



Mapping on Approaches to Reconciliation

Simon Keyes — March 2019



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Commissioned by

The Network for
Religious and
Traditional
Peacemakers



Reconciliation is necessary for sustaining peace

A wide range of ideas and models of reconciliation have emerged over the last 30 years and the possibility for reconciliation has fascinated and frustrated communities in transition. Numerous attempts have aimed to heal effects of the past and help communities reimagine interdependent future. Outcomes of these processes are, however, mixed.

Systematic mapping of all the activity described as “reconciliation” would be an enormous task. In this short report, Prof Simon Keyes offers a selection of theoretical ideas and illustrative case studies designed to broaden the debate amongst practitioners and scholars about the central principles and practices which constitute effective reconciliation.

The mapping was initiated by the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (Network), which was requested by its members to advance efforts enabling more transformative reconciliation, particularly on the work of traditional and faith oriented insider mediators (TFIM) in advancing reconciliation. Based on the theoretical framework developed by Berghof Foundation, I have been developing a model, which identifies community based insider reconcilers, convenes them to help design the reconciliation processes and identify support needs complementing the state level efforts. When combined with efforts to advance community based and individual healing efforts, this simultaneous three-track approach could help to improve the effectiveness of the reconciliation process.

Professor Simon Keyes has done a mapping on past reconciliation processes identifying the gaps and best practices. United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has now launched further research aiming to collect evidence on how to connect the local efforts with national reconciliation processes and on the roles of faith, traditions and local practices in supporting this multi-track approach to reconciliation. Through my current position at Mary Hoch Center for Reconciliation at George Mason University I’m working to plan and establish the appropriate support structures to support more effective reconciliation.

While peace agreements are signed and peace processes are implemented around the globe, the dream of becoming liberated from the effects of the past, often intergenerational pain, decades long cycles of violence and revenge remain very much alive in the lives of the communities. Understanding better how reconciliation processes should be designed and supported is essential for the United Nations in order to sustain peace. Different actors and practitioners need to continue to come together to make their best efforts to support individuals and communities in pain. Faith traditions are often compromised for political or sectarian interests, but they too carry deep wisdom of humanity and can inspire healing and renewing relationships.

Among the practitioners, women are often the first ones to recognize the pain and fears within and between communities and are frequently the ones to reach out and to start the long journey towards reconciliation. We cannot leave them anymore without appropriate recognition and support for their efforts.

One of the key insider reconcilers in South Sudan, Bishop Isaiah Dau, said in one of the workshops organized by the Network:

“Hope is what we would need every day. Most of the thoughts I have on South Sudan are very dark. What we need the most is not to lose trust that we are not alone. We need now believe in the impossible. We are being told there is light in the end of the tunnel, but for us there is only darkness in the tunnel, and only faith for the light. But what we need to realize is that there is light all around us, we need to see it and through it transform darkness around us bit by bit, bit by bit.”

Antti Pentikäinen

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1. Background

The origins of this report lie in a meeting in Geneva on 22/23 February 2018 held to discuss the establishment of a *Consortium for Reconciliation*. At this meeting, it was proposed that those present should pool information in order to, “have a more comprehensive overview of where reconciliation processes are taking place and who is involved”. I agreed to co-ordinate contributions from the 15 agencies represented. A framework for this was established but contributions were few and later in the year the Consortium proposal was abandoned.

During the autumn of 2018, discussions took place with Antti Pentikäinen to devise a different approach, one achievable by a single author in a short space of time. In January 2019, it was agreed that I would attempt to: a) create a simple overview of current thinking about reconciliation; b) reflect on the concepts of “insider” and “transformative” reconciliation; and c) suggest some research questions. This would include indicative case studies and a summary of the information gathered during the process of the review.

To talk about reconciliation is to join a crowded conversation in which hundreds of people are talking from different positions and in different languages. There is prodigious activity at both academic and practical levels – for instance more than 150 new articles on the subject were published during the year I have been involved with this project (See Appx 1). Reconciliation programmes of one sort or another are currently being pursued in at least 100 countries world-wide. There have now been almost 90 Truth Commissions (See Appx 2). To track such activity would be a Sisyphean task requiring a vast and questionable investment of resources.

I have approached this daunting task pragmatically. All I aim to do is to provide Finn Church Aid and others with a context in which I hope may provide some modest help in considering their own reconciliation plans and practice. I make no claims to comprehensiveness.

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March 2019

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2. Defining Reconciliation

“Reconciliation is the most natural thing in the world.”

Desmond Tutu¹

“Reconciliation’s basic problem is that no-one agrees how to define it or do it.”

David Broomfield²

Figure 1: This is Reconciliation



So much has been written about the problem of defining reconciliation and the absence of scholarly or practitioner consensus, that it is almost a field of scholarship in its own right. A recent attempt to summarise the ideas of the 70 most quoted authors in the transitional justice field to create an overarching conceptual structure suggests 18 “types and levels”. (Figure 1³). This is by no means comprehensive but illustrates the conceptual challenge in developing an inclusive definition of reconciliation. This model introduces several important concepts:

- Vertical reconciliation: redefining the relationships between individuals and the state, especially the re-establishment of trust, rights and accountability after human rights abuses
- Horizontal reconciliation: Repairing relationships between individuals, community and societies, including mechanisms for apology, forgiveness, reparation and re-integration of offenders
- The distinction between “thin” and “thick” descriptions of reconciliation: “thin” = coexistence with little or no trust, respect, and shared values; “thick” = the restoration of dignity, reversing structural causes of marginalization and discrimination, and restoring victims to their position as rights bearers and citizens.⁴

1 Preface to Daly 2007

2 Broomfield 2006

3 Strupinskienė 2017

4 Seils 2017

Figure 2: Types and Levels of Reconciliation

	Individual		Communal		National	
	Thin	Thick	Thin	Thick	Thin	Thick
Political	Willingness to participate in joint institutions (Gibson and Gouws 2003; Huyse 2003; Bringa 2005; Nalepa 2007)	Trust in fellow citizens and newly established institutions (De Grieff 2008; Brounéus 2003)	Working on mutually beneficial projects (Borneman 2002; Bloomfield et al. 2003; Kriesberg 1998)	Working together irrespective of group gains (Whittaker 2002; Ignatieff 2003; Kaufman 2006; De Grieff 2008; Stefansson 2010)	Power sharing (Ackerman 1994; Crocker 2000; De Brito et al. 2001; Dwyer 2003; Villavicencio and Doxtader 2004)	Commitment to human rights and rule of law, responsibility for the past (Whittaker 2002; Chapman et al. 2009; Gibson and Gouws 2003; Sriram et al. 2009; Bringa 2005; Teitel 2000; Huyse 2003)
Economic	Everyday pragmatic economic cooperation (Hampson 1996; Augenbraun et al. 1999; Stedman et al. 2002; Sampson 2003)	Everyday economic activity regardless of ethnicity (Lerche 2000)	Engagement in mutually beneficial economic activity (Kumar 1999; Sampson 2003)	Engagement in economic activities irrespective of group gains (Lerche 2000)	Economic cooperation across ethnic lines (Kumar 1999; Sampson 2003)	Economic justice and equality (Bloomfield et al. 2003; Boraine 2000; Gibson and Gouws 2003; Lerche 2000; Paris 2004; Rotberg and Thompson 2000)
Social	Peaceful coexistence, interethnic tolerance (Augenbraun et al. 1999; Fletcher and Weinstein 2002; Sampson 2003; Weinstein 2011)	Forgiveness, empathy (Bar-Tal 2000; Crocker 2000; Galtung 2001; Minow and Chayes 2003; Staub 2006; Kaufman 2006; Nadler and Shnabel 2008)	Seizing communal violence, cooperation (Kumar 1999; Fletcher and Weinstein 2002; Bloomfield et al. 2003; Fischer 2011)	Restoring broken relationships (Lederach 1997; Govier and Verwoerd 2002; Hayner 2001; Nadler and Saguy 2004; Bar-Siman-Tov 2004; Bar-Tal and Bennink 2004; Staub 2006; Chapman et al. 2009)	Peaceful coexistence (Kumar 1999; Bloomfield et al. 2003; Fischer 2011)	Accepting single narrative of the past (Teitel 2000; Schaap 2005; Eastmond and Nalepa 2007; Fischer 2011; Selimović 2012; Clark 2012)

Another way of organising the diverse set of ideas invoked in reconciliation is to arrange them on a spectrum⁵:

Figure 3: The Minimalist – maximalist spectrum (after Verdeja)



The minimalist approach is concerned with establishing the basic conditions in which reconciliation can be pursued about through political rather than violent means. It rejects some of the normative assumptions about reconciliation as a transformative process, in favour of creating new agnostic politics through which differences are worked out⁶.

At the maximalist end of the spectrum the aim is transformation of individuals and society through a coming to terms with history and psychosocial and narrative strategies to repair of the damage to individuals and wider society. Whilst this area has generated a vast literature (there are hundreds of texts on the subject of forgiveness, for instance), it is harder to point to successful maximalist projects of significant scale and impact.

Mechanisms of transitional justice, such as truth commissions, special courts, reparations and institutional reform (e.g. of military or judicial systems) occupy the “deliberative” middle ground.

5 Verdeja 2009

6 Schaap 2008

Both these models illustrate not only the breadth of divergence of views about reconciliation but also the wide range of actions it may involve. They also point to the dualistic nature of the concept which encompasses both a goal and the journey towards it. Thus, some writers see reconciliation as a desirable end state:

“mutual recognition and acceptance invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, mutual trust, positive attitudes, as well as sensitivity and consideration for the other party’s needs and interests.”⁷

Others talk of reconciliation as a sequence of actions to move a society away from historical violence and division:

“dynamic, adaptive processes aimed at building and healing”⁸

For others it is an “equilibrium solution”⁹ concerned with the preservation or reinstatement of a balanced social order. From this angle reconciliation appears as a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), driven by the need for the restoration of community rather than the vindication of individual rights. Anthropologists note that some traditional societies and religious traditions have rituals and social mechanisms which work in this way. This view often conflicts with the priority others give to securing human rights and the accountability of abusers in post conflict situations.

In the face of such variety of understanding and interpretation¹⁰ it becomes impossible to generalise. Instead definitions and aspirations need to emerge from the particular histories and needs of each post-conflict situation.

In general, however, many authors would probably agree on the following:

1. Reconciliation is a means by which a society or community transitions from a divided past to a shared future¹¹
2. It involves the rebuilding of trust and social relationships
3. It is a long-term process, sometimes over generations
4. It cannot be imposed, only chosen
5. It operates across at least five different social strata:
 - a. Political society
 - b. Institutional
 - c. Community
 - d. Interpersonal
 - e. Individual

What is clear, however, is that there is no consensus about any single process or approach to reconciliation, far less any single model or “toolkit”.

Context is everything.

7 Bar Tal 2004

8 Lederach 2001

9 Meierhenrich 2008

10 See Bloomfield 2006

11 Bloomfield et al 2003

3. Ten Ways of Looking at Reconciliation

This section summarises some different ways in which reconciliation has been conceptualised. My purpose is to illustrate the range of ways in which reconciliation has been conceptualised and practiced, not attempt a comprehensive classification.

1. New Social Norms

Verdeja¹² suggests that reconciliation involves political and social agreement to abide by five norms:

1. public dissemination of truth of past atrocities
2. accountability of perpetrators
3. public recognition and acknowledgement of victims (material and symbolic)
4. commitment to the rule of law
5. development of mutual respect among enemies.

This illustrates non-negotiables of the minimalist approach. A new consensus on these norms is worked out through dialogue, public deliberation, negotiation and the political decision-making processes.

2. The Meeting Place

“Paradoxes, tensions, and even contradictions are always present in reconciliation processes”¹³

Lederach’s paradigm of reconciliation as a “meeting place”¹⁴ in which the primary values of truth, mercy, justice and peace compete with each other in dynamic tension has been highly influential. The tension between mercy and justice, for instance, has been much discussed in relation to the notion of amnesty for perpetrators of human rights abuses in return for truth-telling in the light of its use by the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission (although in practice most applications were refused). Lederach also points to the tensions involved in working simultaneously in three timescales: the past, the present and the future.

We can paraphrase Lederach’s approach as:

“Reconciliation...represents a place, the point of encounter where concerns about both the past and the future can meet... Space for acknowledgement of the past and envisioning of the future is the necessary ingredient for re-framing the present. For this to happen people must find ways to encounter themselves and their enemies, their hopes and their fears”(p27)

The key word here is “encounter”. Reconciliation requires direct interaction between different parties, their (hi)stories and ideologies, grounded in the psychological reality of individual hopes and fears for the future. This is where open-ended processes of dialogue (such as those inspired by David Bohm¹⁵ and the model developed by the Public Conversations Project¹⁶) come into their own, using the safe, liminal space of well-conceived dialogue to enable participants from different sides of polarised divisions to engage with each other’s world views and aspirations.

12 Verdeja 2009

13 Hamber & Kelly 2018

14 Lederach 1998

15 Bohm 1990

16 Herzig 2006

3. Interwoven Strands

Hamber & Kelly propose a “working definition”¹⁷ based on interviewing people in Northern Ireland about how they saw reconciliation. This model stresses the importance of simultaneously addressing five interconnected strands of activity.

Figure 4: Hamber & Kelly’s Five interwoven strands



Whilst each strand demands different forms of action, they are not only interdependent (e.g. building positive relationships may be dependent on both acknowledging the past and attitudinal change) but may be in tension with each other (for instance, the value given by different participants to developing a shared vision versus uncovering the past).

This model has some interesting features. Firstly, the emphasis on envisioning a “fair and interdependent society” in the future as a motivating force towards reconciliation. Envisioning as a component of reconciliation is relatively under-developed in practice, although there are some interesting pilot examples.¹⁸

Secondly, Hamber & Kelly draw attention to the significance of ideological positions in shaping people’s expectation of reconciliation. For instance, a person with a strong human rights commitment may have different priorities to someone for whom reconciliation is a religious question.

4. Co-existence versus Social Cohesion

The minimalist/maximalist spectrum is also reflected in debates as to whether, in highly differentiated societies, it is necessary, or even desirable, to aim for integration of previously divided groups. Bosnia and Northern Ireland are given as examples in which peaceful co-existence may be a sufficient goal to maintain peace and prevent revenge. Sampson¹⁹ argues that leaving things unsaid may sometime be a better route to peace than relying on mechanisms for truth-telling and justice that may not be reliable or available. In Sierra Leone the local culture of “social forgetting” proved preferable to public truthy recovery.²⁰

This position contrasts with recent moves to position reconciliation in terms of enhancing social cohesion and accumulating social capital. If social cohesion is defined as “the extent to which people are co-operative, within and across group boundaries, without coercion or purely self-interested motivation”²¹ then it is not difficult to see how this might be both an aim and an indicator of successful reconciliation. The work of the SCORE²² project in Cyprus is an illustration of an attempt to link reconciliation outcomes with the measurement of social cohesion. (See Case Study 6)

17 Hamber & Kelly 2018

18 Dugan 2003

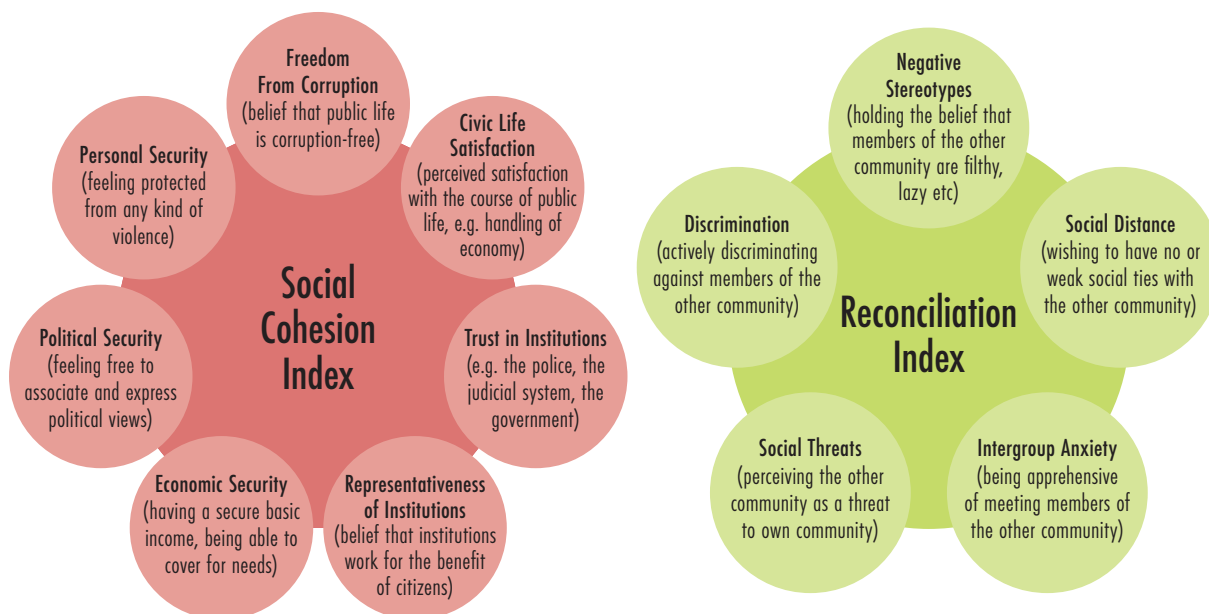
19 Sampson 2003

20 Shaw 2005

21 Burns 2018

22 SCORE 2015

Figure 5: The SCORE Index of social cohesion and reconciliation



5. Woundedness and Moral Repair

“Reconciliation starts when the parties in conflict start to change their beliefs, attitudes, goals, motivations, goals, emotions about the conflict, each other and future relations”²³

Philpott’s²⁴ paradigm of reconciliation is concerned with the “justice of right relationships”. He sees conflict as generating political injustice” whose wounds, both to individuals and societies themselves, can be healed through specific restorative practices:

The wounds of political injustice
Harm to the person of the victim
Violation of victims’ human rights
Lack of acknowledgement of victims suffering
Ignorance of the source of injustice
Standing victory of the perpetrators’ injustice
Harm to the soul of the perpetrator

Six Restorative Practices
Building socially just institutions
Acknowledgment
Reparations
Punishment
Apology
Forgiveness

Related to this is Walker’s notion of “moral repair”²⁵, processes of apology and forgiveness which restore or create trust and hope in a shared sense of value and responsibility. This privileges victims who are given “voice, validation, and vindication” but does not depend on them as individuals since communities can act as moral agents in restorative processes.

23 Bar Tal 2004
 24 Philpott
 25 Walker 2006

6. Moral Imagination

“Moments of possibility that pave the way for constructive change processes do not emerge through the rote application of a set of techniques or strategies, but rather arise out of something that approximates an artistic process”²⁶

Human acts of apology, confession, forgiveness and mercy may play a crucial part in defusing the antagonism and prejudice on which conflict depends. There are many different accounts of the mechanisms and motivations which underpin these²⁷ but in general we can say that they often involve some kind of ethical shift. Perceptions of our enemies and ourselves are transformed by a moral reframing which redefines the possibility of empathy and relationship and enables release from psychological handicaps such as the desire for revenge or a negative self-image of victimhood.

Such actions enable an individual to adjust their psychological status and their perception of, and relation to others. They operationalise the concept of “moral imagination” advanced by Dewey, Lederach²⁸ and others. Essentially a process of creative envisioning of new possibilities for constructive ethical action in destructive situations, moral imagination springs from recognising turning point moments at which people may make leaps of imagination and see their situation and future differently.

Moral Imagination is not confined to individuals. Political apologies, such as Australian Sorry Day²⁹, are an example of attempting a moral leap on a large scale. Although they can sometimes be cathartic and open up new avenues for dialogue and co-operation, they have been criticised for failing to hold states fully accountable, patronising victims and failing to compensate losses³⁰.

Moral acts rarely work in isolation. Forgiveness, for instance, however unconditional, does not release perpetrators from the requirement of reparation.

7. Identity and Inter-Group Conflict

From a social psychology perspective³¹ reconciliation is much concerned with reducing intergroup conflict by changing the nature of adversarial relations between them. Social groups generate negative perceptions of outsiders (“enemy images”) and shape the sense of identity and allegiances of individual members. Threats to identity resulting from harm or humiliation are a powerful driver of aggression and intractable conflict. Socio-emotional Reconciliation approaches³² focus on the emotional needs of victims and perpetrators and enabling group members to reframe their identity (e.g. dual identification, mutual differentiation and the search for superordinate (common) identities.)

Large Group Identity Theory³³ provides a helpful analysis of how historical trauma is transmitted across generations through groups adopting narratives of “chosen glories and chosen traumas”.

26 Maiese after Lederach <https://www.beyondintractability.org/bksum/lederach-imagination> (10.3.19)

27 Warmke 2017 lists more than 230 texts in his bibliography of forgiveness. The list is far from complete.

28 Lederach 2010

29 <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/apology-australias-indigenous-peoples> (Accessed 10.3.19)

30 Cornassel 2008

31 Nadler et al 2008

32 Riek et al 2008

33 Volkan 2006

8. Narrative Incorporation

Much attention has been devoted to the role of narratives in reconciliation, both the role of group meta-narratives in differentiating the identities of warring parties and the potency of story-telling as a means of truth recovery and potentially catharsis and healing for individuals³⁴. Auerbach provides a way of understanding the role of narratives in defining identity-based conflicts, and how working with these may generate a new shared understandings (“narrative incorporation”) and relationships.

Figure 6: Auerbach’s Narrative Pyramid

Auerbach’s Reconciliation Pyramid
— A Narrative-Based Framework
for Analyzing Identity Conflicts



Dwyer describes this process as “bringing apparently incompatible descriptions of events into narrative equilibrium ...and accommodating disruptive events into [a person’s] ongoing narrative”³⁵.

9. Victim/Perpetrator Encounters

Drawing on the insights of the Contact Hypothesis³⁶, encounters in which victims and perpetrators experience each other testimonies have the potential for mutual transformation, although the conditions in which this may be achieved are sensitive and limited. They can take a range of forms, from the public hearings of truth commissions or village courts (e.g. the gacaca system in Rwanda) to private restorative justice initiatives³⁷, to various forms of mediation. Such encounters may be framed as truth recovery, victim-centred justice, or the rehabilitation/re-integration of offenders, and may also invoke other dimensions of reconciliation such as apology, forgiveness and reparation. According to the Needs-Based Model of reconciliation³⁸ they may function to meet the different underlying psychological needs of both parties – for the victim empowerment, for the perpetrator acceptance. The roles of victim and perpetrator may sometimes overlap (e.g. perpetrators may themselves be victims).

34 Phelps 2006

35 Dwyer 2003

36 Pettigrew 2008

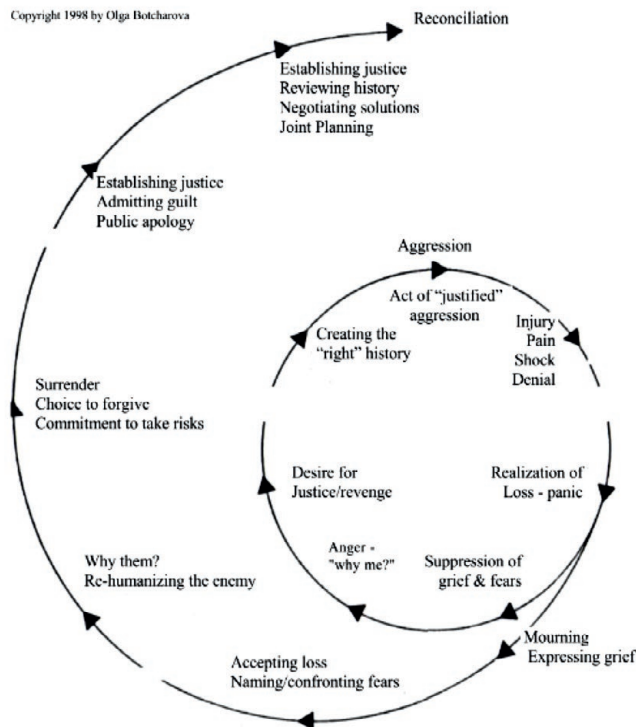
37 e.g. Restorative Circles <https://www.restorativecircles.org/>

38 Shnabel 2008

10. Psycho-Social Interventions – “Healing”

Violence and human rights abuses can inflict profound psychological and social damage on individuals, families and communities. (Perpetrators of violence may be included in those who have suffered psychological harm). A wide range of therapeutic and mental health responses to trauma and symptoms such as PTSD have been developed. These include: Trauma-Informed Peacebuilding³⁹ approaches, Transformative Mediation⁴⁰ and Narrative Mediation⁴¹, workshops developed by agencies such as the Institute for the Healing of Memories (Michael Lapsley)⁴² and the group storytelling work of Northern Ireland’s Healing Through Remembering project⁴³. These mostly rely on highly-skilled intervention.

Figure 7: Botcharova’s Seven Steps to Forgiveness



Botcharova’s model⁴⁴ is one amongst many for conceptualising how cycles of aggression and revenge may be interrupted to provide a transformative pathway to towards reconciliation.

Acute trauma, which disrupts identity and community, may generate powerful negative emotions (fear, anger, betrayal) that may create a culture of anxiety and resentment which perpetuate antagonistic relations. Identity. Long-term work to enable individuals and communities to reconstitute their identities may be necessary⁴⁵.

A Note on “Transformative Reconciliation”

“Transformative Reconciliation” is a label that has been applied in bafflingly different ways. For instance, Friedman⁴⁶ uses it to describe certain types of micro-level psycho-social intervention at the maximalist end of the scale which attempt to achieve cognitive change, which she contrasts with “procedural reconciliation”, a societal process of transitional justice. By contrast Giri describes it as a “deeper process ... which involves structural transformation addressing some of the limitations of a celebratory approach to the South African model of reconciliation and its uncritical global claims”⁴⁷. It is, he says, driven by compassion and confrontation. Whilst such fundamentally contradictory uses of the term persist, I suggest it is not a helpful phrase.

39 <https://mediatorsbeyondborders.org/what-we-do/trauma-informed-peacebuilding/> (10.3.19)

40 Bush & Folger 1994

41 Winslade & Monk 2000

42 Lapsley 2013

43 <http://healingthroughremembering.org/>

44 Botcharova 2002

45 Hutchinson 2008

46 Friedman 2017

47 Giri 2011

4. Critiques of Reconciliation

Briefly, all the above ways of thinking about reconciliation suffer from limitations.

Firstly, despite many authors' experience in culturally unfamiliar settings, most have their roots in a Western liberal conception of peacebuilding. In conflicts which invoke legacies of colonialism, for instance, Western conceptions of reconciliation based on justice or relational transformation may not be convincing to indigenous community whose lives are marked by economic exploitation, ecological damage or issues of land appropriation⁴⁸.

Secondly, they do not take much account of mechanisms which local communities may have developed to facilitate their own healing. For instance, current work on reconciliation work in Somalia aims for *Dhab-u-heshiin* (true reconciliation) with the slogan "repairing our broken Haan" (a traditional pot used to preserve milk and make butter) drawing on distinctive Somali traditions of *Xeer* (a community meeting under a tree). Growing interest in the concepts of *musalaha* and *sulh* in Islamic tradition, for instance, reflect the importance of specific religious ideas and practices to some communities in the way they perceive and manage conflict.

Reconciliation which is focused primarily on restoring relationships may fail to confront underlying structural violence which generated the conflict. Similarly, language of reconciliation which suggests that it involves restoring or returning to some earlier peaceful state that existed before conflict may be a nostalgic delusion which obscures underlying tensions.

Feminist critiques of reconciliation point to the danger of continuation of patriarchal structures and restrictive gender-defined social roles for women as societies reform after conflict.

Finally, we should beware of the lure of elegant conceptual models which ignore the unpredictable nature of reality. Verdeja draws our attention to how reconciliation is "*fundamentally disjunctured and uneven, occurring across social space in different ways and susceptible to different challenges*"⁴⁹. Lederach's call for moral imagination in confronting the essentially paradoxical nature of reconciliation is the voice of an artist embracing the essential complexity of reality rather than the scientist or politician trying to order it.

5. What is "a Reconciler"?

Given the extraordinary diversity of concepts and practices outlined above, the use of the word "reconciler" is certainly problematic, but perhaps not meaningless. Each of the approaches above implies the desirability of both leadership and skilful support. In practice, these roles will take many different forms, each requiring a particular set of generic and specific skills and knowledge. Any use of the term "reconciler" which suggests a single skillset or method would be fatally reductive.

However, the concept of *catalysis* may be a helpful metaphor. In chemistry a catalyst is a substance that increases the rate of a chemical reaction without itself undergoing any permanent chemical change. It provides agents which would otherwise not inter-react with an alternative pathway. One theory is that a catalyst may work by bonding temporarily with both substances, holding them in unnatural proximity until a reaction becomes possible.

48 Murdock 2018

49 Verdeja 2009 p182

In general terms the scope of possible functions of third-party catalysts might look something like this:

Figure 8: The Skillset of Reconcilers

Generic	Interpersonal	Bond with all parties Cultivate trust and hope Non-violence Creativity and moral Imagination Animation Mentoring key individuals
	Diagnostic	Understanding different positions and perceptions Critical thinking Applying experience and theoretical ideas Building a new narrative/picture Conflict Analysis
	Dialogic	Listening Inquiry Suspending Judgement Examining assumptions Voicing
	Facilitative	Mutual Learning & Obtaining consent Model dialogue skills Manage participation Cultivate curiosity Probe and clarify Complete the task
	Reflective	Reflective Practice Personal development
Specific	Process	Mediation (NB range of types) Dialogue methods Negotiation Storytelling Restorative processes Envisioning Appreciative approaches Specific methodologies e.g. Scriptural Reasoning, Narrative Mediation, NVC etc.
	Professional	Truth recovery processes Legal/justice procedures Counselling Therapeutic methods

This is clearly idealised and would be impossibly demanding as a job description for a single individual. However, the myth of the mediator magician is fading and in practice mediation processes may well involve teams of individuals with a range of skills playing multiple roles. Clearly any reconciliation enterprise will define the type of support and facilitation it requires early on.

“Insider Reconcilers”

The recent emergence of this term, which is not clearly defined, seems to have roots in the concept of “Insider Mediation”⁵⁰. This described the role of individuals who are partial or aligned to one side of a conflict but are trusted across divides as being “fair” in wanting an inclusive solution. The absence of “neutrality” is compensated by the benefits of familiarity with the history and cultural context of the dispute. They may know antagonists personally, which simplifies the initial building of relationships. In traditional or religious societies, this role may be assigned to elders or faith leaders who draw on values and practices of religion, faith, spirituality, culture and tradition as a source of inspiration⁵¹. Issues of patriarchy, bias and self-interest noted above may limit the effectiveness of insider partial roles.

How successfully might this idea be replanted into the field of reconciliation? Answer: with some difficulty, for the following reasons. Firstly, the scope of reconciliation activities is much broader than mediation. Insider mediation is largely concerned with brokering deals or agreements. Reconciliation goes much deeper into the history and impact of conflict. Secondly, whilst a community may accept an insider-partial playing a temporary role to solve a dispute, will they accept long-term engagement with issues which may be painful and divisive? Thirdly, the range of the skillset and roles described above may not be present in a damaged post-conflict community.

The value of the Insider Mediator concept is that it challenges the assumption that reconciliation requires a particular type of expertise that must be imported from “experts”. A programme of knowledge transfer that enables local practitioners to explore how some of the ways of looking at Reconciliation appear through the lens of their distinctive cultural understanding of their own society, could create locally-owned approaches.

Firstly, though “Insider Reconcilers” requires more careful definition.

6. Ten Research Questions

1. How can realistic and culturally appropriate goals and systems for measuring progress towards reconciliation be developed?
2. How can Envisioning processes stimulate progress in reconciliation?
3. What role do antagonists’ emotions play in shaping identity and community in the wake of conflict?
4. How do potential participants’ understanding, perceptions and assumptions about “reconciliation” influence outcomes?
5. Are there differences between the needs and roles of men and women in reconciliation processes?
6. How can grassroots peacebuilding activities be integrated into national reconciliation strategies?
7. How can the impact of external advisers/agencies on outcome of reconciliation processes be evaluated?
8. What skills and training are required by facilitators of reconciliation?
9. What is the relationship between social cohesion and reconciliation?
10. How might reconciliation processes contribute to new patterns of exclusion?

⁵⁰ Wehr 1991

⁵¹ Mason

7. Ten Illustrative Examples

The following examples are chosen to illustrate a range of approaches to community-based reconciliation. Detailed information about these is readily obtainable and so here I merely sketch some of the key features relevant in this context.

1. Fambul Tok – Sierra Leone – Community-Led Reconciliation

<http://www.fambultok.org/>

Fambul Tok (“Family Talk”) emerged after the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991–2002) as a community-owned program bringing together perpetrators and victims of the violence in face-to-face encounters using ceremonies rooted in the local traditions of. Some distinctive features are:

- Truth-telling bonfire. Held during the evening, victims and offenders are invited to come forward and tell their stories to their friends and neighbours. This may be accompanied by singing or dancing.
- Offering and Receiving Forgiveness. During the time of story-telling, offenders may ask their victims for forgiveness. If the victims are prepared to do so, they may offer forgiveness.
- Ritual Cleansing. The morning following the truth-telling bonfire, community leaders hold a ‘cleansing ceremony’ drawing upon local traditions. Some of these ceremonies have not been conducted since before the civil war.

Since a single event cannot resolve or heal all the problems in a community, the programme places emphasis on follow-up initiatives to keep communication and healing going. For example, they suggest that communities using Fambul Tok designate a ‘peace tree’ after the ceremony as a place for similar meetings when new conflict issues arise. Other follow-up activities have included:

- sports events
- youth recording the stories of community members for broadcast on local radio
- farms on which reconciled individuals work side-by-side for the good of the community

“The predominant characteristic of these traditions and practices was an orientation toward reintegrating perpetrators into the community, instead of alienating them through punishment or retribution”⁵²

⁵² Hoffman, Elizabeth (2008) Reconciliation in Sierra Leone: Local Processes Yield Global Lessons. *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*. (32)(2) 129–141

2. Palava – the Peace Hut Alliance – Restorative Justice in Liberia

<https://earthtreasurevase.org/liberia-peacebuilding-project/#the-palava-peace-hut-tradition>

“We will create a space where the truth is sacred, and renew our peacebuilding efforts to heal fractured communities. I am prepared to be the first to appear before it, to say what I have already said, to challenge untruths, to say what I have done and what I have not done and to demonstrate that no one is above this process of healing and truth telling.”

President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2013) Launching the national Palava Hut programme as recommended by the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission⁵³

This movement⁵⁴ seeks to revive the indigenous Liberian tradition of *palava* (peace huts), circular buildings which are used for community deliberation and resolving disputes relating to issues such as divorce, land issues, theft and occasionally murder and rape. Elders preside over proceedings which can involve truth telling and acknowledgement of responsibility, forgiveness, and reconciliation rituals including sharing food. They have also been used to hold perpetrators of violence during the Liberian civil war accountable to their community although it is not clear how effective or widespread this has been. So far three have been built. Peace Huts have freshwater wells. One of the leaders of this project, Harper M. Karmon, has studied with the Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh and the Peace Hut programme now includes Mindfulness training.

The *palava* is a specific example of an indigenous restorative justice process which is found elsewhere in Africa, including *Xeer* in Somalia, *Gacaca* in Rwanda and *Judiya* in Sudan. Such mechanisms have been the subject of considerable interest when western traditional (such as TRCs and special courts) have proved unsatisfactory in some countries. They have been criticised for being patriarchal (See Danso 2016) and nepotistic and because they may obstruct real justice. They spring from rural village traditions and it is not clear whether they can operate successfully in urban areas.

3. Greensboro Truth Commission – Truth Telling in N Carolina, USA

<http://www.greensborotrc.org/>

The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (established in 2004) was an independent, initiative seeking truth and healing transformation for Greensboro, a US city which remained divided following the murder of five demonstrators by the Ku Klux Klan in 1979 and to which the police appeared to turn a blind eye. The Commission was a private, community-led initiative which appointed a respected group of individuals as commissioners, heard 200 witnesses and published its findings and recommendations in 2006. It was supported by the International Centre for Transitional Justice (www.ictj.org)

It was important that its terms of reference (“Mandate”) were widely discussed in the community and endorsed by the local authority. As well as producing new evidence that had not emerged in court proceedings, its report provided a factual reference point for subsequent dialogue about race relations in the city. The GTRC used ideas from South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, notably inviting testimonies from victims and others, including some perpetrators, at public hearings. The Commission is an example of community led direct democracy and was not officially sanctioned by the City or state authorities. Whilst this meant there was no statutory obligation to implement the Commission’s findings, its independence from distrusted political institutions gave it moral authority in the eyes of the community. It was mostly welcomed and valued by victims and their families as restoring their dignity. Androff (2012) notes that “GTRC’s contributions to reconciliation makes apparent the need to supplement reconciliation efforts with other community interventions working for social justice.”⁵⁵

53 Republic of Liberia, ‘Towards National Reconciliation and Dialogues: The Palava Hut or Peace Forums’, Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume Three, 2009, p. 2.

54 Danso, Kwaku (2016) Mending Broken Relations after Civil War: The ‘Palava Hut’ and the Prospects for Lasting Peace in Liberia Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre Policy Brief 2. <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/mending-broken-relations-after-civil-war-the-palava-hut-and-the-prospects-for-lasting-peace-in-liberia/>

55 Androff, David K (2012) Reconciliation in a Community-Based Restorative Justice Intervention. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, December 2012, Volume XXXIX, Number 4

4. Healing Through Remembering – Storytelling in Northern Ireland

<https://healingthroughremembering.org/>

“How should people remember the events connected with the conflict in and about Northern Ireland and in so doing, individually and collectively contribute to the healing of the wounds of society?”

HTR, a cross community project established after the Good Friday Peace Agreement (1998), has been at the forefront of developing storytelling methodologies as a means of truth recovery⁵⁶. It has made an important contribution to exploring some of the psychological and ethical dilemmas of storytelling by examining the “feasibility, viability and usefulness of remembering the Troubles”.

It conducted a comprehensive audit⁵⁷ of the many local initiatives in Northern Ireland employing storytelling methods which helpfully summarised the broad spectrum of approaches as:

- Talking circle workshops (person-centred group processes, with no material product)
- Discussion-based workshops (group discussion, involving sharing of stories)
- Creative tools processes (using creative arts to facilitate the telling of stories)
- Oral / life history projects (audio and audio-visual documentation of individuals’ stories)

Its website contains many helpful reports on storytelling and related issues.

5. Inter-Religious Co-ordinating Council of Israel – Dialogue as Peacebuilding

<https://rhr.org.il/eng/2016/04/icci-interreligious-department-rhr-passover-newsletter/>

ICCI is an umbrella organisation comprised of 75 Christian, Palestinian/Muslim, and Jewish institutions, including Jewish-Arab coexistence organisations, museums, universities, and other inter-religious organisations. In practice its members find it difficult to meet physically due to political restrictions, but it functions as an effective network based on shared humanitarian principles:

- Moving from dialogue to action: the programmes combine facilitated dialogue, study, and action projects which demonstrate to the wider community the tangible benefits to be gained from working together towards common goals.
- Addressing the Conflict: all programmes promote relationship-building, including frank and open exchanges of perspectives on subjects related to the local and regional conflict.
- Focus on communities rather than individuals: participants are carefully recruited based on their potential to impact their respective religious communities.
- Long-term programmes and relationships: all major programmes are long-term so as to encourage the building of lasting relationships.
- Religion as part of the solution: by utilizing interreligious textual study as an educational tool, ICCI promotes religion as a means of bringing people closer together.

⁵⁶ It also developed policies and practical strategies around Days of Reflection, Living Memorial Museums, Commemoration and options for Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement in Northern Ireland

⁵⁷ <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/victims/docs/kelly0905storytelling.pdf>

In 2015 ICCI became the Inter-Religious Department of Rabbis for Human Rights (<https://rhr.org.il/eng/>). The Founding Director of ICCI Rabbi Ron Kronish who served (1992–2016), has helpfully summarised the “transformative ways in which participants are affected by such programmes”⁵⁸

1. Seeing that the conflict has two legitimate sides, and being able to accept people who have different opinions
2. Becoming better listeners
3. Realizing that not everything is solvable
4. Looking at the conflict in a more complex and realistic way
5. Realizing that people are similar in many ways yet still have strong differences
6. Allowing them to grow up and become more confident in their own abilities
7. Influencing them to become more active in society
8. Becoming stronger in their own opinions while simultaneously becoming more tolerant and accepting
9. Having more knowledge about other religions
10. Realizing that “the others” are also human beings

6. Fundacion para la Reconciliacion – Colombia Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

<http://fundacionparalareconciliacion.org/>

“Against the irrationality of violence it is necessary to propose the irrationality of forgiveness, as well as demonstrate that cities are built from inside out, that forgiveness is not forgetting but rather remembering with different eyes, that without reconciliation there is no future, that hatred and resentment have grave somatic and psychological effects, that truth and justice are indispensable elements of reconciliation, and, finally, that compassion and tenderness must be reinstated as basic elements of the culture of peace.”⁵⁹ Gomez (2003)

The Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation Project (ESPERE) has been running since 2003 and it claims to have involved over 2 million participants in Colombia and other countries. It works with communities in vulnerable areas of the country by encouraging civil participation, training young peace leaders, and providing psychological assistance to ex-combatants, displaced people and victims of violence. The ESPERE approach is to train animators (*animadores*) chosen by local neighbourhood Board of Action to deliver a 10 module programme of learning. Each requires up to 10 hours so the programme demands a significant commitment from participants. The programme is experiential and playful, and aims to heal wounds, transform “ungrateful” memory, generate restorative practices and provide tools to restore confidence. The methodology involves participants working in small groups of 3 individuals who serve as mirrors for each other. The first half of the programme focuses on a deep reflective personal process of exploring forgiveness. The second focuses on reconciliation (“moving from distrust to trust”) and involves a process of re-socialisation and reconnection with other people.

58 Kronish, R (2010) Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Method of Peace-Building in Israel and Palestine. *Journal of Interreligious studies*.

59 Gomez, Leonel Narváez (2003) Schools of Forgiveness and Reconciliation (English version) *Constructing Peace*. Harvard Review of Latin America. <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/schools-forgiveness-and-reconciliation>

The ten modules are:

1. Motivation and agreements of total privacy
2. I decide to move from darkness to light
3. I choose to forgive
4. I see with new eyes
5. I share the pain
6. I accept the other within me
7. I construct the truth
8. I guarantee justice
9. I agree on a pact
10. I organize the celebration.

The final celebration involved the participants developing their own ritual or memory and restitution (which is often symbolic) and affirmation by the community of participants

7. **uuk*aana – Canada – Reconciliation as Resurgence**

“A central ceremony of hahuulism involves periodically, publicly, and reverently acknowledging that humans are characterized by short-term memory. Humans have a tendency to forget; they are easily distracted. Humans have a tendency to prefer the “quick fix.” The ancient Nuu-chah--nulth guarded against falling into such times with a periodic remembrance ceremony called a uuk*aana, which means ‘we remember reality’.”⁶⁰

Although not an organisational model like the other illustrative examples in this paper, it’s important to consider what Cornassel (2012)⁶¹ calls the “peoplehood model” of decolonising and sustaining indigenous culture and community. He speaks of “political distraction” – the way in which the discourse of “rights, reconciliation and resources” common to much western peacebuilding ideology actually diverts political attention from the deeper desire of indigenous communities which have been decimated by colonialization, conflict, appropriation of homelands and economic and cultural discrimination. These concepts are redolent of pacification and may reinforce an unjust status quo. For First Nation indigenous communities the empowering concept is *resurgence*.

Simpson (2008)⁶² proposes a four-point strategy for the revitalisation of indigenous communities:

1. Confront “funding” mentality – It is time to admit that colonizing governments and private corporations are not going to fund our decolonization;
2. Confronting linguistic genocide – There is little recognition or glory attached to it, but without it, we will lose ourselves;
3. Visioning resurgence – The importance of visioning and dreaming a better future based on our own Indigenous traditions cannot be underestimated;
4. The need to awaken ancient treaty and diplomatic mechanisms – Renewing our pre-colonial treaty relationships with contemporary neighbouring Indigenous Nations promotes decolonization and peaceful co-existence, and it builds solidarity among Indigenous Nations.

In practice this constitutes both a political strategy but also recovering truth and memory through the renewal of indigenous story-telling and healing ceremonies “stories that are told and re-told, in songs that are sung and re-sung, in ceremonies that are performed and re-performed through the seasonal rounds” (Little Bear 2005)⁶³

60 Umeek (E. R. Atleo). (2011). Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous approach to global crisis.: UBC Press p.164

61 Cornassel, Jeff (2012) Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1) pp, 86–101

62 Simpson, L. (2008). Our elder brothers : The lifeblood of resurgence. In L. Simpson (Ed.), *Lighting the eighth fire* (pp. 73–88). Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

63 Little Bear, L. (2005). Foreword. In T. Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous pathways of action and freedom* (pp. 9–12). Toronto: Broadview Press.

8. *Círculos Restaurativos* – Learning from Restorative Circles in Brazil

www.restorativecircles.org

As developed by Dominic Barter in the *favelas* of Brazil in the mid 1990s, where it became known as *Círculos Restaurativos*, it brings together the three parties to a conflict – those who have acted, those directly impacted and the wider community – within a chosen systemic context, to dialogue as equals and recognises that the impact of violence or crime may reach far beyond those directly involved in the events.

A key feature of the approach is that participants invite each other (“who needs to sit round this table?”) and attend voluntarily. The dialogue process used is shared openly with all participants. The process ends when actions have been found that bring mutual benefit which nurture the inherent integrity of all those involved in the conflict. *Círculos Restaurativos* are facilitated in 3 stages that arise in an approximate sequence and identify the key factors in the conflict, reach agreements on next steps, and evaluate the results. As a circle form, they invite shared power, mutual understanding and self-responsibility within community. *Círculos Restaurativos* are facilitated by community members who identify themselves as impacted by the conflict at hand. They commit to serving the emergent wisdom of the participants through their willingness to offer questions sourced from an agreed upon basis and to track the co-creation of meaning and intra-personal, inter-personal and social action by those present.

Evaluation of this and other restorative justice models⁶⁴ has highlighted some important issues of countering power dynamics within such dialogue-based processes and the cultural and emotional competence of facilitators. It highlights the importance of co-creation partnerships between participants rather the reliance on external expertise (“*justice done with those who are directly involved*”). *Círculos Restaurativos* draws to some extent on the culture of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) developed by Marshall Rosenberg⁶⁵ (which in turn draws on Buddhist wisdom about the nature of the heart and mind). NVC may well prove in future to be a central component of reconciliation thought and practice.

9. Spirit of Sangwe Festival – Burundi – Music Challenging Stereotypes

In 2002 Search for Common Ground (<https://www.sfcg.org/>) organised a four-day event featuring eight hundred Burundian musicians and other artists, who performed in setting large and small throughout Bujumbura, attended by tens of thousands of people. A highlight was the appearance of a Ghanaian master drummer Nicholas Djanie who led a workshop for Hutu and Tutsi teenagers. “*Within two days the group was transformed – from individual boys playing on individual drums to their own internal rhythms ... to a drum orchestra who played to one common rhythm.*” The acts of listening and responding to each other musically in the present moment offer a simple but powerful metaphor. Remarking on the distinctive power of the African drum, Cohen⁶⁶ points to several principles which underlie such initiatives: a) the importance of local traditions as a resource for co-existence b) the value of non-linguistic activities which may be a more ready form of communication than dialogue c) the capacity of such events to involve large number of people.

This is just one of many such examples of creative cross cultural ventures which seek to dismantle negative stereotypes and build co-operative relationships through shared artistic experiences. These range from the Theater of Witness (<http://www.theaterofwitness.org/>) to Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said’s West Eastern Divan Orchestra (<https://www.west-eastern-divan.org/>). Watch the video The Art of Reconciliation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwEOhEbsN6k>) for some examples. Interestingly one of the three main factors that appears to influence an individual’s capacity for integrative complexity⁶⁷, a very valuable quality in dealing with difference, is experience of other cultures.

64 Lyubansky, Mikhail & Shpungin, Elaine (2015) Challenging Power Dynamics in Restorative Justice. In *The Psychology of Restorative Justice: Managing the Power Within* edited by Dr Theo Gavrielides. Routledge.

65 Rosenberg, M. B. (2005). *Nonviolent communication: A language of life* (2nd ed.). Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer

66 Cohen, Cynthia (2005) “Creative Approaches to Reconciliation,” in *The Psychology of Resolving Global Conflicts: From War to Peace*, edited by Mari Fitzduff and Christopher E. Stout.

67 <https://psychology.iresearchnet.com/social-psychology/decision-making/integrative-complexity/>

10. Kvinna till Kvinna – Bosnia – Psychosocial Support and Advocacy After Gender-Based Violence

<https://kvinna.tillkvinna.org/>

“War is not over with the last bullet.”

Set up in 1993 during the war in ex-Yugoslavia, a conflict marked by rape and slavery, *Kvinna till Kvinna* is an NGO which aims to address the legacy of those crimes through access to justice, health care and psychosocial support, economic empowerment and efforts to offset stigma. It reports that the trauma of sexual violence does not simply disappear with time and describes its role as *“(our) individual support is rooted in a feminist approach. We believe in victims/survivors’ potential and strength to reclaim their independence. We see them as active players; we are simply by their side in a supportive, consultative role.”*

An evaluation of their work⁶⁸ documents the nature of the trauma that the events of the war imposed on many women (and some men) ranging from PTSD and emotional exhaustion to economic marginalisation. Their approach to psycho-social support rests on a group therapy process in which *“feelings can be felt and named and endured without overwhelming arousal, without defensive numbing and without dissociation”*. It identified that economic hardship impacted negatively on the healing process in the women, with lack of jobs rendering them dependent on men – *“a risky situation in post-war societies with increased domestic violence.”* Many women felt abandoned by the government and the much-vaunted “right to return” of refugees promised in the Dayton Peace Agreement (1997) in practice exposed some women to further dangers.

As the trauma and memory of the war has gradually begun to recede *Kvinna till Kvinna* retains a strong focus on supporting women experiencing other forms of gender-violence and advocating for structural change and seeking to change social norms and perceptions. It has now extended its work into the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the South Caucasus. There have been many different approaches to responding to individual trauma in post-conflict societies, focused on both individual needs and community development. Pearlman⁶⁹ provides a useful overview of the issues.

68 Weston, Marta Cullberg (2002) War is not over with the last bullet. Overcoming Obstacles in the Healing Process for Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina © The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2002

69 Pearlman, LA & Staub, E (2016) Sequencing Trauma Recovery and Reconciliation Interventions in Post-Conflict Settings’ in the book *Building Sustainable Peace: Timing and Sequencing of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Peace-building*, edited by Arnim Langer and Graham K. Brown, Oxford University Press 2016

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