Editorial

Reconciliation

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Introduction

Reconciliation

The definition, process, and significance of reconciliation vary among different people and across different contexts (Bloomfield, Barnes, & Huyse, 2003). In general, reconciliation entails the establishment or re-establishment of non-violent amicable relations between one or two persons or groups (Abu-Nimer et al., 2001; Aiken, 2013). However, the process is never simple, nor is it an isolated act; rather, reconciliation is a non-linear and continuous process wherein all parties involved maintain a constant readiness to forego the tyranny of violence, shame, and fear, and opt for peace and democracy (Bloomfield et al., 2003). As each relationship is unique, the reconciliation process, its outcomes, and its methods vary across contexts.

The first main section of this paper provides definitions and theories of reconciliation within different contexts. First, I provide a brief discussion of reconciliation in current literature and practice – its meaning, process, and expected outcomes. This will be followed by a discussion of reconciliation in relation to the field of depth and liberation psychology, including a description and comparison of the reconciliation process with depth psychology methods and activities. Next, I will present my personal understanding or theory of reconciliation based on readings and discussion in this course, and previous experience and literature on both reconciliation and depth psychology. The second main section of this paper will be a description of the application of reconciliation, first in general, and subsequently, as a tool for addressing violence against women in Lebanon.

Reconciliation in Literature and Practice

Ideally, the purpose of reconciliation is to prevent any and all use of the past to renew conflict. This is achieved by breaking the cycle of violence, establishing peaceful relations, and strengthening democratic institutions (Bloomfield et al., 2003). Reconciliation aids in the healing of survivors, the reparation of past injustices, the acceptance of responsibility and collective understanding of past events, and the establishment of non-violent democratic relationships between individuals and communities (Bloomfield et al., 2003). However, this ideal definition and expected outcome of reconciliation is often difficult to realize as the experience of a particularly brutal and violent past instills fear and trauma in victims, and makes the creation of amicable relations a sensitive operation.

Indeed, according to literature, reconciliation is a long-term process whose pace cannot be dictated and whose outcomes cannot be readily measured or predicted (Bloomfield et al., 2003). Consequently, one cannot definitively define a strict sequence of reconciliation because the process is non-linear. However, three crucial stages can be defined as part of the entire reconciliation process. The first stage involves replacing fear with non-violent coexistence (Bloomfield et al., 2003). At times of conflict, opposing parties are ingrained with the need to fight and engage in combat, either to promote certain philosophies or as a means to survive. In post-conflict reconciliation, the lowest level of non-violent coexistence simply implies the prevalence of the willingness to not kill one another (Bloomfield et al., 2003). Moving further, individuals would be able to build or renew communication within and between victims and offender. Non-violent coexistence is constantly improved with the initiatives of political and community leaders, non-governmental organizations, and religious institutions, and with the own willingness of community members themselves (Bloomfield et al., 2003).

As threats of combat are extinguished and as communication lines are opened, community members would get a greater sense of physical and emotional security, thereby further improving the atmosphere of coexistence. In due time, coexistence would improve from one that can only be described as non-violent to one that is characterized by a relation of trust, which is the second stage of reconciliation. In this stage, reconciliation efforts are focused towards the renewal of confidence in victims and oppressors in both themselves and in each other (Bloomfield et al., 2003). It is with such confidence in one another that each individual is able to see the humanity in every man and woman, which sets the ground for mutual trust and enables a culture of non-violence. Enabling trusting and confident relationships pave the way towards empathy – the third stage in reconciliation. In this stage, victims learn to willingly listen to perpetrators' reasons, explanations, and apologies for the hatred and the pain and damage caused (Bloomfield et al., 2003). This stage is usually carried out through truth commissions, which allows both victims and perpetrators to acknowledge the past injustices, share a common identity and understanding, and to move on together in harmony (Bloomfield et al., 2003). Evoking empathy allows individuals to better understand and appreciate each other's context and position, and experience has shown that in some cases, this enables individuals to discover and consider opportunities for partnership that may be more sustainable and sensible than sustained conflict (Bloomfield et al., 2003). In such cases, individuals or groups previously engaged in conflict are able to create not only non-violent relationships, but also collaborative, peaceful, and democratic relationships (Bloomfield et al., 2003).

As mentioned earlier, these stages are non-linear as one stage may not always lead to another and as the first stage achieved in one case may be the second or last stage achieved in other cases. Additionally, while these stages show great promise of the positive outcomes of

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reconciliatory efforts, there is always the possibility of a relapse to violent methods – perhaps even more violent than originally evident – of conflict resolution because of the sensitive nature of the entire process. These complexities of the reconciliation process add to the difficulty of ensuring the effectiveness and success of efforts in reconciliation. As such, scholars and practitioners continue to determine means to further improve current approaches to reconciliation.

Reconciliation in Depth and Liberation Psychology

Depth psychology is the psychologies of the unconscious based on the writings and theories of Jung, Freud, Hillman, Freire and others. A core philosophy in the field of depth psychology is that the personal unconscious is built and organized around an individual's core patterns of memory, emotions, and perceptions, which are collectively known as complexes (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). These complexes include emotionally-charged unconscious associations around an archetypal center – the interaction of environment and temperament. In other words, complexes are either the cause or the effect of the conflict between the personal need to adapt to a certain situation or environment and the individual inability to do so (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). At another level, within the psyche of a group of individuals, are cultural complexes, which are defined as a collection of emotionally-charged ideas and images gathered around an archetypal center and shared by members of an identified collective – usually a cultural or ethnic group (Singer & Kaplinsky, 2010). Acknowledging this cultural level of the psyche allows one to better recognize the importance and value of the outer world of collective cultural experiences on an individual's psyche. Simply put, collective cultural experiences influence an individual's personal unconscious by creating complexes or distinct emotionally-charged associations caused by conflict (Singer & Kaplinsky, 2010).

This principle can be better understood with an illustration. For example, a white man who was raised and trained in a culture that discriminates against black individuals may find himself in internal and external distress when he develops feelings for a black woman. Whereas archetypal patterns in the man's collective unconscious upholds shape the development of an individual's psyche as a human being, the cultural complexes within the cultural unconscious defines certain polarities as either good or profane. In this case, the cultural complex is the shadow of racial discrimination, and this cultural complex denied the man the ability to readily and peacefully accept the positive emotions towards a colored woman. However, through his consistent experience of happiness, content, and longing for and from the woman, the man found the archetype of the lover in the woman, which helped him individuate. In this process, the man's ego turned inward and confronted the archetype behind it – one of discrimination, power, and violence. For this example, the concept of the cultural complex offered a new and unique perspective for analyzing and understanding a particular layer of the individual psyche that is in conflict with the group identity (Singer & Kaplinsky, 2010). Subsequently, the concept of the cultural complex can also be used in the context of reconciliation to understand the structure and content of a group's s psyche, and the basis and nature of their conflict with other groups (Singer & Kaplinsky, 2010). As such, the cultural complex is an important component of my personal theory of reconciliation, which also fuses existing reconciliation approaches with depth psychological methods.

Personal Theory or Statement of Reconciliation

Cultural complexes arise from the historical and emotional memory of a group and become rooted in the group's cultural unconscious (Henderson, 1984). An activated or a strong collective complex can seize and entangle the imagination, behavior, and emotions of an entire group or a number of members of a group, which can result in irrational thoughts and actions (Henderson, 1988). In the context of reconciliation, cultural complexes can be thought to cause emotions, such as fear, hatred, and shame, which trigger violent and oppressive behavior. Following the application of the concept of cultural complexes in the context of reconciliation, my theory of reconciliation defines reconciliation, its processes and methods, and its potential outcomes with relation to complexes and analytical psychology.

Reconciliation as a process can occur in a myriad of contexts, e.g. between husband and wife, between indigenous and non-indigenous communities, and between religious groups. In order to create a definition that is applicable to all such processes of reconciliation, I believe it is best to keep this definition simple and direct to the point, instead of enumerating facets to be modified and without limiting the intended outcome of the process. As such, my theory of reconciliation follows the simplest definition of reconciliation, i.e. it is the means or process of finding a way to coexist harmoniously. In this definition, harmonious coexistence is achieved when the entities or individuals involved have acted such that each one's beliefs is compatible with the other's beliefs. Surely this does not entail that the individuals attempt to make radical changes such that their beliefs are exactly the same; rather, reconciliation enables individuals to make allowable adjustments such that each one is able to express his beliefs without hindering the other.

In depth and liberation psychology, phenomena or problems are best understood and addressed by exploring and identifying underlying reasons or causes for the problem. As such, the first step in the reconciliation process towards harmonious coexistence would be to explore and understand the cultural complexes that take hold of and strongly influence individuals' or groups' values, beliefs, behaviors, and actions. This exploration and uncovering of cultural complexes can be achieved through dialogic approaches, i.e. conscientization and social dreaming. Such dialogic approaches allow groups or individuals to collectively explore each other's contexts and experiences by identifying and sharing their own standpoint and reflecting on both side's perspectives (Watkins & Shulman, 2008). As a result, individuals are able to not only bring out, but also understand, both side's repressed emotional themes and how these affect their emotions and behaviors. Following this uncovering of cultural complexes as a form of collective individuation, the second step in my theory of the reconciliation process would be individual and communal transformation – that is, to find ways to abolish feelings of fear and hate and to remove violent tendencies while consequently building trust and confidence in oneself, one's community, and the community of one's previous enemy, towards harmonious coexistence. The exact methods or activities to achieve these can vary across contexts, depending on the groups or individuals involved and their history. However, these methods or activities must also be dialogic and participatory such that the individuals and groups themselves are able to establish confidence and trust, build communication lines, and arrive at peaceful coexistence, at their own pace, in their own way, and according to their own understanding.

Application of Reconciliation

Reconciliation can be uses and can occur in a myriad of contexts, e.g. between husband and wife, between indigenous and non-indigenous

communities, between religious groups, and between groups of different races or ethnicities. In recent history, reconciliation has been used as a process to achieve a relationship characterized by peace and mutual respect between two groups who have been engaged in some form of violent conflict or oppression. This process is usually carried out by a truth and reconciliation commission, which is tasked with discovering and revealing past wrongdoing by one entity against another in the hope of resolving conflict, carrying out justice, and rebuilding relationships. Most truth and reconciliation commissions in recent decades were established in states or nations that were emerging from internal unrest, civil war, dictatorship, or inter-state wars.

Reconciliation in History

Probably among the most reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts is the justice and reconciliation process in post-genocide Rwanda. The judicial response to the genocide was carried out at three levels because of the great number of cases that needed to be tried and concluded, and the differences in the scope and weight of the charges against these individuals. In total, courts in the three levels indicted, tried, and sentenced more than 1.2 million individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. While some individuals were released without penalty or with minimal community service requirements, prominent individuals who held great responsibility for the genocide were either sentenced to life in prison or executed. Worth noting in the reconciliation process in Rwanda is the establishment of the Gacaca courts, which utilized transitional justice methods that promote healing, moving on from crises, and harmonious coexistence. The reconciliation process focuses on identifying cultural or ethnic differences, reconciling differences, and reconstructing the Rwandan identity, as well as balancing justice, truth, peace and security. In other words, emphasis was given to creating a future bound by friendship, trust, and peace, rather than focusing on retribution or vengeance.

Reconciliation in Addressing Violence against Women in Lebanon

Following definitions of reconciliation presented in literature, one can see that reconciliation can occur in a multitude of contexts. For example, reconciliation can happen between two friends who had a disagreement, between a husband and his wife, between an offender and a victim, between communities with historically different perceptions, and between nations who have engaged in war against each other (Bloomfield et al., 2003). In the context of marital relations, reconciliation involves addressing issues and modifying the relationship between husband and wife, instrumentally and emotionally, towards a more progressive future (Ross, 2004). A general definition would be that reconciliation is concerned about building or rebuilding relationships damaged by violence and coercion (Sanchez & Rognvik, 2012).

Based on personal experience working with domestic abuse victims and volunteers, the process of reconciliation in a married couple with a history of domestic violence begins with the realization that there is a problem in the relationship. As Middle Eastern culture regard women as inferior to men, most women in the region have grown accustomed to discrimination and abuse. However, due to persistent efforts of both local and international organizations that fight against gender-based violence and domestic violence, women are increasingly becoming aware of their rights and of organizations that aid victims of violence. This has been evident in recent years as many women have sought help from such organizations such that they could leave abusive relationships.

While some women are able to gather enough courage and confidence to leave their husbands, many traditionally conservative women continue to suffer abusive relationships. As many women may be reluctant to listen to strangers about their personal relationships, interveners may use community-based practices and social intervention methods to increase women's awareness without making them feel that we are prying into their private lives. This is particularly important for Middle Eastern women because introversion and timidity are highly valued.

In this stage, I recommend guiding women through the process of conscientization - a process wherein human beings are able to achieve a deep awareness and understanding of both the socio-cultural reality that forms their lives and their inherent capacity to mold and transform that reality (Mithra, 2014). Freire developed conscientization in order for people to become aware of their oppressive situations and to inspire them to reform their reality. This process awakens people's critical consciousness – people become aware of their reality and are able to criticize it, and at the same time, they become aware of their own potential to ignite social change. Through conscientization, therefore, women may be able to realize how they have been oppressed and victimized by their husbands or partners. Subsequently, they will be able to take measures to change their current situation and improve their overall existence.

At the same time, interveners must also encourage men to participate in the reconciliation process by informing them about the psychological, emotional, and physical effects of domestic violence on women and their children. Parallel to the traditionally introverted characteristic of Middle Eastern women, men are raised to a higher level and to higher standards, and as such, they may also be reluctant to participate in direct reconciliation approaches.

Taking from techniques and methods in depth psychology, I would suggest social dreaming as an intervention method that can pave the way for reconciliation. Social dreaming is a method used to explore the un-thought and unconscious dimensions of the social world by examining dreams, which are believed to have an inherent social meaning (Noack, 2010). Providing opportunities for social dreaming creates a site where individuals engage in communal dialogue and imagery, which allows their invisible energies to intermingle, interact, and connect (McCutcheon, 2013), consequently uncovering individual and cultural complexes, promoting healing, and offering possibilities for both individual and communal transformation (Repede, 2009). Social dreaming can be conducted by interveners with groups of couples such that participants would be comfortable that private matters remain private.

Social dreaming will allow couples to realize and assess the current condition of their relationship, i.e. it allows the truth to come out, which is an important feature of reconciliation. The next step would involve ritualistic or symbolic behavior that prove that both parties acknowledge issues and are willing to work towards fixing them to improve the relationship (Ross, 2004). This would be exemplified by apologies, forgiveness, and reparations. In traditional Middle Eastern culture, it would be highly unlikely for men to verbally acknowledge or admit to wrongs committed towards their wives. As such, apologies and reparations could probably be exhibited through actions, e.g. refraining from physical, emotional, and psychological violence. Such changes are the most ideal outcome of reconciliation. However, not all reconciliation approaches or interventions are effective, and these

methods could have various consequences.

In planning and executing the reconciliation process, the intervener must take into account the important factors that could affect the perceptions, prejudices, and overall willingness to participate of the parties involved. Specifically, for Middle Eastern people, religion and culture play a significant role, such that individuals may not even be willing to listen to interveners because they are viewed as strangers who are prying into the private lives of individuals. As such, specific techniques – even words and actions used – in the social dreaming process must be chosen carefully and wisely in order to assure that individuals are not offended and remain comfortable.

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