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Practicing Peace: Psychological Roots of Transforming Conflicts

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The practice of sustainable peace is a process that must be initiated, nourished and revised. The "social energies" of conflict transformation – truth, mercy, justice, peace – offer a useful model to describe the transformative power of this practice. These social energies can be conceptualized as a combination of norms or values, on the one hand, and actions directed toward social reconstruction, on the other. As such, the social energies of conflict transformation are both the guideposts and the engine in the journey of practicing sustainable peace. This article begins by linking psychological constructs of narrative/voice, empathy/altruism, individual/collective guilt, and security/fear with the social energies, highlighting the interdependence of processes and shifting the focus away from pathology toward an emphasis on harmony. An empirical application of how the four social energies contribute to the mobilization, maintenance and adaptations in on-going peace processes in post-war Guatemala is then presented. By analyzing the interaction among diverse actors and goals in the decade and a half since the signing of the 1996 Peace Accords, current theory is extended in two ways: a) differentiation between elite and grassroots initiatives, and b) specification and evaluation the impact of various efforts on episodic and structural violence. We conclude that although national and local processes have had limited success, more integrated practices of truth, mercy, justice and peace are necessary if Guatemala is to make sustainable peace a reality. The findings from this case study have policy and practical implications for other countries facing protracted, violent conflict.

Key Words: Reconciliation, peacebuilding, Guatemala, psychology, healing

Around the world, the continuation of civil conflict, inter-ethnic tensions and renewed political violence demonstrate the challenges to constructing sustainable peace (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2007). Among the challenges, we note that politicians and policymakers largely overlook the psychosocial dimensions of peacebuilding (Bar-Tal, 2007). Focused on national-level change, they often are blind or indifferent to individual and group needs – such as feelings of security and empathy – as well as to the contributions of local actors – such as social reconstruction and grassroots reconciliation (Ajdukovic, 2004; Lederach, 2005). In some regards this is not surprising. Peace processes represent periods of significant and multi-dimensional change. National leaders face the implementation of transitional justice mechanisms, such as conditional amnesties, human rights trials, truth commission hearings (Vinjamuri & Snyder, 2004; Taylor & Dukalskis, 2012). To do so, they must cooperate with former enemies in contexts of high political risk. Facing conditions of social division, scarce economic resources and national

reconstruction, former adversaries must work to achieve change in short-term, demanding timeframes.

At the same time, beyond the walls of national ministries and parliaments, other engaged actors respond to daily challenges. Amid open conflict and in the aftermath of violence, peacebuilding grows creatively at the local level. Yet these local leaders are often sidelined or excluded from national processes. Oftentimes, parallel initiatives from both the national and local leadership levels respond to the experience of protracted conflict in at least one, if not several, of four key areas: the quest for truth and acknowledgement of harm, the offer of mercy and compassion, the demands for justice and human rights, and the promise of restored peaceful relationships. Identified in early writing on one of the authors as the core elements of sustainable reconciliation (Lederach, 1997; 2005), this pursuit and embodiment of truth, mercy, justice and peace create what we would call social energies. Psychological theories may be particularly useful for understanding a level of analysis that explores how individuals and groups mobilize around these areas of engagement in settings of protracted conflict (Bar-Tal, 2007; Christie, Wagner, & Winter, 2001; Staub & Vollhardt, 2008).

First, we present how the social energies – truth, mercy, justice and peace – help to understand the dynamics that sustain constructive change processes in conflicting societies. Next we identify complementary psychosocial theories and practices to conflict transformation across multiple levels of the social ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Druckman, 2003; Staub, 2006). Third, we apply this conflict transformation and psychosocial model to the case of Guatemala, a country devastated by a 36-year civil war, yet also notably for significant conflict transformation (Lykes, 1994; Lykes, Blanche, & Hamber, 2003;

Martín-Beristain, Páez, Rimé, & Kanyangara, 2010). In conclusion, we emphasize how linking these two literatures helps extend existing theories as well as suggest implications for peacebuilding and mental health interventions in areas mired in and emerging from political violence.

Social Energies of Conflict Transformation

Conflict between individuals and groups is an inherent part of life (Galtung, 1996; Kriesberg, 2006; Lederach, 2003). This interpersonal or intergroup tension has the potential for creative and constructive initiatives, on the one hand, or destructive and harmful consequences on the other. The essence of peacebuilding and conflict transformation seeks to harness conflict as an opportunity for constructive ends and healthier relationships. Conflict transformation moves toward structural change and more human relationships. Moreover, it proposes that the journey, as well as the end goal, respect and recognize the inherent dignity of each person and the building of social relations that weave the fabric of vibrant and healthy communities (Lederach, 2005).

But, many questions remain: How does an individual or a society begin to practice conflict transformation? What are the first steps? How can people be mobilized? How can positive energy in settings of social division and cycles of violence sustain itself? How can individual and community resiliency be fostered? Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to these types of questions. Peacebuilding and conflict transformation cannot be achieved through prescribed plans or reduced to a series of "quick fixes" (Lederach, 1995; Lederach, Neufeldt, & Culbertson, 2007). Rather than a static academic model, conflict transformation envisions a living process,

complex adaptive eco-system of human relationships under constant response, growth and change (Wheatley, 1999). A living process, or what the New Sciences call a process-structure, both responds to factors in the environment and exerts influence on its surroundings. Conflict transformation, thus, is dynamic and changing and yet has discernible forms, patterns and structures (Lederach, 2005). Social energies such as truth, mercy, justice and peace, emerge from the human quest for meaningful engagement and sustain, drive and guide the nature of conflict transformation as a living process. Thus, these "social energies" compose the very soul of peacebuilding.

A term such as social energies may sound initially vague. However, the concept is intentionally lively and active, which means that it is difficult to define in a single manner. Yet, for clarity, social energies can be conceptualized as a combination of norms or values, on the one hand, and actions directed toward social engagement and reconstruction on the other. As normative guidelines, the social energies of conflict transformation suggest ideals that conflicting societies should aim for. The concepts embody or describe the goals of sustainable peacebuilding. For example, social energies reflect the ideal of peace by peaceful means (Galtung, 1996). These energies suggest positive and protective ways to sustain constructive conflict transformation.

In addition to this normative or directive dimension, social energies can also refer to specific actions and initiatives. As energies they represent a vibrant voice and quest as people seek response to experiences of sustained violent, destructive conflict. These responses vary by individual and group. For example, some voices will cry for truth and justice, others for compassion and understanding, a new start. The voices

and energy can be heard in phrases commonly emergent in or after conflict: "Where are the disappeared persons? We need to know what happened and who is responsible!" "Can't we just all get along?" "Somebody has to pay for the harm they created." "Enough. An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind!"

As energies of change, truth, mercy, justice and peace can be applied in practice to rebuild communities, restore trust to fractured relationships and reweave the social fabric of society (Ajdukovic, 2004; Ajdukovic & Corkalo, 2004; Kimhi & Shamai, 2004). At the same time, the social energies can also be mobilized to demand retribution, revenge, or freeze a chosen trauma passed on generationally that fuels fear and hate (Volkan, 1997). Balancing these diverse voices and energies, therefore, poses a challenge to peacebuilding practice. Yet, by attending to and truly hearing these voices, demonstrated by integrated responses that respect each perspective, the social energies can serve as guideposts and the engine of conflict transformation.

Truth, mercy, justice and peace. As the soul of peacebuilding, truth, mercy, justice and peace represent four key aspects of the social energies of conflict transformation (Lederach, 1997; 2001). Each is alive in any conflict and has its own distinct voice. Through these voices, individuals and groups speak and share their experiences. The relationship-centric nature of conflict transformation puts these four voices in conversation with the others. If a space can be created where truth, mercy, justice and peace can meet, speak and be heard in an integrated, simultaneous, interdependent and holistic manner, it "create[s] the pathway leading toward reconciliation" (Lederach, 2001, p. 848). This practice opens the door for peacebuiding and "forging structures and processes that redefine violent relationships

into constructive and cooperative patterns" (Lederach, 2001, p. 847). Conflict transformation seeks the social spaces that permit these four voices to engage more constructively and cultivate the potential of resonance and harmony (Lederach & Lederach, 2010).

In conflict transformation *truth* includes, but must go beyond, objective facts. Truth as a social energy, however, has an interactive quality that increases transparency and accountability. Promoting "retelling a story in a public square," (Lederach, 2001, p. 849) truth as a social energy recognizes the difference between yet seeks to balance *knowing* and *acknowledging* (Taylor, 2013). Knowing brings past violations to light. Acknowledging establishes that past violations are unacceptable and publicly recognizes the need for accountability, which can foster a culture of human rights (Gibson, 2004). Practical processes to legitimize truth may be critiqued as symbolic or incomplete (Hayner, 2001; Minow, 1998); thus, truth must be considered in tandem with the other social energies (Hamber, 2001).

Mercy requires a future-oriented view, not only imagining a reconciled society, but also understanding that future society serves as a compass, behaving as if it visible, within sight, like a horizon (Lederach, 2001; 2005). Recognizing that people divided by protracted violent conflict will most likely continue to co-inhabit a shared space (Minow, 1998), this hope for the future provides a space to redefine relationships between individuals and social groups. In practice, mercy is often understood as amnesty for perpetrators (Lykes, 1994; Sanford, 2006). However, as a social energy, mercy has more holistic qualities that include compassion for the suffering of individuals and the whole of the society. Mercy calls for initiatives to repair, heal and rehabilitate perpetrators *and victims* of violence. More holistically, mercy recognizes the complexity of survivors identities; the blur of victim-perpetrator-victim in the lived experience of individuals, particularly in generational conflicts and the stories of child soldiers (McKay & Mazurana, 2004; Wessells, 2006a; 2006b)

Justice as a social energy includes legal accountability for mass atrocity as well as equality and fairness for survivors (Sieder, 2001). In peacebuilding, justice brings two dimensions into conversation: retributive justice – treating wrongdoing as a crime punishable by the state or international tribunals – and restorative justice – encouraging perpetrator responsibility for the impact of his or her actions on real people. The latter, complementing mercy, also focuses on the multiple relationships among victims, survivors, bystanders, perpetrators and society at large. Following episodic violence, justice recognizes the structural nature of processes and aims to encourage the rebalancing of unequal relations.

Often on the forefront of peoples' minds, *peace* has both immediate and structural manifestations. Peace processes, in the form of talks and negotiations, usually focus on ending violence and stopping brutal patterns of human rights abuse. From a structural angle, peace as a social energy can also be understood as building more constructive relationships and flourishing communities. Not just ending destructive behaviors (Galtung, 1996), the notion of positive peace includes elements such as the quality of mental health for those who have personally suffered violence, as well as conflict victims in the broader sense of those who have been affected by the violence. Going beyond the cessation of war, positive peace suggests it is important to understand how individuals feel and how they interact with others in their communities and more

formal institutions, such as the state. Positive peace envisions human and community flourishing through access to economic development, educational, health, etc. Therefore, comprehensive peace initiatives as a social energy of conflict transformation begin both to reweave the torn social fabric in communities and to redefine how individuals and communities interact.

Pursued in isolation, no single voice – truth, mercy, justice or peace – is sufficient to comprehend or address the systemic and structural changes necessary to end and transform protracted conflict. Therefore, peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes must be implemented in a simultaneous, interdependent and continuous manner. For sustainable peace, it is necessary "to organize social spaces and processes where these [social energies] meet and are held together" (Lederach, 2001, p. 853). A dynamic and interactive system of conflict transformation must be developed in which not only the social energies, but the voices of individuals and groups immersed in violence can dialogue with one another in harmony.

Psychosocial Foundations of Sustainable Peacebuilding

Peace psychology offers the systemic view of episodic and structural violence and practical methods work with and within communities to address past abuses and prevent the re-occurrence of violence (Winter & Leighton, 2001). Episodic, or direct, violence refers to a period of destructive behaviors that harms or kills and includes acute violations of well-being (Galtung, 1996). Structural, or indirect, violence "is ubiquitous, occurring across time and space, and [is] manifest whenever people do not have adequate resources or political representation and voice" (Christie,

2006, p. 5). Consistent with conflict transformation, peace psychology calls for the explicit consideration of the structural roots of violence. Thus, if violent outbreaks are to be prevented or mitigated, societal structures must be changed to reflect and promote sustainable, positive relations and satisfaction of basic human needs.

Recognizing the relationship-centric nature of violent conflict, peace psychology promotes peacebuilding through the development of constructive relationships (Christie et al., 2001). Structural conflict transformation also addresses relationships between and among social groups and institutions, such as the state or multi-national lending companies, to advance equitable political, economic and social systems (Christie, 2006; Staub, 2006). Rebuilding relationships must be fostered at the same level the grievance occurred (Martín-Baró, 1994). In deeply divided societies, therefore, conflict transformation must be addressed through a range of responses at multiple levels of the social ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Lederach, 1997). National-level processes may not sufficiently address inter-personal and communal abuses inflicted during collective violence and genocide (Staub, 1999). In this light, psychologists may understand peacebuilding as a means of preventing renewed violence (Staub, 1999).

Truth, mercy, justice and peace. Psychological theories and approaches to peacebuilding complement the conflict transformation concepts of truth, mercy, justice and peace. Although names may vary, many of the key elements of the four social energies are reflected in psychosocial constructs of narrative/voice, empathy/altruism, collective/individual guilt, and security/fear, respectively.

The interactive quality of *truth* resonates with peace psychology methodologies and participatory research

designs to promote individual and social group agency and to amplify the voices of the oppressed (Martín-Baró, 1994). Silence is a common tool of oppression (Blacklock & Crosby, 2004); therefore, truth processes must work to construct channels to communicate, both with other survivors as well as with "the other" (Lofving, 2005). Activities are designed to facilitate conducting research "with" rather than "on" through nonhierarchical relationships between the researcher and the researched (de la Rey & McKay, 2006). Participatory action research (PAR) offers a key process that allows for "transforming the 'talk' as well as the lives of those who speak their truths" (Lykes et al., 2003, p. 85). Research and practice go beyond the facts, to look at the re-storying and narration of an embedded story (Lykes et al., 2003). Psychology recognizes that survivors must have a space to tell their stories, but gives equal attention to how these stories are heard (Ross, 2003; Agger, 2004). That is, the public space for witnessing of truth telling must first do no harm, and second, be integrated with the other social energies (Brounéus, 2010; Bryne, 2004; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010). In this light, narrating one's life with a receptive and respectful audience may also be a means of 'therapeutic testimony' (Agger, 2004). Thus, narrative and the psychosocial quality of truth assist individuals and communities gain voice; this message can then be heard, reconstructed and reintegrated the private and political realms (Agger, 2004).

From a victim-oriented perspective, *mercy* can be equated with empathy, compassion, or the ability to put one's self in the other's shoes. Staub and Vollhardt (2008) have theorized about the development of empathy, or what they term altruism born of suffering, during harsh political repression and violence. Through this lens, mercy can be conceptualized as prosocial behaviors that are motivated by past or current suffering and hardship. That is, those who have borne the brunt of episodic and structural violence may also be those who are able to begin to work for social justice, heal psychosocial wounds and restore intergroup relationships (Vollhardt, 2009). Thus, mercy is a psychosocial motivation for victims of past abuse to transform themselves into agents working for a more peaceful future.

Justice or perpetrator accountability and equality for victims may also be understood through the psychosocial lens of individual and collective guilt. For example, individual accountability recognizes that specific people, rather than social groups as a whole, are responsible for his/her actions. Even though legal justice may not be done, "naming and shaming" particular leaders, or "concealed retribution" (Hayner, 2001), may limit the options for perpetrators (e.g., from reducing personal freedoms, such as travel restrictions, to denying social positions, such as the ability to run for office). When perpetrators received some symbolic form of punishment, victims no longer called for collective punishment (David & Choi, 2009). On the contrary, the inability to hold individual perpetrators accountable motivates victims to turn against the collective entity (political or social group) which is responsible for human rights violations committed in the past (David & Choi, 2009). Thus, toward restorative justice, criminalizing the acts of particular individuals may decrease the stigma for the rest of the social group which can reduce mass reprisals or revenge killing between former adversaries and can diffuse cycles of intergroup violence (Mendeloff, 2004; Vinjamuri & Snyder, 2004). Promoting individual responsibility for past crimes can reduce intergroup conflict, and set a foundation for restorative justice in war-torn societies.

Peace from a psychological perspective may be understood as peace of mind, safety in daily experiences, and security in the community. The freedom to conduct daily life events without fear of violence may be one aspect of peaceful existence (Chirot & McCauley, 2006). Moreover, a protracted experience of fear may deeply influence emotional appraisals and responses to future threat, potentially contributing to the continuation of violence (Bar-Tal, 2007). Fear may be related to a sense of insecurity in the community. Security in the community is a regulatory process of the impact of political violence on individual and family adjustment (Cummings et al., 2013). Greater security is related to fewer adjustment problems, such as aggression and depression, when individuals are exposed to violence in the community (Cummings et al., 2013). Thus, the lack of intergroup fear and stronger security in the community may be key dimensions of peaceful coexistence of conflicting ethnic, political or social groups (Bar-Tal & Jacobson, 1998).

Both conflict transformation and psychological perspectives offer useful concepts to understand the practice of sustainable peace. The four elements of the social energies of peacebuilding – truth, mercy, justice and peace – are complemented by psychological theories and approaches – narrative/voice, empathy/altruism, individual/collective guilt, and security/fear. The connections across these fields help understand truth as voice, mercy as altruism, justice as accountability, and peace as security. Together, these integrated concepts suggest paths and processes that may motivate and sustain conflict transformation practices. Key theoretical consistencies across all of these concepts are the relationship-centric and integrated approach that shifts the focus away from pathology toward an emphasis on harmony.

Examining Social Energies of Conflict Transformation in Guatemala

Guatemala is a site of horrific violence during war and persistent structural violence. Guatemalans have also forged a number of conflict transformation initiatives (Lykes, 1994; Lykes et al., 2003; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010). Therefore, it offers a critical case study to examine the implementation of peacebuilding and conflict transformation initiatives (George & Bennett, 2005). The case study traces specific processes for each of the social energies – truth, mercy, justice and peace. This analysis extends current theory by focusing on macro, top-down and micro, bottom-up processes (Druckman, 2003); these different types of initiatives address both episodic and structural violence. The gendered dimensions of peacebuilding are also addressed (Anderlini, 2007). The aim is to provide concrete examples of how the social energies can function both as normative guideposts as well as mobilizing agents that contribute to conflict transformation.

Brief Overview of War and Peace in Guatemala

Sitting in a circle, a thin man, with clear eyes and muddy boots, holds himself with his arms across his chest, leaning slightly to the left, and, through barely moving lips, describes the horrors that unfolded before him as a child. His village was destroyed, burned to the ground, and as the people fled into the mountains, bullets flew by. In his hiding place, he remained undiscovered but was forced to watch as the Guatemalan security forces slaughtered his entire family—mother, father, sisters, brothers. Long after the security forces left, he remained crouched, frozen in fear. Only

when the family dog—one of the few other living beings to survive the attack—found his way home, and approached the young boy, greeting him excitedly, did the boy begin to grasp what had happened. He looked down and saw the blood-stained paw prints on his shirt (Puentes de Paz 2002-2005).

The young boy who witnessed such violence against his family is now a man who, by sharing his story with a group of fellow survivors, has joined his voice in a collective call for justice and accountability. These survivors are the members and communities of the *Asociación para la Justicia y Reconciliación* (Association for Justice and Reconciliation, AJR; AJR, 2010). The AJR, with the legal counsel of the *Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos* (Center for Legal Action in Human Rights, CALDH) and the mental health support of a number of organizations including the *Pastoral Social* and *Puentes de Paz* (Bridges of Peace), filed a case with the Guatemalan court system charging former dictators Efraín Ríos Montt and Romeo Lucas García with genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This narrative is just one of many that weave together a more complete picture of the violence and terror that was unleashed against civilians. Following years of colonization (Montejo, 1999), the agrarian reforms implemented by the democratically-elected government led by President Juan José Arévalo during the Ten Years of Spring (1944 to 1954) were hastily undone by a U.S. coup in 1954. The series of military dictatorships and puppet presidencies ruling Guatemala for the next three decades committed systematic human rights abuses to maintain control and defeat the *Unión Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Army, URNG) which began an armed struggle in 1960. Violence peaked in during the

scorched earth campaign orchestrated by the Guatemalan government in the early 1980s (Falla, 2001). The UN *Comisión para el Esclaracimiento Histórico* (Historial Clarification Commission, CEH) concluded that 626 massacres decimated Mayan villages, 1.5 million were displaced, 200,000 refugees fled, and more than 200,000 people were killed or disappeared (CEH, 1999). During the conflagration entire villages were razed; indigenous communities were particularly targeted. The war officially ended in 1996, with the signing of the peace accords between government and leaders of the URNG. The promises of the peace accords have remained largely on paper, and crippling poverty and the rise of criminal organizations and violence present on-going threats to sustainable peace. Yet, the survivors continue the struggle for true peace and conflict transformation.

In the wake of genocide, the road to reconciliation and peace is forged by attempting to move beyond murderous crimes while rebuilding society. Indeed, in Guatemala, one sees more than ghosts and mass graves. One sees the strength of the people to rebuild and their courage to not forget the past as they look toward the future. This resilience percolates through the decimated indigenous communities (Hendrickson, 1995). This enduring courage, as much as the violence, frames the history of Guatemala's indigenous majority.

Data Collection and Analysis

A qualitative research design combines first-hand field notes and published sources from academics, researchers, non-governmental organizations, survivor narratives and UN reports. The first author has worked, researched and traveled in Guatemala over eight years as a mental health practitioner, graduate student and research assistant. Field notes were collected using inductive,

ecological documentation, which emphasizes the interaction of the person and the environment. Primary field research was conducted with rural communities in the Ixcán, Quiché department, El Estor, Izabál department, and to a limited degree in Santiago Atitlán, Sololá department. Other community case studies are included to generate deeper understanding of the emergent patterns across local conflict transformation processes (Eichelberger, 1989). As a phenomenological study, the analyses assume commonality can be found in diverse human experiences. Thus, the case study documents patterns across different individuals' experiences and integrates findings into a summary of how the four social energies – truth, mercy, justice and peace – have functioned in the on-going peace process in Guatemala.

National Truth: Legitimating Local Voices

Guatemala's two truth commissions – the CEH and the *Recuperación y Esclaracimiento de la Memoria Histórica* (Recovery of Historical Memory, REMHI – laid the foundation for future action (REMHI, 1999). Both commissions made great strides to balance the historic silencing of the indigenous people by focusing on the victims' testimonies. However, by essentially excluding the perpetrators and not incorporating a forum to reach the population at large, the commissions did not fully achieve the interactive and public qualities of truth, which are central for conflict transformation. In the years since the commissions, however, public dialogue has grown and taken root in many local communities.

The CEH, established during the peace negotiation process at the request of civil society, was designed only to investigate institutional violence during the war. The CEH could not assign responsibility to perpetrators by name, only by institution such as President of the Republic, the army, and the Ministry of National Defense (CEH, 1999). To "clarify history" the CEH mandate only provided for victim's testimonies, to balance the pervasive historic national narrative of denial. This procedural aspect faced vocal opposition; the *Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras* (Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations, CACIF), an economic powerhouse in Guatemala claimed the CEH was biased and denounced the final conclusions (Sieder, 2001). While the publication of the CEH led then President Álvaro Arzú to recognize government excesses, the Guatemalan government and military never formally apologized nor took responsibility for their role in the brutality of the past. Despite various limitations – time frame of investigation, naming institutional not individual responsibility, exclusion of perpetrator testimonies – the CEH enhanced transparency of the historic abuses in Guatemala: 93% of the abuses were committed by the state, and the indigenous population was specifically targeted, suffering 80% of the violence (CEH, 1999).

The REMHI, a project of the Catholic Church rooted in liberation theology (Gutierrez, 1988; Freire, 1970), explicitly addressed historic injustice and aimed to alter "the balance of power by recognizing the power of the truth of those who have been oppressed and marginalized … setting the foundation for a change in power relations" (Levy, 2001, p. 117). Of the more than 6,000 testimonies collected by REMHI, only 8% were from perpetrators, whether guerillas, self-defense patrols (*Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil*, PACs) or members of the army (Isaacs, 2005). Like the CEH, the REMHI's preference for victims' and survivors' testimonies, honoring the

"authority of women and men to speak for themselves," counteracted the government's strategic use of silence as a tool of oppression during the war (Hanlon & Shankar, 2000, p. 266).

The REMHI was also designed to address gender dimensions of the oppression (REMHI, 1999). This was an important step that recognized that "women's voices are rarely heard in societal responses to collective violence" (Minow, 1998). Throughout the conflict, women were exposed to gender-specific threats and abuse. The REMHI called attention to visible and invisible (episodic and structural) violence; it brought into the public discourse previously "private" matters such as sexual violence and rape. In addition to documenting sexual violence, the analysis described the larger trends of exclusion and gendered inequalities in access to resources and power in Guatemalan society. The REMHI's findings also included the documented the burdens women bore to care for and protect their families and communities – as well as their continued struggle to rebuild society. Examining episodic and structural violence, the REMHI contextualized individual violence against women in the gendered spaces of terror in Guatemala (Hanlon & Shankar, 2000), consistent with the psychosocial practice of truth integrating private and political narratives.

The REMHI not only created new spaces for victims' voices, but further broke the silence by developing and distributing a popularized version which could be used and understood by illiterate populations. The Church also published an educational module about how to discuss historical memory in schools and rural communities (ODHAG, 2010a; 2010b). Through the explicit examination of gender-based violence and the publication of a popularize reports, the REMHI's design and

implementation began to promote the public aspects of truth as a social energy.

By acknowledging the past, the top-level initiatives have seeded local-level truth processes and collective efforts to remember (Hale, 1997), empowering indigenous communities to bring truth into the public space. Based on their individual histories, some communities have implemented creative and symbolic projects. "Remembering the martyrs is a commitment to the next generation… It is good to re-'construct' the past. That way our children will know the truth of what they did to us [and] our families" (Puentes, 2002-2005). From theatrical plays to physical monuments, from expansive murals to commemoration days for the victims, these local efforts have promoted interactive, inter-generational and community truth processes (Manz, 2002; 2004).

The military continues to deny their responsibilities for atrocities, a tension which accentuates the need for participatory truth processes. Yet, both commissions legitimized the voices of the victims and survivors; "women and men claimed authority for their own experiences… so they would finally be heard" (Hanlon & Shankar, 2000, p. 281). Truth in Guatemala functioned as a normative goal – breaking the silence of the oppression – and as a process to legitimize and accentuate the voices of victims in a public space.

Mercy: Future Relationships for Perpetrators and Survivors

Mercy, as a social energy in Guatemala, has emphasized reintegration of perpetrators. Relief, reparation and rehabilitation for survivors, on the other hand, are greatly lacking which constrains the development of mutual empathy and compassion. Guatemala's national concept of mercy attempted to distinguish between the

intellectual authors of the genocide and those forced to carry out the scorched earth campaign such as the PACs, or self-defense patrols. The PAC system was begun under President Lucas García, legalized by President Ríos Montt in 1982, and became the "corner stone of rural counter insurgency" (Montejo, 1999, p. 67). Under the control of the military, these groups served as a cheap source of labor; poorly equipped, they received no salaries during the war. The PACs were forced into compliance through torture to terrorize their own communities. "*We did it out of fear. We complied because if we didn't we would be punished and in addition, [the army] dug a well at the edge of the road. We were afraid of what we would have to do, and where we would go, now that we were with them, hand in hand*" (REMHI, 1999, Case 0542). The PACs, responsible for 20% of the abuses, were both victims of the war and perpetrators of violence (REMHI, 1999). With demobilization, demilitarization and reintegration of security forces on the horizon, the drafters of the peace accords incorporated mercy through blanket amnesty, except for cases of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity *(Acuerdo de Paz Firma y Duradera*, 1996).

This concept of mercy as amnesty, however, only partially responded to war experiences. Amnesty addressed challenges faced by the ex-PACs, but it did little to address the survivors' suffering: "*the war caused much damage… we returned to our community with no money, no clothes, almost dead with hunger, incomplete. We had to start from scratch because they had destroyed all we had*" (Puentes, 2002-2005). For example, the national-level plan for reparations lacked political will. Structural conditions continue to marginalize victims and indigenous communities from being included in relief delivered by mercy processes.

In Guatemala, mercy was largely limited by a perpetrator focus and a lack of attention to the reparation and rehabilitation of victims. Yet, mercy is "integral to reestablishing the rule of law and the survivor's belief in a just future" (Hamber, 2001, p. 144). Therefore, a more comprehensive and systemic mercy is needed to foster coexistence in a shared social space and promote empathy and positive relationships (Vollhardt, 2009). Without this more balanced form of mercy, bitterness rather than empathy and altruism may be more pervasive among perpetrators, survivors, bystanders and society at large.

A Collective Call for National Justice

Rule of law is fractured and impunity is rampant in Guatemala. The legacy of war has generated a culture of citizen "justice" through *linchamientos*, or mob violence (Godoy, 2001), and femicide, the deliberate and systematic killing of women (Center for Gender and Refugee Studies, 2010). Linchamientos, when citizens take the law into their hands because of frustration and distrust of the local justice institutions, may also be linked to the amnesty and lack of judicial or symbolic accountability for ex-PACs or former guerilla members. Distrust persists and victims to turn against the perpetrators in violent retribution.

Yet, despite this context of on-going violence, some survivors are courageously calling for justice at the international and national level. For example, charges of genocide, torture, terrorism, summary execution and unlawful detention were brought before the Spanish court system to demand accountability for the firebombing of the Spanish embassy in 1980. This case tested international norms of universal and subsidiary jurisdiction (Roht-Arriaza, 2006). In 2005, Spain's Constitutional Tribunal, the highest national court, reinstated the

Guatemalan Genocide case. This significant decision indicates that even if there is an alternative forum for justice, i.e. the Guatemalan court system, "universal jurisdiction is cases of genocide [is] necessary to avoid impunity" (Roht-Arriaza, 2006, p. 209). These developments set important standards for international accountability, and may also fortify local justice proceedings (Roht-Arriaza, 2006).

In a precedent-setting case, the charge of genocide has also been brought before the judicial system Guatemala, the country in which the crimes were committed. This case against the intellectual authors of the genocide, such as former dictators Ríos Montt and Lucas García, sets more than legal precedent. The indigenous survivors that have formed the AJR are the protagonists in breaking the judicial silence at the national level. As a local, survivor-led initiative, the AJR also promotes restorative justice among survivors:

The river ran with blood of many friends, relatives, spouses and children; that is why it is necessary that we are united together in this struggle, because one person alone cannot demand justice. This is what gives me the will to continue participating [in this case], because we are finding ways to support one another…. My pain will continue to diminish, but at times it is necessary to share all of these hardships to lessen the hurt and to build mutual support (Puentes, 2002-2005).

Through collective efforts, supported by mental health accompaniment, the survivors' children are also sharing this struggle for justice: "*I cannot forget the painful past. Even though I'm old, I will continue participating so that my son will have the courage to see that justice is done*" (Puentes, 2002-2005). As with reparations, however, the AJR case faces continued challenges at the national level. In addition, although the individualization of guilt was established by identifying the intellectual authors of the genocide, social retribution has not necessarily constrained the actions of the previous leaders and their families. For example, Ríos Montt ran for the presidential election in 2003, coming in third, and his daughter continues to be a leading member in the Guatemalan congress. The blanket amnesty, lack of symbolic accountability for local perpetrators and continued impunity for high-level intellectual authors of the scorched earth campaign are examples of the limited ways that justice, as a social energy for conflict transformation, has been practiced in Guatemala. This limitation is further hampered by the primary focus on retributive, rather than restorative justice and rebuilding civic trust in fellow citizens and state institutions.

Peace Process: A Step toward Structural Conflict Transformation

Peace as a social energy influenced the negations between the government of Guatemala and the URNG and the final peace accord. For example, the inclusion of a parallel civil society body in the negotiations redefined the relationship between victims and the state (Cross, 2004), which ultimately contributed to robust peace accords that ended the violence, and also sought to build a new society (*Acuerdo de Paz Firma y Duradera*, 1996). Consistent with the notion of positive peace (Galtung, 1996), the final accords aimed to foster well-being and equality among Guatemalan citizens.

The initial framework for peace talks was designed to address the underlying root causes of the armed conflict, such as socioeconomic inequalities, political exclusion and ethnic discrimination. After much lobbying, in 1994, the *Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil* (Assembly of Civil Society,

ASC) was formed as a parallel table of dialogue. The ASC was "notable for the diversity and plurality" (Jonas, 2002, p. 12) of voices that included churches, labor unions, indigenous groups, women's organizations, journalists and smaller political parties. The ASC developed proposals that recognized the overlapping and connected nature of class, ethnic and gender discrimination (Smith, 1995). These recommendations were submitted to the formal negotiations taking place in Mexico.

Conduits participating in both the parallel body and the formal talks advocated on behalf of the ASC recommendations, which led to the explicit protection of and respect for indigenous and women's rights (Cross, 2004). The passing of the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the establishment of an Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women's Rights, redefined "Guatemala as a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual nation…. It [laid] the formal basis for a new entitlement of Guatemala's indigenous majority and establishe[d] their right to make claims on the state. This accord… create[d] a new context for social and political interactions" (Jonas, 2002, p. 16). This is just one example of the significant impact when conflict transformation processes pursue structural changes and foster relationships between grassroots and national-level actors, consistent with the social energy of peace.

Yet, despite participatory peace negotiations, many of the proposed structural reforms have yet to be implemented due to weak political will (Stanley & Holiday, 2002). If goals of the peace process are to be realized, providing the country with a comprehensive agenda for overcoming the root causes of the conflict and laying the foundations for a new kind of development (*Acuerdo de Paz Firma y Duradera*, 1996), the dynamic, inclusive nature of the negotiations themselves must extend throughout the implementation phase. The agreed conclusions must be addressed collectively, by diverse actors, in order to foster systemic, sustainable change and positive peace. Yet, on a daily basis, fear persists and insecurity continues to influence community relationships. Although the promise of the social energy of peace was high with the process and product of the negotiations, the fulfillment of that promise has not been fully achieved.

A Review of the Social Energies of Conflict Transformation in Guatemala

In Guatemala, truth, mercy, justice and peace have each been addressed at the national level, to varying degrees. However, the impact of these formal conflict transformation processes has rarely reached the vast majority of the survivors or the indigenous population. The efforts to address these social energies were rarely held together in interdependent ways. This tendency, as seen in many other locations, creates separate, disconnected and often bureaucratically-driven initiatives. The truth commission is seen at odds and disconnected from the forms that the official amnesty programs took place. The lack of justice fueled insecurity. Yet, local-level actors have mobilized to generate change-process from the base. Structural violence continues to marginalize and silence grassroots actors in the national dialogue. Despite these challenges, when the social energies address both episodic and structural violence, and integrated through national and local processes, there was greater potential to foster individual and community resilience and to transform political conflict.

In summary, the formal truth processes in Guatemala amplified the voices of the victims. Despite shortcomings, a decade later the commissions have opened spaces

for local public and interactive truth efforts such as memorials, murals and monuments and formal justice proceedings (Kemp, 2004; Manz, 2002; 2004; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010). Although a national concept of mercy was extended to low-level perpetrators there has been insufficient to attention to the relief, reparation and rehabilitation needs of survivors. Restorative efforts like the AJR have promoted local relationship building and fostered individual healing; rooted in this foundation of mutual support, the survivors are continuing their demands for retributive justice at the national level. Finally, the social energy of peace offers a model of inclusive participation in Guatemala's peace negotiations, which emphasized cross-sector and inclusive relationships. As a result, the diverse voices were successful in creating a document that addressed structural as well as episodic violence. Yet the transformation of social relationships was not deep enough to overcome the persistent prejudice and exclusion which have blocked implementation of the accords at the national and local levels.

Conflict transformation has been undermined by the persistent insecurity and injustice in Guatemala. The structural barriers to survivor participation and democratization – ethnic discrimination, economic exploitation, patriarchy – are still entrenched in Guatemalan society (Isaacs, 2010). Structural violence is only counteracted when the agency of local actors is recognized and respected. Although some grassroots processes, like justice, have induced national responses, and national projects, like truth, have seeded local changes, a more integrated approach is required. With more accountability and security, empathy and altruism can also be fostered. The interdependent pursuit of truth, mercy, justice and peace are necessary for survivors of human rights atrocities to heal

and for societies torn apart by systematic violence to begin to rebuild (Hamber, 2001; 2009). The psychosocial roots of the social energies need to be connected in an integrated approach by national and local actors to transform relationships and address episodic and structural violence if Guatemala is to make "never again" a reality.

Conclusion

The social energies of conflict transformation suggest a path to address both structural and episodic violence. Although there is no formula for peacebuilding practice in war-torn societies, the case study of Guatemala demonstrates some of the potential benefits when truth, mercy, justice and peace are pursued as living practice. These benefits have three important implications for peacebuilding and conflict transformation practice. *First, practice must be initiated*. Social energies are both guideposts, the social values signal the intent to change, and the engine, the actual force through which change is mobilized. Conflict transformation may be initiated at the national or local level, but regardless of its origins, a more robust practice must integrate the efforts of diverse actors. *Second, practice must be nourished.* Peacebuilding and social reconstruction are long-term processes. Practice requires addressing both immediate needs to end episodic violence and longer-term goals to foster social justice sustained over longer periods of time that are commonly contemplated in the formal peace accords. As the AJR survivors indicated, this is a generational practice. Peace can be nourished through the intentional inclusion and education of children and youth in conflict transformation (Wessells, 2005). *And, third, practice must be refined.* As conditions change, actors may shift their

goals, revise their strategies, and forge new alliances. The fluid and dynamic approach of the social energies of conflict transformation recognizes the inherently social nature of sustainable peace.

The Guatemala case also highlights the limitations in the practice of building positive peace when the social energies are not pursued in an integrated manner. Truth, mercy, justice and peace have the potential to transformation conflict. Yet, structural violence continues to isolate individuals and pathologize mental health instead of recognizing the social patterns of trauma (Martín-Baró, 1994). If individual and communal wounds are to be addressed, the trend of the government's bias toward national, top-down initiatives over almost 20 years must be complemented by more grassroots processes (Druckman, 2003). Despite these challenges, the analysis revealed that when the social energies address both episodic and structural violence, there was great potential to transform conflict (Staub, 2006).

By linking psychology practice and theory with the social energies of conflict transformation, the relationship-centric nature of violent conflict is highlighted. The focus on integration, or the interdependence of processes, is another key contribution of linking psychology and conflict transformation. This idea of harmony is reflected the idea of peace by peaceful means, supported by the social energies. The social energies, along with the complementary constructs of narrative/ voice, empathy/ altruism, individual/ collective guilt, and security/ fear, emphasize the basic needs that must be met in peacebuilding. The dual approach to protect and sustain peacebuilding practitioners can be seen in efforts to rebuild communities, restore trust to fractured relationships, and reweave the social fabric of society (Ajdukovic & Corkalo, 2004;

Kimhi & Shamai, 2004). The social energies of conflict transformation suggest a way to forge ahead and maintain momentum on the journey toward sustainable peace areas of protracted conflict.

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