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Invisible Suffering: Practitioner Reflections on Peacebuilding Programs for Youth
Exposed to Traumatic Stressors in Intergroup Conflict

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By

Liza Hester

August 2015

Advisor: Dr. Timothy D. Sisk

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Title: Invisible Suffering: Practitioner Reflections on Peacebuilding Programs for Youth Exposed to Traumatic Stressors in Intergroup Conflict

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ABSTRACT

For decades, the international community has recognized that youth are some of the most vulnerable to mental and emotional distress within the intractable and cyclical nature of identity-based violent conflict. Exposure to traumatic stressors within these intergroup conflicts poses unique risks not only to the neurological and social development of youth, but also to the capacities of youth to fully participate in peacebuilding interventions. The peacebuilding field has yet to strongly consider how traumatic stress affects dynamics within programs for youth and how these programs may need to modify expectations of youth's cognitive, social, and emotional functioning to account for the traumatic dimensions of political and social violence. Through a qualitative analysis of practitioner reflections gathered from an online survey distributed worldwide, this study explores how practitioners conceptualize and approach issues of traumatic stress in peacebuilding programs focused on youth in conflict-affected contexts. The objective is to identify the working assumptions undergirding practitioner conceptualizations and approaches to traumatic stress and gaps in trauma interventions in peacebuilding programs for youth. The implications of these findings will support efforts to enhance trauma-sensitive peacebuilding practice by revisiting and reconsidering preexisting norms.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I heard a bomb siren for the first time in November 2012. I was living in Jerusalem and had never before viscerally feared for my life. I had been through the checkpoints entering and exiting the West Bank and the random security checks around the city, but I always felt safe. The privilege of being a blonde, innocent-looking American woman gave me invincibility to the subtle horrors I witnessed around me. After the siren, I was on edge and vigilantly surveying my surroundings for new threats. As weeks passed, I began to think beyond my own experience and more about what was happening for the Palestinian child in Gaza and the Israeli child in Sderot, who have been experiencing waves of bomb sirens and more direct threats of violence throughout their entire lives. I began to wonder: given this cycle of violence, fear, and loss, can we expect these children to grow up to be the leaders who will make the concessions necessary to create a just, lasting peace? I've been dedicated to answering this question ever since, and this academic exploration is one step on this journey.

I offer the utmost gratitude and appreciation to those who contributed their time and knowledge to this study, especially friends and strangers who spread the word of my work through their networks, those that participated in the survey, and my advisors and committee members, who bestowed great insight and support throughout this process.

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INTRODUCTION

The evolving nature and scale of deadly political and social violence leaves children more vulnerable than ever to its impacts. The reduction in conventional war over the 21st century has not stamped out insecurity; new and continuing threats —organized criminal violence, religious and sectarian-based violence, civil unrest due to economic shocks, climate change, viral epidemics, and global terrorism— contribute to cycles of extreme violence and, notably, physical and emotional suffering (World Bank, 2011). The intensity, scale, and context may vary, but the cyclical nature of conflict is all too common; the average duration of violent conflict is twelve years in low-income countries and twenty-two years in lower middle-income countries (UNESCO, 2011).

One does not need to look far to understand the devastating impacts of cyclical, long-lasting conflict on young people. According to 2006 estimates, one billion young people under the age of 18 were living in areas in conflict or emerging from war (UNICEF, 2009). In a recent United Nations (UN) Daily News (2015) publication, young people were at the center of stories and status reports on a cholera outbreak in Burundi, the recruitment tactics of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), education crises, and the vulnerability of children in conflict zones and emergency settings. As UN Special Envoy for Global Education Gordon Brown stated, “this is not the year of the child but the year of fear, with 2015 already the worst year since 1945 for children being displaced, the worst year for children becoming refugees, [and] the worst year for children seeing

their schools attacked” (UN Daily News, 2015, p. 5). As the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth Ahmad Alhendawi further states, young people are “suffering today from complex challenges, from failures in development, from lack of peace and security, and they are, of course, in a situation where they are vulnerable in every sense of the word” (UN Daily News, 2015, p. 2).

The statistics are staggering. Half of the world’s population is under 25-years-old; the developing world, which includes the countries most affected by armed conflicts and emergency situations (see the Uppsala Conflict Data Program), is home to 87% of the world population between the ages of 15 and 24; 600 million youth live in “precarious existences in war zones” (2); over half of the world’s 38 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and half of the world’s 16.7 million refugees are children; 8.6 million children are in slavery and 825,000 were trafficked last year; 74.5 million youth were unemployed in 2013; 168 million children are laborers, with 85 million of them working in hazardous conditions; and 58 million children —mostly girls— remain out of schools (UN Daily News, 2015).

Young people suffer both physically and emotionally in these contexts. For example, half of those fleeing the current unrest in Burundi are children, who are particularly susceptible to the cholera outbreak along the northwestern border between Tanzania and Burundi (UN Daily News, 2015). Growing up within unstable, violent contexts fuels the vulnerability and marginality of youth because it greatly influences how they “create and shape social meaning” (Borer et al., 2006, p. 43). If this context spans an entire “childhood” and the key developmental years of a young person’s life, there remain psychological impressions of that conflict throughout their lives that create a

filter for how they understand themselves, engage with others, and perceive prospects for peace.

The Current Study

The number of youth witnessing and experiencing ongoing identity-based violence is increasing rapidly. As a consequence, many youth participating in peacebuilding initiatives will have some trauma history that may impede their functioning in and outside of the program. With the proliferation of youth-focused peacebuilding programming, including sport-for-development and peace education initiatives, it is critical to examine the intersection of these fields of practice, especially since the wounds of traumatic stress are often hidden from view. The focus of the study is on the unique trauma dimensions of societal-level, intergroup violence rather than interpersonal violence or crime victims. Although these types of violence are related and can all affect human bonds and functioning, intergroup violence carries differential threat perceptions and leads to distinct intergroup attitudes, which will be explored in this study.

The peacebuilding field has not strongly considered how to approach the effects of traumatic stress on youth when considering how to break cycles of intergroup violence. In devising effective strategies to combat conflict tendencies, peacebuilding policymakers and practitioners face the same question: “what are we missing?” given the continued growth of human suffering as a result of conflict (The Project on Justice in Times of Transition, 2012). There is a need for greater research on best practices in supporting the mental welfare of conflict-affected youth as a strategy to transform conflict. By integrating advances in social psychology and neuroscience into peacebuilding methodologies, post-conflict development can be reshaped in collaborative

ways to more effectively target the vulnerabilities of youth so that they are better able to promote and lead transitions to more peaceful societies (Betancourt, McBain, Newnham, & Brennan, 2013). Given what we now understand about the profound and pervasive effects of traumatic stress on individuals, families, and communities, greater exploration of the intersection of trauma and peacebuilding practice is required.

The current study aims to explore this intersection by investigating how issues related to traumatic stress affect peacebuilding interventions with youth. This research focus is captured in the following core question: how do peacebuilding practitioners conceptualize and approach issues of traumatic stress when working with youth exposed to traumatic stressors within intergroup conflict? The researcher hypothesizes that peacebuilding program and project officers will have a general understanding of traumatic stress and will have personally experienced how traumatic stress impedes youths' ability to achieve program outcomes. However, the researcher further hypothesizes that the practitioners will not have a firm grasp of how to approach issues of traumatic stress when they arise within programs, and that peacebuilding organizations do not sufficiently discuss or support these issues. With a stronger understanding of how practitioners think about and manage trauma, the thesis study reveals some of the assumptions regarding trauma embedded within these programs and discovers how prototypical peacebuilding implementation strategies may need to be revisited to take account of the profound effects of trauma on youth's social and emotional wellbeing.

Invisible Suffering of Youth in Protracted Conflict

The way youth are understood within conflict-affected contexts depends both on how one distinguishes youth from adulthood and how one designates the cessation of

formal conflict. For statistical purposes, the UN defines those between ages 15 and 24 as youth. Outside of this numerical categorization, the UN recognizes that the term “youth” is generally considered as a period of transition between childhood and adulthood (UN Youth, n.d.). As such, the “youth” period is much more fluid than a straightforward count of age, depending on the cultural and social contexts in which youth grow up. More specifically, within this transition period, youth can be characterized “by the end of primary education, the physical process of puberty, and growing independence from the family” (Kurtenbach, 2014, p. 120).

The 1996 Machel Report documenting the realities of children in war drew significant attention to the toll of destruction in conflict-affected contexts: physical, human, moral, and cultural. The study declared that “not only are large numbers of children killed and injured, but countless others grow up deprived of their material and emotional needs, including the structures that give meaning to social and cultural life” (United Nations, 1996, p. 10). In a study of over 7,000 children exposed to war, there was a higher prevalence of mental disorders in this population than among the general population (Joffres et al., 2009). Further, those youth conscripted by armed groups face even greater adverse mental health reactions (Kohrt et al., 2008).

Conflict disrupts the social networks and relationships that are central to children’s physical, emotional, moral, cognitive, and social development, with great implications for long-term psychological wellbeing (United Nations, 1996). Youth participation in violence can be understood as the result of a social process, not merely deviant behavior (Kurtenbach, 2014). Youth may be drawn to participate in conflict as

their critical relationships break and social systems fracture, which fundamentally shapes the social fabric of a society:

People say that we're a problem, but they don't know our problems. My uncle raped me when I was 12 and I joined the rebels because I thought it would be better having sex with strangers instead of people in my family. Now the war is over, we have put down our guns, and I am working as a prostitute because I can't get another job. No one really cares about us (as cited in Weiss, 2005, p. 39).

The story of this young Sierra Leonean prostitute illustrates the complexities and multi-layered experience of conflict as arising from social instability that blocks key social transitions into adulthood (Kurtenbach, 2014). The combination of blocked social systems and transitions and of missed developmental milestones resulting from conflict contributes to a vulnerable context for all young people, even beyond those directly exposed to violence.

Since the Machel Report, the standards and norms for children have been strengthened and internationally codified, and the welfare of children has risen higher on the international community's protection and development agenda (UNICEF, 2009). Yet, the increased focus on younger children has left some vulnerable young people behind. There is an overwhelming consensus that young children are innocent and vulnerable. In contrast, older children (i.e., youth and adolescents) are often not viewed as innocent and may be perceived more often as adults with more developed capacities, and thus as perpetrators of violence (Women's Commission for Refugee Women & Children, 2000). Adolescents (defined similarly to "youth") affected by conflict do not suffer mortality and illness to the same degree as young children from such factors as disease, undernutrition, and lack of clean water. But adolescents still experience great risk: they are more likely than children to be recruited into armed groups, more vulnerable to

economic exploitation, less likely to attend school, and more likely to be sexually abused (Women's Commission for Refugee Women & Children, 2000; UNICEF, 2009). As one nongovernmental organization representative underscored, "[youth] are the underserved of the underserved" (as cited in Women's Commission for Refugee Women & Children, 2000).

The Role of Youth in Conflict

Despite the general consensus on the characteristics of youth, the perception of the role of youth can change depending on the sociopolitical context. In times of war and armed conflict, youth are largely considered victims, even when they participate in the conflict, such as through the perpetration of violence while part of a rebel or state militia (United Nations, 1996; UNICEF, 2009). The distinction between "victim" and "perpetrator" is blurred within times of war and post-conflict periods (Borer et al., 2006). Outside the context of war, when organized conflict has ceased, youth violence is perceived more as "troublemaking" behavior and as a significant problem, especially in management of the delicate immediate post-conflict period (see McEvoy-Levy, 2006). There has been a growing body of research that builds on this concept of the "youth problem" in violence mitigation strategies.

The global community is currently experiencing the largest youth bulge in history, which can create the conditions for youth participation in violence. Cincotta (2008/2009) defines a "youth bulge" simply as "a large proportion of young adults in the working-age population" (10). During a period of a large youth bulge, many young people are jobless, drawn into cultures of "distinctive identities and untempered ideologies," and express themselves through risk-taking (Cincotta, 2008/2009, 11). Having a youthful population

can be a destabilizing force in a country, making it more difficult to establish a stable liberal democracy because young men tend to mobilize on divisive and violent political platforms, resulting in regime crackdown on rights and liberties (Cincotta, 2008/2009). Urdal (2006) has also associated youth bulges with an increased risk of domestic armed conflict, terrorism, and riots/violent demonstrations in his analysis of political violence patterns.

Kurtenbach (2014) identifies two main arguments for why “idle young men” participate in violence. First, when men are unemployed, their opportunity costs for recruitment into armed groups is lowered (Kurtenbach, 2014). Urdal (2006) describes these motives as being caused by “institutional crowding of youth” in such areas as the labor market and educational institutions. Second, youth gain personal and collective enrichment and economic independence from participation in violence—including, but not limited to, war, armed conflict, gangs, and rioting (Kurtenbach, 2014). This analysis mirrors the findings of a study of motives for youth paramilitary action in Northern Ireland, which revealed a pervasive belief that violence was a way to make their voices heard as a disenfranchised group in the post-Troubles political context (Muldoon, McLaughlin, Rougier, & Trew, 2008). This concept of violence as a means for personal fulfillment fits within a common perception among youth that they are “outcast minorities,” even when they are the demographic majorities in their societies (Sommers, 2006). Investigations of the correlations between youth bulges and violence offer important insights into youth behavior, which has informed how the post-conflict development fields have intervened with this population.

In response to the threatening “youth problem,” development investments have largely been directed to other vulnerable groups (Sommers, 2006). As the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth Ahmad Allhendawi stated: “the international community has a tendency to blame young people for many problems...young people didn’t cause the problems.” (UN Daily News, 2015). As Weiss (2005) describes, donor and government strategically approach youth by:

...hyp[ing] the threat of violent youth when it comes to the criminal justice system or politically repressive measures, and yet under-fund or ignore solutions that would positively empower young people to use their power for economic or social advancement (45).

It can become even more difficult to transition to peace when youth have been active participants in the conflict, having experienced the power of “carrying arms, political promises in recruitment, and positive self-concepts and identity in armed conflict” (Borer et al., 2006, p. 42). The same power and enrichment derived from fighting wars should be harnessed to prevent them (Weiss, 2005, p. 45). Countering these incentives to participate in conflict and to perpetuate cycles of violence requires that young people be treated as valuable participants in peace processes, not just as “troublemakers” (UN Daily News, 2015).

I. CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

There is a growing movement at the intersection of neuroscience, social psychology, and peacebuilding that seeks to fundamentally shape the way conflict is understood, approached, prevented, and transformed. By utilizing cutting-edge insights in social neuroscience, peacebuilding practitioners may more fully understand conflict and its triggers through analysis of psychological and neuropsychological conflict drivers, including trauma, fear, and hatred (Beyond Conflict, 2013). Advancing understanding of these drivers mandates that interventions are revisited and redesigned to take account of the way people think and behave when experiencing states of deprivation, such as poverty and conflict, that drain critical cognitive, emotional, and relational resources (World Bank, 2015).

No one is immune from the pervasive psychological effects of violence and conflict on functioning and thinking. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2012) estimates that mental health disorders, such as depression, are the leading causes of disability and major contributors to the global burden of disease. Within intergroup conflict contexts in which violence can endure throughout a lifetime, individuals, communities, and societies are affected in several different ways: there is a functional impact (i.e., the way families and communities interact and operate); symbolic impact (i.e., the conceptualization of human bonds and the way one understands themselves in relation to

the group); impact of cyclical violence and trauma (i.e., reactive violence where victims can become perpetrators and vice-versa); and intergenerational impacts (i.e., the ways traumatic events are passed down through generations narratively and neurologically) (The World Bank Group, 2014). Beyond the instabilities for individuals and communities living in conflict and emergency situations, those in helping positions — development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding practitioners— are also affected by vicarious trauma, which limits their capacities to serve others in need (Welton-Mitchell, 2013). These realities necessitate greater discovery, learning, and adaptation in peacebuilding program design and implementation when working with youth to account for psychological and neurological dimensions of intergroup conflict (World Bank, 2015).

The Psychological Dimensions of Peacebuilding

Psychological dimensions are embedded in the peacebuilding field's characterization of intractable conflict and in conflict resolution strategies aimed at breaking cycles of identity-based violence. Perceptions of a conflict as being zero-sum, existential, and irresolvable are fundamentally psychological in nature. The same is true for perceptions of the relationship between the parties (e.g., relative power and trust). The conceptualizations of the psychological experiences of stress, hardship, uncertainty, losses, suffering, etc. endemic in these intractable contexts are thought to perpetuate cycles of violence (Bar Tal, 2013; Pruitt & Kim, 2004).

Bar Tal's (2013) Socio-psychological Model of Intractable Conflict maps how these psychological experiences can lead to infrastructures that perpetuate conflict. As the stressful, threatening, and harsh context of conflict endures, societies have to adapt to

cope with chronic stress and must retain the ability to withstand “the enemy.” These adaptations extend to societal beliefs, attitudes, and emotions, which gradually infiltrate the larger socio-psychological infrastructure: collective memories (i.e., the shared narrative of the reasons for the conflict), ethos of conflict (i.e., shared beliefs that give meaning to societal life in times of intractable conflict), and collective emotional orientation (i.e., the characterizing expression of emotions in a society). The socio-psychological infrastructure is thus solidified once a culture of conflict forms as a prism for gathering new information and interpreting new experiences. The culture of conflict is then made tangible through symbols that provide “a dominant meaning about the present reality, about the past, and about future goals, and serve as guides for practice” (132). These complex types of intractable conflict require more than diplomatic arrangements to create the conditions for conflicting groups to live together in peace and stability (Kelman, 2008).

A stable peace necessitates the transformation of the ways that warring groups feel about and act towards each other. The nature of intergroup conflict today means that conflicting parties must often live with one another in the same communities and within a single political unit. As a result, the relations between groups become central components of both conflict intractability and transformation (Deutsch, 2012; Kelman, 2008). Lederach (2005) conceives of conflict transformation as being fundamentally relational: “the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies...and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence” (5). All forms of peacebuilding approaches, regardless of their distinct and time-bound goals, emphasize,

to varying degrees, the importance of changing relationships between groups: the way parties interact creates the conditions for escalation and perpetuation of conflict (Kelman, 2008; Kelman, 1990). As demonstrated by Varshney's (2002) study on Hindu-Muslim relations in India, intergroup relationships, such as associational civic networks, can also reduce instances of identity-based violence. Further, Saunders (2005) developed a paradigm of relationships that places central emphasis on the human dimension of politics as a complex web of interacting groups. To transform identity-based conflicts, relationship building tends to be more valued than quick resolution of substantive positions (Nagda, Yeakley, Gurin, & Sorensen, 2012).

Rebuilding relationships takes time, especially in the context of intergroup conflict (Jeong, 2005). Given the deep divisions that underlie identity-based violence, quick fixes will not work to alleviate these types of conflicts. They call for comprehensive and multi-faced strategies to end violence and achieve reconciliation — “mutually conciliatory accommodation between former antagonists” (Lederach, 1997; Long & Brecke, 2003, p. 1). Intergroup reconciliation is much more complex than interpersonal reconciliation, due to the high degree of destruction, harm, and structural violence embedded in these types of conflicts. The sustainability of peace processes tends to rely not only on interpersonal and political levels of reconciliation, but also reconciliation requiring renegotiation of identities and the embrace of “the threatening other” (Clegg, 2007, p. 173). Though not expected in the immediate aftermath of harm, forgiveness may be an important ingredient in this reconciliation process: “giving up the rage, the desire for vengeance and a grudge toward those who have inflicted grievous

harm on you, your loved ones, or the groups with whom you identify” (Deutsch, 2012, p. 606).

Reconciliation events, including apologies and other symbolic gestures, can be turning points in a conflict trajectory by reducing rates of recidivist violence and improving relationships between groups (Long & Brecke, 2003). In the relational aspect of reconciliation, building trust and positive perceptions of the other is critical (Nadler, 2012; Kelman, 2008). The most widely applied and studied intervention to overcome the psychological roots of conflict is intergroup contact (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013). Positive contact between individuals from different identity groups can reduce prejudice towards the outgroup (see Allport, 1954), which is mediated by intergroup anxiety, empathy, and knowledge (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Through a meta-review, Pettigrew & Tropp (2008) discovered that contact generally improves relationships between groups. However, despite its longstanding position as the ‘gold standard’ in peacebuilding, recent scholarship suggests that contact does not always eliminate conflict drivers.

Intergroup dialogue is a widely employed mechanism to apply contact theory and improve intergroup relationships with youth. Relationships are not built for the sake of themselves, but rather “to create awareness of social identities and of social inequalities and conflicts, to foster relationships across identity groups, and build individual and collaborative capacity for change” (Nagda et al., 2012, p. 210; see Bargal, 2014). The intergroup contact approach has become an “industry,” especially in Israel and Palestine, and, more often than not, reinforces existing assumptions about members of the outgroup (The Project on Justice in Times of Transition, 2012). There has been little scientific study of the effectiveness of such interventions. Some studies suggest that dialogue

programs and greater contact can, under certain conditions, lead individuals to become more intolerant and can also benefit groups differentially depending on the power asymmetries between the groups (Paluck, 2010; Bruneau & Saxe, 2012). Further, positive intergroup contact does not necessarily create the conditions for eliminating social inequities and the deep roots of conflict (Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009). How one defines success of these types of peacebuilding programs is contingent on framing of the strategic program goals.

In devising strategic program goals, conflict resolution maintains its analytic focus at the intergroup level. This differs from therapeutic models, which focus on interpersonal level functioning (Kelman, 1990). For example, fostering change in individual attitudes is undertaken by conflict resolution practitioners only to change the conflict system (Kelman, 1990). The structure of these interpersonal and intergroup interactions can differ from the structure of trauma-focused groups due to the difference in their goals: for interpersonal psychotherapy groups, the goal is building commonality through the formation of relationships, and for trauma-focused groups, the recovery stage is remembrance and mourning (Herman, 1997). Judith Herman (1997) discusses these differences comparatively:

The time focus of the interpersonal group is on the present, not the past. Members are encouraged to attend to their interactions in the here-and-now. The membership of an interpersonal group aims for diversity rather than homogeneity. There is no reason to restrict membership to those who share a particular traumatic history, since the purpose of the group is to enlarge each member's sense of belonging to the human commonality in the present... Whereas trauma-focused groups are highly structured, with an active leadership, interpersonal groups are relatively unstructured, with a more permissive leadership style... While trauma-focused groups discourage conflict among members, interpersonal groups allow and encourage such conflict to develop, within safe limits. This

conflict is in fact essential to the therapeutic task, for it is through understanding and resolution of conflict that insight and change can occur (234-235).

Another incongruence between these fields is the focus on resilience, defined generally as “good mental health and developmental outcomes, despite exposure to significant adversity” (Tol, Song, & Jordans, 2013, p. 445). Therapeutic interventions place significant attention on resilience-building activities and indicators, whereas peacebuilding literature appears not to place great attention on this dimension of individual and community functioning. Despite these fundamental differences, therapeutic concepts and methods can have positive influences on conflict resolution work, by creating conditions that make meaningful interactions possible (Kelman, 1990).

Despite a recognition of sociopsychological dynamics in theories of conflict escalation and transformation, the peacebuilding field has largely neglected a core psychological dynamic in conflict: trauma. There is a paucity of research from the conflict resolution field exploring how the effects of trauma may have consequences for intergroup relationships and the larger conflict system. The literature focusing on the effects of emotion on intergroup attitudes has not explored deeply how traumatology perspectives can advance a more holistic understanding of the emotional dimensions of conflict, particularly of anger and fear (see DeSteno, Dasgupta, Bartlett, & Cajdric, 2004; Halperin, Bar-Tal, D., Nets-Zehngut, & Drori, 2008; Jarymowicz & Bar Tal, 2006; Spanovic, Lickel, Dense, & Petrovic, 2010). Some scholars have focused on trauma in a general manner, such as Volkan (2001), who developed the concept of ‘chosen traumas’ as shared mental representation of a past experience that can be reactivated to defend

one's threatened identity. Further, Smelser (2004) has investigated the notion of cultural trauma as invasive events that undermine "essential ingredients of a culture" (38).

Yet few researchers have explored more specifically how conflict resolution theories, interventions, and expectations need to be modified when working with traumatized populations, who may not have the emotional, cognitive, or relational capacities to engage in peacebuilding without additional support. As Halperin and Pliskin (2015) describe in regards to challenges in conflict resolution scholarship on emotion in intractable conflict:

One can still identify general biases against the emotional approach, hesitance as to the actual ability to change people's emotions in such long-term violent conflicts, and even some uncertainty about whether changing people's emotions can in fact promote peace (142).

Trauma should be an area of significant exploration since psychological effects of conflict "can act to prevent groups from fully overcoming their differences and interacting harmoniously...and can create a fertile landscape for more extreme forms of conflict to germinate" (Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013, p. 527). Furthermore, the psychological processes that facilitate or inhibit an individual's ability to overcome fear, reduce prejudice, or achieve social trust with "the other" is largely unknown (Hammack, Pilecki, & Merrilees, 2013). The intersection of trauma and peacebuilding is thus a ripe area of study to advance innovation in the field, and literature largely from the social psychology field offers important insights.

Even though relationship building is a key aspect of reconciliation processes to forge sustainable intergroup relations, findings suggest that trauma is not associated with readiness for reconciliation (Nadler, 2012). As previously discussed, a challenge is that

individuals exposed to chronic traumatic stressors within intergroup contexts tend to create protective mechanisms to survive, making “people blindly distrustful of outgroup members, and blindly trustful of their fears” (Crocker, Garcia, and Nuer, 2008, p. 188). Groups experience distinct threat and emotional reactions to those deemed to jeopardize ingroup resources and processes (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). In a meta-analysis of intergroup forgiveness, collective guilt and trust were determined to be the strongest facilitators of forgiveness, while negative emotions and ingroup identity were the strongest barriers to forgiveness (Tongeren, Burnette, O’Boyle, Worthington, Jr., & Forsyth, 2013). As previously discussed, the manifestations of traumatic stress in intergroup conflict (i.e., collective annihilation anxiety, distrust, negative emotions, and collective identity) are in direct opposition to predictors of forgiveness. Further, experiences of war trauma can make ethnic identity —through experience of collective victimization— more salient and lead to greater ascription of collective guilt to the outgroup (Corkalo Biruski & Penic, 2014).

Trauma severity may also be a predictor of diminished forgiveness behavior. In Sierra Leone, younger respondents, particularly young men, reporting high traumatic symptom severity also reported lower levels of forgiveness, as compared to older generations (Doran, Kalayjian, Toussaint, & DeMucci, 2012). Among former Ugandan and Congolese child soldiers, forgiveness is less likely when PTSD symptoms are present (Bayer, Klasen, & Adam, 2007). Additionally, traumatic stress is positively linked to prejudicial attitudes towards the outgroup “when it is in combination of feeling discriminated against by the opposing group and/or with a series of negative experiences with that group” (Biro et al., 2004, p. 199). Traumatic stress is also associated with

greater adoption by adults of exclusionist political attitudes, mitigated by a perception of threats and support for military action among adolescents (Canetti-Nisim, Halperin, Sharvit, & Hobfoll, 2009; Braun-Lewensohn, Abu-Kaf, & Sagy, 2015).

Prevalence of traumatic symptoms among youth can be transformed to promote greater harmony between groups. In an experimental study, those who underwent reappraisal training to shift reactions to emotionally charged events felt less negative emotions and thus greater support for conciliatory policies (Halperin, Porat, Tamir, & Gross, 2012). These findings illustrate the potential to transform divisive intergroup attitudes and build meaningful intergroup relationships by focusing on the psychological sequela of conflict and the traumatic adaptations that arise from the distress of living with a chronically stressful conflict environment.

The Psychological Sequela of Youth in Intergroup Conflict

The dynamics of intergroup conflict are unique from interpersonal conflict, which can include violence of a similar nature —physical, sexual, psychological, or deprivation/neglect— but may be derived from different set of motivations (WHO, 2002). Interpersonal violence involves the “intentional use of physical force or power against another person” (e.g., a family member, intimate partner, or strangers), resulting in “injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (WHO, 2002, p. 4). Collective violence (e.g., armed conflict, terrorism, organized crime) arises when a set of people “have a strong group identity and are mobilized to defend their group’s interests against those of another group” (WHO, 2002; Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 294). Within the dynamics of intergroup conflict, violence and adapted social norms are used to gain political and economic advantage through the collective subjugation of another

group based on their social identity characteristics (Kira, Abdul-Wahhab, Aboumediene, Lewandowski, & Laddis, 2014). In comparing these two typologies of conflict and violence, what unites these experiences is trauma (Minow, 2002).

Trauma —when an experience overwhelms the natural capacities to manage distress— can manifest in reaction to different types of situations and conflicts. The vulnerability to traumatic reactions within these situations and conflicts depends particularly on age and trauma history; younger children in particular have fewer resources to manage feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Levine & Kline, 2006). Normal responses to perceptions of danger are acts of self-protection through flight and fight —activating adrenaline and other physiological responses to defend ourselves— or freeze —a default response when the threat is inescapable (Levine & Kline, 2006). While the magnitude of the stressor is an important factor, trauma does not reside in the event, but in the physiological and psychological manifestations of that experience (Levine & Kline, 2006). When a child experiences traumatic events early in life, there are profound effects on key areas of brain development, including structures that enable emotional regulation and healthy response to stressful situations (Siegel, 2012). Young people may also biologically inherit the ways their parents and even grandparents handle stress and manage the effects of traumatic experiences (Siegel, 2012).

There are a number of theoretical perspectives on traumatic processes, but few create a comprehensive picture of an individual's traumatic exposure. Assessing individuals' trauma history through an integrative framework is essential given the proliferation of trauma; traumatic stressors can beget traumatic stressors (Pearlin, Aneshensel, & Leblanc, 1997). Kira et al. (2013) present a model of stress and trauma,

known as the Developmentally Based Stress and Trauma Framework (DBTF), which constructs an integrated perspective of the traumatization process across the lifespan. This comprehensive model focuses on individual and group traumatization as “a process that can be triggered by stressors with different levels of intensity that range from chronic hassles to severe traumatic complex stressors” (397). The inclusion of temporal dimensions of traumatic stressors and the focus on intergroup conflict and structural, institutional, and ecological traumas are innovative approaches to the study of traumatic processes (Kira et al, 2013). The following table of taxonomies of severe stressors outlines the entire DBTF model (Kira et al., 2013, p. 348):

Taxonomy of severe stressors.

	Physical Traumas		Attachment Traumas		Individuation Traumas			Interdependence Traumas		
Saliency	Mortality		Connection, Intimacy		Identity, Annihilation			Group Elimination, Subjugation and Dominance		
Developmental Task	Safety		Security		Individuation			Affiliation and Interdependence (Belonging, Inclusion and Exclusion Dynamics)		
	Internal	External	Child	Adult	Personal Identity	Collective Identity	Role Identity	Secondary	Tertiary+	Systemic Violence
Type I	Severe Pain	Car Accident	Parental Neglect	Failed Relationships	Rape	Pearl Harbor Attack	Serious Failure (School, Business)	Witnessing Murder	Multiply Transited	-
Type II	Life Threatening Illness, Reproductive Trauma	Combat	Parental Neglect	Failed Relationships	Sexual Abuse, Perpetration-Induced Trauma	September 11, 2001, War on Terror	Dropping Out of School, Bankruptcy	Domestic Violence (Child), Vicarious Trauma (Therapist)	-	Genocide
Type III	HIV	Protracted Violent Conflict Terrorism	Foster Care	Failed Relationships	Prostitution Human Trafficking	Oppression, Racism, Slavery	Homelessness	Violence Media Exposure Globalization	Historical Trauma, Cross-Generation	Extreme Poverty, Caste System
Type IV	Multilateral Continuous Traumatic Stress—Cumulative Traumatic and Non-Traumatic Stress (Chronic Stress) across Life Span*									

Note: *Multilateral traumas are those that involve the overlap of two or more of these basic severe stress elements.

Figure 1

Given the focus of this study on intergroup conflict dynamics, the Type III continuous traumatic framework offers a conceptualization for understanding the impacts of trauma perpetrated by a system or group and its members, rather than individuals (Kira et al., 2014). Within these intergroup conflict contexts, populations are exposed to continuous

traumatic stressors that are “present, ongoing, continuous, and chronic,” ranging from “potentially traumatic” stressors (i.e., microaggressions, including intentional and unintentional verbal abuse and discrimination) to more severe traumatic stress (i.e., macroaggressions, including acts of violence and forced migration) (Kira et al., 2014, p.3).

The psychological sequelae related to these continuous traumatic stressors are distinct from those related to interpersonal traumas. An investigation of Palestinian health revealed that “continuous traumatic stressors related to collective identity was the strongest contributing factor predicting the severity of physical and mental health symptoms,” including depression, general anxiety, PTSD, and poor physical health (Kira et al., 2013, p. 405). Intergroup conflicts (and the resulting traumatic stressors) involve strong identification with a collective, and the intergroup trauma activates this collective identity as the primary filter for emotions, cognition, and actions (Kira et al., 2014). Furthermore, these types of conflicts can trigger existential fears of collective identity subjugation, known as collective annihilation anxiety (Kira et al., 2014).

These findings describing the psychological sequelae of adolescents in oppressive contexts mirror other research on identity-based conflict and violence. The traumatic responses to racism and identity-based violence (e.g., life-threatening assaults against a person because of their identity group) can have significant health implications, similar to effects that rape and domestic violence have on victims (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). Scurfield and Mackey (2001) found that “exposure to race-related trauma, in and of itself, may be the primary etiological factor in the development of an adjustment or stress disorder” (28). Perception of an experience as discriminatory is also associated with

negative physical and mental health consequences (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). These findings challenge prevailing conceptualizations of the events that should be characterized as “traumatic” and the key temporal and perceptual dimensions of traumatic stress.

Approaches in working with Youth Exposed to Traumatic Stressors

When working with youth, there has been a shift away from deficit and trauma frameworks and towards a construct of “resilience” (Barber, 2013). Despite the complexity of the construct, resilient youth are those exceptional individuals who do not succumb to negative psychological outcomes and function relatively well despite suffering adversity, which would be expected to lead to some disability (Rutter, 2012; Barber, 2013). In Barber’s review (2013) of resilience research, the general consensus is of a weak association between war exposure and negative psychological functioning. If this is the case, then the question becomes whether resilience is an exceptional phenomena or the norm. The Hobfoll et al. (2012) study of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza illustrated how people can experience high levels of distress and painful psychological symptoms while exhibiting survival and resilience in light of that distress. It appears unrealistic to expect widespread dysfunction in the aftermath of adverse events, although one’s socio-ecological context is likely more important determinant of resilience than intrapersonal variables (Tol, et al., 2013).

Beyond direct measures of mental disorders, the instability of conflict-affected contexts fundamentally undermines young people’s familial and social systems that are critical to their resilience and wellbeing. Social support can contribute to people’s engagement, defined as “persistent, pervasive, and positive affective-motivational state of

fulfillment” (Hobfoll et al., 2012, p. 61). To understand resilient outcomes in young people exposed to traumatic stressors, it is essential to analyze the protective factors and processes that generate such outcomes.

According to Betancourt and Khan (2008), these factors and processes are embedded within the layers of a child’s social ecology. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological framework of child development facilitates the analysis of the psychological impact of conflict on children through the layered relationships and tiered social settings in which children exist [see figure below for an overview]. This method of analysis is particularly important given adults’ impairments in functioning and caregiving as a result of their own trauma histories.

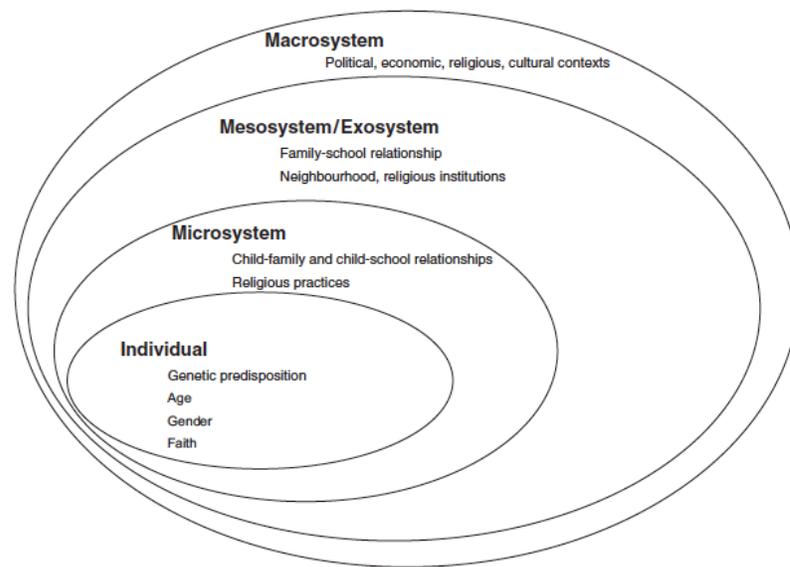


Figure 2 (from Betancourt & Khan, 2008)

In terms of individual attributes, Cortes & Buchanan (2007) identified six themes of strengths and resources of Colombian child soldiers who did not exhibit trauma-related symptoms: sense of agency; social intelligence, empathy, affect regulation; shared experience, caregiving features and community connection; a sense of future, hope and

growth; a connection to spirituality; and morality. Buddhist religious practices were also found to be an important part of coping mechanisms for war-affected children in Sri Lanka (Fernando, 2006).

In terms of attachment relationships, children who perceived loving and caring relationships with both parents exhibited lower levels of post-traumatic stress symptoms compared to those who only perceived their mothers as highly loving and caring (Punamaki, Quota, & El-Sarraj, 2001). Within the mesosystem, lower levels of internalizing emotional and behavioral problems was associated with adolescents' connectedness to family members, peers, and the larger community in Ingushetia (Betancourt, 2005). Finally, within the larger contexts, group positioning influences how one interprets a conflict-related experience (Muldoon, 2013).

Despite the identification of factors and processes facilitating greater understanding of the mental health of young people in conflict-affected contexts, Betancourt and Khan (2008) argue that resilience “offers one way to think about building on naturally occurring strengths in prevention and intervention programmes, but it should not be used to minimize the gravity of war for children and families or limit the scope of services” (324). This call for both risk and resilience factors to drive understanding of the mental health of young people in armed conflict may be driven by the significant impact of these chronically stressful environments on youth development. Chronically stressful environments can affect key domains of development and functioning. For those who have experienced repeated stress, chaos, and danger in their relationships and environments, their assumptions of danger can become rigid and generalized: “it is not that *one* individual is dangerous; *all* individuals are potentially dangerous” (Blaustein &

Kinniburgh, 2010, p. 24). Triggers of perceived danger can include: perception of a lack of control, unexpected change, feeling threatened or vulnerable, feeling shame, and intimacy and positive attention (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010).

The constant assumption of danger interferes with such developmental milestones as regulation and with emotional, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive development due to gaps in care and a young person's reliance on the previously described adaptations. In regulatory and emotional development, a young person may have difficulty understanding "what they feel, where it comes from, how to cope with it, and/or how to express it" (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010, p. 29). These young people may feel a lack of power or control in their lives and have diminished capacities to think about the future. There may also be gaps in their memory due to dissociations from the stressful event and the correlated impacts on brain processes (Cook et al., 2005). Finally, young people in these circumstances can experience greater frustration when presented with challenges, may not comply with directions, and can respond often with negative emotions (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010). Youth people carry these developmental deficits with them to varying degrees until they can process this underlying fear of the environment and learn new adaptations and patterns that promote healthy functioning and positive relationships (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010).

These developmental deficits can accompany relationship-building processes as children age into adolescence. Each person's first relationship is critical in developing earliest psychological representations of self, other, and self in relation to other, which form the foundation of the developmental competencies (Cook et al., 2005). At a fundamental level, a traumatic event or series of events can shatter assumptions of safety

and call into question basic human relationships (Herman, 1996). Emotions from a different traumatic situation can be displaced onto the current situation, and events where hurt is minor can evoke reminders of past cruelty (Milburn & Liss, 2007; Herman, 1996). In forming and maintaining relationships, it can be difficult for traumatized youth to read social cues, maintain healthy physical and emotional boundaries, and trust others (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010, p. 30). They may also exhibit difficulty attuning to other people's emotional states and perspectives. With difficulties in affect regulation, young people may also face challenges in labeling and expressing feelings, knowing and describing internal states, and communicating wishes and needs (Cook et al., 2005) (Cook et al., 2005). If the distress in forming new relationships is overwhelming, young people may isolate themselves as a way to avoid the thoughts, feelings, and/or memories associated with the traumatic stressor (Cook et al., 2005). These factors contribute to lowered self-efficacy and self-esteem compared to their peers, which compounds the strains in building relationships with others (Galezewski, 2010).

In sum, trauma is a phenomenon that has been diagnosed and medicated more than prevented and treated holistically within the social and developmental contexts of youth: "trauma is perhaps the most avoided, ignored, belittled, denied, misunderstood, and untreated cause of human suffering" (Levine & Kline, 2006, p. 3). Given what we now understand about the devastating effects of trauma on youth development, it is critical to understand how those intervening with this population conceptualize and approach this issue.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate how peacebuilding practitioners worldwide conceptualize and approach issues of traumatic stress through a qualitative evaluation of practitioner reflections. The study explores worldwide practice instead of focusing on one region or case study. Including peacebuilding practitioners who work across various contexts offers insights into areas of convergence and divergence in practice on these issues. There is limited existing research that directly illuminates how practitioners conceptualize and approach traumatic stress in the field. Thus, by gathering a range of perspectives on the core question of the study may illuminate patterns of practice in this area.

Qualitative evaluation of practitioner reflections was undertaken to uncover the norms and working assumptions of practice on issues related to traumatic stress. The exact meaning of a qualitative evaluation is reflective of one's theoretical background (Shaw, 1999). Generally, those in this tradition share what Stake and Trumbull (1982) have called 'naturalistic generalizations': "tacit knowings [versus conceptual knowledge]...formed from experiencing" to reach new understandings of practice (6). From first-person accounts of these experiences, naturalistic study seeks to present the data in a natural form with "the richness, ambiguity, and conflicts, which are a part of daily experience" (4). Qualitative evaluations value the daily experience of practitioners, with "concern for program and projects being evaluated as multifaceted,

complex compositions of the experiences of those individuals and groups most strongly influenced or affected by the program or project” (Schwandt & Cash, 2014, p. 11).

Practitioners themselves are great generators of the knowledge needed to do an effective evaluation. As Shaw (1999) describes, “there exists an evaluative dimension to professional practice which is indigenous to practice rather than being ‘on loan’ from research or evaluation methodology” (115). Schön (1983) dives further into this concept of practitioner knowledge as an evaluative method, stating: “in his [sic] day-to-day practice, he makes innumerable judgments of quality for which he cannot state adequate criteria and he displays skills for which he cannot state the rules and procedures” (50). Practitioner reflections illuminate an understudied area of practice since there are not well-documented policies and procedures within the peacebuilding field for how to conceptualize and approach issues of traumatic stress. Therefore, the “rules and procedures” in working with traumatic stress may not exist formally, but may be embedded within the perspectives and judgments of practitioners on this issue.

There is limited time and resources to do everything that is worthwhile in peacebuilding initiatives. As such, a program evaluation can help guide discussions on what should be done and how it can be best implemented (Patton, 1997). As Patton (1997) defines, program evaluation is “the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming” (23). Even though the terms evaluation and research are often conflated, there are clear differences between the two orientations. The following comparative table by Shaw (1999, p. 8) highlights these distinctions:

Evaluation	Research
Addresses practical problems	Addresses theoretical problems
Culminates in action	Culminates in description
Makes judgements of merit/worth	Describes
Addresses short-term issues	Addresses long-term issues
Evaluation methods	Research methods
Is non-disciplinary	Is disciplinary
Includes insider evaluation	Is always conducted by outsiders

Figure 3

There are four notable characteristics of evaluation relevant to this study. First, the nature core question of this study addresses practical problems that practitioners face in the field. The study question and the subsequent data analysis are driven by theoretical principles, but solving theoretical problems is not the primary focus of this study. Second, the implications of the study findings make judgments of the merit of particular conceptualizations and approaches to traumatic stress; these implications are also framed to enhance future practice and to drive future research. Finally, this study is uniquely non-disciplinary, drawing from a number of different but related disciplines (e.g., neuroscience, developmental psychology, conflict resolution, and peace psychology) to generate a more comprehensive understanding of this complex issue.

Qualitative evaluations are especially appropriate in studying the internal workings—including informal patterns, program activities, and anticipated outcomes—of a program (Patton, 2014). Qualitative evaluations are more concerned with the journey of (e.g., how did the program work?) than the destination (e.g., did the program work?). The evaluation explores the relationship between the process and the outcomes, while highlighting the complexities and dynamics of working within a program (Patton, 2014).

Investigating the complexities of working with a program is important not only in understanding how a program works, but also in determining what may be replicable from one program to another. As Eisner (1991) states, “the particular is located a general theme” (39). However, there can be challenges in extrapolating generalizable findings in qualitative evaluations (Shaw, 1999). As Greene (1993) describes:

Applicability of the [qualitative evaluation] to other contexts is a judgment left to others...and the potential contributions of the story to more general social scientific understanding are muted by qualitative evaluators’ rejection of formal, propositional explanations for social phenomena...the stories we tell are only locally powerful (41)

Given the difficulties in wide applicability of qualitative evaluation findings, it is important to consider how to make evaluation outcomes useful and relevant outside of the programs studied. As Patton (1997) states, the problem is “keeping up with, sorting out, absorbing, and *using* information problem” (5). He argues that evaluators should concern themselves with the application of the evaluator’s findings (Patton, 1997).

Following this call for usability, this study aims to make the findings of use to practitioners in the field. For example, the final chapter, which discusses the implications for practice, is designed to spur greater discussion to discover how best to integrate trauma principles into peacebuilding work.

In regards to the qualitative evaluation design, the online survey method allowed for the researcher to reach the greatest number of people in the shortest period of time, while gathering meaningful reflection from practitioners working across the world. The study utilized a broad inclusion criterion —practitioners who had or are currently working with a youth peacebuilding program— to ensure that range of perspectives were captured in the qualitative evaluation. Since the data is derived from global networks of

practitioners, the themes, recommendations, and questions that emerge from this study may have relevance for a wide audience of peacebuilding practitioners.

The online survey questions were developed in consideration of respondents from diverse backgrounds with limited time to dedicate to a survey. It was necessary to maintain the survey questions as readable and concise as possible and the survey as short as possible so that respondents did not feel as if participation was an overwhelming, time-consuming experience. The readability was particularly important given that the expectation was to reach practitioners who were non-native English speakers. If the language was too complex, it might have led to greater rates of survey abandonment. The concern for having as many people as possible complete the survey outweighed considerations for great depth and detail included in the questions.

There were certain aspects of the programs that were critical to elicit through these survey questions: program goals and objectives, types and method of evaluation, types of activities, practitioner assessment of organizational and personal approaches to this issue, and the impact and importance of traumatic stress in the program. Careful attention was paid to the content and organization of the survey questions since respondents are most likely to abandon a survey right at the beginning (Sue & Ritter, 2007). The first questions were intended to ease participants into the survey format by posing questions that did not require thoughtful reflection. These questions regarding their professional history and programmatic goals and theories of change also supported greater awareness of their professional orientation toward youth peacebuilding programs. The subsequent sections prompted practitioners with questions that required greater reflection and generally followed the following themes: how participants' trauma history

informs organizational policies and programmatic decisions; practitioner assessment of how well their affiliated organization integrates considerations of traumatic stress into these policies and decisions; and how practitioners have personally managed issues of traumatic stress during programs.

To generate as much information as possible from the respondents, the questions needed strike a balance between closed- and open-ended question types. Generally, open-ended questions contribute richer detailed data than closed-ended questions. However, respondents are more likely to skip open-ended questions than closed-ended questions. Further, answers to open-ended questions can often contain insufficient detail. Thus, including both closed- and open-ended questions in the survey may facilitate higher percentages of answered questions (Reja, Lozar Manfreda, Hlebec, & Vehovar, 2003). As a strategy to increase rich responses to the open-ended questions, the prompt specified instructions for how to answer in order to better motivate participants to answer in a comprehensive manner (Smyth, Dillman, Christian, & McBride, 2009). For the closed-ended questions, a likert-style scale was utilized as much as possible so that the data contained greater nuance—more so than the dichotomous yes-no response— even if the participant did not answer the open-ended questions. Additionally, to keep respondents engaged, “skip” mechanisms were created so that participants who answered “no” to a question would not then need to read (and skip) more detailed questions on the same topic.

The survey was administered electronically using Qualtrics, an online survey platform that includes safeguards for confidentiality and tools to facilitate the analytical process. The difficulty in reaching practitioners willing to participate in the survey

spurred a modest participation goal of 20 peacebuilding practitioners. To reach this goal, at least 60 people needed to be solicited, based on an expected response rate for web-based surveys of approximately 30% (Sue & Ritter, 2007). There was concern that the response rate could potentially be much lower than 30%, so outreach was conducted to maximize viewership of the study recruitment flyer through various online networks and platforms as well as the researcher's personal networks.

With expedited Institutional Review Board approval, participants were invited to participate in the survey via email (with a survey link), which was open for four weeks. The recruitment notice was posted on various platforms only once because it was more effective to spread the notice through diverse online networks. Two weeks after opening the survey, a follow-up reminder was sent to those who had partially completed the survey. Participants were also recruited through faculty networks, personal contacts, and interaction with non-governmental organizations with experience working with traumatized youth. Practitioners who had begun or completed the survey were encouraged to forward it to other practitioners who meet the study criterion using a 'snowball' sampling method.

Twenty-one individuals working in thirteen different countries—including Mexico, Cameroon, Israel, Nigeria, Burundi, South Africa, The United States of America, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sierra Leone— either partially- or fully-completed the survey. Each of these participants indicated in the survey that they had or are currently working with a youth peacebuilding program through a question that appeared at the beginning of the survey. There were an additional sixteen people who consented to participate in the study but did not answer any survey questions, which is

likely due to restricted time to complete the survey. Nine of these sixteen people indicated that they have not worked with a youth peacebuilding program, which signaled that they did not meet my inclusion criteria for this study; these individuals were directed to the end of the survey and no further data was collected from them.

Throughout this study, both inductive —developing theory from observation and/or data assessment— and deductive —testing theory based in existing literature— research processes were utilized. Even though these two methods reflect different research orientations, in practice the division is not stark and there is often integration of these research traditions (Carey, 2012). At the beginning of the research process, the research question was deductively created from existing scholarship on trauma and peacebuilding as it relates to youth, which, in turn, informed the content of the survey questions. Following end of the data collection period, the analysis took a more inductive form.

The analytic process began through a reading of all the data once without making notes, letting the information speak for itself without immediately trying to fit it into preconceived notions of what the data should say. As McCracken (1988) describes, it is essential to “come to the text with a certain disingenuous wonder, refusing to supply the assumptions and understandings” (44). Treating the data as its own set of facts, rather than as answers to specific questions posed in the survey, encouraged groupings of the information based on content rather than on where it occurred in the survey. During a second reading, the researcher concentrated on themes that gave insight into approaches to issues of traumatic stress and exhibit forcefulness, recurrence, and repetition (Owen, 1984). In addition, there was close attention paid to the narrative linkages and the ways

that the practitioners reasoned in describing their approaches to traumatic stress (Shaw, 1999). Subsequently, specific units of information or ideas (i.e., codes) were categorized into broader units (i.e., themes). Rereading through all of the data multiple times let the data speak for itself and greatly contributed to the final presentation of findings.

The findings of the study illustrate a general understanding of the realities of trauma and the invisible suffering that underlies living in conflict-affected contexts. There exists an intention to heal trauma behind many approaches to traumatic stress among youth participants; most practitioners understand that trauma is an ever-present reality in their daily lives. However, these approaches tend to be indirect and disconnected from comprehensive peacebuilding strategy that creates the conditions to alleviate distress for program participants and promote long-lasting change in conflict-affected communities.

III. FINDINGS

The peacebuilding practitioners who participated in this study work in varying contexts around the world and employ diverse peacebuilding practice. The goals of the programs being studied—as described by practitioners—all fall under at least one of the following three areas of change: personal transformation, relationship building, and social change leadership. Often, program goals spanned more than one area of change. For example, one practitioner working with Seeds of Peace in Israel described the program goal as “to allow teenagers from opposite sides of the conflict to have a healthy, guided dialogue in order for them to be able *to create long lasting relationships* and ... *to explore their own thoughts and feelings on the conflict* [emphasis added].”¹ Another practitioner connecting youth to Nobel Peace Laureates in Denver, USA stated their program goal as “to create young leaders committed to positive change in themselves, their communities, and the world,” which contains elements of all three areas of change.

This characterization of program goals mirrors the practitioner identification of the theory (or theories) of change underlying their peacebuilding work with youth: a majority of practitioners selected *Individual Change* (defined in the survey as “engaging in personal transformation of consciousness, attitudes, behaviors, and skills”), *Healthy Relationships and Connections* (defined in the survey as “reducing division and prejudice

¹ Per Informed Consent protocols, individual identities of the respondents will remain private, and the data will not contain specific information that could identify the respondent.

between groups and fostering strong intergroup relationships”), and *Public Attitudes* (defined in the survey as “building tolerance in a society by changing public attitudes and the prejudice, misperceptions, and intolerance that underlies war and violence) (Church & Rogers, 2006, pp. 14-15). Additionally, a majority of practitioners identified more than one theory of change as the conceptual foundation for their work; sixteen respondents identified between two and seven theories of change, with the greatest frequency being three and five theories selected. This finding implies that practitioners recognize the complexities of the contexts in which they work and thus develop multi-pronged strategies to enact change in the conflict. Knowing that these practitioners largely have a shared vision for the primary mechanisms to shift conditions in complex conflict-affected contexts suggests that they may face similar strategic choices when developing programs to achieve these shifts.

Practitioners largely share a framework for conducting peacebuilding programs for youth, which places strong emphasis on intrapersonal and interpersonal change. These types of change are inherently connected to the psychological dimensions of conflict described above. The most commonly identified theories of change all contain a focus on intrapersonal and interpersonal growth to varying magnitudes. The theories of change that fewer practitioners identified as informing their program goals and objectives — the Withdrawal of the Resources for War theory, the Institutional Development theory, and the Economics theory— do not contain as much (if any) emphasis on intrapersonal or interpersonal transformations. Every practitioner that selected the *Healthy Relationships and Connections* theory as the theoretical backbone for their peacebuilding work also selected the *Individual Change* theory, suggesting that practitioners may conceptualize

building healthy intergroup relationships and leading social change as being predicated on individual emotional transformation. This conceptual framework creates opportunities to explore the psychological experiences of youth participants within peacebuilding programs.

Practitioner Conceptualizations of Traumatic Stress

Practitioners appear to understand that traumatic stress is chronic and continuous has some cognitive, emotional, and relational effects on youth. As many practitioners recognize, traumatic stress is an ever-present part of the everyday life for youth living in conflict-affected contexts, and each individual experiences a range of intensity and visibility of these issues related to traumatic stress. Sometimes these issues are living under the surface and sometimes its impacts are more observable, and practitioners identify general examples or specific vignettes of how issues related to traumatic stress entered program dynamics. One practitioner working with refugee youth in Denver, USA described needing “to be cognizant...of what present conflicts affect the lives of the [refugee] students at the program...because many of the conflicts from which our participants have fled are ongoing and news of outbreaks of violence heavily affect our participants.” Young people are not isolated from their communities, but remain connected to external dynamics even when physically separated from those contexts and are strongly affected by relationships both inside and outside of the intervention.

There is a general understanding that the youth in peacebuilding programs encounter traumatic stress in their every day lives. Youth come to these programs from varying conflict-affected contexts. Most of the organizations either work with youth who currently live within an active conflict zone (e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict); who

grew up in a conflict zone (e.g., refugees who have been resettled in another country); who live in communities with high levels of poverty, violence, drug abuse, and/or health risks (e.g., those exposed to domestic violence or orphans of Ebola victims); or who participated in violent conflict (e.g., members of armed groups or those involved in terrorist attacks). Across these contexts, these youth are exposed to traumatic stress in different forms and to varying degrees. For example, Ebola orphans “have [been] stigmatized, rejected, and made victims,” whereas, refugee youth “struggle[] to find their place as a Somali community [in Boston]...and have experienced civil war in their home countries.” Yet, for a significant portion (if not all) of the youth, the environment is filled with traumatic stress: “there are events that conjure memories of the past in the daily life of the youth.” As another practitioner notes in regards to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: “I believe that living in a conflict area, all our participants have some history of traumatic stress.” One Seeds of Peace practitioner working in Israel builds on this idea by stating that “in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, traumatic events happen so often it is very hard to start healing and moving on,” which reflects the challenges of working with this vulnerable population exposed to traumatic stressors in intergroup conflict.

A practitioner working in Cameroon offered a vignette that highlights the complex social systemic realities of youth in conflict. He described a 15-year-old boy who was late to school and became aggressive when the teacher asked the boy why he was late. The practitioner continues by describing a fight between the boy, the teacher, and the principal, who came to help calm the situation. The boy was arrested and taken to a hospital, where it was discovered that the boy was abusing substances because he

wanted to confront his father about beating his mother and about how hungry they were with their mother in the hospital.

Even outside of such an explicit conflict area, practitioners, such as one working to address the root causes of violence and build peace infrastructures, face challenges in working with youth with “dysfunctional families, economic morass and political polarization that continue to play into the lives of the youth.” Within this complex reality of conflict-affected contexts, “youth are faced with more choices and challenges than ever before and at much younger ages.” In spite of this general consensus on the nature of traumatic stress as continuous and ongoing in the daily lives of youth, there is less agreement on how this impacts youth during course of the program.

There are varying practitioner perspectives on whether and how trauma exposure disrupts healthy cognitive, relational, and emotional functioning in youth. In regards to cognitive functioning, when asked how issues of traumatic stress have arisen during the program, the practitioner working with refugee youth mentioned that “students can be forgetful and many times this is frustrating to staff or leaders who make appointments with students and they forget the appointment or paperwork that they must bring.” In answering the same question, the Seeds of Peace practitioner reports:

Traumatic events (related to the conflict) may influence the teenager’s ability to engage in meaningful discussion...create meaningful relationships...see ‘his enemy’ as the person he is and not only as a representative of a whole nation...for example, for a Palestinian, it may be very difficult not to see an Israeli teenager as a future soldier and an occupier.

When discussing the impacts on emotional functioning, one practitioner described a workshop on gender-based violence in rural Eastern DRC when “a lady broke up in tears, and very loudly, and the whole room was astonished.” From the perspective of another practitioner teaching youth conflict resolution skills in Denver, USA, “many experience strong emotions like anger but have never learned to manage their emotions in healthy and productive ways...triggers of participants can be a barrier to making good choices,” which highlights the interconnectedness of functionality. Despite the general consensus of traumatic stressors as ongoing, chronic in the lives of youth, this conceptualization does not create imperative to employ active approaches to trauma healing.

Practitioner Approaches to Traumatic Stress

Through various types of peacebuilding programming, practitioners seek to both improve the conditions of the conflict and to help youth cope with the effects of traumatic stress. A majority of respondents indicated that their peacebuilding program aims to build resilience (defined in the survey as “coping with the effects of traumatic stress”) on an individual level. Practitioners do this through such activities as Community & Cultural Connections (e.g., “intergroup dialogue using narrative method,” “restorative circles,” and “discussion about stereotypes [after the] ‘Danger of a Single Story’ TED talk”), Education Activities (e.g., “coping mechanisms for stress, anger, and triggers” and “group service-learning projects”), Economic Security projects (e.g., “income generating activities...in order to sustain their family”), and Engaging Activities (e.g., “sports and social engagements”) (Duncan & Arnston, 2004).

The typology of program activities included in this study—including Community and Cultural Connections, Education Activities, Economic Security Projects, and

Engaging Activities— has great potential to serve trauma healing due to their emphasis on attachment and skill building. Even though a majority of practitioners who attempt to build intergroup relationships believe that exploring past traumatic events is an important part of this process, only two practitioners mention placing intentional, central focus on issues of traumatic stress during the activities. One practitioner describes how the topics discussed in the organization’s healing and reconciliation training programs are trauma-related and how the motivation is to “restore/recover their minds.” Another practitioner doing relationship-building work in Nigeria mentions how they “provide an opportunity for participants to relate their experiences before, during or after conflicts. This forms part of the issues to be addressed before any form of mediation or resolution is undertaken.” Although, for a majority of programs, traumatic stress is not the primary focus of activities, and practitioners attempt to create the conditions for the youth themselves to bring up any issues they face in order to help them cope with traumatic stress.

The skills and competencies embedded in the Education Activities and Engaging Activities offer youth opportunities to strengthen their capacities to process through traumatic stress symptoms and cope with distress. For example, the practitioner developing youth conflict resolution skills in Denver, USA mentioned helping participants develop “coping mechanisms for stress, anger, and triggers.” The practitioner working in Mexico describes the value of utilizing photography in programming:

Photography is a great tool because it removes the participant from the experience. In a way they are an observer of their own thoughts as they first take a photo and then examine it. Because there are not necessarily captions or words

required, they are able to first process their feelings with themselves and then with the group through the sharing of photos and ideas.

As many practitioners report, traumatic events or stressors are brought up within such activities as dialogue groups or photography workshops, where they can be processed with the group, though these issues do not tend to be the main focus or be a formal part of curriculum. This same practitioner reflects that “[traumatic stress] is not formally part of our curriculum but if it comes up, there is always a space through photographs for self reflection and then with the rest of the group through the sharing of ideas and art work.” As another practitioner notes, we “only discuss traumatic stress when brought up by the youth...by allowing the youth to lead, [we] can address issues such as these very effectively.” With regard to how program activities work with issues of traumatic stress, another practitioner states:

The only professional way we deal with [traumatic stress] is through dialogue...dialogue is our tool to allow our teenagers to know each other and develop relationships, it is not aimed directly to dealing with trauma or traumatic stress...many times the trauma or past events are dealt with inside the dialogue room but are not the main focus...we encourage our teenagers to always bring to the group/their friends any hardship they encounter that has to do with their life or the conflict and we try to teach them that by doing so they can grow stronger and overcome difficult times together (rather than turn on each other).

Another practitioner working in Denver also identified “small group discussions with students and adult mentors” as the organizational strategy to approach issues related to traumatic stress.

Instead of creating groups explicitly focused on discussing issues related to traumatic stress, the approach most widely employed within programs to bolster youth coping resources is to create safe spaces and forums for youth to discuss traumatic stress if and when they choose. With refugee youth, one practitioner “address[es] issues topics such as leading healthy lifestyles and healthy relationships, but only discuss traumatic stress when brought up by the youth.” According to one practitioner, “by creating a safe, welcoming, and warm place for the youth to talk about issues that are important to them, we can address any issues of traumatic stress that arise.” With safe space in an even more central role, one practitioner working in South Africa notes that their organizational goal is “to create safe spaces within which young people can reassess their lives and choices, in conditions that promote collaboration and mutual support.” In the Denver-based refugee program, achieving this feeling of safety can be achieved through “student leadership [to ensure] that the participants feel safe and secure at the program as they often know about the conflicts and present issues.” Another practitioner asserts that the process of creating a safe space in itself can be healing: “I think without naming it, we are addressing traumatic stress by simply providing a safe space for our participants to process their feelings and if they feel comfortable, to share their feelings with others.” In this context, the safe space can be “a place where others will listen and to know that they are empowered with the ability to change their life circumstances.”

In addition to creating feelings of safety, long-term engagement can be an important factor in facilitating healing processes. Despite a large majority of respondents indicating that they have follow up and longer-term engagement with participants, according to some practitioners, there may not be enough time to process these issues

during the core phase of program activities: “I believe we don’t conduct enough bi-national ongoing dialogue and so a lot of issues end up being not dealt with.” When prompted to articulate ways to handle issues of traumatic stress with unlimited resources, another practitioner offered “multiple long term facilitated dialogue groups that meet on a regular basis,” which is an activity the practitioner previously identified as being a time to discuss traumatic events. These structural considerations for facilitating healthy coping are complimented by referral mechanisms for those youth needing more therapeutic support than the program can provide.

There are some practitioners that offer therapeutic support during the program. Three respondents working in Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo report having counseling services within the program, which is how they manage issues of traumatic stress as they arise: “counseling is the first and potent tool.” The practitioner from Cameroon describes how they “do some psychosocial counseling and some therapeutic sessions” as well as “moving back to the homes to talk to parents and educate them on the effect of their actions on their children.” One practitioner notes that ideally it would be beneficial to have those experiencing difficulties related to traumatic stress to go through counseling before beginning the program. These internal resources can be overstretched, with one practitioner working in practitioner describing how “there are inadequate resources to attend to the thousands of youth who visit the organization.”

During the program, when youth are faced with difficulties in functioning, practitioners employ varying strategies to support participants. One program helps participants “develop a plan for when they are triggered...this process helps them rewire their pathways to develop new reactions.” Following this concept of changing patterns of

functioning through individual care, a practitioner working with refugee youth in Denver states that it's important to "always give the students multiple chances to get things right." They continue:

I also have learned to let them fail/fail a few times and realize what they may need to do to ensure that they have everything in order. Not holding their hand and allowing students to experience something not working out is far more beneficial than reminding them over and over or holding their hand too much. What is important is to be open and understanding, and always there for the students.

In another example, a practitioner described a conference that included "an educational simulation on struggles that refugees face worldwide"; they allowed youth who have been "personally traumatized by displacement" to "choose an alternate activity." One practitioner working with Seeds of Peace relates how "participants of the program need constant 'reminders' that there could be another way different from violence." A challenge that practitioners can face when working with youth is "their denial that they are traumatized. They accuse programme officers for misreading their energies." Beyond these strategies and programmatic considerations, by in large most programs rely on external resources to handle more extreme cases of trauma.

For those with more serious issues, most organizations refer these cases to partner organizations or other resources available within the communities. In cases of extreme distress, "those with serious issues are recommended for a more comprehensive treatment." As one practitioner clearly states: "we help youth get therapy if needed," which can be done in partnership "with different community therapists who we refer to if needed." With unlimited resources, one practitioner in Sierra Leone would "use the local

resources available in the community” and another in the DRC “would consider calling upon volunteers and religious leaders to come and help in this.” Mental health experts could also “examine levels of stress and prescribe appropriate measures,” as one practitioner suggests as a way to ideally handle these issues.

When asked how they would deal with traumatic stress if they had unlimited resources, a number of people suggest strengthening local therapeutic resources in the community: “[if I had unlimited resources to approach issues of traumatic stress] I will establish community-based counseling and vocational training centers.” However, some communities have limited community mental health resources: “there are also less therapeutic centres for social problems.” With greater community resources, there may be opportunities “to collaborate with the others for more solutions and exchange of ideas. This will have help to build our capacities and increase the number of children we can change into peacebuilders.” In Cameroon, they have “to break the strong customs and traditions in communities and homes” since mental health remains a stigmatized issue across communities around the world.

Additionally, in thinking of how to ideally handle issues of traumatic stress, another practitioner suggested greater one-on-one coaching, which suggests interest in bolstering internal resources and capacities to manage more complex cases. Most respondents communicated a *strong interest* or *very strong interest* in training (or another similar resource) on these issues. Yet practitioners did not consistently prioritize these issues; most respondents either indicated a *slight priority* or *priority* and fewer indicated a *strong priority* or *very strong priority* in addressing issues of traumatic stress. One practitioner working in Cameroon highlights the importance of considering the trauma

dimensions within peacebuilding efforts to break cycles of violence: “much still has to be done to help youths in traumatic situations regain a normal life. Most of them are ignored and they grow up to be perpetrator, and rebel leaders easy use them to [commit] crimes and wars.” The disconnect between an interest in the same issue that practitioners do not prioritize may reflect an incomplete picture of understanding of how issues of traumatic stress can impact youth and how practitioners can help youth heal these invisible wounds within a peacebuilding initiative.

Relatively low number of practitioners reporting conducting psychosocial assessments signals that there remains a gap between clear practitioner understanding of the existence of traumatic stress and how they track program impact through monitoring and evaluation procedures. Psychosocial interventions may not be part of the lexicon for many peacebuilding practitioners —evident by one practitioner stating that they did not understand the meaning of ‘psychosocial indicators’— and there may be minimal understanding of what the term psychosocial *actually* means in practice. There is also inconsistency in how psychosocial assessments, when completed, are conducted. Out of eleven respondents, eight practitioners indicated the assessment is done *before the program*, six indicated *during the program*, and five indicated, *end of the program*. There is slightly less attention paid to psychosocial assessments at the end of the program and in follow-up engagement, which suggests that there is little understanding of short- and long-term impacts of programs on psychosocial health. Satisfaction with how affiliated organizations handle these issues indicates congruence between practitioners and organizational leadership in approaches to this issue.

There was an expectation before the study of a greater differential between perspectives of practitioners and their affiliated organizations. The assumption was that peacebuilding organizations would see themselves as having a limited role in trauma healing, whereas practitioners, due to their field experiences and direct engagement with beneficiaries, would want greater latitude to work with these issues as they arise during the program. Practitioners may not know how to operationalize conceptual understanding of trauma impacts and want more resources to more effectively manage these issues, which may explain why there was such a great interest in training on traumatic stress.

Organizational Orientations Towards Issues of Traumatic Stress

Every respondent reported that they have dealt with issues related to traumatic stress during the course of the program, either *occasionally* or *frequently*. Despite every respondent managing these issues at some point in their career, a majority of respondents report that traumatic stress only *sometimes* undermines participant ability to achieve changes sought through program activities.

Even though the youth have experienced traumatic stress in their lives, a practitioner encouraging youth transformation in Mexico through participatory photography cautions against focusing on these impairments: “kids are kids and they have an innate resilience in them that allows them to just participate in a fun program with others. Yes we touch on touch issues but they never cease to amaze me with their creativity and courage.” A practitioner working with refugee youth builds on this idea by noting “although many refugee youth have experienced a traumatic past, many are more concerned with issues such as dating, friendships, passing classes in school, etc. [than the traumatic experiences of the past].” In spite of the complexities of issues in cognitive,

emotional, and relational functioning, practitioners appear confident in their organizational strategies to manage these issues as they arise.

Practitioners recognize that youth carry these functional impairments into program activities, so organizations include psychological considerations in strategic approaches to their initiative to varying degrees. Traumatic stress is discussed fairly frequently in these organizations, with a majority of respondents reporting that conversations regarding traumatic stress occur *sometimes* or *most of the time*. Yet psychosocial factors —defined in the survey as “how effectively a person is able to live and work/study in their community as healthy individuals”— are not consistently integrated into program assessments. A majority of respondents report that they *never*, *rarely*, or *sometimes* conduct psychosocial assessments of participants. For those who engage in follow up and long-term engagement with participants, a majority of respondents *never* or *sometimes* include assessments of psychosocial functioning in their peacebuilding program. One practitioner highlights the challenges of conducting psychosocial assessment: “recovering from trauma is difficult to measure. As such, and equally the impact is difficult to measure. The reason being that stress is caused by many factors which continuously play into the life of the youth.”

Most practitioners describe being either *neutral*, *somewhat satisfied*, or *satisfied* with the way their affiliated organization addresses issues related to traumatic stress. Organizations integrate considerations of traumatic stress into programmatic policies, especially: participant selection process, program activities, and internal and external therapeutic resources.

There was no strong consensus among the respondents on whether or how traumatic stress factors into determination of a potential participant's suitability for the program. Generally, there are two dominant perspectives on which indicators related to traumatic stress should exclude participations. On one side, practitioners assert that indicators of violence make a participant unsuitable for the program. A few practitioners describe indicators of "violent tendencies that threatens other participants" or of "the individual's behavior that is life threatening to oneself" as grounds for exclusion from the program.

On the other side, the more common approach among practitioners is to conduct a pre-program assessment that may or may not include indicators of traumatic stress, though none of these indicators would make a participant unsuitable for the program. When determining whether particular indicators related to traumatic stress should exclude someone from the program, a practitioner cautions:

Psychosocial factors feed into each other forming a complex web. It might even be difficult to tell which factor is more influential in the behavioral patterns exhibited by the youth than the other. As such, sidelining indicators has not been to the best interest of our rehabilitation efforts.

Five practitioners state that they may conduct psychological assessments before the program to understand more about "the triggers" and background of the youth. According to one practitioner, "our diagnosis prior to any workshop consists of the collection mainly of qualitative information including but not limited to interviews, informal discussions and questionnaires." This pre-program process seems to be an important part of the program; out of the eleven respondents who affirmed conducting psychosocial

assessments, eight identified conducting the assessment before the program. Further, the practitioner building youth conflict resolution skills mentions “more intake” as a way to address traumatic stress with unlimited resources.

There are two potential reasons behind why these practitioners may not consider any elements related to trauma an exclusionary factor when determining program suitability. Either they believe that everyone has some history of traumatic stress and those with trauma can benefit from the program activities — “[our] workshops are a place to process any sort of traumatic experience” — or they rely more heavily on other positive indicators — “we choose participants that show maturity, know about the conflict, and have desire to make a change and engage in meaningful relationships with the ‘other side’.” Following this approach to determination of suitability, practitioners generally expect that issues related to traumatic stress may arise in the course of program activities and that the program activities are either intended or can naturally contribute to healing trauma.

These intake protocols, as outlined by practitioners, open programs to a wide range of trauma histories and degrees of functioning. According to respondents, indicators of traumatic stress are not specifically included in determinations of program suitability because the practitioners largely feel able to facilitate trauma-healing processes within their programs. Outside of one practitioner mentioning “mental illness making the communication impossible,” indicators of violence to others or self are the only exclusionary factors related to traumatic stress that practitioners say they consider in the selection process. Some programs target those exhibiting maladaptive behavior, such as “aggressive, rude, and bullies in school” or those youth “identified by their communities

as problematic and anti-social.” This suggests that practitioners recognize their limited capacities to handle more extreme cases of trauma, reconfirmed through endorsement by many practitioners of mental health referral systems in more serious cases, which will be described later in this section. From a psychological perspective, the program is thus open to anyone who is not exhibiting indicators of extreme distress manifesting in violence.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Despite a relatively small number of respondents compared to the peacebuilding field as a whole, the data collected is still useful in drawing lessons and feedback for peacebuilding practitioners and organizations in how to conceptualize and approach issues of traumatic stress when running programs for youth. This study offers glimpses into an emerging area of research and best practices in the field that has yet to be closely studied. Since respondents are drawn from different regions and peacebuilding modalities, emergent themes from their responses may illustrate larger global patterns of practice on these issues.

The findings represent practitioners' individual reflection on their judgment and skills related to issues of traumatic stress, which form the basis of the implications for what already has and what could be done to effectively approach these complex issues. As discussed in the Research Design and Methodology chapter, analyzing this data is useful insofar as it serves as a tool to assist practitioners in engaging in further reflection on this issue. The analysis of the findings is divided into three areas of implications for youth peacebuilding practice: Implications for Organizational Policies, Implications for Program Design, and Implications for Monitoring and Evaluation. These implications are based exclusively on practitioner reports and do not reflect analysis of the programs beyond the data collected through the survey.

Implications for Organizational Policies

Practitioners appear to want to improve their practice on addressing traumatic stress in their programs for youth. This is reflected in the positive survey responses to interest in training, but insufficient time or resources may temper this interest. That practitioners do not consistently prioritize addressing issues of traumatic stress may stem from a lack of understanding for how these issues relate to peacebuilding efforts. An additional reason may concern the time period allotted for the intervention; some practitioners indicated limited time to process issues of traumatic stress. This has been a critique of the peacebuilding field in not consistently dealing directly with underlying psychological and emotional issues due to the belief that there is not enough time within prototypical interventions for them to be transformed (Halperin & Pliskin, 2015).

With its focus on personal transformation, relationship-building, and skill-building processes, much of what practitioners identify as being central to their peacebuilding interventions can indeed offer support to participants in distress, but it requires that staff members have greater training on these issues. Training staff in the core aspects of traumatic stress and its impacts on youth can be a critical step in integrating trauma-sensitive principles into peacebuilding practice. When practitioners have greater knowledge about traumatic stress and capacities to teach youth basic skills for reducing stress, they can contribute to a positive healing environment (Dittmann & Jensen, 2013). Furthermore, through such training, practitioners can also learn how to manage their own reactions and stress in working with vulnerable populations at the heart of intergroup conflict. Without a foundation in traumatic stress, there is not only missed

opportunities to transform and heal underlying distress, but also greater likelihood of unintended harm as a result of practitioner action and inaction.

The following vignette offers an example of a school-based program in Rwanda promoting reconciliation efforts by helping students cope with the effects of violence-related trauma —fearfulness, unpredictable crying, insomnia, and hallucinations (Freedman et al., 2004). This story highlights how staff behavior can unknowingly cause further traumatization:

Schools help students by assigning teachers to keep children with such problems close to them for counseling. When this approach fails, they refer students to specialists in trauma counseling. Some focus groups participants worried, however, that the efforts to deal with trauma were generally ineffective and sometimes even punitive. Teachers do not possess the knowledge to adequately respond, leading a student to express concern that so-called inappropriate comments by a troubled student may lead to dismissal rather than assistance. One student, who was a genocide survivor, explained: if a child suffers from post-genocide trauma and he seeks some advice from the teacher, the latter won't explain to him how to deal with his problem; and then the student will have to take a disciplinary leave of absence, supposedly because he made inappropriate comments (254)!

Even though this example reflects an atypical peacebuilding intervention, the nature of the interactions may reflect similar challenges that peacebuilding practitioners face with youth in emotional distress over the course of their programs.

There are three concerns in the staff approaches to traumatic stress featured in this vignette. First, when youth share the emotional difficulties they face, it is important for those in positions of power to normalize reactions and respond in a supportive manner so that they feel acknowledged and safe in the relationship and in the program. Without this supportive response, youth may feel shame for disclosing such intimate details and continue hiding these distressing experiences from others. This participant who is

referred to counseling may have expressed experiences that were concerning to practitioners (e.g., substance abuse or self-harm behavior), yet were experiences shared by other members of the group. If the referral is perceived as a punitive measure, then those exhibiting similar behaviors may be less willing to disclose to practitioners. Second, if youth's comments are treated as "inappropriate," then others who may be experiencing similar distress may not feel safe to discuss those issues in the program, furthering a sense of silencing of their experience and thus potentially growing the traumatic impact.

Finally, mental health referral is an important step for those needing more specialized and intensive therapeutic treatment, but this strategy requires thoughtful implementation. A number of practitioners reference mental health referral as a core part of their approach to traumatic stress during the program, which can be efficacious or deleterious depending on how practitioners frame the referral with youth. Already feeling estranged from social supports and resources, youth can perceive mental health referrals as further isolating from others and as being labeled "crazy" and unfit for the program. The referral processes can unintentionally sever the same relationships that the program intends to strengthen if peers perceive the referred participant as being 'crazy.' A referral process that creates a smooth transition from the program through such techniques as psychoeducation, empathic responses, and confidentiality may shift youth perceptions of referral from a punitive to a supportive measure (Dittmann & Jensen, 2013). Despite being the most widely employed approach to issues of traumatic stress among peacebuilding practitioners, mental health referral alone is not sufficient healing strategy.

Relying on a mental health referral strategy to manage issues related to traumatic stress is not comprehensive enough in supporting youth in more moderate to severe distress for three principle reasons. First, globally, there tends to be limited resources available for mental health treatment. There is a significant global treatment gap for mental health: 56% for depression and 78% for alcoholism, for example. Mental health treatment also varies across regions, and developing countries often lack basic resources and services for mental health (Kohn, Saxena, Levav, & Saraceno, 2004).

Second, this referral strategy assumes that only those who exhibit severe symptoms need active, specialized support from those with greater expertise in trauma care. Active trauma healing practice can also extend to and benefit those who may not exhibit severe clinical symptoms but are still impacted by trauma. Depending on the cultural context in which the peacebuilding program is implemented, there may also be cultural-relevant healing modalities that can be integrated into program activities. Trauma healing is not limited to talk therapy with a licensed professional. Modification of typical peacebuilding interventions (e.g., non-violent communication) can include more typical therapeutic interventions (e.g., identifying and describing internal emotional states) to promote trauma healing in service of overarching peacebuilding goals. For example, within peacebuilding programs, trauma work can include grounding exercises that help young people develop awareness and control of somatic manifestations of trauma. Whatever the exact approach, there is indeed potential for trauma-sensitive practice to positively affect a broad set of participants.

Third, the point when practitioners untrained in identifying signs of traumatic stress symptoms determine that a participants' feelings, thoughts, and/or behaviors

warrant a mental health referral is the point when that person is crying out for help. Strong referral networks are essential so that those with more severe distress can get adequate treatment, but this strategy must be coupled with other approaches that can support youth before they reach this dire point of distress. Even basic staff training in trauma can increase a practitioners' ability to identify early signs that the effects of traumatic stress are more significant than practitioners can handle.

Implications for Program Design

Practitioners recognize that generating feelings of safety is an essential component of trauma healing in interventions, although creating 'safe space' is easier to proclaim and harder to maintain. Youth need to be in an environment with a felt sense of safety to move beyond a self-defense response mode and process their traumatic stress (Blaustein & Kinniburgh, 2010). As Judith Herman (1997) describes in her seminal work on trauma recovery, it is inconceivable to begin any therapeutic work "until a reasonable degree of safety has been achieved" by "focusing on control of the body and gradually [moving] outward toward control of the environment" to regain control of their emotions and thinking and to regain feelings of trust in relation to others (160). Establishing a safe environment is a complex undertaking. This is especially true in the context of peacebuilding when youth are asked to build trust with "the enemy."

Those treating traumatic stress and promoting trauma recovery have long focused on the necessity of safety in these processes. The complexity of creating safe space arises from the multi-dimensionality of the term, including the physical, the interpersonal, and the psychological (Welkin, 2015). Therefore, creating safe space is not a simple process that can arise spontaneously or assessed solely by external observation. Safety is an

internal felt experience that is dynamic and ever-changing, requiring that those creating “safe space” bring deliberate attention to this process.

Practitioners identified safe space as a key aspect of program dynamics since it facilitates the environment in which traumatic stress can be shared and healed. Safe space is indeed an essential component to trauma healing. Those practitioners that endorse allowing participants to lead discussions on traumatic stress may be concerned with retraumatizing participants. Following this line of thinking, practitioners may believe that if youth decide when and how to bring up these issues, then there is lesser likelihood of creating further psychological harm. Yet, even if a practitioner perceives the program environment as being safe, it can still feel unsafe for participants. Unintentionally, the program may give greater value to those with insights into emotional experience and with greater facility in expressing those experiences. Assuming that the environment is actually considered safe by participants, creating the environment for discussion does not necessarily mean that the conversations that should be happening around traumatic stress are indeed taking place.

When practitioners hand control to participants to decide whether or not to bring up their issues of traumatic stress, the “safe space” can be compromised and in its stead a “brave space” can be created (see Arao & Clemens, 2013). It may be only those with extraordinary courage to bring issues of traumatic stress into the group themselves when there is no explicit endorsement and encouragement by the program facilitators to do so. The “courage factor” is an especially important consideration given that a common coping strategy in coping with traumatic stress is to disconnect and avoid those thoughts and feelings.

Allowing youth to choose whether to bring up issues of traumatic stress can also lead to misinterpretation of the underlying distress. An ethnographic study of Ugandan children aged 9-16 years, who were exposed to extreme events in northern, highlights this dynamic. Even though initial observations suggested that the children were not suffering from psychological distress since no one brought up no complaints, children did not talk about conflict-related distress because of cultural values regarding respect for others and desire not to hurt those who did not want to speak about their suffering (Akello et al., 2010). The complaints did indeed surface, but through somatic complaints, which were treated with pharmaceuticals and herbal remedies to soothe from the physical aches and pains and, in turn, numb them from the emotional pain. This study illustrates the potential pitfalls in relying on youth to speak about their trauma rather than taking more active approaches to trauma healing and further supports inclusion of psychosocial indicators into program evaluation.

While it is commendable that practitioners intend programs to be a setting in which youth can process their distress, making programs appropriate spaces for this intrapersonal and interpersonal growth may require additional steps. Core techniques of the peacebuilding cannon —particularly communication techniques— mirror cornerstones of therapeutic approaches to treating trauma. These techniques can be complimented by trauma-sensitive practice to create the supportive conditions necessary to process and heal traumatic stress. Belief in youth resilience does not justify limiting the scope of services in peacebuilding programs for youth exposed to traumatic stressors. As Betancourt and Khan (2008) state: “a resilience perspective offers one way to think about building on naturally occurring strengths in prevention and intervention

programmes, but it should not be used to minimize the gravity of war for children and families or limit the scope of services” (324).

One potential enhancement of peacebuilding curriculum could include psychoeducation in order to normalize emotional and behavioral reactions to traumatic stress and also to help participants to process and integrate trauma into their personal narrative (Briere & Scott, 2013). This trauma-sensitive approach does not compel youth to dive into uncharted traumatic waters without a roadmap to guide them along the journey; it can prepare them for what could be just down the road. By including trauma-related content up front, participants still have control over when and how these issues are discussed. In this integrated approach, there is greater permission to do so in a way that promotes a culture of healing within peacebuilding programs.

There is potential for practitioners to create cultures of healing by engaging youth social systems into considerations for interventions. Only one practitioner mentioned engagement with families as part of an approach to working with traumatized youth. Given what we understand of the key role of family and social support in either protecting or exposing youth to traumatic stress, an integrated trauma-sensitive peacebuilding strategy should consider how to include these systems within interventions. Practitioners are already constrained by existing resources and expectations, but there may be creative opportunities to engage youths’ immediate social systems in peacebuilding programs. For example, during group discussions, practitioners can include discussions of how being in the program impacts participants’ relationships outside the group.

There are social implications for youth entering a program that promotes connectedness and reconciliation with “the enemy” within an environment that may not support such activities. If program participation negatively affects important social relationships, it can limit the positive long-term outcomes, such as increased empathy. Interventions that contain multi-layered approaches that support healthy families and communities in turn can support healthy and conflict-mediating resilience among youth, as studied in Palestinian youth in the West Bank and Gaza (Al-Krenawi & Kimberley, 2014). Since these relationships with family, peers, and the surrounding community are protective factors against the onset of traumatic stress symptoms, it is critical that these relationships are not broken when the program ends. Youth who have the social resources to manage the stress of reintegration back into their communities post-intervention may be better placed to continue developing capacities to be change makers.

With the focus of many programs being to create social change leaders, young people may also benefit from having family members buy-in to this process. Young people often do not have the social capital within the community to nurture a culture of peace alone. Family systems can offer support to youth as they transition back into communities, which may perceive program activities as a betrayal. As many caregivers and families may also be managing their own distress, engaging the social ecological system of the young person can counteract the cyclical nature of traumatic stress as it passes between family members and across generations.

Practitioners report having limited time during interventions to do trauma healing, so peacebuilding programs could be enhanced by maintaining longer-term investment and engagement with participants, though this is not always realistic. Even after

organized conflict has ceased, the structural inequalities embedded in the socioeconomic landscape can continue to weigh on the social and emotional wellbeing of young people (Browne & Dwyer, 2014). Since trauma healing can be a long-term process, practitioners must also be aware of the limits of what they can do in service of trauma healing. Brief interventions are far from ideal when considering the depth of the issues at stake, but they can be impactful in reducing symptoms of psychological distress. For example, a brief intervention to treat traumatic stress symptoms has been found to be effective in treating youth, who receive an average of ten sessions in their community (Webb, Hayes, Grasso, Laurenceau, & Deblinger, 2014). Practitioners should focus on what is realistic for short-term interventions, especially considering the contexts in which the participants are living, which may include ongoing traumatic stressors. Focusing on activities that can give youth the tools to continue healing and growing without program support may be an effective area of intervention.

Since social and emotional skills and peer relationships are cornerstones of healthy development, then it is critical for peacebuilding practitioners to take a longer-term perspective on these processes when youth are back in their home communities. This begs the question: can broken intergroup social relationships post-intervention negatively affect program participants? There may be significant social and romantic relationships formed within these programs, which are central to garnering youth self-esteem and resiliency. In contrast, those who lose those relationships due to physical barriers (e.g., the separation wall between Israel and the West Bank) or social barriers (e.g., bullying or stigmatization for making friends with the “enemy”) could increase the risk of additional psychosocial problems, leading one further into isolation (Duncan &

Arnston, 2004). These dynamics are especially important given the interest of many organizations to take youth outside of their communities to escape the structural inequalities of these areas and promote safety. How youth fare over the long-term once they are back in those communities with the same structural inequalities in place is an area of important investigation.

It is not always clear how much time is enough time to achieve both peacebuilding- and trauma-healing objectives. Unfortunately, there are no clear answers. Ideally, there would be consistent engagement with participants from when they are young over the course of their most formative years so that practitioners have the time to dive into the substantive issues of the conflict and to engage in deep psychosocial work. The realities of donor cycles and expectations make it difficult to have programs span such a period of time. The question of the effectiveness of peacebuilding approaches to traumatic stress interventions targeting traumatic stress in improving intergroup attitudes and overall health underscores value of monitoring and evaluation for psychosocial indicators.

Implications for Monitoring and Evaluation

Participant assessment processes focus primarily on extreme indicators of traumatic stress (i.e., violence) and can be enhanced if they are multi-dimensional and assess functioning in different aspects of participants' lives. The pre-program intake process can give practitioners a more comprehensive understanding of the context in which participants live and the types of emotional and behavioral issues participants face. Even though intake processes appear important to programming, there tends to be minimal regarding psychosocial functioning. Practitioners need to have a greater

awareness of these factors so that they are prepared to respond to participants' needs as they arise over the course of the program. This assessment could include indicators of "competence, assets, strengths, and protective factors along with symptoms, problems, risks, deficiencies, and vulnerabilities" (Duncan and Arntson, 2004, p. 11). Youth—and indeed all human beings—have natural capacities to cope with difficult situations. By focusing on strengths, this assessment supports this assertion that traumatic stress is not inevitable, but can be overcome and transformed in positive ways.

The finding that there is minimal assessment of psychosocial factors in peacebuilding programs may occur for three reasons. First, practitioners may perceive these factors as irrelevant or unimportant to peacebuilding priorities. Many practitioners recognize that traumatic stress is an issue youth face daily, so asking about traumatic stress may seem like an unnecessary or redundant step in an already constrained assessment process. However, there is value in understanding nuances of participants' trauma histories. Practitioners can gain a more complete picture of youth functioning across different areas of their life, such as home and school, which may promote or impede progress in the program. Further, eliciting information regarding a range of psychosocial functioning can highlight different ways that traumatic stress may manifest (e.g., physiological symptoms and cultural idioms of distress), as discussed previously.

Practitioners may also fear retraumatizing youth if they ask questions about their trauma history. An example of this tension can be found in discussions of suicide. There is common belief that asking someone if they are suicidal can trigger someone into wanting to take their life. On the contrary, not asking the difficult questions regarding one's mental health can further silence issues that are already rarely openly discussed.

When practitioners exhibit comfort with these issues, they can elicit the same comfort in youth to share their psychosocial difficulties.

Finally, practitioners may believe that peacebuilding programs are not equipped to heal trauma. Therefore, there is no need to ask about it. For example, if symptoms of depression or anxiety are identified during the pre-program assessment, practitioners may feel paralyzed by this knowledge and the feeling that they do not have the expertise to handle or the time to prioritize such psychological issues. As previously described, basic training in traumatic stress may give practitioners the confidence in knowing how to approach these issues. From this training and institutional support, practitioners may give greater priority to addressing traumatic stress in the programming and to tracking psychosocial indicators.

The potential psychological risks that may arise from aspects of peacebuilding programs can be mitigated through more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of psychosocial indicators. The impact of any particular approach cannot be assessed solely by external observation since traumatic stress tends to lurk below the surface; those suffering from its effects often want to hide its existence. Understanding what is feasible in trauma healing in service of peacebuilding objectives could be done through overall psychosocial assessment of wellbeing. Indicators of pure peacebuilding outcomes (e.g., trust, stereotypes, prejudice) can miss important aspects of participants' lived experience that may inhibit future growth in the areas targeted by the intervention. For example, if a young person has difficulty sleeping and concentrating in school because of traumatic flashbacks, this might compromise their ability to maintain relationships with their peers.

Furthermore, it is important to be aware not only of the positive benefits of the program, but also the potential negative unintended consequences of interventions.

Practitioners working towards reconciliation between groups in conflict can make assumptions of what processes are healing without really knowing their psychological impacts. For example, in the case of the Gacaca tribunals in Rwanda, witnesses of the truth telling process reported higher levels of depression and PTSD symptoms than those who did not witness the proceedings (Brounéus, 2010). One explanation for these findings is that witnesses ruminate on past trauma rather than successfully processing it (Brounéus, 2010). The question of chronic rumination is critical for those practitioners that rely on pure discussion of traumatic stress and that seek to draw upon past events to transform current attitudes and behaviors in the conflict.

Organizations that initiate empirical investigation of the healing power of practitioners' primary approaches to trauma healing, particularly 'safe space' and mental health referral networks, can garner greater reflection on the most effective of trauma approaches in peacebuilding programs. This self-assessment of standard practice on these issues may offer even deeper insights into what approaches are most effective with this population.

CONCLUSION

Youth are increasingly exposed to traumatic experiences within intergroup conflict that can lead to a range of adaptations to cope with the distress, which, in turn, can also impede peacebuilding processes. The peacebuilding field has yet to strongly consider how traumatic stress factors into strategic approaches to breaking cycles of violence, especially those that seek to transform intergroup relationships. There has been scholarship that explores trauma more theoretically as a way to understand the intractability of particular intergroup conflicts. However, few in the field have tackled this issue in a way that offers insights into how peacebuilding practice needs to be modified and expanded in light of the realities of the effects of traumatic stress on youth.

There is a tendency in the peacebuilding field to avoid going too deeply into the underlying emotional and psychosocial dynamics during interventions. This may be due to the assumption that it may be impossible to ever transform these deep emotions. Contrastly, advances in social neuroscience show that humans have infinite potential for change. Further, psychology literature highlights how the emotional experience of intergroup conflict is a core piece of the conflict resolution puzzle that cannot be ignored. The increasing instability across the globe for youth necessitates peacebuilding consider traumatic stress when preparing and supporting youth to become the leaders of peaceful societies.

Key Findings

In developing a framework for trauma-sensitive peacebuilding practice, it is necessary to first understand how practitioners conceptualize and approach these issues. There is a disconnect between practitioner conceptualizations that exposure to traumatic stressors significantly affects youth within intergroup conflict and how practitioners approach these issues during peacebuilding interventions. Overall, practitioners employ indirect trauma healing strategies that let youth decide when and how to process traumatic stress, unless the issues are so severe that mental health professionals are needed. There is also infrequently conduct psychosocial assessments as part of the program evaluation process.

The following table presents an overview of the primary working assumptions embedded in participants' reflections on their practice in working with youth exposed to traumatic stressors. Each assumption is followed by an analysis, based in the literature, of the potential gaps in practitioner conceptualizations and approaches to traumatic stress.

Table 1

Key Findings of Peacebuilding Practitioners' Principle Assumptions	How Prototypical Assumptions May Need to be Reconsidered and Revisited
<i>Conceptualizing Traumatic Stress</i>	
Youth are continuously exposed to traumatic stressors within conflict and most have trauma histories and memories, which can be conjured in the daily lives of participants.	Trauma is not only a phenomenon of the past, but is also (and more often) chronic and ongoing within intergroup conflict contexts.
Exposure to traumatic stressors with intergroup conflict can affect youth's	With developmentally appropriate, trauma-sensitive interventions embedded in

emotional, cognitive, and relational functioning, and practitioners create strategies to support youth in developing new patterns.	peacebuilding programs, these impairments can be transformed to strengthen youth's ability to achieve changes sought within programs over the short- and long-term.
Youth are resilient with innate abilities to overcome traumatic stress.	Even though most youth will not develop severe psychological distress as a result of exposure to traumatic stressors, conflict erodes the factors (e.g., social support systems) that promote resilience. Further, some youth in peacebuilding programs may still be experiencing varying degrees of psychological distress. Practitioners cannot rely on a resilience theory when deciding not engage in trauma-sensitive programming.
Youth are more concerned with issues other than dealing with their traumatic past, such as dating and school.	When experiencing psychological distress, most tend to avoid dealing with the roots of the trauma. Further, the effects of traumatic stress can manifest itself in other areas of one's life, even if one chooses to avoid it.
<i>Approaching Traumatic Stress</i>	
Trauma is not often a focus of program activities or part of the curriculum.	Psychoeducation has been shown to improve symptoms of psychological distress, so inclusion of trauma into programs and curriculum can positively affect participants' wellbeing.
When traumatic stress is a part of program activities, it is usually within dialogue and discussion groups.	Groups can be effective platforms to achieve program goals as well as process traumatic stress, with appropriate trauma-sensitive modifications.
Engendering 'safe space' creates the conditions for traumatic stress to be healed.	A practitioner-designated 'safe space' may not be safe for everyone, especially considering the power differentials embedded in intergroup conflict.
Youth decide whether or not they discuss issues related to traumatic stress within programs.	When the burden of exposing one's issues of trauma is on the traumatized person, it requires unusual courage for someone to come forward and speak to a group about

	these issues.
Most programs do not exclude youth from participation based on indicators of traumatic stress.	As one practitioner notes, there is difficulty in exclusion based on indicators of traumatic stress since traumatic stress is often a reality for all participants. As such, programs are inviting those with a range of traumatic stress, which necessitates that practitioners modify their work in consideration of these underlying dynamics.
Of those who do exclude participants, most practitioners identify indicators of violence as the only exclusionary factor in determining program suitability.	Indicators of violence may signal that a young person suffers from traumatic stress, but it may not. Single, one-dimensional indicators may miss people experiencing significant effects of traumatic stress, so participant assessment needs to draw on other psychosocial and therapeutic tools.
Allowing youth to exclude themselves from program activities if deals with a sensitive topic with which the participant has personal experience.	Although retraumatization is possible if participants are put into situations without appropriate support, having participants avoid difficult, potentially triggering situations side steps the real issues and may contribute to the silencing of their distress.
It is important to be cognizant of world events and have student leaders help in ensuring what present conflicts affect students in the program.	Having people from the communities assisting in program implementation can offer practitioners insights into the issues of importance to the communities and the unique idioms of their distress.
Programs can help youth building coping mechanisms for anger, stress, and other triggers to manage issues of traumatic stress.	Young people have great capacities for change, so building new skill sets to help individuals manage distress and create new patterns of functioning can promote healthy individuals and communities.
Speaking families can help them understand how their behavior affects their child.	Engaging youth's social support systems can bolster the protective factors critical for youth resilience in the wake of exposure to traumatic stressors, although it needs to be done in a culturally appropriate and ethical manner.

<p>Even though most programs have long-term engagement with participants, programs may not be long enough to heal traumatic stress.</p>	<p>Even short-term therapeutic interventions can reduce distress in participants, yet trauma healing is usually a long-term process. Youth can benefit from longer-term interventions that are emotionally supportive, through follow-up and other types of engagement, especially for those interventions that take youth out of their home context.</p>
<p>Some programs offer psychosocial and counseling services within the organization, which can include religious leaders and other volunteers.</p>	<p>Internal therapeutic resources can support not only program participants, but also peacebuilding practitioners in employing trauma-sensitive approaches and in managing the daily stress of working in this field.</p>
<p>In more severe cases, most practitioners rely on mental health referrals.</p>	<p>The point at which a practitioner determines that a mental health referral is appropriate may be the point at which the distress has become so severe that the young person is crying out for help; there may have been earlier opportunities for practitioner intervention. Unless done in a thoughtful manner, referral could have the opposite effect by making the one referred feel punished or ‘crazy’ for disclosing their distress.</p>
<p>There is a reliance on and need for robust community-based therapeutic resources.</p>	<p>In many communities across the world, there are few mental health resources. So practitioners cannot always expect sufficient therapeutic resources for their participants when determining how to best support someone in distress.</p>
<p>When utilized, psychosocial evaluations of peacebuilding programs are utilized inconsistently, in terms of timing and types of indicators.</p>	<p>Psychosocial evaluations allow practitioners to understand the layers of traumatic stress that may be lurking under the surface of youth functioning. These evaluations also give insight into how peacebuilding programs are effectively promoting or hampering healing processes.</p>

<p>There is a great interest among practitioners in more training in and resources on traumatic stress.</p>	<p>Without becoming therapists themselves, peacebuilding practitioners have the capacities to build on their existing skill-set to play a more active role in trauma healing processes.</p>
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Although many working assumptions identified within practitioner reflections impart strong intention to support young people in their healing process, the findings reveal a number of gaps in how practitioners conceptualize and approach traumatic stress. Given the growing literature on the psychological wellbeing of youth in intergroup conflict, there are greater opportunities to revisit the prototypical assumptions and intuition driving peacebuilding practice. With greater collaboration and communication between these fields, more opportunities to develop integrated, interdisciplinary approaches to these issues may arise and drive the peacebuilding field toward greater innovation at this intersection.

Limitations

There are three principal components of the study that could have been implemented differently to strengthen this qualitative evaluation: the number and type of respondents, the inclusion/exclusion criteria, and the content and wording of the survey questions.

On the first point, a case study could have offered greater depth of understanding of how both organizations and practitioners approach issues of traumatic stress. As a result of utilizing an online survey method, the study does not include as much detailed information to illustrate the complex dynamics at play when practitioners determine which approach is best in serving youth psychological health. Further, an in-depth case

study could have further analyzed how youth program participants themselves experience these approaches. This study could only speculate as to the types of psychological issues participants face and their experience during and after the program. In addition, the online survey does not allow for the evaluator to build relationships with participants. Building rapport with respondents can help them to feel comfortable to share both opportunities and challenges in managing these issues. Furthermore, in this format, there were no opportunities to clarify responses through a follow up, which would have been particularly helpful for those respondents whose first language is not English. Unintentionally, greater attention and authority may have been implicitly given to those whose native command of English brought greater comprehension of answers and thus greater coherence and depth in the responses.

Second, the inclusion criteria —currently or having worked in a youth peacebuilding program— was intended to cast a wide net of diverse practitioners. However, the wording of the criteria may have unintentionally limited the types and number of study participants. The language for the criteria was predicated on the assertion that the term “youth peacebuilding” was inclusive of a wide range of practitioners, which was falsified shortly after opening the survey; nine practitioners who began the survey did not self-classify as a “youth peacebuilding” practitioner. For example, a practitioner working with refugee youth in Denver sent an email to the researcher stating that they were interested in participating and asked whether their work would qualify as “youth peacebuilding.” This example reflects how this term has varying interpretations in practice and, thus, may have limited the types of respondents. Those

that chose to participate likely came into the study with a previous familiarity with this issue and interest in contributing to the knowledge base.

Finally, the survey questions could have elicited greater quality and clarify of information. With regards to clarity, a number of survey responses contained confusing or unrelated data. For example, one question asked practitioners whether they have follow-up and longer-term engagement with participants. The answer to this question does not shed light on what “follow-up” and “longer-term” actually means. These terms can signify different lengths of time and type of engagement to different practitioners, so the question needed to be more specific. With regards to content, the definitions of “traumatic stress” and “psychosocial” included in the survey may not have been clear enough for those unfamiliar with the terminology. Two practitioners specifically mentioned not understanding what these terms meant. The definitions included sought simplicity without including jargon, but there may have been meaning lost in that process. Creating an opportunity for practitioners themselves to define these terms could have offered greater insight into their conceptualization of traumatic stress.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a contribution to understanding best practice for peacebuilding practitioners in approaching issues of traumatic stress when working with youth.

Directions for Future Research

What we understand about how traumatic stress affects youth social and psychological functioning can inform and enhance peacebuilding practice. The issues related to traumatic stress are not outside the boundaries of the peacebuilding field to be delegated to psychologists and social workers. Rather, traumatic stress can and should

become a key component of best peacebuilding practice. This integration of trauma-sensitive practice into peacebuilding interventions cannot wait; the psychological risk for those youth living in these chronically stressful conflict environments is too great. As one practitioner mentions, everyone living within conflict-affected contexts has some history of traumatic stress, so peacebuilding practitioners should begin building greater capacities to support healing processes for these youth. Practitioner reflections illustrate that traumatic stress an issue to which they have dedicated some attention and about which they want to learn more. The conceptualizations and approaches discussed in this study are an important step in developing best practice on this issue, although there is room to grow and improve.

A potential first step in capacity building on issues of traumatic stress is bolstering psychosocial assessment and evaluations. It is impossible to know how youth are emotionally experiencing an intervention without practitioners asking the question. Instead of avoiding sensitive questions regarding psychosocial symptoms, practitioners can introduce culturally and developmentally appropriate assessment tools in order to track whether program activities positively or negative shift this symptomology; improving symptoms have implications for the attitude and behavioral changes sought within peacebuilding initiatives. This assessment should take place over the short- and long-term considering the potential for transitions back into communities after interventions away from one's home community can potentially have traumatic affects on youth.

Building awareness of among practitioners of traumatic stress is another important step in developing trauma-sensitive peacebuilding practice. Practitioners'

ability to identify and then adopt proactive trauma healing strategies may offer great insight into how these issues manifest in programs and how practitioners can best support those in distress. This knowledge can permeate throughout the entire programmatic design process, as trauma becomes part of the organizational lexicon and the lens through which various issues can be addressed.

Adopting trauma-sensitive practice does not preclude the possibility that a young person will be in need of greater care than the peacebuilding program can offer. Yet this fact does not preclude the need to be sensitive to and care for those who may be experiencing milder—and still significant—distress. Peacebuilding is a viable avenue for healing traumatic wounds if assumptions about what is healing are abandoned and advances from other fields are adopted to inform trauma-sensitive peacebuilding practice. Awareness of the psychosocial dimensions of peacebuilding is critical not only to achieving peacebuilding objectives and program goals, but also to ensure that no additional and unnecessary harm is inflicted on this vulnerable population. As these youth grow in abilities to cope and manage the distress of traumatic events, they are better placed to become the leaders of social change movements, fundamentally shaping the course of conflict and breaking cycles of intergroup violence.

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APPENDIX A. SURVEY QUESTIONS

Thank you for willingness to complete this survey. You will first be asked to review more detailed information regarding participation in this study. You will then be directed to the survey questions.

[Informed Consent]

Invitation To Participate In A Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study about the psychological dimensions of youth peacebuilding programs. We appreciate your contributions to this survey. You are being asked to participate because of your expertise in implementing peacebuilding programs in conflict-affected areas and working with youth.

Description Of Subject Involvement

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to fill out one survey. This will take about 30-40 minutes to complete.

Possible Risks And Discomforts

There are no risks associated with this study because the data collection is completely anonymous and the topic is not sensitive.

Possible Benefits Of The Study

If you agree to take part in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you. However, information gathered in this study may offer insight into how practitioners use trauma-informed approaches in youth peacebuilding initiatives.

Study Compensation/Cost

You will not receive any payment for being in the study. You will not be expected to pay any costs related to the study.

Confidentiality, Storage And Future Use Of Data

To keep your information safe, the researcher will not attach your name to any data; a study number will be used instead. The researcher will follow the survey protocol provided by Qualtrics. For more information about Qualtrics, please visit www.qualtrics.com. The researcher will not share any information except to academic advisors involved in the research. We will not share any information via social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). The researchers will retain the data for as long as it is needed for the study or future studies. The data will not contain specific information

that could identify you (i.e., name, institutional affiliation, email). The research will protect your information via password to get into any laptop or computer that contains any research material. The results from the research may be shared at a meeting. The results from the research may be in published articles. Your individual identity will be kept private when information is presented or published.

Who will see my research information?

Although we will do everything we can to keep your records a secret, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The records that identify you may be looked at by others (i.e., Human Subject Research Committee). All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. Also, if you tell us something that makes us believe that you or others have been or may be physically harmed, we may report that information to the appropriate agencies.

Voluntary Nature of the Study

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop the survey at any time. If you skip a question, you will still be able to submit your responses. If you decide to withdraw early, all the data that you provided to the researchers will be destroyed.

Contact Information

The researcher carrying out this study is Liza Hester. If you have any questions, you may email them at liza.hester@gmail.com. If the researcher cannot be reached, or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher about; (1) questions, concerns, or complaints regarding this study, (2) research participant rights, (3) research-related injuries, or (4) other human subjects issues, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at +1 303-871-4015 or by emailing IRBChair@du.edu, or you may contact the Office for Research Compliance by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu, calling +1 303-871-4050 or in writing (University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121 USA).

Agreement to be in this Study

I have read this information about the study. I understand the possible risks and benefits of this study. I know that being in this study is voluntary. By signing electronically and clicking “Agree”, I agree to all the statements above and am ready to begin the survey.

Your Electronic Signature

Date

Please provide your email address if you would like a summary of the study findings sent to you.

[Survey Questions]

Your Name

Affiliated Organization

Country and/or Region Where You Work

Q1 Have you or are you currently working with a youth peacebuilding program?

Yes (1)

No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q2 There are many dimensions of building peace in conflict-affected societies. In what ways is your youth peacebuilding program intended to improve conditions in the conflict? You may select more than one option from the following theories of change.

- Individual Change: engaging in personal transformation of consciousness, attitudes, behaviors, and skills (1)
- Healthy Relationships and Connections: reducing division and prejudice between groups and fostering strong intergroup relationships (2)
- Withdrawal of the Resources of War: stopping the supply of people and goods into the war-making system (3)
- Reduction of Violence: interrupting cycles of violence through such mechanisms as ceasefires and proliferation of nonviolent action (4)
- Root Causes/Justice: addressing the underlying issues of injustice and oppression, including threats to identity and security (5)
- Institutional Development: establishing social institutions that promote values of equity, justice, and fair allocation of resources (6)
- Grassroots Mobilization: creating conditions for political leaders to make peace by mobilizing enough people who oppose war (7)
- Economics: changing the incentives to war making so that people and policy makers make decisions to bring peace (8)
- Public Attitudes: building tolerance in a society by changing public attitudes and the prejudice, misperceptions, and intolerance that underlies war and violence (9)
- Other (10) _____

Q3 What do you consider to be the goal(s) of your youth peacebuilding program?

Q4 Does your organization conduct psychosocial assessments of participants (i.e., how effectively a person is able to live and work/study in their community as healthy individuals)?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Most of the Time (4)
- Always (5)

If Never Is Selected, Then Skip To Some organizations conceive of peaceb...

Q5 When do you conduct this psychosocial assessment? You may select more than one option.

- Before the Program (1)
- During the Program (2)
- End of the Program (3)

Q6 Please describe how the psychosocial assessment tool was developed for your program.

Q7 Some organizations conceive of peacebuilding programs as an ongoing engagement with participants over a long period of time, while others choose to work intensely with participants over a shorter period of time. In your program, do you have follow up and longer-term engagement with participants?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Another variable organizations may co...

Q8 Does the follow up include assessments of psychosocial functioning?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Most of the Time (4)
- Always (5)

Q9 Does your organization consider a participant's history of exposure to traumatic stressors (such as insults, humiliation, and group punishment) when determining their suitability for your program?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Most of the Time (4)
- Always (5)

If None Is Selected, Then Skip To Does your program atte...

Q10 Please describe how your organization screens potential participants for a history of traumatic stress.

Q11 What types of psychosocial indicators would exclude a participant from the program?

Q12 Does your program support participants in creating connections and relationships with those they have learned to hate or fear?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Does your program attempt to shift ne...

Q13 How do you assess change in the capacities needed to build these connections and relationships?

Q14 To build intergroup relationships, some organizations encourage participants to discuss the traumatic events of the past. Do you believe that exploring these past experiences is an important part of building relationships?

- Not at all Important (1)
- Very Unimportant (2)
- Somewhat Unimportant (3)
- Neither Important nor Unimportant (4)
- Somewhat Important (5)
- Very Important (6)
- Extremely Important (7)

Q15 Does your program attempt to shift negative intergroup attitudes among participants?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To Does your program build “resilience” ...

Q16 When assessing attitude change, some organizations measure the positive facets of intergroup attitudes (such as tolerance and respect) and others focus on the negative emotions (such as anger and fear). How much does your program focus on these negative emotional dimensions?

- None (1)
- Little (2)
- Some (3)
- A Lot (4)

Q17 Does your program aim to build “resilience” (i.e., coping with the effects of traumatic stress) among participants?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To How much are issues re...

Q18 What activities and/or approaches do you use to build resilience?

Q19 How much are issues related to traumatic stress discussed in your organization?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Most of the Time (4)
- Always (5)

If Never Is Selected, Then Skip To Click to write the question text

Q20 Please describe how issues related to traumatic stress are included in organizational strategies.

Q21 How satisfied are you with the way your organization addresses the issues of traumatic stress among participants?

- Very Dissatisfied (1)
- Dissatisfied (2)
- Somewhat Dissatisfied (3)
- Neutral (4)
- Somewhat Satisfied (5)
- Satisfied (6)
- Very Satisfied (7)

Q22 Please describe your degree of satisfaction with how your organization addresses issues of traumatic stress.

Q23 Do you think traumatic stress is a factor in undermining participants' ability to achieve the changes you seek through the program activities?

- Never (1)
- Rarely (2)
- Sometimes (3)
- Often (4)
- All of the Time (5)

If Never Is Selected, Then Skip To

Traumatic stress can e...

Q24 Please offer an example of how traumatic stress was a factor in program activities.

Q25 Traumatic stress can affect a young person's cognitive, behavioral, and emotional functioning, such as lower levels of forgiveness and increased aggression. In working with youth, have you dealt with issues related to traumatic stress?

- Not At All (1)
- Occasionally (2)
- Frequently (3)

If Not At All Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Block

Q26 How have you dealt with these issues related to traumatic stress?

Q27 How would you have dealt with this situation ideally?

Q28 How much is it a priority for you to address issues of traumatic stress among participants?

- Not a Priority (1)
- Slight Priority (2)
- Priority (3)
- Strong Priority (4)
- Very Strong Priority (5)

Q29 If you had unlimited resources, how would you address these issues of traumatic stress among youth?

Q30 If a training (or another similar resource) on these issues were to be made available to you, what level of interest would you have in participating?

- No Interest (1)
- Slight Interest (2)
- Interest (3)
- Strong Interest (4)
- Very Strong Interest (5)

Q31 If you have any additional comments or thoughts, feel free to describe those here.

APPENDIX B. LIST OF DE-IDENTIFIED RESPONDENTS

	Affiliated Organization	Country and/or Region Where you Work	Goals of Youth Peacebuilding Program
1	Seeds of Peace	Israel	Our goals are: / 1. To allow teenagers from opposite sides of the conflict to have a healthy, guided dialogue in order for them to be able to create long lasting relationships and in order for them to be able to explore their own thoughts and feelings on the conflict. / 2. To empower the youth - give them leadership tools, dialogue tools and knowledge so they can develop into young leaders in their communities /
2	United Network of Young Peacebuilders	The Netherlands	Giving youth-led peacebuilding organizations greater support and space to conduct their activities, whilst providing a voice for change at the international level.
3	Village Care Initiatives Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	We consider community transformation of power as the goal through training; giving community leaders information and providing for them a platform where they can come together to discuss and agree what's best for them. We facilitate village initiatives that are rooted entirely in the ideas and resources of the community using what

			we call Outcomes, Practices, and Open Space.
4	Mother of Hope Cameroon	Cameroon	Transforming Youths for a better Tomorrow
5	National Integrated Development Association (NIDA)	Pakistan	-
6	University of Bradford	International	To reduce violence but addressing the root causes and built social infrastructures for peace to avoid relapse
7	Seeds of Peace	Israel	Creating critical thinkers with leadership skills who will create a ripple effect within their communities
8	Peace Advocacy International	Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)/Africa	To build a culture of peace and creating awareness among the youths by stopping them to join armed groups or militia groups in Eastern Congo DRC.
9	International Centre of Nonviolence	KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa	To create safe spaces within which young people can reassess their lives and choices, in conditions that promote collaboration and mutual support
10	African Community Center	Colorado	Our mission is to be a "group of international high school students who are dedicated to learning about each other, accepting one another, and welcoming new friends." This mission statement was developed by the youth in our refugee youth program, International CITY.

11	The Conflict Center	Colorado	<p>Youth are faced with more choices and challenges than ever before and at much younger ages. Many experience strong emotions like anger but have never learned to manage their emotions in healthy and productive ways. / Identify multiple choices for any one decision / Consider potential positive and negative consequences of these choices / Stop and think before acting / Communicate needs, wants and feelings in a healthy and productive way / Understand the difference between passive, aggressive and assertive uses of power / Recognize and understand the positive and negative attributes of anger / Communicate needs, wants and feelings more assertively / Recognize the physiological signs of anger, as well as personal triggers / Utilize cooling off techniques to de-escalate their anger / Problem solve using the 6-step method / Identify realistic alternatives to fighting</p>
12	Living Water Community	Caribbean	-
13	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS)	South East Asia	Transforming the individual and collective mindsets and attitudes of young people
14	Youth Move for Development	Burundi	Entrepreneurship and employment

15	Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies, University of Jos	Jos, Nigeria/Africa	Attitude change and relationship building
16	NGO	Middle East	Fostering reconciliation at the community level
17	PeaceJam Foundation	Denver, USA	To create young leaders committed to positive change in themselves, their communities, and the world through the inspiration of Nobel Peace Laureates who pass on the spirit, skills, and wisdom they embody.
18	Sadaka-Reut Arab Jewish Youth Partnership	Israel	Overall Goal: To develop Jewish and Palestinian activists who will contribute to the promotion of an equal and just society in Israel. Specific Objectives: 1. Participants will gain political awareness of injustices, discrimination and the Jewish-Palestinian conflict, and will change attitudes towards their social roles and their responsibilities to create social change; 2. Participants will adopt partnership as a method and a solution to facilitate and end to the Israel-Palestine conflict; 3. Participants will be empowered to take action to create positive social change in Israel.
19	AFJD	Cameroun	Provide work, voluntary program, fund Youth organization In local level, provide more scholarship to African

			youth
20	Peace in Focus	Mexico	<p>Our main goal is to recognize young people as protagonists and to encourage them to take leading roles to affect change in their communities. We do this through participatory photography. First we focus on the "story of self" whereby participants reflect on their identity. Then we focus on communities and the young person's role in their community. Finally, we focus on their ability to affect change through a call to action and digital storytelling and campaigns.</p>
21	WorldLink Program at Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice	Baja Mexico and San Diego	<p>To provide innovative and experiential focus on global education so that students can learn about issues facing us locally and internationally and engage in thoughtful discussions about solutions in a forum where their voices are heard and valued.</p>