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# THE SOCIOLOGY OF EVERYDAY LIFE PEACEBUILDING

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# Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict

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# The Sociology of Everyday Life Peacebuilding

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*This book is dedicated to all victims of conflict everywhere,  
in the certain knowledge they can become the peacemakers of the future*

*and to*

*Caitriona, Bronwen, Gwyn, Fiachra, Russell, Lori, Matilda, Tobias and  
Merryn  
whom I love*

## Series Editor's Preface

Compromise is a much used but little understood term. There is a sense in which it describes a set of feelings (the so-called 'spirit' of compromise) that involve reciprocity, representing the agreement to make mutual concessions toward each other from now on: no matter what we did to each other in the past, we will act toward each other in the future differently as set out in the agreement between us. The compromise settlement can be a spit and a handshake, much beloved in folk lore, or a legally binding statute with hundreds of clauses.

As such, it is clear that compromise enters into conflict transformation at two distinct phases. The first is during the conflict resolution process itself, where compromise represents a willingness amongst parties to negotiate a peace agreement that represents a second-best preference in which they give up their first preference (victory) in order to cut a deal. A great deal of literature has been produced in Peace Studies and International Relations on the dynamics of the negotiation process and the institutional and governance structures necessary to consolidate the agreement afterwards. Just as important, however, is compromise in the second phase, when compromise is part of post-conflict reconstruction, in which protagonists come to learn to live together despite their former enmity and in face of the atrocities perpetrated during the conflict itself.

In the first phase, compromise describes reciprocal agreements between parties to the negotiations in order to make political concessions sufficient

to end conflict, in the second phase, compromise involves victims and perpetrators developing ways of living together in which concessions are made as part of shared social life. The first is about compromises between political groups and the state in the process of statebuilding (or rebuilding) after the political upheavals of communal conflict, the second is about compromises between individuals and communities in the process of social healing after the cultural trauma provoked by the conflict.

This book series primarily concerns itself with the second process, the often messy and difficult job of reconciliation, restoration and repair in social and cultural relations following communal conflict. Communal conflicts and civil wars tend to suffer from the narcissism of minor differences, to coin Freud's phrase, leaving little to be split halfway and compromise on, and thus are usually especially bitter. The series therefore addresses itself to the meaning, manufacture and management of compromise in one of its most difficult settings. The book series is cross-national and cross-disciplinary, with attention paid to inter-personal reconciliation at the level of everyday life, as well as culturally between social groups, and the many sorts of institutional, inter-personal, psychological, sociological, anthropological and cultural factors that assist and inhibit societal healing in all post-conflict societies, historically and in the present. It focuses on what compromise means when people have to come to terms with past enmity and the memories of the conflict itself, and relate to former protagonists in ways that consolidate the wider political agreement.

This sort of focus has special resonance and significance for peace agreements are usually very fragile. Societies emerging out of conflict are subject to on-going violence from spoiler groups who are reluctant to give up on first preferences, constant threats from the outbreak of renewed violence, institutional instability, weakened economies, and a wealth of problems around transitional justice, memory, truth recovery and victimhood, amongst others. Not surprisingly therefore, reconciliation and healing in social and cultural relations is difficult to achieve, not least because inter-personal compromise between erstwhile enemies is difficult.

Lay discourse picks up on the ambivalent nature of compromise after conflict. It is talked about in common sense in one of two ways, in which



compromise is either a virtue or a vice, taking its place among the angels or in Hades. One form of lay discourse likens concessions to former protagonists with the idea of restoration of broken relationships and societal and cultural reconciliation, in which there is a sense of becoming (or returning) to wholeness and completeness. The other form of lay discourse invokes ideas of appeasement, of being *compromised* by the concessions, which constitute a form of surrender and reproduce (or disguise) continued brokenness and division. People feel they continue to be beaten by the sticks which the concessions have allowed others to keep; with restoration, however, weapons are turned truly in ploughshares. Lay discourse suggests, therefore, that there are issues that the Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict series must begin to problematize, so that the process of societal healing is better understood and can be assisted and facilitated by public policy and intervention.

This latest book in the Series is the second written by members of the Leverhulme Trust-funded project *Compromise after Conflict* that originally motivated the Book Series. This project was a six-year research programme (2009–15) that explored the potential for compromise amongst victims of conflict in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka, using a combination of qualitative interviews with victims and surveys of the general population. This volume reports on the qualitative data and while it has been written solely by the Principal Investigator on the Leverhulme project, John Brewer, it has benefited from the research expertise of the team gathered for that project, and the insight they have provided in various first draft reports on aspects of the data and through their commentary on this volume. So important have been the collective efforts of this remarkable research group that this volume should be seen as a joint product by them all.

A compendium volume to this one on the theme of compromise, entitled *The Sociology of Compromise after Conflict*, has already appeared edited by the original applicants on the Leverhulme project, John Brewer, Bernie Hayes and Francis Teeney, and included a whole range of people incorporated into the research, including some of the funded PhD students. It represented an attempt to use the data to offer an empirical grounding to a new sociological theorisation of the concept of compromise. Applying the sociological imagination to the concept of compromise was pioneering enough, but in some ways this present volume goes further.

This current volume draws on other aspects of the data to support a new theorisation of peacebuilding, which it calls everyday life peacebuilding. It argues that victims should be seen as central to the process of conflict transformation. Rather than being perceived as a problem in peace processes, whether to progress, to 'moving on' or to the development of a shared future, it emphasises victims as key agents in social transformation, whose agency is critical to the process of learning to live together. This approach disputes the view of victims as passive, frozen in the moment of their victimhood and largely resistant to progress, sensitivity towards which represents the main political brake on a shared future. It stresses instead, how victims' agency as survivors is often used by victims to promote, support and practice everyday life peacebuilding. In this way many victims are 'moral beacons' to the rest of society.

These are provocative arguments, for they offer several challenges, including to the ways victims are normally viewed in peace processes, the way we understand the nature of peacebuilding, the engagement of victims and bystanders with peacebuilding, and the policy emphasis towards victims in societies emerging out of conflict. It gives priority to capturing the voices of victims directly and uses their narratives to dramatically rethink both the place of victims in peace processes and the very nature of conflict transformation itself. As Series Editor I warmly welcome this new addition to the *Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict* Series.

Belfast, UK  
January 2018

John D. Brewer

# Acknowledgements

This book is based on research undertaken in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka as part of a £1.26 million, six-year Leverhulme Trust funded large research programme grant entitled ‘Compromise after Conflict’, under grant number F/00152/AK, that ran between 2009–15. Our heartfelt thanks are owed to the Trust for their generosity and support, first under the leadership of Professor Sir Richard Brook and then Professor Gordon Marshall. The grant was first administered by the University of Aberdeen and, from 2013, Queen’s University, and for their efficiency in Aberdeen we are grateful to Siobhan O’Connor and Gavin Robertson, but especially the indomitable and indefatigable June Middleton; and in Queen’s to David Robinson and Rory Jordan. The web teams at Queen’s University and Aberdeen University are owed special thanks for the expertise and skill in developing such an effective website for the programme and for providing us with excellent IT support. This includes at Aberdeen, Michael Patterson, Mathew Kite, John Tom and Chris Robb, and George Dunne at Queen’s. Our main dealings with the Leverhulme Trust were conducted through Reena Mistry and Gillian Dupin and we are equally grateful for their efficiency and many kindnesses.

The research programme had an International Advisory Board Chaired by Professor Ian McAllister from the Australian National University, which consisted also of Professor Orla Muldoon (University of Limerick)

and Professor William Mishler (University of Arizona), as well as university representatives, first from Aberdeen (Professor Robert Segal) and then Queen's University (Professor Roddy Cowie). We submitted annual reports on progress to the Board and we found their advice and support always timely and encouraging. Professor McAllister mobilised the group with great efficiency and we are very grateful for his conscientious and serious attention to his role as chair.

The grant enabled the applicants, Brewer, Hayes and Teeney, to employ the following post-doctoral research fellows to help with the research: Katrin Dudgeon (four years), who worked primarily on the Northern Irish data, Natascha Mueller-Hirth (four years), who worked primarily on the South African data, and Corinne Caumartin (two years). Corinne, who was unable to join us in co-authorship of this volume, worked on a subsidiary module on truth recovery, but as an important member of our research team, we wish to acknowledge her contribution to our general discussions and thank her for her many contributions. The Trust also funded four PhD studentships, Laura Fowler (victim support group leaders), Sandra Rios (religious peacebuilding in Colombia), Rachel Anderson (the social reintegration of child soldiers in Sierra Leone) and Clare Magill (the recovered memory project in Spain), who made a significant addition to the research team and contributed effectively to our twice-annual research workshops. We folded three other PhD students into this team, and although they were not funded from the grant, they made an equally important contribution to the working of the group: Aimee Smith (ESRC-funded, working on Catholic youth identity in post-conflict Belfast and Derry); Dave Magee (Aberdeen University Studentship, working on the deconstruction of violent masculinities in former Loyalist paramilitaries); and Duncan Scott (British Commonwealth International Studentship, working on religious peacebuilding in Cape Town).

Grateful thanks are also owed to other members of the team. The survey data on Northern Ireland, known as the 2011 Northern Ireland Social and Political Attitudes Survey, was collected by a team of researchers under the auspices of Peter Ward at Social and Marketing Surveys Ltd., which was overseen by our consultant Dr Yvonne

McGivern. Jennifer McNern, a tireless victim campaigner from Northern Ireland, also served as a consultant, and Rosemary McGarry served admirably as the team's secretarial support officer. We are also very grateful to Dr Gareth Higgins and Dr Erin Parish, who were consultants that helped us to develop the online data archive of the qualitative interviews on our website <http://www.compromisefterconflict.org>, which was launched on 5 September 2015. It serves as a freely accessible online archive to assist civil society groups from conflict zones across the world to work on victim issues with school children, women's groups, church groups, victim support groups and others affected by violence.

An extraordinarily deep and special word of thanks is owed to the Asian Institute of Missiology in Sri Lanka, who collected the Sri Lankan data. Ably led and organised by Professor Shirley Lal Wijesinghe, the Institute translated our research instruments into indigenous languages and the data back again into English, mobilised and supervised a team of interviewers who conducted qualitative interviews and administered a sample survey, and helped in the organisation of two research visits to Sri Lanka by members of the research team. Professor Wijesinghe's stalwart contribution under very difficult circumstances deserves singular recognition.

In conducting interviews with victims in our three case countries, Katrin Dudgeon, Natascha Mueller-Hirth and the Asian Institute of Missiology, called on the help and assistance of very many individuals and organisations, who facilitated access, provided succour and support, gave practical advice and many other untold services, from typing to car lifts. We thank for many numerous services Fr Michael Lapsley, Professor Clifford Shearing, Christopher Ferndale, Madoda Gcwadi, Mickey Carelse, Dipthee Silva, Chaminda Weerawardhana, Sharon Bailey, Bernice Swift, Kenny Donaldson, Sandra Peake, and the Wave Trauma Centre. Their contribution was significant, and we acknowledge this with thanks.

We have left until last those to whom we owe the most. Our deepest and most grateful thanks go to the many victims in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka who agreed to be interviewed, and to the

people, victims and non-victims, who agreed to be part of our surveys. Words are inadequate to convey how much we owe to them, nor how much we hope our approach to victim centred peacebuilding honours all that they shared with us. This book is dedicated to them.

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# 1

## Introduction

### Introduction

Victims have an absent-presence in post-conflict societies. This rather odd term is used deliberately to capture the ambiguous and contradictory status victims have in peace processes. They are talked about a great deal in popular culture, in the media and by politicians – they have a presence – but rarely are they heard directly. Their voice is absent; they are silenced. This absent-presence renders victims passive, for they are talked about aplenty but rarely heard from directly. This silence is despite the fact that victims are central to the success of any peace process.

The first verse of William Blake's poem *A Poison Tree*, penned in 1794, reflects on some of the difficulties victims have in reconciling themselves with their former enemies: 'I was angry with my friend/I told my wrath/my wrath did end/I was angry with my foe/I told it not/my wrath did grow.' The poem goes on to elaborate what can happen when enmity is left unmanaged, reflecting in the last stanza how glad the person was to see his foe dead, outstretched beneath the tree. The title of the poem is significant. Such enmity is poisonous, and Blake sought to identify the importance of reconciliation between protagonists.

In the spirit of Blake's poem, this book proposes what it calls a victim-centred approach to peacebuilding, which recognises the pivotal role victims play in conflict transformation. Rather than being perceived as a problem in peace processes, whether to progress, to 'moving on' or to the development of a shared future, it emphasises victims as key agents in social transformation, whose agency is critical to the process of learning to live together. This approach disputes the view of victims as passive, frozen in the moment of their victimhood and largely resistant to progress, sensitivity towards whom represents the main political brake on a shared future. It stresses instead, how victims' agency as survivors is often used by victims to promote, support and practise everyday life peacebuilding. In this way many victims are 'moral beacons' to the rest of society (for earlier arguments of ours on this see Brewer and Hayes 2011; Brewer et al. 2017). The book seeks to correct, in other words, victims' absent-presence in order to give them a real voice.

The book focuses on three cases, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka, and arises from a six-year, £1.26 million Leverhulme Trust funded project entitled *Compromise after Conflict* that focused on first-generation victims in all three societies, with Brewer as Principal Investigator, Hayes and Teeney as co-investigators, and the remaining co-authors of this volume as key researchers (of the original research team only Corinne Caumartin has been unable to participate in this volume, but her contribution to the programme should be acknowledged). This volume, however, has been written solely by Brewer, the Principal Investigator, in order to give it a single authorial voice, but with the help, support and comments of the co-authors. Dudgeon assisted in writing Chap. 3 and Mueller-Hirth assisted in writing Chap. 4; Natascha largely wrote the section on victim mainstreaming in Chap. 6. Otherwise the single authorial voice is that of Brewer.

It is necessary to note some important caveats to our research. Ours was a study of first generation victims, those directly caught up in the violence, and neglected the separate issue of inter-generation victimhood in the second and third generations. In focusing on first generation victims we do not wish to suggest that subsequent generations are not also affected by the violence as a legacy, but we chose deliberately to focus on those who formed the war generation in order to give voice to their

experiences of the transition from war to peace in three societies newly emerging out of conflict. These cases were selected because they represent different kinds of conflict resolution and their peace processes had occurred at different times, permitting a cross-national comparison of types of conflict transformation that also introduced a longitudinal element. The research sought to capture the voices of first generation victims in these three countries as a counterweight to the isolation and silence they tend to experience. In conducting in-depth interviews with first generation victims in each country, as well as questionnaire research (which is not reported on here), victims were put centre place and allowed to give voice to the range of issues that dominated their victimhood experience and its emotional packaging and management thereafter.

This 'voice' highlights the ambivalence of the victimhood experience, as they oscillate between moments of progress and defeat, and the challenges they faced as agents in their everyday peacebuilding while dealing with the legacy of their victimhood. An important feature of the book is thus a sensitive understanding of the conditions under which they perform agency as everyday peacebuilders and rise above these challenges. Contrast is made with those victims who retain a strong 'victim identity', which locks them in the moment of their victimhood and in which the victim status becomes the master status to explain all other of life's travails. Emphasis is laid on a whole series of mediating factors that predispose a victim versus survivor identity. The book explores the negative impact of a victim identity on victims' agency as everyday life peacebuilders and the factors that sustain or undercut the transition to a survivor identity.

The book concludes with a challenge to the growing literature on everyday life peacebuilding. By developing a victim centred approach that emphasises victims' agency, everyday life peacebuilding is shown to be more than just an arena or stage in which peacebuilding is done. Everyday life peacebuilding must also be conceptualised as a process of reasoning. To illustrate the book's new approach to everyday life peacebuilding, examples will be used from the data where victims' processes of reasoning in everyday life reproduce everyday life peacebuilding as a social practice. The book reports on qualitative interview data from these three cases to support its arguments.

The status and quality of this extensive data set needs to be emphasised. The data was collected as part of the £1.26 million Leverhulme Trust-funded research programme between 2009 and 2015 called ‘Compromise after Conflict’. It was our belief that compromise is thrown into particularly vivid relief in post-conflict societies, where the processes and resources that underpin compromise operate *in extremis* (for other publications arising from this programme see Brewer et al. 2018a, b). It is when feelings of compromise are most difficult to garner and sustain, when stress is at its height, that we get a better handle on how compromise works. We had two main objectives in the research programme – one conceptual, the other empirical – enabling us to theorise the nature of compromise after conflict, and to study it empirically in three post-conflict societies. These twin concerns have enabled us to develop subsequent arguments in two different directions: theorisation of the concept and practice of compromise, and empirical studies of victims. The first route culminated in the compendium on the sociology of compromise (see Brewer et al. 2018a); the second direction brings us to this volume. To contextualise this volume’s arguments, however, some background is needed on the original research programme on compromise after conflict.

## The Compromise After Conflict Research Programme

Empirically, our research programme addressed the processes and resources that develop and sustain feelings of compromise amongst victims of communal conflict in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka and South Africa. These countries were deliberately chosen because they represented what the sociologist Max Weber called a ‘naturally occurring experiment’, in that they had different kinds of peace process and their conflict transformation had occurred in different time periods. Sri Lanka is a victor’s peace that involved a military defeat for one side (this term is used with respect to Sri Lanka also by Høglund and Orjuela 2011), which occurred in the final 2009 massacre of the Tamil Tigers; South Africa’s is the colonial model of elite change at the top with little changing at the bot-

tom, culminating in regime change in the first non-racial elections of 1994; and Northern Ireland represents the classical model of a mutually-agreed second-preference negotiated political settlement in which parties give up on their first preference, a deal known as the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement, signed in 1998 but implemented in practice only with the St Andrew's Agreement in 2007. This research design allowed us to establish whether the type of peace impacts on victims' capacity for compromise, and it allowed us to introduce a longitudinal element in our research to establish whether time really does heal.

Our research design was purposely cross national and mixed in methods. We conducted sample surveys in two of the three countries and in-depth qualitative interviews in all. In Northern Ireland the statistical sample is a nationally representative one of the adult population; in Sri Lanka it is a non-representative quota sample stratified by region. As such, because of its limited statistical value, the Sri Lankan survey data is non-comparable to Northern Ireland, which is why the quantitative data as a whole is not being discussed in this book (a lot has been published already on the Northern Ireland quantitative data, see Brewer and Hayes [2011](#), [2015a](#), [b](#), [2016](#); Brewer [2015](#)). The emphasis in this book on giving voice to absent-present victims justifies the reliance on victims' narratives and stories, which are best captured by qualitative research.

The qualitative interviews were conducted with a cross section of victims, garnered through victim support groups, personal contacts and the snowball technique. Interviewees thus do not represent statistical national samples, as with our quantitative research, but are what is commonly called purposive or judgemental samples, where people are approached according to their fit with the theoretical ideas of the research; in this case that they had experienced conflict-related harm and that they represented one or more of the groups involved in the conflict in each society. Over the period 2011–14, in all 60 victims were interviewed from across Northern Ireland, 80 across Sri Lanka and 51 across South Africa. Interviews in Sri Lanka were conducted by our research partner in indigenous languages and the translations back into English checked by fluent speakers. A standard interview schedule appropriately acculturated was used in all three cases to ensure comparability of the data.

Empirically we defined first generation victims as those who have experienced conflict-related harm. Harm was understood in its broadest sense to cover medical, emotional, relational, and cultural hurts. Hurts can be real or imagined. They can also be direct (to the individuals themselves and their immediate family), indirect (to others whom they know personally), or collective (to whole social groups). Where group membership is important to the individual victim's sense of identity, people will experience harm to the group(s) with which they identify and develop a sense of groups as victims. This is different from 'collective hurts', since this term describes the scale of the experience (that it affected everyone). To describe groups as victims encapsulates that individual victims feel they belong to particular groups that suffered specific harm.

If victims are defined by the experience of harm, 'victimhood' is different. It is the process initiated by the (real or imagined) experience of harm and describes the course over time that the harm and its consequences take and the procedures by which they are managed. Victimhood is a developmental process, involving change in how the experience is packaged and handled over time (captured in the phrase that victims 'move on') and varies with time according to all sorts of cognitive, relational, political, social and cultural factors. Developmental processes, however, do not necessarily go only in the forward direction; 'moving on' is matched, in colloquial terms, by 'hanging on' or 'going back'. Clearly not all victims experience the conditions that facilitate benevolence, kindness and emotional empathy. To understand the practice of compromise in such societies therefore, we need to locate it in the social practices of those victims who reproduce it.

The research programme consisted of a series of linked projects or modules, as follows, details about which are intended to give a simple overview of the research design; further and expanded methodological details are supplied where necessary in the respective chapters.

## **Victims and Compromise in Northern Ireland (2009–13)**

This was undertaken by Brewer, Hayes and Teeney, with one 4-year Research Fellowship post (Dudgeon). This project was in three parts,



done in sequence. The first part involved qualitative interviews with 60 victims, appropriately sampled, to address sensitive issues around their victimhood experience and their attitudes and feelings towards compromise. Access was affected toward the end because of the fall-out from the Boston College Affair (on which see Brewer 2016). The second part was a nationally representative sample survey of the general adult population in Northern Ireland (1500 people) on political attitudes and opinions towards the peace agreement and wider issues of compromise, forgiveness and victimhood. Dr Yvonne McGivern acted as Consultant on Part 2 and provided oversight of Social and Marketing Surveys Ltd, which conducted the survey. As Part 3 we had intended to conduct a sample survey of a larger number of victims (500), but this was abandoned with the agreement of the Leverhulme Trust because of anticipated access difficulties arising from the Boston College Affair. Instead, follow-up interviews were conducted with 50 survey respondents who had identified themselves as victims by means of a filter question and who were willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

## **Victims and Compromise in Sri Lanka (2011–14)**

This was undertaken by Brewer and Hayes, with the assistance of two Research Fellows, Katrin Dudgeon and Natascha Mueller-Hirth in coding and analysing the data, and was designed to replicate Parts 1 and 2 of the Northern Ireland study using the same methodological approaches and research instruments. However, the survey was not nationally representative but used stratified sampling by area in order to reflect key geographical divisions in Sri Lanka. All fieldwork was conducted in Sri Lanka on our behalf by the Asian Institute of Missiology in Colombo, using a number of trained interviewers under the oversight of Professor Shirley Lal Wijesinghe. In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with a cross-section of 80 victims in indigenous languages and with the same interview schedule, appropriately acculturated, as used in Northern Ireland. A sample survey of 500 respondents was undertaken in four provinces, using an acculturated version of the Northern Irish questionnaire. Fieldwork for the survey was slightly delayed because of the ongoing

aftermath of the conflict, which made it difficult to interview in the Tamil regions in the North East. All translations back into English were independently checked by fluent speakers. Wijesinghe made one visit to Belfast and Brewer one visit to Sri Lanka during the respective fieldwork periods.

### **Compromise in South Africa (2010–13)**

This was undertaken by Brewer, Hayes and Mueller-Hirth. Mueller-Hirth made two fieldwork trips to South Africa, the first under the local oversight of Professor Clifford Shearing, at the University of Cape Town, the second under Fr Michael Lapsley, Director of the Institute for the Healing of Memories, whose access to victims and general support proved effective for our purposes. Interviews were conducted with two kinds of respondent: (i) victims of the conflict (38) in the same manner as in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, using the same interview schedule appropriately acculturated; and (ii) witnesses who had earlier appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2) and with staff and officials who had worked for or with the Commission (11), to allow us to establish their experience of this form of truth recovery procedure. Quantitative data was not obtained from our own sample survey but we relied on the already existing longitudinal cross-sectional data sets on reconciliation in South Africa. Secondary analysis of these data sets was undertaken by Hayes and Mueller-Hirth. To facilitate comparison with survey data from Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, our questionnaire drew on some questions from the South African surveys.

### **Victimhood, Truth Recovery and the Development of Compromise (2010–12)**

This was undertaken by Brewer and Corinne Caumartin, a two-year Research Fellow, and sought to assess the value of truth commissions as the most universal and popular device for managing victimhood after conflict. It involved cross-national comparisons of different types of truth commission over an extended time period (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Peru

and Guatemala) for analysis of the verbatim witness evidence available online. Witness evidence offered the opportunity to explore the impact of truth recovery processes on victims' development and practice of compromise. The verbatim evidence by witnesses also constituted a relatively untapped resource for understanding their notions of compromise and its connection to justice.

## Victim Centred Peacebuilding

While the conceptual work of this project culminated in the edited collection entitled *The Sociology of Compromise after Conflict* (see Brewer et al. 2018a), the copious illustrations from the empirical data to support this theorisation did not do justice to the fullness and richness of the research on victims. The current volume is motivated by a realisation that the central focus of the whole research programme was on victims and that not sufficient attention had been devoted to them when staking the claim in the first book to sociology's insightfulness in understanding the process of compromise. Victims are given central place in this current volume, with the data used to develop an approach to peacebuilding that treats them as the centre pin. The third is intended to report on the truth recovery project by advancing a new approach to understanding the problems around truth recovery.

The book proceeds in three stages. First, we analyse the problematic position of victims in peace processes, going on to use this analysis to advocate for a victim centred approach to peacebuilding. These problems are several, ranging from the politicization of victim issues by opponents of the peace process, who instrumentally turn victims into footballs for selfish political ends, to claims that victims are a brake on the future and should forget and move on. The book proceeds, secondly, to give voice to ordinary victims rather than to the victim support group leaders, politicians and civil society leaders who so often appoint themselves to speak on behalf of victims. The variety in victims' experiences will be captured in order not to suggest victims constitute a homogeneous stakeholder constituency, and a major distinction will be drawn between those with a victim identity and those with a survivor identity. There are separate

chapters drawn from the qualitative interviews that give narration to victims respectively in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka.

The third and final stage is to collate the arguments in order to develop the idea of everyday life peacebuilding by victims. Not only does this advance the claim that everyday life is a sphere or realm that can be utilised for peacebuilding by victims, much in the manner of the Manchester School of peace studies (see Mac Ginty 2014), as sociologists of everyday life argued in the zenith of everyday life studies in the 1960s (for a summary see Douglas et al. 1980), everyday life is also a form of reasoning that is mobilised and utilised to develop the very sense of routine and normalisation that pervades everyday life (see in particular Pollner 1987). This will be illustrated from our research with victims to highlight how the social practices of victims reproduce a form of peacebuilding as a routine part of the everyday life of their victimhood. This has important implications for how we understand the status and nature of everyday life and elaborates and expands on current theorisations of everyday life peacebuilding.

We have one last note to explain. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 make copious use of interview data as befits our intention to give voice to victims. Each respondent has a unique identifying code (P = participant, followed by their number), with the small exception of some Sri Lankan victims who wished no marker of their participation, no matter how indirect. With this exception noted, this practice enables the views of individual respondents to be traced while honouring confidentiality and anonymity. The unique identifying code does not run across all three samples but describes only the identification code use for the separate national samples. All direct quotations from respondents are in italics.

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# 2

## Centring Victims in Peacebuilding

### Introduction

In one of the poems from *A Shropshire Lad*, the deeply reflective, even morose, AE Housman warned his subject: 'In all the endless road you tread/There's nothing but the night'. Victims are all too often cast into the side stream in a peace process, portrayed as an obstacle to peace, treading constantly their remorseful night, stuck in the moment of their victimhood, and incapable of progressing forward to the future. Victims are indeed the main carrier of the suffering which the former violence caused, whose mental and physical injuries make them one of the primary losers in any war, but they ought to be in the mainstream, seen as central to the process of peacebuilding.

We refer to this as victims' absent-presence. Talked about aplenty, but not allowed to talk themselves; present in other people's discourse, but silenced and absent as speakers in their own right. This absent-presence, places victims in a highly ambiguous position in peace processes, and the incongruity between how negatively victims are usually located in a peace process in practice and the central position they ought to occupy, can be explained because peace processes tend to distort victim issues and to add