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De-centring trauma

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De-Centring Trauma:
Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and the Importance of Resilience Discourse

Abstract

Discussions about conflict-related sexual violence often focus heavily on trauma. While this article does not seek to minimize the significance of trauma, it is heavily critical of what it regards as a frequent over-use of trauma discourse. The ideas underpinning this research developed from the author's work with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) and interactions with a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Examples from BiH are used to illustrate the article's central thesis that trauma discourse can be deeply problematic and counter-productive. In particular, trauma discourse detracts from the critical fact that some survivors exhibit remarkable resilience. Cautioning against highly deterministic approaches to trauma, the article underscores that a multitude of factors can influence the actual impact of a traumatic event. It is similarly in the interactions between survivors and their environments that processes of resilience – a concept that is increasingly theorized within an ecological framework – develop. Drawing on complexity theory, the article underlines the importance of creating the space for a greater recognition of resilience, a discourse that has significant utility in the context of conflict-related sexual violence.

Keywords

Trauma; conflict-related sexual violence; Bosnia-Herzegovina; NGOs; resilience; complexity theory

> '[T]he human psyche has a tremendous
> capacity for recovery and growth'.[1]

Introduction

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, a book about his experiences inside a Nazi concentration camp, the Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl reflected that:

> Even though conditions such as lack of sleep, insufficient food and various mental stresses may suggest that the inmates were bound to react in certain ways, in the final analysis it becomes clear that the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of

an inner decision, and not the camp influences alone. Fundamentally, therefore, any man can, even under such circumstances, decide what shall become of him – mentally and spiritually.[2]

This powerfully conveys the idea that even in the most extreme situations, when it appears that someone else is in complete control of their fate, individuals make decisions. They retain their agentic state.[3] Reiterating this, Frankl underscored that 'Man is *not* fully conditioned and determined but rather determines himself whether he gives in to conditions or stands up to them'.[4] The 'pan-determinism'[5] which he so strongly rejected, however, is often present in contemporary discussions on conflict-related sexual violence.[6] This is due to the heavy and persistent accent on trauma. A 2016 report by the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, for example, refers to 'the debilitating physical and psychological trauma' that survivors must deal with.[7] In the same year, the European Parliament underlined that 'The long-term effects on victims of sexual violence during conflicts are sometimes just as dramatic as the violence itself. They include psychological trauma and feelings of shame and guilt…'.[8] The purpose of this article is not to negate or to minimize the reality of survivors' trauma, but rather to caution against an over emphasis on trauma.

Taking a step backwards, it is important to note that throughout much of history, the issue of war trauma was critically under-recognized and marginalized. Kirkwood, for example, notes that 'During and soon after World War I, symptoms of PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] were treated as "shell shock", which as the moniker suggests, was the result of the concussive force of ubiquitous shelling during the war'.[9] Approached as a wholly somatic concern, the condition was therefore 'governed by existing norms of manhood which deemed the general anxiety, hypervigilance, night terrors, and other symptoms of PTSD warrant for punishment and scorn'.[10] If manifestations of trauma ran counter to societal expectations of what constituted 'masculine' behaviour in war, they also provoked distrust and accusations of

cowardice.[11] During World War I, 'The psychologically damaged were classed with soldiers who sought to escape combat by deliberately wounding themselves or who refused treatment in order to avoid returning to the front, and they were regarded with the same suspicion'.[12] Trauma, moreover, was widely associated with individual pathology – and individual weakness – rather than with traumatic events.[13] This further reinforced the 'othering' of those who exhibited traumatic symptoms.

It was not until the 1960s that attitudes towards trauma began to radically change, in significant part due to the rise of psychoanalysis.[14] The legacy of the Holocaust also had an impact in this regard; the men, women and children who survived brutal Nazi concentration camps problematized many pre-existing ideas and prejudices about trauma. Fundamentally, 'The notions of malingering, cowardice, selfishness, overdeveloped narcissism, secondary gains, class interest – all the stigmas attached to traumatic neurosis could not be applied to these people in striped pyjamas who were emerging directly from hell'.[15] Only in 1980, however, was PTSD officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association.[16]

In recent decades, there have been major advances in the understanding and treatment of trauma. While these developments are to be welcomed, the historical neglect of trauma should not be replaced with an over use of trauma discourse.[17]According to Angelides, 'No discourse ought to be so complacent as to assume its immunity from producing both positive and negative, constraining and enabling, effects'.[18] Emphasizing these negative and constraining effects, this article seeks to demonstrate that a heavy use of trauma discourse in the context of conflict-related sexual violence can be counter-productive. The ideas underpinning this research developed from the author's work with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) and interactions with a number of non-

governmental organizations (NGOs).[19] Focusing on BiH, the article argues that trauma discourse often operates as a silencing discourse that 'unvoices'[20] survivors and limits the space for alternative discourses.

Above all, trauma discourse occludes the critical fact that some survivors exhibit remarkable resilience.[21] If Frankl insisted that circumstances do not take away an individual's ability to make decisions, it is also the case that circumstances – or the contextual matrix – partly shape how an individual deals with trauma. In other words, a multitude of factors can influence the actual impact of a traumatic event.[22] It is similarly in the interactions between survivors and their environments that processes of resilience – an ecological concept – develop.[23] This article emphasizes the importance of complexity theory to create a space for greater recognition of resilience, a discourse that remains strikingly absent from most discussions about conflict-related sexual violence.[24]

As a note on terminology, this article consistently uses the word 'survivors' rather than 'victims'. Indeed during my fieldwork in BiH, 'survivors' was the term that many interviewees preferred because they associated it with strength and courage. It is acknowledged, however, that these preferences exist within a social context, and some individuals who have experienced sexual violence readily embrace the term 'victims'.[25]

Trauma Discourse in BiH

In 2015, during my fieldwork in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), a man in his late thirties committed suicide. He shot himself in the head. He was the son of one of the women whom I had interviewed more than six months earlier. During the 1992-1995 Bosnian war, when he

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was a young boy, he had been detained in a house with his mother and two other women. Local soldiers used to take the women to nearby houses and rape them. Upon hearing that this man had taken his own life, more than 20 years after the events in question, the head of a local NGO immediately concluded that the only explanation for the suicide was war trauma. It subsequently transpired that the deceased had been in very serious financial debt and saw no way out.[26]

Several of the NGOs whom I approached during my work in BiH were un-cooperative and would not allow me to make contact with 'their' women. These women are highly traumatized, they insisted, and asking them to re-tell their stories could further traumatize them. Assuming the role of gate-keepers, few of these NGOs gave 'their' women an opportunity to decide for themselves whether they would like to speak.[27]

In 2015, journalists from the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) made a documentary film entitled Nećujni krik (Silent Scream). In the documentary, several women who suffered sexual violence during the Bosnian war – and a couple of men – speak about the problems that they face today. Their identities are hidden from the viewer. The tone is distinctly sombre; positive stories and messages of hope are markedly absent. The first survivor to speak in the film reveals: 'This life means nothing to me. Nothing. I just live because God gave me this soul'.[28] *The film's central thematic is trauma. Emphasizing that survivors in BiH live a marginal existence, a BIRN editor explained that the main aim of the film was to encourage survivors – and 'above all women who for years have carried their trauma inside themselves'*[29] *– to speak out.*[30]

These three vignettes illuminate a prominent trauma thematic that is commonly foregrounded in discussions surrounding the use of sexual violence during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. Quintessentially, trauma is the 'master narrative' in BiH, a readily accessible 'cultural script'[31] that is widely used, particularly within the civil society sector. The centrality of this trauma narrative, however, and the seemingly routine way in which it is often used, have curtailed the space for critical thinking and discussion about trauma. Advocating a crucial reflective turn within the discourse, this first section of the article demonstrates that an over-emphasis on trauma in the context of conflict-related sexual violence can be problematic and detrimental to survivors.

In her work on child sexual abuse, Grondin highlights some of the dangers of '[c]onstituting young people as traumatized victims'.[32] Her concern is that 'by reading trauma into the narratives and everyday actions of former victims, we invite victimization experiences to endlessly permeate all future aspects of their lives, rather than help them to overcome it'.[33] Grondin is not seeking to diminish or minimize the trauma of child sexual abuse, but to underscore that traumatological discourses can perpetuate trauma through their 'locking in' effects. In her words, '…discourses of trauma are themselves permanent scars, working in tandem with the traumatic event and/or distressed responses to keep victims "in" trauma through the trope of the trauma "in" them'.[34] Clear examples of this can be found in BiH. Indeed, the very fact that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are routinely referred to as '*žene žrtve rata*' – or 'women victims of war' – contributes to keeping survivors 'in' trauma, by essentializing women's identities as victims.[35] Led by a survivor of sexual violence from Višegrad in eastern BiH, one Bosnian NGO (in Sarajevo) that works with survivors is actually called *Žena – žrtva rata*. An organization in Banja Luka has an almost

identical name (*Udruženja žena žrtava rata*), thus similarly reinforcing the reductionist notion of female survivors of sexual violence as merely – or primarily – victims.

Identities are inherently fluid and in constant flux. Hence, 'we can never be "finished" products, products of a single experience, or products of any one kind'.[36] In BiH, however, the widespread use of trauma discourse, particularly within the NGO sector, means that (female)[37] survivors of sexual violence are often portrayed precisely as 'finished' products – as women who will always be deeply traumatized because they were raped. The prevalence of this discourse, in turn, can significantly affect how survivors perceive themselves. Drawing on the work of Homi Bhahba, Busia refers to 'the incarceration of native women who have no recourse to any counter-text'.[38] In BiH, similarly, the dominance of trauma discourse means that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are rarely exposed to any 'counter-texts' or alternative discourses – and hence they are seldom encouraged to think outside the 'trauma box'. Crucially, in the absence of available alternative narratives, 'individuals may be left without accessible tools to make meaning in helpful ways'.[39]

Working with survivors of sexual violence is inevitably difficult and challenging. According to Christie, however, 'A good victim policy would be to reduce the importance of being a victim and instead emphasise an identity based on having been able to restore dignity as a decision maker in one's own life'.[40] The question of how to develop such a policy is a hugely important one. Yet, in a country such as BiH, where there is a large NGO sector devoted to helping 'victims of war' – and various organizations which are focused specifically on aiding survivors of sexual violence – such a policy may not be desirable. Trauma, in short, is an important part of these organizations' *raison d'être*. Many Bosnian NGOs, for example, work on the basis that women who have suffered sexual violence need help precisely because of

their sexual trauma.[41] This, in turn, means that '…there is often more social utility attached to expressions of victimhood than to "survivorhood"'.[42] Regardless of their actual needs, survivors of sexual violence have a greater chance of getting attention and help by presenting them as vulnerable and traumatized victims.[43] There is little to be gained from assuming the role of a strong and independent woman.

During my fieldwork in BiH, the survivors whom I interviewed frequently did speak about psychological problems, including anxiety, flash backs, depression and insomnia. The main concerns and needs that they articulated, however, were of a more quotidian nature. They wanted jobs, something to do, economic security; they worried about health issues, the high cost of living in BiH[44] and their children's futures.[45] According to Panter-Brick et al., the importance of daily stressors 'cautions against simplistic characterisations of trauma'.[46] Daily stressors can, of course, exacerbate past trauma, or indeed create new forms of trauma. What is important to underline, however, is that although many survivors of sexual violence in BiH are still affected by their war experiences (which often involved multiple or combined traumatic events and not only sexual violence), the help that they most want is not necessarily related to their war trauma. Many interviewees spoke of everyday concerns and stressors that are commonplace in a post-war society with slow economic growth and relatively high unemployment.[47]

One issue that is specific to survivors of sexual violence, however, is stigma. Askin notes that 'Since time immemorial, survivors of sexual violence have been forced to endure misplaced shame, stigma, ostracism, and other injustices simply because the crime committed against them is of a sexual nature'.[48] During my fieldwork in BiH, several female survivors disclosed that they had suffered verbal abuse, most commonly from their husbands who accused them

of having willingly had sex with other men. Some interviewees had also encountered abuse and cruel remarks from neighbours, who were more ready to blame them than the actual rapists.[49] Yet, little attention has been given within BiH to tackling sexual violence stigma. This is discordant with the strong emphasis that is placed, not least within the NGO sector, on criminal prosecutions. According to Bakira Hasečić, for example, the head of *Žena – žrtva rata*, 'The most important thing is the war crimes verdict; we want to fight for justice, and the only justice is that war criminals are arrested and sentenced'.[50] Some survivors, however, do not wish to testify in court. The reasons vary from individual to individual, but they include fears about coming face to face with the perpetrator/s after so many years, concerns about hostile cross-examination from the defence counsel and worries about the possible social consequences of testifying. As Askin underlines, 'Until the negative stereotyping of sexual violence is reversed, by relocating the shame and stigma off the victims and onto the perpetrators and others responsible for the crimes where it belongs, the obstacles in establishing accountability and developing means of preventing and remedying these crimes will continue to be hindered'.[51] Addressing such negative stereotyping remains a critically neglected aspect of transitional justice work in BiH.[52]

The dominant trauma discourse, moreover, can itself potentially exacerbate stigma. In a society where everyone suffered in some way during the war, any discourse that seeks to set apart a particular category of individuals can help to foster resentment and bitterness. In a village in north-west BiH, for example, the head of a local NGO explained that she had given several survivors *plastenici* (greenhouses) as a way of helping them to overcome their rape trauma. Some of these women, however, subsequently reported experiencing problems with their neighbours. The latter wanted to know why nobody had given them *plastenici* too.

Relatedly, trauma discourse can contribute to 'othering' survivors. If their trauma is unique, this necessarily makes them different from everyone else. As Summerfield underscores, 'Trauma models where the focus is on a particular event (rape) or particular population group (children)[53] exaggerate the difference between some victims and others, risk disconnecting them from others in their community…'.[54] None of this is to suggest that survivors of sexual violence do not need help and support. The crucial point is that the provision of help within a traumatological, victim-focused framework may not be the most effective approach.[55] Significant and unexplored potential lies in the adoption of a more 'transformative paradigm',[56] aimed at positively transforming the environments, or social ecologies, in which survivors live through, inter alia, educational activities, community cohesion projects and neighbourhood regeneration efforts. Such transformation is closely linked to transformative justice, which is fundamentally about transforming people, their situations and thereby transforming victimhood.[57] To emphasize transformation, in turn, represents an important shift away from what Aradau has termed the 'politics of pity'.[58]

If trauma discourse can be essentializing and 'othering', it can also operate as a disempowering discourse. It quickly became apparent during my fieldwork in BiH that certain NGOs are extremely territorial, regarding the survivors with whom they work as 'their' women. Without making any attempt to actually gauge the views of these individuals, a number of NGOs were quick to decide that they would not allow their women to meet or speak to me, due to the possible risk of re-traumatization. While this is a risk that must be taken seriously, it should not be used as a justification for the strong control that some NGOs exercise over survivors. These individuals should be free to decide themselves whether and to whom they want to tell their stories. As Madlingozi underlines in the context of a broader argument, 'the practice of speaking for and about victims further perpetuates their

disempowerment and marginality'.[59] Indeed, one interviewee repeatedly underscored that she resented NGOs making decisions on her behalf and speaking in her name.

Sweeping statements about the supposed benefits of story-telling are facile and unhelpful. It is also important to acknowledge, however, that for some individuals who have experienced deeply traumatic events, having the opportunity to tell their stories can be beneficial. Laub's work on the Holocaust powerfully illustrates this point. He argues that '…at the core of the executioner-victim interaction all human relatedness is undone. The internal other, the "Thou" to whom one can address one's plea, tell one's story, no longer exists'.[60] The story thus remains untold, unknown. There is no outlet for it. This changes when survivors start to speak and to recount their experiences. According to Laub, 'What the giving and receiving of testimony does is to set in motion a dyadic-dialogic process. The listener-companion, in his or her total presence, offers the possibility and the protected holding space, within which the internal other, or Thou, can be reestablished, necessary to face the traumatic event'.[61] In the 'process of narrativization',[62] survivors can thereby begin to take control of their stories and to reach out to others. In so doing, they can also assert and manifest their agency and 'subject-position as "master" of narrative'.[63] Furthermore, while it might be argued that survivors' narratives can never tell their whole story because elements of that story will always remain part of their unconscious mind, story-telling can bring out what Freeman has termed 'the narrative unconscious'.[64] It does so specifically 'in reference to those culturally-rooted aspects of one's history that have not yet become part of one's story',[65] thereby enabling contextually richer and 'thicker' narratives.

The equation of story-telling with re-traumatization not only overlooks the positive aspects of 'narrativizaton'. It also assumes that survivors of sexual violence will only speak about sexual violence. Yet, this is in no way a given. In their work with Mayan female survivors of sexual violence in Guatemala, Crosby and Lykes acknowledge that the possibility of re-traumatization was part of the explanation for the women's unwillingness to speak about the sexual harm that they had suffered. However, the authors also go beyond this. They suggest that '…resistance to telling stories of sexual harm over and over again also resides in the fact that they do not reflect the whole of these women's lives'.[66] Fundamentally, attention should also be given to those parts of survivors' stories that may have become 'submerged'.[67]

Some of the men and women whom I interviewed in BiH did speak about their experiences of sexual violence, but others focused on different aspects of their lives – positive and negative. One interviewee talked at length about her mother, who had passed away from illness a couple of years earlier. Many focused on health issues and economic problems. One survivor spoke with great passion and enthusiasm about her love of painting and showed me some of her beautiful artwork. Another talked a great deal about her close relationship with her daughter, whom she had conceived in 1993 as a result of rape. While there were far more negative than positive stories, the point is that interviewees' stories were often rich life tapestries consisting of multiple events. According to Crosby and Lykes, 'The process of becoming a survivor requires the creation of the possibility of telling more complex and messy stories, including those of resistance, rather than replicating the gendered and racialized binaries of war'.[68] When survivors are given limited opportunities to tell and re-tell their stories, and when their story-telling is tightly circumscribed in the name of protecting them from possible re-traumatization, these 'complex and messy stories' are less likely to be told and heard. In short, trauma discourse, particularly in relation to sexual violence, can

'impose strong constraints to life, excluding all the experiential possibilities outside the problem-saturated story'.[69]

This section has explored some of the problems that can result from a heavy focus on trauma and excess emphasis on trauma discourse. Underpinning many of these problems is an over-simplified approach to causation. If causation 'permeates and holds together our lives, our language, and laws',[70] the next section argues that a more nuanced approach to causation – using the lens of complexity theory – can help to temper the dominance of trauma discourse.

Looking beyond Trauma and the Importance of Complexity Theory

There exists a common assumption that sexual violence always causes severe trauma. As Gavey and Schmidt underline,

> …the trauma of rape discourse carries a degree of absoluteness that can readily default to a presumption of traumatic impact, and then cascades into a set of meanings that formulate a unique and lasting cast of damages. The thread of the central logic is linear and prescriptive: *a* (rape) therefore *b* (trauma), in which *b* refers to a set of predictable psychological injuries.[71]

This 'degree of absoluteness' is problematic because it does not allow for sufficiently variegated impact. While it is important not to minimize the trauma that can result from sexual violence, it is also essential to recognize that people react to traumatic events in multiple ways.[72] The concept of allostasis is useful for illustrating this point. According to McEwen, allostasis 'refers to the process of adaptation to acute stress, involving the output of stress hormones which act…to restore homeostasis in the fact of a challenge…'.[73] This process of adaptation, however, is not cost free and entails an 'allostatic load'. As McEwen

defines it, '"Allostatic load" refers to the price the body pays for being forced to adapt to adverse psychosocial or physical situations, and it represents either the presence of too much stress or the inefficient operation of the stress hormone response system…'.[74] In other words, stress and trauma can exert a different 'allostatic load' on different people, depending on multiple factors. How an individual views and interprets a particular situation, for example, and the extent to which s/he is in good physical shape, are just two such factors.[75] By way of analogy, it can be argued that conflict-related sexual violence creates varying allostatic loads which, in turn, influence how different people cope with, and are affected by, their experiences.

Trauma discourse, however, can easily encourage 'narrative determinism',[76] thereby leaving little scope for adequate acknowledgement of survivors' individuality and individual ways of dealing with what has happened to them.[77] It is essential, therefore, to look beyond trauma and trauma discourse. Rajan underscores the importance of creating a 'post-rape narrative that traces strategies for survival'.[78] This section argues that complexity theory has a role to play in the development of such a narrative – or set of narratives.

Complexity theory is quintessentially about non-linear relationships and multi-causality.[79] As Cochran-Smith et al. explain, 'Rather than predictable linear effects, complexity theories emphasize that multi-dimensional relationships and dynamic interactions among agents and elements are responsible for patterns and phenomena…'.[80] This accordingly means that complexity theory focuses on systems rather than on their individual parts.[81] What is also important is the relationship between systems and their components. Accentuating this point, Cillers makes a useful distinction between complicated systems and complex systems. If a system can be fully described on the basis of its individual parts, it is a *complicated* system.

According to Cilliers, 'Things like jumbo jets or computers are complicated'.[82] In a *complex* system, simply analysing the components of the system will yield limited results. Quintessentially, 'A complex system is not constituted merely by the sum of its components, but also by the intricate *relationships* between these components'.[83] These relationships, moreover, are fluid rather than fixed.[84]

To illustrate complexity in more concrete terms, a medical example can be used. If a person is in pain, a linear approach would look for a simple cause-effect relationship and the pain would be 'treated' through the use of opioids. Such an approach not only carries the potential risk of creating opioid dependency,[85] but it is also overly narrow. As Peppin et al. argue, 'Multiple problems and issues can affect a patient's pain level and their ability to function effectively with their pain. These include motivational, educational, psychiatric and behavioral, social, and medical variables'.[86] They accordingly advocate the use of a complexity model in dealing with the treatment of pain. Such a model, they maintain, 'requires a comprehensive pain evaluation that includes assessing the various factors that can influence the manifestation and maintenance of chronic pain'.[87]

By extension, it is similarly necessary for any comprehensive evaluation of trauma to take account of the multiple factors that influence and shape trauma, its severity and how it is expressed. Discussions around trauma, however, typically focus on individuals – though not on their individuality – as the repositories of trauma. Rarely is sufficient attention given to survivors' social ecologies and the complexity of variables – including relationships with spouses and family members, intersectional identities and spiritual beliefs – that can affect how individuals react to and deal with traumatic experiences.[88]

Complexity theory, in contrasts, presents a very different picture. Rubenfeld notes that 'From a complexity point of view a person begins to look like a highly inter-connected nexus of component self-organizing systems'.[89] Complexity theory is thus important for bringing into focus the interactions between survivors and their environments ('systems'), and it is precisely these interactions which lie at the heart of a more nuanced and ecological approach to trauma that looks beyond simple cause-effect relationships.[90] In BiH, for example, all three sides in the conflict were subjected to acts of sexual violence (and particularly rape), albeit not to the same extent.[91] Ethnicity and religion, together with other intersectional identities such as gender and class, constitute 'sets of social relations', each of which is itself a social system.[92] Approaching trauma from the perspective of complexity theory will necessarily foreground these social systems, which form part of survivors' social ecologies; and these ecologies can significantly affect how individual survivors deal with and manage what has happened to them.[93]

Survivors' individual experiences and the wider ecologies in which they exist can thus be construed as constituting a 'hermeneutic circle of part and whole…'.[94] There is a constant movement and dialectic between the two, and discussions about trauma need to capture this flow. If the circle 'is fundamental to all understanding…' ,[95] it is essential to ensure that part of the circle is not eclipsed though a decontextualized approach to sexual violence trauma that artificially extracts survivors from the wider system of which they form an intrinsic part.

The importance of context and social ecology strongly emerges from Pickering and Keightley's work, which centres on two women. Iris is a British, working-class sexagenarian whose late husband suffered from severe mental illness. Her story, according to the authors, displays elements of trauma. For example, 'The narrative is disjointed and out of any

logically progressive, chronological sequence,[96] with the respondent jumping between episodes without warning or explanation'.[97] These elements of trauma, however, are not simply the result of Iris' personal situation. Wider social factors also had a substantial affective impact. Pickering and Keightley note, for example, that:

> Iris's deeply troublesome experience of recalling a past autobiographical episode was compounded by her social exclusion. Her difficulty in writing caused problems with filling in the requisite institutional forms after her husband's death and the incomprehensible nature of these forms has contributed to, or become indicative of, her difficulties in making sense of the experience. In later parts of the interview she refers to the social stigma attached to mental illness and the social isolation it caused. Her experience of social exclusion intersects with the experience of her husband's illness and death, revealing her lack of preparedness for the combination of events surrounding her husband's death. This may further explain why the event was experienced as so radically disruptive.[98]

Fiona, a British middle-class woman, also had a difficult story; her first-born child died at the age of seven months. In contrast to Iris, she gave a chronological account of events that did not manifest traumatic features. For example, when individuals experience trauma, the notions of past and present can become blurred and conflated, the past forming 'a residue of the *then* that is keenly perceived as existent in the *now*'.[99] Fiona, however, was able to distance herself from the past, as evidenced by her statement: '"I was devastated at the time"'.[100] The explanation, according to Pickering and Keightley, is that whereas Iris felt socially excluded and marginalized, Fiona found a way to draw on available social frameworks to learn from her trauma and to assimilate it – and in particular social frameworks regarding motherhood. Despite the tragic loss of her first child, Fiona chose to position herself within her own narrative 'as a successful mother with reference to her two subsequent "happy healthy children"'.[101]

Although the stories of Iris and Fiona are not about sexual violence, they underline the fact that experiences of trauma occur within a wider social context or 'system'. This system – and more specifically the interactions between the different elements of the system – acutely shapes the individual impact of traumatic events and experiences, including in cases of sexual violence. There is thus a strong case to be made for the 'deferral of epistemological certainty in statements about *the* impact of rape and openness to complexity and ambiguity'.[102] Part of this 'openness', it is argued, requires a greater recognition of the fact that some survivors, despite their experiences, demonstrate and manifest resilience – a pronouncedly under-referenced concept in discussions on conflict-related sexual violence.

Recognizing Survivors' Resilience

The Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl emphasized that '…it is possible to practice the art of living in a concentration camp, although suffering is omnipresent'.[103] This 'art of living' requires more than simply a desire to live. It also demands a determination to live and a resolve not to give up on living. More recently, Summerfield worked with war-displaced peasants in Nicaragua. All of them had survived various atrocities and many were showing symptoms of PTSD. Despite their fears, grief and exhaustion, these individuals were not 'psychological casualties' and all of them 'were active and effective in maintaining their social worlds as best they could in the face of poverty and continuing threat of further attacks'.[104] They too were practicing 'the art of living' – and thereby showing that there is life after trauma. Indeed, there exists a rich body of literature underscoring the fact that individuals who endure even the most severe forms of trauma can positively adapt, thrive and, potentially, 'perceive at least some good emerging from their struggle…'.[105] Reinforcing this point, Westphal and Bonanno remark that '…many and often the majority of people

Resilience is an interdisciplinary concept that has been discussed in a multitude of different contexts, from natural disasters[107] and social-ecological systems[108] to violent extremism[109] and forced displacement.[110] This has inevitably resulted in a plethora of scholarly definitions. As Olsson et al. point out, 'The use of the word resilience has a long history replete with diverse meanings ranging from bouncing, leaping, and rebounding, to human resourcefulness, to elasticity and resistance properties in materials including steel, yarn, and woven fabrics'.[111] It is not the purpose of this article to engage in a review of existing definitions of resilience. Two key points, however, should be highlighted.

The first point is that resilience is rarely defined today simply on the basis of individual psychological characteristics.[112] Many scholars have instead developed complex ecological definitions focused on the interactions between individuals and their environments. Adger, for example, refers to 'social resilience', which he defines as an important component of the circumstances under which individuals and social groups adapt to environmental change'.[113] Ungar defines resilience as 'both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual's family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways'.[114] According to Panter-Brick, resilience is 'the process of harnessing key resources to sustain well-being'.[115] These emphases on well-being are to be welcomed. 'Well-being' is an intrinsically holistic concept that requires more than a narrow focus on addressing psychological trauma. It also requires that sufficient attention is given to context, to reflect the fact that 'well-being' is a culturally variable

notion.[116] This foregrounding of context, in turn, helps to guard against prescriptive 'cookie-cutter' approaches to dealing with individuals who have suffered adversity and trauma.

The second point to stress is that resilience is not an end state but rather a process.[117] This means that an individual can demonstrate resilience in one area of his/her life but not others. As Southwick argues, although it is tempting to view resilience in very black and white terms as something that does or does not exist, 'in reality, resilience more likely exists on a continuum that may be present to differing degrees across multiple domains of life.[118] The fact that resilience is a fluctuating process rather than a fixed state also underscores that resilience and trauma are not mutually exclusive, an important point that goes some way to addressing concerns that resilience discourse *expects* people to be resilient.[119] In Harvey's words, 'When resilience is defined as multidimensional…it becomes possible to see trauma survivors as simultaneously suffering and surviving'.[120] A survivor of sexual violence, for example, may exhibit symptoms of trauma, such as flash backs and anxiety, when alone, while demonstrating resilience and resourcefulness in relation to his/her children.[121] In other words, to speak about resilience is not to deny or diminish the significance of trauma, but simply to re-frame it within a more complex and nuanced discursive structure.

With regards to conflict-related sexual violence, which is the focus of this article, there are three key reasons for giving greater attention to resilience and resilience discourse. The first relates to aid and dependency. During my fieldwork in BiH, it became clear that some survivors of sexual violence repeatedly seek help from NGOs – and often from two or more at the same time.[122] Economic help, in particular, is commonly sought. As discussed in the first section, many of the survivors whom I interviewed primarily expressed quotidian and economic concerns. More than 20 years after the war ended, however, some (female)

survivors have come to expect regular help – and indeed they feel entitled to it. Many NGOs have encouraged this sense of entitlement through their use of trauma discourse; raped women are traumatized and, *ergo*, they need help. Yet, part of the process of helping survivors is to give them the tools – including confidence and a sense of self-worth – to find their own solutions and to break cycles of dependency. It is also about ensuring that aid corresponds to need. According to Waller, 'a given individual moves back and forth along the resilience-vulnerability continuum'.[123] The provision of help and support is most important when survivors are at the vulnerability end of the continuum, but it should not hinder movement along the continuum. The significance and utility of resilience discourse in this regard is that it offers a more agentic rationale for the provision of aid. Fundamentally, giving help to survivors should not be simply about ameliorating trauma, which is a backward-looking approach. It should also be about enabling survivors to demonstrate resilience. This is a forward-looking approach, and a key part of resilience is making the decision to 'keep moving forward'.[124]

In the context of conflict-related sexual violence, a second justification for giving far more attention to resilience is that it brings into focus the social environments in which individual survivors live. As previously noted, trauma discourse can exacerbate the 'othering' of survivors. When it encourages what some may view as 'special treatment' for survivors, it can also foster hostility and resentment – and thereby fuel the problem of stigma. The importance of resilience discourse is that it offers the basis for a more integrated approach to working with survivors which, by extension, can potentially mitigate some of the aforementioned risks associated with trauma discourse. The previous section discussed the relevance of complexity theory. Survivors, as individuals, are component parts of a wider system; and from a resilience perspective, the resources that exist within that system are

crucial. According to Ungar, 'The more the environments make available and accessible the resources that promote well-being, the more likely the individuals are to engage in processes associated with positive development such as forming secure attachments, experiencing self-esteem, engaging in expressions of personal agency, and meaningful employment'.[125] Families and communities are two important resources that can promote survivors' well-being[126] by offering, inter alia, a sense of security, safety and belonging. Their potential to act as crucial protective factors, however, may need to be actively developed. A husband, for example, may leave his wife if she has been raped; a community may reject her.[127] Resilience discourse offers the basis for a more comprehensive and ecological approach to working with survivors that actively includes and integrates families and communities.

The third and final reason is linked to transitional justice, the process in which 'countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large scale or systematic human rights violations so numerous and so serious that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response'.[128] Within existing scholarship, there have been various calls for more 'bottom-up' ways of doing transitional justice that are more locally rooted, culturally relevant, participatory and driven by on-the-ground needs.[129] However, bottom-up transitional justice should also be about enabling individuals who have suffered to *be* something other than victims. In this regard, resilience discourse has a potentially valuable, yet unexplored, role to play. Although she is not writing specifically about transitional justice, Jordan underlines the importance of 'promoting a view that is expansive enough to enable recognition and validation of the diverse and varied ways victim/survivors may be impacted upon and respond in the aftermath of sexual violence'.[130] Resilience discourse can aid in promoting such a view, by enabling the articulation of more layered narratives that capture the depth and dimensionality of survivors' lives and experiences.

Conclusion

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), an aspect of the conflict – or rather conflicts – that has received significant attention is the widespread use of sexual violence. Reflecting on this, Heaton notes that 'The concentration of coverage of the DRC's conflict on the stories of survivors of sexual violence, predominantly wartime rape, has proven a powerful narrative for a range of actors, most of whom are likely well intentioned'.[131] However, she also cautions that '…more consideration needs to be devoted to potential adverse effects directly produced by interventions – particularly those driven by the emotional reaction, focusing on victims, and not a broader political analysis of why such disturbing atrocities occur in the first place'.[132] Focused on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in BiH, this article has sought to underscore the 'potential adverse effects' of over-emphasizing survivors' trauma and approaching it as a causal given. The point is not to downplay the reality of trauma, but rather to stress that it is neither pre-determined nor absolute. If trauma 'occurs in layers, with each layer affecting every other layer',[133] it may also constitute only one layer of a more complex post-sexual violence story.

In his work with patients who are suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI), Nochi notes that '…rehabilitation professionals tend to pay more attention to individuals who have problems in managing their new lives'.[134] While this is not unsurprising, he underlines that '…individuals who seem to succeed in coping with the disabilities should be examined, too'.[135] This article has advanced a similar argument in relation to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Critiquing the dominant trauma discourse, and drawing on complexity theory, it has called for a discursive shift that allows for a greater recognition of resilience. An individual's reaction to a traumatic experience is influenced by multiple

factors; and trauma can co-exist with resilience, by manifesting in different domains of an individual's life or in different time periods.

Bonanno et al. point out that 'Interest in the human capacity for resilience in the face of aversive life events has grown exponentially'.[136] Such an interest has been distinctly lacking, to date, in relation to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. This is certainly the case in BiH. It is hoped that this article, which has underscored some of the potential benefits of using resilience discourse, can help to change this situation. It is time for survivors' stories of resilience to come into view and to be heard.

Acknowledgements

References

[1] Irene S. Vernon, '"We Were Those Who Walked out of Bullets and Hunger": Representation of Trauma and Healing in "Solar Storms"', *The American Indian Quarterly*, 36/1 (2012): 34-49, at 42.

[2] Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: The Classic Tribute to Hope from the Holocaust* (London: Rider, 2004), 75.

[3] Based on her work with women who were raped by the New Zealand serial rapist Malcolm Rewa, for example, Jordan underlines that 'Even at the time of the attack, a woman can be understood as a victim in survivor mode, struggling mentally in the moment to find a way to resist total domination by her attacker'. Jan Jordan, 'From Victim to Survivor – and from Survivor to Victim: Reconceptualising the Survivor Journey', *Sexual Abuse in Australia and New Zealand* 5/2 (2013): 48-56, at 53

[4] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, at 133.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] According to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), sexual violence includes rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and enforced sterilization. *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, A/CONF.183/9 (17 July 1998), articles. 7(1)(g), 8(2)(b)(xxii), and 8(2)(e)(vi), available at: https://www.icc-cpi.int/nr/rdonlyres/ea9aeff7-5752-4f84-be94-0a655eb30e16/0/rome_statute_english.pdf.

[7] António Guterres, *Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, UN doc. S/2017/249 (March 2017), available at: http://www.un.org/en/events/elimination-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict/pdf/1494280398.pdf, at 6.

[8] European Parliament, *Fighting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence* (December 2016), available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595846/EPRS_BRI(2016)595846_EN.pdf, at 5.

[9] Jeffrey Kirkwood, 'Introduction: Private Traumas, Personal Mythologies: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among Combat Veterans', in Daryl S. Paulson and Stanley Krippner, *Haunted by Combat: Understanding PTSD in War Veterans* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), xvi.

[10] *Ibid*.

[11] Hunt notes that 'In World War One the British Army authorities executed over 300 soldiers who were accused of cowardice in the face of the enemy of desertion'. Nigel C. Hunt, *Memory, War and Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 19.

[12] Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 42.

[13] Anne M. Dietrich, 'As the Pendulum Swings: The Etiology of PTSD, Complex PTSD, and Revictimization', *Traumatology* 6/1 (2000): 41-59, at 46.

[14] Fassin and Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma*, at 58.

[15] *Ibid*., at 71.

[16] Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42.

[17] The term discourse is defined as 'any form of communication or social interaction that produces and reproduces shared meanings and understandings'. Naomi Sunderland, Tara Catalano and Elizabeth Kendall, 'Missing Discourses: Concepts of Joy and Happiness in Disability', *Disability and Society* 24/6 (2009): 703-714, at 704.

[18] Steven Angelides, 'Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Erasure of Child Sexuality', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 9/4 (2004): 141-177, at 162.

[19] In 2014 and 2015, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 79 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in BiH. Of these, 66 were women and 13 were men. See XXXXX (the author). Full ethics approval for this research was granted by the Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee at the University of Birmingham on 28 July 2014. The research was funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

[20] Abena P.A. Busia, 'Silencing Sycorax: On African Colonial Discourse and the Unvoiced Female', *Cultural Critique* 14 (1989-1990): 81-104, at 87.

[21] Making a general argument that is not specifically focused on sexual violence, Pupavac trenchantly criticizes an 'international psychosocial model' that pathologizes war-affected communities and 'denies the resilience of survivors'. Vanessa Pupavac, 'Pathologizing Populations and Colonizing Minds: International Psychosocial Programs in Kosovo', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27/4 (2002): 489-511, at 493.

[22] As Ganzevoort points out, 'Contrary to common parlour, trauma is not the event as such, but the impact of the event on the person'. R. Ruard Ganzevoort, 'Scars and Stigmata: Trauma, Identity and Theology', *Practical Theology* 1/1 (2008): 19-31, at 20.

[23] According to Ungar, 'An overemphasis on personal agency and other aspects of what has come to be known as "resiliency" naively assumes that individuals survive only because of a positive attitude or other fiction'. Michael Ungar, 'Resilience, Trauma, Context, and Culture', *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* 14/3 (2013): 255-266, at 256.

[24] See, however, Maggie Zraly and Laetitia Nyirazinyoye, 'Don't Let the Suffering Make You Fade Away: An Ethnographic Study of Resilience among Survivors of Genocide-Rape in Southern Rwanda', *Social Science and Medicine* 70/10 (2010): 1656-1664; Maggie Zraly, Sarah E. Rubbin and Donatella Mukamana, 'Motherhood and Resilience among Rwandan Genocide-Rape Survivors', *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* 41/4 (2013): 411-439. Highlighting a broader point, Walklate notes that '…for the most part criminological and victimological work has largely remained uninformed by the wealth of general empirical data on resilience'. Sandra Walklate, 'Reframing Criminal Victimization: Finding a Place for Vulnerability and Resilience', *Theoretical Criminology* 15/2 (2011): 179-194, at 185.

[25] As part of my current research, for example, which is being funded by the European Research Council, a focus group was conducted with 15 women who had experienced diverse forms of sexual violence during the armed conflict in Colombia. Many of them openly stated that they did not wish to be referred to as 'survivors' because, in their view, this detracted from the State's responsibility towards them. Focus group, Bolívar, Colombia, 16 December 2017.

[26] The man's childhood trauma may have contributed to his suicide. The crucial point, however, is that we should 'avoid a mindset that emphasizes univariate, linear, causation'. Dietrich, 'As the Pendulum Swings', at 50.

[27] It is true that some survivors in BiH do not wish to talk. They are tired, jaded and see no purpose in revisiting the past. However, survivors are not a homogenous group and some of them are ready to speak. The fact that I was able to interview almost 80 men and women over a 12-month period attests to this. See XXXXX (the author). Fundamentally, survivors are individuals with their own individual reasons for wanting to remain silent or to tell and share their stories.

[28] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYbIXbscs2U

[29] Author's translation from Bosnian.

[30] Cited in Selma Boračić-Mršo, '"*Nečujni krik": Položaj žena – žrtava ratnog silovanja*' (February 2015), available at: https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/plp-necujni-krik-polozaj-zena-zrtava-ratnog-silovanja/26860342.html

[31] Philip L. Hammack, 'Narrative and the Cultural Psychology of Identity', *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 12/3 (2008): 222-247, at 235.

[32] Anne-Marie Grondin, 'Youth Victims, Competent Agents: A Second Opinion on Sexual Victimization Trauma', *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies* 3 & 4 (2011): 450-472, at 455.

[33] *Ibid*, at 459.

[34] *Ibid.*, at 460.

[35] The foregrounding and juxtaposition of women's gender and victim identities neglects the reality that many men themselves suffered diverse forms of sexual violence during the Bosnian war. See XXXXX (author).

[36] Grondin, 'Youth Victims, Competent Agents', at 463.

[37] To reiterate, very little attention is given to male survivors.

[38] Busia, 'Silencing Sycorax', at 98.

[39] Suzanne McKenzie-Mohr and Michelle N. Lafrance, 'Telling Stories Without the Words: "Tightrope Talk" in Women's Accounts of Coming to Live Well after Rape or Depression', *Feminism & Psychology* 21(1): 49-73, at 50.

[40] Nils Christie, 'Fertile Ground for Victim-Movements', Keynote Speech at the 3rd Nordic Conference on Victimology and Victim Support, Conference Report, Helsinki, March 2008, cited in Walklate, 'Reframing Criminal Victimization', at 190

[41] One NGO leader even insisted, during an informal conversation, that all women who were raped during the Bosnian war should be tested for HIV and AIDS. She maintained that such testing was necessary, notwithstanding the fact that the war ended more than 20 years. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 'HIV prevalence among the general population is now below 1% and is less than 5% in higher risk demographics'. UNDP, 'Scaling Up Universal Access for Most at Risk Populations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (HIV/AIDS Round 9) (n.d.), available at: http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/scaling-up-universal-access-for-most-at-risk-populations-in-bosn.html

[42] Derek Summerfield, 'The Invention of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Social Usefulness of a Psychiatric Category', *British Medical Journal* 322 (2001): 95-98, at 96.

[43] Making a broader argument, Fassin and Rechtman maintain that '…trauma today is more a feature of the moral landscape serving to identify legitimate victims than it is a diagnostic category which at most reinforces that legitimacy'. Fassin and Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma*, at 284.

[44] According to the World Bank, 'a long winter and a rebound in global energy markets led to increasing prices for fuel and imported food after December 2016, raising consumer prices by 1.1% year-on-year in June 2017. Given the limited growth in nominal salaries, higher consumer prices led to a reduction in real incomes'. World Bank, 'The World Bank in Bosnia and Herzegovina', (n.d.), available at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bosniaandherzegovina/overview#4

[45] BiH has very high rates of youth unemployment. According to the World Bank, 'Finding the first formal job is particularly tough: 67 percent of the young people are out of a job, compared with the general unemployment rate of around 28 percent'. World Bank, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina to Create New Private Sector Jobs for Youth with World Bank Support (January 2017), available at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/01/05/bosnia-and-herzegovina-to-create-new-private-sector-jobs-for-youth-with-world-bank-support

[46] Catherine Panter-Brick, Mark Eggerman, Viani Gonzalez, Sarah Safdar, 'Violence, Suffering, and Mental Health in Afghanistan: A School-Based Survey', *Lancet* 374 (2009): 807-816, at 814.

[47] According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 'With structural reforms left unfinished, the private sector has struggled to drive economic growth. Private investment is low and foreign investors have generally stayed away. As a consequence, unemployment is running high…'. IMF, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina: Turning the

Economy Around' (September 2016), available at: http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2016/09/06/NA090916BosniaandHerzegovina. In the first half of 2017, BiH's unemployment rate was 20.5 per cent (a decrease from 25.4 per cent in 2016). World Bank, 'The World Bank in Bosnia and Herzegovina', at 29.

[48] Kelly D. Askin, 'Comfort Women – Shifting Shame and Stigma from Victims to Victimizers', *International Criminal Law Review* 1 (2001): 5-32, at 8.

[49] XXXXX (the author), at 206.

[50] Cited in Denis Džidić, '"20,000 Women Sexually Assaulted" during Bosnian War' (September 2015), available at: http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnian-rape-victims-still-waiting-for-justice-09-28-2015

[51] Askin, 'Comfort Women', at 24, n 52.

[52] The author is currently working on a project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, which is aimed at addressing sexual violence stigma by educating young people in Bosnian high schools about sexual violence in conflict and how these crimes affect survivors. The project is being undertaken with the assistance of *Snaga Žene*, a Bosnian NGO in Tuzla.

[53] Speaking about child sexual abuse (CSA), for example, Grondin maintains that 'CSA discourses can also pathologize already heavily stigmatized individuals, efface counter-narratives, essentialize trauma as an inherent and permanent attribute of the subject, and reinforce anachronistic understandings of children as incomplete'. Grondin, 'Youth Victims, Competent Agents', at 452.

[54] Derek Summerfield, 'A Critique of Seven Assumptions behind Psychological Trauma Programmes in War-Affected Areas', *Social Science & Medicine* 48/10 (1999): 1449-1462, at 1456. In a similar vein, Gavey and Schmidt posit that 'The confluence of these two elements – one that forecasts a devastating array of damage and the other that depicts this particular trauma as unique and beyond ordinary comprehension – arguably lays the ground for ongoing, albeit inadvertent, stigmatization of the "the rape victim" (or "survivor")'. Nicola Gavey and Johanna Schmidt, '"Trauma of Rape" Discourse: A Double-Edged Template for Everyday Understandings of the Impact of Rape?' *Violence against Women* 17/4 (2011): 433–456, at 450-451.

[55] Walklate, 'Reframing Criminal Victimization', at 190.

[56] Donna M. Mertens, 'Transformative Paradigm: Mixed Methods and Social Justice', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1/3 (2007): 212-225.

[57] Paul Gready and Simon Robins, 'From Transitional to Transformative Justice: A New Agenda for Practice', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 8 (2014): 339-361, at 358.

[58] In her discussion of human trafficking, Aradau argues that 'The humanitarian discourse will be shown to function more specifically as a "politics of pity", where emotions are used to re-structure the situation of trafficking and govern it to the benefit of trafficked women'. Claudia Aradau, 'The Perverse Politics of Four-Letter Words: Risk and Pity in the Securitisation of Human Trafficking', *Millennium: Review of International Studies* 33/2 (2004): 251-277, at 254.

[59] Tshepo Madlingozi, 'On Transitional Justice Entrepreneurs and the Production of Victims', *International Journal of Transitional Justice,* 2/2 (2010): 208-228, at 210.

[60] Dori Laub, 'From Speechlessness to Narrative: The Cases of Holocaust Historians and of Psychiatrically Hospitalized Survivors', *Literature and Medicine*, 24/2 (2005): 253-265, at 257. Echoing this, Ganzevoort underlines that in traumatization, 'We lose our place in the world. We lose our connection to others. We lose our sense of self'. Ganvevoort, 'Scars and Stigmata', at 26.

[61] Laub, *ibid*.

[62] *Ibid*.

[63] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Real & Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 1993), 78.

[64] Mark Freeman, 'Charting the Narrative Unconscious: Cultural Memory and the Challenge of Autobiography, *Narrative Inquiry* 12/1 (2002): 193-211, at 202.

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] Alison Crosby and M. Brinton Lykes, 'Mayan Women Survivors Speak: The Gendered Relations of Truth Telling in Postwar Guatemala', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 5/3 (2011): 456-476, at 476.

[67] Susan E. Chase, 'Taking Narrative Seriously: Consequences for Method and Theory in Interview Studies', in Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (eds) *Interpreting Experience: The Narrative Study of Lives*, Vol. 3 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 17.

[68] Crosby and Lykes, 'Mayan Women Survivors Speak', at 476.

[69] Miguel Gonçalves, Marlene Matos and Anita Santos, 'Narrative Therapy and the Nature of "Innovative Moments" in the Construction of Change', *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 22/1 (2009): 1-23, at 3.

[70] Frederick Schauer, 'Causation Theory and the Causes of Sexual Violence', *Law & Social Inquiry* 12/4 (1987): 737-770.

[71] Gavey and Schmidt, '"Trauma of Rape" Discourse', at 449.

[72] Rachel Yehuda, in Steven M. Southwick, George A. Bonanno, Ann S. Masten, Catherine Panter-Brick and Rachel Yehuda, 'Resilience Definitions, Theory, and Challenges: Interdisciplinary Perspectives', *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 5/1 (2014): 1-14, at 7. In a similar vein, Kapitan remarks that 'Some people adapt to terrible circumstances with creativity while others become traumatized as well as traumatizing to others'. Lynn Kapitan, 'Mobilizing Compassion to Counteract Denial and Despair', *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association* 24/4 (2007): 154-155, at 155.

[73] Bruce S. McEwen, 'Allostasis and Allostatic Load: Implications for Neuropsychopharmacology', *Neuropsychopharmacology* 22/2 (2000): 108-124, at 110.

[74] *Ibid.*, at 110-111.

[75] Bruce S. McEwen, 'Stress, Adaptation, and Disease: Allostasis and Allostatic Load', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 840/1 (1998): 33-44, at 34.

[76] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, 'Life after Rape: Narrative, Theory, and Feminism', in Margaret R. Higonnet (ed.), *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 61-78, at 77.

[77] The notion of rape trauma syndrome is arguably problematic from an individualist perspective. See Ann W. Burgess and Lynda L. Holmstrom, 'Rape Trauma Syndrome', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 131 (1974): 981-986; Ann W. Burgess, 'Rape Trauma Syndrome', *Behavioral Sciences and the Law* 1 (1983): 97-113.

[78] Rajan, 'Life after Rape', at 77.

[79] David Byrne, *Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1998), 5.

[80] Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Fiona Ell, Lexie Grudnoff, Larry Ludlow, Mavis Haigh and Mary Hill, 'When Complexity Theory Meets Critical Realism: A Platform for Research on Initial Teacher Education', *Teacher Education Quarterly* 41/1 (2014): 105-122, at 106.

[81] Steven M. Manson, 'Simplifying Complexity Theory: A Review of Complexity Theory', *Geoforum* 32/3 (2001): 405-414, at 409.

[82] Paul Cilliers, *Complexity and Postmodernism: Understanding Complex Systems* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1998), ix.

[83] *Ibid.*, at 2.

[84] *Ibid.*, at ix.

[85] John F. Peppin, Martin D. Cheatle, Kenneth L. Kirsch and Bill H. McCarberg, 'The Complexity Model: A Novel Approach to Improve Chronic Pain Care', *Pain Medicine* 16/4 (2015): 653-666, at 656.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Ibid.*

[88] Accentuating this point, Burstow refers to PTSD as 'a grab bag of contextless symptoms, divorced from the complexities of people's lives and the social structures that give rise to them'. Bonnie Burstow, 'Toward a Radical Understanding of Trauma and Trauma Work', *Violence against Women* 9/11 (2003): 1293-1317, at 1296.

[89] Sy Rubenfeld, 'Group Therapy and Complexity Theory', *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 51/4 (2001): 449-471, at 454.

[90] Adopting a social ecological approach to trauma that is grounded in community psychology, for example, Harvey maintains that 'psychological attributes of human beings are best understood in the ecological context of human community, and …individual reactions to events are best understood in light of the values, behaviors, skills and understandings that human communities cultivate in their members'. Mary R. Harvey, 'An Ecological View of Psychological Trauma and Trauma Recovery', *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 9/1 (1996): 3-23, at 4. See also Rebecca Campbell, Emily Dworkin and Giannina Cabral, 'An Ecological Model of the Impact of Sexual Assault On Women's Mental Health', *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* 10/3 (2009): 225-246.

[91] See XXXXX (the author).

[92] Sylvia Walby, 'Complexity Theory, Systems Theory, and Multiple Intersecting Social Inequalities', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 37/4 (2007): 449-470, at 460.

[93] Froma Walsh, 'Traumatic Loss and Major Disasters: Strengthening Family and Community Resilience', *Family Process* 46/2 (2007): 207-227, at 208.

[94] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second edition (London: Sheed & Ward, 1989), 291.

[95] *Ibid.*, at 293.

[96] According to Koch and Wiskind, 'In trauma, time stands still: chronological time is drawn back, as if on an elastic band, into a mental state. Within temporal structure, trauma is a caesura; it intrudes like a black box between the time before and the time after the traumatic event and it is experienced as discontinuity'. Gertrud Koch and Ora Wiskind, 'The Angel of Forgetfulness and the Black Box of Facticity: Trauma and Memory in Claude Lanzmann's Film "Shoah"', *History and Memory* 3/1 (1991): 119-134, at 130.

[97] Michael Pickering and Michelle Keightley, 'Trauma, Discourse and Communicative Limits', *Critical Discourse Studies* 6/4 (2009): 237-249, 242.

[98] *Ibid.*, at 244.

[99] Erin McGlothlin. 'No Time like the Present: Narrative and Time in Art Spiegelman's "Maus"', *Narrative* 11/2 (2003): 177-198, at 191.

[100] Pickering and Keightley, 'Trauma, Discourse and Communicative Limits', at 245.

[101] *Ibid.*, at 244.

[102] Gavey and Schmidt, '"Trauma of Rape" Discourse', at 452.

[103] Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning,* at 55.

[104] Summerfield, 'A Critique of Seven Assumptions', at 1454.

[105] Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhour, 'The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory: Measuring the Positive Legacy of Trauma', *International Journal of Psychology* 9/3 (1996): 455-471, at 455.

[106] Maren Westphal and George A. Bonanno, 'Posttraumatic Growth and Resilience to Trauma: Different Sides of the Same Coin or Different Coins?' *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 56/3 (2007): 417-427, at 420.

[107] See Susan L. Cutter, Lindsey Barnes, Melissa Berry, Christopher Burton, Elijah Evans, Eric Tate Jennifer Webb, 'A Place-Based Model for Understanding Community Resilience to Natural Disasters', *Global Environmental Change* 18 (2008): 598-606; Christopher G. Burton, 'A Validation of Metrics for Community Resilience to Natural Hazards and Disasters Using the Recovery from Hurricane Katrina as a Case Study', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105/1 (2015): 67-86.

[108] See Carl Folke, 'Resilience: The Emergence of a Perspective for Social-Ecological Systems Analyses', *Global Environmental Change* 16/3 (2008): 253-267; W. Neil Adger, Katrina Brown, Donald R. Nelson, Fikret Berkes, Hallie Eakin, Carl Folke, Kathleen Galvin, Lance Gunderson, Marisa Goulden, Karen O'Brien, Jack Ruitenbeek and Emma L. Tompkins, 'Resilience Implications of Policy Responses to Climate Change', *Climate Change* 2/5 (2011): 757-766.

[109] See Anne Aly, Elisabeth Taylor and Saul Karnovsky, 'Moral Disengagement and Building Resilience to Violent Extremism: An Education Intervention', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37/4 (2014): 369-385; B. Heidi Ellis and Saida Abdi, 'Building Community Resilience to Violent Extremism Through Genuine Partnerships', *American Psychologist* 72/3 (2017): 289-300.

[110] See Robert Schweitzer, Jaimi Greenslade and Ashraf Kagee, 'Coping and Resilience in Refugees from the Sudan: A Narrative Account', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 41/3 (2007): 282-288; Marieke Sleijpen, Hennie R. Boeije, Rolf J. Klebber and Trudy Mooren, 'Between Power and Powerlessness: A Meta-Ethnography of Sources of Resilience in Young Refugees', *Ethnicity and Health* 21/2 (2016): 158-180.

[111] Lennart Olsson, Anne Jerneck, Henrik Thoren, Johanes Persson and David O'Byrne, 'Why Resilience is Unappealing to Social Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations of the Scientific Use of Resilience', *Science Advances* 1/4 (2015): 1-11, at 1.

[112] Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, for example, note that 'Early efforts were primarily focused on personal qualities of "resilient children", such as autonomy or high self-esteem…As work in the area evolved, however, researchers increasingly acknowledged that resilience may often derive from factors external to the child'. Suniya S. Luthar, Dante Cicchetti and Bronwyn Becker, 'The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work', *Child Development* 71/3 (2000): 543-562, at 544.

[113] W. Neil Adger, 'Social and Ecological Resilience: Are they Related?' *Progress in Human Geography* 24/3 (2000) pp. 347-364, at 347.

[114] Michael Ungar, 'Resilience across Cultures', *British Journal of Social Work* 38/2 (2008): 218-235, at 225.

[115] Catherine Panter-Brick, 'Health, Risk and Resilience: Interdisciplinary Concepts and Applications', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 431-448, at 432.

[116] Emory L. Cowen, 'The Enhancement of Psychological Wellness: Challenges and Opportunities', *American Journal of Community Psychology* 22/2 (1994): 149-179, at 152. Sideris, for example, notes that 'For Mozambican women and other African women to whom individual well-being is in large part defined by having a social place, reconstituting links to community is critical to healing the injury done by rejection consequent to sexual violation'. Tina Sideris, 'War, Gender and Culture: Mozambican Women Refugees', *Social Science and Medicine* 56/4 (2003): 713-724, at 722.

[117] Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, for example, define resilience as 'a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity'. Suniya S. Luthar, Dante Cicchetti and Bronwyn Becker, 'The Construct of Resilience: A Critical Evaluation and Guidelines for Future Work', *Child Development* 71/3 (2000): 543-562, at 543.

[118] Steven M. Southwick, 'Resilience Definitions, Theory, and Challenges', at 2.

[119] Chandler and Reid, for example, maintain that 'Across and throughout international relations, practices are being shaped around the need to develop the capacities of humans, individually and collectively, for resilience. Resilience is currently propounded by neoliberal agencies and institutions, especially, as the fundamental property that people and individuals worldwide must possess in order to become full and developed subjects'. David Chandler and Julian Reid, *The Neoliberal Subject: Resilience, Adaptation and Vulnerability* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 1.

[120] Mary R. Harvey, 'Towards an Ecological Understanding of Resilience in Trauma Survivors', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma* 14/1-2 (2007): 9-32, at 15.

[121] See, for example, Margaret O'Dougherty-Wright, Joan Fopna-Loy and Stephanie Fischer, 'Multidimensional Assessment of Resilience in Mothers who are Child Sexual Abuse Survivors', *Child Abuse and Neglect* 29/10 (2005): 1173-1193.

[122] It is also important to underline, however, that many survivors are not in receipt of any help. Some are living in more remote rural areas and may be unaware that help is available – or not know whom to ask for help. Some have moved overseas. Some have never acknowledged that they suffered sexual violence during the Bosnian war and have chosen to remain silent, which is itself a form of resilience. As Kebede et al. argue, 'Enacting silence, or declining to speak, can be a strategic defence – a tool of resistance against the powerful or a means of avoiding stigma'. Meselu Taye Kebede, Per Kristian Hilden and Anne-Lise Middlethon, 'Negotiated Silence: The Management of the Self as a Moral Subject in Young Ethiopian Women's Discourse about Sexuality', *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning* 14/6 (2014): 666-678, at 667.

[123] Margaret A. Waller, 'Resilience in Ecosystemic Context: Evolution of the Concept', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 71/3 (2001): 290-297, at 295.

[124] Panter-Brick, ''Resilience Definitions, Theory, and Challenges', at 3.

[125] Michael Ungar, 'Resilience, Trauma, Context, and Culture', at 258.

[126] See Emma Graham-Harrison, '"I was Sold Seven Times": The Yazidi Women Welcomed Back into the Faith' (July 2017), available at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jul/01/i-was-sold-seven-times-yazidi-women-welcomed-back-into-the-faith

[127] According to Tearfund, for example, 'Survivors in DRC [Democratic Republic of Congo] and CAR [Central African Republic], many of whom reported they had been gang raped by armed men during conflict, often in public, said that their trauma was compounded by being abandoned by their husbands or immediate family as a direct result of their ordeal'. Tearfund, 'Stigma against Rape Survivors Undermines Efforts to Combat Sexual Violence in Conflict' (November 2016), available at: https://www.tearfund.org/media/press_releases/stigma_against_rape_survivors_undermines_efforts_to_combat_sexual_violence_in_conflict/

[128] International Centre for Transitional Justice, 'What is Transitional Justice?' (n.d.), available at: https://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice

[129] See, for example, Laura Arriaza and Naomi Roht-Arriaza, 'Social Reconstruction as a Local Process', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 2/2 (2008): 157-172; Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern, 'Whose Justice? Rethinking Transitional Justice from the Bottom Up', *Journal of Law and Society* 35/2 (2008): 265-292; Kieran McEvoy and Lorna McGregor, *Transitional Justice from Below: Grassroots Activism and the Struggle for Change* (Oxford: Hart, 2008); Anna Eriksson, 'A Bottom Up Approach to Transitional Justice in Northern Ireland', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 3/3 (2009): 301-320; Paul Gready, 'Analysis: Reconceptualising Transitional Justice: Embedded and Distanced Justice', *Conflict, Security & Development* 5/1

(2005): 3-21; Rosalind Shaw and Lars Waldorf (eds.), *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Simon Robins, 'Towards Victim-Centred Transitional Justice: Understanding the Needs of Families of the Disappeared in Postconflict Nepal', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 5/1 (2011): 75-98.

[130] Jordan, 'From Victim to Survivor', at 53.

[131] Laura Heaton, 'The Risks of Instrumentalizing the Narrative on Sexual Violence in the DRC: Neglected Needs and Unintended Consequences', *International Review of the Red Cross* 96/894 (2014): 625-639, at 639.

[132] *Ibid*.

[133] Burstow, 'Toward a Radical Understanding of Trauma', at 1309.

[134] Masahiro Nochi, 'Reconstructing self-narratives in coping with traumatic brain injury', *Social Science & Medicine* 51/12 (2000): 1795-1804, at 1795.

[135] *Ibid*.

[136] George A. Bonanno, Sara A. Romero and Sarah I. Klein, 'The Temporal Elements of Psychological Resilience: An Integrative Framework for the Study of Individuals, Families, and Communities', *Psychological Inquiry: An International Journal for the Advancement of Psychological Theory* 26/2 (2015): 139-169, at 139.