

Sociology and peacebuilding

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Introduction

It is ironic that the discipline of sociology, so closely associated historically with the study of the problem of order, has concentrated on studying war rather than peace. Sociological analyses of organized violence in late modernity abound (most recently see Malešević 2010). However, the changing nature of organized violence today (on which see Kaldor 1999), which is simultaneously witnessing ever more sophisticated forms of weaponry and the return to de-technological war, in which the machete is the favoured weapon of genocide, has both increased the proclivity to violence in late modernity and its level of barbarity and atrocity. There has been a collapse in the distinction between civilian and combatant, and the human body has become a battle site, on which is inflicted moral depravities not witnessed since pre-modern times. While this has led some sociologists to query the very nature of late modernity and its commitment to Enlightenment values (for example Bauman 1989, 1998), it has had a profound impact on the subject matter of the discipline of sociology by encouraging what elsewhere I have called a second wave cognitive revolution (see Brewer and Hayes 2011: 7-10). If the first wave in the 1960s focused on the rediscovery of social meaning and *Verstehen*, in such forms as social phenomenology, ethnomethodology and cognitive sociology, the second wave today addresses notions like suffering, emotion, forgiveness, hope, anger, revenge, reconciliation and, now, also peace. This second wave is not solely down to the reintroduction of genocide as an experience in late modernity, but the reinvigorated sociological analysis of new forms of organized violence has implicated the development of the sociology of peace process.

Individual sociologists have been contributing to the field of peace studies for a very long time. It is worth recalling that the founder of this new field in the 1960s, Johan Galtung,

was originally a sociologist; and for people of my generation he will always be remembered for having written a famous textbook on mathematical sociology (the imprint of which is still felt on his use of equations and formulae and his logical approach in peace studies, see Galtung 2008). Significant contributions to peace studies, both as a field of practice and a theoretical subject, have been made by sociologists, such as Lee Smithey (2011) and, more notably, John Paul Lederach, whose well-known models for peacebuilding (for example, Lederach 1997, 2005) have inspired others to apply them in actual cases (see Knox and Quirk 2000). Sociology pioneered the idea of 'divided society' as a way of capturing the structural dynamics behind zero-sum conflict and Brewer (2003) and Oberschall (2007) used case studies to reflect on how this kind of society inevitably implicates but also constrains peacebuilding. Individual sociologists have worked on the role of memory in peace processes (Brewer 2006), on forgiveness (Misztal 2011), truth and truth recovery (Lundy 2011) and transitional justice more widely (Elster 2004), and on the potential for religious peacebuilding (Brewer, Higgins and Teeney 2011), amongst many other things.

However, for all the work of sociologists as individuals, there has not been an attempt to develop a sociological perspective on peace. The sociology of peace processes is undeveloped. This is despite the huge potential of the discipline for understanding the nature and dynamics of post-conflict societies. This neglect is partly the result of disciplinary closure, which has seen peace studies, political science and international relations dominate the field, but it also lies in a misunderstanding of the nature of peace, which is thought primarily to describe the process by which accords, agreements and pacts are negotiated at the regime level to bring an end to problematic politics.

Peace, however, is a very interdisciplinary concept. The philosopher and ethicist Avishai Margalit (2010) has problematized the concept of peace by referring to those peace

accords that on moral grounds ought *not* to have been negotiated – since they enshrine human indignity – as ‘rotten compromises’ (he has in mind the Munich and Yalta Agreements). The discipline of economics has long worked on the effects of violence in civil war and the impact of ‘war economies’ on the potential for peace (Keen 1998), and we now recognize the importance of strong economies for statebuilding during peace processes (see Collier 2008). Even theology has contributed to the conceptualization of peace through efforts at understanding the scriptural basis to advocating forgiveness and reconciliation at the political level (Shriver 1995; Torrance 2006) and between nations (Amstutz 2004), and the writings of David Herbert (2003) from within religious studies stress the link between religion, civil society and peace. There is now an established subfield of peace criminology, and both law and religious studies (on the latter see Philpott 2007) contribute to our understanding of transitional justice after conflict. The second wave cognitive revolution in sociology has also opened this discipline up to engagement with peace and a nascent sociology of peace processes is emerging.

The sociology of peace processes

This new field in sociology – an infant entrant into the analysis of peace processes – is difficult to characterize with any definitiveness because of its novelty, and I am in a difficult position in doing so because I am so closely associated with pioneering it, but I suggest there are three ways in which it can be mapped: by its substantive, conceptual and analytical foci.

Addressing first its substantive focus, the sociology of peace processes draws on key ideas within the discipline of sociology as they pertain to an understanding of the meaning of peace and the processes that help consolidate and strengthen peace agreements. This work has been summarized by Brewer (2010) and covers the relevance to peace processes

of sociological ideas on emotions, gender, civil society, memory, citizenship, truth, victimhood and globalization, amongst others (on the ideas of social capital and spiritual capital as they relate to peace see Brewer, Higgins and Teeney 2011; on social capital see Leonard 2004). The claims that Brewer makes in *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach* are that sociologists have not applied these ideas in the past to an understanding of peace processes and that analysts of peace processes have tended to either overlook them completely or ignore the sociological take on them. Of course, there are a number of sociologists exempt from this complaint, in that, in particular, people like Jon Elster (2004) and Thomas Scheff (1994) have applied ideas from the sociology of emotions to help understand the problems around the management of emotions following conflict, such those around negative emotions, like anger, hate and revenge, and the cultivation of positive ones around empathy, forgiveness, hope, reconciliation and the like. And there are some advocates of the liberal model of peace in international relations and peace studies that are opening up to some of these ideas, notably civil society (especially Paris, 2004), although not yet to sociology's particular emphasis.

It has to be admitted, however, that sociologists in other fields have not yet awakened to the potential of their ideas for understanding peace processes. We await, for example, masculinity theorists becoming attuned to the import of their ideas for understanding the deconstruction of violent masculinities amongst ex-combatants and to the development of non-violent masculinities in post-conflict societies, although the sociological writings of John Brown Childs (2003) on gang violence are relevant here. Similarly, sociologists of religion offer no understanding of the dynamics of religious peacebuilding. The reduction of the sociology of religion to the sociology of secularization tends to inhibit the ability of sociologists of religion to see it playing a positive role in

society, which is why the specification of religious peacebuilding is done either by mainstream sociologists from outside the sociology of religion (such as Beck 2010; Brewer, Higgins and Teeney 2011) or by non-sociologists. The same must be said for the area of women and peacebuilding, which is burgeoning, advances in which are made almost entirely from outside the sociology of gender (for some exceptions see Lentin 1997; Wallace, Haerpfer and Abbott 2009), although feminist sociologists have made a significant contribution to our understanding of repressed victimhood, especially as it affects women (for example Lentin 1999). To prove the point about the sociology of gender, however, perhaps the best contribution to the topic of repressed victimhood has been by the feminist historian Urvashi Butalia (2000).

The second way to characterize the sociology of peace processes is through its conceptual contribution. I have in mind here the way in which sociology broadens our conceptualization of peace processes. I earlier referred to the way in which peace is inherently perceived as a political process. I mean this in two ways. A peace process is thought to describe the negotiations at the regime level through which an accord or agreement is negotiated to bring an end to problematic politics; and the consolidation of the agreement afterwards is itself represented as a political process involving the introduction of good governance structures and statebuilding. That 'distorted politics' may reside in social processes like racism, ethnicity, structural inequality, and zero-sum conceptualizations of social identity, does not seem to affect the assumption that once problematic politics is resolved and good governance structures implemented, the process of societal healing follows on naturally. This assumption is naive. Sociology is useful for alerting us to the distinction between what elsewhere (Brewer 2010: 200-4; Brewer, Higgins and Teeney 2011: 34ff) I have called the political and social peace processes.

Conflict resolution studies, politics and international relations, for example, can lay claim to expertise on the political peace process, namely, the negotiation process at the regime level that results in the accord and the process of statebuilding thereafter. However, good governance structures like democratic forms of political representation, new forms of inclusive voting systems, a new constitution, institutional reform of the polity and the economy, the introduction of human rights law and Bill of Rights, and the like, are insufficient on their own to address the social peace process. By this is meant the process of societal healing, that is, the restoration of broken relationships, the development of a sense of community and shared responsibility for the future. Reconciliation is part of this, but so too is compromise, empathy, trust and forgiveness. These tend not to be the concerns of the liberal model of peacebuilding and the good governance approach, which neglects such things in preference for the focus on the political peace process. The social peace process forms the area of expertise of the sociology of peace processes.

The conceptual focus of the sociology of peace processes therefore offers an advance by supplementing existing approaches through broadening our attention towards a range of matters that go to define and shape the social peace process. These include the problem of interpersonal accommodation after conflict, the question of what healing means at the societal level, how compromise at the level of interpersonal social relations works, what forgiveness means and whether or not third-party forgiveness – people, mostly politicians, forgiving on others' behalf – is feasible, the new forms of memory work needed to move society on from the conflict and the appropriate level of social and political change needed to permit ongoing social cleavages to be structurally reproduced in non-violent ways, amongst other things.

In other writings I have suggested that one way to understand the sorts of issues that constitute the social peace process is through a series of policy dilemmas that go toward defining the sociological dynamic to peace processes (see Brewer 2004, 2011). I referred to these as a series of policy tensions, problems and imperatives or needs. There are the tensions between truth and reconciliation, and between justice and peace; the problems of victimhood, and of remembrance and commemoration; and the policy imperatives to assist the social reintegration of former combatants, the need to develop a programme of citizenship education for the new society, as well as finding ways to extenuate the mundane over the sense of crisis during the travails of the peace process. These pose serious challenges for policymakers but I suggested their resolution was equally important for the eventual success of the peace process as all the institutional reform in the political peace process associated with good governance and statebuilding.

My own empirical research deals with some of the policy concerns in the social peace process. I lay all this out for reason, which will become apparent shortly. For example, I have recently published research as the principal investigator arising from a four-year ESRC-funded project (RES-000-23-1258) on the contribution of civil society to peacebuilding, which addressed the role of the churches to Northern Ireland's peace process as the illustrative case (see Brewer, Higgins and Teeney 2011). I am principal investigator on a five-year £1.26 million Leverhulme-funded programme of research – begun in 2009 – on compromise amongst victims of conflict, addressing Northern Ireland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Colombia and contemporary Spain, which also includes a project on witness evidence at truth commissions (www.abdn.ac.uk/comprise-conflict). And I am involved in a project as principal investigator on the contribution of religion to the social

well-being of ex-combatant prisoners in Northern Ireland, funded by the Northern Ireland Association of Mental Health.

I state this as a way of laying down a complaint, for, unfortunately, there is not much work of this sort going on in sociology – or at least it is fragmented along with sociology's disciplinary boundaries and hived off into new interdisciplinary subfields like memory studies, victimization studies, transitional justice studies, and the like. Sociology is an exporter discipline infusing many of these interdisciplinary fields. Part of the problem in establishing the sociology of peace processes as the conceptual focus for analysing the social peace process is not so much hostility from outsiders but persuading sociologists that their discipline has something to contribute in the face of its disciplinary fragmentation, to which the new field of the sociology of peace processes might be thought itself to contribute. Thus, rather than proffer possible answers to the questions raised above about the social peace process, I prefer in this short chapter to address the third contribution of the sociology of peace processes, its analytical focus, which goes some way to explaining how a disciplinary perspective enhances the analysis of peace processes.

A sociological perspective on peace processes

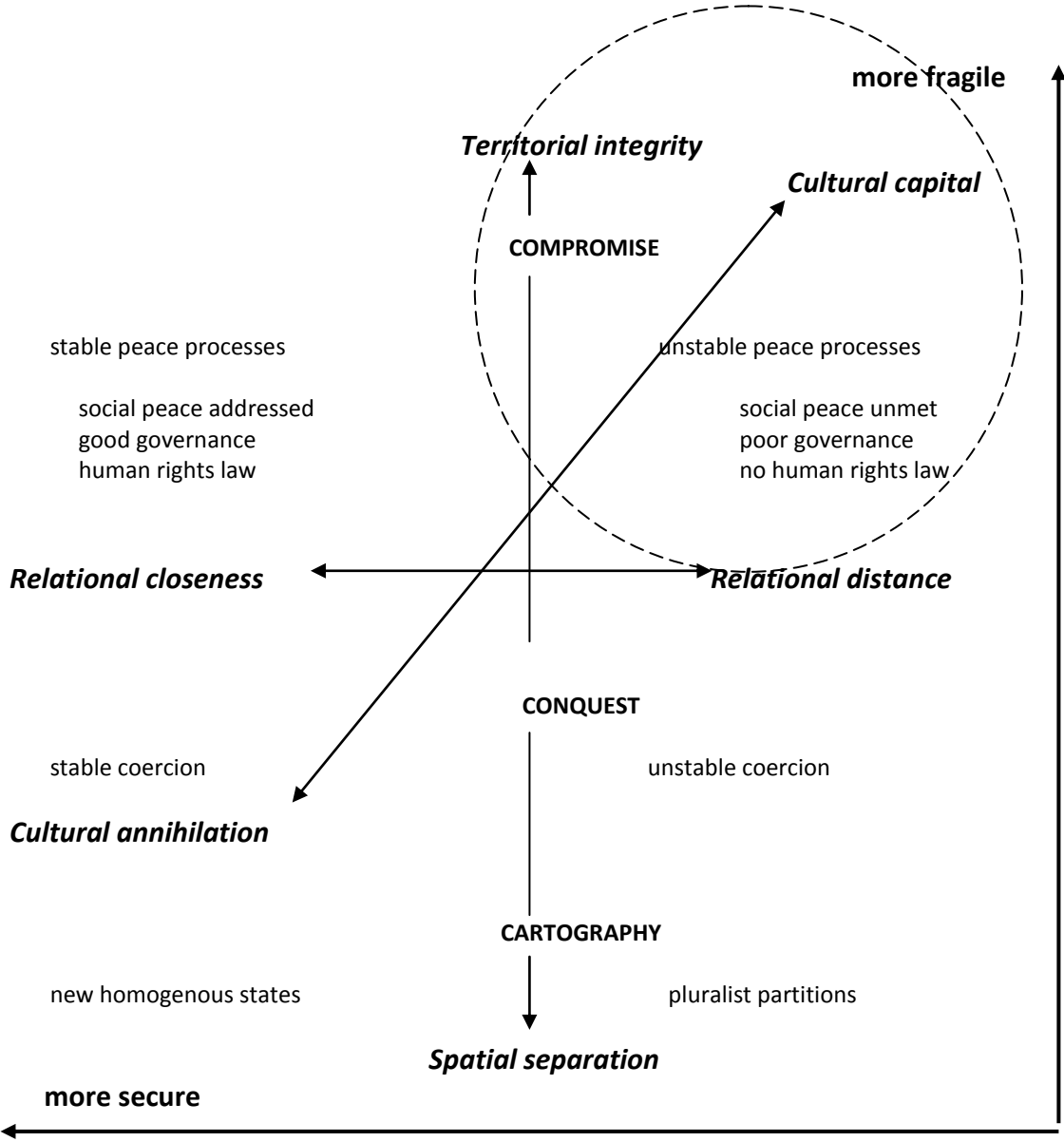
Sociology has ceded the analysis of peace processes to other disciplines in large part because a perspective on such matters that is identifiably sociological is difficult to conceive and there is resistance to the fragmentation of the discipline that the topic is thought to reinforce. While it is feasible to imagine various formulations of such a perspective – it is hardly necessary to limit it to just one – in what follows I proffer a personal view that locates the analysis of peace processes at the centre of what Charles Wright Mills (1959) calls the sociological imagination. This expands upon the approach I developed in my book *C. Wright*

Mills and the Ending of Violence (Brewer 2003), which I applied to understand the emergence and development of the peace processes in Northern Ireland and South Africa. I take the opportunity of this chapter for the first time to link this perspective to arguments developed in the two books that followed next in the trilogy, *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach* (Brewer 2010) and *Religion, Civil Society and Peace in Northern Ireland* (Brewer, Higgins and Teeney, 2011). What follows is therefore a thoroughgoing sociological perspective representing ideas I have been struggling with for the last ten years, although necessarily addressed here briefly due to the limited space available.

Negotiated peace settlements represent only one way in which conflict is pacified. Post-conflict societies are of three types. One type is based on conquest, involving military victory for one group and defeat for others, such as in colonization and contemporary Sri Lanka; another is based on cartography, as map makers redraw territorial boundaries to partition the groups into separate nation states or devolved regions, keeping warring factions apart, as occurred following the deconstruction of the former Yugoslavia; the third is based on compromise as erstwhile protagonists negotiate a second best deal in which they give up on first preferences for the sake of peace, represented by all those modern societies where peace agreements have settled long standing conflicts, such as Northern Ireland and South Africa.

This typology coheres around three axes that usefully capture the scale of the problems faced by compromise societies based on negotiated peace deals. The first is territorial integrity-spatial separation, describing the extent to which, post-conflict, erstwhile protagonists share a common nation; the second is relational distance-closeness, referring to the level to which former enemies share common values; the third is cultural

Figure 1
Types of post violence society



capital-cultural annihilation, describing the extent to which parties retain their cultural capital and resources following conflict. This is represented in Figure 1. This captures the nature of the problems faced by post-conflict societies based on compromise, represented diagrammatically in the circle within Figure 1, for they can involve protagonists without relational closeness, where all parties retain their cultural capital and resources, and have to share common territory.

This means that this peace processes must find ways in which all the social cleavages that once provoked the conflict can be reproduced, following the peace agreement, now in non-violent ways, when there are few common values and senses of shared identity, and where no group is vanquished to the point of cultural annihilation but each having kept their resources and power. The political peace process that delivered the negotiated settlement and monitors conformity to all the good governance structures and institutional reforms afterwards is not capable on its own of dealing with the full range of issues that compromise post-conflict societies face.

The political peace process can, of course, deliver much. Good governance is important. A strong economy, effective statebuilding, the introduction of human rights law and effective institutional reform can eliminate problematic politics. But Figure 1 highlights that despite good governance, social cleavages persist in post-conflict societies based on negotiated peace accords. There can be few shared values, or at least, small differences appear large, social distance remains, and former enemies live side-by-side as neighbours, sharing territory while remaining members of groups that retain their labour power, political clout and cultural legitimacy, even if occasionally only by means of a strong

international diaspora. All this is to say that attention to the social peace process becomes critical after a successful political peace process.

The stability of the compromise represented by the negotiated peace agreement depends as much on success in managing the social peace process as the introduction of all the reforms represented by good governance structures and human rights law. Public policy attention therefore needs to be directed toward the policy dilemmas and problems that shape the social peace process around victimhood, remembrance, the reintegration of ex-combatants, the development of citizenship education, new forms of memory work and memorialization and questions of justice and truth. All this has to be done at the same time as which the potential threat of renewed violence is managed to avoid the return to war by spoilers and dissidents stuck on their first preferences or profiting from the war economy. In other words, reconciliation does not end with the success of the political peace process; it only really starts then. It is hardly a surprise, therefore, that negotiated peace agreements are fragile, for they leave untouched the task of societal healing that only really begins once the political peace process opens up the space for dealing with the task of interpersonal compromise free from the sound of guns or the cut of machetes.

One way to represent the issues confronting the social peace process is by utilizing the famous contrast between negative and positive peace (see Galtung 1996). Negative peace describes conflict transformation, in which there is an end to violence. Positive peace refers to social transformation, in which questions of inequality, injustice and social redistribution are addressed. In the social peace process, negative peace needs to be maintained by managing the threat of renewed violence while pushing onward to implement positive peace, the very fact of which may persuade some to return to war because they resist the idea of social transformation. The policy dilemmas in the social

peace process thus involve tight balancing acts. For example, they involve managing the needs of both victims and ex-combatants, implementing truth recovery and encouraging new forms of memory work that do not make victims arbiters of the future, and balancing the contrasting demands of restorative and retributive notions of justice, as well as dealing with the social cleavages that mark the social structure as unequal and in need of social redistribution, while maintaining the economic strength that permits successful statebuilding. Policies that encourage interpersonal compromise and accommodation across the divide have to exist alongside those that permit victims dignity and recognition. This is a fine balancing act indeed.

Post-conflict societies that neglect social redistribution, no matter how successful their political transition, face the problem of frustrated expectations, for they often leave the same level of disparity across the social cleavages as in the past. Failure to address positive peace therefore offers a severe test of the capacity of the political peace process to desensitize the conflict by democratically translating it in institutional ways through new forms of governance. In some cases, dissidents resist the institutionalization of the conflict and return to violence, such as in Northern Ireland. This explains why activists in South Africa, for example, complain that they now experience class apartheid rather than racial apartheid.

The social peace process is thus about social transformation, the political peace process conflict transformation. Put another way, the political peace process introduces negative peace, the social peace process positive peace. This is why both sets of distinctions are critical to a sociological perspective on peace processes, as represented in Figure 2. Political peace processes rarely concern themselves with the bottom left cell (positive/political), for peace agreements rarely address social transformation, or, at least,

the success of the institutional reforms in embedding new political values and democratic practices is dependent on the extent to which the new state, in conjunction with civil society and grassroots groups, also work in the top left cell (positive/social). Similar sorts of co-operation are required to negotiate ceasefires (negative peace), where peacemaking in both of the right hand cells involves civil society and political groups working to stop the killings, although rarely together or in co-ordination.

Figure 2
Peacemaking in practice

	Positive	Negative
Social	Involves civil society and grassroots groups working in areas of expertise to focus on social transformation and societal healing, whether in pre- and/or post-agreement phases.	Involves civil society and grassroots groups working in areas of expertise to focus on conflict transformation by intervening as mediators in specific instances of violence and/or campaigning to end the violence generally.
Political	Involves political parties, negotiators and politicians incorporating social transformation and societal healing into the terms of the accord and/or using the new political structures to address social transformation and societal healing.	Involves political parties, negotiators and politicians negotiating ceasefires and campaigning for all factions to desist from killing.

It is worth emphasizing that the cells are not hermetically sealed. As noted above, the relationship between the variables is recursive. Positive peace is only feasible once negative peace has been won; with the violence over, the real job of positive peacemaking can take top priority (although always being mindful to manage the threat of renewed violence). The social and political peace processes enable each other; the social peace process can be used as a conflict reduction strategy (top right hand cell) preparing the space for political negotiations (bottom two cells), and a successfully negotiated peace accord gives civil society and grassroots groups the opportunity to address the range of issues involved in social transformation and societal healing (top left hand cell), safe within a secure context established by the accord, where political freedoms, the rule of law and human rights pertain. There should be constant movement, therefore, between the cells, up, down and across, and collaboration between the new state, civil society and the grassroots in making these transitions.

Civil society here includes women's groups, whose contribution to peacebuilding is internationally recognized through the United Nations Development Fund for Women, as well as the churches, faith-based NGOs, trades unions, community development groups, human rights bodies and the like, all of whose contribution to peace needs to be celebrated in addition to that of militant groups, politicians, political mandarins, civil servants and advisers who negotiate deals in the political peace process (see Bew, Frampton and Gurruchaga 2009, for an analysis of 'talking to terrorists' in Northern Ireland and the Basque Country which focuses only on the latter set of people). This reinforces the earlier argument that the substantive focus of the sociology of peace processes draws on sociological ideas about gender, civil society, religion, emotions and the like as they pertain to peace.

I contend that this conceptual apparatus, substantive focus, and set of ideas exemplifies the sociological imagination. Charles Wright Mills is remembered as its first progenitor of this phrase but it is bandied about in sociology almost constantly to the point where it means everything and thus ultimately nothing. I employ it here in the sense that Mills used it. He argued that sociology should be concerned with a subject matter that is historically specified, by which he meant located in real time and space, referring to real events, people and processes. In doing this, sociology needed to show the intersection and connection between four dimensions, the social structure, individual personal biography, history and the political process. This gives social reality a three dimensional quality. First, social reality is simultaneously microscopic, based around individuals' personal worlds, and macroscopic, in that the institutional and structural order of society impacts on people's personal milieu. Social reality is also simultaneously historical and contemporary, in that present structures, circumstances, events, processes and issues have a historical relevance that may impact on their current form and future development. Thirdly, reality is simultaneously social and political; society is deeply impacted by the operation of power within the nation state and beyond and politics affects both the social structure and the personal biographical worlds of people, and is in turn affected by them.

The sociological imagination therefore involves a co-ordination of personal biographical experience, social structural conditions, historical forces and political power and looks at the intersection of them all. In Mills's words (1959: 143), the lives of individuals cannot be adequately understood without reference to the institutions (political and social) and historical forces within which their biography is enacted, and societies are composed in part of the biographical experiences, both historical and contemporary, of the people they comprise. One reflection of this intersection, stressed most by Mills, is the interaction

between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues'. The indissolubility of the individual and social structure ensures that people's private 'troubles' transfer into public issues that transcend local and personal environments to affect society generally (such as divorce and unemployment). Conversely, public issues can become private troubles to affect the individual and shape their biographical experiences (such as fear of crime, anxiety over redundancy, and the consequences of high mortgage rates for homeowners).

It is possible to distil the sociological imagination into a set of guidelines for examining and understanding peace processes that go toward defining what a sociological perspective on such matters might look like. These are as follows.

- A sociology of peace processes should not offer a grand theory or universal schema to understand peace processes in the abstract, but is restricted in its applicability to historically specified cases that exist in real time and space;
- It is necessary to locate specified peace processes in their historical past, to establish whether historical factors continue to shape the form and context of the process (such as the legacy of colonialism or historical wrongs, real or imagined);
- Any account of the emergence, development and progress of the peace process in historically specified cases must focus on the intersection between the social structure, individual biographical experience and the political process;
- This means in practice that it is necessary to:
 - Identify the social structural conditions, and changes to long established patterns of structural differentiation, both nationally and internationally, which affect the potential for conflict transformation in the political peace process and social transformation in the social peace process;
 - Outline the events and developments within the political peace process, nationally and internationally, which have altered the political dynamics of the conflict, and accordingly affect both conflict transformation and social transformation;
 - Chart the influence of individual biographical experience on the political and social peace processes, by examining: (a) the effect of key individuals who have exploited the moment and whose strategies for change and political mobilizations bear upon peace; and (b) the experiences of ordinary people in taken-for-granted settings

whose interests and values make them open to mobilization in the political peace process and to interpersonal compromise and accommodation in the social peace process;

- It is important to show the interaction between local personal milieux and the social structure, by exploring how ordinary people experience the structural and political changes to their local setting, and whose response to which affects progress in the political and social peace processes;
- The dialectic between 'personal troubles' and 'public issues' needs to be highlighted in both the conflict and post-conflict phases. For the pre-agreement phase, it needs to be shown how the broad social conflict translates into 'personal troubles', which themselves transform into 'public issues', and vice versa, and how this affects the wish to end violence and the will to make peace. For the post-agreement phase it needs to be shown how this dialectic presents itself as a series of issues in the private and public spheres, which define and shape the problem of societal healing.

There is no opportunity here to apply this perspective to specific peace processes (although see the cases of Northern Ireland and South Africa in Brewer 2003), but it is indicative that a sociological perspective can be developed for the analysis of peace processes that captures the very kernel of the sociological imagination. It is a truism that sociology exists always between God and chance. That it is to say, miracles and accidents can happen that affect peace processes but mediating between them is the discipline of sociology, which rejects mono-causal accounts of peace processes to offer a whole-rounded approach drawing on social structural conditions, politics, history and individual biographical experience.

Conclusion

The arguments in this chapter have been an attempt at proselytization, for which I offer no apology. I am hoping to convince sociologists of the need to develop a sociological perspective on peace processes and analysts from other disciplines that sociology has much to add. The chapter is programmatic in outlining the potential that lies in such an approach

rather than descriptive of a large body of work already done. What sociology can achieve is immense; what it has done so far is quite limited. What it can achieve, in short, is the broadening of our understanding of the meaning of peace, expert attention on the social peace process, by which is meant the question of societal healing that is left as a problem of interpersonal accommodation *after* the political peace process has worked, and sensitivity toward a series of issues as vitally important to the success of the peace process as any set of institutional reforms. Analysts of peace processes from other disciplines need to open their eyes to matters beyond politics and sociologists to start applying their special insights to what will be an enduring problem in the twenty-first century given the proliferation of new forms of organized violence in late modernity.

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