

Trauma, Trust and Healing

Required Reading

David Bloomfield *et al.*, eds. *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict*, pp. 77-96.

Highly Recommended Reading

Trudy Govier and Wilhelm J. Verwoerd, 'Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 32 (2) (2002), pp.178-205.

Further Reading

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. London: Pandora, rev. edn 2001 [1992].

In-class AV Resource

In-class AV resource: 'Healing the Wounds of War' Programme 4: Writing History (24 January 2002). Ways in which partial and selective accounts of history can obstruct personal and political healing.

Additional AV Resource

'Healing the Wounds of War' Programme 5: Truth and Reconciliation (31 January 2002). The strengths and weaknesses of the South African commission set up to bring truth and reconciliation to a divided nation.

Further AV Resource

United States Institute of Peace, 'Forgiveness and South Africa's Truth & Reconciliation Commission' (21 September 2004). A roundtable discussion with Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela on encounters between victims and perpetrators.
http://www.usip.org/events/2004/0921_wksafrica.html

Possible Films

Born on the Fourth of July (1989) 145 mins. Directed by Oliver Stone. Based on the story of Ron Kovic. After being paralyzed in the Vietnam war, Kovic has to build a new life and struggles with his fears, anger and sense of being betrayed by his government and the country. Along with *Platoon* (1986) and *Heaven and Earth* (1993) this film is part of an Oliver Stone trilogy exploring the impact of the Vietnam war on US soldiers and their family and friends.

Raging Bull. (1980) 129 mins. Directed by Martin Scorsese. Based on the story of Jack La Motta, a tough boxer who struggles to cope with life when he is not fighting.

Sophie's Choice. 150 mins. (1982). Directed by Alan J. Pakula. Based on a novel by William Styron. The story of a concentration camp survivor living in Brooklyn but haunted by her experience and an awful choice that she was forced to make.

Unforgiven (1992). 131 mins. Directed by Clint Eastwood. An unusual western showing the impact of an act of gratuitous violence and the desire it creates for revenge.

WTC View. (2005). 102 mins. Directed by Alan Sloan. A young man living in lower Manhattan places an advert for a room-mate and tries to deal with the traumatic impact of 9/11.

Personal experiences of healing

Can you think of a difficult or painful personal experience of conflict which was followed by:

- a relatively easy and successful healing process?
- a difficult and successful healing process?
- a partial and uncompleted healing process?

Reflecting on your experiences:

- what difficulties and/or barriers did you find to healing?
- what role did the re-establishment of trust play in the process?
- are there any experiences which you think are so traumatic that post-conflict healing could never be possible?

Approaches to healing

The IDEA Handbook defines healing as ‘any strategy, process or activity that improves the psychological health of individuals following extensive violent conflict’.¹ It offers three broad principles to guide all strategies aimed at healing:²

- Understanding the context
- Using the local resources
- Linking healing with broader reconstruction programmes

¹ David Bloomfield *et al.* (eds) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2003) p. 77.

² Bloomfield *et al.* (eds) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict*, p. 80.

If commissioned by an international NGO to act as consultant on healing initiatives for a specific conflict of your own choosing (eg Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Darfur, Colombia, Kashmir, Chechnya, Northern Ireland, Former Yugoslavia):

- What advice would you give the international NGO based on these principles?
- What problems would you suggest that they anticipate?
- Would you want to amend or modify any of these principles?
- Would you want to add any further principles?