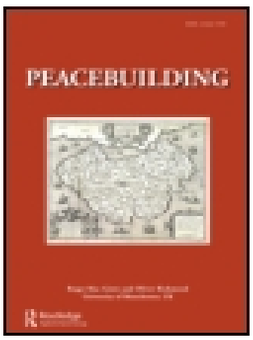

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Embodied reconciliation: a new research agenda

Roddy Brett[a], Richard English[b], Élise Féron[c] and Valerie Rosoux[d]

[a]School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK; [b]Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, Queen's University Belfast, Belfast, UK; [c]Tampere Peace Research Institute, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland; [d]Belgian Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS), University of Louvain (Uclouvain), Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

ABSTRACT

Despite a growth in research exploring corporeal dimensions of peacebuilding, scholarship addressing intergroup reconciliation after violent conflict currently pays too little attention to the human body, and to the consequences of the embodied impact of political violence upon reconciliation. Rather, research tends to focus upon the narrative and discursive aspects of relationships between formerly warring parties. As a result, little is understood about how corporeal experiences of war might influence intergroup reconciliation. This article contends that a paradigm shift towards an embodied approach to reconciliation is necessary, specifically in our understanding of three interrelated spheres of application: the conceptual-theoretical, the practical, and the policy-oriented pillars of intergroup reconciliation after atrocious violence. Reconciliation is in practice embodied; this has, to date, been under-appreciated in the literature and so we require a more body-aware approach to understanding reconciliation; that latter approach will in turn allow for more effective practical and policy-related interventions.

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Reconciliation; bodies; emotions; institutions

Introduction

Wars are, in essence, corporeal experiences: human bodies take centre stage as the terrain of struggle upon which the intent and consequences of political violence are sculpted, often in literal terms. During war and conflict, human bodies experience death,[1] displacement,[2] disappearance[3] and damage.[4] The embodied experience of such violence is inherently intersectional. Children, women and men, for example, inhabit the immediacy of pain and trauma and the aftereffects of injury and victimisation differentially[5]; the wider intersectional embodiment of war – defined by mutually reinforcing forms of positionality, such as gender and class – in turn, shapes the micro-dynamics, patterns, and roles people experience during violent conflict.

CONTACT Richard English r.english@qub.ac.uk

[1]Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2012).
[2]Sarah Kenyon Lischer, 'Causes and Consequences of Conflict-Induced Displacement', *Civil Wars* 9, no. 2 (2007): 142–55.
[3]Roddy Brett, 'In the Aftermath of Genocide: Guatemala's Failed Reconciliation', in *Peacebuilding*, early Online Published Version (2022).
[4]Valérie Rosoux and Mark Anstey, eds., *Negotiating Reconciliation in Peacemaking* (Cham: Springer, 2017).
[5]Christine Sylvester, ed., *Experiencing war* (London: Routledge, 2011).

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Scholars – especially feminist scholars – have drawn increasing attention to a variety of 'war bodies',[6] including dead bodies,[7] disappeared bodies,[8] displaced bodies,[9] and damaged bodies.[10] However, despite the centrality of corporeality to international or intercommunity conflicts,[11] relatively little research has sought to comprehend how human bodies shape interventions and processes that seek to transform violent conflict. Väyrynen's insightful research has made inroads in this regard through developing the concept of 'corporeal peacebuilding', which frames peace as emerging through 'mundane and corporeal encounters' among 'witnessing, wounded, remembering, silenced, and resistant bodies'.[12] For Väyrynen, such corporeal encounters involve not only the somatic, but also affect and emotions. Whilst Väyrynen's research offers important theoretical advances, it has less to say, however, about what corporeal peacebuilding looks like in practice and, significantly, it leaves aside the core pillar of post-accord intergroup *reconciliation*, the central theme of this article.

Whilst there has been then an incipient turn towards the corporeal in peacebuilding, scholarship addressing intergroup reconciliation *after* violent conflict has paid comparatively limited attention to the embodied impact of political violence upon intergroup reconciliation processes. Research has instead focused upon the narrative and discursive aspects of relationships between formerly warring parties and their social and political constituencies.[13] Scholars have specifically identified how the transformation of antagonistic relationships between social groups and the beliefs and ideologies that undergird them are central to successful reconciliation. Accordingly, research has signalled how the outbreak and continuation of violent conflict are shaped by the development and persistence of those narratives and discourses.[14] In turn, scholars contend that it is only through overcoming such embedded narratives and discourses that steps towards reconciliation may be taken; however, whether the embodied consequences of political violence shape such processes has not been fully explored.

From a general perspective, Lederach argues that reconciliation requires four elements: truth (understanding the past); mercy (forgiveness); justice (restitution and

[6]Swati Parashar, 'What wars and "war bodies" know about international relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 26, no. 4 (2013): 615–30.

[7]Lauren Wilcox, *Bodies of Violence: Theorising Embodied Subjects in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[8]Jenny Edkins, *Missing: Persons and Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

[9]Gannit Ankori, '"Dis-orientalisms": Displaced bodies/embodied displacements in contemporary Palestinian art', in *Uprootings/regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, eds. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castañeda, Anne-Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 59–90.

[10]Maria Berghs, 'Embodiment and Emotion in Sierra Leone', *Third World Quarterly*, no. 32, (2011): 1399–417.

[11]See for example Helen Berents, 'An Embodied Everyday Peace in the Midst of Violence', *Peacebuilding* 3, no. 2 (2015): 1–14; Tarja Väyrynen, 'Mundane Peace and the Politics of Vulnerability: a Nonsolid Feminist Research Agenda', *Peacebuilding* 7, no. 2 (2019); and Allison Hayes-Conroy and Alexis Saenz Montoya, 'Peace Building with the Body: Resonance and Reflexivity in Colombia's *Legion del Afecto*', *Space and Polity* 21, no. 2 (2017): 144–57.

[12]Väyrynen, 'Mundane Peace', 1–2.

[13]Mariana Achugar, *Discursive Processes of Intergenerational Transmission of Recent History. (Re)making our past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Jodi Halpern and Harvey Weinstein, 'Rehumanizing the Other: Empathy and Reconciliation', *Human Rights Quarterly* 26, no. 3: 561–583; Amiram Raviv, Alona Raviv, 'The Influence of the Ethos of Conflict on Israeli Jews' Interpretation of Jewish – Palestinian Encounters', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 1: 94–18.

[14]Nurit Shnabel, Samer Halabi, and Masi Noor, 'Overcoming Competitive Victimhood and Facilitating Forgiveness Through Re-Categorisation into a Common Victim or Perpetrator Identity', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 49 (2013): 867–77; Emanuel Adler and Michael Bartlett, 'A Framework for the Study of Security Communities', in *Security Communities*, eds. Emanuel Adler and Michael Bartlett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 43.

new social structures); and peace (a vision of a shared future based on wellbeing and security for all groups).[15] Minimalist accounts, or 'thin reconciliation', are characterised by the end of political violence, respect for the rule of law and a basic level of coexistence within a shared political community. Maximalist approaches, or 'thick reconciliation', however, require the restoration of dignity, redress of the structural causes of conflict, marginalisation and discrimination and the restoration of victims as rights bearers and citizens.[16] Similarly, Crocker, defines reconciliation both negatively, as 'nonlethal coexistence' and 'rapprochement' between former adversaries, and positively, as intergroup harmony and cooperation and a relationship free of bias, hatred and suspicion.[17]

Discussions to date have then identified a series of factors as instrumental to reconciliation, such as the role played by the guarantee and satisfaction of victims' rights[18] and procedural justice,[19] the structural legacies of a deeply divided past,[20] the construction of an inclusive political community[21] and the recognition of the moral worth and dignity of former enemies through the forging of new identities.[22] Specifically, Murphy has argued that rebuilding damaged relationships after episodes of political violence is essential for laying the foundations for the cognitive changes necessary to facilitate reconciliation. Murphy engages primarily with the concept of political reconciliation, exploring how to repair relationships damaged by political violence through the creation and stabilisation of normative expectations and trust. For Murphy, the satisfaction of a series of mutually reinforcing factors would cultivate meaningful political reconciliation, such as adherence to the rule of law (institutions; norms; interactions), the generation of political trust (towards institutions, government, the state) and the exercise of individual capabilities.[23] Similarly, for Verdeja, the 'deliberative democratic' approach is key to understanding reconciliation, wherein 'institutional reform and deliberation over responsibility, collective identity, justice, and reparations' represent the basis for reconciliation.[24] However, and significantly, the impact of dead, damaged, disappeared and displaced bodies upon such processes of transformation and deliberations remains under-researched.

Finally, important insight into the conceptual framing and practice of reconciliation has been developed by social psychologists, who coherently signal how a 'conflictive ethos' – built upon widely held 'societal beliefs' – shapes the onset and perpetuation of political violence, by breaking down 'social capital' between groups and subsequently eroding their respective capacity to empathise with one another.[25]

[15]John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997).
[16]Paul Seils, *The Place of Reconciliation in Transitional Justice* (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2017).
[17]David Crocker, 'Punishment, Reconciliation, and Democratic Deliberation', *Buffalo Criminal Law Review* 5, no. 2 (2002): 509–49.
[18]Paul Seils, *The Place of Reconciliation in Transitional Justice* (New York: ICTJ, 2017).
[19]Rose Shaw, Lars Waldorf, with Pierre Hazan, *Localising Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities After Mass Violence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
[20]James Hughes, 'Agency Versus Structure in Reconciliation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41, no. 4 (2017): 624–42.
[21]Colleen Murphy, *A Moral Theory of Political Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; and Andrew Schaap, *Political Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2009).
[22]Lederach, *Building Peace*; David Androff, '"To not hate": Reconciliation Among Victims of Violence and Participants of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission', *Contemporary Justice Review* 13, no. 3 (2010): 269–85.
[23]See Colleen Murphy, 'Political Reconciliation, the Rule of Law, and Genocide', *The European Legacy* 12, no. 7 (2007): 853–65; and *A Moral Theory*.
[24]Ernesto Verdeja, *Unchopping a Tree: Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Political Violence* (Temple University Press, 2009).
[25]Daniel Bar Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

The above brief exploration into what is a broad literature on reconciliation has evidenced how scholarship has advanced understanding of how narratives and discourses have the capacity to ossify hostile relationships, impede mutual empathy and reinforce fears, prejudices and stereotypes, or, on the contrary, how transforming said narratives and discourses might lead to significant steps towards reconciliation between armed groups and their social and political constituencies. However, said scholarship has eschewed engagement with how the embodied impact of egregious violence may shape reconciliation.

Why an embodied approach to reconciliation?

From our perspective, a corporeal approach to reconciliation is of urgent importance within three interrelated spheres. Reconciliation is necessarily embodied; we need to understand it from that perspective; and this will have practical effects on policy and other practical interventions. So our first contention is that research on reconciliation urgently requires a paradigmatic shift in how we **conceptually** approach the subject. The fields of peacebuilding, conflict transformation and reconciliation studies should develop innovative understanding of how a corporeal approach to violent conflict or political violence influences the way we theorise reconciliation and its aims. Whilst current theories of reconciliation have contributed important insight on how, if at all, former adversaries and their social and political constituencies reconcile or co-exist after egregious political violence, they have shed limited light upon the role played by physical trauma and pain in shaping the trajectories of intergroup relations in conflict's wake. Second, rethinking is similarly required within the **practice-oriented** arena. Our relevant disciplines need to pursue, as a matter of urgency, the question of how survivors of violent conflict or political violence live, face, or resist reconciliation as an embodied process, specifically as regards the degree to which the physical impact of violent conflict shapes the lives of those living in its aftermath. Finally, a turn towards an embodied approach to reconciliation is also urgent within the **policy** sphere, given the potential impact upon reconciliation that the corporeal consequences of political violence impose. In this respect, a paradigmatic shift should also be driven by the question of how, if at all, a corporeal approach to reconciliation might help us understand the limits, failures and successes of intergroup reconciliation in the aftermath of violent conflict or political violence, and how such a lens might assist us in imagining alternative approaches to reconciliation that move beyond the narratives and forms of engagement predominant in how we understand and seek to build reconciliation in practice.

Within the above framework, our proposal is that our fields explore reconciliation processes through four main arenas of investigation, each of which is driven by the recognition that wars and reconciliation processes are inherently corporeal processes: **(i) dead bodies; (ii) disappeared bodies; (iii) displaced bodies; and (iv) damaged bodies**. These thematic areas, which overlap across different vertices, cover a wide array of experiences of political violence, and relate to multiple issues emerging and evolving during reconciliation processes. Embodied research reflects the reality embodiment is part of all human experience, including reconciliation after violent conflict.

Given that bodies are always gendered and otherwise positioned socially, economically, culturally and legally, we argue for a mainstreaming of gender and intersectional

approaches throughout the various components of our framework, and specifically in relation to the impact of violent conflict upon female civilians and combatants.[26] In line with our new agenda, therefore, we call for an innovative set of research projects specifically focusing on the particularities of impact upon the most vulnerable victims.[27] One of the notions on which our approach will build is that of the continuum of violence,[28] which is central in feminist peace research,[29] and which puts the stress on the fact that different forms of violence, from direct physical violence, including gender-based and sexual violence, to structural, cultural, slow, epistemic and epistemological violence, are co-constituted, in both war and peace times, and across conflict and peace. As such, the continuum-of-violence concept forces us to expand our understanding of reconciliation from a gendered perspective and through and over time (pre/during/post-conflict) and space or territory (in the battlefield, in the home, in institutions, and so on). In this regard, the innovative contribution here is that our research agenda builds upon existing scholarship to develop a more explicit understanding of gendered and embodied reconciliation processes.[30]

Innovative methodological approaches to embodied reconciliation

To develop an embodied approach to reconciliation, our disciplines could adopt an integrated methodological approach. Central to this methodology, are new research techniques and methods,[31] with a view to enriching our understanding of the emotional and institutional dynamics of reconciliation. Central also is a requirement that we not only move from disciplinary approaches to multi-disciplinary ones, but also that we integrate scholarly endeavours in order to produce genuinely interdisciplinary understanding. Discipline-specific work can be and has been very powerful. Understanding reconciliation from a variety of disciplinary angles (multi-disciplinarity) offers richer insights still, and avoids the myopia characteristic of any single disciplinary approach.[32] Our research agenda here calls for a further shift, to research in which scholars from different disciplines work together to harmonise their insights in such a way as to allow for a synoptic reading of the subject. Indeed, it is our contention that only through the unique combination of three spheres of application (theory, practice and policy), four arenas of investigation (dead, disappeared, displaced and damaged bodies) and an

[26]Laura Sjoberg, 'Failure and Critique in Critical Security Studies', *Security Dialogue* 50, no. 1 (2019), 77–4; Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Naomi Cahn, Dina Francesca Haynes and Nahla Valji eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[27]Valérie Rosoux, 'How Not to Mediate?', *International Affairs* 98, no. 5 (2022): 1717–735.

[28]Anne-Kathrin Kreft, 'Responding to Sexual Violence: Women's Mobilisation in War', *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 2 (2019): 220–33; and Elizabeth Wood, 'Conflict-related Sexual Violence and the Policy Implications of Recent Research', *International Review of the Red Cross* 96, no. 894 (2014): 457–78.

[29]Tarja Väyrynen, Swati Parashar, Élise Féron, and Catia Cecilia Confortini, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research* (London, UK: Routledge, 2021).

[30]Magda Lorena Cárdenas and Elisabeth Olivius, 'Building Peace in the Shadow of War: Women-to-Women Diplomacy as Alternative Peacebuilding Practice in Myanmar', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 15, no. 3 (2021): 347–66; Milena Abrahamyan, Parvana Mammadova, Sophio Tskhvariashvili, 'Women Challenging Gender Norms and Patriarchal Values in Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation across the South Caucasus', *Journal of Conflict Transformation* 3, no. 1 (2018): 46–70; and Niall Gilmartin, 'Gendering the "Post-Conflict" Narrative in Northern Ireland's Peace Process', *Capital & Class* 43, no. 1 (2019): 89–4.

[31]We are also mindful of the fact that research is in itself a deeply embodied process. See Laura Ellingson, *Embodiment in Qualitative Research* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[32]Richard English, ed., *The Cambridge History of Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

integrated methodological approach, will we facilitate the necessary paradigm shift towards understanding of the embodied reconciliation under scrutiny.

	Dead	Disappeared	Displaced	Damaged
Theory				
Practice				
Policy				

Following Väyrynen, who invites us to 're-theorise peace by locating it within social and political contexts and examining the practices and eventness of mundane peace, thereby defying the dominant non-situated and abstract conceptions of peace',[33] an urgent requirement in our fields is to reconceptualise reconciliation in light of an embodied approach. Our goal, however, differs slightly to Väyrynen's, who considers the theorisation of the local 'as an antidote to abstraction',[34] and calls for a principal focus on the mundane and the everyday. The embodied approach that we propose to situate at the centre of our understanding of reconciliation is not only concerned with the local, the banal or the everyday; but rather, encompasses all forms of violence, including the most exceptional and extreme, and spans across various scales, from the local to the national, international and transnational. In our view, violence and peace can indeed be traced in both everyday *and* extraordinary circumstances, in local *and* international relations. During violent conflicts, and depending on their positionality, bodies experience a multitude of violences, some of which are banal and banalised, whilst others are rare and unusual. When war ends, moreover, bodies carry the consequences, scars and memories of these violences, and often pass on such memories, as well as the traumas associated with them, to following generations.[35] As such, bodies are transformed by war, but also constitute an element of permanence and continuity from war onset to its termination, thus affecting the possibilities of reconciliation in complex and entangled ways. Factoring bodies into our fields' understanding of reconciliation will have two main conceptual consequences: on the one hand, it will usher in a paradigmatic shift by changing how we comprehend what reconciliation is or can be; on the other hand, it will push us to rethink how and why reconciliation happens, or indeed fails to happen. Let us detail these two consequences in turn.

At the heart of our proposed paradigm shift is the contention that reconciliation is not only about narratives, societal structures, or the transformation of relations between rival groups and individuals, but that it is also about individual bodies that have experienced war. Consequently, disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, history, law, philosophy, psychology or politics need to centre bodies as sources, means and targets of reconciliation and as terrains of resistance to reconciliation. Post-conflict justice arrangements conventionally focus on exceptional and extreme experiences of violence such as war crimes, large-scale massacres and genocide, torture and imprisonment, or conflict-

[33]Väyrynen, 'Mundane,' 147.
[34]Ibid., 147.
[35]See Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek, 'Occupied from Within: Embodied Memories of Occupation, Resistance and Survival Among the Palestinian Diaspora', *Emotion, Space and Society* 34 (2020); 100653; Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); and Giorgio Hadi Curti, 'From a Wall of Bodies to a Body of Walls: Politics of Affect| Politics of Memory| Politics of War', *Emotion, Space and Society* 1, no. 2 (2008): 106–18.

related sexual violence.[36] However, experiences of war also impose everyday and mundane occurrences, such as hunger, thirst, contagious diseases, trauma, disorientation induced by displacement, fear for one's own and one's relatives' safety, experience of oppression, as well as pain, grief, resentment or anxiety related to disappeared, missing, injured or killed relatives.[37] These mundane experiences of violence habitually bring severe corporeal consequences, sometimes long after conflict has ended, and, as such, they shape the possibilities and character of reconciliation.

Centring bodies also means we are obliged to conceptualise reconciliation as a shared embodied experience, primarily occurring between situated bodies that have been differentially affected by their (direct or indirect) experience of war. In other words, we are by no means suggesting that reconciliation is not about narratives, institutions or practices to transform post-conflict intergroup relations; but rather that these narratives, institutions and transformative practices are themselves located in, visible for and through and performed and mediated by bodies whose positionalities and experiences of war matter significantly. In short, human bodies and how they experience political violence undergirds narratives, institutions and practices. As such, this assertion implies adopting a truly interdisciplinary and holistic understanding of reconciliation. Such a research agenda should build upon the different ways in which bodies and reconciliation (or the lack thereof) are co-constructed, harnessing insights from other fields, such as legal studies, history, sociology, anthropology, political science, as well as psychology, psychosociology, neuroscience, traumatology and other fields of medicine.

In parallel, centring bodies entails questioning the core preconditions identified for reconciliation to occur. When we understand reconciliation as an embodied experience, it is incumbent upon us to complete those theories that posit that reconciliation is facilitated first and foremost by the transformation of intergroup relations and/or narratives or through institutional reforms. Because they overlook the consideration of bodies as preconditions and as spaces in which these transformations and reforms can materialise or fail, said approaches are at once unable to grasp fully the foundations upon which reconciliation can unfold, the obstacles and resistance that it may face, and the various shapes that it might adopt.

Taking the concept of embodied reconciliation seriously requires beginning from what reconciliation could mean for bodies that have experienced war, and from the essential conditions and settings that can facilitate reconciliation as a corporeal encounter. As feminist scholars have suggested,[38] this step notably entails factoring in care and tending to the needs of bodies that have experienced violent conflict, regardless of the existence or extent of apparent physical injury.[39] However, this also has consequences upon how we think about the spatiality, technicality and temporality of reconciliation. It notably means paying attention to *sites and spaces* that are directly related to the

[36]See Meredith Loken, Milli Lake, and Kate Cronin-Furman, 'Deploying Justice: Strategic Accountability for Wartime Sexual Violence', *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (2018): 751–764; and Kerry F. Crawford, 'From Spoils to Weapons: Framing Wartime Sexual Violence', *Gender & Development* 21, no. 3 (2013): 505–17.

[37]In 1963, Fanon was already pointing at the fact that 'it is not necessary to be wounded by a bullet in order to suffer from the fact of war in body as well as in mind'. See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), 290.

[38]See Tiina Vaittinen and Catia C. Confortini, eds., *Gender, Global Health and Violence. Feminist Perspectives on Peace and Disease* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2020).

[39]On that point, see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

corporeality of violent conflict (like hospitals, care institutions, prisons, cemeteries, refugee camps, as well as spaces of daily encounter with 'the other' or with traces and memories of violence). Similarly, this new approach also obliges us to understand how *institutions and technologies* address the corporeal consequences of war, such as through forensics or remote sensing data, as well as within institutions dedicated to missing persons or to veterans. Finally, this new approach demands that we take into account the *various temporalities* along which bodies bear and sometimes pass on the experience of war, such as long-term injuries or diseases, disabilities, or intergenerational trauma.

Bringing empirical research into embodied reconciliation

The paradigm shift we propose has important consequences for empirical studies on reconciliation. We already know that reconciliation may be accompanied or hampered by specific emotions that can be traced within attitudes[40]; however, might reconciliation also be accompanied or impeded by specific corporeal reactions? In short, it would be important to comprehend how reconciliation processes and encounters with 'the other' affect bodies, and how reconciliation is concretely experienced as a corporeal process. It is vital that such research respect the specificity of context, and that we avoid replicating existing geographies of knowledge production. At present, too much research on violent conflict is defined and determined within politically and economically advantaged settings, while the experiences and insights of those in more disadvantaged regions (frequently those most ravaged by conflict) are overshadowed or silenced.[41] What we call for is multi-locational research, systematically addressing the effects of embodied processes and experiences on reconciliation in particular context. A related question in this regard lies in interrogating the possibility that differently positioned bodies, for instance with respect to gender, age, disability and/or sexual orientation, experience reconciliation in different ways.[42] In this regard, an embodied approach to reconciliation must also adopt an intersectional approach that will only be fully realised if local researchers and participants possess agency and equality in their deployment.

Another line of empirical investigation pertains to an assessment of the impact of bodies on reconciliation practices and processes, starting from the ways in which bodies have been differentially affected by war experience reconciliation. Again, the work must be multi-locational, in order to avoid inequalities of power within the production of understanding. This collaborative work would shed light on the ways in which the observed failures of and limits and resistance to reconciliation can be related to various embodied experiences of violence, and to how post-war bodies are positioned. For instance, we have relatively strong insight regarding the difficulties faced in the post-conflict period by victims of wartime sexual violence, regardless of

[40]Daniel Bar-Tal and Sabina Cehajic-Clancy, 'From collective victimhood to social reconciliation: Outlining a conceptual framework', in *War, Community, and Social Change* (New York: Springer, 2014), 125–36; Sabina Čehajić-Clancy et al., 'Social-Psychological Interventions for Intergroup Reconciliation: An Emotion Regulation Perspective', *Psychological Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (2016): 73–88; Mónica Alzate García, José Manuel Sabucedo Cameselle and María del Mar Durán Rodríguez, 'Antecedents of the Attitude Towards Inter-Group Reconciliation in a Setting of Armed Conflict', *Psicothema* 25, no. 1, (2013): 61–6.

[41]Richard English, 'The Future Study of Terrorism', *European Journal of International Security* 1, no. 2 (2016): 135–49.

[42]So far, such lines of inquiry have mainly concerned experiences of wartime sexual violence. See Pascha Bueno-Hansen, 'An Intersectional Analysis of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission', in *Researching War*, ed Annick T.R. Wibben (London: Routledge, 2016), 185–01.

their gender.[43] However, we know less about how other corporeal experiences of war affect reconciliation as an embodied process and practice. Such exploration, systematic and case-study focused, should be conducted in the *longue durée*, since we know that war can mark the bodies not only of those who have experienced it, but also of their relatives and their descendants, long after violent conflict has ended.[44]

We contend then that our fields should develop interdisciplinary and long-term empirical studies that would help to understand reconciliation as not only determined by cultural, social, legal or political factors, but also as producing and produced through bodies.

The policy implications of an embodied approach to reconciliation

Finally, we propose that this urgent paradigmatic shift will have significant policy implications. In our view, two stand out. The first is that focusing on reconciliation as an embodied process requires that researchers and practitioners take a step back from conventional approaches to reconciliation – and in particular from purely narrative or institutions-based methods – and depart instead from the specific bodies of those who are supposed to reconcile, and from their corporeal experiences of war. This entails, for instance, paying attention not only to mass crimes or horrific episodes of violence, but also to everyday and mundane experiences of war. It also means acknowledging the multiple ways in which the embodied experiences of war – as related for example to dead, disappeared, displaced and damaged bodies, as we will explore in the next section – affect reconciliation processes.

The second main policy implication of this paradigmatic shift pertains to the concrete spaces, sites and choreographies through which reconciliation can take place, or be resisted.[45] Envisaging reconciliation as a corporeal process helps us imagine alternative approaches and spaces through which embodied experiences could be centred. The potential of music, theatre, dance, photography and other arts-based activities for reconciliation purposes is already well-documented.[46] Such broadening would undoubtedly help to understand when, where and why reconciliation is seen as possible and even desired, or as unattainable, intolerable, or even indecent.

[43]Élise Féron, *Wartime Sexual Violence Against Men. Masculinities and Power in Conflict Zones* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018); Nicola Henry, 'Witness to Rape: The Limits and Potential of International War Crimes Trials for Victims of Wartime Sexual Violence', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 3, no. 1 (2009): 114–34; Donna Pankhurst, ed., *Gendered Peace: Women's Struggles for Post-War Justice and Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2012); and Vincent Druliolle and Roddy Brett, eds., *The Politics of Victimhood in post-conflict Societies: analytical and comparative perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Mac Millan, 2018).

[44]Widespread research exists on the intergenerational (embodied) impact of the Holocaust. See, among many others, Liliane Kshensky Baxter, 'To Heal and Recreate Ourselves: Shame, the Holocaust, and nonviolence' (PhD diss., Emory University, 2002); Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); and John J.Sigal and Morton Weinfeld, *Trauma and Rebirth: Intergenerational Effects of the Holocaust* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1989).

[45]We use the term 'choreography' here in the sense proposed by Tarja Väyrynen, Eeva Puumala, Samu Pehkonen, Anitta Kynsilehto and Tiina Vaittinen, *Choreographies of Resistance: Mobile Bodies and Relational Politics* (London, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017).

[46]Cynthia Cohen et al., ed., *Acting Together I: Performance and the Creative Transformation of Conflict: Resistance and Reconciliation in Regions of Violence* (New York: NYU Press, 2011); Sebastian Kim, Pauline Kollontai and Sue Yore, ed., *Mediating Peace: Reconciliation Through Visual Art, Music and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016); and Dylan Robinson and Keavy Martin, ed., *Arts of Engagement: Taking Aesthetic Action in and Beyond the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016).

Arenas of investigation: dead, disappeared, displaced and damaged bodies

A discrete dichotomy between the past and present is seldom experienced in the wake of violent conflict, particularly by victims and survivors of political violence. The choice between remembering a violent past shaped by intergroup hostilities and forging a peaceful present in which former adversaries coexist is often a contrived choice. Rather, post-conflict existence is messy, complex and rarely characterised by such binary dichotomy. The causes and consequences of political violence in fact sculpt enduring scars upon the social and political landscapes of societies emerging from genocide and civil war, scars which recurrently impose a legacy that obfuscates the past, present and future.[47]

In such circumstances, we advocate exploring reconciliation processes through four main spheres of investigation. The first regards ***Dead Bodies***. In most cases, those surviving political violence live with physical and mental scars and perduring pain. However, the bodies and faces of the dead are gradually written out of history, as polities and governments seek to 'move on' and victims of violence take a secondary plane. However, dead bodies remain central to the worldview, lives and existence of survivors, habitually haunted by living ghosts. The impact and weight of the dead then endures long after hostilities have come to a formal end.[48] However, the theorising of how violent conflict and atrocity sculpt and impose their legacy and how societies might move on from egregious violence rarely takes dead bodies seriously into account. In contexts affected by calls for the return of human remains, controversies about gravesites and cemeteries or contradictory attitudes towards exhumations, emotions such as grief, anger, resentment, shame and/or guilt are widely shared and passed on in family circles. Their impact at the individual, social and political levels is enduring, reminding us of the crucial importance of the human dignity of the deceased and their families.[49]

With respect therefore to dead bodies, we consider that an embodied approach to reconciliation would address various relevant questions: How do the dead live on in those they have left behind, physically and psychologically? How, if at all, does remembrance manifest itself corporally on survivors? How do survivors physically experience their dead and those they deem to be their adversaries? Do images of the dead (your own, your adversary's) influence a group's proclivity to reconcile with their (former) adversary?

Most of the above questions not only refer to the dead; they also concern ***Disappeared Bodies***. This second sphere of investigation pertains to the impossibility of carrying out funerary practices and rituals. In such circumstances, how can families escape the 'tyranny of the past'? How can survivors deal with a 'form of pollution' which is 'neither physical nor psychological, neither political or moral, but both'?[50] Most studies devoted to missing persons and enforced disappearances are carried out by anthropologists who emphasise private and deeply emotional stories.[51] Some of them focus on the intrusion of

[47]Brett, 'In the Aftermath'.
[48]Verdeja, *Unchopping a Tree*; Sabina Čehajić-Clancy and Michal Bilewicz, 'Moral-Exemplar Intervention: A New Paradigm for Conflict Resolution and Intergroup Reconciliation', *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 30, no. 4 (2021): 335–42.
[49]Anna Petrig, 'The War Dead and their Gravesites', *International Review of the Red Cross* 91, no. 874 (2009), 341–69; Sandra Rios, 'Dignification of Victims Through Exhumations in Colombia', *Human Rights Review* 22, no. 4 (2021): 483–99.
[50]Daniela Jara, *Children and the Afterlife of State Violence* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 25.
[51]Simon Robins, 'Constructing Meaning from Disappearance: Local Memorialisation of the Missing in Nepal', *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 8, no. 1, (2014): 104–18; Adam Rosenblatt, *Digging for the Disappeared: Forensic Science*

spirits of the dead, whilst others examine the scope and limits of forensic investigation of mass killings. All these perspectives recall the ethical quandaries related to the 'paradoxical absence' of those who remain at the centre of the claims for redress and reparation. However, our fields must also explore whether and how we can concretely trace absent bodies.

Our research in the sphere of disappeared bodies is guided by the following questions: after one, two or even three generations, who speaks on behalf of the disappeared? Do representatives have to be from the direct genealogical line of the disappeared? What are the criteria to evaluate their legitimacy? Does the issue of the disappeared imply specific emotions for families of the missing, and, if so, how do these emotions affect possibilities for reconciliation? Does the restitution of human remains imply specific judiciary and /or non-judiciary procedures? If not, should we conceive more appropriate processes? Until when?

The third thematic arena of investigation highlights the critical influence of ***Displaced Bodies***. Forced displacement is a major feature of contemporary conflicts. Thus far however, the experiences associated with the displaced bodies of refugees, IDPs and diaspora groups have been largely sidelined in theoretical discussions and practices relating to reconciliation; most of the time, in fact, they remain confined to legal debates. Blanket calls to 'legally empower' refugees and IDPs within transitional processes and to encourage their return,[52] have been challenged by empirical studies showing that the return of the displaced is invariably fraught and often ambiguous.[53] Likewise, the mobilities of the displaced can be contested.[54] In parallel, discussions on reconciliation usually limit the process of reconciliation to the space in which the 'core' conflict has been fought. In fact, both the issue of displacement, and the return of the displaced can severely disrupt reconciliation processes.[55]

There is no doubt that displacement is a heavily embodied experience. Exile for many refugees replicates or resembles the feeling of missing a limb, of being cut from their own selves, from their relatives, as well as from their home. A better understanding of displacement and reconciliation as deeply embodied processes allows us to explore what are, at present, largely overlooked contexts.

In this regard, a paradigmatic shift in thinking across our disciplines should be undergirded by the following questions. How can reconciliation occur for displaced bodies, which are often put under close surveillance and scrutiny, and are subject to contingency, precarity and isolation? How do the effects and memories of war weigh on displaced bodies physically? How does displacement affect patterns of interpersonal and intergroup bodily interaction? How do these patterns evolve with time and the passing of

after Atrocity (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015); and Eva Willems, *Open Secrets & Hidden Heroes: Violence, Citizenship and Transitional Justice in (Post-)Conflict Peru* (PhD manuscript, Ghent University, 2019).

[52]Anne-Lise Purkey, 'Justice, Reconciliation, and Ending Displacement: Legal Empowerment and Refugee Engagement in Transitional Processes', *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2016): 1–25.

[53]Roger Zetter, 'Refugees and Their Return Home: Unsettling Matters', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34, no. 1 (2021): 7–22.

[54]Görkem Aydemir, 'Contingent Homes: Mobility and Long-Term Conflict in the Contested Periphery of Georgia', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 34, no. 1 (2021): 23–5.

[55]Shirin Hirsch, 'Chilean Exiles, Reconciliation and Return: An Alternative View from Below', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 29, no. 1 (2016): 82–7; Katy Long, *The Point of No Return. Refugees, Rights, and Repatriation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Juan Prieto, 'Together after War While the War Goes On: Victims, Ex-Combatants and Communities in Three Colombian Cities', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 6, no. 3 (2012): 525–46.

generations? In other words, how do displaced bodies hamper, obstruct, and/or offer opportunities for reconciliation?

In most cases, the above-mentioned questions also concern ***Damaged Bodies***, our fourth and last sphere of investigation. Current scholarly understanding arguably exaggerates the degree to which reconciliation has occurred between those damaged by conflict; it also possibly overplays the importance of reconciliation in preventing conflict recidivism and dealing with conflict legacies. In most post-war settings, claims to a shared vision, or agreed ways of dealing with the past, are regularly challenged by those who were irreversibly wounded.[56] Knowing that these wounds are not only open but also festering, we should wonder what happens if and when survivors consider that reconciliation is not on the agenda. Survivors may, quite legitimately, be reluctant concerning and sceptical of rapprochement with those who damaged – if not ruined – their lives and their bodies. Survivors' resistance underlines the ambivalence of a process that can increase social capital, whilst decreasing individual well-being, at least for some victims.[57] This ambivalence raises a further, crucial question: is reconciliation always possible, and even desirable?

Broadening our temporal and spatial focus

Exploring dead, disappeared, displaced and damaged bodies has to be done in the light of *space* and *time* considerations. A paradigm shift in approaches to reconciliation requires considering two, or even three, generations within each family studied. This might seem an onerous task, but it is a *sine qua non* condition to be able to identify the tensions, discrepancies and even contradictions in how reconciliation is experienced corporally from one generation to another.

Changes in representations, beliefs and emotions take time. All cases show that the appropriate unit of measurement in this field is likely to be neither years, nor decades, but rather generations.[58] The duration of reconciliation processes raises several methodological questions. How can we assess the 'after-effects' of a war? How can we measure the transmission of corporeal traces from one generation to the next? How can we identify emotional and even unconscious processes? These questions rightly encourage us to work with interdisciplinary teams of scholars.

Similarly, a meaningful approach to the subject requires a broadening of the analysis of reconciliation, in general, and embodied reconciliation, in particular, in terms of space. Rather than focusing exclusively on the core territory where the conflict was fought, we are particularly interested in diasporic spaces. Most conflicts are transported to and maintained in refugee and diaspora settings, long after the war in the home country has ended,[59] as previously discussed. There is much at stake here since the maintenance of

[56]David Mendeloff, 'Truth-Seeking, Truth-Telling, and Postconflict Peacebuilding: Curb the Enthusiasm?', *International Studies Review* 3, no. 6, (2004): 355–80.

[57]Jacobus Ciliers, Oeindrila Dube, and Bilal Siddiqi, 'Reconciling After Civil Conflict Increases Social Capital but Decreases Individual Well-Being', *Science* 352, no. 6287 (2016): 787–94. See also Sabina Čehajić-Clancy, Amit Goldenberg, James J. Gross and Eran Halperin, 'Social-Psychological Interventions for Intergroup Reconciliation: An Emotion Regulation Perspective', *Psychological Inquiry*' 27, no. 2 (2016): 73–8.

[58]Sandra Rios et Natascha Mueller-Hirth, eds., *Time and Temporality in Transitional and Post-Conflict Societies* (London: Routledge, 2018).

[59]Élise Féron, 'Diaspora Politics: From "Long Distance Nationalism" to Autonomization', in *Migration and Organised Civil Society – Rethinking National Policy*, eds. Dirk Halm and Zeynep Sezgin (London: Routledge, 2013), 63–8; and Élise Féron, 'Transporting and Re-Inventing Conflicts: Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Conflict Autonomisation', *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 3 (2017): 360–76.

divisions within and between diasporas, as well as their peaceful coexistence, complicates processes and forces us to expand our understanding of reconciliation in this regard. This broader approach will allow us to question the crucial role of contextual and environmental factors in reconciliation processes.

Practical next steps

We have argued that a new paradigm needs to be established in relation to post-accord and post-conflict reconciliation. Research on religion, on nationalism, and on political violence have all been informed in recent years by scholarly consideration of what physically happens when humans make choices and decide on particular actions.[60] Echoing this, consideration of reconciliation after violent conflict – in terms of our theoretical-conceptual understanding, of our reconciliation practices and of policy-facing arguments – requires being reimagined in terms of the corporeal, from the perspective of the embodied experience. In conclusion, therefore, what are the practical next steps required in the consolidation of a new paradigm in reconciliation thinking and practice? As suggested, we propose interrogating a concatenated series of important research questions, which, between them, address themes central to our theoretical-conceptual understanding of reconciliation and to respective practice and policy. Our research questions are grouped into three categories: new techniques; emotions; and the role of institutions.

Techniques

An embodied approach to reconciliation requires new techniques in order to comprehend how reconciliation processes might affect dead, disappeared, displaced, and damaged bodies. We propose interrogating whether AI and other technological innovations might support embodied reconciliation processes at the interpersonal, group, and inter-group levels, or, indeed, whether there are limits to or dangers in employing AI in this regard.

We are respectful of the likely limitations of AI with regard to some peace-building work.[61] The use of AI is not exempt of power dynamics, and entails numerous risks in terms of privacy, access, and what has been called algorithmic oppression, exploitation and dispossession.[62] The digital divide follows gender, age, educational attainment and class divisions, among others, and means that certain bodies have greater access to AI resources.[63] These risks are heightened for vulnerable communities in conflict and post-

[60]Harvey Whitehouse, *Modes of Religiosity: A Cognitive Theory of Religious Transmission* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2004); Richard English, *Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2006); and Robert M. Sapolsky, *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst* (London: Bodley Head, 2017).

[61]Oliver Richmond and Gezim Visoka, 'Peace-Making: New Technologies are No Panacea', *Nature* 590, no. 7846, (2021): 389.

[62]Mark Latonero, 'Big Data Analytics and Human Rights', in *New technologies for human rights law and practice*, eds. Molly Land and Jay Aronson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 154–55; Petra Molnar, 'Technology on the Margins: AI and Global Migration Management from a Human Rights Perspective', *Cambridge International Law Journal* 8, no. 2 (2019): 305–30; and Shakir Mohamed, Marie-Therese Png, and William Isaac, 'Decolonial AI: Decolonial Theory as Sociotechnical Foresight in Artificial Intelligence', *Philosophy and Technology* 33, no. 4 (2020); 659–84.

[63]Barnaby Willitts-King, John Bryant, and Kerrie Holloway, 'The humanitarian "digital divide"', *ODI*. https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/The_humanitarian_digital_divide.pdf (accessed 2019).

conflict contexts, where access to technology is further limited by economic, social and infrastructure breakdown. If these constraints are properly taken into account, however, AI could still be used productively, especially if paired with local and indigenous means of promoting reconciliation. Our commitment to a collaborative, multi-locational research agenda is central to the transformation we seek. There has been increasing recognition that AI might play an important role in fostering peace and assisting human communication in the areas of 'prevention, reconciliation and sustainable development'.[64] AI technology has been used, for example, to facilitate dialogue across formerly hostile groups.[65] However, this research has, with few exceptions, rarely foregrounded reconciliation explicitly. We advocate exploring, for example, what more can be done with AI to aid in tracing and mapping absent, disappeared bodies, as the basis for analysing the intergenerational transmission of narratives and emotions within the families and networks of the missing, and the effects of this on post-conflict reconciliation.

Similarly, a new intellectual and methodological approach should enquire whether technologies have the potential to address the role and experience of displaced bodies and their links to reconciliation. Satellite remote-sensing data, for example, can facilitate spatiotemporal analysis in refugee settlements and allow for an examination of patterns of corporeal interaction between groups in exile, as well as between returnees and other local groups. Video analysis of focus groups across generations of exiles may also help understand how attitudes to displacement shape reconciliatory possibility.

In relation to damaged bodies, key questions may also potentially be addressed by employing new technological approaches. In this regard, it is incumbent upon us to ask whether it may be possible to map the legacy of damaged bodies more systematically than has hitherto been achieved, by revealing the transgenerational effects of violence and trauma through neuroscientific research.[66] We advocate exploring whether new toolkits, drawn from medical research in conflict settings, can be deployed in order to map more fully what we know about damaged bodies. Such techniques would complement rather than replace existing historical and anthropological methodologies within case-study fieldwork (such as interviews, archive/database research and focus groups).

Finally, we also advocate thinking about whether psychological experiments with different generations could help explain the consequences for reconciliation of people's responses to images of the dead drawn from a particular conflict. Could video analysis and AI technology aid us in understanding intergenerational dynamics in such settings? These questions only evidence further the significant contribution that AI – in combination with existing methodologies – might be able to make to our understandings of embodied reconciliation.

[64]Niina Mäki, *Between Peace and Technology: A Case Study on Opportunities and Responsible Design of Artificial Intelligence in Peace Technology* (Vantaa: Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulu, 2020); United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (March 2019) 'Digital Technologies and Mediation in Armed Conflict', https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/DigitalToolkitReport.pdf (accessed August 17, 2021).

[65]John Etherton, Thomas Smyth and Michael L. Best, 'MOSES: Exploring New Ground in Media and Post-Conflict Reconciliation', *Crisis Informatics* 10, no. 15 (2010): 1059–68; and Muhsen Iyad Aldajani, *Internet Communication Technology (ICT) for Reconciliation* (Jena: Springer, 2020).

[66]Sapolsky, *Behave*.

Emotions

A second next step central to a new paradigm in the study and practice of reconciliation is to emphasise the importance of emotions within the context of embodied reconciliation, specifically by enquiring how emotions come into play when discussing, framing and positioning dead, disappeared, displaced and damaged bodies and how such emotions impact upon the corporeal realm. We would then suggest that an embodied approach to reconciliation explore the corporeal impact of emotions, such as anger, resentment, hatred, shame, guilt, grief, or humiliation – in short, the direct consequences of emotions felt, repressed and experienced upon the human body and, in turn, the impact of said emotions upon processes of intergroup reconciliation.

Broad scholarship has addressed the role of emotions in reconciliation processes, in particular, as regards how the acknowledgement of the suffering of members of the adversary group represents a necessary step towards healing collective trauma, generating intergroup trust[67] and overcoming the victim-perpetrator binary to craft mutual recognition.[68] Goman and Kelley, for example, have claimed that understanding forgiveness as a process that has intrapersonal and interpersonal components enables us to define it as a response to traumatic events which 'helps individuals manage the emotional impact and search for meanings of the trauma, while at the interpersonal level also helping determine the future of the relationship'.[69] Brudholm and Rosoux, on the contrary, emphasise the role of legitimate forms of resistance to forgiveness.[70] Other scholars have focused upon how the intergenerational transmission of trauma may represent a barrier to trust-building initiatives.[71]

A multi-disciplinary and multi-locational research agenda would systematically map individual and collective memories of the dead and disappeared as an embodied process, thereby understanding how experiencing and remembering the dead and disappeared shapes survivors' bodies and their approach towards reconciliation. In this respect, the agenda should be led by the following questions: Does the psychological and physical impact of the dead and disappeared change when their bodies are found? How do survivors physically experience their group's dead bodies and those of their adversaries? To what extent do memories of the dead and disappeared lead to more rage and killing and impede reconciliation?

[67] Abiosseh Davis, Celestin Nsengiyumva and Daniel Hyslop, *Healing Trauma and Building Trust and Tolerance in Rwanda* (Interpeace Peacebuilding in Practice, Paper N° 4, 2019).

[68] Michalinos Zembylas, *Emotion and Traumatic Conflict: Reclaiming Healing in Education* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2015); Emma Hutchison and Roland Bleiker, 'Emotional Reconciliation: Reconstituting Identity and Community After Trauma', *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 3 (2008): 385–3; and Julianne Funk, Nancy Good and Marie E. Berry, *Healing and Peacebuilding After War: Transforming Trauma in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (London: Routledge, 2020).

[69] Carmen Goman and Douglas, L. Kelley, 'Conceptualizing Forgiveness in the Face of Historical Trauma' in *Critical Trauma Studies: Understanding Violence, Conflict and Memory in Everyday Life*, eds. Monica Casper and Eric Wertheimer (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 80.

[70] Thomas Brudholm and Valérie Rosoux, 'The Unforgiving. Reflections on the Resistance to Forgiveness After Atrocity', in *Theorising Post-Conflict Reconciliation: Agonism, Restitution and Repair*, ed. Alexander Hirsch (New York, Routledge, 2013), 115–30.

[71] Nevin Aiken, *Identity, Reconciliation and Transitional Justice: Overcoming Intractability in Divided Societies* (London: Routledge, 2013); Jesse Austin, 'The "Ceasefire Babies": Intergenerational Trauma and Mental Health in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland', *Public Health Review* 2, no. 1 (2019): 1–5; and Nyla Rosler and Nimrod Branscombe, 'Inclusivity of Past Collective Trauma and its Implications for Current Intractable Conflict: The Mediating Role of Moral Lessons', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 59, no. 1 (2020): 171–88.

Relatedly, our fields should seek to understand the emotional responses to displacement and return and how far psychological methodologies can aid us in this respect. Regarding damaged bodies, we would propose building on important research on compassion[72] and empathy[73] and interrogating how, if at all, said emotions offer resources not yet deployed in enriching peace-building through reconciliation. More specifically, we believe an embodied approach to reconciliation can help our understanding of how those whose body has been damaged by violent conflict (such as war veterans, rape victims, disfigured survivors) interact with wider society after conflict.

Institutions

Finally, a recalibrated approach to reconciliation requires a focus upon institutions and, particularly justice institutions, with the aim of developing an empirically-driven understanding of how local, national and international institutions engaged in reconciliation processes deal with dead, disappeared, displaced and surviving bodies. Specifically, our fields should interrogate whether and how such institutions, in practice, take into account the corporeal nature of conflicts and reconciliation processes. In other words, we contend that an embodied approach to reconciliation should seek to understand how justice can 'be done' concerning the 'repair for' or 'compensation of' embodied conflict experiences.

We acknowledge that significant research has focused upon how the institutional sphere has become a core terrain of struggle through which national and international mechanisms have been oriented towards building peace and crafting intergroup reconciliation.[74] In particular, the convergence between transitional justice and liberal peacebuilding has largely been fostered by the incorporation of human rights frameworks and transitional justice mechanisms within liberal peace accords and political settlements.[75] However, scholars such as Andrieu have argued that transitional justice measures should not only aim to restore confidence in the rule of law and build civil society trust in post-conflict state institutions, but they should also promote reconciliation.[76] Joshi and Wallensteen reiterate this argument, including reconciliation within their five indicators of quality peace along with security, governance, economic reconstruction and an active civil society.[77] Finally, Hamber and Kelly delineate between reconciliation and peacebuilding whilst acknowledging that 'reconciliation is implicit in *all* peacebuilding processes'.[78]

[72]Emma M. Seppala, Emiliana Simon-Thomas, Stephanie L. Brown, Monica C. Worline, C. Daryl Cameron, James R. Doty, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Compassion Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[73]S Baron-Cohen, *Zero Degrees of Empathy: A New Theory of Human Cruelty and Kindness* (London: Penguin, 2011).
[74]Kora Andrieu, 'Civilizing Peacebuilding: Transitional Justice, Civil Society and the Liberal Paradigm', *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 5 (2010); 537–58; Seils, *The Place of Reconciliation*; Brett, 'In the Aftermath'.
[75]Christine Bell, 'Peace Agreements: their nature and legal status', *The American Journal of International Law* 100, no. 2 (2006): 373–12; Wendy Lambourne, 'Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding after Mass Violence', *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 3 (2009): 28–48; and Chandra Lekha Sriram, Jemima García-Godos, Johanna Herman, Olga Martin-Ortega, *Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding on the Ground: Victims and Ex-Combatants* (London: Routledge, 2012).
[76]Andrieu, 'Civilizing Peacebuilding', 539.
[77]Madhur Joshi and Peter Wallensteen, *Understanding Quality Peace: Peacebuilding after Civil War* (London: Routledge, 2018).
[78]Brandon Hamber and Grainne Kelly, *A Working Definition of Reconciliation* (Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, 2004).

However, there has been less focus upon how post-conflict institutions engage with dead, disappeared, displaced and damaged bodies, and how human beings' own bodies are affected by their engagement with such institutions. Consequently, our aim is to fill this lacuna, focusing upon how, if at all, post-conflict institutions shape corporeal reconciliation, and how experiences of post-conflict institutions might be embodied. For instance, how can post-conflict justice mechanisms better address the dead, beyond narrative and symbolic initiatives? Part of this investigation will involve a more systematic mapping of existing institutional approaches towards the finding of dead bodies. It is also important to ask how far current judicial and non-judicial procedures after conflict alleviate the intensity of people's emotions about the disappeared, and what this implies for reconciliation. Are there more appropriate procedures that need to be devised? Do forward-looking peace processes need to take greater account of the specific challenges related to disappeared bodies? Does this issue necessitate development of particular skills among bureaucrats in charge of reparations policies? In terms of displaced bodies, how can post-conflict justice mechanisms address the embodied nature of displacement, and its consequences for reconciliation and peace-building? In relation to the damaged, how far are they currently considered in reconciliation arrangements? How could specific procedures deal with irreparable consequences on concrete individual bodies?

This article has set out the arguments for a paradigmatic shift in studies of and policy and practical approaches to reconciliation. The authors have aimed to establish a clear research agenda for what we see as a necessary and urgent change, plotting the key methodological steps central to an embodied turn in reconciliation, and providing what we see as the ethical, intellectual and policy justifications for centring reconciliation upon the dead, disappeared, displaced and damaged bodies. This agenda is of fundamental moral urgency and a core policy requirement if scholars and practitioners are to begin to comprehend meaningfully and respond effectively to violent conflict. The immediate and horrendous crisis in Ukraine, compounding ongoing egregious violations across the globe, bring images of destroyed civilian lives, refugee caravans, prosthetic limbs, and other gross images of human wrongdoing. Attempts at controlling the movement of bodies in and out of Ukraine, the embodied solidarities that the war gives birth to, as well as the traumas that it reactivates in the country but also elsewhere, confirm how urgent this paradigm shift is. Only by understanding that the human body is the key battleground for and terrain of this brutality will we be able collectively to engage effectively with its causes and consequences. The embodied turn in reconciliation studies cannot be postponed.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Roddy Brett is a Reader (Associate Professor) in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Bristol. His research focuses on the causes, consequences and legacies of political violence and how societies and states move on from mass violence and he has two decades of experience as a senior policymaker in these themes. He currently leads the ESRC-funded project Getting on with it: Understanding the Micro-Dynamics of Post-Accord Intergroup Social Relations.

Richard English is Professor of Politics, and Director of the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice, at Queen's University Belfast. His books include Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA (2003), Irish Freedom: The History of Nationalism in Ireland (2006), Terrorism: How to Respond (2009) and Does Terrorism Work? A History (2016).

Élise Féron is Docent and senior research fellow at the Tampere Peace Research Institute (Tampere University, Finland). Her main research interests include feminist peace research, conflict-generated diaspora politics, as well as the multiple entanglements between conflict, violence and peace. She has notably explored these issues in Eastern Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Cyprus and the South Caucasus.

Valerie Rosoux is a Research Director at the Belgian Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS). She teaches International Negotiation, Politics of Memory, and Transitional Justice at the University of Louvain (Belgium). She has a Licence in Philosophy and a Ph.D. in Political Sciences. She is a member of the Belgian Royal Academy. Since 2021, she is a Max Planck Law Fellow.