

# Resilience in the context of conflict-related sexual violence

Clark, Janine

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# **Resilience in the context of conflict-related sexual violence: Children as protective resources and wider implications**

*Janine Natalya Clark*

## **Abstract**

This article brings a different focus to existing scholarly and policy-based discussions about children in the context of conflict-related sexual violence. It is not about children born of rape or about children directly or indirectly affected by conflict-related sexual violence. What it emphasizes is a linkage between children and resilience. It is significant in this regard that the phenomenon of children seemingly ‘doing well’ despite adversity spawned the early study of resilience, which has now expanded into a vast field of research. This article, however, is not about the resilience of children or the protective resources that they need to thrive. Locating the concept in the interactions between individuals and their social ecologies, it explores how children – as an important part of these ecologies – can be a significant protective resource for victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and, hence, a support for resilience. It develops this argument using qualitative data from interviews with victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Colombia and Uganda. It further seeks to demonstrate that this linkage between children, social ecologies and resilience has broader implications for transitional justice. Specifically, the article underlines the need for transitional justice processes to give more attention to, and to invest in, the social ecologies – and the protective resources within them – that inextricably shape the lives of individuals affected by violence and human rights violations, including victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

## **Keywords**

Children; conflict-related sexual violence; resilience; social ecologies; transitional justice

## **Introduction**

Scholarly and policy-based discussions about children in the context of conflict-related sexual violence tend to focus on two particular issues. The first is children born of rape.<sup>1</sup> The second is children who have themselves suffered conflict-related sexual violence.<sup>2</sup> Some attention is also given to the effects of such violence on children,<sup>3</sup> including via transgenerational transmission of trauma.<sup>4</sup> This article, in contrast, takes a different angle, through its focus on resilience.

Ungar notes that ‘The study of resilience began in the late 1970s with independent longitudinal studies of child populations exposed to heightened levels of family and community risk factors such as the mental illness of a parent...poverty...and racial marginalization’.<sup>5</sup> Fundamentally, the phenomenon of children ‘doing well’ despite adversity<sup>6</sup> (and in some cases multiple adversities) became the catalyst for a field of research – extending across multiple disciplines – that has grown exponentially over the last five decades.<sup>7</sup> Scholarship on conflict-related sexual violence, however, has largely overlooked resilience.<sup>8</sup> At least part of the reason arguably lies in the fact that resilience is a controversial concept<sup>9</sup> that has attracted significant criticism, including from a normative perspective. In this regard, one of the core critiques is that resilience serves as a cover for a neoliberal political agenda that places the onus on individuals to deal with uncertainty and take responsibility for themselves<sup>10</sup> – notwithstanding the structural obstacles they may face<sup>11</sup> – consistent with ‘the neoliberal belief in the necessity of risk as a private good’.<sup>12</sup>

Applying such arguments to the issue of conflict-related sexual violence perhaps makes it easier to see why scholars working within this area of research have neglected resilience. It is, therefore, important to stress from the outset that this article is not suggesting that victims-/survivors<sup>13</sup> of such violence *should* demonstrate resilience, and nor is it seeking to downplay the responsibilities of governments and states towards war-affected populations. Consistent with a fundamental shift in the literature away from person-centric, psychological explanations of resilience towards more integrated approaches that emphasize interconnected social-ecological systems,<sup>14</sup> this article locates resilience in ‘the interactions between an individual’s environment, their social ecology, and an individual’s assets’<sup>15</sup> that promote resilience. Its aim, thus, is not to put the responsibility for resilience onto individuals themselves, but, rather, to stress the crucial role of their social ecologies – defined as ‘formal

and informal social networks'<sup>16</sup> and which can include, inter alia, schools, families, communities, local associations and religious or cultural institutions – in enabling, fostering and ‘scaffolding’ resilience. This article foregrounds a particular layer of these social ecologies, through its focus on children. In so doing, it offers a different perspective from the commonly emphasized view that good parenting is a prerequisite for children to thrive.<sup>17</sup> Specifically, it explores how children<sup>18</sup> can be a significant protective resource for victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence – giving them a sense of future and a reason to move on with their lives and go forward – and, hence, a support for resilience. It develops this argument using qualitative data from interviews with victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Colombia and Uganda.

The link that the article makes between children, social ecologies and resilience has broader implications for transitional justice, defined as ‘the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation’.<sup>19</sup> While the field of transitional justice has, to date, largely overlooked resilience,<sup>20</sup> the latter is highly relevant to several core transitional justice goals.<sup>21</sup> A peaceful society, for example, is arguably also a society that has key resources for dealing with major shocks and stressors. In this regard, adding a resilience lens to transitional justice is useful precisely because in addition to simply highlighting what is lacking in communities and societies affected by violence and human rights abuses, it also illuminates supportive resources. Through its focus on children as possible resilience resources, this article ultimately underlines the need for transitional justice processes to give more attention to, and to invest in, the social ecologies that inextricably shape the lives of individuals affected by violence and human rights violations, including victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

The article's first section gives an overview of existing scholarship on children and resilience in situations of war and armed conflict. While the literature provides detailed insights into the social-ecological protective factors needed to support children's wellbeing and resilience, the potential role of children as themselves constituting vital protective resources remains overlooked. The second section outlines the fieldwork and qualitative data (semi-structured interviews) on which the article draws. The third section uses the data to empirically explore some of the ways that the interviewees' children were helping them to go forward and rebuild their lives. Crucially, children were an important part of interviewees' social ecologies, and the final section discusses the wider implications of this, specifically for transitional justice. If transitional justice processes are about helping societies to deal with the past with the aim of building a better future, it is essential that they invest in and strengthen key social-ecological resources which themselves can help to absorb some of the effects of past shocks and disturbances.

### **Children and resilience**

In 1996, the former Minister of Education and Culture in Mozambique, Graça Machel, prepared a major report about the impact of armed conflict on children. Presented to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and examining the multiple threats and dangers to children in conflict situations – from internal displacement and sexual exploitation to landmines and health issues – the report painted a powerful and bleak picture. More and more of the world, it argued, is 'being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum' where basic human values no longer exist. It is 'a space in which children are slaughtered, raped, and maimed; a space in which children are exploited as soldiers; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality'.<sup>22</sup> The report underlined that war violates children's

fundamental rights – including the right to be protected – and disrupts the social networks and primary relationships that are essential to their development and wellbeing;<sup>23</sup> ‘The entire fabric of their societies – their homes, schools, health systems and religious institutions – are torn to pieces’.<sup>24</sup>

The report had a major impact at the international level, leading, inter alia, to the adoption by the UN General Assembly of resolution A/RES/51/77 (1997)<sup>25</sup> on the rights of the child and the creation of a UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. According to the UN Office of the said Special Representative, more than 20 years after Graça Machel’s report was presented to the UN, it ‘remains widely used as a foundation for advocacy in child protection’.<sup>26</sup>

In drawing crucial attention to the myriad ways that armed conflict affects children, Machel’s report significantly contributed to building a strong narrative around children as victims.<sup>27</sup> Complementing and complexifying this narrative, however, are studies exploring the resilience that some children demonstrate in situations of war and armed conflict.<sup>28</sup> In their research on child soldiers in Colombia, for example, Cortes and Buchanan identify six themes in the children’s narratives – sense of agency; social intelligence, empathy and affect regulation; shared experience, caregiving figures and community connection; sense of future, hope and growth; connection to spirituality; and morality. According to them, these themes indicate that ‘participants had a wide repertoire of strengths and resources that seemed to facilitate their ability to overcome the trauma of war’.<sup>29</sup> The authors further emphasize that professionals working with child soldiers in the context of rehabilitation programmes need to ‘hear what children have to say about their efforts to cope with the consequences of living in a war zone’.<sup>30</sup> Boyden, for her part, gives examples of how some children in war ‘actively

and creatively engage with their situation and adopt constructive approaches to the management of risk'.<sup>31</sup> She also underlines that children 'thrive, and indeed flourish, in widely contrasting conditions and circumstances and have different capacities and needs, to which a universal child protection model – which is based on only one type of childhood – is not sensitive'.<sup>32</sup>

Relatedly, many studies have specifically sought to identify how different factors within children's particular social ecologies can foster resilience. In their research with Palestinian children aged 10 to 13, Pelonen et al. found that 'good peer relations played a strong protective role', particularly in the case of male children.<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, they have proposed that 'preventive interventions among war traumatized children should include methods which help children to form and maintain trustful friendships and to share their fears and joys with peers'.<sup>34</sup> Also focused on Palestine, Punamäki et al., in a study of 614 children (6–16 years old) living in the Gaza Strip, present their results as suggesting that 'about one-fifth (21%) of children could be defined as resilient in conditions of armed conflict involving long-lasting military occupation and life-threatening trauma exposure'.<sup>35</sup> Identifying a number of factors that support resilience, the authors place a particular accent on parenting, arguing that 'Safety, security and sense of trust, and parental availability are the primary sources of child well-being, and their role becomes especially important in life-endangering conditions of war and military violence'.<sup>36</sup>

More broadly, Betancourt and Khan underscore the significance of protective factors across family, community and cultural layers of the social ecology.<sup>37</sup> Restoring a damaged social ecology, they maintain, 'is fundamental to improving prevention and rehabilitative interventions for war-affected children'.<sup>38</sup> For Wessells, similarly, children's social

environments are crucial. In discussing how changes within these environments can undermine healthy development, he foregrounds the differential impact of war and armed conflict on children. In his words, ‘Consistent with the first principle of DIT [differential impact approach], the key to enabling children’s resilience in such settings is to change their social environments in ways that promote children’s well-being’.<sup>39</sup>

The above examples constitute part of a vast corpus of resilience scholarship exploring protective factors for children in diverse contexts.<sup>40</sup> What remains critically under explored, however, is the fact that children themselves can be crucial protective resources for those around them. Zraly et al.’s research on motherhood resilience in post-genocide Rwanda, for example, draws on 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork and 63 interviews with women who suffered rape during the 1994 genocide. Pointing out that more than half of the women had become mothers for the first time or had given birth to more children since the genocide,<sup>41</sup> the authors identify five key ways in which ‘motherhood bolsters Rwandan genocide-rape survivor’s resilience’.<sup>42</sup> These include reducing the stigma of rape and fostering positive emotion.<sup>43</sup>

This article, in contrast, is not specifically about motherhood and resilience, but, rather, about the different ways that female and male victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in BiH, Colombia and Uganda drew strength from their children (and in some cases grandchildren) and found in them a reason to move on with their lives. It also differs from Zraly et al.’s work in a second important way. The authors assert that ‘The Rwandan women in the study were stunningly resilient and creative in the wake of unfathomable violence’.<sup>44</sup> Not only does the word ‘stunningly’ convey the idea that resilience is something exceptional, contrary to what Masten has termed ‘the power of the ordinary’,<sup>45</sup> but it also appears to locate



resilience in the women themselves – or at least to downplay the significance of their social ecologies. Illustrating why these ecologies matter, Masten locates resilience in ‘the everyday magic of ordinary, normative human resources in the minds, brains, and bodies of children, in their families and relationships, and in their communities’.<sup>46</sup> This reference to families, relationships and communities, in turn, reflects a relational view of resilience as ‘social ecologies and individuals interacting’.<sup>47</sup> In framing children as constituting a significant part of these social ecologies, this article thus has a broader focus than Zrally et al.’s research. It is not only about the relationships between individual interviewees and their children, but, also, about demonstrating why social ecologies matter in the context of conflict-related sexual violence – and thereby challenging neoliberal critiques of resilience. Fundamentally, resilience is not about leaving individuals to simply get on and deal with whatever life throws at them, but about developing ‘facilitative environments’<sup>48</sup> that support those who have suffered violence and adversity. Ultimately, the article argues that transitional justice processes have an important role to play in helping to build or strengthen such environments.

## **Fieldwork and methodology**

The fieldwork that informs this article was undertaken in the context of an ongoing five-year research project about resilience and victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Focused on three case studies – BiH, Colombia and Uganda – that reflect maximum variation<sup>49</sup> across several key dimensions, including socio-cultural context, type of conflict and patterns of sexual violence, the study is exploring, *inter alia*, how everyday forms of resilience are expressed and how common protective factors (such as family) function in these highly diverse settings. The study is not embracing a normative ‘ideal’ of resilience, ‘with a package of connotations about moral fibre, courage, endurance, bravery, strength and

a good sense of humour'.<sup>50</sup> Approaching resilience from a social-ecological perspective and giving prominence to the interactions between individuals and their environments,<sup>51</sup> it examines both positive and negative aspects of these interactions, as well as the social-ecological legacies of conflict-related sexual violence on these environments themselves – and the resources that they offer.<sup>52</sup>

While this article draws only on the study's qualitative data, it is important to contextualize this by briefly outlining the quantitative part of the research. Between May and December 2018, 449 female and male<sup>53</sup> research participants across the three countries – all of them victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence – completed a study questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with the key aims of measuring resilience and identifying independent variables that could explain variations in resilience scores across the dataset. The crucial part of the questionnaire was the Adult Resilience Measure,<sup>54</sup> or ARM. A 28-item scale, the ARM seeks to measure an individual's protective resources across three sub-scales – personal, relational and contextual. Answers are scored from 1 to 5, with a higher overall ARM score indicating that a person has more protective resources to support resilience. Additional sections of the research questionnaire included demographic questions, a traumatic events checklist, a Centrality of Event Scale<sup>55</sup> and a broad set of questions about life today (including current problems, security and sources of support). The author, two researchers, several in-country organizations<sup>56</sup> and two independent psychologists in BiH and Colombia respectively were all involved in applying the questionnaires (which were not self-administered). These in-country organizations also played a crucial role in locating research participants.

In the qualitative stage of the research, the ARM scores for all participants – which ranged from 64 (a female respondent in Uganda) to the maximum possible score of 140 (a male respondent in BiH and two female respondents in Colombia and Uganda respectively) – were grouped into four quartiles per country. Interviewees were selected from each quartile, and particular care was taken to respect demographic diversity (in particular gender, age and ethnic/racial diversity) within the quartiles. Sixty-three women and men (21 in each country) were interviewed between January and July 2019 by the author and two researchers. In many cases, a period of several months elapsed between a participant completing a questionnaire and subsequently taking part in an interview.<sup>57</sup> All interviews were conducted in the local language/s. With the interviewees' informed consent, interviews were recorded using fully encrypted digital voice recorders. The host institution and the research funder granted ethics approval for the research. Approvals were also obtained from relevant in-country authorities, including the Ugandan National Council for Science and Technology.

Given the sensitivity of the research, measures were put in place to lessen the risk of potentially re-traumatizing participants. As one example, all of the 449 women and men who completed a study questionnaire received a follow-up telephone call from the in-country researcher or, where possible, from one of the organizations involved in the project. Those who also took part in the interviews received a further follow-up telephone call. Additionally, a referral network was built into the design of the project, to ensure that, if necessary, research participants could be directed – often through the organizations – to appropriate sources of support.

The interview guide sought to explore interviewees' lives and wider social ecologies. It included questions about their war experiences (for example, 'Are there parts of your war

story which are important to you and which you are never asked about?) and their resources (including ‘What resources do you have that help you deal with the challenges that you face – for example, your own inner resources, services within your community, government institutions?’). To capture the significance of cultural and intersectional factors within a highly unique and demographically diverse dataset, interviewees were also asked questions such as ‘What does your community expect from women/men?’ and ‘Do you think that being a man/woman has influenced how you deal with challenges and adversity in your life? Can you give me an example?’

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated, and the transcripts were subsequently uploaded into NVivo. The author developed the codebook over a period of approximately 12 months, continually refining it as the coding process progressed, and the majority of interviews were coded by two people (including the author) to ensure consistency and rigour of coding. The 63 interviews underwent two cycles of coding, and the author used thematic analysis<sup>58</sup> to develop the eight core themes.

Reflecting its anchoring within a broader body of scholarship on social-ecological systems, the study utilizes the ecological concept of connectivity and transposes it to a social science context.<sup>59</sup> Connectivity, in turn, is the common thread that links the eight themes, which include “‘I am all that I’ve lived’: Connectivities of violence’, “‘It isn’t there anymore’: Broken/ruptured connectivities’ and “‘With them I get through it’: Supportive and sustaining connectivities’. The third of these themes is fundamentally about the various protective resources in interviewees’ lives across different social-ecological levels, and the importance of children strongly emerged in this context. It should be noted in this regard that the interview guide itself did not include any questions about children. Demographic data from

the questionnaires, however, revealed that of the total 449 respondents, only 43 participants (24 in BiH, 13 Colombia and six in Uganda) did not have children.<sup>60</sup> Of those research participants who were selected for the qualitative part of the research, only four of the Bosnian interviewees, two of the Colombian interviewees and one of the Ugandan interviewees did not have children.

### **Children as a protective factor**

The interview data provided important insights into some of the myriad ways that war and armed conflict affect children,<sup>61</sup> consistent with Machel's aforementioned report. However, it also highlighted something else. Baraitser and Noack – noting that 'research on resilience has paid particular attention to the childhood conditions required for the development of resilient individuals'<sup>62</sup> – underline 'how the mother is called on to function as one of the crucial influences in the development of resilience in children'.<sup>63</sup> Exemplifying this point in relation to fathers, Feldman argues that 'In modern societies, greater father involvement enhances child resilience, in terms of better mental health, higher academic achievement and professional attainment, and better self-regulatory abilities'.<sup>64</sup> What was particularly salient in the interview data underpinning this article was that children themselves can be a significant protective factor for their mothers and fathers.

When asked which factors had been most important in helping her to rebuild, or start to rebuild, her life, a Bosnian interviewee answered: 'Well, a factor can be family, children. To me they are, it's because of them that I had to...You have to keep on living, if not for yourself then for your children. To provide for them. That is number one'. Although her two children were now adults, they had been very young in 1992 when the Bosnian started and

they were detained with her in a camp. She also spoke at length about her six-year granddaughter, whom she described as her priority now. In her words, ‘The two of us are inseparable. We have not been together today and I can’t wait for her to come...Well, so, this is what fills me up and what I like the most. I relax and forget everything. I go down into her little world’.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly, when asked what had helped her to rebuild or start to rebuild her life, a Colombian interviewee stressed the importance of her two remaining children, as well as her faith. In her words, ‘First of all...[m]y spirituality has helped me rebuild. Secondly, my daughters [pause]. I had my children around me, but they [paramilitaries] disappeared one [her son]<sup>66</sup> and now I have two left. That’s what helps me to keep fighting and carry on...And calling on Christ’.<sup>67</sup>

For some interviewees, a key reason for getting on with and rebuilding their lives was to ensure that their children had the education and the opportunities that they themselves never had. When asked what she most needed from transitional justice,<sup>68</sup> a Ugandan interviewee explained: ‘most important is the education of the children, yes. Children must read because they are our future more than anything else...[O]ne can be given money, but if your child is not reading, it is of no use. The education of the children is more important than anything else. It will renew my life’.<sup>69</sup> A Colombian interviewee spoke more broadly about her goals for her children. In her words, ‘I don’t want them to have to go through what I did. I want them to have opportunities, ones I didn’t have. I want them to get on in life [her voice cracks and she begins to cry], I want them to study – most of all my girl’.<sup>70</sup>

These examples illustrate one part of what has been called ‘vicarious futurity’, a concept that refers to ‘the vicarious hope and vicarious despair an individual has for another, and specific

to parents, the feelings of hope and despair a parent has when thinking about their child's future'.<sup>71</sup> Interviewees' focus on their children's futures was an important driving force in their lives, and the goals and dreams that they expressed often included their children. The broader point is that children can help to create a sense of future, an idea that also emerged strongly from Zraly et al.'s aforementioned research on the relationship between motherhood and resilience in post-genocide Rwanda. They found, *inter alia*, that '...motherhood situated Rwandan genocide-rape survivors, along with their children, hopes, prayers, and desires, at an intersection of different potential futures that were not overdetermined by their personal biographies involving brutal violence, excruciating pain, myriad illnesses, and disease'.<sup>72</sup>

Relatedly, interviewees frequently spoke about their children as a major source of support in their lives. In some cases, the nature of this support was practical and financial. More commonly, however, interviewees drew strength from their children's emotional support and love. Emphasizing that the Bosnian war and the sexual violence to which she was subjected had destroyed her childhood – '...because I was very young...I was not even 15. I was a child' – an interviewee in BiH described her family as her biggest support. Specifically referring to her two young children, she underlined: '...they keep me alive. Without them, I think, I would have sunk long ago'. She described their love as 'the most beautiful thing in the world' and reflected: 'Without them, trust me, I would not be...I don't think that I would even be alive'.<sup>73</sup> A Colombian interviewee who had lost a son (in 2002) and had to deal with the fact that one of her daughters was also raped explained: 'Seeing my family grow [referring to the fact that she now had a six-year-old grandson] has been a support to me. I think that, well, love for your family is what makes you keep going...'.<sup>74</sup>

Although only 11 of the 63 interviewees were male (five in BiH, two in Colombia and four in Uganda), some of them (and particularly those in BiH) also spoke about their close relationships with their children and families – and the strength that these relationships had given them. In response to the first question in the interview guide (‘Can you start by telling me, in a few sentences, something about your life today?’), one of the Bosnian interviewees stressed that ‘My life is within my family’. This man was arrested in 1992 and taken to a camp, before subsequently being moved to a different camp. Released after more than a year, he joined the army several months later; ‘I had a need to join the army’. Both the army and his family – his wife and two (now grown-up) children – had helped him in different ways. In his words, ‘I mean, after the camp was the army, and after the army was my wife. And from that moment, in fact, there is only one goal: to live. With the family, within the family...So, family, the most. This, this, this is the engine that drives me through life’.<sup>75</sup>

Another male Bosnian interviewee, whose relationship with his wife had ended several years earlier, emphasized that ‘It is difficult to live with this trauma [referring to the sexual violence he experienced during the war]’. For a long time, he recalled, he had felt that surviving was a form of punishment. However, his 18-year-old son had helped to change his outlook on life. As he narrated, ‘And now this son, he gives me strength, gives me...We fight together, work together...To lead him to the right path, to give him some kind of tangible security, to provide for him, so that he has the life of a dignified man. As much as possible, I provide for him’. He described his son as ‘a friend and everything I have’.<sup>76</sup>

One of the two male Colombian interviewees talked about the significance of both his own mother and his son in his life. He had had been raped in front of his mother and she was raped in front of him (by members of the guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia



[FARC]). Describing her as his main source of support, he maintained that ‘Seeing how my mother has got through so much has given me the strength to do the same’. He further added that ‘Now, there is my own son too, so there’s even more reason. Those are my factors to keep me going’.<sup>77</sup>

The male Ugandan interviewees, in contrast, did not speak about their children as a source of support, accentuating instead their worries – for example, about how to pay the cost of school fees. One of the interviewees had seven children, four of whom were living at home. However, he and his wife were also looking after the four children of his brothers who were killed in a massacre in 1987. Repeatedly underscoring the financial pressures that he faced, the interviewee explained: ‘How to get money to pay school fees for the children is pressing me hard. And this includes the orphans that were left in my hands’.<sup>78</sup> When asked about his current problems, another interviewee with three children similarly emphasized: ‘The most pressing problem that I am experiencing daily is how to raise children, which is bothering me’. He further stressed that finding the money to buy the children what they needed ‘is the most painful thing I am experiencing and it is no joking matter’.<sup>79</sup>

Indeed, across all three countries, the positive role that children played in many interviewees’ lives was not the entire story; these men and women frequently expressed various concerns and anxieties relating to their children and their children’s futures – thereby illustrating the ‘vicarious despair’ dimension of the aforementioned ‘vicarious futurity’.<sup>80</sup> These worries, in turn, often reflected/were linked to interviewees’ wider environments. The key point in this regard is that while the interviewees’ children were an important protective factor and source of support within their social ecologies, there were also significant deficits and ongoing

stressors within these ecologies, in turn highlighting the need to think about the latter in terms of ‘interactions on a number of different scales’.<sup>81</sup>

A Bosnian interviewee, for example, insisted that the Bosnian state was failing young people by not creating opportunities for them. Speaking about the eldest of her three daughters, aged 23, she explained:

If there were some institutions for my daughter to get employment, this is something that would be encouraging for me...To open a centre where your child can, for example, undertake practical work experience, finish an internship, so that I don’t have to worry this much....In addition to my own stresses and worries, I have to worry about her because the system was made wrong or absolutely doesn’t function. Some [young people] can get on well, others can’t.<sup>82</sup>

This last point illuminates the issue of corruption, which several of the Bosnian interviewees talked about. Similarly, Bargués and Morillas found that low social acceptance of institutions (including parliament and government) in BiH ‘is connected in part to the high perceptions of corruption across the institutional landscape, but also importantly to how people perceive the efficiency and ability of governance actors to address their needs and wants satisfactorily’.<sup>83</sup>

When asked about her current problems and challenges, one of the Colombian interviewees, for her part, expressed concerns about raising children in an environment that she regarded as unsafe. In her words, ‘Trying to bring up children in the society we live in at the moment with so many drugs, so many, such immense things for children to cope with, we don’t know where to begin. It’s a fight. That could be the most difficult thing’.<sup>84</sup>

What is also significant, however, is that notwithstanding important deficits and pressures within their social ecologies, some interviewees – as an extension of their ‘everyday practices of care’<sup>85</sup> towards their children and as a further expression of everyday resilience – were seeking to actively address particular issues within these ecologies, including through caring

practices vis-à-vis other victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. This was particularly evident in Colombia, reflecting the fact that several of the interviewees were engaged in social leadership roles (which had also exposed some of them to death threats).<sup>86</sup>

One of the interviewees, for example, talked about her work helping young people and creating new opportunities for them. Discussing the risks of young girls in her community being lured into child prostitution, she explained: ‘You have to focus on doing something useful for that young girl and what she’s doing....We get together and organise dances, bands, recycling gangs and we get the kids working in the spare time they have after coming out of school’. She further talked about how her association helps other women who have suffered sexual and other forms of violence, whether in the context of the Colombian armed conflict or in their domestic lives, thereby creating supportive spaces within the women’s social ecologies. In the interviewee’s words, ‘if you’re a craftsperson, make crafts; if you sew, start dress-making. I try to get them the space where they can relax and have their therapy’.<sup>87</sup> Another Colombian interviewee, similarly, described her efforts to help other women and essentially to make their social ecologies more responsive to their needs. She insisted that ‘We want productive partners for the women who can’t work, who have to stay at home. So, as you say, we’re busy trying to arrange all sorts of things and, God willing, some of them will come through’. She additionally spoke about essentially helping some of the women in her association to engage with their social ecologies differently – and not to be held back by structural and gendered barriers. In her words: ‘You see, there are lots of women who suffer domestic abuse and there are lots who say: “I can’t,” so I, I want to change all their programming and tell them: “Yes we can, yes we are able, we don’t need to depend on a man, to follow him, to fight for us. We can do it on our own, us on our own”’.<sup>88</sup>

The above examples are an illustration of how ‘Women’s organizations [in Colombia] have played a crucial role...in pushing for and crafting legal and political transformations, which have had multiplicative effects on women’s mobilization’.<sup>89</sup> The bigger point, not specific to Colombia, is that if children can be a protective factor for their mothers and fathers, thus providing a support for resilience, they can also, more indirectly, support resilience in the sense of fostering caring practices towards other parts of individuals’ social ecologies in ways that may benefit future generations more broadly. Ultimately, this article’s argument is that transitional justice processes themselves need to ‘care about’ and give greater attention to the social ecologies with which the lives of both victims and perpetrators are tightly intertwined. Phillips has proposed a concept of care that ‘campaigns for a radical restructuring of social and political institutions focused on more-than-human flourishing’.<sup>90</sup> In a transitional justice context, this ‘more-than-human flourishing’ necessarily encompasses individuals’ social ecologies, starting with children as a crucial protective resource.

### **Children as the starting point for a social-ecological framing of transitional justice**

There have been a number of developments regarding the participation of children in transitional justice processes. In its 2016 ‘Policy on Children’, for example, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) committed to ‘maintaining contact with child witnesses in order to keep them informed of developments in the case, and also to listen to their views and any concerns’.<sup>91</sup> Noting, moreover, that regardless of any vulnerability or dependence, children ‘possess and are continuously developing their own capacities – capacities to act, to choose and to participate in activities and decisions that affect them’, the report further accentuates that ‘The Office will remain mindful, in all aspects of its work, of the evolving capacities of the child’.<sup>92</sup>

Discussing Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Indian Residential Schools (2008–2015) – which had the unique quality of being ‘the only truth commission with a primary focus on the victimization of children’<sup>93</sup> – the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) has highlighted the active efforts made by the TRC ‘to include...children and youth in education and awareness programs’ related to its work.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the Canadian TRC came into being as a direct result of legal action by thousands of residential school survivors made it ‘the first Truth Commission in which those who were the subjects of harm...had a central role in its origins and operation. It was in this sense the most “victim centric” of truth commissions’.<sup>95</sup>

Some transitional justice mechanisms, moreover, have prepared outreach materials specifically for children. At the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), for example, which completed its mandate in December 2015, the External Relations and Communication Outreach Unit produced a comic book (*100 Days in the Land of the Thousand Hills*) about the 1994 Rwandan genocide; and Sierra Leone's TRC (2002–2004) produced a ‘child-friendly’ version of its final report.<sup>96</sup> The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), whose mandate lasted from 1993 until 2017, had a Youth Outreach Programme, and one of the outcomes of this was a publication – *Our Tribunal* – which showcased ‘the views and perceptions that young people from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) hold on issues of war, post-conflict justice and reconciliation’.<sup>97</sup>

Notwithstanding these child-related developments within the field, some scholars remain concerned that transitional justice processes are still failing to acknowledge (or sufficiently acknowledge) children as key stakeholders. Reflecting on the ICTR's aforementioned comic book for children, for example, Gidron maintains that readers of the book, like the child

characters in it, ‘are not in a position to question their surroundings, influence them or independently think about what they face’.<sup>98</sup> Such independent thinking is neither encouraged nor anticipated; ‘Lines between right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust could not be clearer, and there is only one narrative regarding the conflict. Thus, children are expected to follow and absorb ideas and ideals that are clearly presented to them’.<sup>99</sup> Aptel and Ladisch, moreover, insist that ‘Children have the right to express their views and be considered in processes concerning them, including transitional justice’, while also underscoring that ‘children and youth<sup>100</sup> have not been systematically included as [a] focus of transitional justice mechanisms’.<sup>101</sup>

In short, transitional justice scholarship has emphasized the critical importance of engaging with children and allowing them to assume their rightful place ‘as active partners and agents of transition’.<sup>102</sup> Through its particular focus on resilience, this article frames the significance of children in the context of transitional justice from a different angle. Having explored some of the ways that interviewees in BiH, Colombia and Uganda spoke about their children and the strength that they drew from them, its argument is that children constitute important resources that transitional justice processes, as part of dealing with the complex legacies of the past and seeking to help build a better future, should invest in. The broader point is that supporting those who have suffered human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, also means supporting their social ecologies. In their work on gender-based violence, Moletsane and Theron ‘aim to foreground the ways in which transforming the social ecologies characterised by unequal gender norms...might help build resilience among girls and young women in the context of extreme levels of violence that they encounter in families, communities (rural and urban), institutions, the workplace and the streets’.<sup>103</sup>

Giving attention to social ecologies, however, means more than simply seeking to ‘correct’ them and to rectify their deficits.

In this regard, it is useful to think about transitional justice in an architectural sense. Genadt defines architectural resilience as ‘a building’s capacity to support a community [understood as a village, city or nation] in regaining equilibrium following a notable change or disruption in its organization’.<sup>104</sup> In an article specifically about architecture and transitional justice, Mihai argues that ‘architecture can play a role in sustaining political renewal and hope in the possibility of a different future in the wake of political violence. It constitutes an element of the physical and symbolic infrastructure that can either enable or stifle new visions, relations and a new sense of place’.<sup>105</sup> By extension, transitional justice can be likened to an architecture, designed to support communities torn apart by war and violence to regain some degree of ‘balance’ and stability – and a sense of the possibilities of alternative futures. Optimal functioning of this architecture, however, requires greater attention within the operationalization of transitional justice processes to the social ecologies with which individual lives are intricately intertwined. Genadt’s reference to architectural resilience ‘as belonging not just to a single building but to the construct of its greater environment’<sup>106</sup> indirectly highlights the importance of these ecologies, of which children – as this article has demonstrated – are a significant part.

Oetzel and Ting-Toomey distinguish between what they call an ‘independent construal of self’ – based on the view that ‘an individual is a unique entity with an individuated repertoire of feelings, cognitions, and motivations’ – and an ‘interdependent construal of self’, which entails ‘an emphasis on the importance of relational connectedness’.<sup>107</sup> This idea of relational connectedness emerged strongly from the qualitative data; interviewees located themselves

and their lives within broader relational connectivities (both positive and negative) – underscoring what Hopenwasser has referred to as ‘the deep ecology of entangled relationality’.<sup>108</sup> The social-ecological reframing of transitional justice that this article ultimately advocates means recognizing these connectivities – and extending the focus beyond individual and group harms to take account of the multiple ways that entire social ecologies are affected by war, conflict and large-scale human rights abuses. However, beyond harms, it also means strengthening and investing in the resources and relational connectivities within these ecologies. Not only does this add a new dimension to discussions about the role of children and transitional justice but it also, more broadly, provides a novel starting point for practically exploring and developing largely overlooked synergies between transitional justice and resilience. Fundamentally, if resilience is a ‘co-construction’,<sup>109</sup> transitional justice has an important role to play in this process.

## **Conclusion**

In their work on children born of war in northern Uganda, Baines and Oliveira argue that these children ‘are entangled within webs of relationships that have been impacted by the violence of the conflict’. As such, they ‘cannot be understood in isolation from the society in which they live’.<sup>110</sup> This article has similarly located children within ‘webs of relationships’, specifically examining how the children of victims-/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence can act as a significant protective resource. In this way, it has added a new dimension to the common argument that good parenting is a factor for building children’s resilience, demonstrating – through reference to empirical data from BiH, Colombia and Uganda – that children themselves can contribute to the resilience of their mothers and



fathers. It has ultimately developed this argument within a broader transitional justice framework.

According to Lee-Koo, ‘Knowledge about conflict is constructed. At the heart of this construction is often a series of facts that might include dates and times of attacks, invasions, declarations or mobilisations; it might also include data on the quantity and capacity of weapons, armies or coalitions’.<sup>111</sup> Transitional justice processes such as criminal trials and truth commissions place a strong emphasis on establishing the ‘truth’ and the ‘facts’ – which in practice are often highly contested concepts<sup>112</sup> – of what happened. This focus on the details of who did what to whom, when and how can detract from the wider social ecologies – families, communities, institutions, relationships – that significantly affect, positively or negatively, the success of transitional justice processes. The social-ecological reframing of transitional justice that this article calls for means giving more attention to these ecologies, as a way of, *inter alia*, identifying and strengthening crucial protective resources within them. These resources include both children and, more broadly, the relational connectivities that can support individuals and societies to deal with the multiple legacies of the past.

In this way, the article illuminates the – to date – largely overlooked possibilities for transitional justice processes themselves to contribute to fostering resilience as part of their own legacies. Ungar argues that social-ecological definitions of resilience purposively de-centre individuals in order ‘to avoid blaming them for not flourishing when there are few opportunities to access resources’.<sup>113</sup> This article is not arguing for a de-centring of individuals in the context of transitional justice. The crucial point is that just as ‘...we cannot think of any organism, down to the smallest microbe, that lives without having to think of an

environment within which it must be in an ever-ongoing interaction’,<sup>114</sup> a similar argument – adapted to a social science context – can also be applied to transitional justice.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Wilton Park, *Report – Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative: Shaping Principles for Global Action to Prevent and Tackle Stigma* (November 2016), <https://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/WP1508-Report.pdf> (accessed November 11, 2020); Erin Baines and Camile Oliveria, ‘Securing the Future: Transformative Justice and Children Born of War’, *Social & Legal Studies* (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0964663920946430>; Ambassador Neil Bush, ‘International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict: UK Statement’ (June 2020), <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/international-day-for-the-elimination-of-sexual-violence-in-conflict-uk-statement> (accessed July 4, 2020); Myriam Denov and Antonio Piolanti, “‘Though my father was a killer, I need to know him’: Children Born of Genocidal Rape in Rwanda and Their Perspectives on Fatherhood”, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104560>; UN Secretary-General, ‘Secretary-General’s Message on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict – “The Plight and Rights of Children Born of War”’ (June 2018), <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-06-19/secretary-generals-message-international-day-elimination-sexual> (accessed October 7, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> ABColombia, Sisma Mujer and the U.S. Office on Colombia, *Colombia: Women, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and the Peace Process* (November 2013), [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ABColombia\\_Conflict\\_related\\_sexual\\_violence\\_report.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ABColombia_Conflict_related_sexual_violence_report.pdf) (accessed October 16, 2020); Daniele Perissi and Karen Naimer, ‘Achieving Justice for Child Survivors of Conflict-related Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: The *Kavumu* Case’, *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 18, no. 2 (2020): 293–306; UN News, ‘Sexual Violence against Children during Armed Conflict, Vastly Under-Reported’ (June 2020), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066962> (accessed November 11, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Aisling Swaine, ‘Addressing the Gendered Interests of Victims/Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Their Children Through National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security’, *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 7, no. 2 (2020): 145–176.

<sup>4</sup> Jeewon Lee, Young-Sook Kwak, Yoon-Jung Kim, Eun-Ji Kim, E. Jin Park, Yumni Shin, Bun-Hee Lee, So Hee Lee, Hee Yeon Jung, Inseon Lee, Jung Im Hwang, Dongsik Kim and Soyoung Irene Lee, ‘Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma: Psychiatric Evaluation of Offspring of Former “Comfort Women,” Survivors of the Japanese Military Sexual Slavery during World War II’, *Psychiatry Investigation* 16, no. 3 (2019): 249–253; Nena Močnik, *Trauma Transmission and Sexual Violence: Reconciliation and Peacebuilding in Post Conflict Settings* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Ungar, ‘Resilience after Maltreatment: The Importance of Social Services as Facilitators of Positive Adaptation’, *Child Abuse & Neglect* 37 (2013): 111.

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<sup>6</sup> Masten points out that ‘World War II (WWII) set the stage for the emergence of resilience science, bringing worldwide attention to the plight of children affected by the devastation’. Ann S. Masten, ‘Global Perspectives on Resilience in Children and Youth’, *Child Development* 85, no. 1 (2014): 7.

<sup>7</sup> W. Neil Adger, ‘Social and Ecological Resilience: Are They Related? *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 3 (2000): 347–364; Jon Coaffee, ‘Rescaling and Responsibilising the Politics of Urban Resilience: From National Security to Local Place-Making. *Politics* 33, no. 4 (2013): 240–252; Katy Jenkins and Glevys Rondón, ‘“Eventually the Mine Will Come”: Women Anti-Mining Activists’ Everyday Resilience in Opposing Resource Extraction in the Andes. *Gender & Development* 23, no. 3 (2015): 415–431; Roberto E. Barrios, ‘Resilience: A Commentary from the Vantage Point of Anthropology’, *Annals of Anthropological Practice* 40, no. 1 (2016): 28–38.

<sup>8</sup> Maggie Zraly, Sarah E. Rubin and Donatilla Mukamana, ‘Motherhood and Resilience among Rwandan Genocide-Rape Survivors’, *Ethos* 41, no. 4 (2014): 411–439; Jerker Edström, Chris Dolan, Thea Shahroksh, with Onen David, *Therapeutic Activism: Men of Hope Refugee Association Uganda Breaking The Silence Over Male Rape in Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*. Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Evidence Report No. 182 (2016).[https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/9995/ER182\\_TherapeuticActivismMenofHopeRefugeeAssociationUgandaBreakingtheSilenceoverMaleRapeinConflictrelatedSexualViolence.pdf?sequence=1&source=post\\_page](https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/9995/ER182_TherapeuticActivismMenofHopeRefugeeAssociationUgandaBreakingtheSilenceoverMaleRapeinConflictrelatedSexualViolence.pdf?sequence=1&source=post_page); Carlos Koos, ‘Decay or Resilience? The Long-Term Social Consequences of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone’, *World Politics* 70, no. 2 (2018): 194–238. Even when scholars have referred to resilience in the context of conflict-related sexual violence, however, they often do so only in passing and without substantively engaging with the concept, its meaning and complexity. In her work in BiH, for example, and reflecting on her interview with one particular woman who had experienced conflict-related sexual violence, Močnik comments: ‘Accepting that she is a victim, together with all the psychological and physical injuries she still suffers from, is how she practices resilience’. Resilience is nevertheless left undefined, as though its meaning were self-evident. Nena Močnik, ‘Collective Victimhood of Individual Survivors: Reflecting the Uses and Impacts of Two Academic Narratives Two Decades after the War Rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina’, *East European Politics* 35, no. 4 (2019): 464.

<sup>9</sup> Pizzo, for example, argues that ‘unbounded recourse to resilience and its translation into a normative category represents an unresolved and controversial issue’. Barbara Pizzo, ‘Problematizing Resilience: Implications for Planning Theory and Practice’, *Cities* 43 (2015): 135.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, David Chandler, ‘Resilience and Human Security: The Post-Interventionist Paradigm. *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 3 (2012): 213–229; Jon Coaffee, ‘Rescaling and Responsibilising the Politics of Urban Resilience: From National Security to Local Place-Making. *Politics* 33, no. 4 (2012): 240–252; Brad Evans and Julian Reid, ‘Dangerously Exposed: The Life and Death of the Resilient Subject’, *Resilience* 1, no. 2 (2013): 1–16; Jonathan Joseph, ‘Resilience as Embedded Neoliberalism: A Governmentality Approach’, *Resilience* 1, no. 1 (2013): 38–52.

<sup>11</sup> Ungar makes the important point ‘there are many marginalized groups which find the concept of resilience stigmatizing because it reflects a neo-liberal understanding of individual responsibility for success and ignores the structural and institutional barriers confronting young people living on the margins’. Michael Ungar, ‘Designing Resilience Research: Using Multiple Methods to Investigate Risk Exposure, Promotive and Protective Processes, and Contextually Relevant Outcomes for Children and Youth’, *Child Abuse & Neglect* 96 (2019): 104098.

<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Joseph, ‘Governing through Failure and Denial: The New Resilience Agenda’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 44, no. 3 (2016): 374.

<sup>13</sup> The article uses the terminology of ‘victims-/survivors’ of conflict-related sexual violence, reflecting the fact that some of the interviewees who participated in the underlying research identified more with one term rather than the other, and many viewed themselves as both victims (because of what they had gone through) and survivors (because of what they had overcome).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Fikret Berkes, Johan Colding and Carl Folke (eds.), *Navigating Social-Ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Carl Folke, ‘Resilience: The Emergence of a Perspective for Social-Ecological Systems Analyses’, *Global Environmental Change* 16, no. 3 (2006): 253–267.

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<sup>15</sup> Linda Liebenberg and Jeff Christopher Moore, 'A Social Ecological Measure of Resilience for Adults: The RRC-ARM', *Social Indicators Research* 136 (2018): 3. See also Michael Ungar, 'Families as Navigators and Negotiators: Facilitating Culturally and Contextually Specific Expressions of Resilience', *Family Process* 49, no. 3 (2010): 423.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Ungar, 'Resilience, Trauma, Context, and Culture', *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* 14, no. 3 (2008): 256.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Susana Gavidia-Payne, Bianca Denny, Kate Davis, Andrew Francis and Merv Jackson, 'Parental Resilience: A Neglected Construct in Resilience Research', *Clinical Psychologist* 19, no. 3 (2015): 111–121; Ann S. Masten, 'Resilience Theory and Research on Children and Families: Past, Present and Promise', *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 10, no. 1 (2018): 12–31. Mayall remarks that 'Children's welfare in the last 100 years has been inextricably woven into women's welfare and women's social condition; to an extent, children's welfare has been subsumed under the composite concept "women-and-children"'. Berry Mayall, 'The Sociology of Childhood in Relation to Children's Rights', *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 8, no. 3 (2000): 243.

<sup>18</sup> The article uses the term 'children' specifically in relation to the interviewees' children, regardless of age. It is not referring to children in a general sense. This is important to underline, in view of the complexities surrounding the concepts of 'children' and 'childhood'. Boyden, for example, maintains that 'In practice, childhood is not a fixed state bound by predetermined developmental stages, but a diverse, shifting category that follows certain biological sequences, and responds to the cultural and social environment, genetic heritage, personal agency and economic and political circumstance'. Jo Boyden, 'Children under Fire: Challenging Assumptions about Children's Resilience', *Children, Youth and Environments* 13, no. 1 (2003): 8. See also Helen Brocklehurst, 'The State of Play: Securities of Childhood – Insecurities of Children', *Critical Studies on Security* 3, no. 1 (2015): 29.

<sup>19</sup> UN, *General Guidance Note of the Secretary-General: United Nations Approach to Transitional Justice* (March 2010), [https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/TJ\\_Guidance\\_Note\\_March\\_2010FINAL.pdf](https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/TJ_Guidance_Note_March_2010FINAL.pdf) (accessed October 4, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> See, however, Eric Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 'After Shocks: Exploring the Relationships between Transitional Justice and Resilience in Post-Conflict Societies', in *Justice Mosaics: How Context Shapes Transitional Justice in Fractured Societies*, eds. Roger Duthie and Paul Seils (New York: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2017), 154–156; Philipp Kastner, 'A Resilience Approach to Transitional Justice?' *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 14, no. 3 (2020): 383; Janine N. Clark, 'Resilience, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Transitional Justice: An Interdisciplinary Framing', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2021.1912990>; Janine N. Clark, 'Thinking Systemically about Transitional Justice, Legal Systems and Resilience', in *Multisystemic Resilience: Adaptation and Transformation in Contexts of Change*, eds. Michael Ungar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 530–550; Janine N. Clark and Michael Ungar, eds. *Resilience, Adaptive Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice: How Societies Recover after Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021, in press).

<sup>21</sup> Clark, 'Thinking Systemically'.

<sup>22</sup> Graça Machel, *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* (1996), [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/51/306](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/51/306) (accessed August 24, 2020), para. 3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 29.

<sup>25</sup> UN General Assembly, 'Resolution A/RES/51/77 on the Rights of the Child' (February 1997), [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/51/77](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/51/77) (accessed September 6, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, 'Graça Machel and the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children' (n.d.), <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/about-us/mandate/the-machel-reports/> (accessed October 3, 2020).

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<sup>27</sup> Clara Ramírez-Barat, *Engaging Children and Youth in Transitional Justice Processes: Guidance for Outreach Programs* (November 2012), <https://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Report-Children-Youth-Outreach-2012.pdf> (accessed July 6, 2020), 3; Alison Bisset, 'Building Resilience in Post-Conflict Disaster Contexts: Children and Transitional Justice', in *Research Handbook on Disasters and International Law*, eds. Susan C. Breau and Katja L.H. Samuel (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016), 479; Krista Billingsley, 'Intersectionality as Locality: Children and Transitional Justice in Nepal', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 12, no. 1 (2018): 65.

<sup>28</sup> Jacqueline L. McAdam-Crisp, 'Factors that can Enhance and Limit Resilience for Children of War', *Childhood* 13, no. 4 (2006): 459–477; Chandi Fernando and Michel Ferrari, 'Spirituality and Resilience in Children of War in Sri Lanka', *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 13, no. 1 (2011): 52–77; Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, 'The Meaning of Resilience: Soviet Children in WWII', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 47, no. 4 (2017): 521–535. More broadly, general resilience scholarship has significantly focused on the resilience of children facing adversity. See, for example, Ann S. Masten, 'Global Perspectives on Resilience in Children and Youth', *Child Development* 85, no. 1 (2014): 6–20; Catherine Panter-Brick, Kristin Hadfield, Rana Dajani, Mark Eggerman, Alastair Ager and Michael Ungar, 'Resilience in Context: A Brief and Culturally Grounded Measure for Syrian Refugee and Jordanian Host-Community Adolescents', *Child Development* 89, no. 5 (2014): 1803–1820; Sharne A. Rolfe, *Rethinking Attachment for Early Childhood Practice: Promoting Security, Autonomy and Resilience in Young Children* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020); Michael Ungar, *Working with Children and Youth with Complex Needs: 20 Skills to Build Resilience* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

<sup>29</sup> Liliana Cortes and Marla J. Buchanan, 'The Experience of Colombian Child Soldiers from a Resilience Perspective', *International Journal of Advanced Counselling* 29 (2007): 47.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Boyden, 'Children Under Fire', 17.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Kirsi Peltonen, Samir Qouta, Marwan Diab and Raija-Leena Punamäki, 'Resilience among Children in War: The Role of Multilevel Social Factors', *Traumatology* 20, no. 4 (2014): 237.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>35</sup> Raija-Leena Punamaki, Samir Qouta, Thomas Millar and Eyad El-Sarraj, 'Who Are the Resilient Children in Conditions of Military Violence? Family- and Child-Related Factors in a Palestinian Community Sample', *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 17, no. 4 (2011): 406.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>37</sup> Theresa Stichick Betancourt and Kashif Tanveer Khan, 'The Mental Health of Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Protective Processes and Pathways To Resilience', *International Review of Psychiatry* 20, no. 3 (2008): 319.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>39</sup> Michael G. Wessells, 'Supporting Resilience in War-Affected Children: How Differential Impact Theory is Useful in Humanitarian Practice', *Child Abuse & Neglect* 28 (2018): 14.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Tracie O. Afifi and Harriet L. MacMillan, 'Resilience Following Child Maltreatment: A Review of Protective Factors', *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 56, no. 5 (2011): 266–272; Shaheen Mohammed and Miles Thomas, 'The Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being of Refugee Children and Young People: An Exploration of Risk, Resilience and Protective Factors', *Educational Psychology in Practice* 33, no. 3 (2017): 249–263; Kristen Yule, Jessica Houston and John Grych, 'Resilience in Children Exposed to Violence: A Meta Analysis of Protective Factors Across Ecological Contexts', *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 22 (2019): 406–431.

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- <sup>41</sup> Maggie Zraly, Sarah E. Rubin and Donatilla Mukamana, 'Motherhood and Resilience among Rwandan Genocide-Rape Survivors', *Ethos* 41, no. 4 (2014): 429–430.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 40.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 435.
- <sup>45</sup> Ann S. Masten, 'Ordinary Magic: Resilience Processes in Development', *American Psychologist* 56, no. 3 (2001): 235.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup> Ungar, 'Resilience after Maltreatment', 112.
- <sup>48</sup> Michael Ungar, 'The Social Ecology of Resilience: Assessing Contextual and Cultural Ambiguity of a Nascent Construct', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 81, no. 1 (2011): 4.
- <sup>49</sup> Harsh Suri, 'Purposeful Sampling in Qualitative Research Synthesis', *Qualitative Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (2011): 67.
- <sup>50</sup> Lisa Baraitser and Amélie Noack, 'Mother Courage: Reflections on Maternal Resilience', *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 23, no. 2 (2007): 176.
- <sup>51</sup> Michael Ungar and Linda Leibenberg, 'Assessing Resilience across Cultures Using Mixed Methods: Construction of the Child and Youth Resilience Measure', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 5, no. 2 (2011): 127.
- <sup>52</sup> Janine N. Clark, 'Beyond a "Survivor-Centred Approach" to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence?' *International Affairs* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iab055>
- <sup>53</sup> A total of 27 men completed a questionnaire. While this number is small, it attests to the immense challenges of gaining access to male victims-/survivors. Part of the explanation is that men who have suffered conflict-related sexual violence may not recognize or identify themselves as such, partly due to 'incidents of male victimization usually being depicted using desexualized labels such as "torture" and "cruel treatment"'. Paula Drumond, 'What about Men? Towards a Critical Interrogation of Sexual Violence against Men in Global Politics', *International Affairs* 95, no. 6 (2019): 1275.
- <sup>54</sup> Resilience Research Centre, *The Resilience Research Centre Adult Resilience Measure (RRC-ARM): User's Manual* (May 2016), <http://www.resilienceresearch.org/files/CYRM/Adult%20-%20CYRM%20Manual.pdf> (accessed October 5, 2017).
- <sup>55</sup> Dorthe Berntsen and David C. Rubin, 'The Centrality of Event Scale: A Measure of Integrating a Trauma into One's Identity and Its Relation to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms', *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 44, no. 2 (2006): 219–231.
- <sup>56</sup> The in-country organizations that played a key role in the quantitative stage of the research are the Centre for Democracy and Transitional Justice and *Snaga Žene*, both in BiH; *Colombia Diversa*, *Profamilia* and *Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres* in Colombia; and the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) and Facilitation for Peace and Development (FAPAD) in Uganda. All of them, with the exception of *Profamilia*, are non-governmental organizations.
- <sup>57</sup> This was beneficial because it created an opportunity to ask interviewees whether anything had substantially changed in their lives since they had completed the study questionnaire and to measure the potential impact of any such changes (such as illness) by re-running the ARM section of the questionnaire at the start of the interviews.

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<sup>58</sup> Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3(2): 77–101.

<sup>59</sup> Clark, 'Beyond a "Survivor-Centred Approach"'.

<sup>60</sup> Information about children was missing for two respondents.

<sup>61</sup> Some of the interviewees had also lost children as a result of war/armed conflict.

<sup>62</sup> Baraitser and Noack, 'Mother Courage', 172.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>64</sup> Ruth Feldman, 'What is Resilience: An Affiliative Neuroscience Approach', *World Psychiatry* 19 (2020): 137.

<sup>65</sup> Author interview, BiH, March 6, 2019.

<sup>66</sup> Five years after the interviewee's husband was killed, paramilitaries also 'disappeared' her son.

<sup>67</sup> Researcher interview, Colombia, March 30, 2019.

<sup>68</sup> Most interviewees were not familiar with the term 'transitional justice'. All of them were given the same definition and explanation, namely: 'Transitional justice refers to the process of dealing with past human rights abuses in a society. It can take many forms, including criminal prosecutions, truth commissions and reparations (such as compensation, memorials and apologies)'.

<sup>69</sup> Researcher interview, Uganda, March 19, 2019.

<sup>70</sup> Researcher interview, Colombia, May 2, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel J. Faso, A. Rebecca Neal-Beevers and Caryn L. Carlson, 'Vicarious Futurity, Hope and Well-Being in Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder', *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* 7 (2013): 289.

<sup>72</sup> Zraly et al., 'Motherhood and Resilience', 430.

<sup>73</sup> Author interview, BiH, February 19, 2019.

<sup>74</sup> Researcher interview, Colombia, February 4, 2019.

<sup>75</sup> Author interview, BiH, April 10, 2019.

<sup>76</sup> Author interview, BiH, March 4, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Researcher interview, Colombia, January 30, 2019.

<sup>78</sup> Researcher interview, Uganda, June 13, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Researcher interview, Uganda, February 22, 2019.

<sup>80</sup> Faso, Neal-Beevers and Carlson, 'Vicarious Futurity', 289.

<sup>81</sup> Jon Moen and E. Carina H. Keskitalo, 'Inter-Locking Panarchies in Multi-Use Boreal Forests in Sweden', *Ecology and Society* 15, no. 3 (2010): 17.

<sup>82</sup> Author interview, BiH, 3 May 2019.

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<sup>83</sup> Pol Bargués and Pol Morillas, 'From Democratization to Fostering Resilience: EU Intervention and the Challenges of Building Institutions, Social Trust and Legitimacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Democratization* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.1900120>.

<sup>84</sup> Researcher interview, Colombia, 11 February 2019.

<sup>85</sup> Tiina Vaittinen, Amanda Donahoe, Rahel Kunz, Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir and Sanam Roohi, 'Care as Everyday Peacebuilding', *Peacebuilding* 7, no. 2 (2019): 196.

<sup>86</sup> During the quantitative stage of the research, nine of the 21 Colombian interviewees identified themselves as social leaders. While five of the Bosnian interviewees and 10 of the Ugandan interviewees also identified as having a leadership role, this was not something that they spoke much about – if at all – during the interviews.

<sup>87</sup> Researcher interview, Colombia, March 6, 2019.

<sup>88</sup> Researcher interview, Colombia, May 2, 2019.

<sup>89</sup> Anne-Kathrin Kreft, 'Responding to Sexual Violence: Women's Mobilization in War', *Journal of Peace Research* 56, no. 2 (2019): 225.

<sup>90</sup> Mary Phillips, 'Embodied Care and Planet Earth: Ecofeminism, Maternalism and Postmaternalism', *Australian Feminist Studies* 31, no. 90 (2016): 470.

<sup>91</sup> Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, *Policy on Children* (November 2016), [https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/20161115\\_OTP\\_ICC\\_Policy-on-Children\\_Eng.PDF](https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/20161115_OTP_ICC_Policy-on-Children_Eng.PDF) (accessed September 26, 2020), para. 90.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., para. 25.

<sup>93</sup> Ronald Niezen, *Truth and Indignation: Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools*, 2nd ed (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 5.

<sup>94</sup> International Center for Transitional Justice, 'Teaching Truth in the Classroom: Canadian Youth Address the Legacy of Residential Schools' (June 2015), <https://www.ictj.org/news/canada-truth-commissions-youth-classroom> (accessed December 12, 2020).

<sup>95</sup> Ronald Niezen, 'Templates and Exclusions: Victim Centrism in Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22, no. 4 (2016): 921.

<sup>96</sup> Gidron, 'The Act of Reading', 508.

<sup>97</sup> ICTY, 'Publication "Our Tribunal"' (2013), <https://www.icty.org/en/outreach/youth-outreach/publication-our-tribunal> (accessed November 11, 2020).

<sup>98</sup> Gidron, 'The Act of Reading', 515.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2250 recognizes that 'youth [defined as persons aged between 18 and 29] should actively be engaged in shaping lasting peace and contributing to justice and reconciliation, and that a large youth population presents a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity if inclusive policies are in place'. UN Security Council, 'Resolution 2250' (December 2015), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250(2015)) (accessed December 16, 2020). See also UN Security Council, 'Resolution 2535' (July 2020), [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2535\(2020\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2535(2020)) (accessed December 16, 2020).

<sup>101</sup> Cécile Aptel and Virginie Ladisch, *Through a New Lens: A Child-Sensitive Approach to Transitional Justice* (August 2011), <https://ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Children-Through-New-Lens-Aptel-Ladisch-2011->



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English.pdf (accessed August 28, 2020), 3. See also Angela McIntyre and Thokazani Thusi, 'Children and Youth in Sierra Leone's Peace-building Process', *African Security Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 74. Some authors have raised particular concerns about the lack of inclusion in transitional justice processes of children born of war. See, for example, Tatiana Sanchez Parra, 'The Hollow Shell: Children Born of War and the Realities of the Armed Conflict in Colombia', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 12, no. 1 (2018): 49; Myriam Denov and Sara Kahn, "'They Should See Us as a Symbol of Reconciliation': Youth Born of Genocidal Rape in Rwanda and the Implications for Transitional Justice', *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 11, no. 1 (2019): 152.

<sup>102</sup> Aurelie Roche-Mair, 'Challenges to the Protection of Children's Human Rights and the Perpetuated Marginalization of Children in Transitional Justice', *Georgetown Journal of International Law* 49, no. 1 (2017): 160.

<sup>103</sup> Relebohile Moletsane and Linda Theron, 'Transforming Social Ecologies to Enable Resilience among Girls and Young Women in the Context of Sexual Violence', *Agenda* 31, no. 2 (2017): 4.

<sup>104</sup> Ariel Genadt, 'Three Lessons from Japan on Architectural Resilience', *Architectural Histories* 7, no. 1 (2019): 2.

<sup>105</sup> Mihaela Mihai, 'Architectural Transitional Justice? Political Renewal within the Scars of a Violent Past', *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 12, no. 3 (2018): 534.

<sup>106</sup> Genadt, 'Three Lessons from Japan', 2.

<sup>107</sup> John G. Oetzel and Stella Ting-Toomey, 'Face Concerns in Interpersonal Conflict: A Cross-Cultural Empirical Test of the Face Negotiation Theory', *Communication Research* 30, no. 6 (2003): 603.

<sup>108</sup> Karen Hopenwasser, 'The Rhythm of Resilience: A Deep Ecology of Entangled Relationality', in *Wounds of History: Repair and Resilience in the Trans-Generational Transmission of Trauma*, eds. Jill Salberg and Sue Grand (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 69.

<sup>109</sup> Lou Haysom, 'Moving the Social Ecology to the Centre: Resilience in the Context of Gender Violence', *Agenda* 31, no. 2 (2017): 1.

<sup>110</sup> Baines and Oliveira, 'Securing the Future'.

<sup>111</sup> Katrina Lee-Koo, 'Horror and Hope: (Re)presenting Militarised Children in Global North-South Relations', *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2011): 730.

<sup>112</sup> See, for example, Patricia Lundy, 'Paradoxes and Challenges of Transitional Justice at the "Local" Level: Historical Enquiries in Northern Ireland', *Contemporary Social Science* 6, no. 1 (2011): 90.

<sup>113</sup> Ungar, 'Resilience, Trauma, Context and Culture', 256.

<sup>114</sup> Louis W. Sander, 'Thinking Differently Principles of Process in Living Systems and the Specificity of Being Known', *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 12, no. 1 (2011): 14.