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## **CHAPTER 21**

# **RECONCILIATION IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES**

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Reconciliation is a complex concept. As is the case with many concepts that describe human interaction, it cannot be easily defined. Reconciliation has been interpreted in many different ways, and it has been given form through a range of structures and processes that vary across contexts and boundaries. This chapter provides a mapping of the complexities of its meaning, identifying points of clarity and consensus while also pointing to areas that require further explication. Exploration of the meanings of a concept such as reconciliation is not a mere semantic exercise, for as Kriesberg (1998) has suggested, understanding these variations is critical to developing theories, policies, and practices that promote peaceful societies. Moreover, mapping the meaning of reconciliation is central to the mission of peace psychology as envisioned in this volume, namely, that peace psychology seeks to develop theories and practices that elucidate psychological processes involved in the prevention and mitigation of violence.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF DIVIDED SOCIETIES**

One of the reasons that it is so difficult to arrive at a single definition of reconciliation is that its

interpretation seems to vary depending upon the specific dynamics within a social context. For example, Hamber and van der Merwe (1998) have distinguished five ways in which people in South Africa have interpreted reconciliation. Chief among these five is what they term the *non-racial ideology of reconciliation*. This interpretation sees the reconciliation as decreasing the salience of racial identities that formed the basis of the old apartheid system. This may be appropriate in a context like South Africa where race discrimination between black and white people has been the primary source of conflict, but it may not be applicable in a context such as Northern Ireland, where the divisions are political and religious. Therefore, a good starting point for an analysis of the multiplicity of meanings of reconciliation with a view to identifying commonalities is to identify the characteristics that create the *need* for reconciliation. At a meta-level, or across the variations of context, what are the defining features of contemporary conflicts across the globe? Using the analysis carried out by Lederach (1995), the following key characteristics may be listed:

- structural injustice such as poverty and oppression
- the lines of conflict typically coincide with group identities where one group has been oppressed by the other
- the conflicts have long histories across generations
- conflicting parties are in close geographical proximity
- there has been direct, physical violence

As is evident from this list, the concept of *relationship*, albeit conflictual, is often central to the divisions in contemporary societies. It makes sense then, that any policies established to

promote reconciliation must focus on *changing the relationship* between the parties in conflict. On this aspect, there is consensus.

While the notion of relationship is central, there are several other aspects of reconciliation that are considered below in the section on mapping meaning. Then I discuss the preconditions for reconciliation, continuing with a brief overview of some of the methods for reconciliation, followed by the conclusion of the chapter. To illustrate many of the issues, the case of South Africa, my native country, is frequently cited. A short overview of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) follows to provide a context for the examples used throughout the chapter.

## **SOUTH AFRICA'S TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**

A central question faced by societies whenever an era of oppression has ended is how does one achieve closure of the past and set the scene for a peaceful future? The first-ever democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994 marked the end of legislated racism, known as *apartheid*, which had begun in 1948. Under the apartheid system of government, all South Africans were classified in terms of one of four main racial categories: Black, White, Asian (mostly people of Indian descent), and colored (mixed race). These racial classifications determined where the individual lived, worked, what kind of job s/he could do, and whom s/he could marry. Apartheid was a complete system of racial segregation which determined life circumstances and access to opportunity. Only people classified as White had the vote and thus controlled the government, the economy, and the entire society. This system of minority rule (Whites comprise only 13 percent of the population) was enforced by a web of state security which included the army and the police. All peaceful resistance was brutally crushed through detentions, torture, and murder. Con-

sequently, political organizations opposing apartheid, such as the African National Congress, were forced into exile. A protracted struggle for liberation ensued both inside and outside the country. By the early 1990s, the extent of the political resistance and international pressure exerted through measures such as economic sanctions had increased such that the demise of apartheid seemed imminent.

The elections in 1994 were a culmination of a four-year process of negotiations in which the key players were the African National Congress in alliance with other liberation parties on the one side, and the Nationalist Party/South African government on the other side. The South African Government of National Unity (GNU) elected into office in April 1994 ended White minority rule and faced the tricky question of how to confront the wrongs of the past while simultaneously pursuing national reconciliation, unity, and peace. In answer to this question, South Africa turned to the concept of a truth commission. The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Bill establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was signed by President Mandela in May 1995, and it became an Act of Parliament in July of the same year.

Four key words encapsulate the objectives of the TRC: truth, forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation. In broader terms, the tasks of the TRC were to:

- establish as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature, and extent of the gross violations of human rights committed during the years of apartheid.
- facilitate the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all relevant facts relating to acts with a political objective.
- establish and make known the fate of victims, restore their human and civil dignity by grant-

ing them an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violations, and make recommendations on reparation measures in respect of the violations.

- compile a comprehensive report of the activities and findings of the TRC together with recommendations of measures to prevent future violations of human rights.

It was believed that through the process of meeting these objectives, the commission would restore the moral order of South African society, create a culture of human rights and respect for the rule of law, and prevent the past abuses happening again.

After a process of consultation, the President appointed 17 TRC commissioners, with Archbishop Desmond Tutu as the chairperson. The criteria for the appointment of the commissioners were that they had to be fit and proper persons who were seen as impartial and who did not have a high political profile. The composition of the commissioners as a group showed sensitivity to both race and gender. Seven women were appointed, and all race groups were represented.

The commissioners presided over three committees: the Committee on Human Rights Violations, the Committee on Amnesty, and the Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation of Victims. Each of these three committees had different tasks which were executed with the assistance of specific support structures such as an investigations arm, a research unit, and a media department. The Committee on Human Rights Violations was responsible for conducting public hearings throughout the country. The purpose of these public hearings was to provide survivors of human rights abuses the opportunity to tell their stories and thereby come to terms with the pain and trauma of the past. The task of the Committee on Amnesty was to consider applications for amnesty from those who had committed political crimes. A condition for granting amnesty was that the perpetrator had to first disclose the full details of the abuse, and the act of abuse had to

be within the definition of a political crime. The Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation was to make recommendations to the government on how to implement a reparations policy.

The TRC was not wholly a judicial process. It was not fully constituted as an institution of law, but it did follow some procedures of law, for example, the use of legal representatives and cross-examination procedures. It could name perpetrators and grant amnesty without a trial and conviction in a court of law. However, the TRC could not carry out prosecutions nor could it sentence. Wilson (1995) noted that the legal system and the TRC had to be seen as “complementary and working in tandem, with the latter compensation for the limitations and deficiencies of the former” (p. 42).

In South Africa, the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission created a great deal of public debate on the meaning of reconciliation. Many of these debates were facilitated by the TRC itself in a concerted effort to achieve its task. References to these debates and the TRC processes appear throughout this chapter with an eye to illuminating the complexities involved in reconciliation.

## **MAPPING THE MEANING OF RECONCILIATION**

### **Reconciliation as Process and Outcome**

Overall, reconciliation is widely seen as a process undertaken to restore relationships, rather than as an event (e.g., Kriesberg, 1998; TRC Report, 1996). Based on an analysis of the use of the term in everyday language, Cohen (1997) concludes that reconciliation is used to refer both to a process *and* a state that is the outcome of the process. To illustrate, she offered the example of the release of political prisoners which, she suggests, may be understood as a step in a process

designed to achieve a state of reconciliation between conflicting parties.

Kraybill (1992) offers another version of reconciliation. He very specifically defines reconciliation as a process that unfolds in stages over time. According to his model, each stage poses new challenges and dilemmas to be addressed. Therefore, the process is complex. Kraybill's model differs from many others in that he views reconciliation as a cyclic process; namely, a process that will be repeated many times to transform the differences in relationships.

### **Reconciliation as Relationship Building**

There is widespread agreement that reconciliation necessarily involves the *restoration* of relationships that have been fractured. Moving from strife or antagonism to a more positive relationship is a defining feature of reconciliation. But there are variations in the type of relationship necessary for reconciliation to occur. Kriesberg (1998) explains that one meaning is to bring people who have had some history of conflict into a harmonious relationship. Another meaning may be to bring people *into agreement* on a set of historical events or circumstances. Or reconciliation may just involve developing the capacity to live with one another, according to TRC Commissioner, Wynand Malan (TRC, 1998a).

Whatever the nuances in meaning, reconciliation is undoubtedly a relational concept. This statement then begs the question: relationship between whom? One way of answering this question is to import the categorization scheme used by Tavuchis (1991) in his work on apology and reconciliation. Applied to reconciliation, it would read as follows:

- interpersonal reconciliation between one individual and another (one to one)
- reconciliation between an individual and a collectivity (one to many)

- reconciliation between a collectivity and an individual (many to one)
- reconciliation between one collectivity to another (many to many)

This means that reconciliation may vary in terms of units of analysis. As Kriesberg (1998) observes, it may be achieved between individuals, families, officials, groups, or any combination thereof. However, in the context of a deeply divided society these units of interaction, be they individuals or collectivities, would more than likely have had a long history of experience where some people would have been in a position of power or privilege over others. Given Lederach's characteristics of divided societies, they are also likely to have had experience of direct physical violence. Thus individuals or collectivities would enter into reconciliation not simply as individuals or collectivities but with a history of relationships, as perpetrators or victims and/or as beneficiaries or victims. This brings into play the role of the past in reconciliation.

### **RECONCILIATION: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

In South Africa throughout the TRC process, the need to address the past was emphasized. On signing the legislation that created the TRC, President Nelson Mandela proclaimed "We can now deal with our past." du Toit (1996) has explained that dealing with the past is an historical act of interpretation through which we try to understand and explain ourselves personally and nationally.

This explanation hinges on the understanding that in divided societies the past would have had a negative impact on the identity of people as humans. In whatever ways the lines of power differentials were drawn, be it race or ethnicity or religion, there would have been consequences for all, be they beneficiaries or victims. Frye (1992) has used the image of a bird in a cage to il-

lustrate the impact of a system of oppression. She makes the point that barriers, such as the wires of a birdcage, are restrictive to those within the cage and those outside of it. Of course, the meaning is different if one is inside. For the bird in the cage, it is immobilization; those outside control the lock and keys. This metaphor highlights the significance of power inequalities; the wires of the cage cut people off from one another as humans in relationship with other humans.

The *dehumanizing* impact of a system of oppression on those who seemingly benefit from the system is illustrated in the final TRC report (1998b). In one of the testimonies, a victim of torture asked the perpetrator: “When you do those things, what happens to you as a human being?” He responded: “...as long as I was one of the Whites, the privileged Whites who had an education, who had a house, I couldn’t see it being taken away. If you ask me what type of person is it that can do that, I ask myself the same question” (p. 15).

Cohen (1997) uses the concept *alienation* to describe the estrangement from other human beings experienced during prolonged periods of conflict and structural violence. In her terms, we become estranged or disaffected from another person when we see them as outside of our moral community. She says that this is the type of dehumanization that makes it possible for enemies to inflict torture and to kill. Another feature of this type of alienation, explains Cohen, is that it is accompanied by a corresponding splitting within oneself. This is perhaps seen in the following testimony given during the TRC public hearings: A man describes how after the death of his brother at the hands of the White army, “... anti-White obsession grew, and I would dream about burning down White businesses and farms...I then began to fantasize and, while this may seem laughable, I sincerely prayed to God to make me invisible for just one day so that I could do the things I dreamed of, and when God did not comply, I reduced the time to one hour, and in that

hour I was determined to go to Parliament and shoot every cabinet minister” (TRC, 1998b, p. 19).

We see in these accounts that there are sound psychological reasons for dealing with the past to attain reconciliation in divided societies. Through a reinterpretation of the past, people may work toward changing themselves and in this way build a future of community. Reconciliation is, therefore, poised in relation to three time frames: a very specific form of relationship building that necessitates a linking of *past* with *future* through the *present*.

### **Reconciliation and Truth**

An additional reason for dealing with the past is that in many situations of prolonged oppression and resistance, numerous individuals seemingly disappear or die under mysterious circumstances. As a result, many people are left simply not knowing what happened to relatives and loved ones. In such situations, an undertaking to deal with the past is likely to become a search for the truth. Such was the case in South Africa. Throughout the TRC process, establishing the truth has been one of “the principal paths South Africans have taken to deal with their dark past” (Hamber, 1997, p. 1). But the TRC experience has shown that this is a complex task subject to political contestation.

A central point of contention concerns the question “What is truth?” At one level there is factual truth: Did something happen or not? But there is also truth as interpretation. In psychology, we have seen the emergence of post-structuralism, a theoretical framework which rejects the idea of an absolute truth in favor of a multiplicity of truths. At a very simple level, this is a view that incorporates the significance of perspective in definitions of what is true. Rothman (1998) spells

it out as follows: “When conflicting parties in identity conflict do describe its significance in historical terms, observers may believe different histories are being told. In many ways this is so....One side’s freedom fighter is very often another side’s terrorist” (p. 231)

Truth may be *factual* evidence, but it may also be *subjective* account. The complexity of the question of what is truth is powerfully illustrated in the following statement made to the TRC (1998b):

Coming from the apartheid era at my age, 43, I was never a supporter, an active supporter of apartheid. But it’s something that you grew up with, and things changed quite fast in the last couple of years. All of a sudden you start hearing from the blacks how they’ve been ill-treated, exploited, all kinds of words and all of a sudden you start seeing the bad side of it....coming from a background where everything was fine for all these years, now all of a sudden...the police were the baddies. (p. 8)

In this statement, we see that what someone understands as truth may be shaped by his or her position within a social system; we also see how versions of truth may change as social and historical circumstances shift over time.

Is truth necessary for reconciliation? A nuanced answer is provided in Hamber’s (1997) observation that “Some victims may be satisfied by knowing the facts....but for others, truth may heighten anger and calls for justice rather than lead to feelings of reconciliation” (p. 2). He further points out that there is a possibility that truth may produce revenge rather than reconciliation. The tensions around the meaning of truth emerged during the TRC process even though the

Commission tried to be accommodating. On the one hand, people were allowed to tell their version of events without being subjected to cross-examination, but on the other hand there was an investigative unit which worked at establishing the facts. Answers to the question of how this tension is to be bridged in the reconciliation process may perhaps best be derived through careful consideration of why the truth is important. The accuracy of the historical record may be one reason, but another is the importance of merely *acknowledging and validating* the hurtful experiences of the past.

### **Reconciliation as Acknowledging the Other**

Acknowledgment of the other is widely viewed as critical to reconciliation. Lederach (1995), in fact, argues that it is decisive in the reconciliation dynamic. The exclusion of the other, someone who does not belong to one's own group, from the scope of a moral framework is a key factor in violence between groups. Earlier in this chapter, Cohen's (1997) concept of alienation was outlined to explain the psychology of dehumanization. Toscano (1998), on the other hand, refers to a particular form of identity known as narcissistic identity, to explain the psychological processes involved in denying of the humanity of the other. He has aptly named it "erasing the face of the other" (p. 67). *Narcissistic group identity* occurs when one's own group is perceived as so superior to any other group that the others are seen as outside the moral code of one's community.

A widely supported idea is that if reconciliation is to be attained, the different sides of the conflict must relate to one another as *humans in relationship*. The traditional African concept of *ubuntu* describes the philosophy that a person is a person through other persons or "I am human because you are human. If I undermine your humanity, I dehumanize myself" (Gevisser, 1996, p. 103).

Acknowledging the existence of the humanity of the other after a protracted period of conflict is necessarily emotional. Toscano (1998) distinguishes three components that are involved in the process he calls “the reconstruction of the face of the other.” The first component is cognitive—knowing the other; the second component is emotive—valuing the other; and the third component is behavioral—getting closer to the other. In distinguishing cognition from the other two components, Toscano draws attention to reconciliation as an *emotional activity*. We acknowledge the other through understanding the harm that has occurred through our actions, either directly or indirectly. This is cogently illustrated in the TRC testimony of a man who said that he felt the peace of reconciliation when he placed himself “in the other person’s shoes” and considered “...how would I have felt about it. How would I have liked not to be able to vote, not to have any rights, and that kind of thing. So I realized that I would not have liked it, so I realized how it must have felt for them.”

Throughout the TRC hearings there was much talk of the pain and suffering that people had experienced. Many psychologists have emphasized that reconciliation necessarily involves the expression of pain, guilt, anger, and sorrow (e.g., Edelstein & Gibson, 1993; Statman, 1995). Mechanisms that provide the space and opportunity for people on both sides to express their experiences of pain and loss can be a significant means towards a mutual acknowledgment of the moral reality of the other. But whether this should lead to apology and forgiveness is a question over which there is little consensus.

### **Reconciliation, Apology, and Forgiveness**

In considering the role of apology and forgiveness in reconciliation, Cohen (1997) notes that several scholars, such as Brummer (1992) and Tavuchis (1991), virtually make reconciliation

equivalent with apology and forgiveness. In South Africa many researchers would seem to agree. Villa-Vicencio (1995), the head of research in the TRC, has stated that “Forgiveness, contrition, penance, repentance, restitution and reconciliation are an integrated whole” (p. 121). However, there is no agreement on this issue. Cohen also considers the work of other scholars, such as the anthropologist Gulliver (1979), who do not believe that apology and forgiveness is a central issue in reconciliation.

The meanings, nature, and functions of apology are explored in great detail in Tavuchis’s work, which draws attention to the very specific requirements of an apology. At a minimal level, it incorporates an *admission* that there has been a violation and an expression of *regret*. Forgiveness would mean that the offended party accepts the offender’s acknowledgment of the wrong together with the expression of sorrow. In this way both parties, the offender and the offended, are brought into a common moral community. A woman whose son had been killed by the police during the apartheid era, when asked how she saw the concept of reconciliation, responded:

What we are hoping for when we embrace the notion of reconciliation is that we restore the humanity to those who were perpetrators. We do not want to return evil by another evil....I think that all South Africans should be committed to the idea of reaccepting these people back into the community....We want to demonstrate humaneness towards them, so that they in turn may restore their own humanity.

(TRC, 1998b, p. 13)

Thus we see a view of reconciliation that relies on the mutual recognition of humans as moral agents.

Hamber and van der Merwe (1998) note a second approach—the human rights approach—that seeks to establish a new order but typically through the establishment of democracy and legal and civil rights. Even though the moral and the human rights approaches are competing models, they can co-exist. Indeed, the final report of the TRC suggests that a weak or limited form of reconciliation that emphasizes peaceful co-existence may often be the most realistic goal for societies trying to overcome decades of conflict, especially at the beginning of the peacemaking process.

### **Reconciliation, Reparation, and Justice**

Apology and forgiveness clearly try to deal with the wrong that has been done; another form of acknowledging that wrong has been committed may be achieved through *reparation* or making amends in some way. Tangible forms of reparation may include financial compensation, memorials, policies and procedures offering protection against future violations, or even some type of punishment for the perpetrators. It raises images of making things right or rectifying wrong.

Justice is about fairness and equality. Boesak (1996) makes a distinction between two forms of justice that may enter into reconciliation. The first form is punitive or *retributive justice*. The second is *compensatory justice*. Reparations are a form of the latter and can be distinguished from restitution. Whereas reparations refer to compensatory measures, restitution refers to measures aimed at restoring the dignity and humanity of victims (and sometimes their families).

Reparations may be both the responsibility of the state and of the perpetrators. In South Africa, the TRC recommended that the state pay reparations as a way for the nation to show sorrow for the victims. In some cases, the perpetrators themselves undertook some form of reparation.

Examples included setting up a trust fund for victims, participation in community work, and cooperation with the authorities to expose further abuses. Whether it is from the state or the perpetrators themselves, reparations may take many different forms, from symbolic to legal and administrative measures. Tavuchis (1991) raises the possibility that apology itself, if offered and accepted, may constitute sufficient restitution.

The TRC hearings showed that the needs of people are likely to be varied. First, as Tavuchis suggests, acknowledgment and apology is sufficient for some. Others want financial assistance, and yet other people simply want symbolic measures. Then, there are those who, as Kriesberg (1998) points out, want punishment for the perpetrators. In sum, there are no reconciliation procedures that are guaranteed to be successful in every instance. People's needs differ, as do the circumstances underlying the conflict they have been engaged in.

## **PRECONDITIONS FOR RECONCILIATION**

What circumstances are most conducive to the initiation of the reconciliation process? Very little is known definitively in answer to this question, for we are still developing our knowledge about the process of reconciliation in practical terms. In the absence of such a body of knowledge, we may turn to related fields, such as conflict transformation and peacebuilding, to explore lessons to be learned.

Reconciliation generally begins when a relationship of conflict between groups shifts to a new phase of lessened conflict, typically through an agreement of some type. Zartman (1985) used the concept of the "ripe moment" to talk about opportunities that offer hope for the resolution of conflict. But as de Silva and Samarasinghe's (1993) review demonstrates, peace accords

and agreements that result from mediation often fail to bring about reconciliation. Lederach (1995) identifies the critical element as the *role of relationship*: In the negotiations and peace talks which often occur between conflicting groups, *do the parties take serious account of the need for developing relationship, not only at the top level of leadership but also at the middle-range and grassroots levels?* He argues that without incorporating the dynamics of and space for relationship building, peace accords and agreements will not translate into reconciliation.

Lederach's propositions are still to be subjected to systematic study. Richardson Jr. and Wang (1993) point out that amongst authors who have done case studies there is no consensus on the essential preconditions for peace; there is no list that guarantees successful relationship building.

## **METHODS AND MECHANISMS FOR RECONCILIATION**

The chapter now turns to the praxis of reconciliation. In this section, I present a short overview of some mechanisms used in the reconciliation process, to overcome the conflict of the past and to restore social harmony.

### **Storytelling and Testimony**

Psychologists such as Gergen (1989) and Bruner (1990) have promulgated the idea that people use narrative to make sense of themselves and their experiences within a socio-historical context. In their view, narrative or storytelling is central to the construction of the individual's self-perception and worldview. This proposition is evident in Botman's (1996) statement that people "communicate, confess, forgive and reconcile in the form of stories" (p. 37).

Public storytelling in the form of giving testimony was the primary mechanism used in the South African TRC process. As explained in an article by de la Rey and Owens (1998), the South

Africans were strongly influenced by the Chilean experience in turning to testimony as a mechanism for reconciliation. Public hearings were held in venues across the country where people told their stories of pain, suffering, and loss. The public nature of the event—having an audience, having the story reported in the media and recorded as written text—permitted the reconstruction of private, individual trauma as part of a larger social-political process. Botman (1996) described it as follows:

Victims and perpetrators and those who thought that they were just innocent bystanders, now realize their complicity, and have an opportunity to participate in each other's humanity in story form. (p. 37)

The value of storytelling has also been endorsed by Rothman (1998), who has argued that storytelling is particularly significant in identity-based conflict. This makes sense, given the idea that self-perceptions are constructed through stories. In evaluating the TRC process of public testimony, Hamber (1997) concluded that providing space for the telling of stories was clearly useful.

## **Dialogue**

A common assumption about deeply divided societies is that an absence of dialogue is at the source of the conflict. Communication is then presented as the antidote. But as Rothman (1998) points out, in many divided societies there is dialogue even when there is intense conflict. Thus not all types of dialogue may be useful in attaining reconciliation. Rothman has identified several distinct dialogue approaches. If dialogue is used as a method for reconciliation, which approach should be used?

Reflexive dialogue, which allows disputing parties to articulate to each other and discover the meeting points in their narratives, best fits the requirements of reconciliation as outlined in this chapter. It is an approach in which participants “reframe their perceptions and analyses of each other and their own identities; ...they learn to articulate their own voice and recognize each other’s as valid” (Rothman, 1998, p. 234). During the course of the dialogue, questions are posed for the purposes of clarification and mutual understanding until it is possible to see one another as humans. It therefore resonates with the core components of reconciliation as outlined in this chapter.

### **Traditional Institutions**

Honwana (1997), in discussing reconstruction in Mozambique, argues that the process of community rebuilding needs to take into account the worldview of the local population. For the reconciliation process, this may mean making a space for the role of traditional institutions and practices. Honwana describes a number of rituals that are aimed at self-renewal, healing, and restoration. Among the mostly rural population of Mozambique, chiefs, healers, spiritualists, and diviners are significant role-players in the lives of the people. In South Africa, the TRC tried to incorporate rituals to signify loss, death, and closure. Ritual activities may include washing of clothes, slaughtering of animals, and communal feasts. Symbolically they refer to concepts such as confession, forgiveness, and apology.

The role of religion as a traditional institution is another important mechanism for reconciliation. Prayers and religious services are used for forgiveness, guidance, and, generally, to restore relationships. These activities may be meaningfully used in the reconciliation process *if* they are consistent with the worldviews of the particular communities.

## Legislation and Policies

There is the view that change of relationships, although vital to reconciliation, by itself is not enough. It needs to be accompanied by changes in social structure (Statman, 1997). The *creation of a human rights culture* is widely viewed as pivotal to reconciliation in modern societies. This usually involves introducing new legislation and policies, as well as measures to safeguard these initiatives. Many of these *structural* methods are described in Section IV of this volume.

Although the TRC is probably South Africa's most well-known mechanism for reconciliation, a number of structural methods have been implemented since the advent of democracy in the society. A constitution with a bill of rights is one; others have included a human rights commission, a gender equality commission, and a youth commission. Together these structures are aimed at creating a society in which there is a culture of human rights. Through monitoring and acting on complaints from citizens, these structures enhance the possibility of sustainable peaceful co-existence, noted in a previous section as a form of reconciliation.

An important component of reconciliation is the reduction of inequalities between groups. Policies such as affirmative action and specific equal opportunity programs may be used to reduce inequalities (Kriesberg, 1998). Another method listed by Kriesberg is the use of superordinate goals and the fostering of common identities. The creation of a new sense of nationhood through a new national anthem and other national symbols, such as a flag, is often a way to foster a common identity among formerly divided societies. In many instances the country may also be renamed. In South Africa a new flag was chosen through a public participation process in which individuals could submit designs. These were then published in the mass media for comment before the flag was finally chosen.

## CONCLUSION

As we move into the twenty-first century, we are confronted with a number of ethnic-based conflicts in different parts of the world; some, such as in Northern Ireland, Israel, and Palestine, show signs of abating, but others, such as in Sri Lanka, do not. A pivotal challenge for peace psychologists as we enter the twenty-first century is the further development of our knowledge base on reconciliation in both theory and practice. There is a dire need for systematic empirical research on issues such as the identification of the minimum conditions for reconciliation practices that work. We need answers to questions such as what are the basic requirements for relationship building, what strategies are most likely to be effective, and how can positive beginnings such as the TRC be translated into sustainable social harmony in contexts of diversity. Furthermore, given the variation across contexts, there is a particular need for research across boundaries of ethnicity, nationhood, and culture. Finally, although developing our knowledge base is critical, we also need to take steps to ensure that the accumulated knowledge is widely disseminated and put into practice where required.