

Palgrave Studies in Compromise after Conflict

Series Editor

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This series aims to bring together in one series scholars from around the world who are researching the dynamics of post-conflict transformation in societies emerging from communal conflict and collective violence. The series welcomes studies of particular transitional societies emerging from conflict, comparative work that is cross-national, and theoretical and conceptual contributions that focus on some of the key processes in post-conflict transformation. The series is purposely interdisciplinary and addresses the range of issues involved in compromise, reconciliation and societal healing. It focuses on interpersonal and institutional questions, and the connections between them.

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Linda Asquith

Rebuilding Lives After Genocide

Migration, Adaptation and
Acculturation

palgrave
macmillan

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*For my family: Phil, Rebecca, Bethany and Rochelle, you make my life
brighter and more joyful.*

*For Lydia: We've come a long way since sitting in that criminology lecture
together.*

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The survivors in this study gave their time and stories willingly, and fed and watered me as I trekked around the UK. My heartfelt thanks go to every participant for giving me their time. I hope I do your stories justice.

General Editor's Introduction

'Compromise' is a much-used, but little understood, term. There is a sense in which it describes a set of feelings (the so-called spirit of compromise) that involve reciprocity, representing the agreement to make mutual concessions towards each other from now on: no matter what we did to each other in the past, we will act towards each other in the future differently as set out in the agreement between us. The compromise settlement can be a spit and a handshake, much beloved in folk lore, or a legally binding statute with hundreds of clauses.

As such, it is clear that compromise enters into conflict transformation at two distinct phases. The first is during the conflict resolution process itself, where compromise represents a willingness amongst parties to negotiate a peace agreement that represents a second-best preference in which they give up their first preference (victory) in order to cut a deal. A great deal of literature has been produced in peace studies and international relations on the dynamics of the negotiation process and the institutional and governance structures necessary to consolidate the agreement afterwards. Just as important, however, is compromise in the second phase, when compromise is part of post-conflict reconstruction, in which protagonists come to learn to live together despite their former enmity and in face of the atrocities perpetrated during the conflict itself.

In the first phase, compromise describes reciprocal agreements between parties to the negotiations in order to make political concessions sufficient

to end conflict; in the second phase, compromise involves victims and perpetrators developing ways of living together in which concessions are made as part of shared social life. The first phase is about compromises between political groups and the state in the process of state-building (or rebuilding) after the political upheavals of communal conflict; the second is about compromises between individuals and communities in the process of social healing after the cultural trauma provoked by the conflict.

This book series primarily concerns itself with the second process, the often messy and difficult job of reconciliation, restoration and repair in social and cultural relations following communal conflict. Communal conflicts and civil wars tend to suffer from the narcissism of minor differences, to coin Freud's phrase, leaving little to be split halfway and compromise on, and thus are usually especially bitter. The series therefore addresses itself to the meaning, manufacture and management of compromise in one of its most difficult settings. The book series is cross-national and cross-disciplinary, with attention paid to interpersonal reconciliation at the level of everyday life, as well as culturally between social groups, and the many sorts of institutional, interpersonal, psychological, sociological, anthropological and cultural factors that assist and inhibit societal healing in all post-conflict societies, historically and in the present. It focuses on what compromise means when people have to come to terms with past enmity and the memories of the conflict itself, and relate to former protagonists in ways that consolidate the wider political agreement.

This sort of focus has special resonance and significance, for peace agreements are usually very fragile. Societies emerging out of conflict are subject to ongoing violence from spoiler groups who are reluctant to give up on first preferences, constant threats from the outbreak of renewed violence, institutional instability, weakened economies, and a wealth of problems around transitional justice, memory, truth recovery and victimhood, amongst others. Not surprisingly, therefore, reconciliation and healing in social and cultural relations is difficult to achieve, not least because interpersonal compromise between erstwhile enemies is difficult.

Lay discourse picks up on the ambivalent nature of compromise after conflict. It is talked about in common sense in one of two ways, in which

compromise is either a virtue or a vice, taking its place among the angels or in Hades. One form of lay discourse likens concessions to former protagonists with the idea of restoration of broken relationships and societal and cultural reconciliation, in which there is a sense of becoming (or returning) to wholeness and completeness. The other form of lay discourse invokes ideas of appeasement, of being *compromised* by the concessions, which constitute a form of surrender and reproduce (or disguise) continued brokenness and division. People feel they continue to be beaten by the sticks which the concessions have allowed others to keep; with restoration, however, weapons are turned truly in ploughshares. Lay discourse suggests, therefore, that these are issues that the Palgrave Studies in Compromise After Conflict series must begin to problematise, so that the process of societal healing is better understood and can be assisted and facilitated by public policy and intervention.

This new volume is an exciting edition to the series given its focus on the everyday life experience of migration to Great Britain. It is exciting for two reasons. First, it gives a glimpse from direct, first-hand data of the everyday experiences of survivors of genocide who had relocated to Great Britain, something which is under-reported and both new and novel compared to other treatments of genocide. Second, it uses sociological ideas to help understand these everyday life experiences, particularly the work of the late and sadly missed Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's work is encompassing and is popularly applied in areas such as education, religion and civil society. Linda Asquith's application of Bourdieu's conceptual map and ideas to survivors of genocide is pioneering.

Asquith's sample of survivors is small, as most opportunity samples amongst hard-to-access groups inevitably are. It is significant that they are all survivors who have integrated into British society in different ways and to different degrees. While this distinguishes them from many forced migrants in Britain's contemporary Brexit climate, with the legitimacy this has given to public expressions of intolerance, and to hate speech and far-right extremism, amongst other things, it makes the sample relevant to the themes of this series, by showing how tolerance, compromise, healing, social reintegration and the like are possible after genocide. New lives can be recreated after involuntary relocation.

As series editor I am particularly enthusiastic about this volume for it fits into two bigger themes that have been pushed in the series and as part of broader work by other writers and me in the series. The first is the application of the sociological imagination to the study of peace processes in an attempt to rescue the field from political scientists, international relations experts, and human rights and transitional justice specialists. The use of ideas by Asquith from social capital theory, and in particular Bourdieu, is part of this attempt to reshape the field and to develop the sociology of peace. Second, there is now a growing literature, including contributions from the series, on the everyday life of peace-building. International relations has discovered the notion of everyday life but treats it unsociologically. Some books in the series have given sociological insight into the everyday life experiences of victims of conflict in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Sri Lanka (Brewer, Hayes, Teeney, Dudgeon, Mueller-Hirth and Wijesinghe, *The Sociology of Everyday Life Peacebuilding*) and into the everyday life experiences of displaced peoples returning to their former homeland in Bosnia (Sivac-Bryant, *Re-Making Kozarac*). In other words, Asquith's discovery of the everyday life of people surviving genocide is part of a bigger discovery of the sociology of everyday life of people emerging out of conflict.

In all these ways, Asquith's book makes both empirical and conceptual advances. It is an impressive empirical analysis of a very hard-to-access group, and the wealth of material offers ethnographic richness to our understanding of genocide survivors' everyday lives. Its advances are also conceptual, not only by adding significantly to our knowledge about the aftermath of genocide, but also in the application of Bourdieu's work to develop further the sociology of everyday life peace-building. As series editor, I warmly welcome this new volume to the series.

Belfast, UK
January 2019

John D. Brewer

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Bourdieu and Social Capital	27
3	Migration and Acculturation	47
4	New Lives: Initial Adaptation	73
5	Resettlement and Reintegration: Adapting to Life in the UK	115
6	Identity and Adaptation	151
7	Conclusion	199
	Index	215

About the Author

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