HEALING WOUNDS OF HISTORY, ADDRESSING ROOTS OF VIOLENCE:
A Psycho-Social Approach

Programme Evaluation Report

DR SCHERTO GILL
GUERRAND-HERMÈS FOUNDATION FOR PEACE/
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

PREFACE

As the Evaluation Team, we have worked closely with the Healing the Wounds of History (HWH) Programme Team and the Workshop Coordinators in order to carry out an evaluation of the HWH pilot programme. HWH workshops took place over a period of 18 months in Beirut, Lebanon. This programme model was unique and innovative in its psycho-social and somatic approaches to healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the programme engenders an increased awareness of the need to relieve oneself from the emotional grip and thereby emotional charge left by a past trauma of violence, through forgiveness and compassion, including self-forgiveness and self-compassion. In addition to determine a sense of empowerment so that the participants can be inspired to pursue a pathway of healing and peacefulness in their own lives and help others to achieve the same.

The evaluation methodology consisted of direct observation of the participants' experiences during the workshop, in-depth explorations of the participants' reflection on their experiences of the workshops through questionnaires, one-to-one interviews, focus group conversations and interview conversations with the workshop facilitators. In addition, the data also included the notes kept by the workshop facilitators regarding the participants' experiences and how well they considered the programme activities worked; and the overall comments and feedback they received throughout the workshops.

What distinguished the HWH Evaluation Methodology from other programme evaluations is that the framework arose from a collaborative effort between the Evaluation Team and the Project Team. After each workshop, the Project Team adapted the programme so that it continued to stress the elements that were identified by the participants as meaningful and conducive to their needs, and in terms of the overall aims of the programme. This way, the programme itself was heuristic – the facilitators learned to improve the workshop design and their facilitation through absorbing the participants' feedback and comments.

Thus this report first describes the HWH workshops and then presents a detailed reflection of the participants' experiences during each of the workshops and finally, concludes with an in-depth analysis of changes in the participants' perceptions, awareness, attitudes and possible future actions, including the methodological and pedagogical features of the programme that might have enabled the participants' experiences.

We hope that this report will shed some light on possible grassroots methodologies in dealing with the myriad challenges confronting post-conflict societies, especially the challenges of healing and reconciliation.

Dr Scherto Gill
Research Fellow
Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace

Visiting Fellow
School of Education and Social work
University of Sussex

CONTENTS

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Healing the Wounds of History (HWH) Programme consists of a series of training workshops aimed at creating a community of change agents (field workers and practitioners) who will take the spirit of HWH into their respective practices within the various communities of Lebanon.

The original idea for the programme was inspired by Alexandra Asseily's vision concerning the inter-generational cycles of pain and violence present in individuals, families, tribes and nations. In 1997, she conceived the Garden of Forgiveness – a place of calm reflection, sheltered from the bustle of the city, expressing themes of understanding, forgiveness and unity. It was based on her understanding of transgenerational transmission of trauma which is now evidenced in the study of epi-genetics. It suggests that repeating causes of mass atrocity can be originated in grievances held long before our time and handed down from generation to generation (cf. Asseily, 2007; Kellermann, 2013; Dias & Ressler, 2014; Hurley, 2015).

Indeed, as maintained by Alexandra, traumatic experiences in our personal or collective past tend to leave 'stings' in our emotional memory which could be echoed from one generation to another. These 'stings' arise from fear, judgement, misconceptions, anger, shame, guilt, etc. Our inherited memories of trauma, conscious or unconscious, also carry such 'stings'. When these 'stings' are left unattended to and unhealed, they can be activated by similar emotional memory and become impulses for further violence often, in a new generation, unconsciously. Alexandra argues that unless these 'stings' are removed through forgiveness, compassion and understanding, they will continue to serve as triggers of negative emotions and hostility towards oneself or others. Healing our own past is the beginning of taking responsibility to end the trans-generationally transmitted trauma and latent impulse for violence (Asseily, 2007, 2009, Volkan, 1999, 2005).

In order to evoke more dialogue about the above, in November 2011, the Centre for Lebanese Studies (co-founded by Alexandra and her husband George Asseily), together with other partners, convened an international conference entitled '[Healing the Wounds of History: Addressing the Roots of Violence](#)'. 160 participants from around the globe gathered at Lebanese American University (a conference partner) in Byblos to explore the role of forgiveness in freeing ourselves from the grips of historical patterns so that no further violence and atrocities shall happen again.

In the meantime, the realities in Lebanon remain to be challenging. The ongoing Shiite and Sunni conflict is a core issue not only in Lebanon but throughout the Middle East. Together with the recent dramatic increase of Syrian refugees in the region, the peacebuilding processes being introduced in the country since the end of the civil war have become even more challenging. The threat of people acting from unhealed past trauma is ever present and the need for healing and community building through forgiveness and compassion has never been greater.

In this context, Alexandra Asseily and Matthew Pruen, all professional psycho-therapists and experienced facilitators designed the HWH programme with the purpose of raising the participants' awareness of the need to deal with the deeper roots of violence.

Drawing on the success of some emergent but well-proven innovative approaches to psycho-social healing, the HWH programme was proposed as a set of experiential activities aimed at creating a safe space to explore individual and collective pasts, develop human relationships amongst people from diverse backgrounds in Lebanon and create opportunities for joint actions of change. The Project Team (consisting of Dr Eileen Boris who left the team after the first workshop, Alexandra, Matthew and other colleagues at the Centre for Lebanese Studies) hoped that through different experiential journeys of self-discovery, forgiveness and compassion, individuals could become more aware of how those unresolved past grievances might serve as part of their own individual and collective identities and hence continue to drive us into dead ends in our everyday lives or to violence during war.

With these in mind, the HWH programme focused on facilitating spaces for participants to experience well-established and innovative approaches to healing, including the use of storytelling, constellation work, deep spiritual reflection, expressive arts and so forth. There were four workshops in the first HWH series over a period of 18 months. A key to these workshops is learning to take responsibility for oneself on one's own journey of forgiveness, and another is exploring the transformative potential of interconnectedness or oneness of all things.

Integrating the evaluation process as part of the programme development is a unique feature of the HWH workshop series. This has allowed the project team to make adjustments to the programme in accordance with the participants' feedback and comments. Briefly, the evaluation process involved participant observations during each workshop; an evaluation questionnaire which the participants completed anonymously, an in-depth interview and a focus group conversation, following each workshop; and a final questionnaire survey inviting the participants' reflection on the series of workshops as a whole.

In addition, during each step of the evaluative investigation, critical feedback and suggestions for change to the programme were sought from the participants. After each workshop and each round of evaluations, the researchers and the workshop facilitators came together for debrief and reflection, during which the feedback from the participants was analysed and discussed. Emerging good ideas were implemented in the design of the next workshop.

This willingness to listen to feedback and suggestions for improvement and to adjust the programme to meet emergent needs also encouraged the participants to continue on this healing journey together. In this way, the four workshops also provided an opportunity to nurture and develop a community of committed individuals for learning and innovation and above all for embarking on a journey of forgiveness and healing together.

Briefly, the following are the main findings of this study:

a. Individuals carry with them a latent woundedness regardless of whether they are directly or indirectly affected by violence in the recent or past history. Such woundedness is a major hindrance for social harmony, unity and solidarity amongst people, especially in areas of the world where communities have been divided by violent atrocities. So it is necessary to provide ongoing experiences of encounter, understanding, interaction and reflection so as to enable the individuals and groups to acquire a readiness for healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

b. Programmes such as the HWH workshops can play an important part in supporting individual and communal healing journeys due to the safe space they create and their methodological approaches that embody care, trust, respect, listening and other values. The safe space was the result of both the programme design and the skilfulness and sincerity of the facilitators. The methodological approaches to the programme have had a far-reaching impact on the participants in different ways. Amongst the methods, particularly mentioned were the rituals and the bonding exercises which were considered to be profoundly effective as they allowed the participants to connect with each other at a human level.

c. As a step-by-step approach to individual healing and growth, the HWH programme is transformative, through a smooth progression from a relationship with one's self and one's past, to a relationship with the Other in the group and in wider communities, and finally to the possibility of collective joint actions. This focus on personal journey from self-awareness to self-acceptance, self-compassion and self-forgiveness, although individualistic, has been recognised as having the potential to enable the participants to radiate their new found wholeness, integrity and peacefulness to those around, thus creating a rippling effect and cycle of positive change.

d. A key to the HWH workshops lies in its capacity to bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds within Lebanese society, and to recognise each participant's identity and

personal experiences as unique, but at the same time to allow the deepest connection with each other to unfold beyond all differences. This is essentially how a society can develop solidarity amongst its divergent groups. The bond developed through the workshops became one of the most significant aspects of the programme.

e. As the HWH programme illustrates, learning about and experiencing self-forgiveness and self-compassion is liberating, and it is pivotal to individual's developing a more holistic self-concept and self-understanding. It is an important step towards understanding interpersonal forgiveness too and can help prepare individuals for engaging in reconciliation between the self and Other, and between groups.

f. During the HWH workshops, the rituals held in the Garden of Forgiveness helped bring an awareness that by forgiving, and by taking the responsibility for stepping out of the cycles of revenge and negative emotions, each individual can become a 'good ancestor'. Thus the historical significance of the Garden of Forgiveness lies in the way that the Garden is and will be used for individuals and communities to reflect on Lebanon's collective past, to forgive in order to appreciate the gifts from the previous generations and prepare the gifts for future generations.

Based on the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are presented for the future development, sustainability and expansion of the Healing the Wounds of History Programme in Lebanon and beyond:

1. As the project is further established, training could be provided to facilitators who would run the workshops in different languages.

2. The recruitment process could better inform the candidates about the methodologies and approaches, and clarify the nature of the workshops – healing or training.

3. Further expansion of HWH workshops will require carefully selected and well trained facilitators who have a deep understanding of the intricacies of the history and current challenging realities in Lebanon.

4. For the programme to have a wide impact in Lebanon and beyond, it is necessary to continue piloting it in different settings and contexts and with various groups of participants.

5. When evaluating future workshops, measures on self-forgiveness could be introduced in order to understand better the process of self–forgiveness and the variables that may facilitate this process (cf. McCullough, 2000; Thompson and Synder, 2003).

6. While continuing piloting the workshops, it is necessary to systematically develop and consolidate a pedagogical model for facilitating personal healing and growth in divided societies.

In conclusion, the HWH programme enjoyed a highly successful pilot implementation in Lebanon. It was extremely well received by the participants and has achieved its key objectives. According to the project team, the HWH is homoeopathically small healing 'interventions', during which individuals are empowered to learn to love and forgive themselves, to bond with others and to support and inspire each other to take similar small steps towards positive changes in the world. Continued consolidation and further expansion of the programme, combined with support from funding organisations to ensure its sustainability can make HWH a most valuable resource for societies seeking opportunities to heal the ruptures in their communities.

CHAPTER 1 EVALUATION DESIGN

In this chapter, we will outline the motivation behind this evaluation, key guiding research questions, the rationale for the evaluation design, including the process for collecting the evaluation data, and the approach to data analysis.

In chapters 2 through 4, we will describe the programme and its individual components, in our case, the workshops and present more specific findings.

1.1 Programme Rationale

The Healing Wounds of History programme is intended to facilitate a learning journey during which the participants will begin to

(1) cultivate a deeper self-awareness and self-knowledge;
(2) forge connections with one's inner self and develop relationships with the Other; and
(3) heal past traumas and transform one's relationship with one's past and with the Other through forgiveness, compassion and understanding.

By offering diverse group-based experiential activities and through listening, witnessing and participating in rituals, visualisation and meditation, the HWH programme further serves to form a healing alliance and a community of change agents amongst the participants and their extended communities. It is a journey from self-discovery and self-knowing, to bonding with others, eventually supporting each other's healing and growth.

The HWH's pilot programme consisted of four workshops or modules as the trainers call them. The first module was largely centred on narrative – self narrative and the narrative of the Other, including the story of past hurt. Attentiveness to the feelings and emotions individuals attached to the personal experience of trauma served as the foundation for later developing both self-compassion and compassion for the Other. The second module introduced a number of experiential and didactic activities, moving from narrative to personal experiences of change, in both self-concept and a deeper awareness of oneself. The possibility of self-understanding and self-love was the beginning for developing a relationship with the Other. The third module focused on the healing process through self-compassion and self-forgiveness, which promoted a strong sense of empowerment and encouraged some of the practitioners to consider how to bring learning to their personal and professional lives. In the last module, the group received additional training to consolidate the learning gained during the HWH training. They further supported each other by practicing together the 'tools' and 'instruments' introduced during the HWH Programme. This prepared the group to pursue their ongoing learning and healing paths.

In addition to the stated objectives, the HWH was also intended to create a self-sustaining community of empowered, competent practitioners who may positively influence the many Lebanese and refugee communities with the HWH message of forgiveness and compassion. By including a coaching session in the last module, the HWH programme enabled some participants to become facilitators of HWH workshops. As these novice facilitators take this learning and experience forward into their lives, both professionally and personally, they not only support the ongoing growth of the existing group, but also sow the seed for healing the trans-generationally transmitted trauma in the wider society in Lebanon.

1.2 Evaluation Design

We believe that there are two main points to consider when deciding the approach to programme evaluation:

A. In order to develop an evaluation design that is fit for purpose and that pays attention to the particularities of a specific programme or intervention, it is essential for the Evaluation Team to have a good understanding of the conceptual underpinnings of the programme. This means that the external evaluators and the programme designers or Project Team must work together to ensure that the evaluation is aligned with the programme's ethos, theoretical framework and intended outcomes (eg. Craig et al 2008[1]).

B. For the programme evaluation to maintain research rigour and avoid biasing the findings, it is important for the Evaluation Team to remain independent and embed criticality in both the research design and data analysis.

Therefore for the evaluation of HWH, we proposed to take a collaborative approach. As stated above, the advantage of the collaborative approach is that it allows us to (a) take into account the Project Team's aims and objectives for the programme and their conceptual, methodological and pedagogical approach to it; and at the same time (b) maintain a critical stance in evaluating the programme.

The evaluation was carried out in the following steps:

The **first step** was to identify the purpose of the evaluation by way of discussions with the Project Team. Together, we envisaged that the aim of the evaluation was two-fold:

1. The first objective of the evaluation was to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the programme (e.g. to demonstrate impact and to provide rigorous research evidence for further dissemination of the programme methodology and pedagogy within the academic community.) In this case, the research question was: Does the programme work? The evaluation focus would be to conceptualise what it means for the programme to work, and identify variables based on relevant quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to establish objectively whether or not the programme has impact on specified intended outcomes.

2. The second objective is to explore participants' experiences of the programme, including their views, understandings and actions and how these may shift during the course of the programme (e.g. to understand how the programme methodology and pedagogy impact on the participants' experiences, to identify areas for programme improvement in the future and to provide in-depth insights into the particular setting for others within the academic community.) In this case the research question was: How does the programme work? The evaluation approach was based on qualitative research methods in order to explore how individual participants perceive their experiences and consider the factors contributing to their experiences as such.

The **second step** was to identify the design of the evaluation

The HWH serves a dual-purpose, therefore the evaluation was tasked to consider both questions: **(1) Does the programme work? (2) How does it work?** We therefore took a **mixed-method approach** to evaluate the effectiveness through both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences using observations, interviews and focus group discussions.

---

[1] Craig, P., Dieppe, P., Macintyre, S., Michie, S., Nazareth, I., & Petticrew, M. (2008). Developing and evaluating complex interventions: the new Medical Research Council guidance. BMJ: *British Medical Journal*, 337

A key aspect of the evaluation design was the built-in heuristic nature of the programme – as the evaluation unfolded the participants' experiences and the effectiveness of the workshops, and enabled the trainers and facilitators to make adjustments to the programme's pace, spaces created, dynamics and approaches to activities.

a. Research Question 1: Does the programme work?

From a scientific (and post-positivist) perspective, training or intervention effectiveness needs to be demonstrated through objective evidence. In this view, randomised controlled trials are considered to be the best. However, whilst randomised control trials have become more frequently used in educational research, they do pose some particular challenges, for instance, in certain educational settings, randomisation of individuals is often not possible (such as in the case of HWH, the participants self-selected to attend the workshops). As such, evaluations of training and interventions in educational settings are often required to be adapted to real life contexts by some form of compromise in terms of some research quality criteria as proposed by the scientific community.

Regarding the specificities of the HWH programme, its aim to effect change was found in the following three dimensions: the cognitive (as in self-awareness and understanding), the relational (as the result of one's enhanced self-awareness and self-appreciation and one's openness towards the Other) and action (as in one's willingness and capacities to act upon one's learning as well as in one's ability to support others to do so), and therefore effectiveness would ideally be sought through a general questionnaire that seeks participants' ratings of the programme activities and their personal reflections on whether the programme has worked.

b. Research question 2: How does the programme impact on participants' experiences?

The HWH is aimed at changes in the participant's understanding of past events and how these events affect an individual's perception of the meaningfulness in one's life, one's attitudes towards oneself and the Other, and one's decisions in terms of how to effect change in one's personal and professional life, and in one's community. This essentially constitutes a learning process.

Identifying factors that contribute to people's experiences of learning and transformation is not necessarily a straightforward process. Although statistics can capture some supporting or hindering factors, it is necessary that we further employ in-depth qualitative methods in order to develop a fuller understanding in terms of how the workshops have impacted on participants' experiences.

Therefore, we have decided to take an ethnographic approach to this aspect of evaluation, including observation (participant and non-participant), in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Here sample size is not an issue as the evaluation did not aim to generalise findings, but rather to provide in-depth insights into individual's subjective experiences of HWH workshops in a unique social context at a particular time. We regarded it as important that the findings were reported in a transparent, credible, authentic and trustworthy manner to enable the reader to judge their validity and to consider the extent to which they may be applicable to his/her own contexts.

The **third step** was to develop the evaluation in specific stages:

	Stage	Quantitative evaluation element	Qualitative evaluation element
1.	Research Design	<u>Project Team</u> Identification of a small number of key outcomes by the programme developer Clarification of potentially divergent interpretations with evaluation team NB: these identified outcomes should be the ones most likely to be impacted by the programme	<u>Project Team:</u> Identification of main issues worthy of exploration. Advise about cultural and programme specific appropriateness relating to specific research methods (e.g. observations may or may not be appropriate in situations where participants share very personal stories of victimhood as the presence of an external researcher may hinder disclosure)
		<u>Evaluation Team:</u> Operationalising key outcomes through identification of appropriate methods for data collection. Confirmation from Programme Team that measurements seem fit for purpose. Questionnaire design, (where survey is not administered by the research team preparation of clear protocol for survey administration)	<u>Evaluation Team:</u> Identification of appropriate research methods (e.g. observation, interviews, focus groups, etc) to best understand the questions to be explored Design of interview and observation schedules, etc.
2.	Fieldwork	<u>Evaluation Team:</u> Questionnaire administration for programme participants: - Pre-workshop questionnaire - Post-workshop questionnaire These questionnaires were used to contrast the participants' awareness of the key concerns raised by the workshops. Data coding, cleaning and preparation for analysis.	<u>Evaluation Team:</u> Observation: participant observation Field-notes: including researcher's fieldnotes and reflective notes by facilitators. Interviews: Audio-recorded Focus groups: Audio-recorded Audio-file transcriptions and translations. Data tables for observations. Data coding for reflective diaries
3.	Analyses and Report writing	<u>Evaluation Team:</u> Simple statistical analysis of the data Compilation of data	<u>Evaluation Team:</u> Thematic analysis of qualitative data. (research question-based and content analysis)
		<u>Evaluation Team:</u> Initial findings Cross-referencing throughout four workshops; <u>Project Team:</u> Considering draft findings, suggesting further clarification, additions (e.g. theoretical underpinnings, alternative interpretations of findings, context considerations) <u>Evaluation Team:</u> Final report Dissemination to evaluation participants/trainers/stakeholders	

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the programme goals identified above and the evaluation design, three categories of research questions were addressed in this evaluation:

The first set explores whether the programme has been effective in relation to its stated objectives:

a. How well did the HWH programme team inform the participants about the intended outcome of the workshops?
b. What were the most significant moments for the participants throughout the training? What were their experiences during these moments?
c. To what extent did the HWH programme have an impact on the participants' journey of growth? And how?

The second set is to do with how the programme has been effective in relation to its stated objectives?

d. How would the participants rate their overall experience of the HWH training workshops? Why would they rate it in this way?
e. Which aspects of the HWH workshop were the participants most critical of / appreciative of?

The third set of questions seek the participants' feedback on the programme's design and their suggestions in terms of how to make the programme more relevant to the peacebuilding needs in Lebanon.

f. In what way, according to the participants, might the HWH training help contribute to a more peaceful Lebanon?
g. How could we strengthen the workshops further in order to integrate the programme to better meet the peacebuilding needs in Lebanon?

In the next chapter, we will address each set of the research questions. In Chapter 4, we will discuss the findings as a whole and provide a discussion of the evaluation outcome, and finally in Chapter 5, we will offer some recommendations for further programme development and expansion.

1.4 Data Collection

The data collection was done during and after each workshop.

Participant observation:
During two of the workshops (1st and 3rd), the Evaluation Team members made participant observations. This means that the researchers were also participants in the workshop and they made observations of the workshop from that perspective. This added to the much desired understanding of the 'webs of significance' that might afford 'thick description' of healing in the HWH training setting (Geertz, 1973, p. 5).

Evaluation Questionnaires
Immediately following each workshop, an evaluation questionnaire was sent to each of the participants through email. There was also an online version of the questionnaire, which the participants could complete anonymously. Allowing the participants to complete the questionnaire anonymously was intended to empower the participants and to enable them to give voice to their experiences without any concerns about being frank, critical or truthful.

The questionnaires collected both quantitative data (the participants rating their experiences of different aspects of the workshops) and qualitative data (through open-ended questions). However, as the participants tended to read each of the questions differently, and as the participants tended to give varying amounts of time and attention to completing the questions, these are supplemented by other in-depth methods.

In-depth Interviews
In the questionnaire, there is always a question that asks the participants if they are willing to attend an in-depth interview with the researcher about their experiences during the workshop. After each workshop, on average, 8-10 participants expressed willingness to take part in the interviews. The in-depth interviews consisted of two parts: in the first part, the researcher invited the participant to share his/her personal life narrative in an open-ended way. This served to provide a rich context within which to understand his/her motivation to participate in the HWH workshops, and their experiences within them. The second part was a semi-structured interview using a very similar schedule of questions. Semi-structured interviews give the researcher the opportunity to prompt the participant and encourage him/her to elaborate and to reflect. These interviews were recorded and once again the participants' anonymity was assured.

Focus group conversation
During the interviews, the researcher asked the participant if he/she was interested in participating in a focus group conversation. Each time, 3-5 people agreed to participate in the focus group conversation. These conversations were open-ended, unstructured and free-flowing. The focus group conversations were not recorded, but notes were made and then shared for correction.

Feedback meeting with the Programme Team
The feedback meeting with the Programme Team served as yet another data source. These meetings helped clarify the programme's objectives and programme design. During each step of the evaluative investigation, critical feedback and suggestions for change to the programme were invited. The feedback was then analysed and reported to the Programme Team for implementation in the design for the next workshop.

1.5 Data Analysis

This research has generated a large amount of data and therefore demanded a clear framework for data analysis. Indeed, the interpretive challenge of this research was to anchor the individual's life story, personal motivation for healing and their reflection of their experiences during the HWH workshops within the programme's objectives and methodologies, as well as the healing needs, challenges and obstacles of peacebuilding in Lebanon and in the Middle East region.

To begin, this research situates its conceptual understanding of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconciliation within the following theoretical ideas: (a) Asseily's and others' work on forgiveness and its part in ending the cycles of violence[2], (b) Lederach's theories on conflict transformation[3], (c) Volkan and Montville's theories of the need to overcome enmities through acknowledgement of chosen traumas and developing shared histories and empathy with the other[4], and lastly (d) Staub's ideas of humanising the other and cultivating human values as the basis for peacebuilding[5]. These interconnected theories of reconciliation and peacebuilding helped sensitise the Evaluation Team in terms of the data's significance (and the participants' experiences and learning during the workshops) at the micro and macro levels and of the data analysis.

Furthermore, the specific goals and aspirations of the HWH training programme provided a clear framework for content analysis, especially in the way we used thematic coding, developed topical clusters and built connections (and triangulations) between the diverse sources of data.

Guided by the overall programme aims, evaluation questions and theories concerning healing, forgiveness and reconciliation, the data analysis took an initial holistic content analysis approach and came up with a number of themes, on which basis, a preliminary descriptive interim report was drafted for the Fetzer Institute.

After the completion of the final workshop evaluation, we compiled all the data for a thorough thematic analysis, and broadened the findings from those capturing the participants' learning experiences through the HWH training workshops to those that provide insights into the wider healing needs and peacebuilding priorities in Lebanon.

In this way, the data analysis focused on the issues of self-concept, social-emotional challenges and memories of past trauma that have been somewhat undermined in the existing peacebuilding endeavours in Lebanon and the region. It also aimed to unfold those underlying causes of individual and collective psychological problems, and the effect of broken relationships manifested in violent conflicts. Such analytical emphasis does not underestimate the need for political reconciliation, social justice and inter-communal reconciliation and cohesion. However, our analysis suggests that concerns with power, security and structural peace must coincide with psychosocial and relational approaches to healing and reconciliation. They are equally the priorities for building a peaceful culture in a country and region traumatised by many decades of violence.

---

[2] Asseily, A. (2007) Breaking the cycles of violence in Lebanon, in Y Choueiri (ed.) Breaking the cycle, London: Stacey International

[3] Lederach, J. P. (1998). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington D.C. USIP

[4] Volkan, V. D. (2005) "Large Group Identity and Chosen Trauma." Psychoanalysis Downunder 6

[5] Staub, E. (2003). "Preventing violence and generating humane values: Healing and reconciliation in Rwanda." International Review of the Red Cross. 852: 791-806.

CHAPTER 2 PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

2.1 Programme Context

For some time, Lebanon has been in a state that is neither war nor post-conflict. There is an overhanging threat of future violence combined with an uneasy relationship to the violence of the past. The strong sectarian and social identities that made the wars psychologically possible are still active and transmuting, thereby further reducing trust and heightening fears. For several generations, the lack of closure with regard to civil wars and foreign invasions has had profound psychological and social effects. Turning over a new page does not necessarily mean that grievances and memories have been fully acknowledged and addressed. The cycles of blame and revenge threaten to reignite violence, as competing victims do not take responsibility, but act from denial or blame, sharpened by fear. At the same time, Lebanese youths have been labelled as a post-memory generation[6] as they can't find any way to talk or to understand the past, and are stuck between collective memory and collective amnesia.

The causes for violence are regarded as having been rooted in recent but also older and even ancient historical grievances, memories and traumas. Such psychological roots draw on perceived injustices, and can become the sources of violence, especially in acute times of crisis, fear and threat. These driving forces usually remain unexamined because they tend to be latent or dormant. By analysing them, deconstructing and even unfolding them, individuals can begin to understand where these prejudices and impulses for violence against the Other are located. Furthermore, memories of past traumas (whether the individual has experience directly or indirectly of traumas) can keep conflict alive, both consciously and unconsciously, which invokes the formation of ingredients that create certain sectarian and social labels marking one group as different from another. Individuals may feel that it is a betrayal of their 'identities' if they move away from these elements. Therefore, it is through unearthing these deeply rooted identity markers that we can begin to reframe/rethink the self, humanise the Other and improve relationships.

To complicate its own peacebuilding process, currently (at the start of 2015), there are over 1.3 million registered Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In addition, asylum-seekers from Iraq continue to arrive in the country. Furthermore, it is estimated that there are tens of thousands of stateless people in Lebanon as a result of violence in the region.

In this case, there is no consensus or shared aspiration amongst stakeholders with regard to how the society can move forward. This un-clarified situation presents an extra dimension of difficulty for those who would attempt to implement regular post-conflict peacebuilding strategies. Therefore, it is evidently necessary to design processes that address and heal the deeper roots of conflict. This is a key element in seeking to re-build relationships in a society that has long suffered from division and lack of trust between individuals and their respective communities. Therefore, it is necessary that approaches to healing, reconciliation and forgiveness are formulated so that they are relevant to all parties concerned.

Feasible proposals for developing grassroots skills and capacities are crucial for how this can be achieved. Developing capacities at the individual level would help in collective action and peacebuilding efforts at the group level. These should be placed alongside political, social, economic, juridical and civil society endeavours.

---

[6] See Craig Larkin's book entitled 'Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the Past' published by Routledge in 2012.

2.2 Outlines of the Workshops

Lebanon is a paradoxically liberal country in an autocratic region because its illiberal institutions tend to cancel each other out in the shadow of a sectarian system that makes the religious communities and sects more powerful than the state … This reality in turn, creates spaces in society for individuals to pursue these freedoms with relative ease.

- Young 2010: 247

As indicated in the quote above, individuals in Lebanon tend to have the opportunity to seek freedoms more than other countries in the region. Therefore, when the HWH was first proposed, the team had hardly any difficulty in recruiting participants. In fact, following the Healing the Wound of History Conference held in November 2011, a small group made up of educators, activists, peace workers, NGO professionals, psychologists and therapists, has remained in touch with the HWH team through social media and other means. As these workshops were funded by the Fetzer Institute, almost effortlessly, a group of 25 individuals self-selected to participate in the first workshop. The subsequent workshops were attended by 15-25 participants.

The HWH team provided four workshops over the period of 18 months. 10 participants completed all four training workshops, and others attended 1-3 workshops depending on their work commitments or personal circumstances.

HWH Module 1

This introductory workshop was carried out by a trainer from the USA[7]. It was designed to provide opportunities for individuals to develop their own narrative, including narrative of past hurt and pain. The narrative-focused approach was gently guided so that the participants could feel safe and trusting before they ventured into their narratives and memories that involve risk. During the workshop, participants worked in small groups of three so that it was possible to maintain confidentiality of the stories shared and to develop deep personal connections.

Another goal of HWH1 was to introduce the concept of forgiveness and for individuals to prepare themselves for forgiveness[8].

HWH Module 2

Following the feedback from HWH1, especially with regard to the need for more time to develop self-awareness and self-understanding, including the need to develop a better understanding of forgiveness, HWH2 was designed to be a set of experiential, didactic and tool-based activities. Exercises were in both individual and group formats, aimed to:

a. Raise self awareness, through reflecting on experience of life accepted unquestioningly, especially in childhood, through a multi-dimensional, systemic, holistic view;
b. Raise consciousness of one's self, including one's connection with past events, ancestors and unconscious memories;
c. Provide a holistic/systemic view of self, Other and the world in a non-judgemental way;
d. Prepare oneself for grieving the past, accepting gifts from ancestors, and bearing witness of each other's learning journeys.

---

[7] An important feedback from the participants during the evaluation was that the participants preferred trainer/facilitator who are from or at least lived in the ME region in order to have internalised the deeper struggle Lebanon is confronted. Therefore, from HWH2, the team introduced a trainer of Lebanese Palestinian origin; and one who is married to a Lebanese and lives in between Lebanon and the UK.

[8] As we will see from the programme evaluation that the concept of forgiveness was not successfully introduced in HWH1, therefore, in HWH2, there was more time devoted to the notion of forgiveness.

HWH Module 3

The feedback from HWH2 showed that the participants needed more time to consolidate and deepen their learnings, including further developing an understanding of self-concept which involves a recognition of it as partly constituted in the memories of the past, and an appreciation of the importance of forgiveness and compassion for oneself and the Other. During HWH3, exercises were refined and repeated towards depth, allowing the participants to take risks and go deeper into self-reflection and develop confidence to live through overwhelming emotions. The underlying intention was that this workshop would help the participants to journey further, i.e. from unconsciousness to self-awareness, from self-acceptance to relationships with others, and to inter-communal relationships and solidarity within the society. In this way, the individual will develop a link from oneself to Lebanon and then the world at large. This helped develop an alliance of change agents.

HWH Module 4

With increased awareness of the need for healing, and the group's growing confidence in integrating HWH approaches in these individuals' life and work, the last module aimed to provide the participants with the kind of experience that would enable them to either take additional training and become an HWH workshop facilitator, or to continue applying HWH approaches effectively in their personal and professional lives. Therefore, the focus was on practicing, innovating, making the HWH one's own, adapting this work and customising it so that it would work for each individual participant within diverse contexts.

After the final workshop, a core group of individuals who have participated in all 3/4 workshops and who are motivated and enthusiastic about training to become facilitators decided to join in the second cohort of HWH participants, and undergo training of trainers (ToT). In this way, the HWH programme has begun to nurture an alliance of change agents.

2.3 Summary of Workshop Principles, Activities and their Goals

The fundamental premise of the HWH workshops is an understanding that our past grievances constitute in part our consciousness and we need to be aware of past 'drivers' so that they do not lead us to repeat our mistakes. Understanding the past in this way allows us to change the past and then the future – by releasing the past through forgiveness and compassion, we can change the present and allow the future to transform.

The HWH activities and exercises are aimed at developing, primarily, self-awareness, which is the basis for fostering relationships with others and with wider communities. Self-love, self-appreciation, self-forgiveness and self-compassion are the main goals of the earlier exercises, as only with these can it become possible for loving relationships to emerge from the place of higher self and spirituality. Through self-awareness, individuals will then make peace with their ancestors. This process is humanising and can enable us to overcome barriers to connection with others so that bonding comes from being more fully human.

The key qualities that the HWH workshops aim to cultivate include:

A. **Respect**
This is a foundation value of the HWH workshop – respecting people from all backgrounds who have an equal capacity to become good. Such respect goes beyond mere tolerance to embrace the true differences and diversity in people.

B. **Trust**
This is another key value underpinning the HWH workshops – trusting that people can be helped to become aware of the traumas/gifts of their ancestors. Trust opens the doors to the past that anger closes, allowing us to be open to receiving gifts from our ancestors.

C. **Openness to our spiritual core and our higher self**
This is a central aspect to connect with in resolving any internal conflict through dialogue, i.e. the divine in me sees the divine in you. Thus the programme integrates rituals.

The HWH workshops do not follow a particular approach, but take combined methodologies drawn from different schools of thoughts and therapeutic approaches. **The key principles** or conceptual underpinning of the HWH workshops are:

(i)   Four Aspects of Oneself
Drawing on Hoffman's work, these four aspects of oneself are represented by Horse, Carriage, Driver and Passenger. They are our emotions, body, intellect and spirit. When we start to position ourselves between the 'I' and the different aspects of myself and we include our wiser/higher soul/self, then we can begin to see things in a completely different way.

(ii)   The Hoffman Process (www.hoffmaninstitute.org)
The journey is designed in accordance to Hoffman's four stages of change: (1) awareness; (2) expression; (3) compassion/forgiveness; (4) new behaviour.

(iii)   David Richo's Five As (Richo, 2013):
David Ricoh's approaches to developing relationships focus on five As that we need to give to ourselves and to others, allowing ourselves and others to have the freedom to be who we and they truly are. (1) Attention; (2) Affection; (3) Affirmation; (4) Acceptance; (5) Allowing

(iv)   Embodied Knowing
Constellation work with different traditions is one which has harnessed somatic knowledge since the 80s. Activities and exercises are designed for the HWH participants influenced by Family Constellation, Human Potential Movement in California, and other traditions.

2.4 The Participants

Thanks to the Fetzer Institute's generous grant, participants from a wide range of diversity were able to take part in the workshops, including age, gender, occupation, social, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, economic status, geographical region and more. The Programme Team deliberately allowed the participants' anonymity in joining the workshops. That is to say that when signing up the workshops, the participants were not pressed to give their personal details. This was done deliberately so that individuals didn't feel that they were judged or treated based on the externally imposed identity markers. This was considered important in the present day Lebanon where the sectarian divisions remain a significant challenge in peacebuilding.

Despite the diversity of the participants, here we chosen to present the only data that were collected when they registered.
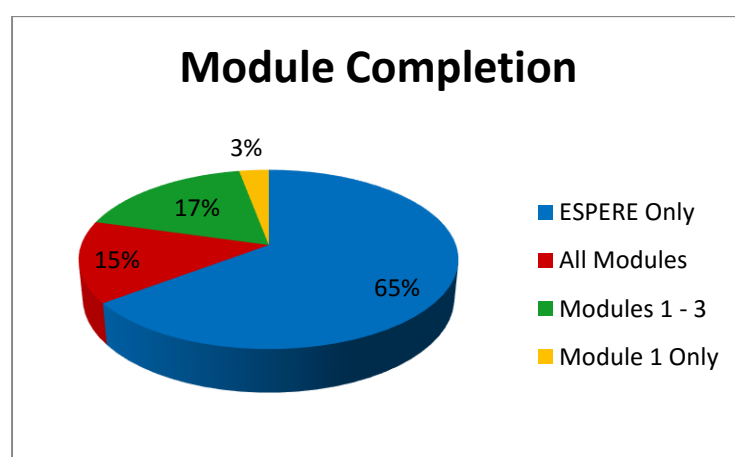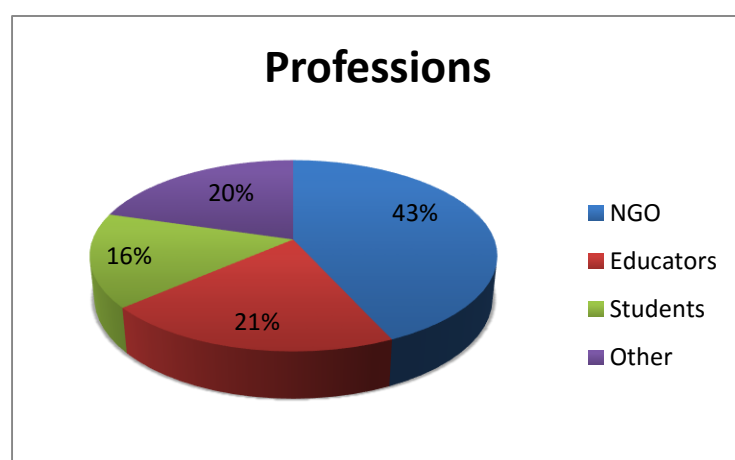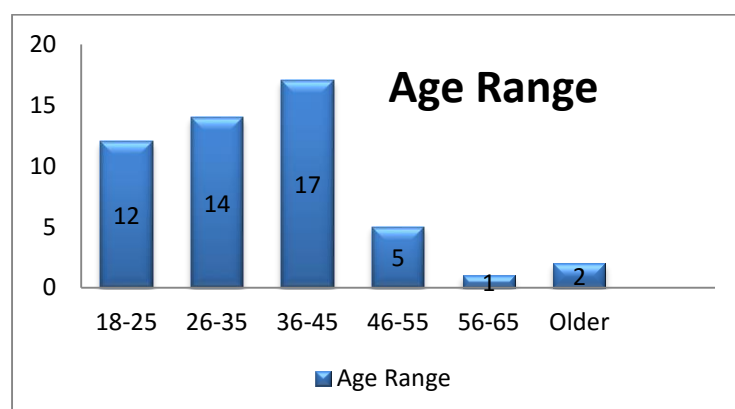
CHAPTER 3 REPORT ON THE HWH WORKSHOPS

3.1 Findings from the 1st set of research questions

The first set of research questions explores whether the programme has been effective in relation to its stated objectives. The evaluation not only sought the participants' feedback in terms of what they thought of their workshop experiences, but also encouraged the participants to provide detailed descriptions of their experiences, in particular, to reflect on their learning from participating in the workshops.

We will report on the findings by going through each of the sub-questions.

a. How well informed were the participants about the intended outcome of the workshops?

Out of the 15 participants who completed the first questionnaire, six of them recognised that the workshops were aimed at healing the past through forgiving. Amongst the six answers, two perceived the aim to be more to do with personal transformation, eg "*to know how to forgive; to know how to overcome some problems in our past that we can't forget; … how to use our sense of being humans*"; and "*to equip people with the tools and inner strength to forgive those who have inflicted harm on us, including ourselves*".

One participant considered the aim to be more emancipatory where these individuals would be change agents who would "*create a network that offers continued support and collective knowledge*".

Most participants saw the aim to be developing a link between the personal and the societal:

> *healing our personal and societal wounds by forgiving and reconciling, and working together towards a new way of relating to the Other; understanding our personal role in conflict and violence, and learning a methodology that can be applied in different contexts.*

Similarly, they identified the aims to be connected with developing compassion for others and nurturing a sense of interconnectedness towards healing, conflict transformation and reconciliation. The connection between the individual and the social was made more obvious through the workshops. One female participant said: "*it made me realise that as we heal ourselves, we become a means to help others in the healing process*".

However, from the start, several participants had the impression that the workshops were aimed at training individuals to become trainers (through experiential learning) so that they would extend their learning to wider communities and beyond, eg. "*To guide people in their journey to forgiveness, and with that, these people will guide others to do so, and so on...*".

This perception only applied to those participants who are trained facilitators and who are already providing training in the field of peacebuilding, conflict transformation and reconciliation. For instance, until the last workshop, one of the participants who is herself a scholar in psychology and who has attended three HWH workshops, found it confusing with regard to "*whether we are healing or we are training…. I think more thought needs to be given to this because it was hard to have both hats on at the same time*".

At the same time, the few experienced facilitators who continued (rather than quit) to attend the workshops, seemed to be able to appreciate the intention of starting with the self. They gradually

became aware that to facilitate others' learning and healing, it is really important that they experienced and internalised the healing process themselves.

Here is the reflection from an NGO director who took part in the first HWH workshop:

> *HWH tries to spread peace around the world by helping us understand the meaning of conflicts, understand ourselves and our behaviours during conflicts, and understand our own feelings towards our personal conflicts. Through such an awareness, we then experienced ourselves and others from very different perspectives.*

For one or two people, this recognition of the journey only came at the very end of the workshop. For instance, this participant reflected that:

> *Just now after the third workshop I have finally come to understand the real meaning of this procedure since I'm coming from a background far from [the] field of psychology. I realize the meaning of it by allowing myself to feel my feeling and [by] respect[ing]my reaction toward what happen[ed] to me in the past and [by] allowing it to express, then the forgiveness part coming to heal the wounds. Forgiveness is a long journey, I begin it now and I'm at the stage of exploring what happened to me and what the effects are on me, however the healing is coming. Insha'Allah.*

Therefore, there was an overall recognition that the starting point of the workshop was healing through reflection on one's personal past and grievances. All the participants saw it as necessary to "*start off on an individual level during the workshops because we need to achieve inner-peace before being able to spread peace on a wider scale*".

b. What were the most significant moments/experiences during the workshops and Why? What was the participants' learning during these moments/experiences?

Most participants commented on their experiences of the safe space provided by the workshops which had enabled them to explore personal and collective histories. This comment summarises a shared sentiment:

> *I found the HWH training incredibly powerful. I think that creating safe environments for people to open up and share is not easy at all, especially in such a small interconnected community where people know each other and may have history with each other (professional and personal).*

There has been a strong consensus, as pointed out above, that within such safe environments, the participants could become more open and have more courage to explore deeper personal and collective traumas.

They also found that certain activities create memorable and deeply transformative experiences. Three activities particularly were regarded as significant for most of the participants: the Joining Ritual, Finding Spirit in Nature Ritual, the Constellation Exercise and Forgiveness Ritual at the Garden of Forgiveness.

The Joining Ritual involves the participants standing in two circles (one inner circle and one outer circle) and connecting by looking into each other's eyes in silence. Initially, several participants broke down in laughter as they felt reluctant and embarrassed to look into the eyes of other people. Some participants attributed this to one's own sense of insecurity:

> *It was difficult for me to meet the eyes of others so intensely and directly, and I felt an overwhelming sense of insecurity and lack of presence. It was a wonderful challenge. I had to pace my breathing and let go of barriers that were preventing me from connecting to myself and the person in front of me.*

Gradually, the laughter stopped and once the individuals were open to connect with oneself, they begin to connect with others and the deeper experiences occurred. Typical comments are as follows:

> Through the exercise it confirmed that the eyes are the gateway to the soul. Defensive mechanisms shut off the eyes. Sometimes I cried looking into the eyes of the Other, sometimes 'the Other' cried whilst looking into my eyes.
>
> ***
> The "Joining" exercises really helped us to build heart to heart connections and a sense of community. It particularly helped me to become more comfortable in being seen in front of others, and seeing others.

The activity to find Spirit in Nature contained silent and solitary walks in a beautiful garden surrounding the workshop venue. It gave the participants opportunities to identify objects that expressed their personal qualities. Then these objects were brought into the circle for sharing. Here are a couple of comments on this particular exercise:

> The ritual of choosing an object from nature and the sharing of all its qualities and understanding the meaning of what we found and why I chose it was profoundly moving. I was as moved by my own experience as I was when I witnessed others doing the same thing. I was moved because each of us resonated with nature and we were able to see our own qualities in plants, flowers, stones or features of birds. The finding your spirit in nature was a beautiful moment for me. It is rare for people these days to go out for the purpose of spiritual finding instead of a concrete purpose. This exercise brought me closer to my roots, and reminded me about the essence of our being.

The constellation exercises were applied in different contexts and the participants experienced different 'constellations'. They seemed to find these activities very illuminating, the embodied knowing as each constellation provides an opportunity to the individual to explore a particular aspect of him/herself. Here a young woman reflected on her learning:

> The resistance constellation was also a powerful experience for me. To be able to map and organize the aspects within self in plain sight is amazing. It gave me more insight on the relationship between highest vision, my resources, my resistance, and myself.

Lastly, almost unanimously, every participant acknowledged that the final ritual at the Garden of Forgiveness was one of the most significant moments. In fact, the Garden of Forgiveness has been used as the site for an important ritual at the end of each HWH workshop. It takes place at the location where the physical Garden of Forgiveness is yet be built, amidst mosques, chapels, cathedrals and other holy places of worship, including the archaeological remains of ancient city layers.

The Forgiveness Ritual involves the participants forming a circle, symbolising unity and solidarity within the dignified diversity and differences in Lebanon. Whilst staying connected, the participants reflect on their collective memory of past traumas and pains and their experiences of healing and forgiveness; at the same time they also remember the beauty of this land, their shared ancestry and the Lebanese unyielding spirit of joie de vivre.

The ritual continues whereby each individual ties a note of love, compassion and forgiveness on the olive trees which were planted by the HWH conference participants who came to celebrate the Garden in Nov 2011. Each person takes turns to walk up to a tree and to tie the pre-prepared note, and holds the thought of compassion for oneself, others and the collective whilst releasing any guilt or grievances and embracing the freedom which is the fruit of forgiveness. This part of the ritual is witnessed by the rest of the group in silence - an act of mutual witnessing: as the participants witness each other performing this forgiving and letting go ritual, they also witness

the mechanism of their own mind without getting actively involved in one's thoughts and feelings. So in this meditative state, the group is reunited in a spiritually uplifting way, each holding a candle, forming a circle of light.

To complete the ritual, the group come together for more active expression of love for each other and for humanity – some sing, some shed tears of joy, some embrace, others exchange a word of gratitude and appreciation.

Some participants felt that the learning experience from this particular ritual is far-reaching beyond the personal realm, towards healing of the country. Here one of the participants writes in her reflection:

> *The forgiving ritual, forgiving our ancestors, in the Garden of Forgiveness helps in adding peace and healing to Lebanon [be]cause every single person will be healing lots of his or her past generations, which will do a chain of healing aspects between ourselves and our previous generations, and that leads to spreading the effect of peace to our present generations on the one hand, and to our lovely Lebanon on the other hand.*

This ritual also helped the group to develop a collective sense of history as the location of the Garden of Forgiveness and what it symbolises in Lebanon and in the world have enabled the participants to connect this activity to values beyond themselves. It was here that the participants, the facilitators and the onlookers came together to contemplate the country's past, present and future.

Here a young NGO professional remembered his experience at the Garden of Forgiveness:

> *What really moved me in the workshop was the last part and our visit to our ancestors, I felt that I want to forgive myself and forgive my past ... It was a moment of truth where I felt as I crossed forward "back" in time. I see more light. It was such an outstanding feeling that I had to go back again to the Garden to revisit my ancestors and talk to them a week later...*

We asked the participants to identify five keywords that summarise the significance of their experiences. Here is the word-cloud that captures the weight the participants attributed to the keywords. As we can see, friendship is the most significant experience for the participants. Following that, are two words forgiveness and love. Other words of greater weight include respect, peace, serenity and motivation.

The implications of these words for Lebanon at this particular time couldn't be more significant. We will return to this point when we analyse the data in Chapter 5.

c. To what extent did the HWH programme have an impact on the participants' journey of growth?

In this question, we were interested in whether and to what extent the programme has met its own intended goals, i.e. a broad shift from unconsciousness to self-awareness, from self-awareness and self-understanding to relationships with others, and from relationships with others to bonding and belonging to a community/society.

The overall evaluation concluded that 89.8% of all stated aims and goals had been met according to the participants, the highest being 'deepening the connection between self and Other' at 98%. This has been attributed to the workshops' focus on developing self-awareness, and on cultivating a deeper understanding of the part that forgiveness plays in one's personal healing and reconciliation with others.

Although each individual's experience during the HWH workshops was unique, there seemed to be general agreement that the workshops had recognisable impacts on each participant's personal growth. Growth was first connected to individual's developing their self-awareness and self-understanding. Secondly, it was linked to the participants' experience of some form of self-love, self-compassion and self-forgiveness. Thirdly, growth was experienced and expressed from the perspectives of how the individuals were able to take learning from the workshop into their personal and professional lives.

Let's review these areas of impact separately.

(1) Self-awareness

Most of the participants appreciated the fact that the workshop activities gave them the opportunity to explore different aspects of themselves and therefore to become more aware of themselves as persons.

For some, self-awareness contained an element of an awareness of the grievances and woundedness one has carried with oneself over a long period of time. One participant reflected on this point:

> *It became clearer to me over the course of the 3 workshops how much sorrow and grievance we carry and how light and happy it feels to let go of them. I could see how this letting-go transformed the group dynamics and made a very heavy task lighter and more effective. It was possible to see in tangible detail how psychological transformation could contribute to personal development and to less overt conflict. It's a beautiful gift to will others who wish to let go of the past to live lighter and happier. This is the kind of work that has real meaning.*

For some, the impact on their self-awareness was connected to the integration of the different aspects of oneself into the wholeness of being a person. A young teacher articulated her experience as follows:

> *I came to the workshop really stuck in a 12-year old me who wanted to refute everything she was being told and yet needed to be hand-held in the everyday duties/activities. … Coming from an educational background that was very intellectual, I struggled to bring in my emotional awareness, higher self and body awareness to the table. HWH healing programs allowed me to re-integrate aspects of self that I have suppressed and put me on a journey that looks at me with self love and growth, and prompts to focus on various aspects of "me".*

22

For others, self-awareness was connected to becoming aware of the universal nature of being human, especially the inner lives of people. Here one participant articulated his perception on this point:

> I believe all humans are pretty much identical when it comes to the components that make up their inner lives. However, the interactions of everyday life with others give the false illusion that we are different and apart. It seems that groups (at least in our part of the world) are more comfortable discussing subjects such as the state of the weather, or the price of clothing, rather than the more intimate meaningful subjects related to history, feelings, or things of a higher purpose. As a result each person is more likely to assume that the intimate things he/she experiences are not universal, and as a result we feel more alienated. The interesting thing about HWH is that it is designed in such a way to counter that effect and help participants realize how truly alike we all are. As a result, strong bonds are created and a much needed dealing with our emotions is realized.

As an important goal of the HWH workshops, developing self-awareness was considered the foundation for healing, reconciliation and transformation. As the participants illustrated here, self-awareness is also about an awareness of our common humanity. This is the true basis for forgiveness and peace.

(2) Self-forgiveness

With increased self-awareness, the participants began to realise that healing must start with self-healing and self-forgiveness. This has been perceived as an important part of the participants' growth.

Every participant reflected on the impact of the workshops on their self-acceptance and self-love. They mentioned the experience of letting go and self-forgiving as a key to their personal development.

For some participants, the acts of forgiveness were oriented towards self-understanding and self-compassion following some traumatic past events, such as those described by this entrepreneur and project manager:

> in the beginning, I didn't want to forgive, I wanted to hold onto the anger inside of me, to revenge, an anger that would fuel me to get even with xxx (the person who caused a bad experience for her in the past). I didn't want to FORGIVE, not to forget. … With time, I noticed that it is only burning me, and only when exercising forgiveness I felt the peace. I knew how comforting this can be, and I started my journey of forgiveness.

Similarly, a young teacher clarified this aspect for herself:

> Loving oneself and forgiveness is acknowledgement of one's past, the good and the bad, without carrying "it" (the past) with them into the future but carrying how they grew/learnt…

Some found relief in forgiveness as they have struggled for a long time with self-acceptance and tended to self-blame, self-condemn or self-punish. Self-forgiveness became the beginning of real personal growth. An NGO facilitator considered his path to maturity through the HWH training:

> I learned to let go and to forgive myself, and to accept that I am not and cannot be the saviour of the world. I regained a new maturity and understanding of how to serve the world and promote human rights without doing that for the wrong reasons of self-punishment.

Others took forgiveness as a starting point for their real personal and professional journey. A young trainee psychologist suggested:

This is relevant to me as a person, in my personal life, and in my professional work, psychology. Being a future psychologist, the nature of my work requires that I heal myself as much as possible to be able to help others to heal too and not project my own sufferings onto them. It also requires that I work on myself, forgive myself, accept myself in order to accept my future patients with an open mind and no judgment and so on.

However, despite the consensus amongst the participants about the crucial role of self-forgiveness in personal growth, some participants, such as this young psychologist, suggested that this process is complex, and forgiveness is not a one-off experience, but ongoing:

The process of forgiving is definitely not an easy one. I would be lying if I said that I have come out of these workshops totally forgiven. No. I have been able to forgive myself for so many things throughout these workshops, and being able to talk about them in front of the group was extremely helpful too. But I still need to continue my work on forgiving myself. It's a process and I realize that it takes time, but thanks to HWH, I now have the tools, the understanding, and hopefully the emotional strength to go on with this process of forgiving myself and others.

Or at least, the HWH workshops provided an opportunity for some participants to "*discover some stepping stones leading to my forgiveness process.*" One such stepping stone is the understanding of what forgiveness is and how forgiveness may help bring peace to a person.

Another female psychologist whose parents fled the Lebanese civil war said that although she grew up abroad and had no memories of the war, she knew too well that what was unspoken of at home about the history and wars in Lebanon had had a profound impact on her. The workshops helped her develop a more sophisticated understanding of forgiveness:

We resist forgiving because we've been so badly hurt. Now, I understand that forgiveness is not about forgetting, it's about letting go of the grievances. By allowing forgiveness of oneself and others including our ancestors, we let go of shame, fear and guilt. We then no longer need to uphold the same grievances from one generation to another.

She thus connects forgiving with healing, which "*is a process that entails a complex link between our internal and external dialogue – forgiveness for oneself and for the Other*". As a professional who has just started getting involved in peace movements in Lebanon, she was acutely aware that she really needed to "*start working on my own peace to be able to reach out for others*". The HWH workshops played an important role in bringing this awareness of self-healing and self-compassion as a key to one fostering qualities such as compassion and acceptance for others, the foundation of peace-related work.

Another 'stepping stone' was compassion, or self-compassion which is closely followed on from the previous point, but nevertheless allowing us to regard it as a separate point as this participant tried to articulate:

Oddly, the most important lesson I gained is not about love, it is about compassion. When one has intransigent ideals, it is hard to accept one's weaknesses; the breakthrough I experienced was that I can never proclaim to be humane, if I deny myself compassion. (I hope this is clear enough)

Self-compassion is connected to peace with oneself as one participant summarises: "*I felt strong and confident to let go of the past and welcome new things in my life. With a compassion that I deserve better, loving myself, I feel more in peace with myself!*"

With increased understanding of the concept of forgiveness, self-forgiveness, self-compassion and self-acceptance can become possible. For some, self-forgiveness has been a key transition point in their journey of growth and learning. Such experiences seemed to catalyse a process of change in the participants. As we shall see below, many participants took self-forgiveness to be the starting point from where they began to make a real shift in their life.

(3) Integrating learning in personal and professional life

Participants expressed that personal growth as the result of participating in the HWH workshops was connected to their capacity to integrate the learning(s) in their personal and professional life. That is to say that much of the learning identified by the participants corresponded to the intention of the workshops. 85% of the participants reported having been able to integrate learning into their personal and professional life and they suggest that they are able to integrate learning at four different levels:

The first is at the group level by becoming part of an alliance born out of the HWH workshops. This bonding with the group has been a very important way to integrate learning in one's life. The group have voluntarily self-organised to meet in between the workshops to talk, reflect and practise some of the skills learned.

Indeed, one of the aims of the HWH workshops was to create and nurture a healing alliance. When asked about what it meant, the facilitators replied that the workshops should be able to empower the participants to bond in a small community of social activists. One of the tasks of the workshops was therefore to create a space for the participants to relate to each other profoundly as human beings and this relationship and bond would then serve as the basis for these individuals to offer an HWH experience for each other first and when they are ready, they would be able to facilitate others to embark on an HWH journey. One of the facilitators says: "*In this way, a community of self-loving and self-forgiving individuals grows and as it grows, it invites others to become part of it, hence a healing alliance.*"

This idea of alliance has allowed the participants to journey together as fellow travellers. They recognise that this alliance makes each other feel safe and confident as "*the love and support the HWH group has been/is beautiful and wholesome and makes activities and exercises flow smoothly and naturally.*"

Another participant writes:

> *One of the most valuable aspects of the workshop is the dynamic created between the members of the workshops. We have all become so close to one another, so caring for one another, and I now know that anytime I am not feeling well or anytime I would like to come up with a project in HWH, I can just pick up the phone and call the members and I will have their full support. It is really strange because we all come from completely different backgrounds, we have had different ways of growing up, in different countries even, we have different ways of thinking, different stories, but still, we were all able to connect on a very deep level and accept, learn from, appreciate, and love one another for who we truly are.*

In a country that has been torn by continued sectarian conflicts and violence, this alliance has true potential to transform the culture of Lebanese society from one of suspicion, alienation and intolerance to one of acceptance, solidarity and appreciation.

However, although it was hoped that embracing this bonding and close connection with one another would sustain the *alliance*, sadly there remains the need for 'leadership' from the facilitators in order to continue the meetings and interactions. We will return to this point when discussing the findings from the third set of research questions.

The second is at the level of personal integration both subtle and explicit. This is often reported as adopting a shift in one's attitude or better self-awareness as a way to change one's relationships with oneself, families and friends and to transform the qualities of one's life. Self-transformation sows the seeds for taking individual and collective action in healing and building peace. Integration at the personal or individual level is regarded as equally important as at group, communal and societal levels. Here a young psychology student comments on how each level is connected to the next one:

> On a personal and family level, I have been much more peaceful at home, much more understanding; listening and accepting my family more. And because of this increasing change in myself, the whole family dynamic is changing too. To be fair, it had already began to change since we went through family therapy, but the workshops and the tools given have given us an extra push too. I also showed my parents and sisters many of the exercises we did at the workshops and I constantly update them on our work. They absolutely love it.

Integrating change at a personal level can be practical as indicated above, but also conceptual. Here a 21-year old psychology student shares his understanding:

> I am starting to see the world differently lately, especially with the help of the workshops. The "connectedness" and unity of everything existing in this world is starting to become clearer to me. It is both good and bad that all is connected to and affected by all. Understanding why it is so is an almost impossible thing to do in this life – as far as I know. Until then, grasping and taking in this truth will help me on all levels of my life.

The third level is professional integration where the participants are now able to practise acquired tools and exercises or apply these tools or exercises in their workplaces. 45% of the participants mentioned this in the questionnaire. For instance, a business manager who also works as a life coach reports that she is applying all the tools learned in her work with clients. She suggests that by offering these tools and exercises, she is able to take the HWH workshop into her clients' life: "*They all noticed the change that happened [to me] and that I am forwarding to them.*"

A young teacher reports that she has begun using the tools and exercises she learned at the HWH workshops in her teaching and her work with young people:

> I work with high school students and school is a structure that doesn't create the space for various aspects of person to come into place. We focus most on the intellect not how can we educate the "whole child". This workshop has given me techniques to use with my students in my classes.

Another teacher talks about using a specific tool in her class to help engage with the students. Similarly, two NGO professionals say that they are able to use some of the tools in their own facilitation of peace workshops.

The last level of integration is social activism. 25% of the participants say that they are implementing learning from the HWH workshops in some form of community oriented project through volunteering, supporting social movements and participating in other forms of activism. This was attributed to one of the sessions during the workshop when the participants were invited to consider ways to take the HWH project into the communities. Here a young participant recalls that moment:

> Perhaps one of the most important aspects to me, was the last day of the last module, in which each of us discussed whether we could see ourselves continuing with HWH or not and how. This day was absolutely touching and motivating. The ideas that we all came up with, the plans that came up concerning schools, universities, workplaces, charity associations, and many others, were extremely energetic and lively. They are well-studied

plans full of enthusiasm and hard-work and I was so happy to know that the end of our journey is in fact the start of a new one.

Several psychology students have decided to embark on a joint project within their university. Here one of them shares their plans:

> *we have planned a whole series of meetings and 'mini-workshops' at XXX University to pass on what we have experienced and learned at HWH. Every month there will be two meetings of two hours each with up to 15 participants (psychology students mostly) in which we will be practicing exercises … relating to a certain theme. … And from now until the end of the year, there will be about 2 or 3 mini-workshops in which we will be able to practice deeper and for a longer period of time the exercises that we have already started and news ones too. The meetings serve as a support for the workshops and are also a way to keep all the students in touch with themselves and with the work we're all doing.*

Taking an initiative to proactively and creatively take the HWH into the community becomes one of the major outcomes of the workshops. One participant writes:

> *HWH has contributed to my decision to retrain in child and adolescent community mental health. … although I am deeply passionate about research, I will now use my time and skills to serve society as much as I serve science. The HWH workshops have contributed to this shift and I am deeply grateful.*

Summary

Findings from the first set of research questions suggest that the HWH workshops have had a deep and accumulative impact on the participants' journey of personal growth and professional development. The increased influence on the participants' self-awareness, openness to reflect on one's history and capacity to self-forgive, to be self-compassionate and to effect change in the wider world was particularly obvious in those who participated in 3-4 workshops. Hence we have chosen to use the word 'a journey' to describe these individual's learning and growth.

3.2 Findings from the 2nd set of research questions

In the 2ⁿᵈ set of research questions, we sought the participants' comments on their HWH workshop experiences as well as their feedback in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme. A mix of quantitative and qualitative data were employed in order to answer these questions.

First, we asked the participants to rate their overall experiences of the HWH workshops. Although, after each workshop, comments about the participants' experiences were invited to provide the organisers/facilitators with immediate feedback, what we report in this section are largely the findings from the survey done after the last workshop. Therefore, those who participated in all 4 or 3 or 2 workshops were encouraged to reflect on all the workshops they attended and those who took part in only one workshop, which was the last workshop, were reflecting on that particular workshop.

Then we asked the participants to identify those aspects of the workshops that could be improved and those aspects of the workshops that they found more constructive to their learning experiences. As already mentioned, these questions were posed following each workshop. Therefore, the Project Team and the workshop facilitators were able to adjust the programme in accordance with the feedback received. So what is included here is the participants' feedback over time, with an emphasis on wide-spread comments rather than anecdotes.

d. How do the participants rate their overall experience of the HWH training workshops? Why do they rate it in this way?

15 participants completed the final questionnaire. In seeking participants' rating of their overall experience of the HWH workshops, we asked seven questions:

The first one invited the participants to rate their experiences in relation to the stated aims of the HWH workshops. We used sub-questions related to the stated aims to seek the participants' comments and they rated each very highly as follows:

  i. Telling our stories and attending to those of others: 96%
 ii. Deepening connection to self and others: 98%
iii. Working with our personal, collective and ancestral past: 84%
 iv. Using embodied 'knowing' to diagnose historical wounds and explore healing: 80%
  v. Developing and forming a community of practice and learning: 88%
 vi. Engaging me in active and experiential learning related to its aims: 93%

Clearly, these figures could easily form a very strong statement to suggest that the HWH programme has successfully met its intended objectives with an overall rating of 89%.

However, the relatively low rating of iii and iv indicated that the goals concerning healing the past were difficult to meet. In particular, one psychology student gave the goal of working with personal, collective and ancestral past the lowest points and he later commented that the workshops touched the individuals deeply at a personal level, but not at a collective level, let alone any ancestral past. Similarly, a university professor made a note to say that she didn't think the goal to diagnose historical wounds and explore healing applicable to the workshops. What made their opinions noteworthy is that both participants attended all four workshops. We will revisit this point in the next section when we review the weaknesses and strengths.

Although the overall rating of v is good, one participant gave it a relatively low score of 2 out of 5 and added the following comment:

> *The ground work for this is set up but for some reason, which I can't figure out, the*

community is not actually practicing and definitely not learning from each other. We wait again and again for the authority to teach. Learning from the self and our peers needs to be worked on in a careful way... it is not reinforced in this culture –at least as far as it comes to mental health and deep self realization.

What we have seen here is the tension between individual liberation and the overall authoritarian culture within the society, and between the desire for autonomy and agency and the need for others or leaders to engender the changes.

The subsequent questions were related to the communication, preparation, design and facilitation. The participants' average rating on each item is listed separately here. It is easily observable that the participants were satisfied with the way the workshops were communicated, planned and executed.

2) The pre-workshop communications gave me the information I needed to learn about and prepare for the workshops: 91%
3) Materials provided by the workshop leaders were useful in preparing for the workshop: 95%
4) The design of the workshops met my needs: 91%
5) The workshops were well facilitated: 98%

What was most significant is the very high rating on the facilitation. Almost all the participants agreed that the workshop leaders have done a terrific job in facilitating their experiences. The praise was for the two facilitators who re-designed and delivered the second, third and fourth workshops but not for the first one. In fact, after the first workshop, the participants had reservations about the facilitator for two reasons: (a) she was a Westerner who knew very little about the Lebanese contexts; (b) she mainly focused on 'delivering' a course instead of 'engaging' with the participants.

Interestingly, the two facilitators who were considered as very 'successful' are also 'Westerners'. However, the participants seemed to identify with them more they had certain identity 'markers' which enabled them to be accepted as 'insiders' and not 'outsiders'. For one facilitator, the identity marker is his ancestral connection with Lebanon - his father being Lebanese Palestinian; and his early childhood spent in Lebanon. As for the other facilitator, she is of English and Russian backgrounds, but the identity marker that the participants acknowledged and accepted is her marriage into a Lebanese family, her social standing, connections and activities in Lebanese society and her spending time living between England and Lebanon. These so-called insider's 'identity markers' seem to suffice in bridging the distance between the facilitators and the participants. The fact that the two facilitators could not lead the workshops in Arabic but only in English didn't seem to be a weakness from the participants' perspective.

However, this research has identified this aspect as highly limiting because only English speaking participants (who are mostly educated outside of Lebanon) could take part in the HWH programme, thereby excluding many Lebanese whose English is not fluent enough to participate in the workshops. This last point will be re-visited later when we discuss the potential of the HWH work in contributing to the peacebuilding effort in Lebanon.

The final aspect that the participants rated was the logistical side of the workshop. As we see below, once again the participants were extremely satisfied with the attention to detail.

6) The logistics for the workshops were well executed: 98%
    i.   Transport arrangements were helpful: 100%
    ii. Food and snack choices were agreeable to both my tastes and dietary needs: 96%

As already mentioned by several participants, the location, the atmosphere, the ambience and the care were important ingredients for creating a safe space and for a successful workshop. In

contrast to the first venue which was on a university campus in a traditional classroom, the latter three workshops took place in the mountains on the outskirts of Beirut. In this setting, the participants had access to idyllic beauty – well maintained gardens, running water, winding paths into the wilderness, an olive grove, orange blossoms, scented wild flowers, songs of birds, the fluttering wings of colourful butterflies …

As the venue was not in the centre of Beirut, the organisers provided daily transport to collect the participants from a central location in the morning and take them back at the end of the day. This arrangement was appreciated by all. In addition, the freshly prepared lunches and snacks were recognised as key ingredients to the participants' workshop experiences. Here is a participant's comment which summarised everyone's sentiment:

> *The quality and presentation of the meal and snacks facilitated our work—there was an emphasis on light nourishing substance that doesn't make the body heavy. Very much appreciated.*

e. Which aspects of the HWH workshop were the participants most critical of?

Although, for most participants, the HWH workshops have been transformative at a personal level, there was some critique with regard to the activities and tools introduced during the workshop.

Due to the heuristic nature of the workshops where most of the feedback and suggestions were accepted and integrated into the subsequent workshop design, here we will limit our findings on this question to the feedback and comments received after the last workshop. This is also because in the last evaluation questionnaire, we invited the participants to review their experiences during all four workshops or the entire HWH programme, rather than just the last one.

Out of the 15 participants who completed the questionnaire, 5 didn't have any critical comments about the workshops. 9 participants pointed out that some of the activities offered during the workshops were not necessarily helpful for their learning. These activities identified, although very diverse and unique to each individual, that there were some overlapping comments regarding the 'Constellation' exercises. Out of the 9 participants, 6 suggested that they didn't enjoy the Constellation work for one reason or another. One participant found that there was too much Constellation related exercise; another one recalled that these Constellation exercises were very similar and a bit repetitive.

The psychology professor reflected further on this aspect in a general way, not exclusively concerning the Constellation work:

> *facilitator and participant co-contextualising the techniques [is really important]. For example there may be a technique that people just don't get. So part of the process of using the technique would be to interpret it and test it out, like explorers, like scientists, like curious children.*

Her reflection was echoed by many participants who didn't feel able to fully engage in some of the activities such as Constellation, partly due to the fact that they didn't develop an understanding in terms of where and how these instruments should be used, but most importantly, the group didn't go through a process of exploring when would be contextually relevant for them to use these tools and exercises. This reflection does not negate what the participants said earlier in this report that they were beginning to apply some of the techniques and tools in their personal and professional life. What was highlighted was the need to take the training to a deeper level where there are more opportunities to explore, to question, to experiment.

Another set of critique was directed at the programme's overall weakness in the aspect of *healing the wounds of history*. The participants had made the connection between self-forgiveness and

Other-forgiveness. However, they didn't seem to connect the programme to healing at a collective level. Here a young psychology student wrote in the questionnaire: "*More work and enlightenment is needed in the fields of ancestral past, collective intelligence and historical wounds.*"

A similar point was also raised during the very first workshop where many experienced trainers and facilitators joined the training with the view of acquiring skills and techniques for facilitating Lebanese people's healing journeys so that the traumas transmitted through the generations and the ruptures in the continuity of human spirit and identity could be mended and restored.

There were equally comments that too much focus was laid on the individual, especially the personal grievances which was either "*egoistic*" or "*having hardly any scope for moving forward*". These comments pointed out that although the workshops were intended to help the individual to let go of personal grievances as the result of past traumas, participants seemed to be mostly working through present personal issues.

Two participants were uncomfortable about the practices connected with spirituality. As neither of them is religious, they found the use of the word 'God' alienating. This NGO professional who has a background in philosophy wrote here:

> *My atheism is an essential part of my identity, and it does not at all prevent me from appreciating my spirituality, the spirituality of others, or the grandeur and beauty of the universe. As the training course included several exercises that asked the participants to talk with God or ask God to forgive someone, I felt left out of the loop in those sessions. I know that religious belief is vital for many people and I do not wish to impose my viewpoint on others. But it would be nice if the exercises could also integrate people of my worldview as well.*

Another participant supported the objection against using religious terms and pointed out that "*there is more room for the integration of spirituality into the HWH work in a way that respects all faiths and those that do not identify with this dimension.*"

A different set of critique, although only found in 3 participants, was directed to the programme evaluation – too much review and evaluation. This point, although minor, shows that the HWH team were very much dedicated to reflective practice, and their ongoing review of the programme resulted in more open and helpful feedback from all the participants. The fact that most of the participants put their names on the evaluation questionnaires and confirmed their willingness to be interviewed gave strong evidence to the openness and mutual trust that the programme managed to engender amongst the group.

One participant offered a list of questions for her own further inquiry but also for the organisers to consider:

> *i.e. how to contextualize the skills we learned so that they fit the intended group, how to integrate spiritual practices (there are many levels in which this can be done); how to fit in reflection and silence so that participants know how to tailor the techniques to them or how to create a responsible context that supports this contextualization and tailoring.*

Such questions coming from a participant show that the HWH programme had genuinely created a trusting relationship between the facilitators and the participants; so much so, the participants' are expressing their ownership of the activities, challenging the programme design and are willing to take it forward as their own project.

f.   Which aspects of the HWH were the participants most appreciative of?

Moving on to the aspects that the participants appreciated about the programme, what emerged were diverse features that have already been identified by other research questions. Broadly,

there are three areas that the participants really appreciated:

(1) the overall design of the programme;
(2) the activities selected; and
(3) the facilitators' approaches.

In the space below, we will summarise the participants' comments rather than providing individual quotations, as so much similar sentiment has been captured in other quotes in the previous sections.

(1) Overall design of the HWH Programme
The participants seemed to understand and appreciate the fact that the HWH training was designed as a personal development programme. Even those who are currently working in the field of training and supporting others' healing found this focus very helpful, let alone the NGO professionals, students and other emerging leaders in social activism. By tapping into the underlying intention of the workshops, the participants were able to experience them accordingly.

They appeared to appreciate the carefully chosen rhythm of the workshops, eg. "*the serenity and slow pace of the workshops*", the inclusion of time for reflection and allowing time to review the activities during the workshops and the participants' experiences of them.

The setting of the venue has been agreed to be a great ingredient of the success of the workshops. Participants used words such as 'magical', 'serene', 'enchanting' and 'transformative' to describe the setting. Such space offered a bridge for the participants to step into the innermost or higher self.

That is to say, if the setting of the workshop provided an outer space, the participants recognised that the inner space created within the workshop was another key feature. This inner space was the space held by the participants and facilitators in-between each other and between one's higher spiritual self and the other dimensions of oneself, including the social, emotional, intellectual and physical. This integration of the outer and inner spaces makes it possible for understanding, appreciation and acceptance of oneself and the Other, and allows the participants to step into a virtuous circle of positive change and personal growth. This aspect was attributed to the success of facilitation which we will turn to next.

The founder of the Centre for Lebanese Studies who participated in all the workshops observed:

> *There was the openness and sincerity that appeared amongst all present. This was quite a revelation in our otherwise divided society.*

This observation is echoed in the next section when we look at the HWH workshops' contribution to Lebanon's healing needs. However, we placed it here as the CLS' founder was himself very surprised at the consistent presence of openness, sincerity and non-judgement. This showed strong support for the participants' appreciation of the programme design.

(2) Activities selected for the programme
The participants highlighted a long list of activities that they found meaningful for themselves and also meaningful to apply in their life and work. The participants mentioned the importance of including:

- rituals, in particular, the celebratory ritual held at the site of the Garden of Forgiveness
- group-based activities, such as meditation and visualisation,
- small-group work (in pairs and in threes),
- activities that gave opportunities for the participants to come out of their comfort zone in a safe way,

- activities that helped create bonds between the participants,
- activities that allowed the participants to reflect and engage with the different aspects of themselves,
- activities that provided insight into one's own guilt, shame, embarrassment and trauma
- activities that promoted self-forgiveness and the forgiveness of the Other.

(3) Facilitators' approaches

The roles and presence of the facilitators (the latter two) have been acknowledged as the greatest strength of the workshops. The participants recognised that they were able to create a safe and non-judgemental space throughout the workshop and their approaches allowed the participants to flourish.

First was the balance of gender (male and female), age (younger and older), other backgrounds (Lebanese/Palestinian and English/Russian) and professional training (Hoffman approaches, Jung, NLP, Constellation, and other psychotherapeutic schools), as well as the complementarities where one facilitated and the other observed the group and provided (therapeutic) support to individuals when needed. Through this partnership between the facilitators, the HWH workshops remained safe for all the participants.

Second was the modelling of the desired relationships and rapport amongst the participants. The two facilitators worked together and showed the true spirit of collaboration where there was no ego, but instead there was genuine care for each other and care for the group's learning, growth and well-being. The rapport and harmony between the two facilitators had a huge impact on the participants, and hence the participants recognised the "*wonderful dynamic created between members of the workshop*", "*the beautiful love and support of the group*" and "*building heart to heart connections and a sense of community*".

Third was the generosity of the facilitators whose main concern was for the participants to learn and grow. Therefore they provided detailed information on the workshop activities, gave clear written directions in terms of how to use them and put together notes on their accumulated wisdom about facilitation and shared them with all the participants. There was no sense of their holding back anything. We share one observation here:

> *A key point is how much the facilitators are concerned and eager to let us participants take in the information and experiences they're providing generously. They genuinely care about us, which made us care more about each other and the mission of HWH.*

Lastly was the humanity of the facilitators which was infectious. This was picked up by several participants, eg. "*the facilitators being humane created the group's dynamic*". On the one hand, there was the facilitators' training and experiences in working with groups; and on the other hand, there was the intention of letting the human spirit or the higher self guide the group process. When we asked the facilitators to comment on the participants' feedback about them, they simply answered that they were being themselves and that they were in touch with their innermost self.

Summary

Findings from the second set of research questions suggest that the participants were overwhelmingly positive about the HWH programme design, the methodological and pedagogical approaches, the activities selected, the physical environment where the workshops took place, and the safe (inner) spaces created. The most praise-worthy aspect of the programme seems to be the personal qualities, caring attitudes and professional skilfulness of the facilitators who were able to connect with the participants at many levels and who also engendered a learning and healing environment where the participants connect with their deeper or higher self, the nature and each other.

However, we also noted that the facilitators' capacities and qualities could make some participants feel dependent. They expressed the need to have a similar person (as a skilled professional facilitator) who would be able to hold the space for them when the participants meet informally to practise the techniques in-between the workshops.

We end this section with comments from various participants about the facilitators:

I think the facilitators' relationship (M and A) is a wonderful example of how two individuals support and lift each other and solve problems together. I benefitted immensely witnessing this. I think they are role models for how team or pair work can work out and support HWH work.

***

When partners are as supportive and understanding of one another as M and A, facilitation is infinitely more effective. The way they worked together made me realize how important the deeper connections between us set the stage for developing and growth. It feels like a pillar for the work we are doing.

3.3 Findings from the third set of research questions

In the third set of research questions, we aimed to seek the participants' perceptions on the potential contribution of the HWH programme in Lebanon's ongoing peacebuilding effort. Equally, the research was interested in finding out how the programme could be improved towards the peacebuilding end. The last question may sound repetitive, as we already invited constructive feedback on the programme from the participants. However, in practice, the last question was welcome and necessary because it allowed the participants to reflect on the programme, its design, structure and audience from a new angle.

g. In what way might the HWH training help contribute to a more peaceful Lebanon?

The participants were united in recognising that the HWH training can help contribute to a more peaceful Lebanon by cultivating the individual's self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-compassion and self-forgiveness. They also share a common diagnosis that Lebanese society is plagued with mistrust due to unsolved historical violence and continued conflicts between different groups and communities. As there has never been a process of developing a collective understanding of the past, nor reconciliation with the past or an explicit national process of reconciliation amongst the different communities, there remain the grievances and perceived injustices. As one of the participants illustrated here, the danger of non-understanding is the repeated violence and aggression:

> *In Lebanon, we are still in the phase of non-understanding what we are doing and continuing repeating the violence aggressively even in the region which is a 'calm area', the war lives inside the people and manifest in our behaviour toward society and toward our self.*

In addition, the participants suggested that the Lebanese are a close-knit society where people tend to know each other well. This apparent closeness is then paradoxically complicated by reluctance from individuals to reach out to each other in an open and transparent manner. As one of the participants pointed out, there was a need to "*bring a sense of awareness of the humane side of each one of us*". We can only assume that this suggests an awareness of each person's humanity is the basis for trust, openness and solidarity.

So what we have seen was enthusiasm from the participants in identifying different ways that the HWH programme might be helpful in building a more peaceful Lebanon. Here this participant was looking at the potential of integrating the HWH workshops within the educational system in order to help the society to overcome its past:

> *A major part of the aim of HWH is understanding and dealing with past problems and addressing the residual pain and difficulties from major traumas like the Lebanese war(s) in order to really overcome them and live more in peace. A lot of people do not acknowledge the link between their problems now and the past wars and traumatic experiences, or even their parents' and grandparents' past incidences. Educating them through the workshops and using the proper tools will help them individually and within their families and small communities, which will eventually help in the achievement of forgiveness at a larger scale, thus healing and peace.*

Creating a rippling effect of transformation starting from the individuals who then reach out others and the communities, the HWH programme has engendered great optimism amongst the participants. However, although some participants saw the HWH as a good start, they also maintained that "*it is not enough. Forgiveness is a rare quality. We have been brought up on a steady diet of holding grudges in this country. Lebanon has a lot of residual hatred due to its history.*"

Therefore, other participants proposed more proactive approaches. Here is a proposition that the HWH trainees or the 'HWHers' as the group called themselves collaborate with NGOs in order to effect positive change in Lebanon:

> *HWH work is needed especially if HWHers collaborate with existing organisations and groups. It is needed because very very few people/organisations in the field of human development give others resources for living a more meaningful and happy life. Usually the aim, in subtle and not so subtle ways, is not to encourage self-sustaining development and the accumulation of inner resources. Dependence and group affiliation receives priority.*

Similarly, this participant suggested that scaling up would be necessary to achieve the HWH's potential:

> *in their current format, they are not adequate to reach as large of an audience as needed to achieve healing and peace on a national level. As much as I love Krishnamurti and as much insight as the phrase 'be the being the doing gets done' has, I also think it is essential to think in a result-based approach (numbers, villages, schools, universities, members of political parties) if our ambition is to truly achieve peace and healing among all Lebanese.*

However, whether to integrate the HWH programme in the educational system, or to take a grassroots approach, the participants recognised that more workshops would be necessary so as to develop a critical mass who can help shift the culture of Lebanese society from one of distrust to one of openness, trust and harmony.

h. How can we strengthen the HWH programme further so that it would better meet the peacebuilding needs in Lebanon?

The participants offered many constructive suggestions regarding the different ways that the HWH programme can be further strengthened. As we have seen, they expressed a genuine conviction that these workshops are necessary for Lebanon's peacebuilding. The suggestions can be divided into three groups: the first concerns making the programme structure more explicit; the second relates to adaptation and piloting of the programme; and the third is about encouraging the existing group to be more self-organised.

Let's look at the first set of comments. Several participants suggested that the structure of the programme should be made more explicit. They asked for, as an example, "*more structuring in terms of how the program will flow and what materials will be covered in each day*". One or two participants echoed these comments because they were considering themselves as trainers/facilitators who would like to use the HWH programme materials in their own work context.

In the second kind of comments, the participants pointed out the need for ongoing adaptation and piloting "*so that we can learn how it is used with different populations/groups*". As the existing extended cohort is from exclusively middle-class backgrounds, the participants recognised the importance of further piloting it with different groups and with individuals from wider backgrounds. For instance, one concern is that "*it will not be implemented in rural and less westernised contexts*" without further adaptation.

There are a few participants who are concerned that Lebanon is not necessarily a post-conflict society and therefore it is not clear if forgiveness (self-forgiveness or other-forgiveness) is effective. Here is an example of such concern:

> *In our contexts, the current conversation is about whether to go and fight, or use non-violence to protest and fight violent acts, or to just run away from it all … These are the conversations that are happening now, so unless forgiveness can have a meaningful role*

to play in the current state of things, it shouldn't just be inserted out of context just because some people decided it would be great to have a workshop about it. There has to be meaningful integration.

This comment shows the challenge of peacebuilding in any society. As this evaluation report has captured, on the one hand, many participants appreciated the modest ambition of the programme as a personal transformative journey allowing the individual to develop self-awareness, cultivate self-acceptance and foster self-compassion and self-forgiveness; on the other hand, they are concerned about how such a highly meaningful personal healing programme could have impact at a collective and even a political level.

A further challenge which became visible is the dilemma of the programme: although the organisers would like to see more participants actively practise and use the trained techniques in their work and lives, many participants felt a lack of confidence in using them because they don't feel that they have been properly trained to a standard in order to do so. Here one participant shared her thoughts on this:

As I think about how the HWH work can be introduced in the university context I keep coming up against the challenge that psychotherapeutic techniques are being used by persons who have not been trained according to recognized standards—such as those recognized by Psychology programs. … Also some sort of peer or advisory group is needed for consultation with regard to specific cases and situations and arising questions. I've been trying out the tasks on individuals who are curious and many things are arising and I don't know how to resolve them and would appreciate perspectives from others like me but also from experts.

This reflected an earlier comment that some participants were confused about whether the HWH was training (so that the participants learned certain skills and techniques for further use in life and work) or healing (which is a personal journey and there is no expectation of the individual to take the project forward). Perhaps in inviting the participants to explore further, the organisers inadvertently gave a mixed message about the purpose of the workshops.

Thus one participant suggests a solution to this dilemma:

Possibly we need to keep returning to why we are doing this work (personally, professionally etc..) and integrate this goal into the workshops in some way because a goal if it is personally formulated, revised and refined and used at the right time is a lift and a guiding light especially in times of uncertainty or confusion.

The last set of suggestions is to do with the necessity for the cohort to become more self-organised. This was in response to one of the programme's goals – to develop a therapeutic alliance. This alliance refers to a number of things, including the bond between the participants, the solidarity founded on a shared interest in healing and growth and the implied partnership to support each other's ongoing healing journey. These noble aspirations were challenged in practice. As was already pointed out above, the group needed to develop confidence in pursuing the tasks together. Thus they appeared very overly-dependent on the programme organisers. This has been frustrating for all.

Therefore, one participant offered some insight:

I am doubtful that the project will reach its aspired goals if the community is simply asked to self-organize and take it from there. From experience, I foresee that the momentum of the group will dwindle in time and each individual will go back into his/her own life. I suggest that there be some strong centralization and leadership from the Center for Lebanese studies to lead the group into implementing some pre-planned activities. For example the Center can plan to organize a HWH training in July for instance for new

beneficiaries (with the current group being in charge of developing and implementing the training). Or this can be done as a series of workshops in which each few individuals of the HWH team can organize one training.

This comment showed that the group was enthusiastic in maintaining the therapeutic alliance, but also pointed out that such an alliance could only be alive and serving if there is consistent support and regular initiative to keep the flame kindled.

Summary

In exploring the third set of questions, this research unfolded the participants' recognition of the HWH training's potential contribution to a more peaceful culture in Lebanon. The focus on cultivating the individual's self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-compassion and self-forgiveness seems to be appropriate in the current political context of Lebanon. However, further exploration is needed in order to understand better the steps necessary for collective healing and peacebuilding across the divisions.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we presented the findings from three sets of research questions drawing on the data collected over a period of 18 months. The data gave strong evidence that the HWH programme was very successful in many ways, especially in that it had met its intended aims and objectives, facilitated the participants' experiences of personal healing and growth and thus offered some optimism for a future culture of peacefulness in Lebanon.

The programme design, the facilitators' approaches, and the physical environments of the workshop venue, the human space and overall workshop settings, and the choice of activities have been identified as pivotal in shaping the participants' experiences.

However, this research also identified an area for further improvement: the HWH Project Team needs to consider how to make the link between personal healing and collective healing of the past more explicit. In its current design and setting, the participants were not able to engage at the level of collective forgiveness, nor healing the wounds of history.

In Lebanon where there lacks a collective sense of shared history, and where the confessional system, stipulating that all the country's sects (at least 18 recognised ones) shall be equitably represented in public employment and in the government, groups tend to be in competition with each other about perceived injustice and past traumas and suffering. Therefore, there are few opportunities for joined political effort to deal with the collective past. This is compounded by the fact that those responsible for the mass atrocities during the war are amongst the same people responsible for rebuilding the country, and hence there is a reluctance to deal with the collective past (Haugbolle, 2005).

Furthermore, as Khalaf (1993) notes, the unfinished nature of the end of the Lebanese civil war left the nation in a limbo in dealing with the collective memories of the conflict. There is a tendency to structure interpretations of the war around a simplified antagonistic discourse of "the Other", aggravating the dividedness amongst Sects (Haugbolle, 2005).

In the light of these complexities, the HWH Project Team's 'narrow' focus on nurturing the individual's self-awareness, self-forgiveness and self-compassion might be the only way forward in helping the nation to heal the wounds of history. We will look further into this aspect in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Lebanon carries a lot of pain. The more I grow up, the more I observe that people are about to explode. Everyone walks around almost ghostly, rarely sharing feelings, satirizing the situation, and not acknowledging their own pain/states. It feels like I have to uncover so many layers/masks before I can "see" the person. Self-healing is the priority for this population. If we can first connect to ourselves, the process of connecting to others will come more naturally, with less fear of the inherited Othering that continues to divide the country politically, religiously, class-wise...

- a young high school teacher who participated in all four HWH workshops

The context of the HWH programme was complex.

Lebanon has an uneasy relationship to the violence of its past, fuelled by intergenerational differences in perspective (Khalaf, 2014), ongoing sectarian tensions, and a historical pattern of general amnesty (5 in 50 years)[9], creating what Larkin (2012: 5) describes as a culture founded on 'almost absolute immunity from prosecution or...public accountability'. This juxtaposes with the overhanging threat of future violence owing to the instability of the 1990 Taif Accord, internal sectarian frictions (between its diverse population of Christian, Druze, and Shi'ia and Sunni Muslims) and regional conflicts and interests, in particular those of the 2006 Israel-Hezzbollah conflict and recent civil war in Syria which further entrench and inflame pre-existing sectarian divides.

To complicate the situations even further, it has been noted that no war in Lebanon in its relatively short history has so far come to an end as a result of direct and unmediated negotiations between the parties concerned (Choueri, 2007: 21). Interventions from Syria and the West in particular, have been key in shaping Lebanese politics and its every attempt at peacebuilding.

Meanwhile the strong sectarian and social identities that made Lebanon's civil wars psychologically possible remain present, under the ongoing tensions between Christians, Druze and Sunni Muslims on the one hand and political Shi'ism on the other. As King-Irani (2000) notes,

> The scale and duration of Lebanon's violent conflict engendered deep feelings of bitterness, fear, anger, powerlessness, frustration, confusion, and despair. If the Lebanese fail to confront and transcend these legacies of victimization, they will never be free from desires for vengeance that still lurk beneath the surfaces of daily life.

Despite the existence of a political structure that enables sectarian power-sharing, trust is weak and fear is strong. There is no consensus or shared aspiration amongst stakeholders with regard to moving forward, and this lack of a common goal further complicates the role of would-be peace-builders in the region.

It was within this context that the HWH programme was developed (starting with an international conference on the theme of 'Healing the Wounds of History: Addressing the Roots of Violence' in 2011) and the workshops piloted. By bringing together participants from diverse backgrounds and through diverse activities that encouraged the group to experience and embrace our common humanity, the programme aimed to find ways for these individuals to engage with and support each other's journey of becoming liberated from their own past, woundedness and grievances.

In this chapter, we will analyse the findings from four emerging themes:

---

[9] This 'general amnesty' approach, which involves legislative pardon and exoneration for politically motivated war crimes was also employed in 1949, 1951, 1958 and 1967, and has tended to be pushed for by parties who have vested interests in keeping war files closed, including in most recent conflicts Syria, Lebanese Militia leaders and traditional elites (Larkin, 2012: 5)

a. **Encounter and Empowerment**: Peacebuilding starts with empowering individuals to take courage and address their own psychological blockage in a human encounter within a safe space;

b. **Humanisation and Wholeness**: Healing involves becoming whole and human again and rituals and facilitated activities are important humanising processes which enabled the participants to experience oneself and each other as whole persons;

c. **Understanding and Awareness**: To end the cycles of violence requires an awareness and understanding that our past (recent person past and collective past as well as memories of distant past) can impinge on our present.

d. **Forgiveness and Compassion** (including self-forgiveness and self-compassion): Forgiveness is simultaneously a disposition, virtue, attitude, process and act. However, without self-forgiveness and self-compassion, it is impossible to either move beyond the past's hold on the present or develop genuine relationships and solidarity with the Other. Forgiveness is a foundation for peaceful culture in Lebanon.

a. **Encounter and Empowerment**

I felt as though I was connecting at a very deep level with almost everyone. It was as if we could see into each other, as if we were all naked, with our masks off, and were letting each other in and sharing our most intimate selves with each other. There is no other way I'm able to explain it.

- a participant who attended 3 HWH workshops

Peacebuilding in Lebanon requires reconciliation between sects and groups, and reconciliation between past and present. Reconciliation, according to Lederach (1997), stresses that relationships, in their full range of psychological dimensions, are at the core. The HWH programme seemed to follow Lederach's conceptual framework of reconciliation which is grounded within human relationships as the main ingredient of peacebuilding in divided societies such as Lebanon.

The findings of this research unfolded that the HWH programme had indeed created a space where humans-in-relation can become possible (Lederach, 2000). To re-build trust and to re-establish human relationship, the programme offered opportunities for emotional and psychological aspects of violence to be addressed.

One of the workshop organisers, Alexandra Asseily looks at the primordial bases for violent conflicts and proposes to address the deep emotional drivers, the brutality, or the way the conflict takes on its own 'persona' once commenced. In this case, she takes a step further from Lederach's idea of reconciliation and thus maintains:

Current as well as past, or more historic, conflicts affect us psychologically as individuals and in our relationships, especially with loved ones (not just 'Others' or enemies). They shape our beliefs and patterns of behaviour. This contributes to our propensity to participate in the next wave of strife or pass it on to the next generation thereby creating a cycle of violence. (Asseily, 2007: 3).

By addressing these issues and tackling them at the level of the individual and then the group, Asseily proposes, we can defuse the emotional charges against the Other that have perpetuated these cycles of violence.

As we have seen from our research findings, what can be instigated at the level of the individual has genuine potential to be applied to groups of individuals. Indeed, although the HWH's aims and

objectives were modest – by focusing on each person and by helping liberate the small things in each person and unblock the pathway of growth – the team had hoped to plant a seed for greater transformation in Lebanese society.

To liberate and to be liberated, the individuals must encounter oneself and one another within a shared reality. Freire (2000) proposes the principle of conscientization, namely 'awareness-of-self-in-context'. To develop such an awareness requires an encounter of people with themselves and with the realities they experience and face. Conscientization suggests that 'people are knowledgeable about, capable of naming, interacting with, and responding to their own realities in dynamic ways' (Freire, 2000, p. 112).

The findings particularly pointed to the central role of encounter. The design of the workshops provided multiple opportunities for the participants to encounter themselves, each other, and encounter the past and present at many levels. As illustrated by the HWH word cloud in Chapter Three, these encounters formed a strong basis for the participants to develop bonding and belonging.

b. Humanisation and Wholeness

Once everyone was done, we all hung our strips on a tree inside the garden [Garden of Forgiveness] and then stood in a circle each holding his own candle to say our final goodbyes for the day and for this final module too. When we stood in a circle and every single person was making eye contact with one another, I broke into tears. I couldn't help it. All I was feeling was happiness and pride to see myself and all the other members come this far in just a year or so. It is impossible to describe the progress we've all made and I just hope and promise to work for many others to be standing in the exact same spot feeling just as peaceful and healed as we were feeling that day…
- 21-year old psychology student who participated all four HWH workshops

Rituals and ceremonies are essential components of the HWH workshops. As Giddens (1991) points out, rituals are as pivotal to individuals' well-being as much as they are for social harmony and community cohesiveness. Similarly, others argued that rituals can play a significant role in healing (Tursunova, 2008). Rituals have been used to restore broken and interrupted relationships in individuals and communities.

Our research data showed that individuals felt the depth of their experiences and the empowerment of the HWH intervention in these rituals and other activities. They explored and strengthened the bonds that connect them. In developing intimacy/relationship with others in the group, the participants felt that they themselves were being affirmed. Self-affirming or self-acceptance is the basis for individuals to then develop relationships with others. Several of the HWH activities mentioned by the participants, such as bonding and group-based sharing, confirmed the illusion of separateness and the deeper truth of interconnectedness.

With the full knowledge of the group's diversity, the HWH programme organisers deliberately omitted the information about each participant's ethnic, religious, other social backgrounds and his/her position in an organisation. Participants were invited to arrive at the workshop without any 'labels' (although paradoxically, the participants also acknowledged that Lebanon is a tightly knitted society where people seem to know each other). What emerged from this research was that despite their differences (in sectarian identities and other identities), there has been this strong sense of belonging – the participants felt that they belonged regardless of their immigrant statuses, religion, ethnicity or social standing. They felt that they were just as human and humane as the person sitting next to them.

Although the identities and loyalties of communities, as well as their very political goals cannot be ignored, the complexity of the Lebanese sectarian conflicts appeared to have been swept under the carpet, or at least, intentionally disregarded. This was one of the strategies that the organisers

applied in order to make the workshops open, inviting and safe for self-exploration. Indeed, from the findings of this research, this active disregarding was certainly a strength rather than a weakness of the programme as it allowed the participants to immediately step into a safe and non-judgemental space and to experience a common humanity together.

A connected aspect of the HWH programme is its pledge to the individual's higher and spiritual self rather than situated and social identities. As the data suggested, this was appreciated by most participants as they were able to connect with each other deeply and truly. For instance, many recalled, as one of the most memorable moments, of being uplifted spiritually through several of the group's rituals, such as 'joining' and the 'letting go' at the Garden of Forgiveness, a symbolic sacred site for the group.

As the research findings illustrate, workshops aimed at healing must include rituals and activities that encourage the participants to experience the wholeness of their being, i.e. physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. As one of the participants said: "*When you start to position yourself between you and different aspects of yourself and you include your wiser soul/self you can begin to see things in a completely different way.*' In other words, they must encounter each other in their full humanity in order to connect with each other from their humanity.

c. Understanding and Awareness

> *A major part of the aim of HWH is understanding and dealing with past problems and addressing the residual pain and difficulties from major traumas like the Lebanese war(s) in order to really overcome them and live more in peace. A lot of people do not acknowledge the link between their problems now and past wars and traumatic experiences, or even their parents' and grandparents' past incidences.*
>
> - A HWH workshop participant

It has been argued that humans can inherit memories of trauma from previous generations, sometimes from generations in a remote past. This means that individuals grow up carrying a certain emotional 'sting' that may be latent. This can be part of a person's belief, disposition, or general attitude towards oneself and others. In order to return to one's true self, it is necessary to engage in a process of healing in order to shift our consciousness towards a more integrated (rather than divided) sense of Self.

Volkan (1999) introduced the notion of 'chosen trauma' which refers to the shared image of an event (in the past) that has caused a large group (i.e. ethnic or religious group) to feel helpless, victimised and humiliated by another group. Chosen trauma is utilised to psychologise and to mythologise the event so that the group will carry the image of the event, together with the associated shared feelings of hurt and shame and with the defences against perceived shared conflicts they initiate, from generation to generation. Volkan calls this the transgenerational transmission of trauma as the image of the event eventually becomes a significant marker of the large-group identity.

An important finding of this research was that the participants were able to develop understanding and awareness of the connection between their personal emotional baggage and collective traumas passed down from one generation to another.

Although intending to develop the participants' awareness and understanding of the latent emotional 'stings' and the transgenerational nature of trauma, instead of engaging the participants in war-related memories, the programme addressed the emotional 'markers' and 'stings' using artistic ways, somatic experiences and embodied knowing. Thus the workshops avoided the risk of 'active-remembering', due to its potential to reignite ethnic and sectarian hostilities (Divine-Wright, 2001).

This research noted that such understanding and awareness was developed in both younger and older participants. The reason that we wanted to highlight the younger participants' experiences was because it has been well documented and researched that post-war Lebanese youths have become trapped between collective memory and collective amnesia (cf. Larkin, 2011). Khalaf (2014: 102) describes Lebanese youth as remaining 'devoid of war memory' due to mass emigration during conflict, whilst many older Lebanese embrace nostalgia, silence and collective amnesia. So exploring the younger participants' engagement in the HWH workshops provided further insights into the young people's contribution to peacebuilding in Lebanon.

What we have seen in this research was that younger participants of 18-35 years old (who constituted more than 50% of the participants)[10] were actively engaged in reflecting, revealing and healing. Throughout the four workshops, this research collected young participants' stories of personal closures and individual transformation. Many had expressed determination to pursue a more active path of continued healing and of helping others to do likewise.

The younger people's transformation was the result of their increased awareness and understanding of themselves and their relationship with the country's collective past. As indicated in the previous pages, especially in the plans of psychology students, they seemed to be willing to take responsibility for making a difference.

d. Forgiveness and Compassion

> *It has made me understand that the key to forgiveness is self-love and acceptance. And this self love is a process that you feed into…When one is open to love him/herself, automatically there is an openness that he/she is willing to have with others…Loving oneself and forgiveness is acknowledgement of the good and the bad in the past without carrying "it" (the past) into the future; what we should carry is how they grew/learnt.. the concept of clock (learning from past) versus "psychological time" (dwelling on past) that Eckhart Toll talks about …*
> - Psychology student from NDU who participated three HWH workshops

Addressing the emotions of hurt, pain, humiliation and shame in individual and group identities towards renewed self-awareness and self-understanding through self-forgiveness is an important step. Thus Asseily (2007) suggests that each person has a part in the cycles of violence, actively or passively, therefore it is the individual's responsibility to step out or end the cycle. The HWH research suggests that this responsibility lies in self-overcoming and self-transformation.

Asseily and others (argue that central to transcending emotional fuses (of violence) is forgiveness and compassion. Forgiveness has been studied rather timidly over the centuries by theologians, philosophers and peacebuilders. It was only in 1985 that psychologists began to link the clinical implications of forgiveness to the emotional recovery of victims of different forms of violence. As mentioned by Worthington (1998, 1), "Before 1985, only five studies investigating forgiveness had been identified. In the thirteen years since then, more than fifty-five scientific studies have been conducted to study forgiveness and to help people learn how to forgive."

Furthermore, the nature of forgiveness has been varyingly understood. Despite the differences, an account of forgiveness tends to reveal what is morally desirable and good about it, as well as showing how it is possible. Worthington (2001) and Enright (2001) agree that to forgive requires an emotional transformation in which the subject swaps resentment and desire for revenge for an understanding of the hurt, respect for the offender and search for empathy and compassion.

Nevertheless, often, standard models render forgiveness incapable of contributing to psycho-social processes that break the cycles of violence. These understandings make forgiveness a tool

---

[10] The reason that the HWH programme attracted so many young people was due to a generous grant from the Fetzer Institute who sponsored the costs of all four workshops.

that belongs only to the victim (Casarjian 1992). For instance, Luskin (2001) suggests that forgiveness constitutes an experience of peace and understanding that emerges from the analysis carried out by the offended party of the rules that they themselves have constructed to judge the behaviour of others. As a result, they refuse to allow the memory of the offence to 'ruin' their present. Luskin says that victims will only opt for forgiveness if they want to. Likewise, Enright (2001) argues that in every case the decision to forgive is one that can only be taken by the person who forgives; the decision will depend on an individual´s attributes and his/her interest in adopting a given position.

The HWH programme presented an additional dimension of forgiveness – not only as a virtue or attitude as Enright (2001) and others see it, but also as an ongoing process and an experience. Although forgiveness can be understood through reasoning and conceptualising, our research pointed out that a real understanding of forgiveness was developed through individuals experiencing forgiveness. As the programme refrained from engaging directly with individual's narratives of past traumas or events of interpersonal transgression, it instead invited the participants to experience self-forgiveness and self-compassion.

According to Enright and The Human Development Study Group (1996), self-forgiveness is facing one's own transgression without the negative feelings, thoughts, or behaviours directed at the self and with love, compassion and generosity towards the self instead; without the transgressions being condoned, excused, or forgotten (Hall & Fincham, 2008). Thus self-forgiveness entails accepting one's responsibility for the wrongdoing committed by the self. This means accepting those parts of the self that one has previously regarded as unacceptable due to the transgression.

The HWH workshop participants' experiences suggested a move from forgiveness as a tool belonging to the victim, to forgiveness as part of an individual's way of being-in-the-world. As we have seen in this research, self-forgiveness is highly restorative – it restores goodwill, self-respect and dignity (see also Dillon, 2001).

Furthermore, as the quote above demonstrates, many participants had deep experiences within this dimension of the programme. This suggests that only by experiencing intrapersonal forgiveness (which was more appropriate given the setting and contexts of the HWH workshops) can the individual have a better understanding of interpersonal forgiveness as well as the part that forgiveness can play in liberating people and communities from the memories of past traumas and wounds as a result of violent history.

What emerged from this research was that for this particular group of individuals, there was a common understanding of forgiveness. As said, this understanding was the fruit of group activities aimed at individuals' self-forgiveness. This experiential understanding appeared to be deeper, less superficial. This could be a potentially significant finding of this research – the recognition of the necessity to have the process of preparation in place so that individuals can be ready for a journey of healing through forgiveness. Although forgiveness and compassion are sacred gifts, they are not easily accepted and appreciated without prior educative encounters. This is because it is impossible to imagine that a culture of compassion and the practice of forgiveness can be introduced to a community before time and energy are invested in developing an awareness of such a need.

Further research is necessary in order to fully comprehend how the HWH workshops have impacted on the participants' healing, and what would count as healing. Other psychometric measures may be introduced in future research in order to grasp the processes and effects of self-forgiveness and how it might contribute to the participants' interpersonal forgiveness.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter, we highlight key insights emerging from this research. We are aware that any conclusion is merely one way to interpret the data, as we are certain that there are many other ways that the findings could be analysed and construed.

Nevertheless we offer these learnings as they directly address the questions posed by this inquiry.

a. Individuals carry with them a latent woundedness regardless of whether they are directly or indirectly affected by violence in the recent or past history. Such woundedness is a major hindrance for social harmony, unity and solidarity amongst people, especially in areas of the world where communities have been divided by violent atrocities. So it is necessary to provide ongoing experiences of encounter, understanding, interaction and reflection so as to enable the individuals and groups to acquire a readiness for healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

b. Programmes such as the HWH workshops can play an important part in supporting individual and communal healing journeys due to the safe space it creates and its methodological approaches that embody care, trust, respect, listening and other values. The safe space was the result of both the programme design and the skilfulness and sincerity of the facilitators. The methodological approaches to the programme have had a far-reaching impact on the participants in different ways. Amongst the methods, particularly mentioned were the rituals and the bonding exercises which were considered to be profoundly effective as they allowed the participants to connect with each other at a human level.

c. As a step-by-step approach to individual healing and growth, the HWH programme is transformative, especially through a smooth progression from a relationship with one's self and one's past, to a relationship with the Other in the group and in wider communities, and finally to the possibility of collective joint actions. This focus on personal journey from self-awareness to self-acceptance, self-compassion and self-forgiveness, although individualistic, has been recognised as having the potential to enable the participants to radiate their new found wholeness, integrity and peacefulness to those around, thus creating a rippling effect and cycle of positive change.

d. A key to the HWH workshops lies in its capacity to bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds within Lebanese society, and to recognise each participant's identity and personal experiences as unique, but at the same time, to allow the deepest connection with each other to unfold beyond all differences. This is essentially how a society can develop solidarity amongst its divergent groups. The bond developed through the workshops became one of the most significant aspects of the programme.

e. As the HWH programme illustrates, learning about and experiencing self-forgiveness and self-compassion is liberating, and it is pivotal to individual's developing a more holistic self-concept and self-understanding. It is an important step towards understanding interpersonal forgiveness too and can help prepare individuals for engaging in reconciliation between the self and Other, and between groups.

f. During the HWH workshops, the rituals held in the Garden of Forgiveness helped bring the awareness that by forgiving, and by taking the responsibility for stepping out of the cycles of revenge and negative emotions, each individual can become a 'good ancestor'. Thus the historical significance of the Garden of Forgiveness lies in the way that the Garden is and will be used for individuals and communities to reflect on Lebanon's collective past, to forgive in order to appreciate the gifts from the previous generations and prepare the gifts for future generations.

Based on the evaluation findings, the following recommendations are presented for the future development, sustainability and expansion of the Healing the Wounds of History Programme in Lebanon and beyond:

1. As the project is further established, training could be provided to facilitators who would run the workshops in different languages.

2. The recruitment process could better inform the candidates about the methodologies and approaches, and clarify the nature of the workshops – healing or training.

3. Further expansion of HWH workshops will require carefully selected and well trained facilitators who have a deep understanding of the intricacies of the history and current challenging realities in Lebanon.

4. For the programme to have a wide impact in Lebanon and beyond, it is necessary to continue piloting it in different settings and contexts and with various groups of participants.

5. When evaluating future workshops, measures on self-forgiveness could be introduced in order to understand better the process of self–forgiveness and the variables that may facilitate this process (cf. McCullough, 2000; Thompson and Synder, 2003).

6. While continuing piloting the workshops, it is necessary to systematically develop and consolidate a pedagogical model for facilitating personal healing and growth in divided societies.

In conclusion, the HWH programme enjoyed a highly successful pilot implementation in Lebanon. It was extremely well received by the participants and has achieved its key objectives. According to the project team, the HWH is homoeopathically small healing 'interventions', during which individuals are empowered to learn to love and forgive themselves, to bond with others and to support and inspire each other to take similar small steps towards positive changes in the world.

Continued consolidation and further expansion of the programme, combined with support from funding organisations to ensure its sustainability can make HWH a most valuable resource for societies seeking opportunities to heal the ruptures in their communities.

In addressing the greater need of 'healing the wounds of history', the programme has yet to create a space for dialogue amongst Lebanese groups in order to develop a collective sense of history. Individuals and groups in Lebanon have so long been denied the opportunity to be listened to, heard and accepted, including the accepting of one's self.

In the meantime, it is pivotal to introduce HWH approaches to teachers and educators in schools so that through personal healing and growth, they can begin to radiate qualities that are necessary to nurture a new generation of peace-loving individuals.

REFERENCES

Asseily, A. (2007). *Breaking the cycles of violence in Lebanon-and beyond.* Brighton: Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace Publishing.

Casarjian, R. (1992). *Forgiveness: A bold choice for a peaceful heart.* Bantam Books.

Choueiri, Y. M. (2007) *Breaking the Cycle.* Stacey International.

Craig, P., Dieppe, P., Macintyre, S., Michie, S., Nazareth, I., & Petticrew, M. (2008). "Developing and evaluating complex interventions: the new Medical Research Council guidance". *British Medical Journal*, 337.

Dias, B. G. & Ressler, K. J. (2014). "Parental olfactory experience influeces behavior and neural structure in subsequent generations", *Journal of Nature Neuroscience*, 17, pp. 89-96

Devine-Wright, P. (2001). "History and identity in Northern Ireland: An exploratory investigation of the role of historical commemorations in contexts of intergroup conflict". *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, *7*(4), 297.

Dillon, R. S. (2001). "Self–forgiveness and self–respect". *Ethics*, 112, 53–83.

Enright, R. D. (1996). Counselling within the forgiveness triad: On forgiving, receiving forgiveness, and self-forgiveness. *Counselling and values*, *40*(2), 107-126.

Enright, R. D. (2001). *Forgiveness is a choice: A step-by-step process for resolving anger and restoring hope.* American Psychological Association.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: selected essays*, New York: Basic Books.

Giddens, A. 1991). *Modernity and self-identity. Self and society in the late modern age.* Cambridge, MA: Polity.

Hall, J. H., & Fincham, F. D. (2008). "The temporal course of self-forgiveness". *Journal of social and clinical psychology*, *27*(2), 174-202.

Haugbolle, S. (2005). "Public and Private Memoryof the Lebanese Civil War", *Journal of Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and The Middle East*, Vol.25, No.1, pp. 191-203

Hoffman, R. (1978) *No One Is to Blame: Freedom from Compulsive Self-Defeating Behavior; the Discoveries of the Quadrinity Process*, Science and Behaviour Books Inc.

Hurley, D. (2015). "Grandma's Experiences Leave a Mark on Your Genes", *Discover Science for the Curious*, 25 June, 2015 http://discovermagazine.com/2013/may/13-grandmas-experiences-leave-epigenetic-mark-on-your-genes

Kellermann, N.P. (2013). "Epigenetic transmission of Holocaust Trauma: Can nightmares be inherited?" *Israeli Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences*. 50(1): pp.33-9

Khalaf, S. (1993). *Beirut Reclaimed: Reflections on Ur-ban Design and the Restoration of Civility*, Beirut: Dar an-Nahar

Khalaf, R. (2014). Lebanese youth narratives: a bleak post-war landscape. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *44*(1), 97-116.

King-Irani, L. E. (2000). Rituals of reconciliation and processes of empowerment in post-war Lebanon. *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict Medicine.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher.

Larkin, C. (2011). The inevitability of identity: Lebanon, nationalism and the failure of an idea. *The Undergraduate Journal of Social Studies*, *1*(1), 4.

Larkin, C. (2012). *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon: Remembering and Forgetting the past*. London: Routledge.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies.* Washington DC.: United States Institute of Peace Press

Luskin, F. M. (2001). *Forgive for good: A proven prescription for health and happiness.* San Francisco: Harper.

McCullough, M. E. (2000). Forgiveness as human strength: Theory, measurement, and links to well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *19*(1), 43-55.

Richo, D. (2013). *How to Be an Adult in Love: Letting Love in Safely and Showing it Recklessly*, Boston: Shambhala

Staub, E. (2003). Preventing violence and generating humane values: Healing and reconciliation in Rwanda. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 852: 791-806.

Thompson, L. Y., & Synder, C. R. (2003). Measuring forgiveness. In Shane J. Lopez & C. R. Snyder (Eds.). *Positive psychological assessment: A handbook of models and measures* (pp. 301-312). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.

Tursunova, Z. (2008). The Role of Rituals in Healing Trauma and Reconciliation in Post-Accord Peacebuiding. *Journal of Human Security 4, no. 3.*

Volkan, V. D. (1999). Psychoanalysis and diplomacy Part II: Large-group rituals. *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies*, *1*(3), 223-247.

Volkan, V. D. (2005) Large Group Identity and Chosen Trauma. *Psychoanalysis Downunder 6.*

Worthington Jr, E. L. (Ed.) (1998). *Dimensions of forgiveness: Psychological research and theological perspectives*, Philadelphia, Templeton Foundation Press.

Worthington Jr., E.L. (2001). *Five steps to forgiveness: The art and science of forgiving: Bridges to wholeness and hope*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers

Young, M. (2010). *The Ghosts of Martyrs Square. An eyewitness account of Lebanon's life struggle*. London and New York, Simon & Schuster.