

How does Truth-Telling Heal?
An Exploration of *Voice* and Pathways toward Victim Healing in
Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste

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Abstract

Why is it that truth-telling in post-conflict settings has been found to be both helpful and harmful to victims of mass violence? Existing studies have identified a range of positive benefits and negative consequences of truth-telling for victims; however, the reasons why some victims experience a sense of healing while others do not after participating in post-conflict truth commission processes continue to remain unclear. Addressing one piece of this complex puzzle, this thesis seeks to begin clarifying how truth-telling may be beneficial for victims by investigating the research question: *What pathways lead from truth-telling to victim healing in post-conflict settings?* Building on the proposition that having *voice*—a key component of procedural justice—can help individuals to overcome the disempowerment and marginalisation of victimisation, this thesis investigates *voice* as a possible causal mechanism that can create pathways toward healing within truth commission public hearings.

Intended as an exploratory, theory-building study, this thesis investigates the potential positive impact of public truth-telling on victims by using a least similar case study design in two post-conflict countries, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. A total of 19 semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who were victims of mass violence in both research settings, and who gave public testimony in their country's truth commission. The field research findings suggest that *voice* can be seen as a possible causal mechanism that links truth-telling to victim healing by facilitating the creation of three pathways: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. I argue that, for those victims interviewed, contributing to their country's national narrative and raising awareness about past violence, experiencing a sense of relief from sharing their stories with others, and receiving empathetic support or feedback are aspects of *voice* that contributed to the creation of these pathways, which in turn facilitated a sense of healing.

The interview data also suggests that the healing potential of truth-telling may be jeopardised when *voice* is hindered in instances where victims' ability to share their stories is limited, when they experience distress related to giving testimony, or when their testimonies are met with negative responses from community members. Additionally, three other facets of truth commission participation were found to affect victims' sense of healing: clarity around the purpose and goals of the truth commission,

the realisation of substantive outcomes from victim participation, and the degree of cultural respect demonstrated by the process. I argue that these aspects of truth commission processes may also be pathways that facilitate the healing potential of truth-telling.

Comparative, empirical studies that investigate how truth-telling contributes to victim healing in post-conflict settings are scarce in the field of transitional justice, hence this study begins to fill an important gap in the existing body of literature. From a practical standpoint, by enhancing understanding of how truth commissions can promote healing, the findings obtained from this research provide insight into how the design of transitional justice processes may be improved in the future to better respond to the needs of victims of mass violence.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Tables.....	xii
List of Acronyms.....	xiii
1 Setting the Stage: Mass Violence, Truth commissions, and Victims.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Mass Violence and Victim Needs during Transitions toward Sustainable Peace.....	8
1.3 Healing: A Complex Goal after Mass Violence.....	12
1.3.1 Conceptualising healing: Components and processes.....	13
1.4 Truth Commissions: A Restorative, Victim-Centred Response to Mass Violence.....	20
1.4.1 Truth commission goals.....	24
1.4.2 Truth commissions as participatory processes.....	25
1.4.3 Truth commissions as healing enterprises: Promises and limitations.....	27
1.5 Conclusion.....	39
2 Theoretical Framework: Linking <i>Voice</i> , Truth Commissions, and Healing.....	41
2.1 Introduction.....	41
2.2 Testimony Method and Healing.....	42
2.3 Theories of Justice and the Role of <i>Voice</i>	46
2.4 Giving Testimony in Truth Commissions: Possibilities for <i>Voice</i> and Healing.....	50
2.4.1 Empowerment.....	52
2.4.2 Catharsis.....	58
2.4.3 Being acknowledged.....	59
2.5 Conclusion.....	62
3 Research Design and Methods.....	64
3.1 Introduction.....	64
3.2 Choosing the Investigation Method.....	65
3.3 Operationalising Additional Key Concepts.....	67
3.4 Case Selection.....	68
3.5 Developing the Research Instrument: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire.....	74
3.6 Research Permission and Beginning Phases of Locating Respondents.....	76
3.7 Sampling Strategy.....	77
3.8 Data Collection.....	80

3.9	Ethical Issues	82
3.10	Data Analysis and Presentation	82
3.11	Limitations	86
3.12	Conclusion	87
4	Timor-Leste: Case Study Analysis	89
4.1	Introduction.....	89
4.2	Case Background: Timor-Leste	90
4.2.1	Indonesian occupation	92
4.2.2	Women and the resistance	93
4.2.3	Santa Cruz massacre	94
4.2.4	Path to independence and subsequent violence	94
4.3	Post-conflict Justice Efforts	97
4.3.1	Judicial initiatives	98
4.3.2	Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation	100
4.4	Field Research Findings and Analysis: Giving Testimony to the CAVR— Opportunities for Healing through <i>Voice</i>	104
4.4.1	Empowerment.....	104
4.4.2	Catharsis	110
4.4.3	Social acknowledgment	115
4.5	Other Findings	123
4.5.1	Clear communication of CAVR purpose and intended outcomes	123
4.5.2	Process outcomes and healing: Unmet expectations and continuing needs.....	124
4.6	Conclusion	131
5	Solomon Islands: Case Study Analysis	134
5.1	Introduction.....	134
5.2	Case Background: Solomon Islands	135
5.3	Post-Conflict Justice Efforts	140
5.3.1	Reconciliation efforts.....	141
5.3.2	Tension trials	143
5.3.3	Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission.....	144
5.4	Field Research Findings and Analysis: Giving Testimony to the TRC—Opportunities for Healing through <i>Voice</i>	146
5.4.1	Empowerment.....	146
5.4.2	Catharsis	153
5.4.3	Social acknowledgment	167
5.5	Other findings	170

5.5.1	Clear communication of TRC purpose and intended outcomes	171
5.5.2	Process outcomes and healing: Unmet expectations and continuing needs.....	173
5.5.3	Counselling and victim healing	181
5.6	Conclusion	183
6	Discussion and Conclusions	186
6.1	Introduction.....	186
6.2	Similarities between Cases	188
6.2.1	Empowerment.....	189
6.2.2	Catharsis	190
6.2.3	Social acknowledgment	190
6.2.4	Limitations of <i>voice</i> and hindrances to pathways toward healing	194
6.2.5	Cultural sensitivity and healing	198
6.2.6	Process clarity and unmet expectations	200
6.3	Differences between Cases	208
6.3.1	Differences in primary pathways between cases: Empowerment and catharsis	208
6.3.2	Desired outcomes of truth-telling processes: Justice v. reconciliation	210
6.3.3	Negative social reactions to testimony in Timor-Leste	213
6.4	Conclusion	215
	Bibliography	219
	Appendix One: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire	231

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Components of and means to achieve victim healing based on existing literature. ...	14
Figure 1.2 Regional truth commission creation over time, 1970-2010.	23
Figure 1.3 Truth commission public vs. closed hearings, 1970-2010	26
Figure 1.4 “Healing” in truth commission charters, 1970-2009.	29
Figure 3.1 Analytical framework: Themes and categories	85

List of Tables

Table 1.1 Examples of composition of truth commission goals according to 40 truth commission charters.	24
Table 3.1 Comparison of case study contexts, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste.	69

List of Acronyms

APODETI	Popular Democratic Association of Timorese
CAVR	Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, Timor-Leste
CRP	Community Reconciliation Process, Timor-Leste
DLU	Defence Lawyers Unit, Timor-Leste
FALANTIL	East Timor Defence Force
FRETILIN	Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor
GLF	Guadalcanal Liberation Force, Solomon Islands
GRA	Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army, Solomon Islands
IFM	Isatabu Freedom Movement, Solomon Islands
MEF	Malaitan Eagle Force, Solomon Islands
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
SCU	Serious Crimes Unit, Timor-Leste
SIBC	Solomon Islands Broadcast Corporation
SICA	Solomon Islands Christian Association
SPSC	Special Panel for Serious Crimes, Timor-Leste
TNI	Indonesian Armed National Forces
TPA	Townsville Peace Agreement, Solomon Islands
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDT	Democratic Union of Timorese

UN	United Nations
UNAMET	United Nations Mission in East Timor
UNMISET	United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration of East Timor

1 Setting the Stage: Mass Violence, Truth commissions, and Victims

“I dared to tell all, it was in 2003 [that] I had to give testimony... [It is] important in that time that it [my story] was written in the book that can be read by our children and they will know that their mother was also involved in politics for the independence of this country... [But] until now they never appreciate our disgrace... We can say that Timorese women are like an empty plastic (bag) with no wind in it. We are living without dignity in Timor-Leste.”
Cidalia, Timor-Leste

“When I told my story, I just felt again this pain of that day. That was all I felt, how I remembered back that day. So it made me feel sorry about that day I told about... [But] after I told out every true story, one difference I felt was this healing; of this thought that stayed with me, [it] started to go out, and this fear of [from] the tension.”
Erena, Solomon Islands

1.1 Introduction

Why is it that public truth-telling is sometimes helpful and at other times harmful to victims of mass violence? As evidenced in the above comments from two victims of armed conflict in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste, the experience of testifying in their country's truth commission was both a beneficial and painful experience. Truth commissions have emerged as one of the most common post-conflict justice mechanisms created to rectify the consequences of past violence (Wilson, 2001); however, recent research has suggested that public truth-telling in post-conflict settings can simultaneously have a negative impact on some victims of mass violence, while having positive effects for others (Brounéus, 2008b, 2010; Byrne, 2004; Clark, 2010; Hamber, Nageng, & O'Malley, 2000; Laplante & Theidon, 2007; Rimé, Kanyangara, Yzerbyt, & Paez, 2011; Stanley, 2009). To understand how these post-conflict justice mechanisms can avoid causing further damage to victims, there is a need to shed light on the puzzle of why public truth-telling has a healing effect for some victims of mass violence while being harmful for others. Hence, this study aims to build on the findings discovered from previous research regarding the impact of truth-telling upon victims by focussing on the ways in which public truth-telling in truth commissions may be beneficial for victim healing. As such, this thesis explores the question: *What are the possible pathways that lead from truth-telling to victim healing in post-conflict settings?*

In recent decades, cessations of periods of mass violence have been followed with a variety of strategies initiated by international, state-level, and local institutions and

organisations that aim to rectify crimes committed in the past in order to foment a transition to sustainable and harmonious peace. In the words of United States Institute for Peace president, Richard Solomon (as cited in Lederach, 1997):

Sustainable peace requires that long-time antagonists not merely lay down their arms but that they achieve profound reconciliation that will endure because it is sustained by a societywide network of relationships and mechanisms that promote justice and address the root causes of enmity before they can regenerate destabilizing tensions (p.ix).

In order to transition to such a state of peace, it has been suggested that the individual and societal wounds resulting from past conflict must be addressed once violence has ended (Hayner, 2011; Kritz, 1995; Tutu, 1999). The post-conflict strategies that have emerged to reckon with previous periods of mass violence fall within a rapidly developing field known as ‘transitional justice’. Teitel (2003) defines transitional justice as “the conception of justice associated with periods of political change, characterised by legal responses to confront the wrongdoings of repressive predecessor regimes” (p. 69). Transitional justice strategies may be comprised of a range of judicial and non-judicial mechanisms including prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking and truth-telling, institutional reform, purging of former state officials, or some combination of such processes (UNSC, 2004). These mechanisms are intended to address consequences of mass violence through the achievement of four primary goals, which are grouped into the following categories for the purposes of this thesis: peacebuilding, justice, reconciliation, and healing (Kritz, 1995; Lambourne, 2009; Leebaw, 2008; Lundy & McGovern, 2008). As a pursuit of transitional justice strategies intended to promote sustainable peace, the goal of ‘healing’ will be a primary focus of this thesis.

Research on the relationship between transitional justice processes—particularly truth-seeking or truth-telling processes—and healing has developed in the recent past. However, the reasons why some victims experience a sense of healing while others do not after truth-telling in transitional justice processes continue to remain unclear. Truth-telling processes—particularly truth commissions—are often praised for their ability to facilitate healing for victims of mass violence, but recent empirical research from post-conflict settings such as Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, and Timor-Leste has found that in practice, truth-telling has a mixed effect on the promotion of healing for victims of mass violence. Based on this research, truth-telling can result in negative consequences including: revictimisation/retraumatisation, disappointment or dissatisfaction,

frustration, increased symptoms of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and insecurity (Brounéus, 2008b, 2010; Byrne, 2004; Hamber, 2009; Hamber et al., 2000; Rimé et al., 2011; Stanley, 2009). At the same time, some small-N studies conducted in these same settings have found that truth-telling may be beneficial for victims of mass violence through offering victims a sense of relief/catharsis, providing them with ‘truth’ or new information, being acknowledged by those that harmed them, and opportunities for empowerment (Byrne, 2004; Clark, 2010; Hamber et al., 2000; Laplante & Theidon, 2007; Rimé et al., 2011; Stanley, 2009). Findings related to the impact of officially sanctioned truth-telling on victims have been inconsistent, indicating that while some victims may experience therapeutic benefits, others may feel as if they are worse off after participating in the same process.

Relatively few empirical studies have focussed on determining why truth-telling processes are experienced in such vastly different ways by victims of mass violence. Addressing one piece of this complex puzzle, this thesis seeks to begin clarifying how truth-telling in post-conflict settings may lead to individual victim healing. To this end, a comparative, empirical investigation of the potential positive impact of public truth-telling upon victims in two post-conflict countries, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste, was conducted. Intended as an exploratory, theory-building study, the current research looks at how victim healing can be facilitated by giving public testimony in truth commission processes.

This investigation is rooted in restorative justice and procedural justice theories. Restorative justice relates to repairing the harm resulting from past crimes by attempting “to facilitate healing for the victim, the offender and the community” through a participatory process (d'Estrée, 2006; Doak & O'Mahony, 2006; Rugge & Scott, 2009, p. 1; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013; Zehr, 1990), while procedural justice refers to the perceived fairness of a justice or decision-making process (Folger, 1977; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Tyler, 1994). Based on research that examined the therapeutic benefits of victim-offender mediation on victims of violent crime in Canada, it has been found that procedural justice can have a healing effect on victims who participate in restorative justice processes (Wemmers & Cyr, 2005). Possible therapeutic benefits of procedural justice for victims of violence have been alluded to by other scholars, as it has been suggested that *voice*—a key component of

procedural justice—can promote a sense of satisfaction, acknowledgment, empowerment, and healing for individuals (d'Estrée, 2006; Folger, 1977; Herman, 2003; Laxminarayan, 2012; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, Rasinski, & Spodick, 1985; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013; Wemmers & Cyr, 2006). According to procedural justice scholars, *voice* relates to the ability of an individual to express their views and opinions in a justice or decision-making process (Folger, 1977; Lind & Tyler, 1988). To add to this definition, this study approaches *voice* as a multidimensional concept in which not only the *telling* of one's experiences is important, but so is being *heard*, which can result in the sense that one's suffering has been acknowledged and recognised by others (d'Estrée, 2006; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013).

A primary characteristic of victimisation is that it establishes an imbalanced power relationship between the perpetrator of harm and the one who is abused, essentially empowering the torturer while usurping power and dignity from the tortured (Agger & Jensen, 1996; Mollica, 1988). Writing on the effects of violent crime on victims, Govier (2009) has asserted that “people commonly seek vindication in the aftermath of wrongdoing because wrongs, by implication, deny worth and status” (p. 40). d'Estrée (2006) proposes that *voice* can help victims to overcome the disempowerment and marginalisation of victimisation because, as she proclaims,

Voice can be seen as power, status, self-worth, identity, and even existence. Denial of voice can threaten perceptions of fairness, sense of legitimacy of authorities and systems, and ultimately can pose even an existential threat. People may react to denial of voice with noncompliance, passivity, frustration, agitation, and violence. Provision of voice is essential for a sense of justice, community restoration, and healing (p. 118).

Through this portrayal, *voice* is considered to be inherently beneficial for both individuals and communities because of its ability to promote victim healing through re-establishing individuals' control and sense of dignity. To this end, based on d'Estrée's (2006) approach, I argue that *voice* is a means through which victims can reclaim control and dignity through telling the story of their trauma and being heard by others, and is therefore a possible causal mechanism that links truth-telling to victim healing in post-conflict settings. As a key component of this research, it is important to highlight what is meant by the term 'healing'. For the purposes of this study,

healing requires restoration of the individuals' capacity to resume the course of their lives; it involves making their [victims'] previous history—political

commitment, personal relationships, work, and social connections—meaningful in the present and the future (Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983, p. 44).

As periods of mass violence can affect victims economically, physically, and psychologically, it is valuable to view healing through a “holistic approach” (Clark, 2010, p. 48). The above definition considers healing as the restoration of “the whole or complete person” by acknowledging the variety of pathways beyond exclusively psychological or physical repair that may facilitate healing—an appropriate perspective in post-conflict settings where victims are affected by trauma on a multitude of levels (Clark, 2010, p. 40).

Using a comparative case study research design, a total of 19 individuals who were victims of mass violence in Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands, who also gave public testimony in either the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste or the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission, were interviewed. In line with theoretical expectations, I found that having *voice* created three pathways toward healing within the context of truth commission public hearings in both research contexts, namely: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. I suggest that fulfilling the desire to share their stories with others, contributing to the historical narrative of the atrocities committed within their country, and increasing awareness about what happened during the conflict while giving public testimony were aspects of *voice* which provided victims with an opportunity to restore control, or be empowered. Further, I argue that communicating the stories of their past trauma for others to hear was a source of relief, which I suggest was another aspect of *voice* that facilitated a sense of catharsis for interviewees. Lastly, receiving empathetic support or feedback can be considered as another facet of *voice* which allowed victims to receive social acknowledgment of their previous suffering. In light of the definition used in this study, I argue that these three pathways helped interviewees to transform their past trauma into something meaningful in the present and future as well as to restore their capacity to live their lives. In addition to these findings that suggest how having *voice* contributed to victim healing, I discovered several ways in which *voice* was inhibited in relation to giving public testimony, which I argue impeded interviewees’ sense of healing. Several instances where storytelling was limited or mismanaged by each truth commission were found, which hindered victims’ ability to have *voice* in the process. Some interviewees also cited experiencing feelings of distress associated with giving

testimony related to either reliving traumatic memories in front of others, a perceived incompatibility between cultural norms and publicly airing sensitive stories, and experiencing fear or anxiety related to sharing their stories. Finally, it was found that *voice* was inhibited through the receipt of negative social reactions within their communities in response to victims' testimonies, which I suggest disrupted the healing process.

In addition to these findings which are reflective of theoretical expectations of the relationship between *voice* and healing, two other issues emerged strongly as themes within the interviews in both Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands. First, responses from many interviewees in each country suggest they felt frustrated and confused about the purpose and goals of the truth commission, even after they had given testimony. Secondly, the majority of interviewees cited feeling disappointed, upset, or hurt because they felt as if their participation in the truth commission process had not resulted in substantive outcomes, which ranged from material or monetary assistance, reparations, justice (in Timor-Leste), and reconciliation (in Solomon Islands). Based on the interview responses, I argue that the absence of these outcomes may have further compromised victim healing, which is also parallel to existing research that suggests that these components are necessary for victims to overcome their past trauma.

In considering the field research findings, *voice* can be seen as a possible causal mechanism that links truth-telling to victim healing through creating three pathways: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. However, the healing potential of truth-telling may be jeopardised when victims' *voice* is hindered in instances where their ability to share their stories is limited, they experience distress related to giving testimony, or their testimonies are met with negative responses from community members. As comparative, empirical studies which investigate how truth-telling contributes to victim healing in post-conflict settings are currently limited in the field of transitional justice, the results from this study enhance the body of existing literature. In addition, the least similar comparative case study research design has allowed for the discovery of findings which may be relevant in other transitional contexts (George & Bennett, 2004). My findings indeed indicate that the realisation of *voice* within truth commission processes can be an important pathway to healing for victims of mass violence; however, it would be important to further to test how the role of *voice* affects

the healing potential of truth-telling in other post-conflict settings. Finally, from a practical standpoint, the results of this study also contribute to an increased understanding of how victim healing can be better promoted within transitional strategies after periods of mass violence, which could be used to improve the design of future truth commissions.

This thesis will proceed as follows: Chapter One will lay the background for this study by outlining how mass violence impacts individual victims and why it is important to address their resulting needs in transitional settings. In conjunction with this topic, the concept of healing and how existing literature proposes it may be achieved will be discussed, alongside a description of truth commissions which are considered to be the transitional justice mechanism most adept at facilitating healing through their victim-focussed aims.

Chapter Two will develop the theoretical framework used to investigate the research question by examining the theories behind why truth-telling has been believed to contribute to victim healing in post-conflict settings. Based on existing literature, this chapter will also depict how *voice* is a possible mechanism that may facilitate healing for victims of violence by enabling the creation of three possible pathways—empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgement—within the context of truth commission public hearings.

In Chapter Three, I will describe the research design and methods used in this study in order to make sense of how the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two will be applied to the research findings. I will discuss the utility of pursuing a comparative case study in this thesis in an effort to increase the ‘explanatory richness’ of the results obtained from field research, while highlighting the use of a least similar cases research design, which can generate data that may have applicability in other contexts.

Then the case study of Timor-Leste will be discussed in Chapter Four. This chapter will outline background information about the country’s history, the Indonesian occupation, relevant socio-cultural factors, and transitional justice initiatives pursued in order to situate field research data. Thereafter, responses from seven semi-structured interviews that were conducted with individuals who were victimised during the Indonesian

occupation and who also gave testimony during a national public hearing of the CAVR will be presented.

Chapter Five will explore the second case study, undertaken in Solomon Islands. Similar to the Timor-Leste case study chapter, a brief historical background of the country, a description of the ethnic conflict known as the Tensions, key socio-cultural components, and the transitional justice strategy undertaken will be provided. This will likewise be followed by the presentation of responses from 12 semi-structured interviews conducted with victims of the Tensions that also gave public testimony during the TRC.

Finally, the interview responses from each case will be compared and contrasted in Chapter Six, where the implications of these findings in the broader context of post-conflict truth-telling also will be discussed. Chapter Six will also present the conclusions drawn from this study, identify policy recommendations for the design of future truth commissions to better respond to the needs of victims of mass violence, as well as outline several directions for future research.

1.2 Mass Violence and Victim Needs during Transitions toward Sustainable Peace

Widespread and systematic violence may be carried out as a tool of repression against a population by internal authoritarian or military regimes, intra-state—including ethnic-based—conflicts, occupation by a foreign military regime, or state-sanctioned policies which marginalise a particular group (Staub, 2011). Such violence may leave countries in a condition fraught with a tense political climate, dilapidated institutions and rule of law, economic hardship and poverty, unstable communities, widespread crime, and corruption as well as physical and emotional injuries of individuals (King, 2011; Mani, 2002). In order to move forward into a setting capable of sustainable peace, it has been argued that these consequences of past violence must be addressed (Galtung, 1996; Hamber & Kelly, 2004; Leebaw, 2008). Several authors have commented on both the prevalence of genocide in the 20th century as well as the high numbers of civilian casualties in recent decades (French, 2009; Moon, 2009). This depiction of the magnitude of violence in the recent past and thus, individual and collective trauma, necessitates attention as countries attempt to transition into a future capable of sustainable peace. Transitional justice, which is aimed at confronting the legacy of

abuse perpetrated in the past (Teitel, 2003), has been considered to be capable of fulfilling this need to address trauma of the past.

Transitional justice is comprised of a spectrum of mechanisms or processes which, according to a definition provided by former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan (2004), “may include both judicial and non-judicial mechanisms, with differing levels of international involvement (or none at all) and individual prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking, institutional reform, vetting and dismissals, or a combination thereof” (p. 4). Transitional strategies intend to achieve various goals which, based on existing literature, are grouped into four overarching categories for the purposes of this thesis: peacebuilding, justice (or accountability), reconciliation, and healing (Amstutz, 2005; Kritz, 1995; Lambourne, 2009; Leebaw, 2008; Sooka, 2006). However, the determination of how these goals should be pursued through the initiation of the variety of available transitional justice mechanisms is often a challenging task in the face of competing needs and interests at the state, community, and individual levels (Lundy & McGovern, 2008). To this end, transitional processes inherently require trade-offs as the achievement of one goal may be at the expense of another (Lundy & McGovern, 2008). A common example of this has been the debate over whether post-conflict settings would benefit more from truth or justice, individual healing or national peacebuilding, as some believe these goals may be mutually exclusive (Gutmann & Thompson, 2000; Rotberg, 2000). In this thesis, I focus on a specific dimension of post-conflict justice processes by looking at how the transitional justice goal of healing affects individual victims. I have chosen to investigate the goal of healing at the individual level as it has been proposed that one way of promoting the ability of an emerging nation to overcome previous periods of mass violence and move toward sustainable peace is by addressing individual level consequences of mass violence (Galtung, 1996).

During periods of armed conflict, individuals are violated and abused at the hands of others in order to repress or eliminate their power or existence, leaving them with not only physical wounds, loss of limbs, incurable diseases, and loss of property, but also mental and emotional burdens (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Allan & Allan, 2000; King, 2011; Le Touze, Silove, & Zwi, 2005; Quinn, 2011). From a material perspective, individuals may be left financially vulnerable because of the loss of property or their

possessions at the hands of the ancien régime, or as a consequence of the death of family members who were the household's primary breadwinner (Hayner, 2011; King, 2011). The financial incapacity of individuals as well as institutional breakdowns can limit access to basic needs, such as healthcare, housing, or the availability of food and water supplies, which can present a struggle for victims to survive from one day to the next. These material consequences are often compounded by mental or emotional suffering, including feelings of insecurity, marginalisation, and other psychological sequelae that mass violence can impose on individuals (Hayner, 2011; King, 2011).

According to Doak (2011), some of the most common psychological or physiological consequences of victimisation “include fear, self-blame, insomnia, depression, anxiety, a sense of loss of control and post-traumatic stress” (p. 265). In countries such as Guatemala, these types of issues have been seen in victims as long as 20 years after the end of the widespread atrocities perpetrated by the Guatemalan military between 1960 and 1996 (Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, 1998). Hence, not only are the negative effects of mass violence immense, but they can also be long-lasting (Hamber, 2009; Le Touze et al., 2005; Lumsden, 1997).

It has been suggested that if these consequences are not addressed, the development of conditions that are able to support sustainable peace may be jeopardised (Minow, 1998; Moon, 2009). First, it has been proposed that victims may be compelled to seek vengeance against those that harmed them, which may perpetuate the cycle of violence if this desire is not quelled (Dahl, 2009; Govier, 2002; Jacoby, 1983; Minow, 2000; Moon, 2009; Phelps, 2004). In a study undertaken by Collier (2003), it was discovered that the likelihood of renewed violence is highest immediately following periods of conflict because of the political, institutional, and economic instability that often characterises states during post-conflict periods. Although not the argument made by Collier (2003), Lumsden (1997) would contend that desires for vengeance may be exacerbated in a context of dilapidated socioeconomic and political conditions. Thus, negative psychological consequences may be aggravated by political and economic hardships, which can lead to the re-escalation of conflict if victims' emotional needs are ignored. Hence, addressing victims' needs, including their material or political suffering after periods of mass violence, may in turn assist in diminishing the risk of renewed conflict.

Because individuals are faced, perhaps most directly, with the burden of recovering their lives (M. Smyth, 2007), including their health and possessions or property during and after mass violence, victims need both rehabilitation and restitution—attention for physical and psychological trauma as well as the restoration of their livelihood (De la Rey & Owens, 1998). Robins (2012) supports placing a focus on victims in post-conflict settings as he articulates that

whilst there are moral and normative reasons for prioritising the views of victims...because they occupy a unique role in societies emerging from conflict, victims and their needs should be given a privileged position in transition in order to maximize the success of recovery from conflict (p. 86).

Although it has been argued that victims and their needs should be prioritised after periods of mass violence, individual needs are often side-lined by state or international imperatives that favour institution-building over the restoration and rehabilitation of individual victims (Millar, 2010; Ross, 2003). Victims are indispensable to post-conflict justice processes as they often possess eye-witness knowledge of events that transpired in the past (Humphrey, 2003; Karstedt, 2010; Lykes & Mersky, 2006). However, it has been proposed that they can sometimes be used merely as instruments to achieve macro-level goals related to peacebuilding and may not receive any substantive personal benefit (Allan & Allan, 2000; Doak, 2011; Humphrey, 2003; Robins, 2012). In relation to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Hamber et al. (2000) write that

a danger exists that the survivors...may feel that it was their suffering (and their testimony) that helped contribute to greater collective awareness and national reconciliation. This may be flattering, but without any concrete gains, they may end up feeling that they were merely pawns in a national process over which they had little say (p. 37).

Such a dilemma may mean that victims essentially sacrifice themselves twice, once during the period of conflict, and then again when they tell the story of their past suffering without receiving some type of benefit. Further capturing this conflict between individual and macro-level goals, Doak (2011) reflects that “the question as to how this tension between the desires of victims, on the one hand, and the requirements of transition, on the other, might be overcome remains unsolved” (p. 275). Thus, it can be a difficult and complex task to balance state or international imperatives with individual victims’ needs in the aftermath of mass violence. Despite these complexities,

however, David and Choi (2005) suggest that victim needs must be met before healing can begin.

1.3 Healing: A Complex Goal after Mass Violence

The concept of ‘healing’ has been readily integrated into the parlance of post-conflict justice processes in recent decades; however, there has generally been a lack of consensus regarding what is actually intended by transitional justice strategies that pursue this as a goal. Hence, this section will discuss the complexities of healing, including the definition that will be used in this thesis, and how existing literature has proposed that healing may be achieved in post-conflict settings. As Orr (2000) indicates, healing is often viewed through “physical, spiritual and psychological” paradigms, which illustrates the multidimensional nature of this concept (p. 240). In many settings—particularly in non-Western cultures—healing does not exclusively mean psychological rehabilitation as determined by a mental health professional, but also includes traditional notions of restoration (Clark, 2010; Mollica, 1988; Pillay, 2010). In light of this, the definition of healing used in this thesis must reflect a more holistic view of this concept. For the purposes of this study, healing is considered to include an individual’s restoration of self through multiple possible pathways, as a strictly psychological conception of the term may limit the understanding of the complex task of facilitating victim healing in post-conflict settings (Clark, 2010). To this end, a relevant definition which encompasses the multifaceted qualities of healing has been provided by Cienfuegos and Monelli (1983), who articulate that

healing requires restoration of the individuals’ capacity to resume the course of their lives; it involves making their [victims’] previous history—political commitment, personal relationships, work, and social connections—meaningful in the present and the future (p. 44).

This definition situates healing in terms of restoration and transforming past experiences in a way that helps victims to continue their lives. Conceiving of healing in this way acknowledges that healing is not necessarily a ‘linear’ process that adheres to a certain pattern for every victim, as each individual has unique and varied needs after experiencing trauma (Hamber, 2009). Indeed, healing depends on a multitude of factors, including victims’ level of previous trauma as well as their current socioeconomic and psychological condition (Srinivasa Murthy, 2007). To this end, it is also important to consider that healing may not be achieved after a singular intervention

(Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002; Orr, 2000), but is a process that often needs to take place over time (Hamber, 2009). The relationship between the potentially long-term nature of healing and truth commissions as one-off interventions aimed at promoting healing will be further described in Chapter Two.

In the context of post-conflict settings, it has been suggested that a tension exists between intentions of transitional justice mechanisms to promote healing and what outcomes can reasonably be expected from initiatives that pursue this goal (Hamber, 2009). As Hamber (2009) asserts, there is often a conflict between the desire of a nation to heal itself, often based on political goals, and the speed at which individuals can heal. During a transition from a period of mass violence, state leaders may capitalise on the short-term political benefit of promoting victim healing within the context of post-conflict justice in order to pacify victims' groups or international organisations. When healing is pursued in light of political motivations, it is possible that victims will not stand to benefit from such pursuits because potentially long-term individual healing does not necessarily coincide with short-term political goals (S. Cohen, 2001; Hamber, 2009; Moon, 2009). Hence, without the adequate capacity or political will to follow through with long-term measures that would secure this aim, there is a risk that victims will be further aggrieved as they wait to receive rehabilitation that may never come.

1.3.1 Conceptualising healing: Components and processes

The holistic conception of healing used in this study acknowledges that healing may be comprised of a number of different components. As such, to further explain the concept of healing, particularly in relation to transitional justice, I have synthesised illustrative components of healing and the means through which it may be achieved based on existing literature. Figure 1.1 below offers a visual representation of examples of what is needed for victims to heal and the processes that may facilitate this goal.

I have grouped the processes or mechanisms which can facilitate healing—referred to as 'means' in this study—into six categories: Reparations, Justice, Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Support, and Storytelling. Figure 1.1 illustrates the relationship between the examples of components of healing that have been proposed in existing literature and these six means that can promote their realisation, and thus, facilitate the outcome of healing. Although each of these processes have been considered to promote healing and are thus important to outline, this thesis will particularly focus on storytelling, as

this process can be seen to be the most relevant for providing opportunities for *voice* within the context of truth commission public hearings. The relationships will be further explained in more detail below through discussing how each of these means can fulfil the various components of healing.

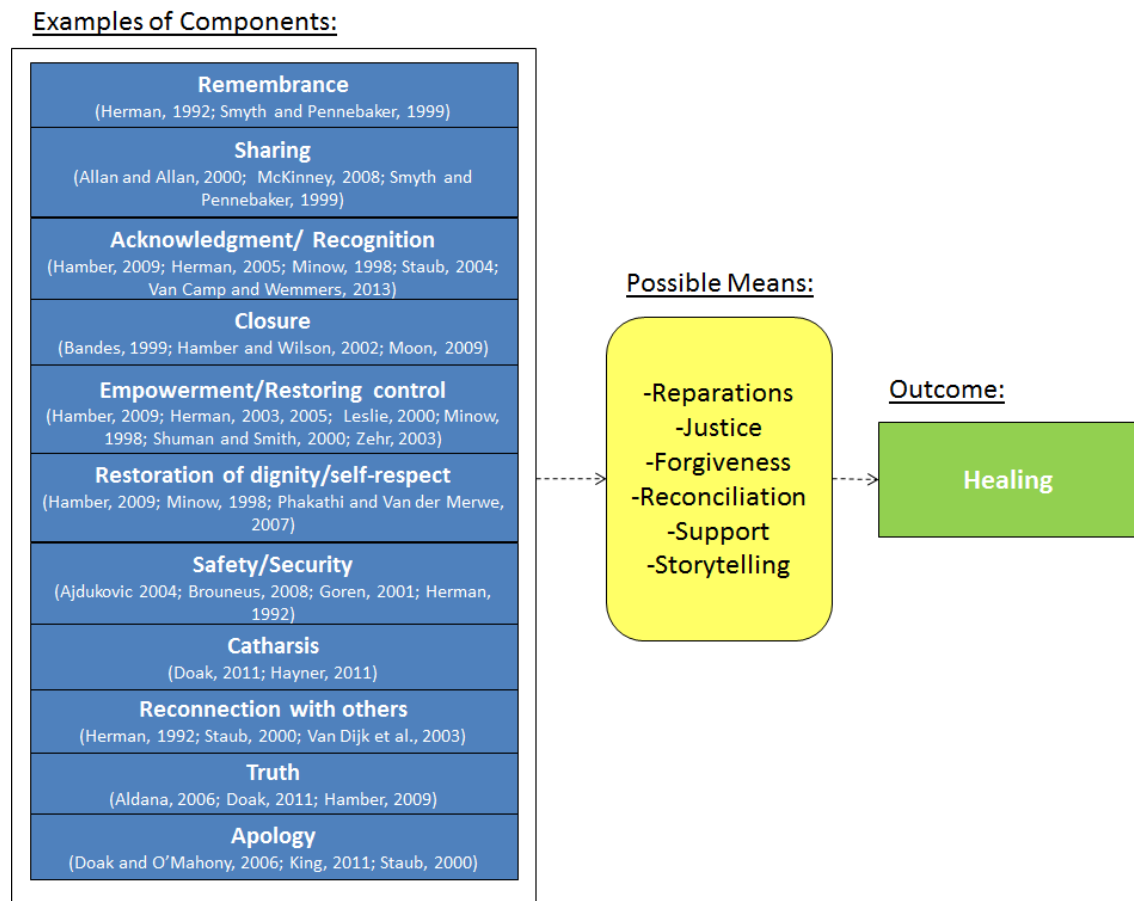


Figure 1.1 Components of and means to achieve victim healing based on existing literature.

Reparations have several roles in the healing process for victims of violence. First, as victims often face dire socioeconomic conditions following periods of armed conflict resulting from either the loss of family breadwinners or the deterioration of economic infrastructure, monetary reparations can help to alleviate physical and psychological hardships that have hindered victims' capacity to resume the course of their lives (David & Choi, 2005; Freeman & Hayner, 2003; Lykes & Mersky, 2006; Walaza, 2000). Both symbolic and monetary reparations can help victims to feel that their past suffering has been *acknowledged* and *recognised* by the state (David & Choi, 2005; De Greiff, 2006) and can help to *restore victim dignity* (David & Choi, 2005; Freeman & Hayner, 2003; Lykes & Mersky, 2006). Although justice is another means through

which healing may be achieved (which will be discussed below), it has been suggested that receiving reparations can serve as a “proxy for justice” by providing official *acknowledgment* of victims’ past suffering (David & Choi, 2005, p. 424; Lykes & Mersky, 2006). In cases such as the Czech Republic after the fall of communism, some of those responsible for past crimes were given pensions as they were forced into ‘retirement’ by the new state (David & Choi, 2005). Because of this, many victims felt as if former perpetrators had actually received greater benefits than they themselves had, thus, the provision of reparations or other benefits for victims served as a sort of equaliser between victims and those that harmed them (David & Choi, 2005). If such a shift in the power balance is realised, victims may also experience a sense of *restored control*, which is suggested to be an important component of victim healing. Lastly, reparations may encourage victims to feel assured that there will not be a reoccurrence of abuses in the future (David & Choi, 2005; van Boven, 1995). Receiving some form of reparation can provide validation in the sense that that the crime committed against a victim is wrong in the eyes of the state and such behaviour will not be tolerated in the future, thus helping to facilitate a sense of *closure* for victims (David & Choi, 2005; Hamber & Wilson, 2002). Feeling secure from the repetition of violence and assured of the viability of the rule of law can contribute to a sense of *safety* that is also necessary for victims to heal (Ajdukovic, 2004). Although receiving some form of reparation has been considered to be valuable for victim healing, some have criticised the provision of financial reparations that intend to compensate a family for the loss of a loved one for unduly placing a price tag on the life of the deceased (King, 2011). To this end, Backer (2007) writes, “no such payment can ever truly repay or repair their [victims’] sufferings, and that the compensation should not be treated crudely as a financial reward—at best, it is consolation” (p. 190).

Justice also has the ability to address various needs that are integral to the healing process for victims of mass violence. After experiencing a crime, victims often feel a need for vindication—“that is, retribution and not [necessarily] revenge”—in order to “re-establish feelings of empowerment and equity” which may be realised through the achievement of justice (Hamber, 2009). In the wake of armed conflict, as Weinstein and Stover (2004) suggest,

individuals need some form of justice to acknowledge the wrongs done to them, just as societies need it to establish boundaries by which individuals can be held responsible for their behavior toward their fellow citizens (p. 11).

It has been suggested that the process of securing justice has the ability to provide victims with *acknowledgment* of “their innocence and suffering”, *truth* about past crimes and can “release them from being trapped in the past and facilitate *closure* and individual healing” (David & Choi, 2005, pp. 405-406, italics added). Staub (2000) has also proposed that if those who caused harm to victims also express a feeling of regret for their crimes or *apologise* for what they have done during justice proceedings, healing may be further facilitated.

The ability of justice to *recognise* that what victims experienced in the past was wrong and is unacceptable in the eyes of the state has also been cited (Stanley, 2009; Staub, 2000; Weinstein & Stover, 2004). Official recognition can also help to restore the *balance of power* that was disrupted as a result of the previous abuse when perpetrators face punishment for their crimes (Stanley, 2009; Villa-Vicencio, 2006). Such an outcome conveys a message that the abuses the victim experienced will not be tolerated, which can contribute to increased trust in the government or legal system (Doak, 2011). This can in turn enhance victims’ sense of *safety* and *security*, which may also pave the way for reconciliation—another means which can facilitate healing—to take place (Staub, 2000). As some have suggested, proponents of retributive justice argue that these measures can dampen the possibility of renewed violence (Moon, 2009), particularly by reducing desires for extrajudicial vengeance (Phelps, 2004). This may also increase victims’ sense of *safety* and help contribute to stable peace. To a similar effect, the punishment of perpetrators through retributive justice measures may also allow victims to experience a sense of relief or *catharsis* (Doak, 2011), which may be therapeutic.

Explicitly speaking about the possible benefits of retributive justice for victims of political violence, Kira et al. (2006) also comment that justice “can restore perceived personal self-efficacy, agency, and *control*, and accordingly this may have some mental health healing effects for victims” (p. 14, italics added). Self-efficacy, agency, and control may be indicative of a renewed sense of self which has been proposed to result from a person feeling that they had *voice* in a justice process. However, there are a multitude of factors inherent to criminal trials which have been seen to stifle the

communication of victims' suffering, thus inhibiting a restoration of such agency and control. The aspects of retributive justice processes that can be seen to hinder *voice* will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

The potential value of **forgiveness** in the healing process for victims has also been suggested (Enright, Freedman, Rique, Enright, & North, 1998; Hope, 1987; Kaminer, Stein, Mbanga, & Zungu-Dirwayi, 2001; Moon, 2009; Shuman & Smith, 2000; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). Suggestions have been made that forgiving one's perpetrator can reflect a sense of *restored control* through the victim's ability to actively choose to let go of anger or bitterness, thus shifting the balance of power between victim and perpetrator (Pillay, 2010). Wenzel and Okimoto (2010) indicate that acts of violence may be seen "as the offender having illegitimately appropriated status and power over the victim (and the wider community)" (p. 404). Thus, through the act of forgiveness, "victims could indicate that they are not being drawn to the low moral level of the offender (as seeking revenge would) and reserve for themselves a higher level of morality", which can place *control* and power back into the hands of the victim (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010, p. 404). For victims, this shift may also be indicative of a reclamation of *self-respect* or *dignity* that was lost as a consequence of abuse (Pillay, 2010). Further, forgiveness may also lead to feelings of freedom or liberation, illustrating a sense of *catharsis*, in victims (Pillay, 2010; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013), which may contribute to their sense of healing.

Despite the potential for forgiveness to play a role in victim healing, it is important to consider that, as Zehr (1997) asserts, "when victims feel pressure to forgive and reconcile prematurely, healing will be incomplete" (para. 2). Villa-Vicencio (2000a) also suggests that victims may be angered if they sense that their forgiveness is being dictated by another. The disempowerment that may result from this loss of control over the decision to forgive voluntarily may be reminiscent of the disempowerment connected with the original oppression (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). Hence, the expectation from others to forgive those that caused them harm may also be retraumatizing (Doak, 2011). If forgiveness is offered voluntarily it may be beneficial for victims; however, if victims feel as if they are expected (either explicitly or implicitly) to forgive their perpetrator, the action may be detrimental to their healing process.

Although there is a lack of consensus in the literature regarding whether **reconciliation** leads to healing or if it is the achievement of healing that opens the possibility for reconciliation, I contend that the process of reconciliation may play a role in helping victims to restore their lives, and thus heal. Taking into consideration that most conflicts have taken place *within* countries after the end of the Cold War, it is often the case that perpetrators and victims must continue to live together in communities after periods of mass violence (Themnér & Wallensteen, 2012). For victims, remaining in close proximity to their perpetrators can result in continued feelings of insecurity and fear (Burgess, 2004). Reconciliation can assist in rebuilding trust between victims and perpetrators, which can help to foster new relationships. Thus, by enhancing trust and rebuilding relationships, reconciliation can help to facilitate a *reconnection with others*, which has been cited as a component of the healing process (Herman, 1992). Staub and Pearlman (2010) and Villa-Vicencio (2000a) also indicate that through increasing trust within communities, reconciliation can also lead to feelings of *safety*, which is an important foundation for healing. Reconciliation can also help to facilitate the healing process for victims by providing opportunities for *acknowledgement* (from perpetrators), *restoration of dignity* and *increased security* through the signification that conflict has come to an end (David & Choi, 2005, pp. 407, 426). Through the process of reconciliation, the recognition of responsibility, particularly through the provision of recompense, may also contribute to a sense of *closure* (Stanley, 2002), which has been identified as part of the healing process (Hamber & Wilson, 2002; Moon, 2009).

De la Rey and Owens (1998) explain that **support** can contribute to healing through the provision of psychological, medical, traditional, and/or religious assistance or services. Having often sustained physical and/or emotional injuries during periods of mass violence, victims may require attention in the form of medical or psychological care to repair the consequences of past abuse. In countries where Western conceptions of psychological care are not considered as the norm, the need for support may be addressed in more culturally meaningful ways through traditional or religious healing practices. Stark (2006) suggests that local practices and spiritual understanding may be valuable in supporting the restoration of victim well-being after trauma. In addition to physical or emotional injuries, victims face various dimensions of insecurity in the wake of mass violence, including fear of renewed violence or continued attacks from groups or individuals who previously harmed them (Ajdukovic, 2004). The provision of

the various levels of support mentioned here may also enhance victims' sense of *safety* by reassuring their security, health, and social support networks. Support, whether it be emotional, medical, traditional, or religious can also aid in the *restoration of victim dignity* when others offer sympathy which *acknowledges* their suffering (De la Rey & Owens, 1998). According to responses from victims of the communist regime in Czech Republic, many felt that “by [the state] not providing them with adequate healthcare, society is quietly wishing them to die faster, thus bringing an end to their remembrance” (David & Choi, 2005, p. 424). This illustrates another way in which victims' suffering may be *acknowledged* when the state affirms their memory through the provision of support in the form of medical care.

Lastly, **storytelling** has been considered as a process which can facilitate healing (De la Rey & Owens, 1998). Herman (1992) has written that “remembering and telling the truth about terrible events [is a] prerequisite both for the restoration of social order and for the healing of individual victims—when the truth is finally recognised, survivors can begin their recovery” (p. 1). Several authors have written about the need for remembrance to facilitate victims' ability to move on after trauma (Herman, 1992; Silove, Zwi, & le Touze, 2006), as remembering the traumatic events that one experienced in the past and constructing and articulating the narrative of those events has been associated with an enhanced ability to cope and recover from abuse (Androff, 2012; Hamber, 2009; Silove et al., 2006). Smyth and Pennebaker (1999) propose that processing one's traumatic memories can help to organise these experiences in one's mind which can facilitate the integration of traumatic experiences into existing memory. They suggest that such integration can contribute to improvements in victims' psychological state. To this end, it has been suggested that *remembrance* can facilitate healing as it allows victims an opportunity for “working through their anger and hatred as a means of rising above their suffering—of getting on with life and *dignity*” (Villa-Vicencio, 2000c, p. 72, italics added). Remembrance has also been referred to as a “triumph over injustice” which can be *empowering* for victims (Verwoerd, 2000a, p. 159).

Storytelling thus integrates the remembrance and construction of trauma narratives, which can then be communicated, or told, to others. The process of storytelling has been posited to facilitate the *restoration of victim dignity* by providing an opportunity

for victims to regain their ability to speak about their trauma after having been, in many cases, previously silenced by the ancien régime (Laplante & Theidon, 2007). Further, many have proposed that victims of trauma have an ‘instinctive’ or ‘internal’ need to share the story of their suffering with others in order to receive *acknowledgment* of their past suffering and/or to experience a sense of *catharsis*—processes which have been linked to victim healing (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Allan & Allan, 2000; Herman, 1992; McKinney, 2008). The idea that the process of storytelling leads to healing is parallel to the theory (which will be further described in Chapter Two) that giving testimony can be beneficial for victims, where *remembering* and *sharing* of past traumatic experiences are part of the healing process. This relationship between storytelling and healing is integral to this thesis that investigates storytelling—equated with giving public testimony in a truth commission for the purposes of this study—as a process which may allow victims an opportunity to experience *voice* as a restoration of control and dignity through being heard by others. The next chapter will expand on this relationship by further explaining the theoretical principles which guide the present investigation of the healing potential of truth-telling through discussing the interaction between restorative and procedural justice with a focus on the concept of *voice*.

1.4 Truth Commissions: A Restorative, Victim-Centred Response to Mass Violence

This chapter will now deepen the discussion of truth commissions as restorative, victim-centred institutions. Empirical data that I collected as background research for this thesis will be provided, which illustrates trends in truth commission creation, goals, and degree of focus on victims over time with an emphasis on how truth commissions have sought to promote victim participation and healing. The final sections of the chapter will describe ways in which participation in truth-telling processes has impacted upon victims. Each of these elements will provide the background for Chapter Two, which develops the theory that guides this thesis by further linking the concepts of giving testimony, *voice*, and victim healing within the context of truth commissions.

It has been suggested that pursuing justice in some capacity during a transitional period can facilitate the promotion of sustainable peace (Lie, Binningsbø, & Gates, 2007; Minow, 1998) or healing (as mentioned above); however, descriptions of what justice may actually entail in transitional settings have tended to be vague. Here, I briefly

highlight the difference between retributive and restorative justice in order to affirm the common assertion that truth commissions are restorative justice mechanisms within the context of transitional justice (Daly, 2008; Leebaw, 2008; Olsen, Payne, Reiter, & Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2010; Tutu, 1999). While retributive justice views crime as “a violation of the state, defined by law-breaking and guilt” for which sanctions against offenders must be imposed (Zehr, 1990, p. 181), restorative justice aims to repair the harm that resulted from the crime by attempting “to facilitate healing for the victim, the offender and the community” through a participatory process (Rugge & Scott, 2009, p. 1). This is an important distinction to make as the way in which these two types of justice initiatives address victims and victims’ needs are different (David & Choi, 2005), which arguably affects how healing is realised for victims of mass violence.

As truth commissions are a key focus of this study, it is important to first set the stage for the discussion with a definition. Hayner (2011) writes that a truth commission

(1) is focused on the past, rather than on-going events; (2) investigates a pattern of events that took place over a period of time; (3) engages directly and broadly with the affected population, gathering information on their experiences; (4) is a temporary body, with the aim of concluding with a final report; and (5) is officially authorized or empowered by the state under review (p.11-12).

From a macro-level perspective, truth commissions may “enhance the accountability and stability function of the justice balance” (Olsen et al., 2010, p. 475). It has also been proposed that these institutions have the ability to break the ‘culture of silence’ that may have pervaded past periods of mass violence by countering the denial of abuses through the illumination of a comprehensive narrative of what happened in the past (Aldana, 2006; French, 2009; Hamber, 2009; McKinney, 2008; Minow, 1998). The official record of past abuses established through the revelation of truth may also be necessary for victims to receive redress, such as reparations (Brahm, 2007; Grodsky, 2009). Additionally, some have stated that truth commissions may also prevent the recurrence of crimes by deterring groups or individuals from committing further abuses in the future by promoting accountability in newly emerging states (Brahm, 2007; French, 2009; Mendeloff, 2009).

Like trials, truth commissions are intended to promote accountability for past crimes through acts of truth-telling (Daly, 2008; Humphrey, 2003), thus requiring the presentation of testimony from witnesses, including perpetrators, victims and/or

bystanders (Allan & Allan, 2000). However, the key distinguishing characteristic between truth commissions and trials is that they generally pursue restorative rather than retributive aims (Leebaw, 2008). Such restorative aims can include: documenting past abuses; recommending reformative actions or initiatives; encouraging reconciliation; marking the transition from present to future; addressing victim needs; and healing (Aldana, 2006; Bohl, 2006; Brahm, 2007; Daly, 2008; Mendeloff, 2004; Popkin & Roht-Arriaza, 1995).

The restorative focus of truth commissions is particularly evident in their focus on addressing victim needs through aiming to repair the harms suffered during past periods of violence by promoting healing and reconciliation, as opposed to pursuing the punishment of perpetrators as a primary goal. As truth commissions are also commonly referred to as victim-centred institutions (Brahm, 2007; Hamber, 2009; Humphrey, 2003; Mendeloff, 2009; Minow, 1998; Olsen et al., 2010; Roht-Arriaza, 1995; Sooka, 2006; Stanley, 2009; Villa-Vicencio, 1999; Wiebelhaus-Brahm, 2010), their encouragement of victim participation in order to repair the negative consequences of past harms depicts another quality of restorative justice. These restorative characteristics make truth commissions ripe for exploring the linkages between truth-telling and healing in the context of post-conflict justice processes in this thesis. As mentioned, although the discussion above described six processes that may facilitate healing, the following sections will predominantly focus on storytelling as a means through which healing can be achieved as this process relates most directly to telling one's story and being heard by others, which is at the heart of what this thesis intends to investigate.

Since the creation of the first truth commission in Uganda in 1974, there have been 40 commissions created as of 2010 (Hayner, 2011). As a first step for this thesis, I undertook a quantitative, empirical study to determine trends among the goals of the truth commissions listed by Hayner (2011), with a focus on aspects of their official charters that had an explicit emphasis on victims—particularly relating to the concepts of healing and participation. It has been commonly assumed that truth commissions are created with intentions to promote healing and participation of victims, but the degree to which these inherently victim-focussed features have been pursued had not previously been empirically examined. Hence, studying the ways in which truth

commissions have intended to focus on victims over time was a valuable pursuit within the background study to inform the justification for this thesis research.

My background study demonstrated a sharp increase in the initiation of truth commissions since the 20-year period between 1970 and 1989, during which seven commissions were created, and the 2000s, when 21 commissions were created. The background investigation also charted the creation of these institutions by region, over time, which is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

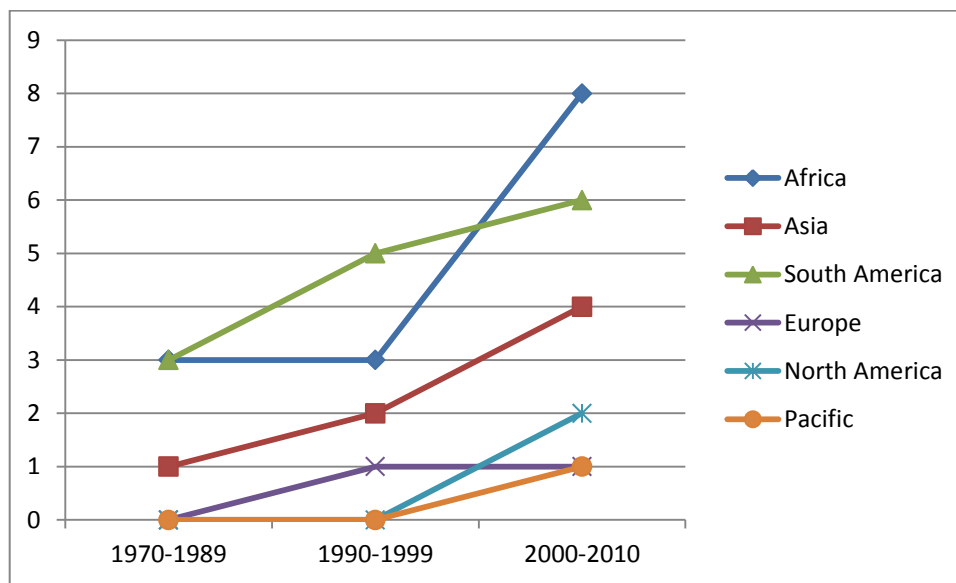


Figure 1.2 Regional truth commission creation over time, 1970-2010.

As Figure 1.2 depicts, South America and Africa have ‘led’ the way in truth commission creation, with 14 commissions having been initiated in each region from 1970-2010. To contextualise these findings, the creation of truth commissions was also compared with the existence of armed conflicts around the world between 1946 and 2009 as found by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2010). Based on this data, armed conflicts in the Americas peaked in 1989 and then decreased thereafter until the end of the reporting period in 2009 (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2010). As illustrated in Figure 1.2, truth commission creation in both North and South America had increased in the 2000s from the 1990-1999 period. Similarly, the African region had peak levels of conflict during the 1990s (particularly in 1991/1994 and 1998/1999), which decreased during the 2000s (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2010). Armed conflicts in Asia also spiked in 1992 and 1997 and decreased slightly thereafter (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2010), while the region’s creation of truth commissions

increased from the 1990s to the 2000s. Armed conflicts in Europe decreased after their peak in 1993 (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2010), while truth commission creation remained constant. Europe is the only region which did not illustrate an increase in truth commission creation after a heightened period of armed conflict, although both the incidence of conflict and truth commission creation have been low in this region. According to Harbom and Wallensteen’s (2010) research, the occurrence of global armed conflict was at its highest in 1992, whereas overall truth commission creation peaked in the 2000s (as seen in Figure 1.2). This illustrates the prominent use of this transitional justice mechanism following heightened periods of conflict worldwide. Thus, my empirical findings support the assertion that truth commissions are “now standard post-conflict structures” that are created to examine human rights abuses committed during past periods of mass violence (Wilson, 2001, p. xviii).

1.4.1 Truth commission goals

Although a number of goals have been suggested to be pursued by truth commissions, no previous study had systematically examined the official charter of each truth commission to determine the goals that these institutions have sought to achieve at their onset. Hence, to determine truth commission goals, each of the 40 truth commission charters were examined for key concepts and wording, which were then grouped into categories to depict the five primary goals that truth commissions have intended to achieve upon their creation. These are: truth (32/40), reconciliation (25/40), reparations (19/40), preventing recurrence (18/40), and healing (18/40). Examples of wording found in official charters which comprise each of these goals are outlined in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Examples of composition of truth commission goals according to 40 truth commission charters.

Truth: truth; shedding light on the past; making as complete a picture as possible; historical record
Reconciliation: individual or national level; promoting national unity
Reparation: provide redress; decide appropriate measures for victims; restitution; compensation
Preventing Recurrence: avoiding repetition; prevent future violations
Healing: healing; restoring victim dignity; rehabilitation; helping victims deal with their pain and move on

Each overarching goal depicted in Table 1.1 is composed of various elements which may be focussed on needs manifested at the state, societal or individual levels, or a

combination thereof. In many truth commissions, pursuing the goal of truth, for example, has generally been considered as a goal aimed at the more macro-level goal of peacebuilding; however, some commissions have identified the role of truth in individual victim healing as well. For example, in the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in Chile (1990), the official charter states that "the knowledge of the truth will restore the dignity of the victims" (p. 1), which suggests that uncovering the truth of the past may help victims to heal through regaining their self-worth. Existing literature has proposed that through hearing the stories of individual victims, a more complete truth about the past can be obtained, which may lead to healing for both victims and society (Androff, 2012; Nwogu, 2010; Robins, 2012). This relationship between individual and societal healing illustrates the fluidity of truth commission goals which interact with and affect aims at multiple levels in transitional settings, including the state, society, and individuals.

1.4.2 Truth commissions as participatory processes

As victim-centred, restorative bodies, truth commissions have been valued as being participatory mechanisms that allow victims a greater opportunity to be a part of the post-conflict process, particularly by ‘giving victims a voice’¹ through which they can speak publicly about their experiences during past periods of mass violence (Hayner, 2011; Roche, 2005). This may be particularly important as victims are often silenced as a means of repression by the ancien régime (French, 2009). It has been suggested that beginning with the earliest commissions created in Latin American countries such as Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala, truth commissions have “opened the door for a strong presence of victims in such procedures” (Karstedt, 2010, p. 18), although the real increase in victim focus came with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that was created in 1995 (Backer, 2007). Arguably inspired by the widely publicised public hearings held as part of the South African TRC’s work, other commissions “added public hearings and ceremonies aimed at giving a public voice to those who had suffered” (Van Der Merwe, Baxter, & Chapman, 2009, p. vii). The following figure (Figure 1.3) illustrates the rise in public as compared to closed hearings based on my empirical study.

¹ ‘Voice’, as it is used in this quote refers to victims’ ability to speak and not necessarily the way it is described in procedural justice literature as mentioned above. When referring to this concept as a component of procedural justice as it is approached in this thesis, it will be italicised as: *voice*.

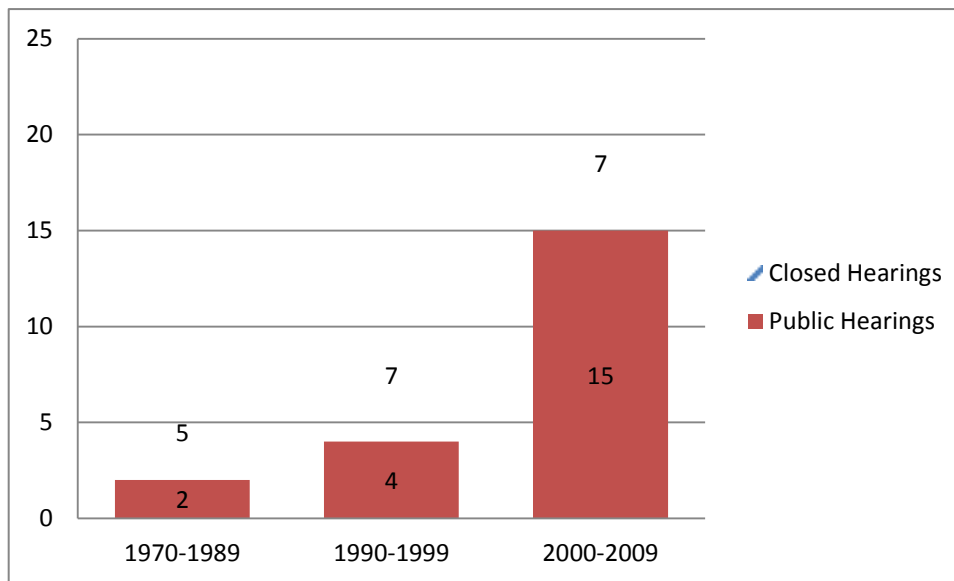


Figure 1.3 Truth commission public vs. closed hearings, 1970-2010

As shown in Figure 1.3, of the seven commissions created during the 1970s and 1980s, only two held public hearings. In the following decade, the 1990s, public hearings increased slightly to four out of 11 total commissions. Finally, the 2000s experienced a sharp increase in public versus closed hearings, where 15 out of the 22 commissions held public hearings. These results are important to highlight as it has been suggested that public hearings are a feature of truth commission processes which are likely to benefit victims as they are “victim-oriented” (Grotsky, 2009, p. 827) and provide a “public platform for victims” through which they can “receive sympathy for their suffering” (Crocker, 1999, p. 48; Grotsky, 2009; Hayner, 2001). The relationship between the ways in which public truth-telling in truth commissions may facilitate benefits related to healing by providing opportunities for *voice* will be further discussed in Chapter Two.

Placing victims at the centre of their work has been considered to be one of the reasons that truth commissions are able to provide a greater number of benefits for these individuals than trials (Humphrey, 2003; Stanley, 2009). Instead of focussing primarily on the outcome of punishment, which as Zehr (1990) suggests, can leave victims marginalised from justice processes, many truth commissions (particularly in recent decades) have directed their attention toward addressing victim needs through encouraging direct victim participation in the process. As Humphrey (2003) articulates: “the strength of truth commissions has been their participatory process in which the

truth about past atrocity is located outside the state within the people” (p. 184). This means, in effect, that within truth commissions, victims are the key source of information about the past, which is often a divergence from the status quo of periods of mass violence where state or military leaders may be the dominant purveyors of information thus further repressing populations. In this sense, the victim-centred quality of truth commissions can give victims an opportunity to speak out about their suffering or needs, which may have been impossible during the previous period of mass violence. In the words of Cohen (2001), truth commissions have become a primary space “for the symbolic recognition of what is already known but was officially denied” (p. 13). To this end, it has been suggested that “it is precisely the victims who gain the most from the breadth of truth commissions’ truth-seeking/truth-telling function” (Aldana, 2006, p. 113). Stanley (2009) proposes that involving victims in such processes may serve to “recognize victims, give them ‘equal respect’, and provide an authoritative acknowledgment of previous harm” (p. 57). However, the extent to which victims do in fact gain benefits—particularly related to healing—from participation in truth commission public hearings remains under researched from an empirical standpoint. As such, this thesis intends to begin filling this gap.

1.4.3 Truth commissions as healing enterprises: Promises and limitations

Related to their victim-centred nature, truth commissions are the transitional justice mechanism that most commonly specify healing as an aim. Particularly beginning with the South African TRC, victims were encouraged to tell the stories of their suffering under the apartheid regime during public hearings in order to experience some sort of catharsis or healing, as justified through the Commission’s slogan: “Revealing is Healing” (Field, 2006; Young, 2004). Millar (2010) suggests that beginning with South Africa,

commissions have become intricately involved not only in developing authoritative records of the past but also in supposedly catalyzing collective psychological, or ‘socioemotional,’ reconciliation through the public performance of witnesses’, victims’ and perpetrators’ stories of their experiences (p. 481).

It has been proposed that the rationale for pursuing healing in this manner can be seen to originate in both psychological literature (De la Rey & Owens, 1998; Millar, 2010) and Christian beliefs (Vorster & Botha, 1999; Young, 2004)—both of which have

pointed to the potential for therapeutic benefits to be gained through storytelling, or giving testimony (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983; Tutu, 1999). In addition to encouraging healing for individual victims, some have suggested that societies may also experience some degree of healing through listening to victims publicly tell their stories which can assist in refuting pervasive myths about past human rights abuses (Androff, 2012; Hamber, 2001; Kiss, 2000; Nwogu, 2010; Robins, 2012; Van Zyl, 2005). The elucidation of these stories is also beneficial because “when the fragmented memories coalesce, a comprehensible overview of what has happened can evolve”, which, according to Van Dijk et al. (2003), can lead to reconciliation (p. 368). Indeed, as McKinney (2008) has asserted, the “rupture” of victims’ identity and social cohesion that mass violence can create “is enlarged by both the lack of acknowledgment or denial by others about what happened and by the inability of the sufferers to acknowledge or bear witness to their own suffering” (p. 277). Thus, addressing individuals’ needs through pursuing truth-telling initiatives can provide an opportunity for acknowledgment of victims and acceptance of their suffering by the nation, which can be beneficial for promoting the transition to sustainable peace (Boraine, Levy, & Asmal, 1995; Hayner, 2011; Stanley, 2009).

To expand the discussion of truth commissions as healing enterprises, this section will illustrate the increase of the term ‘healing’ in truth commission charters in recent decades with examples of how commissions have intended to pursue this goal based on the wording found in their official charters. Then, examples of both positive and negative victim experiences in truth-telling processes as found in existing empirical studies will be provided. This comparison will further illustrate the puzzle identified in the beginning of this chapter: What makes truth-telling beneficial for some victims while it is detrimental to others?

Through the background investigation of truth commission trends over time, I found that ‘healing’ as an explicit goal of truth commission processes has increased since the inception of the first commission created in Uganda in 1974. Healing was not actually explicitly mentioned in an official truth commission charter until 2002, when it was stated in charters of commissions created in Ghana, Timor-Leste, and Sierra Leone. The following figure, Figure 1.4, shows how the inclusion of healing in official truth

commission charters has increased during the four decades in which truth commissions have been created as part of transitional justice strategies.

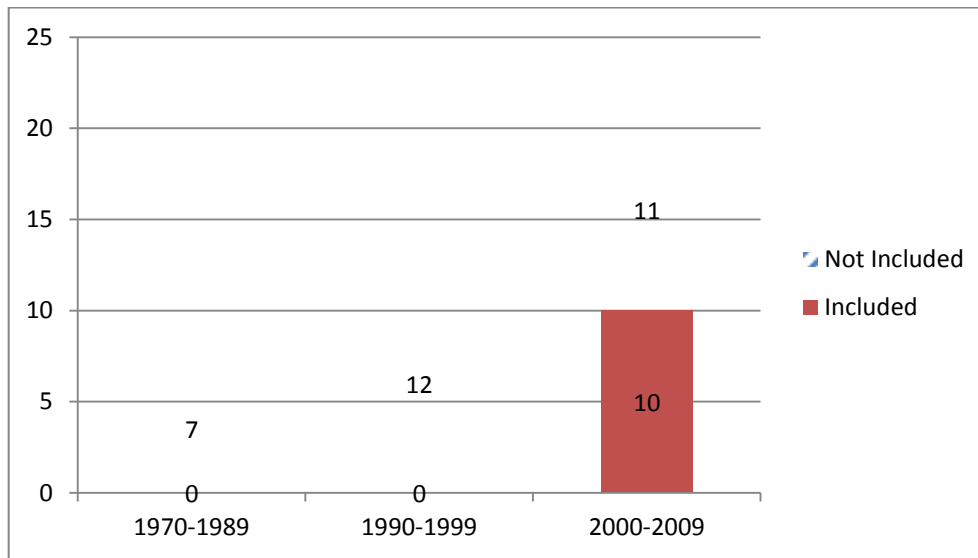


Figure 1.4 “Healing” in truth commission charters, 1970-2009.

As depicted in Figure 1.4, ‘healing’ was not mentioned in truth commission charters until the 2000s, at which time it was mentioned in 10 of the 21 official charters of truth commissions created during that decade². Before 2002, a number of commissions endeavoured to achieve goals such as, to “restore the dignity of victims” (Haiti, 1995) or contribute to the “political and moral rehabilitation of the victims and to redress damages” (Germany, 1992). The concepts of restoring dignity and rehabilitating victims have been considered as facets of the healing process (Hamber, 2009; Minow, 1998); however, although such terminology was found in truth commission charters beginning in the 1990s, the word ‘healing’ itself did not enter the official wording of truth commission charters until the last decade.

Some commissions have made a distinction between healing societies versus healing individuals; however, exactly *how* this healing was meant to be achieved in these countries transitioning from mass violence has often been unclear. In regard to the South African TRC, for example, Hamber et al. (2000) mention that the Promotion of Unity and Reconciliation Act which created the South African TRC, and also the Commission itself “seemed mired in its own indecision (or perhaps it was overwhelmed) about whether it existed to promote individual or national healing” (p.

² Ghana, 2002; Timor-Leste, 2002; Sierra Leone, 2002; Morocco, 2004; Greensboro, USA, 2004; Timor-Leste and Indonesia, 2005; Liberia, 2006; Kenya, 2009; Solomon Islands, 2009; and Togo, 2009.

34). According to my data, this appears to be a common theme among truth commissions. For example, the Commission for Truth and Friendship initiated jointly between Indonesia and Timor-Leste included the provisions to "heal the wounds of the past" (Article 13.d) and to "rehabilitate and restore human dignity" (Article 14.c) in its charter, but the means through which this would be achieved were not fully articulated. Several commissions that have included a provision to promote healing in their charters also indicated intentions to facilitate redress for victims, but the plan that would carry out such initiatives was often not explicitly specified, as in Kenya's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which began its work in 2009. Having now identified the increase in healing as an explicit goal of truth commissions in recent past and examples of how previous commissions have considered this goal in their official charters, the discussion will now turn to how participation in truth-telling has been experienced by victims themselves based on existing empirical research.

1.4.3.1 Victim experiences in truth-telling processes: Examples of "success"

The following empirical findings are intended to show how truth commissions have both 'succeeded' and fallen short in their aim of benefitting victims. The theoretical assumptions that more specifically underlie how the ability to have *voice* through giving public testimony may contribute to victim healing will be further described in Chapter Two, which will form the analytical basis for the case studies on Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands. Based on the results from the studies described below, the ways in which truth-telling processes have benefitted victims can be grouped into four primary categories: (1) feeling relief/catharsis; (2) receiving 'truth' or new information; (3) being acknowledged by perpetrators; and (4) experiencing a sense of empowerment.

It has been suggested that victims can experience a sense of relief and/or catharsis from public truth-telling (Hayner, 2011; Martín-Beristain, Paez, Rimé & Kanyangara, 2010; Tutu, 1999). Two studies which investigated the impacts of truth-telling on victims in the South African TRC found that some victims felt relief after giving testimony. Hamber et al. (2000) conducted interviews with 20 victims of the apartheid regime in South Africa who gave either a public or private statement to the South African TRC. Of those, four of the eight who had testified during a public hearing "expressed positive feelings of relief and comfort upon completion" of the process (Hamber et al., 2000, p. 35). In Byrne's (2004) study, 30 black South African victims were interviewed, with 24

of those having attended either Human Rights Violation Committee hearing or an Amnesty Committee hearing of the South African TRC. She reports that seven of those interviewed described feeling positively about giving testimony, which resulted in feelings of relief from being able to publicly share what had happened to them in the past. Depicting a similar theme from interviews with 21 victim-survivors who publicly testified in Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it was found that all of the interviewees found the experience of giving testimony to be a positive one—"for some it clearly had a cathartic effect" and "most participants had a sense of relief after sharing their stories in public" (Laplante & Theidon, 2007, p. 239). For some, this relief appeared to be directly tied to having the opportunity to share the story of their trauma with others (Laplante & Theidon, 2007). In research undertaken by Androff (2012)³ that aimed to understand victim perceptions of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission held in North Carolina, United States, he similarly found that many of the 17 victims he interviewed experienced a sense of catharsis from giving testimony to the Commission. One interviewee, for example, said, "it was a kind of catharsis for me, which I had not had the opportunity to have before" (Androff, 2012, p. 42). The findings from these three research contexts—South Africa, Peru, and the United States—are evidence that feeling a sense of relief or catharsis from having the opportunity to speak about past violence is one possible way that victims may benefit from participation in truth-telling processes. This issue will be further developed in the next chapter with regard to the theory behind why some victims may find the experience of telling their story to others to be relieving.

Learning the truth about the past has been described as a possible benefit of participation in truth-telling processes in existing literature (Doak, 2011; Hayner, 1994; Olsen et al., 2010). In regard to the South African TRC, some victims from the studies conducted by Backer (2007), Byrne (2004), and Hamber et al. (2000) commented that the truth-telling process had allowed some degree of 'truth' or new information to be presented, which was viewed favourably. Although only two of the 20 victims in

³ Although Androff's (2012) research which focusses on victim participation in the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission held in North Carolina, United States is an example of a truth commission that takes place in a stable democracy as opposed to a post-conflict country, his work provides interesting insights into how public truth-telling may affect victims of violence. Thus, I acknowledge that the needs of victims may have been quite different between interviewees in his study and the others referred to in this section, however, including the findings from his research remains valuable for this thesis.

Hamber et al.'s (2000) study indicated that the South African TRC had helped in delivering truth about the past to victims, 12 of the 30 interviewees in Byrne's (2004) study commented that they felt the South African TRC had been at least somewhat successful in this regard. Byrne (2004) remarks that receiving new information about crimes committed during apartheid helped to facilitate a sense of closure for some victims. One of her interviewees, for example, commented that she was "'grateful' to finally learn the tragic fate of her missing son" (Byrne, 2004, p. 244). In Backer's (2007) investigation of victim satisfaction with their participation in the South African TRC, a survey was conducted with 404 direct and indirect victims of apartheid-related violence in South Africa as well as focus group discussions involving 70 victims. With regard to truth revelation, Backer (2007) found that most victims from his study felt as if the public hearings held by the South African TRC were "relatively constructive" in establishing general truth about the past, which was a source of satisfaction (p. 189). In research undertaken by Stanley (2009) in Timor-Leste, a total of 36 victims of violence perpetrated during the Indonesian military occupation were interviewed⁴. Stanley (2009) discovered that some victims felt a sense of satisfaction from giving testimony to the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR) because it allowed others to know what victims experienced during the Indonesian occupation, thus resulting in some degree of truth about the past. For example, one interviewee said:

I gave my testimony to the CAVR. I was happy with doing that. They must let everyone know what happened to the people. Not just me but so many of us. So many people died and suffered for the independence (Stanley, 2009, p. 112).

Additionally, among Phil Clarks' (2010) interviews with survivors of the Rwandan genocide,⁵ some interviewees also expressed a sense of relief through feeling free from the burden of the past, which they related to the illumination of truth during the *gacaca* hearings⁶. Based on these findings from Rwanda, South Africa, and Timor-Leste, it

⁴ 15 of these were interviewed as a part of a collaborative project with the Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP).

⁵ He notes that a total of 356 individuals—survivors, suspects, *gacaca* judges, and the general population—were interviewed, however the precise number of survivors is not given.

⁶ Although Rwanda's *gacaca* courts are not considered to be an official truth commission as determined by Hayner (2011), they have been considered to be a 'functional equivalent' of a truth commission in Rwanda (Brounéus, 2008). As the two quantitative large-N studies conducted by Brounéus (2010) and Rimé (2011) regarding this case are unique in the field of transitional justice, their findings about the impact of the process on victims' mental health are of relevance for the ensuing discussion.

appears that victims were keen to learn new information or truth about the past, which when they felt as if this occurred, was viewed to be valuable.

In both South Africa and Timor-Leste, it was found that some victims felt positively about the way in which perpetrators expressed remorse about their past crimes. In Byrne's (2004) study, four of the 30 victims interviewed mentioned that they were appreciative that those that harmed them previously came to participate in the South African TRC. One interviewee, for example, commented on how receiving an apology for the abuse they had been subjected to "brought a new picture to my mind" (Byrne, 2004, p. 244), indicating a shift in perception about the perpetrator, which was perceived to be beneficial. In regard to the Community Reconciliation Process—a component of the CAVR which incorporated traditional conflict resolution practices in its work—one victim interviewed by Stanley (2009) illustrates that the truth-telling process allowed an opportunity to be acknowledged by those that previously caused harm by telling how the perpetrator's actions affected him, which ultimately led to an apology. He said:

The hearing gave me a better idea of how he [the perpetrator] had been forced into the militia. He would not have done these things if the Indonesians were not here... We were able to tell him how we had suffered and he apologized. This made me feel better (Stanley, 2009, p. 115).

This comment illustrates that not only did the experience in the CRP hearing facilitate a better understanding of the perpetrator's decision to turn to violence, which may have illuminated truth to some extent, but it also resulted in the acknowledgment of the victim's suffering as the perpetrator offered an apology, which the interviewee viewed positively.

It has been suggested that public truth-telling may also be empowering for victims of mass violence (Hayner, 2011; Humphrey, 2003; Minow, 1998). Several of those interviewed in Androff's (2012) study indicated that they experienced a sense of empowerment from their participation in the Greensboro TRC. One interviewee, for example, commented that having an opportunity to reflect on the past "was very educational and empowering for me" (Androff, 2012, p. 42). Additionally, in a study undertaken by Rimé et al. (2011), a survey of 200 victims who participated in Rwanda's *gacaca* hearings was conducted to assess the psychosocial effects of these

hearings. The authors found that some victims experienced a sense of empowerment through their participation in the process. Rimé et al. (2011) describe that the increase in empowerment was manifested in an exchange of power, where internally directed vulnerable emotions shifted to anger and disgust for the perpetrator, illustrating what the authors depict as a reversal from shame to a restoration of dignity and self-esteem (Rimé et al., 2011, p. 703). As described above, both the restoration of dignity and self-worth have been cited as components of healing, thus truth-telling in this context appeared to be beneficial in this respect through providing an opportunity for empowerment.

1.4.3.2 Victim experiences in truth-telling processes: Examples of limitations

In addition to the positive benefits that some victims have experienced from their participation in truth-telling processes, a number of negative consequences resulting from the experience have also been identified. Based on examples from existing research, five categories of possible detrimental aspects of participating in truth-telling processes can be discerned. These are: (1) retraumatisation; (2) unmet expectations; (3) insecurity or stigmatisation; (4) frustrations with the process; and (5) hearing incomplete truth/inadequate perpetrator engagement.

In regard to the risk of revictimising or retraumatising victims that has been cited as a potential negative consequence of participation in truth-telling processes, a study conducted by Brounéus (2008b) found that, based on in-depth interviews with 16 female survivors of the Rwandan genocide, truth-telling in the *gacaca* hearings resulted in retraumatisation of those interviewed. In another study undertaken by Brounéus (2010) in which a structured survey questionnaire was administered to 1,200 individuals—400 survivors, 400 *inyangamugayo* (judges), and 400 neighbours—within four provinces of Rwanda, it was found that those survivors who became witnesses in Rwanda's *gacaca* hearings had higher levels of PTSD than those who had not, even when controlling for other important predictors of psychological ill-health. Her findings further show that longer exposure to truth-telling in the *gacaca* process did not reduce levels of depression or PTSD as initially hypothesised (Brounéus, 2010). Similarly, the prevalence of PTSD did not decrease over time when compared with earlier studies, suggesting that public truth-telling may have negative psychological effects (Brounéus, 2010).

A similar discovery was made in the Rimé et al. (2011) study conducted in Rwanda described above. Results from this study indicate that participation in the *gacaca* hearings reactivated negative emotions, including fear, sadness, and anxiety in victims, as well as increased PTSD symptoms (Rimé et al., 2011). Likewise, Androff (2012) found that in relation to the Greensboro TRC, some respondents in his study described feeling fear and anxiety prior to testifying as well as “having strong emotion reactions” as they gave testimony (p. 42). Further illustrating this issue in another context, results from Byrne’s (2004) study in South Africa found that secondary victimisation resulted for many of her interviewees. She found that “the process involved considerable emotional pain for a large majority (24 of 30) of the interviewed victims” and as one interviewee highlighted, “when I heard them [perpetrators] at the TRC, the way my heart was sore, I felt as if I was going to die” (Byrne, 2004, p. 246). It was also discovered that four of her interviewees experienced “physical distress either while testifying or while listening to the testimonies of perpetrators, or for days following the hearings” (p. 247). The majority of victims in Backer’s (2007) study also cited that “the actual experience of giving a statement caused a significant amount of distress” with 56 per cent describing the experience as “very upsetting” and 18 per cent describing it as “somewhat upsetting” (p. 181). These findings are important to consider as it has been suggested that the psychological impacts of revictimisation can affect “victim’s self-esteem, faith in the future, trust in the legal system, belief in a just world, and ability to cope with the effects of the crime” (Laxminarayan, 2012, p. 391).

Further, in many cases, before testifying, victims may expect to receive a range of benefits, from material/monetary assistance to psychological relief, which have sometimes been promised by institutions or their staff members as outcomes that would result from their participation. In the case of South Africa, as Verwoerd (2000a) describes, “many victims whose suffering was morally, symbolically acknowledged at the TRC human rights violation hearings now expect more tangible, material recognition” (p. 156). In Byrne’s (2004) study, it was found that many victims felt as if they were promised certain benefits if they participated in the South African TRC process, but those expectations were not met, which led to dissatisfaction, disappointment and even retraumatisation as mentioned above. Also in regard to the South African TRC, Backer (2007) found that “victims were clearly disappointed with the substantive outcomes of the process, at least as they applied to their own specific

circumstances” (p. 189). Many felt that they did not receive adequate benefit for their participation, which was perceived as a shortcoming of the process (Backer, 2007). Additionally, one victim interviewed by Stanley (2009) who participated in a CRP hearing held as part of Timor-Leste’s CAVR indicated a sense of dissatisfaction with the truth-telling process because he felt as if those responsible for atrocities have not yet confessed to crimes, and have thus evaded justice. He commented: “I have participated but I am upset with it. The people who are really behind the violence have not had to say anything” (Stanley, 2009, p. 119). This statement suggests that the interviewee expected that some degree of justice or truth would be illuminated through his participation, but he was ultimately let down by the process as it did not fulfil these expectations. Indeed, such unmet expectations can result in victims feeling disappointed or dissatisfied from their choice to participate (Doak & O’Mahony, 2006).

Another issue which has been highlighted as a potential drawback of public truth-telling for victims is the risk of insecurity or social stigmatisation. Brounéus (2008b) described that after testifying in the *gacaca* hearings, the women she interviewed encountered risks to their safety, including threats and abuse from people in the community. Although not directly related to experiencing physical harm, Hamber et al. (2000) found that some victims felt a sense of psychological insecurity because of their sense that after they publicly told their stories they were ostracised by their communities. For example, one interviewee said,

I regret it so badly. Since then I’m even scared to walk out in the street because people swear at me, saying that I want to make money from my children’s death. I didn’t mean it like that. It’s just that people decided to believe what they wanted to and I have become so miserable because of my testimony (Hamber et al., 2000, p. 29).

Also in the South African context, Backer (2007) discovered that giving public testimony to the TRC led some victims to feel stigmatised by their communities after telling their stories (Backer, 2007), which also indicates some level of psychological insecurity. Fear of being reintroduced to their perpetrators while giving public testimony has also been mentioned by other victims in South Africa. Byrne (2004) discovered this in her study, as one interviewee recalled feeling a sense of fear when having to come face-to-face with her perpetrator during the South African TRC hearings. These examples illustrate the possibility that truth commission participation may be detrimental to the physical or psychological health and safety of victims.

The next potential detrimental aspect of truth-telling processes experienced by victims according to existing research was a frustration with the process itself. Such frustration also included a lack of follow-up support put in place to provide victims with care, which illustrates inattention to the struggles victims face after mass violence (Hamber, 2009; Phakathi & van der Merwe, 2008). In Byrne's (2004) study, 14 of the 30 victims interviewed expressed a sense of disappointment regarding the lack of clarity of the South African TRC process. Although some interviewees commented on how they were unclear about how the South African TRC would respond to their needs, others also mentioned that they were frustrated by the way in which the Commission would deal with perpetrators. They were concerned about the appropriateness of amnesty and they perceived that the Commission gave 'preferential' treatment to perpetrators over victims (Byrne, 2004). The respondents from Backer's (2007) study also had trouble accepting the "perpetrator-centered approach", which as one victim said, "pardons these people who have destroyed our lives but there is nothing we benefit from it" (p. 186). It was found that this aspect of the process was distressing and intensified pain and suffering (Backer, 2007). Interviewees from Hamber et al.'s (2000) study similarly commented that they were unsure of how their needs would actually be addressed by the South African TRC. For example, one victim said,

I'm actually not sure what their work was. All that I thought would happen like investigations, compensation and prosecution of perpetrators has not happened and I just don't see what it is that the TRC was here to do. What I do know is that it brought me heartache because I had such high expectations of it (Hamber et al., 2000, p. 29).

Regarding the lack of follow-up—which may involve addressing psychological or emotional needs or physical health-related needs by providing medical or counselling services—in reference to the South African TRC, Hamber (2009) writes that "victims tended to complain of the TRC opening old wounds and then not offering any psychological support" (p. 59). As de Ridder (1997) also describes in relation to the South African TRC, although follow-up support was enacted immediately after the process, it was not continued throughout the period of time in which victims may have needed attention (De Ridder, 1997). Although victims may have experienced an immediate feeling of relief after giving testimony, it may have been months until the pain resurfaced, at which time help was unavailable (De Ridder, 1997; Hamber et al., 2000). Based on the results of his study, Backer (2007) discovered that respondents felt

as if the South African TRC “did a poor job with follow-up” (p. 189). Although many respondents indicated their sense that perpetrators should take responsibility for rectifying the harm done through some type of recompense, still “many victims were unhappy that little was done to respond to victims’ specific requests in the hearings, much less to carry through with the full program of reparations that the TRC recommended” (Backer, 2007, p. 190). As healing is a process that must take place over a period of time and does not often happen immediately, the lack of support available in the aftermath of transitional justice processes has been viewed unfavourably as it may hinder victims’ ability to heal in the long run.

The way in which perpetrators engage with the truth-telling process, including their attitudes and perceived sincerity, has also been seen to affect victims (Ling, 2005). Hamber (2009) recalls that within the South African TRC, “research has found that healing was undermined by... limited remorse shown by perpetrators and the fact that perpetrators were not forthcoming with sufficient information” (p. 68). This was similarly found in Stanley’s (2009) interviews conducted in Timor-Leste, where one victim commented:

I have participated but I am upset with it. The people who are really behind the violence have not had to say anything. We know nothing more... the Indonesians have had nothing to do... and, that is seen to be ok! (p. 120).

Additionally, in Byrne’s (2004) study, 13 interviewees cited that they had anticipated that perpetrators would express remorse for their past crimes during the South African TRC, but did not ultimately feel that those that harmed them were remorseful for what they had done. She comments that “perpetrators’ lack of remorse was distressing to victims who expected that perpetrators who came forward would show their regret at having committed human rights violations” (p. 248). For some victims, without the sense that their perpetrator is sincerely sorry for what they have done or if they do not recognise the consequences of their actions, it can be very difficult to move on from the past (Staub, 2000).

Further, victims may attend or participate in a truth commission process in order to gain information about their loved ones. Thus, when a perpetrator withholds information about the abuse they committed it may be akin to pouring salt into an open wound for victims who sought closure from their involvement in the process, which may hinder

their ability to overcome their suffering (Hamber, 2009; Senier, 2008). Byrne (2004) found that nearly half of those interviewed in her study felt negatively about “expecting to hear the truth and not hearing it” (p. 248). Thus, although victims have indicated some sense of satisfaction with hearing the truth about past crimes during a truth-telling process, the expectation of being presented with new information about abuses perpetrated previously and not receiving it may be detrimental.

In sum, there has been evidence that truth-telling processes may be harmful for victims of mass violence because of retraumatisation, unmet expectations, insecurity, frustrations with the process itself, and inadequate perpetrator engagement with the process. The contradiction between these findings and the aforementioned beneficial aspects of participation in truth-telling processes is at the heart of the puzzle which frames the work of this thesis. Indeed, participation in truth-telling processes has been found to be both beneficial and detrimental for victims of mass violence, sometimes even within the same process. Thus, research which clarifies the ways in which truth-telling can lead to victim healing by identifying the various pathways through which healing may be achieved is of paramount importance to the study of truth commissions and transitional justice in general. By exploring these pathways, a greater understanding of how truth-telling processes can be better designed to address victim needs can result, which may lead to the improvement of such processes in the future.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has begun to lay the background for the remainder of this thesis by delineating the ways in which mass violence affects individual victims and why addressing victim needs should be a priority in transitional settings. Through this discussion, healing has been identified as a prominent goal of post-conflict justice strategies and the components of healing and the means through which this aim can be achieved have been presented. Truth commissions have been highlighted as “instruments of restorative justice” within transitional justice strategies (Villa-Vicencio, 2000c, p. 68), particularly as they focus on repairing the harm of the past through promoting victim participation and healing. A number of proposed benefits and potential negative consequences of public truth-telling, supported with findings from existing empirical studies conducted in Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, Timor-Leste, and the United States have also been delineated. These elements are crucial to building the

foundation for the field research undertaken in this thesis as they illustrate the complex reality of pursuing victim healing after periods of violence. Related to this complexity, the overarching puzzle of why truth-telling is beneficial for some victims while being harmful for others has also been presented to situate the necessity for the empirical exploration of possible pathways that link truth-telling to victim healing in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste undertaken in this thesis. With the findings from the semi-structured interviews conducted in each of these countries, I intend to contribute to the understanding of *how* truth-telling can lead to victim healing in post-conflict settings, thus beginning to shed light on one piece of this complex puzzle. The next chapter will develop the theoretical framework which is used to guide the investigation of this topic.

2 Theoretical Framework: Linking *Voice*, Truth Commissions, and Healing

2.1 Introduction

In describing the consequences of periods of mass violence for individual victims, Chapter One has articulated why transitional justice strategies should be pursued to address victim needs—particularly healing—in post-conflict settings in an effort to develop conditions capable of sustainable peace. As a result, the truth commission has been highlighted as a victim-centred transitional justice mechanism which focusses on restorative goals such as facilitating healing for victims of mass violence and encouraging victims to participate in the process through telling the stories of their past suffering. Understanding truth commissions as a restorative mechanism of transitional justice is important to this thesis as it situates the discussion of the theoretical considerations that support the potential for truth commissions to facilitate victim healing through providing opportunities for participation, and thus, *voice*. This thesis argues that the intersection of restorative and procedural justice theories provides a key theoretical foundation that assists in explaining the ways in which truth-telling may lead to victim healing in post-conflict settings.

Research undertaken in Canada has found that experiencing procedural justice during participation in restorative justice processes can result in a sense of well-being, and thus may be healing for victims of violent crime (Wemmers & Cyr, 2005). Although not explicitly discussed in terms of procedural justice, other studies undertaken in the United States, Canada, and Belgium have similarly linked victim participation in restorative justice processes with healing (Strang, 2002; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013; Wemmers & Cyr, 2006). To date, these findings have related to stable democracies which are not in the process of recovering from periods of widespread and systematic violence. However, the theoretical underpinnings of such findings that link participation in restorative justice initiatives with victim healing share similarities with the process of giving public testimony in truth commission hearings. Hence, it could be argued that the theory which emerges from these findings discovered in stable, democratic settings can be readily applied in post-conflict settings. This chapter will

deepen the discussion of linkages between public truth-telling, *voice*, and healing to further explain the theories that frame this thesis.

This chapter will first describe studies relating to the ‘testimony method’ which sheds light on why giving testimony in truth-telling processes may be valuable for victims of mass violence. Then, a brief discussion of the relationship between *voice* and retributive and restorative justice theories will be presented in order to situate the theory of procedural justice, which plays an important role in this thesis. The relationship between restorative and procedural justice will also be further explained with an emphasis placed on how procedural justice—particularly the concept of *voice*—may be beneficial for facilitating the healing process for victims of mass violence. After this, the ways in which giving testimony in truth commission public hearings can provide opportunities for the healing potential of *voice* to be realised, based on propositions in existing literature, will be discussed.

2.2 Testimony Method and Healing

Storytelling, which involves the process of remembering and sharing one’s traumatic experiences, has been suggested to facilitate victim healing in existing literature, as described in Chapter One (Allan & Allan, 2000; Herman, 1992; J. Smyth & Pennebaker, 1999). Arguably, this proposition is rooted in the findings from several studies which have examined the role of the so-called ‘testimony method’ in healing victims of political violence within the context of one-on-one therapy sessions. In the testimony method, victims construct a narrative of their traumatic experience in order to share the story of their suffering with a therapist. The first to assess the healing potential of the testimony method, Cienfuegos and Monelli (1983) evaluated the efficacy of this method with former political prisoners (and their relatives) of the military dictatorship in Chile, and found that through giving testimony, “the process of emotional deterioration is halted and the possibilities of growth are reopened” (p. 50). They also propose that giving testimony can promote the “integration of traumatic experience” and “restoration of self-esteem” (Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983, p. 43), which have been cited in Chapter One as potential ways in which storytelling may facilitate healing. Other studies have found similar results, such as the work undertaken by Weine, Kulenovic, Pavkovic, and Gibbons (1998) who assessed the mental health of Bosnian refugees in Chicago who had survived the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans.

They found that testimony was helpful for trauma victims as it “led to a reduction of depressive symptoms that often accompany PTSD” for those interviewed (p. 1723). Similarly, Agger and Jensen (1990) evaluated the impact of the testimony method for political refugees. They found that when survivors of abuse share their stories with others, the experience can result in catharsis by “giving *meaning* to, and therefore as a *reframing* of the individualized pain: the private pain is transformed into political or spiritual dignity” (Agger & Jensen, 1990, p. 116, italics in original). In considering these three studies, Van Dijk et al. (2003) describe that constructing a narrative to be shared is “the crux of the recovery process” and disclosing the story also “has a positive impact on psychological and physical health” (Van Dijk et al., 2003, p. 369). McKinney (2008) has also pointed to the therapeutic value of testimony for victims of political violence because “the dialogical process” of turning traumatic memory into a narrative “is itself constitutive of redemptive self and social reconstruction for survivors” (p. 270). In investigating the pathways that link truth-telling to victim healing, the findings from these studies are important as they offer a psychological perspective on the potential healing benefits of storytelling for victims of mass violence. These studies offer clues about the theoretical justifications for encouraging victims to publicly tell their stories in truth commissions (Ross, 2003), and are thus crucial to consider in relation to the theoretical framework developed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

According to these studies, the testimony method is considered to be a valuable means through which healing may be facilitated; however, limitations of the efficacy of this method in promoting psychological benefits for victims have also been cited. Although giving testimony can provide relief or catharsis for some victims, the remembrance and communication of their traumatic stories can in itself be a source of distress or anxiety for others (Ross, 2003), which may contribute to retraumatisation (Byrne, 2004). To this end, although the practice of ‘debriefing’ has been considered as an early psychological intervention that may reduce trauma victims’ risk of experiencing symptoms of PTSD (van Wyk & Edwards, 2005), it has been found that when debriefing is undertaken only once between victim and therapist, it does not lower the risk of victims developing PTSD (Rose, Bisson, Churchill, & Wessely, 2002). This finding has generated criticisms of using ‘single session’ debriefing in promoting healing because a transitory use of the testimony method does not allow the victim to

build a relationship over time with their therapist. In the absence of such a relationship, which can enhance feelings of trust and safety, single session debriefing may run the risk of retraumatising victims (McKinney, 2008).

In the context of post-conflict truth-telling, the public nature of truth commission hearings may inhibit the development of a safe space in which a victim tells their story, as in many cases, such hearings do not provide possibilities for privacy or confidentiality (Brounéus, 2008b; Doak, 2011). These findings are relevant to the study of the healing potential of truth commissions because, by nature, truth commissions are temporary institutions allocated with limited time and resources with which to complete their work (Hayner, 2011). As a result of these limitations, victims generally have only one opportunity to tell their story to a truth commission. This, in effect, precludes the development of a confidential, therapeutic relationship over a number of meetings, which has been suggested to be important for the success of the testimony method in facilitating healing (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Brounéus, 2008b). As the public hearing feature of truth commissions can be readily equated to single session debriefing in this way (Brounéus, 2008a), such a relationship raises questions about how apt a single experience of giving testimony in a public forum can be at facilitating victim healing (Brounéus, 2008b; Fletcher & Weinstein, 2002; Hayner, 2011; O'Connell, 2005).

It has also been found that when a greater amount of time elapses between the traumatic event and a debriefing session, victims may be adversely affected by the process (Rose et al., 2002). The use of single session debriefing in truth commission public hearings as a functional equivalent to therapy can be critiqued to this end because truth commissions may not necessarily be available as an immediate outlet in which victims can 'debrief' about their trauma. For example, considering the case of Timor-Leste, the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation heard stories of abuse that had happened as early as 1975, which would mean that if one was subjected to violence at the beginning of the 24-year Indonesian occupation, 27 years could have passed between their initial suffering and the year 2002 in which the truth commission began its public hearings. If one considers the findings from Rose et al. (2002) which suggest that single session debriefing may have adverse effects on victims the more time that elapses between the abuse and the debriefing session, such a substantial waiting period

between a victim's initial abuse and the initiation of truth commission public hearing may not prove to be beneficial for victims' mental health.

Despite the potential shortcomings of the 'one-off' nature of giving testimony in a truth commission for the promotion of victim healing, scenarios in which a singular experience of truth-telling was found to be beneficial for victims have also been seen. Both the helpful and harmful impacts of a single session of truth-telling have been evidenced in previous studies conducted in countries such as Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, Timor-Leste, and the United States, as highlighted in Chapter One. Considering such findings, it does not appear that the one-off aspect of truth commission public hearings is necessarily detrimental for victims as might be deduced from the results of Rose et al.'s (2002) study. However, it is still unclear why this type of meeting is helpful for some victims while, at the same, is harmful for others, which is the key contradiction that forms the puzzle of interest in this thesis.

To further develop the theoretical foundations behind the rationale for pursuing truth-telling as a means to facilitate healing within transitional justice strategies, the next section will revisit the brief discussion found in Chapter One regarding the healing role of retributive and restorative justice in post-conflict justice processes. In post-conflict settings, both retributive and restorative initiatives rely on truth-telling in order to achieve their goals, where testimony is given by individuals affected by past violence. However, the way that each of these types of justice processes facilitate opportunities for victims to have *voice* can have a marked impact on achieving the goal of healing. According to existing literature, strategies with a restorative focus are more likely to promote victim healing through their focus on repairing past harm rather than primarily pursuing punishment and/or sanctions as in retributive processes (Zehr, 1990). Although it has been suggested that securing justice through retributive processes can be beneficial for victims in some respects (Kira et al., 2006; Moon, 2009), it is not generally believed that the act of testifying in such processes will, in itself, facilitate healing. Indeed, quite the opposite has been suggested by authors such as Herman (2003), who proposes that victim participation in retributive justice initiatives is likely to cause victims greater psychological suffering. After the ways in which retributive and restorative justice processes purportedly affect victim healing through their potential to provide victims with opportunities for *voice* are developed, procedural

justice theory will be discussed in relation to restorative justice as a means to facilitate therapeutic benefits for victims of violent crime. This nexus between restorative and procedural justice is a key part of the foundation of the theoretical framework used in this thesis, which explores *voice*—a component of procedural justice—as a potential causal mechanism that links truth-telling to victim healing in post-conflict settings.

2.3 Theories of Justice and the Role of *Voice*

Although justice may be beneficial for victims of mass violence in some respects, retributive justice initiatives such as trials have often been criticised for limiting victims' ability to control the way in which they tell their stories, a key facet of *voice*. To this end, it has been proposed that “legalistic interventions may result in a strangulation of desired forms of voice” (Ross, 2003, p. 332). Some have suggested that retributive justice processes can retraumatise victims through cross-examination during which victims often have the validity of their sensitive stories challenged or their character impugned (Doak, 2011; Herman, 2003), which may hinder the ability of *voice* to restore victims' sense of control and dignity. Further, it has been suggested that trials can shift the ownership of the conflict to the state instead of the victim, where “the state is thereby notionally conceived as the victim, with those who have suffered the primary consequences of the perpetrator's act being viewed as awkward outsiders to the process” (Doak & O'Mahony, 2006, p. 159). In this way, victims become akin to passive observers of a process that intends to adjudicate the harm committed against them, which can be disempowering as they are essentially denied a sense of control by being pushed outside of the decision-making process. Related to this issue, trials often place limits on the ways in which victims tell the story of their trauma (Doak, 2011; Franke, 2006; Kelsall & Stepakoff, 2007; Stover, 2004), thus hindering the sense that they had *voice* in the process and inhibiting the possibility of their story being heard by others. To this end, trials have generally been seen as ill-suited to promote victim-focussed goals such as participation and healing (Franke, 2006; Herman, 2003; O'Connell, 2005) as well as *voice* (Gibson, 2002).

In contrast, restorative justice processes have been seen to promote healing and recognition of those affected by crimes, particularly by providing opportunities for victims to participate as decision-makers in the process and to express how past harms have affected them (d'Estrée, 2006; Doak & O'Mahony, 2006; Van Camp & Wemmers,

2013). Doak and O'Mahony (2006) suggest that through expressing the story of the harm they have suffered (i.e. storytelling) in restorative processes, victims may have the chance to “have their anxieties and fears addressed; to receive information and compensation; and to be consulted on decisions that affect their interests” (pp. 160-161). Hence, restorative justice processes can facilitate opportunities for *voice* by providing victims with a forum in which to tell their story and be heard by others, thus feeling a sense of empowerment, safety, affirmation, a restored sense of status as well as restorations to their livelihood which can enhance their sense of dignity (d'Estrée, 2006; Doak & O'Mahony, 2006; Strang & Sherman, 2003; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013). As such, many have proposed that participation in restorative justice processes can be therapeutic for victims (Rugge & Scott, 2009; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013; Wemmers & Cyr, 2005)—often, it has been argued, more so than retributive processes (Mendeloff, 2009; Minow, 1998)—which may be because restorative justice processes are more adept at offering a space in which victims are able to have *voice* (d'Estrée, 2006).

Within transitional justice strategies, storytelling has been a primary component of the work of restoratively-focussed truth commissions (Ross, 2003). The theory behind the efficacy of truth commissions in facilitating victim healing is largely based upon their reliance on restorative justice principles, including the promotion of victim participation and the reparation of past harms. The highly participatory nature of truth commissions (Doak, 2011), along with their focus on the process of restoration justifies the inclusion of another type of justice in the theoretical considerations that guide this thesis—*procedural justice*. Although often not explicitly highlighted in the majority of debates regarding which type of justice should be sought in transitional justice strategies, procedural justice theory (also known as procedural fairness) may provide important insights into how truth-telling in post-conflict justice processes may be beneficial for victims. Instead of focussing on a specific outcome such as retribution or restoration, procedural justice is concerned with the *process* through which these outcomes might be achieved. Pioneering procedural justice scholars Thibaut and Walker (1975) assert that individuals will perceive a justice or decision-making process as fair or just when they have control over the procedures undertaken within the process. Termed as ‘process control’ and ‘decision control’ by Thibaut and Walker (1975), Van Camp and Wemmers (2013) suggest that factors such as “having input in

the process and an opportunity to present one's arguments and opinions" as well as "having veto power" may dictate the perceived fairness of a process (p. 120).

Stemming from Thibaut and Walker's (1975) research, the concept of *voice* was later presented by Folger (1977) who proposed that "having a voice in the system means having some form of participation in decision making by expressing one's own opinion" (p. 109). Lind and Tyler (1988) suggest that the perceived fairness of a justice or decision-making process will be influenced by an individual's ability to participate and have *voice* in such processes—the potential benefits of which will be described below. It has been proposed that procedural justice is important because "it seems to cushion the negative impact of an unfavourable outcome...because victims felt involved, respected and heard" (Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013, p. 136). Thus, experiencing a sense of procedural justice plays an important and beneficial role for individuals participating in justice processes, which I argue is also relevant to victim healing within post-conflict truth-telling initiatives.

As "potent determinants" of procedural justice, participation and *voice* are of particular interest to this thesis as it has been suggested that individuals may benefit from having opportunities to participate and express their views and opinions, that is, to have *voice*, in a justice or decision-making process (Lind & Tyler, 1988, p. 176). Both participation and *voice* can be associated with individuals' restoration of control when they have the ability to express themselves in the manner of their choosing ('process control'). A link between these procedural justice components and therapeutic benefits for victims can be surmised from Herman's (2003) comment that "victim inclusion, choice, and empowerment may be the best predictors of mental health outcomes" (p.163). This proposition bridges participation and 'process control' (a benefit related to *voice*) with victim healing, thus supporting the value of incorporating participation and *voice*—two key components of procedural justice theory—into the study of healing within the context of transitional justice processes.

The ability to participate in a truth-telling process has been considered to be beneficial for victims' mental health (Freeman & Hayner, 2003); however, it is *voice* that is of particular interest to this thesis. *Voice* has been considered to be desirable for victims as it allows them to "seek recognition" and "control" by expressing themselves in front of others (Wemmers & Cyr, 2006, p. 111). Having *voice* "suggests that one is valued by

those running the process”, and implies that “one has status and is worth being listened to” (d’Estrée, 2006, p. 112). According to Epstein (2001), a person’s perception that they are allowed to “state their views” and that “their perspective is taken seriously” may also help them to feel “a sense of self-worth” (p. 1846). Based on these assumptions, I suggest that if victims do not have *voice*, their feelings of dignity and control may be compromised, and thus their sense of healing may be limited.

Indeed, *voice* may be important to victims of mass violence because, as mentioned previously, in the words of d’Estrée (2006):

Voice can be seen as power, status, self-worth, identity, and even existence. Denial of voice can threaten perceptions of fairness, sense of legitimacy of authorities and systems, and ultimately can pose even an existential threat. People may react to denial of voice with noncompliance, passivity, frustration, agitation, and violence. Provision of voice is essential for a sense of justice, community restoration and healing (p. 118).

As mentioned in Chapter One, “people commonly seek vindication in the aftermath of wrongdoing because wrongs, by implication, deny worth and status” (Govier, 2009, p. 40). Hence, the realisation of *voice* may provide an opportunity to overcome the disempowerment that can result from victimisation through restoring a victim’s sense of control and dignity. Because “voice [can be seen] as a form of participatory decision-making” (Potter, 2006, p. 35) and is “the most important aspect of fair procedure” (Gibson, 2002, p. 546), it could be argued that *voice* is more meaningful than participation alone, as *voice* can be considered to be a more advanced and complex stage of participation. Participation, in the context of truth commissions, may include attending a truth commission hearing or submitting a private statement, but not necessarily the ‘additional experience’ of telling one’s story in public (Backer, 2007). Based on the suggestions that both *telling* their stories and being *heard* by others is important for victims (d’Estrée, 2006; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013; Wemmers & Cyr, 2006), the ‘higher status’ of *voice* may better facilitate the delivery of psychological benefits related to victim healing than participation alone, making it valuable to explore as a potential mechanism that may enhance the healing potential of truth-telling.

To further explain the potential for this component of procedural justice to contribute to healing, a recent study investigating the impact of restorative justice—specifically, victim-offender mediation—on victims of violent crime in Canada found that when victims experience a sense of procedural justice in restorative justice processes, a sense

of healing may result (Wemmers & Cyr, 2005). The findings of this study which interviewed 59 victims of violent crime who participated in a victim-offender mediation programme indicate that participation in this process contributed to improvements in victims' well-being and, consequently, was healing. Indeed, Wemmers and Cyr's (2005) results "suggest that procedural justice facilitates healing" (p. 540), however, this proposition has not previously been explored empirically in the context of truth commission processes in post-conflict settings. Thus, this thesis seeks to examine whether the procedural justice component of *voice* in restorative justice processes can be therapeutic for victims of violence in transitional justice settings by examining how victim healing may be facilitated by giving public testimony in truth-telling processes.

2.4 Giving Testimony in Truth Commissions: Possibilities for *Voice* and Healing

In light of previous suggestions about the relationship between *voice* and healing, this section will take a closer look at the role of these two concepts in relation to public storytelling in truth commissions by further discussing the theoretical considerations which guide this thesis. Previous research has suggested that narrative interventions may hold healing potential for victims of political violence (Neuner, Schauer, Roth, & Elbert, 2002). Thus, because "TRCs are narrative interventions... it is assumed that they will contribute to the healing of survivors of violence" (Androff, 2012, p. 38). By the same token, it has been suggested that truth commissions are capable of providing a space where victims "regain their dignity" and can be re-empowered through a restorative process (Aldana, 2006, p. 108; Hayner, 2011, p. 146). Truth commission proponents argue that this can be facilitated through the way in which commissions "[invite] victims to tell their story in an open and receptive environment", which can allow opportunities for empathetic support and feedback, which is said to be beneficial for facilitating healing (Aldana, 2006, p. 108). Illustrating this supposition in the context of the South African TRC, Moon (2009) writes:

Truth-telling was the key 'therapy' by which the TRC sought to address national and individual trauma: the TRC aimed to 'give voice' to victims in order to provide a cathartic space in which the pain of the past might be purged and transformed (p. 79).

In transitional settings, it has been suggested that "providing victims with mechanisms to voice themselves would be most beneficial, and may be helpful in their recovery"

(Laxminarayan, 2012, p. 402). It could be argued that such a suggestion stems from findings about the utility of the testimony method for promoting healing in one-on-one therapy sessions as discussed above. Some have quite directly equated the process of giving public testimony during a truth commission hearing to therapeutic interventions, because as Rosenberg (1995) has suggested, “in both contexts, victims will have someone who will listen to their stories, validate them with official acknowledgement, and enable the narrative of the atrocity to be integrated into their life stories” (cited in Doak, 2011, p. 273). One could surmise that the increase in public, as opposed to closed, truth commission hearings evidenced in the previous chapter is an illustration of how truth commissions have increasingly intended to use a variation of the testimony method as therapy, particularly in the recent past. Thus, it is important to study how this has affected victims.

So, how is it that giving public testimony may actually benefit victims? As discussed in relation to storytelling in Chapter One, many have suggested that victims of mass violence have an inherent need to tell the story of their trauma to others (Allan & Allan, 2000; McKinney, 2008). Others have similarly asserted that talking about their trauma aloud, whether it be to an audience or merely to another individual or group can be beneficial for victims of mass violence (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983; Laplante & Theidon, 2007; Van Dijk et al., 2003). In the context of truth commissions, victims may be able to use public storytelling to communicate the suffering inflicted in the past, which may “satisfy—or at least begin to satisfy—a clear need on the part of some victims to tell their stories and to be listened to” (Hayner, 2011, p. 147). The process of public storytelling about past abuse may also produce psychological benefits for victims (Martín-Beristain et al., 2010), which may result from sharing and being heard by others, or having *voice*.

This section will further link the concepts of *voice* and healing in the context of truth commissions by exploring the ways in which storytelling, that is, giving public testimony, can facilitate the realisation of the potentially healing benefits of *voice*. Although by giving testimony, an individual is, by implication, speaking about their experiences in some way, it is possible that they may still feel as if they did not have *voice*. Thus, the way in which testimony is *heard* or responded to may have an effect on whether an individual has felt as if they had *voice*. The sense that a person has had

voice may depend on their perceived ability to tell their story in their own way and how it is acknowledged by others, including family or community members, state officials, or truth commission staff (d'Estrée, 2006). As such, the following sections will discuss how *voice*, as both telling one's story and having that story heard by others, can be beneficial in facilitating victim healing within truth-telling processes. Three primary themes relating to how *voice* can lead to victim healing can be seen to emerge from existing literature, namely: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. This section will discuss these themes, which will be used as a basis for the analytical framework (to be described in Chapter Three) through which field research findings will later be presented.

2.4.1 Empowerment

It has been suggested that truth commissions provide a forum in which victims may feel empowered by publicly telling the story of their suffering (Aldana, 2006; Humphrey, 2003; Minow, 1998), but it is important to examine the theoretical assumptions about why this might be the case. As mentioned, periods of oppression and the resulting trauma can leave victims feeling disempowered (Govier, 2009), thus restoring a sense of control⁷ after being victimised is an important component of healing. French (2009) has suggested that the process of giving testimony can allow victims an opportunity to restore the control that was lost as a result of being victimised by letting others know what happened to them in the past. The ability to give testimony can help victims to overcome this disempowerment in the sense that they have the opportunity to tell their story in their own way, thus controlling what is said and how it is communicated—a fundamental characteristic of *voice*.

It has also been suggested that giving public testimony can be beneficial for victims by allowing them the ability to contribute to the documented history of past violence in their country (McKinney, 2008; Stauffer, 2013). This may be empowering for victims as it can allow them to actively participate in the construction of their national narrative (Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983). In the context of therapy sessions with victims of political violence and their relatives in Chile, Cienfuegos and Monelli (1983) write that testimony “creates a document of historical value for future generations, and constitutes

⁷ Although there may be a nuanced difference between the concepts of ‘empowerment’ and ‘restoring control’, this thesis will use them interchangeably.

an important step toward the elaboration of past experiences for patients [victims] themselves” (p. 49). This proposition can be readily applied in the context of truth commission public hearings as giving testimony in these settings allows for the documentation of victims’ stories in a forum which can help to break the silence of the past (McKinney, 2008). It is the ‘narrative truths’ which are disclosed through giving testimony “that often underlie mass violence and which also may play a role in recovery from violence as well as prevention of further violence” (Stauffer, 2013, p. 39). To this end, McKinney (2008) has also asserted that “bearing witness” allows individuals to transmit “the knowledge of historical reality to others” which may help to “halt future conflict and repression” (p. 283-4). So not only may the public construction of the narrative truth of the past contribute to healing, but it also may result in a sense of safety from future abuses—a point that will be further developed below. Thus, victims may experience *voice* from communicating their stories in a way that actively contributes to building an historical narrative of the past violence, exposing the truths of the past which may have been buried by the ancien régime, which can be empowering.

The ability to give testimony (and the choice of whether or not they will testify) in a truth commission can be considered another aspect of *voice* that may help victims to restore a sense of control that was lost as a consequence of victimisation. As d’Estrée (2006) writes “voice... signifies that one has the legitimacy and value to have a voice” (p. 105), whereas “suppression of one’s voice and one’s self...has been shown to have important psychological consequences, such as depression, hopelessness, and lower global self-worth” (p. 107). Therefore, being provided with an opportunity to tell their stories can be affirming, empowering, and healing for victims. It has been proposed that this sense of empowerment may also increase victims’ sense of dignity as the “restoration of dignity is not simply a function of restored voice, but of a voice in control” (Ross, 2003, p. 336). Having the ability to share one’s story during a truth-telling process may be important for reinstating the dignity that was lost as a result of past abuse.

Whether in public or private interviews, it has been proposed that truth commissions can help provide a way for victims to have some degree of control over the narrative of their traumatic experience, as within these processes “victims...are encouraged to tell

as much [of] their stories as they wish to reveal, without regard for its relevance to the determination of guilt” (Aldana, 2006, p. 111). This feature, which is considered to be characteristic of truth commissions, has generally been an area of criticism within trials, where the presentation of testimony serves the exclusive function of adjudicating a case by determining guilt or innocence, instead of offering witnesses a chance for the potentially cathartic and empowering experience of unfettered storytelling (O’Connell, 2005). Some truth commissions, such as Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, have instituted various options intended to increase the comfort of victims who wish to give testimony, including offering victims the choice of testifying in public, in private hearings in front of only truth commission staff, or within *in camera* hearings which record the witnesses’ testimony, but preserve their anonymity (Nowrojee, 2005). Although offering different options for victims to give testimony is not generally directly referred to as creating opportunities for *voice*, the ability to choose how one tells their story can be seen as a way in which the potential benefits of *voice*, such as the restoration of control and dignity, may be realised. The ability for victims to determine how they will share their narrative with others may be empowering as it could lend itself to a sense of process control for those who may have been previously silenced and/or marginalised during periods of past violence (d’Estrée, 2006).

However, there are a number of ways that victim’s ability to share their stories in public may be limited by truth commission processes, which can be disempowering. Truth commissions are not often capable of hearing public testimony from everyone who may wish to give it, as only those who are *chosen* to give testimony will be able to share their experiences. Having *voice* can affirm that one’s story is legitimate and worthy of being heard (d’Estrée, 2006), thus, those who are not selected to testify may continue to feel marginalised and insignificant. In addition, there may be practical reasons that preclude victims from having the ability to tell their stories. For example, some victims may actually be too traumatised to tell their stories, even years after the event has occurred (Stanley, 2009). Several victims interviewed by Stanley (2009) in Timor-Leste cited practical or logistical reasons, such as work and family obligations, for not being able to testify in the national hearings held by the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation or the local Community Reconciliation Process hearings. One victim interviewed in her research commented on how the CAVR did not come to his

village, thus he was not able to give his story, implying that even if he desired to do so it would not have been possible (Stanley, 2009). This may be frustrating for some victims who wish to actively contribute to documenting the history of past abuses, but are, in this case, implicitly denied the opportunity to do so.

Additionally, victims' stories may be silenced or mismanaged by state officials, truth commissioners or family members, which precludes the realisation of *voice* as a mechanism of empowerment. *Voice* may be limited by either those in power or members of the ancien régime who intimidate witnesses that intend to testify in a truth commission, or who prohibit victims' ability to share their story in the way in which they would like to share it. Those either directly or indirectly responsible for past abuse may try to stifle the ability of victims to speak about their trauma in order to avoid being held accountable for their past crimes (d'Estrée, 2006; Sarkin, 2001). This type of "silencing of victims by perpetrators occurs to prevent crimes from being recognized, and from even being 'real'", which may preclude the validation of one's suffering and can thus be disempowering (p. 108). Evidence of this type of limitation enforced on victims' ability to tell their stories and be heard by others was seen during the *gacaca* hearings in Rwanda where some women who had testified received threats or were subjected to retaliatory attacks in response to having their stories heard in public (Brounéus, 2008b). Not only did this intimidation, in effect, punish those who had testified, but it may have also served as a deterrent for others to bring their experiences forward to the *gacaca* courts. When individuals are limited as to how they will share their stories, the culpability of former perpetrators could also be minimised as a truncated view of the abuses committed is developed. At the same time, these limitations may frustrate victims who desire that the truth be known about their suffering.

Furthermore, although some individuals may have the opportunity to testify or provide statements to truth-telling institutions, the sharing of sensitive stories in public may result in reprisals or repercussions from their community or families (McKay, 2000; Wandita, Campbell-Nelson, & Pereira, 2006). To this end, cultural—including patriarchal—norms may preclude victims' ability to have *voice*. Regarding patriarchal norms, one woman interviewed by Stanley (2009) in Timor-Leste said that part of the reason she did not give testimony to the CAVR was because

my husband was not happy that everyone would hear the detail about what happened to me. He thought it would be better if I kept quiet. I think that I would like to give my testimony (Stanley, 2009, p. 117).

Although speaking more specifically about the experiences of victims of sexual violence testifying about their abuse in a judicial context, Herman (2005) asserts that “victims understand only too well that what awaits them in the legal system is a theater of shame” (p. 573). Such a proposition is readily applied to the truth commission context as well because the process involves a similar expression of potentially sensitive stories to others. Ross (2003) has highlighted that although victims testifying in the South African TRC may have felt in control of their narratives and that they experienced some sense of safety during the public hearing process, the “mediatization of the hearings” meant that once their story had been told, they were no longer in control of how it would be received by others (p. 334). Hence, the cultural norms surrounding the publication of victims’ sensitive stories may ultimately inhibit the realisation of *voice*, when giving testimony results in a sense of a loss of control of disempowerment.

There have also been instances in which final reports were never released or were very minimally distributed, thus limiting the communication of victims’ stories to others (Hayner, 2011). This may counteract the commission’s intention to ‘give a voice’ to victims (Hayner, 2011; Phakathi & van der Merwe, 2008; Roche, 2005), as their stories were never able to be conveyed to the public in the way that may have been desired. Additionally, as evidenced in the South African TRC, some truth commissions may only select “window cases” that provide a snapshot of various types of previous abuse to be heard during public hearings, which can leave victims “feeling ‘left out of the process’” (Byrne, 2004, pp. 251-252). Although this is often a consequence of the time limitations that truth commissions are faced with, it ultimately means that “only a tiny fraction of victims can be heard” (Zehr, 1997, para. 2), which can be disheartening to those who desire the opportunity to share their story with others. Further, in many cases, truth commissions may only select certain pieces of testimony to be included in their final reports in order to provide an overview of the period of mass violence (Minow, 1998). When this is done, not all of those who provided testimony may have their stories included, which can be disappointing upon the release of the report in which victims anticipate finding documentation of their experiences. Although likely a reflection of the inherent temporal and budgetary restrictions with which truth

commissions are often faced (Hayner, 2011), these examples illustrate how limitations placed on *voice* during periods of transition may be a source of disempowerment for victims who may want to tell the story of their trauma, but are either implicitly or explicitly denied an opportunity to do so.

2.4.1.1 Importance of silence

Related to the above points about the potential sense of empowerment that can result from having *voice* in a truth commission public hearing, it is important to mention that in some cases, silence may be just as valuable as storytelling. According to d'Estrée (2006), “voice may be a choice to remain silent and/or choose when to speak”, thus having *control* over telling one’s story may be equally important to the act of telling itself (p. 117). Indeed, in countries that have suffered from political repression, silence may be a tool through which victims try to retain or reclaim their dignity (Lykes & Mersky, 2006) as “a way to protect oneself from shame, humiliation, or future repression” (Stanley, 2009, p. 65). It is important to not confuse silence with the denial of, or compliance with, abuse, but instead as a possible coping mechanism used by victims in order to ‘get on’ with their daily lives in the wake of periods of mass violence (Hayner, 2011; Lykes & Mersky, 2006; Motsemme, 2004; Stanley, 2009). In some cultures, silence as a coping mechanism may also be equated with the concept of ‘forgetting’. Summerfield (2000), for example, has suggested that “many non-Western cultures have little place for the revelation of intimate material outside the family circle and consider ‘active forgetting’ as a normative means of coping”, a concept which he proposes is also relevant to “mankind in all epochs and cultures”, illustrating the potentially innately human desire to forget in order to move on with life (p. 429).

Further highlighting the potential value of silence, it has been suggested that “silences, particularly those surrounding difficult or violent pasts, can be sites of communication” which represent the memory and acknowledgment of traumatic experiences (Obradović-Wochnik, 2013, pp. 7-8). Silence may also be “a form of resistance” to political systems that have previously asserted power and dominance over others (Motsemme, 2004, p. 917; Stanley, 2009, p. 65) and thus may be a way in which victims regain their sense of agency (Motsemme, 2004). In this way, silence may be crucial to maintaining a person’s sense of power and control of their own security. Indeed, in the context of transitional justice mechanisms, it has been suggested that

silences can be equally important to what is said aloud (Motsemme, 2004; Ross, 2003; Stanley, 2009). Thus, the decision of whether or not to tell one's story may be an important factor which affects victims' sense of empowerment.

2.4.2 Catharsis

Another justification for encouraging victims of mass violence to give public testimony within truth commission hearings is that the process of telling their story may help to facilitate catharsis and thus, healing (Androff, 2012; Hayner, 2011; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010; Tutu, 1999). As mentioned in Chapter One, several studies regarding victim participation in truth-telling processes have identified scenarios in which victims have experienced a sense of relief or catharsis from public truth-telling (Androff, 2012; Byrne, 2004; Clark, 2010; Hamber et al., 2000; Laplante & Theidon, 2007). This section will more clearly identify how having *voice* in a truth-telling process may result in such feelings of catharsis, and in turn facilitate healing. Dowdall (1996) asserts that “we all know that concealing, suppressing or repressing painful memories commonly brings in its wake psychological symptoms: stress, anxiety and depression” (p. 34). In addition, it has been suggested that the “psychologically adverse consequences” associated with the repression of these memories can also “lead to physical symptoms” (Hamber, 1995, p. 3). Such reasoning plays a role in the assumption that the ability of a victim to speak aloud and thus reveal these memories publicly within truth commission proceedings will assuage these types of symptoms. It has been widely believed that telling one's story to others can be cathartic or a source of relief from the burden of one's trauma (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Avery & Quiñones, 2002; Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983; Freeman & Hayner, 2003; Kiss, 2000; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010), which may in turn allow victims an opportunity to restore their capacity to live a productive life in the absence of the burden of suffering that has previously weighed them down. In Gibson's (2002) study of perceptions of fairness about the amnesty process implemented as part of the South African TRC's work, he writes that

victims can be given procedural justice by giving them an opportunity to tell their story. Research has shown that giving people 'voice' is the most important aspect of fair procedure, and during the TRC hearings there was much discussion of the cathartic effect of being able to tell one's story publicly (p. 546).

Although he does not explicitly link the potentially cathartic effects of having *voice* to healing, this comment suggests that making such a link is likely a valid assumption. Further, Hamber (1998) has suggested that “psychological restoration and healing can only occur through providing the space for survivors of violence to feel heard and for every detail of the traumatic event to be re-experienced in a safe environment” (p. 10). Hence, a sense of catharsis or relief may result from having *voice* through telling one’s story and being heard by others, which may help to facilitate a sense of healing.

In the words of South African Reverend S. K. Mbande, who took part in facilitating statement-taking for the South African TRC, “after telling their [a victim’s] story, they relax. They’ve said what’s in their hearts, in their chests, what was closed up... They are able to open their hearts to a statement-taker, and they often say they feel much better” (cited in Hayner, 2011, p. 149). Hayner (2011) also points to an interview she conducted with a woman whose son was killed during apartheid who spoke about the experience of telling her story as being “painful, but also a relief” (p. 149). The interviewee suggests that the reason why giving public testimony was relieving was at least in part related to being listened to by others who were interested in the story that she shared (Hayner, 2011). Another South African survivor interviewed by Hayner (2011) mentioned that he felt that speaking about his trauma “provide[d] emotional relief” and talking about his experiences with others was helpful for him (pp. 150-151). It could be that the sense of support from others allowed this survivor to feel relief as it affirmed that his suffering was wrong. To this end, it has also been suggested that “the simple act of publicly telling a story in their own language, in their own town, can provide a sense of symbolic liberation” (Hamber & Wilson, 2002; Stanley, 2009, p. 59). Hence, having *voice* by telling their stories and being heard by others may help victims to feel a sense of catharsis, which can help to facilitate the healing process.

2.4.3 Being acknowledged

In addition to the potential sense of empowerment and catharsis that victims may experience from telling their story, the capacity for giving testimony in truth commissions to be therapeutic for victims may be dependent on the way in which others respond to their story. As Hamber et al. (2000) suggest, “revealing is not simply healing; the process of healing depends on how we reveal, the context of the revealing, and what it is that we are revealing” (p. 19). Thus, it is important to consider not only

the ability of a victim to tell their story, but also the way in which the story is received by community members, perpetrators, or state officials because “being heard by others gives one’s story reality and truth”, which can help to validate victims’ suffering (d’Estrée, 2006, p. 111).

It has been suggested that giving testimony is a dynamic process that relies on one’s story being heard by another (De la Rey & Owens, 1998). Purportedly “open and receptive environment[s]” (Aldana, 2006, p. 176), truth commissions have the ability to provide a forum in which a person can communicate the narrative of their trauma in public, which can then be heard by others, thus creating a space in which the listeners can provide sympathy and acknowledgment (David & Choi, 2005). The provision of a supportive and sensitive environment in which to tell their stories has been cited as important to facilitating victim healing (Allan & Allan, 2000; Freeman & Hayner, 2003). There are, however, a number of factors that may preclude truth commissions from being considered as ‘supportive and sensitive’, which may limit their healing potential. For example, healing may be compromised in settings where telling one’s story is not appropriately acknowledged, recognised, or supported. In some cases, this may be a consequence of the way in which cultural norms dictate that speaking about acts of violence—particularly those of a sexual nature—is shameful and/or culturally inappropriate.

Narrating the story of one’s trauma through truth commission testimony has been linked to a restoration of victims’ sense of self (Ross, 2003), which may include the reclaiming of dignity and self-worth. It has been asserted that the realisation of *voice* allows victims to reclaim their identity and self-worth that was compromised as a consequence of being victimised because it allows an opportunity for suffering to be heard and thus acknowledged by others (d’Estrée, 2006). As French (2009) articulates, the collection of testimonies, which often culminate in a “public and officially-sanctioned report represents for many victims the first sign of acknowledgment by any state body that their claims are credible and that the atrocities were wrong” (p. 95). By receiving validation that what they experienced was wrong, victims may be able to begin living life anew with the sense that their trauma is believed to be true and is worthy of recognition. In presenting one’s trauma narrative in public, the story is available to a wide audience, thus potentially increasing the ability of others to hear and

respond to the suffering, thus validating the victim (Ross, 2003; J. Smyth & Pennebaker, 1999).

In transitional justice literature, acknowledgment and recognition are often written about with little distinction made between the terms, thus this study will also consider them to be closely related. According to Govier (2009), “when we acknowledge something, we mark our knowledge or awareness of that thing, and we mark that knowledge to someone” as “acknowledgment is articulated or embodied awareness” (pp. 36, 41). In the case of truth-telling, once a victim tells the story of their suffering, acknowledgement of their trauma can be provided by those listening—an experience which can provide a sort of vindication for the victim (Govier, 2009). Backer (2007) also asserts that “public acknowledgement is intended to communicate a commitment to deter such atrocities in the future” (p. 167). Victims may feel acknowledged through the process of expressing their pain to others, who in turn validate those experiences by affirming their veracity or through expressing sympathy for the events that occurred (d’Estrée, 2006; Goren, 2001; Herman, 2003; Minow, 1998; Staub, 1996). Referring to arguments about the ability of truth commissions to facilitate the provision of acknowledgment and recognition, Ross (2003) has written that “the public nature of testimony may indeed enable easier recognition and acknowledgment of suffering than might otherwise occur” (p. 332). However, she reminds the reader that “recounting harm does not guarantee that it will be received in ways testifiers might wish” (p. 332). Indeed, if testimony is met with “negative social reactions”, the healing process may be hindered (Campbell, Ahrens, Sefl, Wasco, & Barnes, 2001; Laxminarayan, 2012).

To this end, Staub (2000) proposes that

in order to heal, members of victimized groups, like victimized individuals, need to engage with their experience. They need to reexperience the pain, sorrow, and loss under safe conditions. They need to receive empathy, support, and affirmation from each other and, ideally, from people outside the group (p. 376).

As such, communicating the narrative of suffering in a ‘safe space’ in front of ‘sympathetic witnesses’ has been seen to contribute to the recovery process (Androff, 2012). Being offered empathetic support from others can not only contribute to healing (Campbell et al., 2001; Staub, 2011), but it can also facilitate a reconnection with others that can be lost in the aftermath of trauma, which has been suggested to be an important

component of healing (Herman, 1992; Staub, 2000; Van Dijk et al., 2003; Weinstein & Stover, 2004). Truth commissions may allow opportunities for this by encouraging victims to widely communicate their story in public, which may facilitate sympathy from others, thus reinforcing social bonds. As highlighted by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, truth commissions “allow for a reflection on one’s own role in the past and the capacity to confront and acknowledge the wrong done and, in turn, this should lead to reaching out to others in the attempt to repair broken relationships” (cited in King, 2011, p. 140). Reconnection with others and the improved relationships that can result from this may also help to improve victims’ sense of safety or security by feeling assured against the repetition of abuse or increased social support from family or community members.

However, sharing traumatic experiences in public may be detrimental to victims because of the social stigmatisation that can result from publicly telling their traumatic stories (particularly for women who speak about sexual violence), which has been reported in a number of countries, such as Nepal, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Timor-Leste (Aguirre & Pietropaoli, 2008; Allden, 2007; Brounéus, 2008b; Kendall & Staggs, 2005). Although it has been suggested that some victims may experience a sense of catharsis immediately after giving testimony, sharing their stories can have long-term negative effects on victims related to either personal emotional suffering or social ostracisation from their family or community (De Ridder, 1997). Indeed, “giving testimonies or telling stories” can have “unanticipated consequences”, which may result in risks for victims (Das & Kleinman, 2001, p. 21; Stanley, 2009, p. 65). Based on these propositions, it could be argued that when victims’ testimony is presented in an environment which is not amenable to providing social support or acknowledgment in response to hearing about sensitive issues such as sexual violence, *voice* may be inhibited, which can thus hinder healing.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has developed the theoretical framework that guides the investigation undertaken in this thesis through providing insights into the theories behind why truth-telling has been believed to contribute to victim healing in post-conflict settings, particularly by looking at *voice* as a potential mechanism which creates pathways for healing to occur. The testimony method used in one-on-one therapy sessions with

victims of political violence has been described as a justification for the use of public truth-telling in truth commissions (Boraine et al., 1995; De la Rey & Owens, 1998). A deeper examination of the relationship between the restorative justice principles which guide truth commission processes has also been presented, alongside the theory of procedural justice. The intersection of these two justice theories—restorative and procedural—is the root of the theoretical foundation upon which this thesis is based. Because of the parallels that can be drawn between participation in domestic restorative justice initiatives and giving testimony in truth commissions, the theory that procedural justice may help to facilitate healing that emerges from Wemmers and Cyr’s (2005) findings may also be relevant in post-conflict settings. This chapter has also linked existing theories about how giving testimony in truth commissions may promote healing through victims’ ability to experience *voice*. Based on existing literature, I contend that having *voice* in a truth commission public hearing may be therapeutic for victims when telling one’s story and being heard by others facilitates catharsis, empowerment, and social acknowledgment. The next chapter will outline the research design and methods used in the field research undertaken for this thesis, which will be followed with a presentation of the findings obtained from Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands in concert with the historical, cultural, and conflict backgrounds of each case study in Chapters Four and Five.

3 Research Design and Methods

3.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I have discussed the relationship between mass violence, transitional justice, truth commissions, and victim healing along with the theoretical framework which guides this thesis. Highlighted in Chapter Two, the theory that guides my investigation involves the proposition that having *voice* in a restorative justice process may result in therapeutic benefits for victims of violence. As such, I examine this theory in the context of giving public testimony in truth commission processes to understand ways in which the experience of truth-telling can contribute to victim healing. In light of the theoretical framework provided in Chapter Two, I suggest that having *voice* within the context of truth commission public hearings can create three pathways toward healing: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. In this chapter, this theory is used to develop the analytical framework through which field research findings will be presented in Chapters Four and Five.

To begin shedding light on the puzzle identified in the previous chapters, this thesis investigates *voice* as a possible causal mechanism which links the process (truth-telling) to the intended outcome (healing). In order to delineate the pathways that lead from truth-telling to victim healing, a comparative case study approach which explores individual experiences of truth commission participation in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste is undertaken. Nineteen semi-structured interviews (seven in Timor-Leste and 12 in Solomon Islands) were conducted in each of these countries with individual victims of previous mass violence that also gave public testimony in the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste. The project was approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee Ethical Approval of a Research Proposal involving Human Participants, New Zealand # 11/060. This chapter will now describe the research design and methods used to undertake this research, along with justifications of why these choices were made, which will lay the foundation for the presentation of field research findings in Chapters Four and Five.

3.2 Choosing the Investigation Method

This study intends to build on the existing theory that giving testimony can be therapeutic for victims of mass violence by examining how *voice* facilitates linkages between truth-telling and victim healing in post-conflict settings. Instead of desiring to measure, for example, the strength of the relationship between healing and truth-telling, I am concerned with understanding the pathways that lead from truth-telling to healing, thus a qualitative approach which develops theory as opposed to testing a theory was an appropriate strategy for this research (L. Ellis, 1994; Yin, 2003). I use a qualitative approach in order to assist in making causal inferences about how truth-telling (the cause) can lead to healing (the effect). The intention to investigate how truth-telling may lead to victim healing is an argument for pursuing qualitative over quantitative methods. Hedström and Ylikoski (2010) suggest that statistical methodology, for example, may ignore “the importance of causal process assumptions in causal inference” (p. 57). Hence, although well-suited for proving relationships, such methods may overlook the complexities of causality, which is of primary interest in my study.

Although qualitative research has been critiqued for its lack of “scientific rigor”, quantitative research has been similarly criticised for being “inadequate for capturing the full breadth and color” of the complexities of “human behavior and culture” (L. Ellis, 1994, p. 143). My research aims to uncover nuanced insights into personal experiences related to how giving public testimony to a truth commission has contributed to healing for victims of mass violence, which is an intrinsically qualitative aim.

Based on existing theory outlined in Chapter Two, it has been suggested that the ability to have *voice* in a post-conflict justice process may be beneficial for victims of violence through providing opportunities for empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment, which have each been considered to be components of healing. Considering this theory, I examine *voice* as a possible causal mechanism that links truth-telling to victim healing. As Hedström and Ylikoski (2010) write, “mechanisms help causal inference in two ways” (p. 54). First, “the knowledge that there is a mechanism through which X influences Y supports the inference that X is a cause of Y” (p. 54). For my study, “X” would be truth-telling (independent variable) whereas “Y” would be healing (dependent variable). Thus, by determining a mechanism which

helps to explain how truth-telling leads to healing, one may begin to enhance understanding about the possible pathways that link this process to the outcome. Hedström and Ylikoski (2010) further indicate that “the absence of a plausible mechanism linking X to Y gives us a good reason to be suspicious of the relation being a causal one” (p. 54). Previous studies have found that truth-telling can be both helpful and harmful to victims, but there has been sparse empirical research to determine why this is the case. Thus, by examining the possible causal mechanisms which link truth-telling and victim healing, this study intends to begin shedding light on *how* truth-telling can be beneficial for victims of mass violence.

As Goertz and Mahoey (2012) write, “we can understand causal mechanisms to mean the intervening processes through which causes exert their effects” (p. 100). It has been suggested that determining causal mechanisms is particularly useful in understanding why certain outcomes occurred (Elster, 1989). In light of the overarching puzzle presented in this thesis, I investigate *voice* as a possible causal mechanism that links giving public testimony in a truth commission process to healing in order to better understand why victims may experience a sense of healing in some cases while they do not in others.

In an effort to enhance the “explanatory richness” which links truth-telling to healing, conducting case study research was the method of choice, as case studies can facilitate “finding the conditions under which specified outcomes occur, and the mechanisms through which they occur” (George & Bennett, 2004, p. 31), which is the interest at the heart of this study. According to Stake (1995), “case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). Undertaking an in-depth study into each case examined in this thesis offers insight into the unique cultural background, history, and conflict context in each country, which undoubtedly have had influence on how the truth commission processes were experienced by victims. It is crucial to also outline the specific details and characteristics of each commission to understand their impact on individual victims.

To further strengthen the utility of this research, a comparative case study approach was used to compare the ways in which giving public testimony in a truth commission contributed to victim healing in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. Hantrais (2009)

writes that “systematic international comparisons are the most valuable and the most explicit in research that is seeking to discover empirical relationships among variables” (p. 49). As this study intends to understand how truth-telling is related to, or may lead to healing, case study comparison is an appropriate strategy. Comparing two cases, as Hantrais (2009) proposes, can assist in the determination of whether the explanation of why an outcome occurred in multiple cases “has a wider applicability” (p. 49). To this end, the possible external validity of this study was strengthened through the use of a least similar case comparison, where two cases which exhibited few similarities were compared to determine whether similar causal paths to healing emerged between them (George & Bennett, 2004). The logic behind this decision was that if similarities between the pathways that link truth-telling to victim healing are discovered between largely dissimilar cases, the potential for these results to be considered plausible in other contexts is enhanced. Greater explanation of the least similar comparative case study design as well as the specifics surrounding case selection will be further described below.

3.3 Operationalising Additional Key Concepts

To clarify the aims of this research, it is critical to further define and operationalize the concepts under examination, supplementing the key concepts provided in Chapter One. As described in Chapter One, healing has been a difficult concept to define throughout a multitude of disciplines. This study thus relies on a definition provided by Cienfuegos and Monelli (1983), who state that healing involves the “restoration of the individuals’ capacity to resume the course of their lives”, where victims’ “previous history [including] political commitment, personal relationships, work, and social connections” are made “meaningful in the present and the future” (p. 44). The aim of this research is not to test the psychological condition of victims after giving testimony by, for example, assessing levels of post-traumatic stress; instead it seeks to understand ways in which a broader type of healing that encompasses material, physical, and psychological restoration, may be achieved. Western psychological measures are not necessarily appropriate in many cultures (Allan & Allan, 2000), particularly as the consequences of mass violence may be manifested economically, psychologically and physically, thus it is valuable to utilise a ‘holistic’ definition of healing (Clark, 2010). Using the above definition to conceptualise healing considers that there may be multiple factors which influence healing, but the end result is still related to the

restoration of one's life. In this study, healing will be determined by the ways in which interviewees express how the experience of giving public testimony has impacted upon their ability to resume the course of their lives and transform their past experiences into something meaningful in the present and the future.

As mentioned in Chapter One, it has been proposed that victim healing can be achieved through six primary means: reparations, justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, support, and storytelling (see David & Choi, 2005; De la Rey & Owens, 1998; Freeman & Hayner, 2003; Kaminer et al., 2001; Kira et al., 2006; Moon, 2009; Staub, 2000; Walaza, 2000; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). This study focuses on storytelling, which for the purposes of this study is operationalized as giving testimony, as a process that can facilitate victim healing. Giving testimony within a truth-telling process can provide victims with an opportunity to have *voice*, which is investigated as a key causal mechanism that may facilitate healing in the context of this research. *Voice* is defined as the ability to share one's views, opinions, and experiences (d'Estrée, 2006; Folger, 1977; Lind & Tyler, 1998), which for the purposes of this thesis, involves not only the telling of one's experiences, but also being heard by others (Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013).

3.4 Case Selection

To investigate this topic, a comparative case study design, employing what George and Bennett (2004) refer to as “least similar cases”, is used. George and Bennett (2004) discuss that “in a least similar cases design, the researcher selects cases that are dissimilar in all but one independent variable, but that share the same dependent variable” (p. 50). As such, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste are examined in this study as they share few similarities in terms of the nature of conflict in each country, duration and gravity of abuses perpetrated in the past, and the primary perpetrators of violence—all of which may impact upon the prospect for victim healing after the previous period of mass violence. However, the truth commission processes created in each country, which are the focal points of this investigation, share a key similarity in that they held public hearings in which victims of past violence gave testimony. Additionally, each commission sought to promote victim healing as an outcome of their work (CAVR, 2006; TRC, 2012). By comparing cases which are different in more respects than they are alike, the intention is to identify whether the intervening variables, or ways in which

voice may lead to healing, are in any way consistent between the two cases (George & Bennett, 2004). Although these cases will be described in greater detail in the following two chapters, this section will highlight several of the key similarities and differences which led to the decision to utilise Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands as case studies.

The following table (Table 3.1) depicts a comparison between these two cases.

Table 3.1 Comparison of case study contexts, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste.

	Timor-Leste	Solomon Islands
Nature of violence	Externally led military occupation	Internal ethnic conflict
Perpetrators	Indonesian military, some East Timorese pro-Indonesian militias	Guales v. Malaitans; then intra-ethnic violence
Duration of violence	25 years	5 years
Gravity of abuses	~250,000 displaced; 100,000-180,000 killed/pop. ~1 million	~35,000 displaced; ~200 killed/pop. ~500,000
Type of abuses	Sexual violence, torture, murder, imprisonment, starvation, forced sterilisation, property crime, forced relocation	Sexual violence, torture, murder, kidnapping, property crime, displacement
Transitional justice (restorative)	-Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) -Community Reconciliation Processes (incorporated as part of CAVR and based on traditional conflict resolution)	-Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) -No indigenous component of official transitional justice strategy
Transitional justice (retributive)	-Hybrid serious crimes process, Special Panel for Serious Crimes, Dili (most convictions resulted in acquittals; no "big fish") -Ad-hoc tribunal, Jakarta	-Domestic "tension trials" (highest number of incarcerations per capita in TJ process according to Braithwaite, et al.) - No international tribunal
Time elapsed between end of TC and field research	5 years	0 (Conducted during final months of TRC work)

As illustrated in Table 3.1, the primary similarity between these cases is the creation of a truth commission to address the consequences of prior human rights abuses. Although the type of abuses committed also has some overlap, the duration of abuses and extent of those affected is vastly different, discussed in more detail below. It is important to further discuss the common characteristics shared by these two commissions. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission served as the model for both the CAVR and TRC. Developed from the basis of the South African TRC, each has been considered to have had a high degree of focus on victims, particularly illustrated in goals stated in each mandate: to facilitate/promote victim healing and to restore victim dignity. Further, also taking a cue from the South African TRC, public participation was encouraged in the CAVR and TRC through holding hearings which were publicised through various radio, television, and media outlets. It is these similarities which form the basis for comparisons of the potential pathways that lead from truth-telling to victim healing as both truth commissions were victim-focussed and provided opportunities for victims to have *voice* in the process. As truth-telling within the context of truth commissions is the key process under investigation in this thesis, this similarity is critical. In essence, with all else being dissimilar, the study of the impact of truth-telling upon victim healing between these two cases may allow inferences to be made about the applicability of findings in other research contexts.

Aside from the similarities between the truth commissions, the multitude of differences between the cases themselves makes Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste ripe for the least similar comparative case study design utilised in this thesis. The first difference is between the nature of conflict in each country and the way in which each commission was created. Solomon Islands experienced an internal ethnic conflict which lasted from 1998 until 2003. This five-year period, although characterised by widespread abuse, displacement and intimidation, including sexual violence against women, was considered to be of relatively low-intensity resulting in roughly 200 deaths (Braithwaite, Dinnen, Allen, Braithwaite, & Charlesworth, 2010). The type of violence in Timor-Leste was, however, quite different. Having been invaded by the Indonesian military in 1975, Timor-Leste was occupied by these forces until 1999. During 25 years, the East Timorese were subjected to systematic abuse aimed at quelling their resistance to Indonesia's occupation and, as it has been proposed, the elimination of the East Timorese as a population (Franks, 1996). The types of abuse included sexual

violence, sexual slavery, sterilisation, imprisonment, forced displacement, starvation and murder, resulting in the death of between 100,000 and 180,000 individuals (CAVR, 2006).

Another contrast between the two cases is the nature of who perpetrated the violence. As the Tensions were an intra-state conflict between ethnic groups, abuses were carried out by Solomon Islanders against Solomon Islanders. In Timor-Leste, atrocities were largely committed by an externally-led occupying force, the Indonesian military. Although there were a number of East Timorese anti-independence militias (e.g. Timorese Democratic Union, UDT) which supported the efforts of the Indonesians to eradicate the East Timorese who supported independence, particularly during the 1999 violence, blame for the abuses is largely cast on the Indonesian regime as these militias were funded by the Indonesian military.

The differences between those who were responsible for the mass violence in each country also contributed to the different aims of transitional justice strategies and the manner in which they were undertaken. As perpetrators and victims continue to live in the same country, and in many cases, the same or proximal communities in Solomon Islands after the Tensions, it was necessary that transitional justice processes consider that these individuals would continue to occupy the same space. Thus, domestic trials were held to try perpetrators, while a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was created with one key goal being to promote reconciliation. The TRC was strongly advocated for by the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA), which lobbied the government to implement such an institution. The Truth and Reconciliation Act was introduced by the Ministry of Peace, Unity, and Reconciliation in 2008, and subsequently passed by parliament to create the TRC (Harris Rimmer, 2012). In Timor-Leste, on the other hand, a transitional justice strategy came as a result of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1999/1, which meant that the administration of the transitional process would be primarily in the hands of an international institution, rather than the East Timorese state—a stark difference from the Solomon Islands process. The transitional justice process in Timor-Leste was comprised of judicial and non-judicial mechanisms: the Ad-hoc tribunal in Jakarta, the serious crimes process based in Dili, Timor-Leste, the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR) and the village-based Community Reconciliation Process, which was operated

by the CAVR⁸. The first mechanism, the Ad-hoc tribunal, was geared towards prosecuting Indonesians which were responsible for atrocities committed during the occupation and has been largely ineffective in doing so (Burgess, 2004). Its ability to promote justice and accountability has been believed to be wholly lacking as the Court was considered to essentially be a ‘sham’, and failed to bring any of the so-called ‘big fish’ to justice (Burgess, 2004; Stanley, 2009). The next mechanism, the serious crimes process, did convict 84 individuals of crimes committed in relation to the violence surrounding the 1999 referendum for independence (Stanley, 2009), but “in recent years, presidential pardons have ensured that almost all those convicted by the Special Panels have been released” (Robins, 2012, p. 88). Despite the high number of prosecutions, high-level perpetrators who are believed to be most responsible for abuses have escaped punishment (Stanley, 2009). Further, the process suffered as it intended to try individuals who had vacated Timor-Leste to seek refuge in Indonesia or West Timor and did not have the capability to extradite them for the purposes of prosecution (Roosa, 2007).

Limitations of the purview of the judicial processes are another difference between the post-conflict justice process in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. While crimes committed during the entire period of conflict (1998-2003) were eligible to be investigated in Solomon Islands, the serious crimes process focussed only on crimes committed between 1 January 1999 and 25 October 1999, despite the fact that the majority of abuses occurred during the 24 years preceding 1999 (Burgess, 2004; Stanley, 2009). To this end, as of 2012, “no effort has been made to prosecute those responsible for violations committed before 1999” (Robins, 2012, p. 88). This failure of judicial processes in Timor-Leste to provide justice and accountability contrasts the relative success of the so-called ‘Tension trials’ in Solomon Islands, which have been lauded for securing a proportionally high number of convictions of perpetrators (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Harris Rimmer, 2012; Jeffery, 2013). Although the domestic justice initiatives in Solomon Islands have generally been considered to be successful, Averre (2008) has indicated that a number of high-level ‘big fish’ perpetrators have been released from prison after being acquitted of serious charges, including murder.

⁸ In addition, another truth commission the Commission for Truth and Friendship was created in 2005 to “seek the ‘conclusive truth’ about the 1999 violence with a view to fostering friendship and reconciliation” between Indonesia and Timor-Leste (Kent, 2011, p. 435). As this commission was initiated jointly between Timor-Leste and Indonesia and had a lesser focus on individual healing, it is arguably incomparable to the Solomon Islands TRC and is thus not discussed in this thesis.

This degree of success in incarcerating lower-level perpetrators could at least in part be a result of the continued presence of perpetrators in Solomon Islands, whereas in Timor-Leste, architects of the violence were largely absent and unable to be extradited from Indonesia or West Timor. Thus, it appears that at least some degree of justice and accountability was achieved in Solomon Islands, whereas in Timor-Leste, this outcome was limited.

The length of time elapsed between the end of each truth commission and when I conducted field research is also a point of difference between cases, which has several possible implications. The CAVR completed its work in 2005 and released a final report, *Chega* ('Stop' or 'Enough' in Portuguese), in 2006. Among a number of recommendations, a reparations programme for victims was proposed. Aside from an Urgent Reparations Programme which delivered assistance in the amount of US\$200 to 712 individuals deemed to be in most immediate need (CAVR, 2006, Section 11), reparations have still not been received by the greater population of victims as of 2013. In contrast, the Solomon Islands TRC finished its work at the end of 2011, and at the time of writing has not yet officially released their Final Report because of resistance from the current government⁹. Although many victims may expect that a reparations programme will be proposed, it is uncertain if it will be recommended and what the scope of such an initiative may be. Field research was conducted for this project during September and October of 2011, which is 6 years after the completion of the CAVR's work and which coincided with the last hearings held as part of the work of the TRC. The significant contrast in the time passed since the work of each commission may be expected to contribute to differing responses in the ways in which truth-telling contributed to victim healing.

In all, the differences between the two cases including the nature of conflict, aims, and implementation of transitional justice processes and time elapsed between the end of the commission's work and data gathering would each be expected to result in different responses from interviewees about the ways in which giving public testimony in a truth commission hearing contributed to healing. Thus, the cases were purposely selected as part of a least similar comparative case study design. The intention of undertaking

⁹ However, in the final stages of writing this thesis, the Final Report was unofficially leaked in April 2013. Because the release came at such a late stage in this thesis project, findings from the report are largely not included in this manuscript.

research in this way was to explore whether there were similarities despite the vast number of differences, which would suggest a degree of external validity where these findings may be applicable to other cases if discovered (George & Bennett, 2004).

3.5 Developing the Research Instrument: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire¹⁰

In the initial phases of developing the research design, I had intended to conduct focus groups which would be complemented by semi-structured interviews with selected respondents from each focus group discussion. This could have been beneficial as it has been suggested that when being asked about sensitive issues, “being among peers sometimes makes it easier to divulge sensitive information than a one-to-one interview would allow” (Söderström, 2011, p. 149). However, the discovery that the intended sample populations were very small and widely dispersed throughout the country led to the decision to rely solely on semi-structured interviews as the primary research method. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for the same overarching questions to be asked to every interviewee so that they might be more readily compared, but also left open the possibility for asking clarifying or deepening questions based on the responses to the primary set of questions (Bernard, 2011). As obtaining perceptions of victims who gave public testimony to their country’s truth commission about how the experience contributed to healing was integral to my study, the use of semi-structured interviews was the only methodological choice which allowed me to probe the nuanced responses of the sample population through asking follow-up questions. The process of data collection through this method will be further described below.

Questions for the semi-structured interviews were developed considering the theoretical underpinnings of transitional and procedural justice literatures. The template of questions was designed to begin with practical background questions about interviewees’ birthplace, whether they have gone to school and what work they do to and gradually move to more complex questions, ending with again less serious, though still important questions with a more forward-looking sentiment. Three overarching question themes were developed within the semi-structured interview questionnaire: general perceptions about truth commission participation; various factors that may have

¹⁰ See Appendix One for the full questionnaire.

contributed to healing, such as the receipt of compensation or apology; and perceived effect of public truth-telling on personal healing. As mentioned in Chapter One, the transitional justice literature has suggested that there are a variety of factors that can be beneficial for victims of mass violence such as receiving an apology or compensation (Crocker, 2002; David & Choi, 2006; Grodsky, 2009; Hamber, 2009). Thus, questions pertaining to these issues were included to explore their influence on victims' sense of healing. Recent studies in Rwanda and the Balkans have also suggested that truth-telling benefits may be limited for victims of mass violence (Brounéus, 2010; Stover & Weinstein, 2004), hence questions about whether and how telling their story in the public hearing has made the respondent's life worse/harder or easier/better were also included. It has also been proposed that the ability of a transitional justice process to meet the expectations of victims who participate in them may also have an effect on their overall satisfaction with the process (Mendeloff, 2009), therefore questions were also included to explore what victim expectations were before the process, whether those expectations were met, and how that was experienced by the interviewees. In some transitional justice contexts there have been reports of some victims feeling shame or embarrassment after telling their story publicly (Allden, 2007; Kelsall & Stepakoff, 2007; McKay, 2000), so it was also important to determine whether individuals felt negative effects from testifying, which could have potentially hindered their sense of healing.

Some questions were also based more specifically on procedural justice literature, such as whether respondents had the sense that they were listened to and felt sympathy from commissioners or other individuals during or after giving public testimony. Although for both research contexts, because of linguistic and cultural norms hypothetical questions can be difficult to convey, a question was also asked about what could have been done to improve the experience of testifying in public in order to obtain a better sense of what their experience may have lacked with regard to its healing potential. During interviews in the Solomon Islands, some respondents remarked that they went through a counselling programme before they testified, which some said helped them to heal from their trauma. Thus, I decided to include this in future interviews with the intention of understanding the role of counselling in the healing process. Because the objective of the study was to enquire about the aspects of having *voice* in a truth commission process that may have been experienced as healing for victims, there were

no questions about individual experiences in the actual conflict itself or about specific trauma. This was undertaken to minimise the risk of re-traumatising or causing emotional or psychological discomfort for respondents during the interview.

3.6 Research Permission and Beginning Phases of Locating Respondents

In Solomon Islands, research permission was sought and granted through the Ministry of Education to conduct my research in Honiara as well as greater Guadalcanal Province and Malaita Province. Upon arriving to Auki, in Malaita Province, permission was also sought from the Provincial Minister and Provincial Secretary of Malaita in order to conduct interviews on that island. To facilitate access with potential respondents, contact was made with various local organisations and church members, which led to introductions with interviewees.

Before arriving to Timor-Leste, I made contact with several academics that have extensive research experience and local knowledge of the country. These individuals expressed that for my project, it would not be necessary to seek research permission from a government body in Timor-Leste as the study did not involve medical research¹¹. I was also informed that, at the time, a process for applying for research permission was being developed, but had not yet been solidified and was geared toward researchers intending to stay in Timor-Leste for six months or longer. As I would only be in the country for four weeks and there was not an official avenue through which to gain official research permission according to my expert sources, I did not pursue this avenue further. However, upon arrival to Timor-Leste, I contacted local organisations whose work related to my project to enquire if there was local support for my research. In relation to this, I met with two members of the Post-CAVR Secretariat who agreed to provide assistance in locating respondents for my project. Both individuals expressed support for my project and viewed the aim of the research as a valuable addition to the existing work relating to victims and the work of the CAVR. Other local organisations, including *Cruz Vermelha* (Red Cross), International Center for Transitional Justice, and *Comité 12 Novembro* (November 12th Committee, whose work relates to the Santa Cruz massacre) were consulted and were also supportive of the research and its aim; they also provided important assistance to begin locating interviewees.

¹¹ I was informed that the Ministry of Health was aiming to keep track of research and data on medical treatments and programs, or medical research that involves human participants such as trialling new drugs.

3.7 Sampling Strategy

For this study, respondents were chosen with a ‘purpose’ in mind, a consideration that is suitable for a qualitative approach which utilises semi-structured interviews (Brounéus, 2011; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). As the focus of my study is to understand the possible pathways which lead from truth-telling to victim healing through examining how victims experienced giving testimony in truth commission processes, it was necessary to find individuals who had this particular experience, where “the processes being studied [were] most likely to occur” (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p. 166). Only victims who gave testimony in a truth commission public hearing would have insight into how that process may have contributed to their own sense of healing, hence the potential sample population consisted exclusively of individuals who gave public testimony in a national truth commission public hearing¹². Further, I did not intend to generalise the views of those interviewed to the wider population of each country, thus it was not necessary to generate a random representative sample—a consideration illustrated in other similar studies which have investigated victim participation in truth-telling process (Backer, 2007). As Ellis (1994) has commented, when the motivation for a research project lies in determining relationships between variables as opposed to determining the “prevalence and distribution of variables within a particular population”, it is not crucial to use a representative sampling technique (p. 167).

In both contexts there was difficulty in locating potential respondents. Not only was the potential pool of respondents, who were both victims of the former conflict and who testified in a truth commission public hearing limited, but the sensitive nature of the research and the disparate locations of potential respondents made obtaining access to interviewees challenging. To this end, it was crucial to create a network of local contacts in each context to aid in the research process and facilitate contact with potential respondents. When meeting local contacts, I aimed to be transparent about my research goals and role as a student undertaking research for my doctoral degree in order to promote trust and build rapport. In another effort to build rapport, in each country, I endeavoured to learn local languages (Pijin English in Solomon Islands and

¹² I mention this to distinguish between victims in Timor-Leste who may have given public testimony in the Community Reconciliation Process. As Solomon Islands did not initiate a comparable process, I interviewed only those who gave public testimony in one of the eight national public hearings in Timor-Leste or the 11 national public hearings in Solomon Islands.

Tetun in Timor-Leste) to better communicate with individuals who may have limited English capabilities. I was able to quickly achieve proficiency in Pijin through immersion in a village homestay at the beginning of my trip in Solomon Islands and developed an intermediate conversational level of Tetun through a local tutor and local friends in Timor-Leste. When meeting contacts to facilitate introductions to interviewees and gain insights into my research project, local languages in each country were primarily used. Thus, the learning of local language in each country proved to be valuable in facilitating rapport with and gaining assistance from both contacts and interviewees.

Snowball sampling was used to locate potential respondents as it is a “method for obtaining respondents where they are few in number or where some degree of trust is required to initiate contact” (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p. 2). The snowball sampling method has been considered to be a useful approach in conflict and post-conflict contexts that may not be suited for other methods (N. Cohen & Arieli, 2011, p. 424). For my study, which is intended to be “explorative, qualitative and descriptive” instead of quantitative and statistical, snowball sampling offers a number of advantages (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p. 1; Hendricks & Blanken, 1992). Snowball sampling can facilitate access to populations who may be hidden from the public sphere or difficult to reach and “is commonly used to locate, access, and involve people from specific populations in cases where the researcher anticipates difficulties in creating a representative sample of the research population” (N. Cohen & Arieli, 2011, pp. 426-427). Temporal and budgetary restraints made it impossible to travel to every district or province in each country; thus snowball sampling proved to be the most appropriate method for this project as it has been considered to be “economical, efficient and effective” (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p. 2). Using “chain-referral” in instances of small and hard to reach populations can also benefit the researcher as it may enhance rapport with interviewees by giving the researcher “characteristics associated with being an insider or group member”, which “can aid entry to settings where conventional approaches it find difficult to succeed” (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p. 2). This method of locating and contacting respondents contributed to a sense of trust because I was in almost all cases introduced directly to respondents by people whom they knew and trusted to be cognisant of their safety and needs. In the cases where I was not directly introduced to the interviewee by one of their acquaintances, I mentioned the person

who had suggested that I contact them about my project in order to also facilitate some degree of trust.

In Solomon Islands, initial contact was made with a formerly high-ranking member of the Anglican Church, who enjoys a high level of respect and prestige in the country. This man provided another contact, a high-level member of the Catholic Church, who facilitated an introduction with the first respondent. This respondent then provided contact information for another woman who then assisted in introductions with another four respondents within her social network. The woman who aided in these introductions holds a well-respected position in Honiara related to women's issues and was thus able to enhance trust between myself and potential interviewees.

Another person who helped to facilitate contact with interviewees was a well-respected former Catholic priest who was known for his peace and trauma healing work both during and after the Tensions. The former priest accompanied me to a nearby village to assist in introductions to interviewees and was also present during interviews with male respondents in the area to provide any needed clarifications in Pijin English during the interviews¹³. Because this man was familiar with the potential respondents and was well-regarded in this village, a degree of trust and rapport was immediately established between me and the interviewees. Similar to the process in Solomon Islands, in Timor-Leste, access to interviewees was facilitated by various members of local organisations and local contacts in Dili, as mentioned above¹⁴.

Although there are a number of advantages of snowball sampling, the primary drawback of the method is the potential for selection bias, as the sample is not generated randomly and tends to depend on the path that the initial respondent leads the researcher (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). This perceived disadvantage was, however, used as an advantage for this study, which has been described as a possible strategy for case

¹³ Although one may question whether these interviewees felt compelled to speak to me because of the introduction made by the former priest, I did not sense that they felt obligated to do so, indeed one woman declined to be interviewed. Instead, my impression was that here, as in general, people were rather pleased with the opportunity to share their experiences of participating in the TRC.

¹⁴ I was introduced to the first interviewee in Dili by a local contact. Afterwards, another local contact facilitated an introduction with a well-respected community member in Liquiça. This woman then directed me to a woman who had worked with the CAVR, who then recommended a possible interviewee. This interviewee in turn mentioned that there was another victim who gave testimony to the CAVR, who I then also approached about participating in my study. The next interviewee was contacted by another local contact, who then suggested another man that knew had also testified in the CAVR national public hearings. The final two interviewees were located through another local contact in Dili and Ermera district.

study researchers (George & Bennett, 2004). The individuals I interviewed can be considered as those who were most likely to experience a sense of healing from giving testimony in each truth commission as it is conceivable that they would have decided to be involved in the truth-telling process under the auspice of receiving some type of benefit¹⁵ from their participation. Thus, individuals who chose to give testimony may have been, in a sense, expecting that the process would contribute to healing—as it relates to psychological, material, or financial restoration—in some capacity. As the aim of this study is to understand the ways in which healing may be achieved through truth-telling, it is most instructive to interview those who were most likely to have experienced a sense of healing from the process (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Recruiting individuals in this way, with a purpose in mind, was important to obtaining the type of data that would be useful for answering the research question proposed in my study (Bernard, 2011). Further, those individuals who were willing to be interviewed for this study were likely those that held stronger opinions about their experiences giving testimony and its relationship to healing than those who may not have been available to participate in my research. Thus, those who held stronger opinions about the potential for truth-telling to lead to healing were the ideal sample for my study.

3.8 Data Collection

As described above, respondents were located through the assistance of various local contacts in both countries. Ellis et al. (2003) remark that interviews aim, above all, to *understand*, thus researchers must establish trust and rapport with interviewees. As mentioned above, trust and rapport were built through communicating in local languages and through introductions facilitated by local contacts that had knowledge about the locations of respondents and their participation in the truth commission public hearings. During the interviews, I also ensured respondents that our conversation would be confidential and their anonymity would be preserved. The interviews were conducted one-on-one with the assistance of a translator when language barriers precluded my ability to conduct the interviews myself.

¹⁵ Expected benefits may, for example, include reparations, support, or sharing their story with others, which are each considered as aspects of healing (De la Rey & Owens, 1998).

The interviews were conducted during nine weeks between September and October 2011. Five weeks were spent in Solomon Islands, while four were spent in Timor-Leste. Research was based in the capital city of Honiara, Solomon Islands and Dili, Timor-Leste, with trips taken outside of the primary locations in an attempt to also include respondents living in rural areas in the project. Five locations were visited in Solomon Islands: Auki (Malaita Province), Visale (Guadalcanal Province), in addition to Honiara and two of its neighbouring villages. Interviews in Timor-Leste were conducted in Dili and its environs, as well as Liquiça and Ermera Districts. In total, 12 interviews were conducted in Solomon Islands, while seven were conducted in Timor-Leste. Six men and six women were interviewed in Solomon Islands, while four men and three women were interviewed in Timor-Leste. Respondents were between the ages of 30 and 60. Two specific subcategories of respondents also emerged in Solomon Islands, which is of importance to situating their responses to some interview questions: of the 12 total respondents, three were part of a women's peace group and two are ex-militants who were also victimised during the Tensions.

In Solomon Islands, interviews were conducted primarily in Pijin English except in cases where the respondent chose to interview in English. As I have proficiency in Pijin English, I conducted the interviews myself in Pijin and/or in English for those who preferred. I also had the assistance of a local contact who spoke English during six of the 12 interviews to assist in providing clarifications and translations as necessary. In regard to the remaining interviews, one preferred to be interviewed in English. Three women were not comfortable to be interviewed in front of the male contact who introduced us; although they trusted him as a member of the community, the stigma of women sharing sensitive stories to men likely made them feel more comfortable speaking exclusively to me. Each of these women were proficient in English, but it proved unnecessary to use as we easily understood one another using Pijin during the interviews. The final two interviewees were ex-militants, who also expressed that they were not comfortable being interviewed in the presence of anyone else because of confidentiality concerns. Despite describing the aim of my research, I sensed they were concerned that I would ask them about past crimes they committed (which I did not), about which they insinuated that they did not want others to hear. Each of these men appeared confident in my ability to communicate in Pijin and the interviews flowed smoothly without the use of English. In Timor-Leste, a translator was used in all but

one interview where the respondent had high English language proficiency and thus chose to complete the interview in English. The interviews in both research contexts lasted between 25 and 75 minutes.

3.9 Ethical Issues

Great effort was taken to ensure that ethical norms were followed in this research project, through the provision of informed consent, right to privacy, and protection from harm—the three fundamental ethical norms described by Ellis et al. (2003). First, each of the interviewees was provided with a verbal description in local language or English (depending on their preference) of the research project, aims, and intended outcomes to meet the need for informed consent. I chose not to provide a written form for informed consent as the prevalence of illiteracy in each country would preclude such a document from being useful to many of those interviewed. Confidentiality was ensured through the assurance that no identifying information would be kept in the final research report and that their names would not be shared to guarantee anonymity. Each respondent was asked if they understood what was required of them for the interview and whether they agreed to participate. They were also told that participation in the interview was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time.

Furthermore, because of the sensitive nature of this research which could result in respondents psychologically revisiting their trauma, care was taken to limit retraumatisation to the greatest degree possible. Interview questions were designed with a forward-looking focus, avoiding enquiries about experiences in the conflict itself and instead concentrating on experiences providing testimony in the truth commission public hearings exclusively. To this end, the project, including interview questions and an outline of the informed consent documentation, was approved by the University of Otago Ethics Committee before the research was undertaken.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation

Using dictaphone recordings from the 19 interviews conducted in both countries, transcriptions were made. Interviews in Pijin from Solomon Islands were translated and transcribed by an American academic in Solomon Islands who is fluent in both Pijin and English. Interviews in English were transcribed by the same person because, although the majority of the interview was conducted in English, interviewees were

known to mix in Pijin expressions. Thus, the consistency and validity of the data obtained was increased by having the same individual complete these transcriptions. All but one interview in Timor-Leste was conducted in Tetun, and these interviews were translated and transcribed by a Timorese national in New Zealand with proficiency in English, Tetun, and Portuguese. External transcribers were used to enhance the validity of the transcripts, essentially having a second pair of eyes to ensure the accuracy—to the greatest degree possible—of the data obtained in the field. Although the transcripts are complete to the best of my and the translator/transcribers' knowledge, it is acknowledged that obtaining wholly “complete” data or “perfect” transcripts may be impossible (C. Ellis et al., 2003, p. 355), particularly in settings where multiple languages are spoken. This is particularly important to consider as the majority of the interviews were conducted in a language other than English. For this reason, the resulting transcripts were viewed as being more representative of ideas and concepts, and thus were not analysed using a coding software which would, for example, count the number of times that particular words or phrases were used, as this may have been a less accurate way to analyse the documents. The remainder of this section will now describe the process of analysis that was pursued in light of this factor.

In order to analyse the interview transcripts, I undertook a process of thematic analysis, which is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes within data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008; Joffe, 2012; Robson, 2011). A method of analysis that can be seen to have roots in content analysis, Joffe (2012) describes thematic analysis as “among the most systematic and transparent form of [qualitative analysis], partly because it holds the prevalence of themes to be so important without sacrificing depth of analysis” (p. 210). Content analysis relies on establishing the frequency of certain categories within a dataset and has been critiqued for generating conclusions that are “trite” (Silverman, 2011, p. 66), as this method has been “accused of removing codes from their context, thereby stripping data of its meaning” (Joffe, 2012, pp. 210-211). Thematic analysis, on the other hand, aims to improve upon this weakness by also analysing “the more tacit meanings” within data, which can enhance the “subtlety and complexity” of results (Joffe, 2012, p. 211).

This method has been considered to be suitable when a researcher wishes to “gain a more naturalistic inroad into people’s meaning systems concerning the phenomenon under study” (Joffe, 2012, p. 212). Thematic analysis can be approached both deductively and inductively, where the meaning of data found in interview transcripts is derived from both prior research and theories as well as from the raw data itself (Joffe, 2012), thus taking into account the “active role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). In my study, I was interested in the relationship between victims’ perceptions of the benefits of giving public testimony and the theory that having *voice* during a truth-telling process can lead to victim healing. Thus, “theoretical” thematic analysis was a valuable method to employ in my research as this type of analysis “tend[s] to be driven by the researcher’s theoretical or analytic interest in the area” to be studied (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12). Based on the theoretical framework that I developed from existing literature found in Chapter Two, I created preliminary codes, or themes that considered the aim of the research question (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008). These themes represented the possible pathways which link truth-telling to victim healing that may be created by *voice*, namely: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. It has been suggested that by engaging with existing literature in thematic analysis, the analysis can be enhanced by “sensitising...[the researcher] to more subtle features of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86; Tuckett, 2005) that might be overlooked otherwise (Robson, 2011). Indeed, by looking at the findings in relation to the existing literature, “layers of analysis” are added to the research, thus “invoking broader interpretations of the meaning of the case” as a whole (Cresswell, 2007, p. 93).

In line with the suggestions of Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2008), prior to undertaking “the in-depth analysis of the data” (p. 83), I created a template of possible codes, or categories, derived through an iterative process of reading the interview transcripts while also considering my theoretical framework. These categories can be seen as aspects of *voice* that may facilitate the creation of the three pathways—empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment—which then lead to victim healing. The following figure (Figure 3.1) depicts the relationship between these themes and categories as well as their linkages with *voice* and healing, which form the analytical framework used in this study.

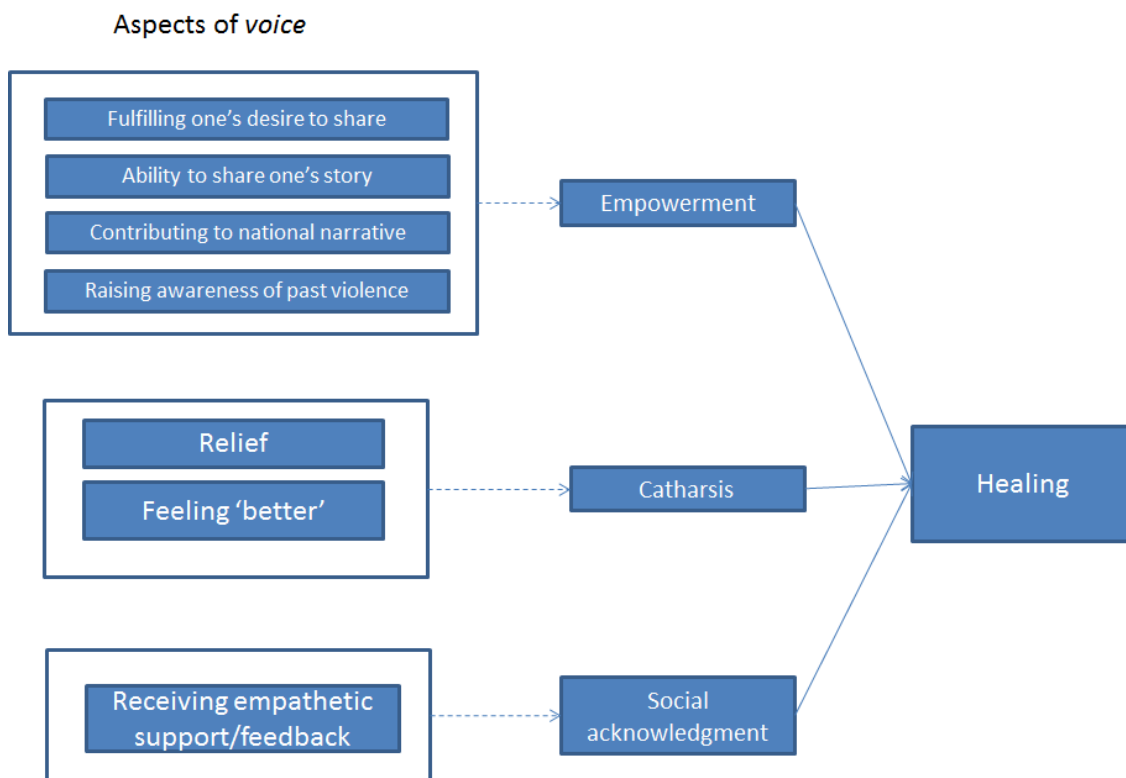


Figure 3.1 Analytical framework: Themes and categories

Interview transcripts were examined with these themes in mind, however, the analysis was “guided, but not confined” by these preliminary codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008, p. 88). As has been done in other studies using thematic analysis, “inductive codes were assigned to segments of data that described a new theme observed in the text” during the coding process (Boyatzis, 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008, p. 88). For example, many respondents indicated disappointment with not receiving a substantive outcome from their participation in the truth commission. Although this did not relate directly to how *voice* may have led to healing, it was evident that this played an important role in the way in which interviewees perceived the healing potential of the truth commission process. Thus, this was also included as another theme during the process of data analysis. Results from interviews in each research context are presented in relation to this framework in Chapters Four and Five.

All of these groupings were placed into a larger table with accompanying quotations for each theme, category, or subcategories that emerged from the data (C. Ellis et al., 2003). As “small unrepresentative texts or data sets can have dire implications for inference,” contextual material or the question that was being responded to was included so that the intended meaning would be retained (Druckman, 2005, p. 260).

After each country was examined separately, the cases were combined into a larger table. Although themes and categories were largely the same, the list of subcategories was expanded to encompass material from both cases. Each country was first analysed separately to understand themes and complexities within the case, then were analysed together to illuminate similarities and differences between the cases.

By examining respondents' views, perceptions and feelings about their experience in the truth commission public hearing process, findings build on existing theories of the potential pathways that lead from truth-telling to healing. When presenting the findings in Chapters Four and Five, within each category of ways that *voice* may lead to healing, interview responses which indicated whether the respondent experienced or did not experience a sense of healing from having *voice* are presented. Direct quotations from interviews are provided as support for both of these areas. Although the study aims to understand how giving testimony in a truth commission public hearing may contribute to victims' sense of healing after periods of mass violence, the ways in which the process did not enhance a sense of healing are also worthy of mention. Describing both positive and negative aspects of respondents' experience provides a more complete picture of the truth commission process from the viewpoint of those interviewed for this study. Through examining these experiences from both of these perspectives, insight into how public hearing processes affect victims may enhance the work of future commissions by illuminating aspects which have been beneficial as well as aspects that may need to be avoided to limit causing further harm to victims who testify is provided.

3.11 Limitations

As the field research for this project operated under budget and time constraints, the number of individuals that could be interviewed was limited. Access to remote villages was inhibited by the lack of telecommunications in many areas as well as the time and money involved in travelling to various destinations in both countries. The choice of research sites to be visited thus had to be based on cost-benefit considerations, taking into account the number of respondents that I would be available to interview and the time and money associated with visiting them. Despite the desire to procure responses from rural populations (which are often underrepresented in empirical research relating to truth commission participation) in addition to urban populations, the resources available hindered comprehensive travel throughout each country.

Conducting research in contexts where English is not widely spoken can present various problems for a native English speaking researcher. In Solomon Islands, language issues did not result in significant barriers as I was able to develop proficiency in Pijin English, which enhanced my mobility and the ability to conduct interviews without a crucial need for a translator. I do, however, acknowledge my inability to communicate at a level of native proficiency—an inherent limitation in conducting the interviews myself. In an effort to mitigate this limitation, I employed individuals fluent in English and the local language of each country to transcribe and translate the interviews. This offers a greater degree of reliability in the accuracy of transcriptions as it offers a second insight into the translation of interview data.

Locating translators that were highly competent in both Tetun and English in Timor-Leste and who also fit into the allocated budget was a persistent problem. I found that schedule flexibility of those who were fluent in both languages was extremely limited, thus inhibiting obtaining assistance from capable translators with erratically scheduled interviews that often happened somewhat suddenly or were unexpectedly delayed or cancelled. The lack of limited availability of translators created frustrations during interviews as I was not always confident that some meaning was not lost when the interviewees' responses were interpreted by the translators. This may have limited the development of meaningful follow-up questions to deepen the understanding of information received during the interviews.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter has described the research design and methods used in this study in order to make sense of how the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two will be applied to the research findings. A case was made for undertaking qualitative research methods in this study, as the aim of the research is to build upon existing theory instead of testing theory and to explore causal relationships between variables as opposed to determining the strength of relationships between variables, which are intrinsically qualitative goals (L. Ellis, 1994; Yin, 2003). I have also described the utility of pursuing a comparative case study design in this thesis in an effort to increase the “explanatory richness” in looking at how truth-telling can lead to victim healing (George & Bennett, 2004; Hantrais, 2009). To this end, the employment of a least similar comparative case study has also been highlighted as a means through which

data that may have applicability in other contexts can be generated (George & Bennett, 2004). Reasons for choosing the cases of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands were also delineated. These cases were similar in that each country created a victim-focussed truth commission that incorporated public hearings into their work, which is the primary variable under investigation. The nature and duration of conflict, judicial efforts during transition, and the relationship between primary perpetrators of violence are vastly different between contexts, which may have implications for the way in which healing may have been realised for victims. If similarities exist between the ways in which giving public testimony in a truth commission hearing contributed to healing in these two cases, there is more reason to believe that the findings may have relevance in other contexts. By generating such data, insights into how future truth commission processes may be better designed to address victim needs may be gained. The following two chapters, Chapters Four and Five, will outline the background of each case under examination, including the transitional justice strategies used in each country, in concert with findings from semi-structured interviews conducted for each country. After these two chapters, Chapter Six will discuss how the findings from each case relate to one another while linking back to theoretical considerations and the wider literature. This last chapter will highlight the conclusions that can be drawn from this research, policy recommendations, and directions for future research.

4 Timor-Leste: Case Study Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe the first case examined in this thesis, Timor-Leste¹⁶, by outlining the pertinent elements of the country's history, culture, and conflict in concert with a presentation of the findings obtained from field research. I conducted semi-structured interviews with seven individuals who had been victimised during the Indonesian occupation and who had also given testimony during a national public hearing¹⁷ of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR) in Timor-Leste. This chapter will first describe some of the particularities of Timor-Leste's history which preceded the invasion by the Indonesian military and provide details about the occupation itself in order to situate the responses from the semi-structure interviews I conducted in this research context. In an effort to reckon with the brutality of the 24-year occupation, a transitional justice strategy was created by the United Nations, which was comprised of processes aimed at achieving both retributive and restorative justice. As detailed previously, on the retributive level, attempts to secure justice have been largely unsuccessful, particularly with regard to high-level perpetrators. Although this thesis is focussed on the restorative transitional justice process, the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation, the relative failure of the judicial aspects of the transitional process are important to consider as this has clearly had an impact upon many interviewees. Thus, the judicial elements of the transitional strategy in Timor-Leste will also be briefly mentioned in this chapter. After describing the transitional justice process implemented in Timor-Leste, field research findings will be presented according to the structure of the analytical framework provided in Chapter Three, which illustrated linkages between truth-telling and victim healing via the possible causal mechanism of *voice*. As such, I will argue that having *voice* during a CAVR public hearing created three primary pathways that helped to

¹⁶ Although the country is primarily referred to as "Timor-Leste" throughout this thesis, there are some places in this chapter where it is also referred to as "East Timor", which was the country's name prior to independence.

¹⁷ To clarify, the CAVR provided two opportunities for victims to give public testimony: within the eight national public hearings and within the village-based Community Reconciliation Process (CRP). Individuals in my study were interviewed only about their experience giving testimony in the national public hearings. This is an important distinction to make as Solomon Islands did not have an equivalent to the CRP. Thus, in order to obtain comparable results, interviewees were drawn from the sample population of victims who gave national public testimony.

facilitate healing for victims: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. In addition to these pathways, two other themes that appeared to have an effect on healing emerged from the interviews: first, clarity of communication about the purpose and goals of the CAVR process and second, outcomes resulting from the process. These themes will be explored after data has been presented in relation to the analytical framework.

4.2 Case Background: Timor-Leste

Becoming an independent country in 2002, Timor-Leste has overcome a long history of colonisation, occupation, and civil strife. The first wave of foreign occupation of the country began in the 16th century, with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1522 (Kingsbury, 2009). Portuguese rule was seen as ‘purely formal’ as Portugal did not highly invest in Timor-Leste until the late 19th century when they began attempts to assert greater control through the denigration of indigenous culture and the exploitation of Timor-Leste’s resources (Taylor, 1991).

While still under Portuguese colonial rule, the East Timorese were faced with another form of occupation during the Pacific War in 1942. The Japanese entered the country with the intention of creating a military base. At this time, Australians worked with the East Timorese to launch guerrilla campaigns against the Japanese, who eventually surrendered and then evacuated (Jolliffe, 1978; Taylor, 1991). However, this struggle resulted in the death of at least 60,000 East Timorese, equating to nearly 14 per cent of the pre-1941 population (Carey & Bentley, 1995). Following the end of the Pacific War, and in light of the diminished control of the Dutch, Indonesia began to gain force as the “lynch-pin of Southeast Asian security” (Taylor, 1991, p. 19). Newly independent, strategically located, abundant with resources and the fifth largest population in the world, Indonesia came to be a centre of focus both in the region and for international powers, such as the United States (Taylor, 1991). After a military coup which overthrew Indonesia’s General Sukarno, who was replaced with General Suharto in 1966, questions of how to address the Portuguese-controlled Timor arose (Taylor, 1991). A special operations unit within Suharto’s regime determined that an independent Timor could threaten the security of eastern Indonesia, thus it would be preferable to integrate Timor into Indonesia should Portuguese control of the country

waver (Taylor, 1991). This rationale was ultimately the impetus for the Indonesian military to invade Timor, which resulted in 25 years of turmoil and brutality.

Following the demise of the Portuguese Caetano regime in April 1974, the new Portuguese government prioritised democracy and decolonisation, which led to the decolonisation of Timor (Taylor, 1999). This turn of events also “marked the beginning of civil unrest in East Timor” (Wandita et al., 2006, p. 285). As they prepared to vacate the country, the Portuguese offered three options to the East Timorese which would be available as part of the process of decolonisation: “continued links with Portugal, integration with Indonesia, or complete independence” (Jolliffe, 1978, p. 61). During this period of transition, several political parties developed to take on the new governance of Timor, with the Democratic Union of Timorese (UDT) being the first to emerge (Jolliffe, 1978). The UDT held a desire for self-determination of the East Timorese, while keeping ties with Portugal during the interim stage of acquiring independence (Jolliffe, 1978). Shortly afterwards, another party—Social Democratic Association of Timor, ASDT (and later called the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor, FRETILIN)—of which Jose Ramos-Horta (former President and Prime Minister of Timor-Leste) was a founder, was formed. Setting themselves apart from the UDT, who wanted to maintain ties with the colonial power, FRETILIN called for “the right to independence” and the “rejection of colonialism” (Jolliffe, 1978; Nicol, 2002, p. 91). The creation of UDT and FRETILIN was followed by the formation of the third prominent party—Popular Democratic Association of Timorese, APODETI—who wanted Timor to become an autonomous province of Indonesia (Jolliffe, 1978).

The decolonisation plan appeared to be on track in early 1975; however, rumours of impending plans of each party to overtake the other led to security concerns for the East Timorese (Jolliffe, 1978). Tensions between UDT and FRETILIN mounted as each group was provided with misinformation about the intentions of the other, which led UDT to stage a pre-emptive coup against FRETILIN (Kingsbury, 2009). FRETILIN quickly responded, resulting in a brief (less than one month) but intense civil war between the two groups during which an estimated 1,500 to 3,000 people were killed (Fernandes, 2012). This conflict ended with FRETILIN taking control of Dili, the capital of the country (Franks, 1996; Kingsbury, 2009).

After the civil war, FRETILIN established the East Timor Defence Force (FALINTIL), which became the militarised wing of FRETILIN in August 1975 (Kingsbury, 2009). As Indonesian forces began to pose a more imminent threat, spreading attacks into the Western districts of East Timor, FRETILIN pleaded to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to facilitate the withdrawal of Indonesian troops (Kingsbury, 2009). They then declared their territory to be the independent Democratic Republic of East Timor, in the hope of being recognised by the UNSC, which would help them to secure assistance to quell Indonesian forces (Kingsbury, 2009). However, the UN refused to recognise this declaration of independence, as did Portugal, and other nations which supported Indonesia's efforts to annex East Timor (Kingsbury, 2009). In reaction to this effort, pro-Indonesian parties UDT and APODETI signed onto the Balibo Declaration which would effectively place East Timor under Indonesian control (Kingsbury, 2009).

4.2.1 Indonesian occupation

The support from UDT and APODETI for the annexation of East Timor proved to be the only catalyst needed by Indonesia to launch an invasion on the country, backed by the United States and Australia, on 8 December 1975 (Kingsbury, 2009; Wandita et al., 2006). Encountering a resistant population, Indonesian troops increased their efforts to terrorise the local population. Villages were destroyed and their surviving populations moved into strategic camps, often in the mountains (Taylor, 1999). Viewed as an imminent threat to their operation, supporters of FRETILIN were particularly targeted by the Indonesian military, which was known to slaughter entire villages of perceived FRETILIN strongholds (Taylor, 1999). Despite these events on the ground, the presence of Indonesian troops in East Timor was denied by the Indonesian government, who proclaimed instead that they were "Indonesian 'volunteers' sent to assist the struggles of the indigenous parties, UDT, Apodeti, Kota, and Trabhalista, against Fretilin" (Taylor, 1991, p. 72). However, in reality, between 35,000 and 40,000 Indonesian troops were present in East Timor by 1976 (Franks, 1996; Taylor, 1991). In this year, Indonesia also declared East Timor to be their 27th province (Harris Rimmer, 2010).

Shortly after the invasion, violence escalated during the late 1970s when Indonesian forces intensified efforts to eliminate all resistance to their control of the country. They forced civilians to choose whether to align with pro-Independence supporters or

surrender to the Indonesians—both of which would have potentially dire consequences (Kingsbury, 2009). Brutality characterised the treatment of the East Timorese by the Indonesian military as the objective of their operation appeared to be “terrorizing the population into submission”, which was “evidenced in their widespread use of imprisonment” and torture (Taylor, 1999, p. 103). During just five years, between 1975 and 1979, the occupation and its consequences had claimed the lives of more than 130,000 East Timorese (Kingsbury, 2009). These immense atrocities used to repress the population—which were experienced differently between men and women—are significant as they characterise the physical and psychological duress that would complicate the work of forthcoming transitional justice strategies, which will be discussed below.

4.2.2 Women and the resistance

During this time, women were particularly active in the resistance to the Indonesian occupation. One prominent women’s organisation that emerged during the occupation was the Popular Organisation of Timorese Women (known by the Portuguese acronym, OPMT), which participated in the struggle against Indonesia through armed resistance and clandestine communication with guerrillas (Wandita et al., 2006). However, there was widespread sexual and reproductive violence perpetrated against women by the Indonesian military (Allden, 2007; Harris Rimmer, 2010; Wandita et al., 2006), both as a means of repression and as a population control to limit the growth of the Timorese population (Franks, 1996; Mason, 2005). By the late 1970s, rape was institutionalised by the Indonesian military as a tool to undermine resistance and destroy communities (Franks, 1996). Despite the institution of policies of abuse that were specifically targeted at their gender, women continued to fight and assist in the resistance with vigour. Indeed, “it is a testimony to the strength of East Timorese women and their commitment, that despite being far from the world’s attention they have continued to survive and resist” (Franks, 1996, p. 167).

Unfortunately, although there is much evidence to indicate the occurrence of violence perpetrated against women during the occupation, the true extent to which East Timorese women suffered has not wholly been communicated. The reason for this is, as Franks (1996) writes, “East Timorese women’s experiences remains hidden beneath the general trauma and also behind the Timorese notion of shame, that these were subjects

that were too personal; there was also an element of exposing their vulnerability” (p. 160). Women’s honour is highly related to the preservation of their virginity, and thus, acts of sexual violence can deprive women of this honour (Allden, 2007). Although such violence occurs by force, victims of these acts may be blamed for shaming their families and communities, which, according to Allden (2007) “makes women particularly vulnerable to discrimination, stigmatisation and marginalisation in society” (p. 12). This issue will prove to be particularly important in the context of the field research findings which reveal the difficulties women have faced in the truth-telling processes created as part of Timor-Leste’s transitional justice strategy.

4.2.3 Santa Cruz massacre

Two individuals interviewed for this study mentioned that they were victims of the well-publicised Santa Cruz Massacre that occurred on 12 November 1991, during which 2,000 unarmed protesters gathered at the Santa Cruz Cemetery in Dili to commemorate the funeral of Sebastio Gomes who was killed by the Indonesian military (Kingsbury, 2009). A brief explanation of this event will help to contextualise their responses. Soon after the funeral procession began, the Indonesian military opened fire, resulting in the death of at least 270 protesters during the procession. At least 80 more were murdered in the following days, and a vast number of victims were injured (Kingsbury, 2009). In an unanticipated turn of events for the Indonesian military, journalist Max Stahl was able to video the massacre which was eventually smuggled out of the country and publicised in international media (Kingsbury, 2009). It was the release of this video that turned international attention onto the dire situation in East Timor, as it was perhaps the first massacre to have been verifiably documented, and “was probably a turning point in Indonesia’s occupation of East Timor” (Kingsbury, 2009, p. 63). However, it was not until seven years later that the East Timorese would finally experience some signs that their suffering under the Indonesian occupation would come to an end.

4.2.4 Path to independence and subsequent violence

In 1998, Indonesia embarked on a return to democracy after their ruler, Suharto, was ousted after 32 years of rule (Lipscomb, 2010). In light of this move to enhance democratisation, the newly installed President B.J. Habibie, declared that East Timor would be allowed two options for their future, to become independent or to become an

autonomous region under Indonesian control (Harris Rimmer, 2010; Lipscomb, 2010; Wandita et al., 2006). This announcement was met with resistance by anti-independence militias, in cooperation with the Indonesian Armed National Forces (TNI), who embarked upon a campaign to harass and intimidate pro-independence voters, particularly through violent means (Harris Rimmer, 2010; Kingsbury, 2009).

In June 1999, the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was launched by the UN Security Council to help facilitate the ‘popular consultation’ that would determine the future of East Timor (Harris Rimmer, 2010; Kingsbury, 2009). Although there were numerous concerns about the security situation in East Timor just before the consultation, it was ultimately decided that the ballot should continue as scheduled in August in an effort to avoid it being tabled completely (Kingsbury, 2009). Anti-independence violence intensified in the weeks preceding the ballot and came to a head on voting day. The referendum indicated that, with a voter turnout of 98.6 per cent, 78.5 per cent of East Timorese cast their vote for the independence of East Timor (Harris Rimmer, 2010; Kingsbury, 2009).

This outcome was met with an intense and violent backlash from the Indonesian military and anti-independence militias as the results were announced on 4 September 1999. These groups razed nearly 70% of the country’s buildings and infrastructure in the following three weeks (Kingsbury, 2009; J. Nevins, 2003). The response to the vote was seen as “part of a systematically planned policy by elements of the Indonesian government and the TNI, to prevent the people of East Timor from freely participating in the referendum, and to punish them for voting for independence” (Burgess, 2004, p. 136). An estimated 250,000 people were displaced, forcibly in some cases to West Timor, and there was widespread violence and sexual abuse committed against pro-independence supporters (Harris Rimmer, 2010; Kingsbury, 2009; J. Nevins, 2003; Wandita et al., 2006). Estimates of between 1,000 and 1,500 people were reported to have been killed or disappeared during this rampage (CAVR, 2006 Part 8.1; Wandita et al., 2006). In relation to the impact of the 1999 post-referendum violence, Silove et al.’s (2006) research demonstrated that “almost all Timorese were traumatised in 1999, and in the ensuing months, a third of the community met criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder” (p. 1222). In addition to having gravely suffered prior to this referendum, a number of victims interviewed in this study were also abused during the 1999 violence.

News of the massacre quickly spread outside of Timor-Leste's borders and it was determined that something must be done to address the atrocities being committed, which resulted in pressure being placed on neighbouring Australia to intervene. Obviously resistant to the idea of an international peacekeeping force being installed in East Timor, Indonesia finally succumbed to threats by the United States to cut off the financial resources they desperately needed to overcome their financial crisis (Kingsbury, 2009). Reluctantly, Indonesia finally allowed the entry of such a force (Wandita et al., 2006)—the Australian-led International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) on 20 September 1999. Indonesian forces ultimately evacuated on 29 October 1999.

During the 24-year occupation of Timor-Leste by the Indonesian military, the East Timorese were subjected to extreme violence, torture, enforced famine, execution, and widespread sexual and reproductive violence including enforced slavery and sterilisation of women in an effort to completely suppress and eliminate the population of the country (CAVR, 2006; Wandita et al., 2006). As determined by the final report of the CAVR, between 100,000 and 180,000 East Timorese died as a direct result of the Indonesian military invasion and occupation (CAVR, 2006). According to interviews conducted with CAVR staff by Le Touze et al. (2005), the abuse endured by the survivors of the occupation resulted in a variety of psychological responses, which were linked to “a complex matrix of traumatic, social, economic and cultural issues” and included: *Hanoin barak* (‘thinking too much’); *Moi* (‘shame’ or ‘embarrassment’); Silence/‘shutting down’; Anger/ frustration; and (Overwhelming) sadness” (pp. 196-7). In the wake of the UN-led referendum, Le Touze et al. (2005) assert that survivors faced immense struggles to survive in a country wrecked by widespread violence after 1999 and that “poverty, unemployment and geographical isolation of remote communities all added to feelings of frustration, a collective feeling that was compounded by a sense that the reconstruction process was not proceeding rapidly enough” (p. 196). In light of the atrocities committed between 1975 and 1999, as well as the collapse of infrastructure and institutions in the post-referendum violence of 1999, it was necessary to pursue a process which would attempt to rectify the wrongs committed in the past as well as rebuild the country to encourage lasting peace.

In October 1999, the United Nations Transitional Administration for East Timor (UNTAET) was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1999/1272, which had the aim

to provide peacekeeping to maintain security and order; to facilitate and coordinate relief assistance to East Timorese people; to facilitate the emergency rehabilitation of East Timor's physical infrastructure; to administer East Timor and create functional state structures for sustainable governance and the rule of law; and to assist in the drafting of a new constitution and conducting elections (Kingsbury, 2009, p. 79).

Essentially, the Mission was to serve only as a transitional authority, that would vacate East Timor once "the state was deemed to be capable [of] independent survival" (Kingsbury, 2009, p. 79). UNTAET was "an unprecedented peacekeeping mission" that would have "total administrative responsibility for the territory, including the administration of justice" (Burgess, 2004, p. 136). Although arguably constrained by its own capacity and the limited time frame imposed upon it, UNTAET unfortunately did little to effectively build the capacity of East Timorese institutions and their staff (Kingsbury, 2009). This limitation hindered local capability to facilitate transitional justice without continued assistance from the UN. On 20 May 2002, Timor-Leste finally declared their independence and, as the UNTAET mission was ushered out, a new UN Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET) was developed to facilitate the country's transition into a more peaceful and sustainable era (Kingsbury, 2009). In this year, the transitional justice strategy that would aim to rectify the brutal past of Timor-Leste was initiated.

4.3 Post-conflict Justice Efforts

Following independence, the new state, The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was faced with the seemingly immeasurable task of rebuilding a nearly non-existent judicial system that had disintegrated with the withdrawal of Indonesian forces, but also to address widespread human rights violations that affected almost all East Timorese people. The resulting transitional justice strategy involved judicial, truth-telling, and reconciliation initiatives that were to be undertaken simultaneously in an effort to secure accountability and promote healing and reconciliation in Timor-Leste. This section will outline each facet of the transitional justice process, identifying strengths and weaknesses of the transitional strategy which will set the stage for the interview responses obtained from field research in Timor-Leste that are presented below.

4.3.1 Judicial initiatives

Two judicially-based processes were enacted for Timor-Leste following independence, to pursue punitive, or retributive, justice. The first was the Ad-hoc Human Rights Courts based in Jakarta, created by the Indonesian government, and the second was the locally-based Special Panel for Serious Crimes, developed by the UN in the capital city, Dili (Stanley, 2009). Although there was a call for an international tribunal, which was to effectively be the first tier of the post-conflict justice process, the realisation of such a process never came into fruition and was replaced with the aforementioned processes (Burgess, 2004; Joseph Nevins, 2009; Stanley, 2009).

4.3.1.1 Ad-hoc tribunal

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the ability of the Ad-hoc Human Rights Court to promote justice and accountability was wholly lacking. The Court was only mandated to investigate crimes committed between April and September 1999 (the six months preceding the referendum for independence), which limited its ability to prosecute those who were responsible for crimes during the 24 years of military occupation (Burgess, 2004). This process was ultimately seen to have ‘embedded impunity’ in that of the 18 individuals brought to trial, all were finally either acquitted or had their convictions overturned through appeals (Stanley, 2009). This post-conflict process was unsuccessful in securing retributive justice for the East Timorese, failing to meet the expectation that Indonesians should be held responsible for their crimes. More on the perceptions of justice in Timor-Leste as viewed by interviewed victims will be provided below.

4.3.1.2 Special Panels for Serious Crimes

The Special Panels for Serious Crimes (SPSC) within the Dili District Court was a hybrid judicial process composed of local and international judges to try offences including “genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity” committed between 1 January 1999 and 25 October 1999 (Kent, 2011; Stanley, 2009, p. 92). The SPSC was complemented by the Serious Crimes Investigation Unit (SCU) and the Defence Lawyers Unit (DLU), which was largely administered by the UN who provided the bulk of resources and funding for their work, although it was also under the authority of Timor-Leste’s Prosecutor General (Stanley, 2009, p. 92). In 2005, the convictions secured through the serious crimes process “surpass[e]d that reached by any other

international or hybrid tribunal” (Stanley, 2009, p. 92). Although the process was aimed at: “establishing a historical record; bringing closure to cases; confirming respect for the rule of law; ensuring due process; deterring future offenders and building local capacity”, many victims continue to feel that justice has not been adequately delivered, particularly as the process only investigated those crimes committed in 1999, thereby excluding the abuses that occurred during the preceding 24 years (Stanley, 2009, p. 92). Again, this illustrates the same temporal limitation mentioned in relation to the Ad-hoc Human Rights Court in Jakarta that allowed many perpetrators to escape the purview of justice (Burgess, 2004). The serious crimes process was also limited in its ability to compel perpetrators outside of East Timor—particularly those who escaped to West Timor or Indonesia—to stand trial, further instilling impunity (Burgess, 2004; Wandita et al., 2006). In all, the Special Panel for Serious Crimes resulted in the convictions of 84 individuals deemed to be responsible for violence committed during 1999; however, nearly all of those convicted by the Special Panels received presidential pardons in the following years (Robins, 2012). This demonstrates another way in which those responsible for past abuses escaped the purview of retributive justice in the wake of the Indonesian occupation (Robins, 2012; Stanley, 2009).

The lack of success in punitive justice measures can be attributed to a number of factors, as briefly mentioned in Chapter Three. The first is that there has been an inability to access many perpetrators because of their location in either Indonesia or West Timor. Secondly, there has been a notable lack of political will to prosecute those responsible for crimes committed between 1974 and 1999 (Scheeringa, 2007). One factor to consider regarding the absence of political motivation in this matter is the potential for further straining already tenuous relations with Indonesia (Joseph Nevins, 2009; Stanley, 2009). Also, financial constraints and judicial inefficiency in the still fragile East Timorese political system weakened opportunities for achieving comprehensive justice. Although the judicial process has been most strongly criticised for not being able to bring the ‘big fish’ perpetrators to justice, Le Touze et al (2005) point out that

problems of achieving justice in relation to these prominent perpetrators relate more to political issues (the relationship between Indonesia and Timor Leste and their joint commitment to achieving justice) than to the practicalities of apprehending and extraditing those who are indicted. These realities are evident to the Timorese people (p. 200).

Each of these shortcomings of the judicial processes pursued after the Indonesian occupation have strongly affected the ability of the East Timorese to move on after the trauma they experienced between 1975 and 1999, a point clearly evidenced from the responses by individuals interviewed for this study. As the failures of the serious crimes process to achieve retributive justice for East Timorese people have now been illustrated, this chapter will shift to a discussion of the restoratively-focused Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation—a primary focus of this thesis.

4.3.2 Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation

The creation of the truth commission in Timor-Leste came as a result of a resolution passed by the CNRT (coalition of all East Timorese pro-independence parties) National Congress in mid-2000 (Burgess, 2004; Senier, 2008). A steering committee comprised of local and UN representatives was developed to determine what kind of mechanism would best suit the needs of Timor-Leste in the aftermath of their brutal past (Burgess, 2004). Following consultation with grassroots groups, the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (in Portuguese, *Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação*, CAVR) was developed, which “was a combination of aspects found in other similar commissions [such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission], and new approaches tailored to the situation in East Timor” (Burgess, 2004, p. 143). The CAVR was ultimately established through UNTAET Regulation 2001/10 to uncover the truth about crimes committed between 1974 and 1999, promote reconciliation within communities in the case of lesser crimes, and culminate with a final report which would provide recommendations (CAVR, 2006). A “therapeutic approach” was taken by the CAVR in the sense that it explicitly stated that “justice, truth and mutual understanding are essential for the healing and reconciliation of individuals and the nation” (CAVR, 2006 Executive Summary, p. 5; Robins, 2012). The intention to pursue therapeutic aims makes the CAVR particularly ripe for study in this thesis which seeks to understand how giving testimony in truth commission processes can contribute to victim healing in post-conflict settings. As the CAVR process envisioned healing as a primary goal, a high degree of focus on victims is evident, and is thus a potentially illustrative case for addressing the research question.

As part of its work, the CAVR operated an adapted traditional conflict resolution practice, the Community Reconciliation Process (CRP) which was held on the village

level within the country. Working in concert with the Special Panel for Serious Crimes, the CAVR “was obligated to refer statements from deponents who came forward to participate in the community reconciliation process to the Office of the Prosecutor General” (Wandita et al., 2006, p. 288). If it was determined that the deponent had not committed a serious crime such as grave human rights abuses including murder and rape, the reconciliation hearing was able to proceed (Wandita et al., 2006). Thus, the CRP was only able to address lesser crimes such as the burning of houses, arson, theft, or destruction of livestock (Kent, 2011; Le Touze et al., 2005). Village elders presided over these hearings where both victims and perpetrators provided testimony about past crimes, which was intended to result in a Community Reconciliation Agreement that would effectively reintegrate the perpetrator back into their community. Although the majority of those most responsible for crimes under the Indonesian occupation had fled to West Timor or Indonesia after the 1999 violence, nearly half of the East Timorese who fought with the anti-independence militias who fled to West Timor returned to their home villages in order to participate in the CRP (Senier, 2008). Hence, the CRP programme allowed an opportunity for these East Timorese perpetrators to reconcile with those they harmed and to be reintegrated into their former communities.

The work of the CAVR was undertaken by seven national commissioners with the help of an extensive staff who were roughly 80% East Timorese, providing an opportunity for a degree of local ownership and a decentralised nature of the process (Scheeringa, 2007), although it was believed that Westerners held more power in the undertaking of the process. The CAVR collected 7,824 statements from the 13 districts and 65 sub-districts of Timor-Leste (CAVR, 2006 Vol.1, p. 26). National public hearings were also a part of the Commission’s work as a series of eight thematic hearings were held around the country, which were highly publicised through the press, radio, and television (CAVR, 2006 Vol. 1, p. 29). The first of these hearings was dedicated specifically to victims, called the “Victims’ Hearing”, while the others focussed on such themes as “Massacres” and “Women and Conflict” (CAVR, 2006 Vol. 10, p. 19). The CAVR Final Report (2006) highlights that “a fundamental objective of all hearings [including the village-level CRP hearings] was to create a process which respected and helped restore the dignity of victims of human rights violations” (CAVR, 2006 Vol. 10, p. 19).

Although initially compared to the South African TRC, one of the most striking differences was the lack of an amnesty provision for perpetrators who testified (Burgess, 2004). Unlike previous truth commissions which sought to investigate crimes committed by individuals who were still present in the country where the abuses occurred, the CAVR was faced with a unique difficulty in that those most responsible for atrocities committed in Timor-Leste had almost all left at the end of Indonesian occupation (Roosa, 2007). In one sense, “the absence of the main perpetrators was, on one hand, an advantage; it allowed the commission to work with complete freedom, unconstrained by a compromise with elements of the ancien regime” (Roosa, 2007, p. 565). However, in another sense, “their [the ancien regime’s] absence reduced the relevance of the commission” as “the CAVR could not demand that the former rulers of East Timor appear before it to testify” (Roosa, 2007, p. 565). This factor clearly limited the ability of the Commission to ascertain the complete truth of what had happened in the past, as outlined in its mandate. Indeed, as Nevins (2007) remarks, the “CAVR did not go as far as it could and should have in analysing responsibility for atrocities and recommending amends” (p. 594). To this end, although the report emphasises the need for accountability, the way in which that would be achieved was not clearly elucidated (Joseph Nevins, 2007).

Ultimately, the final report released in 2006 titled *Chega!* (meaning ‘Enough!’ in Portuguese) recommended that reparations and memorialisation programmes should be set up by the government to honour and recognise victims as well as an exhumations programme to locate the bodies of those whose fates are still unknown (CAVR, 2006, Vol. 11, p. 40). After the dissolution of the CAVR, a Post-CAVR Secretariat was created in 2005 to further disseminate CAVR findings and oversee the CAVR Headquarters which houses CAVR archives and the CAVR museum, which is located in a former Indonesian detention centre, *Komarca*, located in Dili. Following the culmination of the CAVR’s work, a series of books which contained the testimony from each national thematic hearing were published in an effort to document the past in a tangible way.

Despite the completion of a substantial report with an abundance of recommendations for promoting justice and attention to victim needs, little has been done to fulfil them. Internal dissent over several recommendations, most specifically the proposed

reparations programme, also led East Timorese leaders including Xanana Gusmao and Jose Ramos-Horta to eschew the legitimacy of some aspects of the final report (Joseph Nevins, 2007). Ramos-Horta, for example, stated that those recommendations provided by the report were “outlandish, with no connection to reality”, which was further bolstered by then-President Gusmao’s comment that the recommendations surpassed “conventional political boundaries” (Stanley, 2009, p. 126). In regard to the proposed reparations programme, “since receiving the CAVR report, parliament has declined to debate it, let alone to act on its recommendations [as of 2012]” (Robins, 2012, p. 89).

As a response to the widespread atrocities committed by the Indonesian military as well as pro-independence militias between 1975 and 1999, the transitional justice process of Timor-Leste has been both praised and criticised. The primary downfalls of these processes were the failure of retributive justice mechanisms to promote accountability for those most responsible for abuses through retributive justice as well as the lack of a widespread reparations programme (as proposed in the CAVR’s Final Report) to recognise victims for their suffering during the 24-year struggle for independence. Despite the implication of numerous actors in the atrocities committed in the country, Timor-Leste did not have the power to compel the majority of the perpetrators in Indonesia or West Timor to stand trial, which has been a notable source of disappointment for many victims (Lambourne, 2009; Joseph Nevins, 2007).

However, as part of the work of the CAVR, the Community Reconciliation Process have been largely praised for incorporating traditional conflict resolution practices into their work in order to facilitate reintegration of those East Timorese perpetrators who fought with pro-Indonesian militias and they been seen as effective by many East Timorese (Kent, 2004; Larke, 2009; Senier, 2008). Although the work of the CAVR has been considered successful in some respects, the contribution of some components of its work—such as the national public hearings—to victim healing, as stated in its mandate, remains questionable (Robins, 2012). In order to add to the understanding about the ways in which truth-telling can lead to victim healing in post-conflict settings, this study examines how having voice can create pathways that lead to healing within the context of giving public testimony in truth commission processes. To shed light on this topic, the remainder of this chapter will present the findings from the seven semi-structured interviews conducted in Timor-Leste with individuals who were victims

during the Indonesian occupation that also gave public testimony during a national hearing of the CAVR.

4.4 Field Research Findings and Analysis: Giving Testimony to the CAVR—Opportunities for Healing through *Voice*

To understand the ways in which truth-telling can contribute to victim healing, this chapter aims to provide insight into how the experience of giving testimony during a CAVR national public hearing affected victims of the Indonesian occupation. The work of the CAVR has been considered to be highly participatory in its public hearing processes and widespread statement-taking (Robins, 2012; Stanley, 2009). As such, the CAVR is a valuable case to study in light of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two. Based on theoretical expectations, the analytical framework (through which field research findings will be now presented) was outlined in Chapter Three, which illustrates three possible pathways that link truth-telling to victim healing through the causal mechanism of *voice*: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. Interview responses that depict aspects of *voice* which facilitated the creation of these pathways, as well as ways in which various facets of the process inhibited *voice* and thus hindered healing will be expounded upon below. In addition to the ways in which *voice* may be expected to facilitate victim healing based on existing literature, two other themes emerged from the interview responses which may provide further insight into how truth-telling affects victims' sense of healing. These other findings are: first, how the purpose and goals of the CAVR's work were communicated to victims and second, the outcomes that resulted from interviewees' truth commission participation. The findings from the seven semi-structured interviews conducted in Timor-Leste will first be analysed in relation to the framework developed in Chapter Three. This will be followed by a presentation and analysis of the other findings and their relationship to victim healing in order to begin shedding light on possible pathways that link truth-telling to victim healing in post-conflict settings.

4.4.1 Empowerment

As mentioned previously, being victimised commonly results in individuals feeling disempowered as a consequence of the abuse they have been subjected to in the past (Agger & Jensen, 1996; Govier, 2009). Hence, it has been suggested that restoring a sense of control, or being empowered, is an important component of victim healing

(Hamber, 2009; Herman, 2003, 2005; Leslie, 2001; Minow, 1998; Shuman & Smith, 2000). Based on the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two, I propose that in the context of the CAVR, fulfilling their desire to share the story of their trauma with others and contributing to their country's national narrative are aspects of *voice* that led to a sense of empowerment, or restored control for some interviewees. A discussion of the interview responses in relation to these categories and how they can be seen to contribute to healing will now be presented.

It has been suggested that many victims have a need to share the story of their trauma with others (Allan & Allan, 2000; McKinney, 2008). Through fulfilling this need, victims may experience a sense of having *voice* by being able to communicate their views and experiences to others, which may help them to restore a sense of control. Four interviewees in Timor-Leste indicated that giving testimony to the CAVR allowed them to fulfil this need, which I suggest allowed them to be empowered by having *voice* in the process. Alberto¹⁸ commented that he felt “content” to tell his story and that giving testimony “was good because we provided [information about] experiences” that could be heard by others. Claudina also said, “the good thing for me was [that] if we disclose the story...the whole world will also know.”

The sense that giving testimony to the CAVR helped to fulfil a desire to share the story of his trauma in public was similarly expressed by Hugo who was abused by the pro-Indonesian UDT forces during the occupation. He commented: “For me, the best thing was to share the experiences in public. What the UDT did at that time made me suffer so I had better express it”. Likewise, Jose mentioned that “I really wanted to give testimony in the CAVR from my heart, which made me happy”. These four interviewees indicated that they felt it was important to share their stories with others, which has been described as an integral part of facilitating healing (Allan & Allan, 2000; McKinney, 2008; J. Smyth & Pennebaker, 1999). As mentioned, because of the disempowerment that can result from being victimised, regaining control through communicating the narrative of their suffering with others has been suggested to be empowering (French, 2009). In light of this, I suggest that for these four interviewees, fulfilling their desire to share their stories in a public hearing is an aspect of *voice* that helped to contribute to the healing process by helping them to restore a sense of control.

¹⁸ In order to preserve anonymity, pseudonyms are used to identify interviewees.

Although not directly related to the desire to share the story of her suffering during the Indonesian occupation within a CAVR public hearing, my interview with Cidalia revealed that the reason she was willing to be interviewed for my research project was because she wanted her story to be communicated with other parts of the world. This again illustrates the value that some victims may place on telling others about their personal sacrifices for their country. I did not ask questions about the trauma that Cidalia experienced in the past, however, she did become upset as the interview unfolded. When she started to appear distressed, I questioned whether or not to continue the interview as I did not want to be the source of more suffering. As she calmed, we continued the interview and as I finished with the interview questions and was thanking Cidalia for her time and assistance, she stated:

I hope, if later you become a leader or an officer, do not forget we are the victims in Timor-Leste, for example, [you] visited women who are victims of politic[al violence] in Timor-Leste, to find out whether they are still alive or dead and what about their children.

Although, for Cidalia, the process of remembering was difficult and invoked sadness both in relation to giving testimony in the CAVR and during our interview, she indicated that she felt it was important that others around the world know her story and the stories of other Timorese victims of the Indonesian occupation. At the close of the interview as I thanked her once again for her time and willingness to participate in my study, she proposed,

I am the one who should give thanks to you... I think it is good [that] my experience can be written in USA or other places, it is better [that it is written and not forgotten] because it is part of history... Although the CAVR still does not give a response, this story has been spread across various countries, as part of the political history, so I am thanking you.

With this comment, Cidalia made it clear that it was important for others outside of Timor-Leste to know what the East Timorese have suffered in order to gain independence, illustrating a way in which sharing their traumatic stories with others may be perceived by victims as being beneficial, even if the experience of giving testimony itself is painful. Thus, for some victims, reliving their trauma in order to communicate the story of their sacrifice to others may be, in a sense, worth the distress if it results in more people becoming aware of what victims were subjected to during a period of mass violence in order to secure their freedom.

As mentioned previously, another way in which having *voice* may facilitate healing through empowering victims is by helping them to restore a sense of control by contributing to their country's historical narrative of past abuse. Agger and Jensen (1990) have suggested that through the constructive development of written documentation about past atrocities, victims may be able to turn their "private pain" into "public dignity", which can contribute to healing (p. 116). In Timor-Leste, most interviewees (six out of seven) expressed satisfaction with having been able to communicate a story that would be read by the wider public and future generations. For example, although she was largely dissatisfied with the work of the CAVR, Cidalia mentioned:

[It is] important in that time that it [my story] was written in the book that can be read by our children and they will know that their mother was also involved in politics for the independence of this country.

Hugo and Claudina also spoke about feeling gratified that the testimony they gave to the CAVR was documented for future generations to read. Hugo said he felt that "it [CAVR] was good, to improve our life in the future" because the documentation of past abuses would then be available for the next generation to retell so that the history of how Timor-Leste came to be independent would not be lost. Claudina similarly indicated that "all those different stories [are]...a new experience for me and it [now] exists in Timor history, in the future when the next generation will read about it, that makes me happy". Jose also mentioned that he felt "happy" to give testimony to the CAVR because he "wanted to let people know what happened in the tragedy of 12 November", the date of the Santa Cruz massacre. As mentioned, by creating "a document of historical value for future generations", testimony is "an important step toward the elaboration of past experiences for patients [victims] themselves" and can thus be healing (Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983, p. 49), which appears to have been fulfilled for these interviewees.

Manuel and Alberto expressed a sense of pride from giving testimony about their involvement with the resistance to the Indonesian military. For example, when asked if telling his story to the CAVR made his life easier or better in any way, Manuel said, "I feel proud. I feel proud to be a part of that group, that group that was telling the story, not only my story, but other friends who present[ed] their stories to the Commission. I am proud of that". Conversely, when he was asked if the experience made his life

harder or worse in any way, Manuel continued the previous line of thinking, saying, “No, it becomes easier because now I feel proud”. Alberto also commented:

For me, it's important that you tell the experience... the data, the historical data, it's something that you need to complete the history... [After giving testimony] they recognised you as combatants, a warrior. They respect you because you were young and you were involved in that thing.

These two men were active in the pro-independence movement and were subjected to abuse because of this involvement. As Manuel said, “no one asked me to be involved, I voluntarily involved [myself] in this because I want freedom and want to be part of this struggle”. Although they were victimised during that time, Manuel and Alberto view their struggle as turning into strength because their battle was ultimately won, as Timor-Leste is now independent. Although both male and female interviewees spoke about satisfaction in contributing to the documentation of what happened during the occupation, it should be mentioned that this sense of pride mentioned by Manuel and Alberto differed quite starkly from sentiments expressed by female respondents. Cidalia, for example, recounted that as a consequence of the Indonesian occupation: “I lost everything, lost dignity as a woman and have no more pride”. These gender-specific contrasts will be further discussed below.

The East Timorese people have experienced centuries of repression through colonisation and occupation and it is likely that the ability to openly speak about the events that led to their freedom was an important source of satisfaction for many people. The ability to share the stories of their suffering during the occupation, which many felt was a sacrifice for the independence of their country, may be an important aspect of overcoming the ‘conspiracy of silence’ which pervades many periods of conflict and/or authoritarian rule, as described in existing literature (Allan & Allan, 2000; Danieli, 1984; McKinney, 2008). Thus, based on the sense of satisfaction these six interviewees felt from contributing to their country’s national narrative, I argue that this was a source of empowerment. This finding is in line with the theoretical expectations discussed in Chapter Two, which propose that being empowered through having *voice* in this way may contribute to victim healing within the context of truth commissions.

4.4.1.1 *Limitations on victim storytelling*

The ability to give public testimony to the CAVR was beneficial for some interviewees as it gave them an opportunity to share the story of their sacrifice for Timor-Leste's independence with others and/or contribute to their national narrative, and thus experience a sense of empowerment. However, two interviewees (Claudina and Cidalia) indicated ways in which they were personally affected by limitations or mismanagement of their stories by the CAVR, which I suggest hindered *voice* and was hence a source of disempowerment. Two other interviewees (Manuel and Alberto) spoke about their sense that many people who may have wanted to publicly testify about their trauma were not able to, which may have limited the ability of other victims to experience a sense of empowerment by fulfilling their desire to share their stories within the CAVR process.

As described in Chapter Two, there are a variety of ways in which *voice* may be inhibited during transitional justice processes. One issue is that some truth-telling processes only select stories which are representative of certain types of abuses or experiences and thus do not hear the complete story that witnesses would like to share, or they do not invite victims to give testimony whose stories do not contribute to the collective narrative the process aims to develop (Hayner, 2011). Claudina experienced this when she was asked to tell only the story of her experience during the Liquiça massacre in 1999, although she had also been abused by the Indonesian military following the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991 because of her alleged participation in the nonviolent protest. When I asked why she did not tell the story of her experience in the Santa Cruz massacre, she said,

because the CAVR program was not asking about that, they just asked me about the massacre in Liquiça in 1999, but in the CAVR's point of view this wasn't a big problem, so they just investigate about the Liquiça massacre instead of the Santa Cruz massacre.

As she was victimised in both of these instances, only being asked about the abuse she experienced in 1999 felt like an omission of the full gamut of her experiences during the occupation. It is possible that the constraint placed on her story was a reflection of the limited time the CAVR had to hear stories of victims, which Manuel and Alberto mentioned was a shortcoming of the process. Manuel commented that

the time is not, there is not a lot of it, so you must have summaries and not all stories come out at that time because it was collective, representative. So, that was, there should be more time for everyone to tell their stories.

Echoing this sentiment, Alberto suggested that the CAVR should have “provide[d] more chance[s] to other people to tell their story”.

Further, Cidalia spoke of a way in which she felt her story had been manipulated when she read her testimony that was published in the series of books that contained documentation of the CAVR’s national public hearing proceedings. She commented that some of the things she said during the hearing were not written in the publication and that “they even write other things [that] I had never experienced”. Although Cidalia was the only person interviewed in Timor-Leste that indicated a discrepancy between her testimony and what was published, this is a powerful testament to how truth commissions can control the narrative which is read by others. As part of being victimised involves the domination of self by another, this conflict between the ability of Cidalia to give testimony to the CAVR and how her story was ultimately presented reflects a continuation of a power imbalance that can further perpetuate the cycle of victimhood or violence (Staub, 2011). Writing of victims’ experiences testifying in the South African TRC, Ross (2003) has commented that through her descriptions of victims’ stories, some victims felt as if poet and journalist Antjie Krog took “unauthorized ownership of their ‘stories’”, illustrating how “experience can be subsumed”, which may result in a “sense of loss” for victims (p. 335). Thus, in this way, instead of control being restored from giving testimony for Claudina and Cidalia, the experience may have promoted further disempowerment and illustrates how the limitation or mismanagement of victim *voice* may have hindered the healing potential of truth-telling.

4.4.2 Catharsis

It has been suggested that truth commissions can provide opportunities for victims to experience a sense of relief or catharsis from telling their stories to others (Androff, 2012; Hayner, 2011; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010; Tutu, 1999). In Timor-Leste, three interviewees indicated that they gained some sense of catharsis from giving testimony in a CAVR public hearing, which I would argue is because they were able to have *voice* through sharing the stories of what they experienced during the Indonesian occupation with others. However, in addition to the feelings of catharsis mentioned by these

interviewees, three expressed that the experience of giving testimony caused them some sort of distress. The distress felt by two of these interviewees appeared to relate directly to the way in which others responded to their testimony, illustrating how the potential therapeutic benefits of *voice* were not able to be realised because of how their stories were heard by others. The responses of those interviewees will be provided here, but a further discussion of how negative reactions from their communities contributed to their sense of distress will be presented later in this chapter.

The three respondents who experienced a sense of “catharsis”—as it is categorised in this study—described feeling relief, feeling “better”, feeling a reduction of worry, or a sense that sharing their story helped to reduce the “burden” they have been living with since being subjected to abuse during the Indonesian occupation. Hugo, for example, remarked:

We feel relief in our heart... [Before giving testimony] I felt heavy, but the burden has been released, otherwise when you come [to talk to me] I still will feel the burden and would answer with a bad mood and discouragement.

Claudina also indicated that telling her story relieved some of the burden she felt as a consequence of her victimisation, which she associated with her renewed ability to work. She said:

I was very sad [when I testified], but after I told everything that I saw, I feel relieved... I feel that the trauma began to decrease and the burden was slightly reduced so that I could work, if I do not return to normal then I cannot do anything because I still live in trauma... it [giving testimony to the CAVR] helps because what I shared in the public has been disclosed so that I feel relief now.

Similar to Hugo and Claudina, Jose also commented: “I feel better when I gave testimony”. He continued:

First, when I was interviewed, I always spoke emotionally, with anger because people were always asking about how I became a victim and so I tell the tragedy that happened. At first I did not have much to tell. Many things that I cannot tell and cannot express because I think it will happen again, but now I can survive, I'm ok.

This statement from Jose suggests that after he gave testimony to the CAVR, he felt less worried about events from the past happening again. In order to heal, it has been proposed that victims need to be reassured that past traumatic events will not happen again (Allan & Allan, 2000), which some have indicated can be facilitated by truth

commissions (Brahm, 2007; French, 2009; Mendeloff, 2009). By feeling free of the fear of being subjected to further abuse, it could be argued that Jose experienced a sense of relief or catharsis.

Laplante and Theidon (2007) found similar reactions to the experience of giving testimony in their interviews with 21 survivors of the military dictatorship in Peru who spoke of feeling “internal peace”, relief, and a lessening of their burden after providing testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Peru (p. 240). Hamber et al. (2000) and Byrne (2004) also discovered that several of their interviewees in South Africa experienced a sense of relief after giving public testimony during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Hence, giving public testimony may allow victims an opportunity to experience a sense of catharsis through sharing their stories and being heard by others, or having *voice*, in the process. Chapter Six will further discuss the relationship between these findings across multiple research contexts, including Solomon Islands.

4.4.2.1 Feeling distress related to giving testimony

Although the comments from three interviewees suggest that they experienced a sense of catharsis after they testified in the CAVR, three interviewees remarked about feeling distress or sadness when they remembered their experiences in order to disclose them in public. Jacinta, for example, recalled that “they [the CAVR] just dig more and it just makes more pain” which she said made her feel sad as she remembered things that she had tried to forget. Here, she appears to blame the CAVR for its work of digging into past stories, which she viewed as detrimental because it inherently forces victims to relive their traumatic experiences. She continued by saying,

I'm sad because I talked about my father, my sister and another family member who was beaten to death and thrown into the hole, at that part [of the story], I was crying and everybody was also crying. I certainly cry when I remember, still grieve to this day.

Jacinta's experience during the Indonesian occupation, perhaps similar to many other victims of that time, reflects a great deal of suffering. Not only did Jacinta lose family members, but she was also imprisoned, tortured, and sexually abused. Likely because of these experiences, giving testimony to the CAVR public hearing was not a source of relief, but of anguish. Similarly, although Claudina mentioned that she ultimately felt relief from telling her story, she conveyed experiencing sadness similar to Jacinta's

while testifying as she recalled: “I cried when I told the story, I cried because in my whole life I never saw the cruellest things like this massacre. I was very sad.”

Cidalia also spoke about the sadness and pain caused by remembering her story in order to speak in front of the CAVR. Her experience during the occupation was also characterised by sexual abuse committed by the Indonesian military, which may have at least, in part, been perpetrated as punishment for her active role in the resistance movement. As mentioned above, women were targeted by Indonesian forces to systematically quell opposition to the Indonesian leadership (Allden, 2007; Franks, 1996). In talking about her experience in the CAVR public hearing, Cidalia commented: “We often feel a heavy heart, it is common. Governments also often make us hurt, CAVR also often makes us hurt, because they have to bring up the past”. These memories made Cidalia feel a “heavy heart”, which Silove et al. (2006) describe as a way in which “overwhelming sadness”, particularly related to the loss of family members, is expressed in Tetun (p. 1222). In her study of 30 South African victims who testified in the South African TRC, Byrne (2004) similarly found that the process of testifying “involved a considerable amount of emotional pain” for 24 of her 30 respondents (p. 246). Respondents described their suffering in reliving their traumatic experiences over again and feeling pain in their hearts (Byrne, 2004), which suggests that publicly telling one’s story can be emotionally trying across different contexts. Considering that those respondents who described feeling distress associated with giving testimony were all female, the finding also supports Brounéus’ (Forthcoming) suggestion that women may experience greater emotional difficulties than men when participating in transitional justice processes. In a survey of 1,200 Rwandans following the 1994 genocide, Brounéus (Forthcoming) found that women felt that “the gacaca intensifies suffering to a higher extent than men” (Discussion, para. 2). Further, Brounéus (Forthcoming) suggests that because women are more likely than men to experience “non-lethal forms of violence” during periods of armed conflict, “they may carry a heavier burden of war-related memories in their bodies and minds” (Introduction, para.6), which is reflected in her finding that women had higher levels of PTSD and depression than men in Rwanda after the genocide. In addition to the personal abuse that Cidalia was subjected to, she also recounted: “my husband was a former political prisoner and has died; it became a burden to me and my family. I do not know with other friends, but for me it really makes me suffer”. Related to the South

African context, Byrne (2004) similarly found that “survivors who had lost their primary family breadwinner to political violence or whose breadwinner had been substantially disabled hoped the TRC would provide some compensation in this regard (perhaps in the form of reparations)” (p. 247).

Brounéus (Forthcoming) has proposed that such a loss of “family networks” that can result from periods of armed conflict may, to a greater extent, negatively affect women’s psychological well-being (The ‘Women and Peace’ Hypothesis and Peace-building, para.4), which may be another factor that played a role in Cidalia’s sense of on-going distress after being victimised. Thus, the relationship between the findings from my study and previous research suggests that women’s experiences both during conflict and within transitional justice processes are different from those of men, which may have implications for understanding how future truth commissions should be designed to better address the needs of victims.

Based on the findings presented in this section, interviewees experienced giving testimony as both cathartic and distressing, which further illustrates the puzzle investigated in this thesis. I argue that it was having *voice* through telling their stories and being heard by others that facilitated some interviewees’ sense of catharsis from testifying in the CAVR. As indicated in the responses, the distress that some interviewees associated with telling their stories in public appeared to result from remembering the pain of their traumatic experiences during the Indonesian occupation. Although Claudina expressed that she, at the time I was conducting interviews, felt as if she had moved on from her past trauma, Jacinta and Cidalia emphasised how they have continued to suffer until the present and that the process of giving testimony had not helped to assuage this suffering. Jacinta and Cidalia’s on-going duress may be attributed to a number of factors, including their financial struggles that made it difficult to support their families and how their communities responded to their testimonies—an issue that will be further discussed below.

In addition, the experiences of testifying in the CAVR, particularly for Jacinta and Cidalia, may also be illustrative of retraumatisation, which has been described as a potential risk for victims participating in truth-telling processes (Brounéus, 2008b; Byrne, 2004; Hayner, 2011; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010; Rimé et al., 2011). Considering Jacinta and Cidalia’s distress while testifying, which persisted throughout

the years following the CAVR, it can be seen that, as mentioned in Chapter Two, giving testimony during a public hearing as a “functional equivalent” of single session debriefing in the context of a truth commission may risk causing harm for some victims (Brounéus, 2008a, p. 18). Indeed, remembering past traumas can be a significant source of pain, which when left untended, can cause further psychological damage for individuals who have testified (Hamber, 2009).

4.4.3 Social acknowledgment

Having presented findings related to how having *voice* can help to facilitate a sense of empowerment and catharsis for victims, this section will now deepen the discussion of how *voice* may contribute to victim healing by looking at how victims’ testimonies were *heard* or received by others. It has been suggested that in order for victims to experience benefits from telling their traumatic stories to others, they must feel that they are speaking in a safe and supportive environment (d’Estrée, 2006). When this happens, victims may feel as if they have had *voice* through controlling their narrative and being validated by the provision of support or acknowledgment. It has been proposed that having their suffering acknowledged after sharing their traumatic story is important for the healing process of victims (Hamber, 2009; Herman, 2005; Minow, 1998; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013). According to Govier (2009), “acknowledgment is articulated or embodied awareness” which is communicated to others (p. 41). Receiving acknowledgment, which may include empathetic support or feedback in response to victims’ stories, has been described as an important component of victim healing that can be facilitated through giving testimony (Allan & Allan, 2000; Androff, 2012). Paralleling the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two, the interview responses from Timor-Leste suggest that when victims receive affirmation of their suffering through social support from community members or truth commission staff after telling their stories—indications of *voice*—they may feel acknowledged, which has been seen to contribute to victim healing. This section will discuss acknowledgment in terms of others conveying their awareness and affirmation of interviewees’ past suffering by documenting the story of their past sacrifice in publications and offering empathetic support or feedback.

French (2009) has indicated that by collecting victims’ testimonies, truth commissions can offer victims a “first sign of acknowledgment” that the stories of their trauma are

true and that the abuse they experienced should not have happened (p. 95). Evidencing this sense of being acknowledged, Claudina spoke about her contentment with being included in the series of books of public testimony that the post-CAVR Secretariat published after the CAVR completed its work. She said, “I dared to reveal [my story] because I know when they [future generations] open the CAVR’s book, I am there, that makes me glad”. Hugo similarly commented that “everyone listened to us and heard what we said and declared [and] it was written into a book...[which] was distributed to us, others, and those abroad”. By publishing their stories for others to read, the CAVR may have helped to convey to Claudina and Hugo that the sacrifices they made during the Indonesian occupation were acknowledged, which appeared to be beneficial for their sense of well-being

Regarding another aspect of acknowledgement, it has been suggested that healing can be facilitated through the provision of a supportive environment in which victims can tell their stories (Allan & Allan, 2000; Staub, 2011). Empathetic support may be beneficial if it is offered within the process itself or from community members, particularly as community support has been cited as being integral to the healing process for victims of mass violence (Ajdukovic, 2004). Two interviewees in Timor-Leste, Claudina and Jose, cited receiving empathetic support from either CAVR commissioners or their community. Claudina, for example, remarked that “After sharing the [my] experience, some of the commissioners came to hug me”. The receipt of social support may help to acknowledge and affirm victims’ past suffering and help them to overcome self-blame, which often results from being victimised (Pillay, 2010). Thus, I suggest that feeling sympathy from the CAVR commissioners helped to facilitate the affirmation of the wrongness of Claudina’s past suffering, which likely contributed to her sense of healing.

In response to being asked whether he felt “listened to” by the CAVR commissioners, Jose said, “yes, I saw they were listening”, but he sensed that it did not ultimately amount to anything as “everyone gave testimony there, but it was just put in the archives...they [the commissioners] listen and write and then just keep it [the story]... I feel unsatisfied because there is no continuation”. Such a sentiment indicates that it was not enough for Jose to feel listened to, as he also needed to see that giving testimony in the CAVR would lead to some more significant result. Thus, perhaps the *extent* to

which one is listened to is important, as those who have testified may not sense that they have been adequately heard unless they feel as if some outcome is realised from their participation in the process. The disappointment in the failure of the CAVR process to deliver substantive outcomes for the witnesses who gave testimony will be further discussed below.

Although he did not feel particularly supported by the CAVR commissioners that heard his story, Jose spoke about feeling an improved social connection after testifying as friends supported him and others became friendlier with him after the process. When asked whether he felt ‘good’ about having his story widely publicised, he remarked, “Yes, for me because almost all of my friends liked that I disclosed my story in public. Also some people who didn’t like me before became more friendly to me after I told my story”. It has been suggested that through widely disseminating the stories of their trauma, victims may be able to experience this type of reconnection or reinforcement of social bonds from truth commission participation (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2008; King, 2011). For Jose, I suggest that receiving support from his friends and his community helped to affirm his past experiences and acknowledge that what he suffered during the occupation was unacceptable, which has been considered to be beneficial for victims’ sense of healing (Campbell et al., 2001; Staub, 2000). Additionally, responses from both Jose and Claudina suggest that they experienced a sense of catharsis from telling their stories to others. Based on their comments regarding feeling social support or acknowledgment after giving testimony, it is possible that these two pathways may be related—a subject that will be further addressed in Chapter Six.

Two respondents (Cidalia and Jacinta), on the other hand, did not feel as if they received social support from their communities after giving testimony. Cidalia, who was taken as a wife of an Indonesian soldier, an issue that still carries great stigma in Timor-Leste (Franks, 1996; Mason, 2005), said:

We can say that Timorese women are like an empty plastic [bag] with no wind in it. We are living without dignity in Timor-Leste. We have no shame¹⁹. We walked feeling very embarrassed, many people despised us.

Instead of receiving empathetic support for the suffering that she experienced during the occupation, Cidalia was met with disapproval and derision from those in her

¹⁹ Here, to have no shame is used to mean the same as to lose dignity.

community who heard her story. A feeling of shame and social stigmatisation after experiencing sexual violence has been described in other research on Timor-Leste (Allden, 2007; Harris Rimmer, 2010; Wandita et al., 2006), as well as in various other contexts where women have experienced widespread sexual violence during conflict, such as in Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Rwanda (Aguirre & Pietropaoli, 2008; Brounéus, 2008b; Kendall & Staggs, 2005; Nowrojee, 2005). Experiencing sexual violence can bring shame not only on a person, but also on a family, and speaking about this type of abuse in front of others can result in a woman being shunned by her community (Aguirre & Pietropaoli, 2008; Allden, 2007; Brounéus, 2008b). This feeling that Cidalia expresses may have also played a role in the distress that she experienced in relation to giving testimony (as mentioned above) because she was, in effect, punished for an experience that she had no control over. Thus, in this instance, it can be seen that although Cidalia was able to tell her story in the CAVR public hearing process, her community did not provide support that would have acknowledged her past suffering, which I would argue hindered her sense of *voice* and therefore inhibited the healing potential of telling her story to others.

Cidalia further commented, “Actually, political history and the disgrace of the victim should not be exposed to the public, because it can be said that it is a very big disgrace. Our dignity is lost”. She went on to express:

Our testimony has been brought to the public, our words recorded in the tapes and publicised by radio, the public already knows everything. We are obviously embarrassed; confidential matters concerning women have been published. Our voices recorded on tapes and publicised through radio, our words and our images are recorded on CD. We are embarrassed because they publicised it through television.

With this statement, it can be seen that because it is inappropriate to describe the plight of women in a public forum in Timor-Leste, giving public testimony risked having a negative impact on the women that chose to tell those stories. Allan and Allan (2000) suggest that victims must “have the opportunity to work through their experiences in a culturally supportive setting” in order to overcome the psychological consequences of past trauma (p. 465). In light of Cidalia’s comments, it appears as if the CAVR did not adequately consider the social ramifications for women testifying about sexual abuse related to cultural norms, which may have inhibited *voice* and thus the healing potential of giving testimony during the CAVR process.

When she was asked whether telling her story to the CAVR made her life better or easier in any way, Cidalia responded,

More difficult, [sometimes] that is very difficult. This is a disgrace for East Timorese women. This is a disgrace for the women in this world that should not be opened in public. This is very embarrassing. Woman is a creature that is considered sacred, with the opening of our disgrace in public, we lose our dignity.

She spoke of her regret for having participated when I asked her whether testifying in the CAVR was a good experience as she said:

How can we ever be happy if they never respect our dignity? We are all very disappointed and I regretted disclosing my sad story in public. In Portuguese, we say 'arepende' [means: repent, regret, feel sorry]. Our lives have no value anymore in Timor-Leste.

Restoring dignity has been described as a component of healing (Hamber, 2009; Minow, 1998); however, Cidalia indicates that, for her, she further lost her dignity by disclosing her story in public. In this case, it appears that the cultural insensitivity of the process may have precluded the potential for Cidalia to receive empathetic support and feedback from others in her community that may have helped to restore her sense of dignity. It has been suggested that when a victim receives a negative reaction to their testimony, their healing process may be impeded (Campbell et al., 2001; Laxminarayan, 2012). It is evident from Cidalia's comments that the way in which her story was responded to made her feel ashamed and embarrassed, which I argued hindered her sense of *voice* and therefore limited her ability to heal through giving public testimony.

A sentiment similar to Cidalia was offered by Jacinta who said, "now my thoughts are normal, but when they came, they were digging and asking me the same questions over and over again, and it made me remember all those things again, and made my life more complicated". Although Jacinta commented that her "thoughts are normal" now, she made other indications that she has continued to suffer until the present with her experience giving testimony doing nothing to facilitate her recovery from past trauma. Jacinta commented:

I lost all my family members, they died in the prison. I am sad and my heart still hurts to this day...My suffering started in 1975, from [when I was] 16 years old until this moment and they [the CAVR and/or government] have to

help me and my family because now we, my family, have not recovered from any trauma.

As mentioned above, for both Cidalia and Jacinta, it appears that the CAVR process may have led to some degree of retraumatisation, which is consistent with findings from other studies that discovered a negative psychological impact of truth-telling on victims (Brounéus, 2008b, 2010; Rimé et al., 2011). The distinction found between these responses of Cidalia and Jacinta and the above comments of Manuel and Alberto who spoke of a sense of pride they felt from giving testimony in the CAVR is noteworthy. Although there was generally not a striking difference between male and female responses in Timor-Leste, the way that these two women and two men interviewees felt after giving testimony is polarised. It is possible that the difference lies in the fact that the two women were subjected to “shameful” violence, whereas the two men were regarded as heroes for the sacrifice they made for their country. Another reason for these divergent responses is likely tied to the cultural inappropriateness of talking about sexual violence in public in Timor-Leste. As both Cidalia and Jacinta indicated that after describing this type of abuse during a CAVR public hearing they felt either ashamed (in Cidalia’s case) or as if the experience made life “more complicated” (in Jacinta’s case). On the other hand, although also traumatic, the violence experienced by Manuel and Alberto as male pro-independence fighters during the occupation was quite different, which parallels suggestions in recent research that armed conflict affects men and women in vastly different ways (Jones, 2000). Indeed, as Srinivasa Murthy (2007) has suggested, “women have an increased vulnerability to the psychological consequences of war” (p. 189). Social stigmatisation that can result from experiencing sexual violence can have enduring effects on the women who are subjected to this type of violence (Brounéus, Forthcoming), which can be seen in the comments made by Cidalia and Jacinta. The lack of social support they felt from their communities after disclosing their experiences during the occupation appeared to be quite different from how Manuel and Alberto were received in a way that made them feel proud or respected by others after they told their stories. I would argue that *voice* is the mechanism at work behind these divergent responses. Whereas Manuel and Alberto were able to have *voice* through feeling acknowledged and respected after giving testimony, Cidalia and Jacinta did not have *voice* because of the way that their communities negatively responded to their stories, essentially refusing to acknowledge their suffering.

Although they did not personally receive adverse social reactions from talking about sensitive issues during the CAVR public hearings, Claudina and Alberto cited that giving testimony about sexual abuse was inappropriate for the cultural context in Timor-Leste. Claudina commented,

I'm sad because of the violence that has happened was not appropriate to be described in public. It was very inappropriate... the purpose of this program is that victims can tell what happened to them in public, for example rape. Things like this are not supposed to be told, right? I think this is a disgrace and [should be] left as a story, but the CAVR programme is forcing people to tell it because that [violence] was caused by the militia.

Alberto also called attention to this conflict between East Timorese culture and the CAVR public hearing programme. He remarked that

As a man, you can say bad experiences in public...it's no problem, but there are some victims from '75 or even before... involving women that were victims of sexual harassment or sexual abuse. If in the CAVR, some women, they describe their experience about that...they become a victim twice because [they were first] the victim of a violation and now they were isolated or feel shy, feel ashamed in front of their families in the public.

Based on these responses, it is evident that a number of those interviewed did not feel as if the CAVR provided an environment that was culturally respectful. Thus, the inadequate cultural respect demonstrated by the CAVR in regard to women speaking about sexual abuse may have negatively impacted upon their ability to heal through giving testimony as revealing their sensitive stories in public could lead them to be ashamed and ostracised by their communities.

Many truth commissions encourage victims to share their stories of sexual abuse, particularly when it is characteristic of the abuse experienced by many individuals during a period of mass violence. However, these commissions have often not taken into account the effect that sharing these stories can have on victims when they return to their communities. In the words of Judith Herman (2005), a “crime [of sexual violence] is intended to defile the victim, so that she will be publicly stigmatized and scorned should the crime be disclosed” (p. 573). This appeared to be a result of women testifying about these types of violations in Timor-Leste as members of these victims’ communities did not appear to be supportive of the public disclosure of such abuses as cultural norms dictate that these issues should be kept in private. Thus, although some victims may feel satisfied and relieved after telling their stories, the healing process

may be hindered for others who are met with hatred or suspicion after testifying (David & Choi, 2005). As a result, it can be considered that in the absence of social support that acknowledges victims' suffering, *voice* will be hindered, which may also compromise victims' ability to heal.

From the interview responses provided in the above sections, I suggest that having *voice* while giving public testimony in the CAVR's national public hearings created three primary pathways for healing to be achieved, namely: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. These findings support the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter Two. First, giving testimony helped some interviewees to restore a sense of control as it allowed them to have *voice* by fulfilling their need to tell the story of their trauma to others and contributing to their country's historical narrative. Next, some interviewees experienced a sense of catharsis after sharing their stories during the CAVR which was related to feeling relief, a decreased burden, a reduction of worry, or feeling 'better'. Lastly, having *voice* in a CAVR public hearing allowed some interviewees to have their suffering acknowledged through the receipt of social support and empathetic feedback, which have been considered to be components of healing. However, I also found three areas that suggest that *voice* was not realised, which I argue detracted from the healing potential of truth-telling in the CAVR. A sense of frustration and disappointment was communicated by two interviewees with having their stories limited or mismanaged by the CAVR, which I suggest hindered their ability to have *voice* and was disempowering. Additionally, some interviewees felt distress or sadness related to disclosing their stories in public, which may have been indicative of how giving testimony may be retraumatising instead of cathartic. Finally, other interviewees suggested that they were not supported in their communities after giving public testimony, which I propose impeded *voice* and healing as their suffering was not adequately acknowledged. In addition to these findings related to the relationship between *voice* and victim healing, two other themes emerged from the interview responses, which may help to provide further insight into how truth-telling may lead to healing and are thus important to include in this study. These themes will be developed in the following sections.

4.5 Other Findings

4.5.1 Clear communication of CAVR purpose and intended outcomes

One theme that emerged from the interviews that was not anticipated based on the theoretical expectation discussed in Chapter Two regarding the relationship between *voice* and healing within truth commissions, was that four of those interviewed were disappointed and frustrated that the purpose and intended goals of the CAVR process had not been clearly communicated to them. Cidalia remarked, “we thought probably the testimony we gave in public was just [created] as a project for the President in collaboration with the CAVR. This maybe is enough for them”. Similarly, Alberto said that he was not sure why the CAVR was created, “if it’s purely for collecting the data, collecting the victims’ information or it’s politically motivated or I don’t know”. With both of these statements, Cidalia and Alberto questioned whether the purpose of the CAVR was merely to provide information to the government and not necessarily to deliver benefits to victims. Cidalia also mentioned that the “CAVR did not explain anything, [then] after we give testimony, [name of commissioner suppressed] closed the event and explained to us that the CAVR did not give anything, but just... a certificate”. This remark suggests that Cidalia had expected something more than just a certificate from her participation in the CAVR and was frustrated that she was told that this is all she would receive only *after* she gave testimony. According to Van Camp and Wemmers (2013), when victims are not clearly informed about the purpose and aims of justice processes, a sense of disempowerment could be perpetuated when the process ends and witness expectations are not met. In light of Cidalia’s comment, it could be argued that not being clearly informed about the goals and intended outcomes of her participation in the CAVR process led to feelings of disempowerment from having anticipated that her participation would result in some type of substantive benefit, but only receiving a certificate.

For Jacinta it was also unclear what type of benefit she was meant to receive from her participation in the CAVR. She said, “I do not know what would be the response from the CAVR to me”. In a similar way, although Claudina commented that she was happy to have given testimony to the CAVR, she remarked:

But finally there is no action. So, the CAVR’s programme was to help the victims or not? Because that person was traumatised as humiliation and now has no dignity in this world. Through this program, after the CAVR heard the

lamentations of the victims, their cries, did CAVR take action and the help them or not? Did the help happen or not? For that, I have no idea.

The comments from these four interviewees suggest that they were led to question what the outcome of their participation in the CAVR was actually intended to be. This type of uncertainty may indicate a failure of the CAVR process to restore control to these interviewees as they continue to wait for benefits while not knowing what those benefits will be or when (or if) they will receive them. Considering the remarks from these interviewees, it appears that it is necessary that truth commissions clarify what will be the benefit from participation for those that give testimony in order to avoid further disempowering victims and to better facilitate healing.

4.5.2 Process outcomes and healing: Unmet expectations and continuing needs

Another theme that emerged from the interviews in Timor-Leste was that the outcome that resulted from interviewees' participation in the CAVR process was not sufficient. All seven of the respondents in this research context expressed disappointment and frustration that there was not a significant outcome or result from their participation in a CAVR national public hearing. It was clear that these respondents expected to receive some result—including justice, assistance, monetary support, truth, or an apology—from giving testimony, but felt as if these outcomes had not been achieved by the CAVR. Although fulfilling some of these expectations was not necessarily the responsibility of the CAVR, interview responses suggest that the absence of these outcomes detracted from the potentially therapeutic value of participating in the truth commission. Robins (2012) critiques this as a weakness of the process, remarking that the participatory nature of the CAVR may have been flawed as it did not rely heavily enough on the actual needs of victims (i.e. financial support) and instead pursued goals (e.g. truth, reconciliation, and healing) that had little relationship to the everyday lives of those victims who were called to participate in the process. Some of those interviewed in my study expressed sentiments similar to a comment made by Cidalia, who remarked:

All data [from the public hearings] has been written into a book, cassette and newspaper, but the promises to the victims are not fulfilled... until now, CAVR has not started doing anything for those victims, they didn't recognise what the conflict was for women in Timor. They haven't given any result, particularly to us group of women as victims. No result at all.

Also speaking about how he felt as if the promises made by the CAVR to the victims who testified were not kept, Hugo said, “we have not yet received anything that we had expected. I still think that sometime the government will give something, but until now not yet... They have talked about it and promised but there is nothing until now”. Likewise, Alberto commented that “[victims] gave the testimony and after [they] just head back without any follow-up attention or some other things... They [the CAVR] promise something but [it was not delivered]”. In the South African context, both Hamber et al. (2000) and Byrne (2004) found that many victims they interviewed felt disappointment and frustration from unfulfilled promises or not having their expectations met from their participation in the South African TRC. Regarding the Peruvian TRC, Laplante and Theidon (2007) discovered that “victim-survivors could feel a deeper sense of deception and neglect” when truth commissions raise victims’ expectations and then do not meet them (p. 240-241). This was similarly evidenced in Timor-Leste as interviewees sensed they had been promised something in exchange for their participation, but did not receive what they have been promised. This may have also inhibited a sense of empowerment and restoration of dignity.

Cidalia also said: “They forgot that they had interviewed all of us; they have made us testify in public, disclose our disgrace of being married to the Indonesian army, raped by Indonesian soldiers, all of our suffering”. She further described that

until now, they [the CAVR] never appreciate²⁰ our disgrace. For one week at the CAVR, we only received \$49. I have to spend the money for my sons, it’s not sufficient... They [CAVR/government] have been paying tribute to those who have been involved in political diplomacy abroad, why can they not give some respect or appreciation to us [women] as victims in this country? They have not yet acknowledged our suffering.

For her, this lack of official acknowledgment for the suffering of herself and other women was a source of discontent and clearly did not contribute to her sense of healing after giving testimony to the Commission. Such a sentiment mirrors a comment made by Le Touze et al. (2005) who convey that “some members of the resistance movement who fought for many years in conditions of great hardship felt that since independence, their contributions had been forgotten and their sacrifices remained unacknowledged” (p. 196). This suggests the widespread feeling of survivors that official acknowledgment for their suffering, particularly in the form of assistance or

²⁰ By being offered what is perceived as a sufficient token of appreciation, e.g money or assistance.

recompense, has still not been adequately delivered, which is reflected in Cidalia's statement.

As mentioned above, Manuel and Alberto felt proud of telling about their sacrifice for Timor-Leste's independence; however, for Cidalia, reliving the pain of her trauma left her to feel somewhat used by the process as she have received no tangible benefit from her participation. Cidalia highlights this point as she said,

I always say that, maybe they have made this as a project that could be sold abroad, as women who are victims of politics, we are used as a project, they used us, but they will regret it. I talk like this because I was so upset, I spoke with pain in my heart.

As Cidalia has still not received any substantive benefit from her participation in the CAVR or recompense to address her suffering during the Indonesian occupation, she indicates that she is only able to suspect that the CAVR process was merely a programme to communicate the stories of victims abroad. The way in which she spoke about this issue and being "used as a project" reflects the concern regarding the instrumentalisation of victims for the purposes of achieving larger nation-building goals and side-lining individual victims' needs in the process (see Doak, 2011; Humphrey, 2003; Robins, 2012). Jose also commented "after I gave my testimony, I feel unsatisfied because there is no continuation. There is no continuation there, with what I gave, everyone gave the testimony there, but it was just put in the archives. There is no continuation". The sense that he gave his testimony, but nothing materialised after the stories were documented was a source of frustration for Jose, and may also reflect a perception that he had been but an instrument used by the CAVR to achieve its goals while he personally received no benefit. Cidalia also spoke about her perception that although she, as a victim, received nothing, she felt that some of those who worked with the CAVR had come to benefit from being given positions in the government. She recounted:

I was very hurt to see them now working in government...As I said earlier, this is just a project for them to gain some benefits that is not intended to solve the problem or help the victims. Never mind if the tears and our suffering are just wasted.

This feeling illustrates a sense of being 'used' by the process while professionals receive some benefit, which may have further inhibited her sense of healing. Laplante and Theidon (2007) suggest that "using" victims in this way, may involve "the risk that

testifiers will view their participation as a mere exercise in data collection and see no concrete benefits in their own struggle for recovery and justice” (p. 240).

Although Claudina indicated positive feelings about being able to share her story for future generations to read, she also reflected: “that’s why I was not happy...because once the person[‘s story] is told to the public, everybody knows, the whole world knows too, and finally there is no action”. The sense that an outcome, such as justice and/or assistance has still not been realised after giving testimony was disconcerting for Claudina as she did not feel as if her sacrifice for Timor-Leste’s independence had been adequately recognised. Alberto described a similar feeling in the aftermath of the CAVR, “Because the, you know, publication was made on CD and DVD, so now it’s distributed even to the victims... the sad thing is now that many people watch, but their life still remains the same”. By the same token, Jose said “they [the CAVR] don’t do anything to help us as victims”. Although some of those interviewed for this study may have initially felt some sense of restored control from, for example, contributing to their national narrative, the experience did not ultimately change their personal or family situation, which may have further perpetuated a feeling of disempowerment, thus hindering healing.

Cidalia also expressed that although the CAVR provided a modest transportation and food stipend for their participation, she lamented that they never gave “something permanent to ensure the survival of our lives”. In a similar way, Jacinta commented:

I have been telling my story since a long time but CAVR never takes any action [there is no result]...I...wanted the CAVR to give a response such as assistance to the victims, for people who are victims over the years...now the CAVR just listens to the story and never responds to what I want.

Although not explicitly related to having *voice* in the CAVR process, it may have been because Cidalia and Jacinta gave public testimony that they felt perhaps even more deserving of some benefit. In his study about victim satisfaction with the South African TRC, Backer (2007) suspected that those respondents who gave public testimony as opposed to only a private statement to the South African TRC had higher expectations because of their “additional experience of testifying before the public hearings” (p. 187). As Cidalia and Jacinta contributed to the goals of the CAVR by providing information to support the truth-seeking dimension of the CAVR’s work, it was clear

that she felt as if the Commission should have also contributed something to them, illustrating a sort of reciprocity.

De la Rey and Owens (1998) have suggested that the provision of support is a crucial aspect of the healing process; however, many of those interviewed in my study felt as if the CAVR process fell short in delivering assistance that may help to facilitate their sense of healing. Both Cidalia and Jacinta commented that some type of assistance needed to be provided for those that suffered during the Indonesian occupation. Cidalia said, “if they [the CAVR/government] really want to help, they should provide assistance to the victims in 13 districts. I’ve found out that some of the victims are dead and some are stressed and have gone crazy”. Although Cidalia alludes to a need for psychological assistance for victims, Jacinta expressed that she desired some type of monetary assistance that would help her to support her children, when she remarked:

For me personally, it also depends on the government, such as what kind of support [that] is needed by these people, the wishes of the victims. Three of my children are still studying in school, three kids, that’s my wish, supporting my children to go to school and who will study in overseas, that’s all.

Jacinta also emphasised her need for personal support as she highlighted:

I want to say that they should help me as a victim and I suffered for many years. But I keep telling the story, a story that ends with no result. [Everything is] all the same, it still hurts my heart.

The provision of follow-up support may be an indication to victims that their stories have been heard and that their suffering is real, which may be beneficial for victims’ emotional well-being (Epstein, 2001). Neither Jacinta nor Cidalia received such support after testifying in the CAVR, which could have helped them to address their suffering from a mental health perspective, but also could have communicated a sense of acknowledgment that the trauma that resulted from past atrocities they experienced must be addressed.

4.5.2.1 Justice

Further, four respondents in Timor-Leste spoke of being discontent because they perceived that the CAVR process did not adequately bring perpetrators to justice. Although judicial retribution was not an aim of the CAVR process, many appeared to believe that the two were inextricably linked. Claudina commented on her

disappointment that her desire for justice had not been fulfilled by the CAVR process when she said:

My wishes and demands for all people is justice. Justice! Our testimony was delivered to the CAVR and other leaders and we asked to bring these people to justice and also urged to establish an international tribunal of this country, but leaders say that it will take a long process and long time. So...until now people are still living in trauma... That's my expectation, our demands, because our hearts are hurt, we want the court to provide justice and prosecute those people.

Cidalia also commented, “for those who are still alive who committed war crimes, [they] must be prosecuted and imprisoned, in order to pay for our disgrace. This is what we want”. Likewise, Jose said,

the objective [of the CAVR] was that there must be a settlement for the bad things that happened and to resolve the problem of the people there who, for example, were not put to justice, or [in] prison. There's no justice... All the main actors should go to the court or something like that to be prosecuted.

Although he mentioned that he desired that those responsible for past abuses be brought to justice, Jose expressed his scepticism that this would actually come into fruition. He remarked: “there will be no development that says that there are Indonesian people who will go to prison, the murderers. There will be no progress because of the political leaders [in Timor-Leste] as well, so justice will not happen”. Justice can validate victims' suffering by officially acknowledging that what they experienced in the past was wrong and can thus facilitate closure and healing (David & Choi, 2005). However, it can be seen that the perceived failure of the retributive post-conflict justice initiatives in Timor-Leste to punish those most responsible for abuses perpetrated during the occupation has not contributed to victims' sense of healing, perhaps in part because their suffering has not been officially acknowledged in this way.

Also speaking to this point, Alberto noted that his participation in the CAVR process did not result in a suitable outcome because the perpetrators of past atrocities have not yet faced justice. He said,

it's good that the CAVR collected the information, but the only thing is that it's only, you know, collecting information, videoing, making some videos for internationals or other people to know, but so far there is no one... they couldn't find the people responsible.

Although he indicates that the process of information gathering was a positive undertaking of the CAVR, this was not enough to satisfy victims. He further said that

bringing those who were responsible for the past atrocities to justice “can recover other people that still feel traumatised” and help them to restore their lives. In relation to the South African TRC, Kaminer et al. (2001) found that a “perceived absence of justice may have been a barrier to recovery” for victims (p. 375). Such a comment indicates that justice is an important component to the healing process and without achieving it, healing may not be fully realised. The proposition that justice has a role in the facilitation of victim healing in the wake of mass violence (David & Choi, 2005; Kira et al., 2006; Staub, 2000; Villa-Vicencio, 2006; Weinstein & Stover, 2004) appears to be supported by interview responses in the case of Timor-Leste.

4.5.2.2 Truth

Two interviewees also expressed that they desired to receive more information, or truth, about what happened during the occupation. As mentioned in Chapter One, for many victims, receiving the truth about the past can contribute to their sense of healing (Aldana, 2006; Doak, 2011; Hamber, 2009). In acknowledging the likelihood that those responsible for past abuses may never be brought to justice, Jose and Hugo suggested that in the face of this reality, at least the truth should be known about those who died at the hands of the Indonesian military. Jose commented:

There had not been anyone handed over and there was no justice for example, but it had little power to, um, contact the authorities of Indonesia. If they don't want to, for example, give apologies or justice at least they should say the exact numbers, how many people they killed. In which place, where, when. There might be no justice but at least they could have had the heart to say something.

Similar to the remarks of Jose, Hugo said,

Everyone was asking the CAVR and government to talk to the Indonesian government to show where the bodies of those that were killed are located. To show doesn't mean to capture the killers, but to clarify. For our country we need to sacrifice and even die for the country, not just talk about [it]. They have to show us so on All Soul's Day²¹ we can visit their grave.

In the context of South Africa, respondents from studies undertaken by Byrne (2004) and Backer (2007) indicate that receiving the new information about past crimes was a beneficial aspect of the South African TRC. Byrne (2004) suggests that being presented with the truth about apartheid helped to facilitate closure for some of those victims interviewed in her study; however nearly half of those interviewed in her study felt

²¹ In Timor-Leste 2nd November is All Soul's Day, the day to commemorate those who have died.

negatively about “expecting to hear the truth and not hearing it” (p. 248). Similarly, Hamber (2009) recalls that “research has found that healing was undermined by... the fact that perpetrators were not forthcoming with sufficient information” (p. 68). As indicated by their responses, this appears to have also been the case for Jose and Hugo as they both illustrate that there are many questions about the past that remain unanswered. They both suggest that receiving this information from Indonesian perpetrators might actually help to assuage the disappointment in the failure of retributive initiatives to bring those responsible to justice.

4.5.2.3 Apology

Lastly, the receipt of an apology from those that caused harmed in the past has been considered to be beneficial for facilitating victim healing (Doak & O'Mahony, 2006; Staub, 2000). Both Jose and Jacinta expressed that no one has apologised to them, which may reflect a way in which acknowledgment of their suffering was limited, therefore hindering their sense of healing. When I asked if she had received an apology from anyone since being subjected to abuse, Jacinta said, “not yet. I am still waiting, but no one came to apologise”. Jose also commented:

I wish that everyone, not only me, many people came to testify not only me, but we wish that at least the Indonesian government, Indonesian authority have a good desire to come, let's say, first, to apologise. There is no justice, so at least come to apologise. Coming to apologise says that ‘we feel guilty for the regime that we (Indonesian government) once were’.

Jose’s remark reflects his sense that receiving an apology from Indonesia may help to compensate for the lack of justice in the aftermath of the occupation, which fits in line with Gibson’s (2002) suggestion that “apologies seem to mitigate blame, and may well make the failure to get retributive justice palatable” (p. 543). However, Jacinta and Jose did not receive an apology for past abuse, which may have limited their sense of having their suffering acknowledged and may have also further intensified the frustration that perpetrators were not brought to justice—two areas that arguably hindered the healing process.

4.6 Conclusion

This thesis investigates *voice* as a possible causal mechanism that creates pathways which link truth-telling to victim healing in post-conflict settings. In Timor-Leste,

seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who were victimised during the Indonesian occupation and who also gave testimony during a national public hearing of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR). Supporting the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter Two, the interview responses illustrate that having *voice* created three primary pathways linking truth-telling to victim healing within the CAVR process: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. Fulfilling their desire to share the story of their trauma with others and by having the opportunity to contribute to the historical narrative of their country were aspects of *voice* that helped interviewees to feel empowered through giving public testimony. Some victims further felt a sense of catharsis from sharing their traumatic stories with others, which was thus beneficial to healing. It was also found that feeling as if the story of their suffering was heard and acknowledged through receiving empathetic support from others and having the story of their sacrifice for the freedom of Timor-Leste published for future generations to read was beneficial. I would argue that these types of acknowledgment were aspects of *voice* that helped to facilitate a sense of healing. As mentioned, each of these paths is in line with the theoretical expectations discussed in Chapter Two.

However, there were several issues described by respondents that indicate that they did not have *voice* while giving testimony, which I argue inhibited healing. First, two interviewees described that the CAVR limited or mismanaged their testimony in some capacity, which illustrates their inability to control the way in which their narrative was told and heard by others. Next, the responses from several interviewees suggest that they felt as if their suffering during the Indonesian occupation had not been properly acknowledged by others. Two respondents received negative reactions from their communities in response to the sensitive issues that were revealed in their testimonies because of the taboo in Timor-Leste against speaking about sexual violence in public.

In addition to the findings which have illustrated the relationship between *voice* and victim healing, two other themes emerged from the interview responses that appeared to have an impact upon victims' sense of healing. Four respondents cited that the purpose and aims of the CAVR were not communicated clearly to them, which was a source of frustration and confusion. In line with previous research, I suggest that this may have also been disempowering for victims as they did not feel in control of the

process in which they were participating (Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013), which may have hindered healing. Further, all seven of those victims interviewed in my study indicated that they felt discontent that there was not a substantive outcome that resulted from their participation in the truth commission. The desired outcomes expected from giving public testimony were to see those most responsible for atrocities during the occupation brought to justice and the provision of some benefit, such as support and/or assistance to address victims' suffering, the revelation of truth about past crimes, and receiving an apology. Propositions have been made in the literature that each of these areas can contribute to victim healing (see Aldana, 2006; Backer, 2007; David & Choi, 2005; De la Rey & Owens, 1998; Doak, 2011; Hamber, 2009; Kaminer et al., 2001; Weinstein & Stover, 2004). Hence, the sense that these outcomes did not result from their participation in the CAVR indicate ways in which the path to healing was constricted for these interviewees.

Overall, the findings from the first case study suggest that the pathways that lead from truth-telling to victim healing via the causal mechanism of *voice* are: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment of past suffering, which fits in line with the analytical framework developed in Chapter Three. However, it was also found that when *voice* was limited, so was the healing potential of truth-telling. Additionally, the interview responses suggest that in order to heal from their past trauma, many felt that it was necessary that the CAVR provided them with clearer information about the purpose and goals of the public hearing process and an adequate outcome from their participation in the CAVR. The following chapter will present the findings obtained from the second case study context, Solomon Islands. After this, Chapter Six will discuss the results from each context in relation to one another including an exploration of the meaning and implications of these findings.

5 Solomon Islands: Case Study Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Having described the case of Timor-Leste in the previous chapter, the current chapter will turn its focus to the second case study to be examined within the comparative case analysis design—Solomon Islands. This country experienced a period of mass violence, known as the Tensions, during which many Solomon Islanders suffered from human rights abuses. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the key factors that distinguish this conflict from that in Timor-Leste are that the Tensions was an ethnic conflict lasting only five years, in which violence was perpetrated by Solomon Islanders against Solomon Islanders as opposed to abuses being committed primarily by a foreign occupying regime. In response to the Tensions in Solomon Islands, post-conflict strategies were also pursued, which included domestic justice initiatives as well as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was geared toward revealing the truth about past abuses, promoting reconciliation, and healing.

To further explore the possible pathways that lead from truth-telling to victim healing in post-conflict settings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 individuals who were victims during the Tensions that also gave public testimony to the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Similar to the previous chapter on Timor-Leste, this chapter will provide a brief background of the country's history, the Tensions, key socio-cultural characteristics of Solomon Islands, and an overview of the post-conflict justice processes pursued in the wake of the conflict in order to situate the field research findings. Then, interview responses will be presented according to the framework provided in Chapter Three, which proposes three main pathways created by the possible causal mechanism *voice* that may lead to victim healing: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. Following the presentation of results in accordance with the analytical framework, three other themes that emerged from the interviews and are related to how participation in the TRC can be seen to have impacted upon victim healing, will also be described. These are: the clarity of communication about the purpose and goals of the TRC; the outcomes of participation in the TRC process; and the perceived relationship between counselling and healing.

5.2 Case Background: Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands is a country located in the Pacific Ocean, which has a population of just over 500,000 people spread across roughly 900 islands and atolls. Although predominantly Melanesian, Solomon Islands is culturally and linguistically diverse with between 80 and 120 languages being spoken throughout the country, although *Pijin* English prevails as the *lingua franca* spoken by the majority of the population (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Dinnen, 2002; Moore, 2004).

The first foreign presence in Solomon Islands began with a Spanish expedition that was in pursuit of gold, led by explorer Alvarro de Mendana in 1568 (Bennett, 1987). Visits from other foreigners attempting to exploit or trade either resources or people continued in the 1800s, when visits from whalers and traders became more frequent (Bennett, 1987). The mid-19th century also marked the beginning of missionary activity in Solomon Islands, leading to the adoption of Christianity by a vast number of Solomon Islanders, which has now reached nearly 98 per cent of the population (Goddard, 2010). Indeed, as Braithwaite et al. (2010) write: “Solomon Islands today is far more consistently and committedly Christian than the population of any Western society”, illustrating the strong value of this religion to Solomon Islanders (p. 15). The role of Christianity in the lives of Solomon Islanders may also help to facilitate understanding of some interview responses which indicate the importance of forgiveness and the relationship with giving testimony as a form of catharsis, much like Christian confession.

The arrival of other foreigners continued into the late 19th and early 20th centuries, seen with the ‘blackbirders’ or labour traders who recruited and/or kidnapped Solomon Islanders to work as indentured labourers in places such as Australia and Fiji (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Fraenkel, 2005) and then, during World War II, when the Japanese constructed an airbase on Guadalcanal Province in 1942. Following WWII, as the capital was moved from Tulagi in Central Province to Honiara on the island of Guadalcanal, an influx of people (many from neighbouring Malaita province) moved to Honiara looking for better economic opportunities (Dinnen, 2002; Liloqula, 2000). Malaita was agriculturally overpopulated, which made the opportunity to find work—some with the United States military—enticing (Braithwaite et al., 2010). The rapid migration of Malaitans to Guadalcanal, particularly to the new economic centre of

Honiara, marked the beginning of strained relations between Malaitans and people from Guadalcanal. This was problematic because of an unequal distribution of economic opportunities and resources. Disputes over land ownership also began to intensify during this time as intermarriages between people from Guadalcanal and Malaitans (both having different systems of land inheritance) complicated land rights.

In 1978, Solomon Islands gained independence from Britain. The new Constitution provided for the “freedom of movement of all peoples” (Liloqula, 2000, p. 41), a factor that was used to justify the migration of Malaitans to Guadalcanal. Following independence, the logging industry began to develop, which made wood the most profitable resource exported from Solomon Islands (Hameiri, 2009). As the population in and around Honiara began to expand with the increase of logging, so did the tensions between Malaitans and the people of Guadalcanal. Community-level divisions were heightened because of “the unevenly distributed and unsustainable gains from the destruction of their habitats” by members of the logging industry (Hameiri, 2009, p. 65). The population increase also led many Guales to resent the way in which Malaitans were acquiring land. The development of squatter communities outside Honiara, along with the rise in intermarriages between Guales and Malaitans, led to complexities in land acquisition. Gualé land acquisition is matrilineal, while Malaitan acquisition is patrilineal, thus if a Malaitan man were to marry a Gualé woman, he would have land claim in both Malaita and Guadalcanal, ultimately leaving Gualé men with fewer women and less land (Braithwaite et al., 2010). Despite whether land was acquired illegally through squatting, or legally as in the latter case, this issue contributed to the discontent of many people of Guadalcanal, who were forced to give up claims to the land they believed to be theirs.

Because of the population increase in Honiara and disagreements over the distribution of wealth from industry, relationships started to breakdown while crime, alienation, and unemployment began to increase (Liloqula, 2000). Only a small minority of Solomon Islanders had access to economic opportunities, which led many of the disenfranchised younger generation to use ethnicity as a justification for violence against those who benefitted from employment and resources (Pollard 2000). In succumbing to the economic and material realities on the ground, the uniting factors of culture and

nationalism were left in the background, generating the possibility of more divisive conflict based on ethnic belonging.

In 1988, strained relations between Malaitans and Guales further intensified. Reports that a group of Malaitan men committed a ‘payback’ killing on three Guadalcanal villagers (known later as the Mount Austin murders) marked the beginning of escalating conflict between both sides and came to be viewed as a justification for the harassment of Malaitans by Guales in the following years (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Moore, 2004). In response to this event, a petition was submitted to the government—“Bona Fide Demands of the Indigenous People of Guadalcanal”—which called for “the government to find ‘ways and means to repatriate all nonindigenous unemployed illegal squatters’, for the death penalty to be reinstated and, most controversially, for a shift to state government” (Fraenkel 2005 p. 47).

These grievances presented in the “Bona Fide Demands” in 1988 resurfaced in 1998, following a Guale request for compensation from the Solomon Islands Plantation Ltd. which was denied by the Ulufa’alu government in 1997 (Moore, 2004, p. 105). This denial prompted the former Prime Minister-cum-Guadalcanal provincial Premier, Ezekiel Alebua, to demand compensation from the government for the murder of 25 Guadalcanal people by Malaitans in the previous two decades (Bennett, 2002), as well as payment for using Honiara as the nation’s capital and prohibitions on Guadalcanal land ownership for those not indigenous to the island (Dinnen, 2002).

To further explain the significance of these demands, it is important to expand on the issue of compensation, which plays an important role in Solomon Islands culture, as it is used “as a mechanism to restore social equilibrium after a dispute or wrong action” (Moore, 2004, p. 125). The payment of compensation is a cornerstone of the justice system in Melanesia, which is focussed on “rebuilding *relationships* between people as members of communities, rather than as individuals” (Fraenkel, 2005, p. 108, italics in original). The exchange of compensation as recompense for wrongdoing is crucial to reconciliation and social harmony which are pillars of Solomon Islands culture (Moore, 2004). This issue will be further explored below in relation to interviewee responses that conveyed grievances about not receiving appropriate recompense for the abuses or losses of property that victims were subjected to during the Tensions.

In response to the demands of the people of Guadalcanal being ignored by the government, a militant group by the name of the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army (GRA, later called the Isatabu Freedom Movement) mobilised in 1998 to fight for the rights of their people and their island. They began to attack and harass Malaitan settlers in Honiara and its environs (Bennett, 2002; McGovern & Choulai, 2005). This violence contributed to the displacement of approximately 25,000 Malaitans back to their home island and around 11,000 Guales from Honiara to inland Guadalcanal (McGovern, 2005). As attacks were primarily targeted toward Malaitans, the widespread violence began to appear as almost an “ethnic cleansing” to foreign journalists and diplomats (Fraenkel, 2005, p. 57). As of 1999, over 35,000 people had been displaced and at least 28 had been killed as a result of increasing hostilities (Bennett, 2002; Fraenkel, 2005; Hameiri, 2007).

From 1999, a number of attempts to make peace between the Guales and Malaitans were initiated (including the Honiara Accord and Panatina Agreement), but these continued to be met only with more violence. In 2000, Malaitans mobilised into the Malaitan Eagle Force (MEF), a militant group that sought to fight against the abuse and harassment to which they had been subjected. The MEF led a coup in June 2000 where they broke into the national armoury at Rove Prison in Honiara, taking weapons and ultimately seizing control of the government (Dinnen, Scales, & Reagan, 2001). It was believed that the government under then Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu was not doing enough to meet the demands of the Malaitans, although he himself was Malaitan. Prime Minister Ulufa'alu was captured by the MEF during this coup and replaced with a leader that would be more sympathetic to the Malaitan cause. The newly instated Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare (from Choiseul Province) announced a 100-day action plan which would facilitate the payment of compensation to Malaitans for the property they had lost, the restoration of law and order, as well as amnesty for militant groups involved in the conflict (Fraenkel, 2005).

The most notable attempt to reach a peace agreement between the MEF and IFM came in October 2000 with the Townsville Peace Agreement (TPA), brokered by Australia and New Zealand. The TPA had three main purposes: “1) police who had joined the militants previously could now return to the police force without punishment; 2) the parliament was asked to pass an Amnesty Act to absolve militants from criminal

prosecutions; 3) all weapons and ammunitions were to be surrendered within 30 days, under supervision of an unarmed International Peace Monitoring Team” (Moore, 2004, p. 146). Despite its forward-looking intentions, this Agreement was viewed by some as a “flawed document” (Fraenkel, 2005, p. 101) as it was considered to have been too hastily created and not considerate of the capacity of the government to achieve the goals set out in the Agreement (Braithwaite et al., 2010). The Amnesty Act proposed by the TPA was passed in December 2000, which “provided immunity from prosecution for offences relating to arms and ammunition, for damage to property or for killing or wounding in combat conditions or in connection with military or security operations” (Fraenkel, 2005, p. 103).

Following the signing of the TPA, violence in Solomon Islands began to shift. As the conflict had previously involved MEF and IFM militants almost exclusively, these two groups splintered into various armed factions. Taking place within the context of widespread impunity and general lawlessness, the violent actions of these splinter groups did not result in sanctions as the police force had collapsed (Braithwaite et al., 2010). One prominent militant group that arose from the fragmentation of the IFM was the Guadalcanal Liberation Force (GLF) headed by Harold Keke on the Weather Coast. As the violence began to shift to infighting amongst people from Guadalcanal, Guales were thus no longer a unified enemy embodied by the IFM, but now a disparate grouping of threats to Malaitan militant groups (Moore, 2004). In the absence of a clear and singular opponent, infighting between Malaitans often escalated out of control (Moore, 2004). The dispersion of violence and increased intra-Malaitan conflict provided a further obstacle to the peace process in the Solomon Islands.

After several unsuccessful attempts at halting the violence in Solomon Islands, the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was asked to intervene in 2003 by the Solomon Islands government. Australia had begun to take a role as a peacekeeper in the Pacific following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. Thus, they had become increasingly concerned with the potential for the politically unstable Solomon Islands to be a ‘breeding ground’ for terror activity in the Pacific (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Dinnen, 2008). This mentality is seen to have been a key motivating factor for their decision to undertake this mission. The intervention almost immediately facilitated the de-escalation of the conflict and the re-institution of

law and order. Not only did RAMSI initiate the widespread surrender of firearms within communities (Moore, 2004), but also 6,300 individuals and 160 police officers were arrested by 2008 (Harris Rimmer, 2012). Although this was lauded by many as a step towards law and order, others criticised RAMSI for not abiding by the previous instituted Amnesty Act which sought to protect militants from prosecution (Jeffery, 2013).

RAMSI has been one of the longest and most expensive (per capita) international peacekeeping missions the world has seen (Braithwaite et al., 2010), having been present in the Solomon Islands for 10 years as of 2013. They intend to begin their evacuation from the country in 2013, although limited RAMSI personnel will remain to facilitate the transition of power back to the people of Solomon Islands. The duration of the RAMSI intervention is important to consider as it reflects the lack of government and institutional capability of Solomon Islands to address needs relating to law and order on their own, which may have affected the ability of post-conflict justice processes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to deliver on its promises—particularly those relating to restitution for victims.

5.3 Post-Conflict Justice Efforts

Although the ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands has been characterised as being low-intensity because of the relatively small number of conflict-related deaths (estimated to be around 200 in total), Solomon Islanders experienced widespread abuse, including torture, kidnapping, and sexual violence during this five-year period (Braithwaite et al., 2010). Also, forced displacements reached extremely high numbers in proportion to the population, with estimates of between 20,000 and 35,000 people having been displaced (Fraenkel, 2005; Hameiri, 2007). In light of these struggles, a number of initiatives were pursued to address the resulting needs of the emerging state, society, and individuals. Although it is important to acknowledge these efforts, the focus of the following section will be on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which was created specifically to hear stories from victims and ex-militants in an effort to promote reconciliation and healing in the wake of the Tensions.

5.3.1 Reconciliation efforts

Reconciliation is a key aspect of indigenous conflict resolution in Solomon Islands, aiming to maintain the social fabric of society. According to Solomon Islands scholar, Tarcisius Tara Kabutaulaka, for Solomon Islanders, the reconciliation process

must provide an opportunity for those who did wrong to admit their faults and be held accountable for it. Furthermore, those who were wronged must be apologized to and be given the opportunity to forgive and come to terms with their loss. Reconciliation must involve restoring relationships amongst people at all levels of society (as cited in Moore, 2005, p. 64).

The prominence of Christian beliefs in Solomon Islands interact with *kastom*—that is, traditions and culture—so that traditional reconciliation processes often encourage the Christian notion of forgiveness (Jeffery, 2013). It has been stated that “in the traditional context, reconciliation and compensation are inseparable when it comes to brokering peace” as the end of conflict is signified by the payment of compensation (Jeffery, 2013; Maebuta & Spence, 2009, p. 15). This issue of compensation as a determinant of the cessation of conflict is critical for situating the context of grievances expressed by a number of interviewees which will be presented below. The cultural importance of reconciliation is evidenced in the number of initiatives pursued both during and after the Tensions through churches, women’s groups, and through village leaders.

Both during and after the Tensions, the Church²² has had a strong role in promoting reconciliation in the Solomon Islands. The significance of Christianity to Solomon Islanders, as mentioned above, is illustrated in the church-affiliated reconciliation initiatives undertaken in response to the violence between militant groups. The Anglican affiliated Melanesian Brotherhood has been a forerunner in reconciliation efforts, including the initiation of a police reconciliation programme in 2002 (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Moore, 2004). There have also been local-level mediation initiatives undertaken by the Church in various communities, particularly in Malaita province (Braithwaite et al., 2010). The Church has largely taken the reins of these efforts, as it is believed by many that government involvement would only encourage

²² In Solomon Islands, when people refer to “the Church”, it can be taken to mean any of the main branches of Christianity present in the country including Anglican, Roman Catholic, South Seas Evangelist, Methodist and Seventh-day Adventist. These are generally all encompassed under the blanket term “Church”; hence, referring to “the Church” in this thesis means the institutions involved with any of these branches of Christianity.

greater demands for compensation that the government will not be able to provide (Braithwaite et al., 2010).

In addition to the Church, women played a unique role in the Solomon Islands peace process as many female-led groups have been instrumental in promoting reconciliation between militant groups. Not only have women been important to reconciliation after conflict, but they have also been considered to be integral in quelling conflict between parties (Pollard, 2000b). Several authors have remarked that in various cultures in Solomon Islands, women intervene in conflict using their words and even their bodies (Pollard, 2000b; Tovosia Paina, 2000). Solomon Islands Women for Peace was one group which emerged during the Tensions and often publicly called for reconciliation through the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation and used local churches as platforms to undertake their peace work (Braithwaite et al., 2010). Two related groups, Guadalcanal Women for Peace as well as Westside Women for Peace, were also formed with similar motives and made important steps in the peace process both during and after the Tensions (Tovosia Paina, 2000).

Although there has been some success of reconciliation initiatives on the local level, societal reconciliation between the larger groups of Malaitans and Guales has been considered to be lacking. Perhaps, reconciliation efforts were stifled within the very mission that led to the end of the ethnic conflict, as it has been noted that the goals of RAMSI were not so much focussed on reconciliation, but more so on law and order (Braithwaite et al., 2010). To this end, Braithwaite et al. (2010) also comment that the “Melanesian patience about getting around to reconciliation meant that reconciliation languished for years with little attention” (p. 81). At the present, it appears that many are still waiting for reconciliation in Solomon Islands, as demonstrated in interview responses below.

Another hindrance to the reconciliation process is related to the issue of compensation which, as discussed above, is crucial to social harmony and reconciliation in Solomon Islands. After the end of the Tensions, many (such as RAMSI, the MEF, and a number of state leaders) believed that justice and/or compensation should come before reconciliation (Braithwaite et al., 2010). Many groups and individuals felt as if they were owed compensation, particularly for the loss of property and abuse that resulted from the conflict. The lack of the state’s financial capacity (and as some believed, the

lack of political will) to provide payment to all that desired it complicated any swift reconciliation between parties (Braithwaite et al., 2010). Even in the event of compensation being provided for losses, perhaps a further affront to reconciliation was the issue that “because the state is seen as having the deepest of pockets, even payments that would be interpreted as massive in traditional lineage-to-lineage compensation can be interpreted as insultingly low when proffered by the state” (Braithwaite et al., 2010, p. 47). Thus, the issue of reconciliation was further complicated by the inability (or lack of desire) of the state to provide adequate compensation to those who demanded it, creating further frustrations and hindering motivations to reconcile. The issues of compensation and reconciliation will be revisited below in the interview responses.

5.3.2 Tension trials

In an effort to prosecute the significant number of offenders arrested by RAMSI for their connection with Tensions violence, trials were initiated within the purview of the domestic justice system in Solomon Islands beginning in 2005 (Jeffery, 2013). Because of the vast number of perpetrators, along with the weak and under resourced judicial infrastructure, the state was under immense strain in its attempts to undertake these trials (Harris Rimmer, 2012). There were also concerns from potential witnesses that those who they testified against might seek retribution, thus limiting their motivations to take part in the process (Harris Rimmer, 2012). Three interviewees in the current study indicated that they felt a similar fear before giving testimony in the TRC, although they did choose to participate in the end. The so-called ‘Tension trials’ also suffer from a problematic omission in their mandate, as despite the prevalence of sexual violence during the Tensions, the trials do not include this as a crime to be tried within the process (ICTJ, 2011, p. 2). As many individuals, particularly women, endured this type of abuse, overlooking this crime may not inspire confidence in the legal system, or the feeling that justice has been done, as the crime remains invisible in the eyes of the law.

Despite the number of shortcomings of the Tension trials, according to Braithwaite et al. (2010), “in the seven years since the conflict ended, the number of arrests and incarcerations per capita, more so per conflict death, exceeds that in any case of post-conflict justice the authors know of” (p. 87). Others have similarly commented on the high number of convictions secured through the Tension trials, some of which were of

high level militants (Harris Rimmer, 2012; Jeffery, 2013). Averre (2008) remarks that many of the ‘big fish’ were, however, released on acquittals for serious charges, such as murder. Having described the Tension trials, which were a retributively focussed post-conflict justice strategy, and the traditional and church-led reconciliation processes, the following section will focus on the most prominent state-sanctioned restorative justice mechanism pursued after the end of the ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands—the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

5.3.3 Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Committed to developing a response to the abuses perpetrated during the Tensions, the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) lobbied for a truth commission modelled upon the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. After researching other commissions and consulting with the government, local and nongovernmental organisations as well as victims and militants, the Peace Committee of SICA helped to develop the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Bill that would ultimately create the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In 2008, the Minister for Peace and Reconciliation, Sam Iduri, introduced the Bill to create the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act, which was consequently passed by parliament on 28 August 2008 (Harris Rimmer, 2012). The TRC Act officially created the Solomon Islands TRC which would examine “the nature, antecedents, root causes, accountability or responsibility for and the extent of the impact on human rights violations or abuses which occurred between 1st January 1998 and 23rd July 2003”, thereby reconciling the nation and addressing the needs of victims (TRC Act, 2008, Article 5(1)b). Commissioners for the TRC were chosen through the National Selection Committee, who selected three Solomon Islands nationals and two overseas individuals from Fiji and Peru (five in total) to act as commissioners. The Commission was inaugurated in 2009 by Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, and officially began its work on 15 January 2010. The Solomon Islands TRC was the first truth commission to be created in a micro-state in the Pacific region.

According to the mandate of the Commission, the TRC was aimed at pursuing three primary goals:

to investigate and report on human rights violations that took place during the Tensions; to provide ‘opportunities for affected parties . . . to tell their story’

through a range of mechanisms, and; to recommend ‘policy options or measures that may prevent future repetition of similar events’ (Jeffery, 2013, p. 16).

This Commission intended to place a high degree of focus on victims by taking statements and offering public and closed hearings in which individuals could provide testimony (mirroring initiatives undertaken by the South African TRC). Another notable aspect of the TRC which relates to victims is the provision in the TRC Act to “facilitate healing” and to “restore the human dignity of victims” by allowing “an opportunity for victims to give an account of the violations and abuses suffered” (TRC Act, 2008, Article 5(2)c). Although, according to Article 16(2) of the TRC Act (2008), the Commission intended to focus upon “responding to the needs of victims”, it was not evident how this would ultimately be facilitated.

The TRC held a series of 11 public hearings throughout the country, which were publicised in print and by the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC). According to Harris Rimmer (2012), the publicity around the hearings was met with “mixed reactions, ranging from enthusiastic support to ‘let sleeping dogs lie’”, illustrating the wide range of sentiments from Solomon Islanders about the work of the TRC (p. 434). In all, nearly 4,000 statements were collected both publicly and in private interviews, with 146 victims and 34 ex-militants giving testimony during a public hearing (TRC, 2012). The TRC also initiated an exhumations programme to locate and remove the remains of those who had been killed during the Tensions so that they could be buried properly, intending to facilitate a degree of closure for the victims’ families. Although beneficial in the eyes of some, others believed that this process was inappropriate to the Solomon Islands context as it is seen to be culturally inappropriate to dig up graves in the presence of individuals other than immediate family. The issue of cultural considerations made by the TRC will be revisited in light of interview responses below.

The Commission held its last hearing in October 2011, and although it had intended to publicly release its final report in 2012, the report was met with resistance from the government and was unofficially leaked by the editor of the report in April 2013. There was a great deal of support from several MPs for the release of the report, but the current Prime Minister Gordon Darcy Lilo had opposed its publication as it was believed the information may re-incite further ethnic tensions within the country. It has

also been suggested that another concern about the release of the report is that it may implicate prominent members of government in tacitly and/or actively supporting militant activities during the ethnic tensions. This could result in demands for compensation payments, which could be a challenge in the face of limited economic resources available. The remainder of this chapter will focus further on the work of the TRC by presenting findings from the 12 semi-structured interviews conducted in Solomon Islands with individuals who were victimised during the Tensions and who also gave public testimony during the TRC. Alongside interview responses, reflections on the wider literature will be woven into the text to enhance understanding about the results.

5.4 Field Research Findings and Analysis: Giving Testimony to the TRC—Opportunities for Healing through *Voice*

Similar to the Timor-Leste case analysis, this chapter will present data gathered from field research in Solomon Islands in accordance with the framework presented in Chapter Three, which has outlined three possible pathways (based on theoretical expectations) that may lead from truth-telling to victim healing via the causal mechanism of *voice*. These pathways are: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. Each of these pathways relates to the different outcomes of storytelling that may be beneficial for victims' sense of healing. In addition to the ways in which having *voice* can be seen to have facilitated a sense of healing for interviewees, several ways in which *voice* was hindered were also discovered, which I argue impeded the healing process. Further, beyond the findings which are in line with the theories that suggest how having *voice* can lead to victim healing in the context of truth commissions, several other themes emerged from the interview responses that provide additional insight into how participation in truth-telling processes may affect victim healing, namely: clear communication of the purpose and goals of the TRC's work, substantive outcomes resulting from participation, and counselling.

5.4.1 Empowerment

Experiencing a sense of restored control, or empowerment, after experiencing trauma has been described as an important component of healing for victims of violence (Herman, 2003; Stover, 2004), as it may help individuals counteract the sense of powerlessness that can result from victimisation (Agger & Jensen, 1996). In line with

the theoretical expectations discussed in Chapter Two, I suggest that fulfilling a need to share their stories with others and raising awareness about past violence were aspects of *voice* that were empowering for interviewees in Solomon Islands.

As mentioned, it has been suggested that sharing the stories of their suffering with others can help to facilitate healing for victims (Allan & Allan, 2000; J. Smyth & Pennebaker, 1999). I suggest that satisfying the ‘instinctive’ or ‘internal need’ that victims have to tell their stories to others (Allan & Allan, 2000; McKinney, 2008) is an aspect of *voice* that can contribute to a sense of empowerment. Faye²³, for example, expressed that she felt positively about the opportunity to share her story with others through giving public testimony when she said, “I think it was good for me to come out with my story at the TRC”. Faye viewed the experience of sharing her story with others positively and I suggest this may have been because she was able to restore a sense of control by sharing the narrative of her traumatic experiences with others, which has been considered to facilitate a sense of empowerment for victims (French, 2009), which was also seen in the case of Timor-Leste. However, although Faye felt satisfied to tell her story, she also commented, “and I want the TRC to recognise our story”.

As another aspect of *voice* that may facilitate empowerment, it has been suggested that having the ability to let others know what happened in the past, thus raising awareness about previous periods of violence, can be beneficial for victims as it may help them to restore some sense of control that was lost as a consequence of victimisation (French, 2009). Testimony from the TRC public hearings was quite widely publicised in the media, particularly on the radio and in newspapers, which some victims viewed positively as it helped to communicate the stories of their suffering during the Tensions with a wide audience. Mary, a woman who suffered abuses while living in Honiara during the Tensions, said, “I’m happy about the interviews, because they made a video when we spoke there and people from overseas saw us. I was happy about that”. This sentiment indicates that one beneficial feature of Mary’s participation was being able to convey her story with people in other countries. In this sense, telling her story was a process that may have given meaning to her private pain by transforming it into a public narrative, which has been described by Agger and Jensen (1990) as an important component of the healing process. In being able to contribute to increasing awareness

²³ As in the Timor-Leste case study, pseudonyms are used in order to protect the identity of interviewees.

about the past violence in her country, Mary was able to, in a way, assume a role as an active agent of communicating the history of suffering in Solomon Islands during the Tensions, which I suggest was a source of empowerment. Similar to Faye, however, Mary commented: “We told and retold our stories – we are happy about that, they put us on the radio and they took videos of us, we are very happy about that – but then it all finished with that”, indicating that nothing more had happened after she gave testimony to the TRC. Although Faye and Mary perceived the ability to speak publicly about their suffering to be beneficial, they both highlighted that telling their stories needed to be complemented by something being done by the TRC or the government to “recognise” the suffering they endured during the Tensions. A further discussion of the relationship between recognition or acknowledgment of victims’ suffering and victim healing will be further described below.

Although Ruth from Guadalcanal did not feel as if the needs she presented while giving testimony were adequately recognised by state leaders (discussed further below), she spoke positively about the wide public exposure that victims’ stories received. Ruth mentioned that she had begun to feel relief during the trauma counselling that she went through after the Tensions, but when asked how giving testimony affected her, she remarked that “it [the TRC] helped me more in the sense that many more people came to know about our problem. My feelings and emotions were clear”. Although Ruth expressed that her sense of relief came in part from the counselling she received prior to giving testimony, she indicates that speaking publicly about her trauma was helpful because it allowed her to communicate the story of her suffering with others, thus increasing knowledge about the violence that occurred during the Tensions. Comments from Mary and Ruth are similar to findings obtained from Hamber et al.’s (2000) interviews with victims who gave written or public testimony to the South African TRC as well as Clark’s (2010) interviews with Rwandan genocide survivors, where it was discovered that some victims felt satisfied with being able to inform others about their suffering. I suggest that having *voice* by controlling the narratives of their victimisation and conveying these stories to a wider audience, thus contributing to increased knowledge about the traumas that were experienced during the Tensions, allowed these victims to feel a sense of empowerment.

Wilson similarly spoke about his sense that telling his story publicly helped to inform others of what happened in the past, but also that it increased his self-awareness of how the violence he experienced during the Tensions caused him to feel in the past. He said:

Telling my story to the TRC really helped me to understand and to review my life... 'Review my life' means I continue to struggle in a good way, not to retaliate, not to do something which is totally against those people who did that to us. That's what I mean.

In Androff's (2012) study regarding participation in the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission in North Carolina, United States, he found that one of his 17 respondents "felt that his testimony helped to reflect on the past" (p. 42), which mirrors Wilson's sense that his experience giving testimony helped him to review his life and see the way forward. It has been suggested that, for victims, letting others know what happened to them in the past can be a source of empowerment (French, 2009), which may help to facilitate healing. In this way, giving testimony appeared to be beneficial to Wilson's sense of healing by allowing him an opportunity to reflect on his past and construct a narrative of those experiences, which I suggest helped him to restore a sense of control after being victimised during the Tensions.

5.4.1.1 Limitations on storytelling

I suggest above that interviewees were able to experience a sense of empowerment through the ability to share the narrative of their traumatic experiences and raise awareness about past violence during the TRC; however, as mentioned previously, limitations placed on storytelling in the context of truth commissions may be disempowering for victims, which can hinder *voice*, in turn inhibiting healing. Although not personally affected by having limitations placed on their own abilities to share their stories, remarks from four interviewees illustrate ways in which the opportunity to give testimony may have been limited for others during the TRC process, which was also highlighted in Timor-Leste. Three of these interviewees thought that the TRC should have invited more victims to give public testimony. Although this was likely a consequence of temporal restrictions and the limited capacity of the TRC, which has been cited as a shortcoming faced by many truth commission processes (Hayner, 2011), these interviewees felt that the TRC overlooked many victims who might have desired to tell the stories of their suffering. For example, Erena commented:

One way the TRC should improve, the TRC should not select just us affected persons [to testify] but really the whole community should come, and [the TRC should] make awareness for the whole [community], because some who have not come [to testify] are also affected.

When Erena mentions her feeling that the TRC should “not select just us affected persons”, she is speaking about the need for victims whose trauma is not necessarily public knowledge in the community, as was the case with her experience during the Tensions. For her, it is important that these people whose suffering was not so much in the spotlight were encouraged to tell their stories. Charles expressed a similar sentiment when he said:

Many times I see, people, like we who went through the public hearing, we are not an issue, because [the TRC] already knows we are victims, but they just came through us, you come to the public hearing because they know we were victims at that time. But there are many people who were victims who stay in the communities.

With this he suggested that the TRC should have made more effort to give those victims “hidden” within communities a chance to testify. Charles also indicated that many people may not have told their stories to the TRC because they were not well informed about the work of the Commission—an issue that will be further discussed below.

Similar to Charles, Ruth remarked:

One thing I would like to say is that as I told my story I felt really relieved and I would like the same thing to happen to all of us...They've done public hearings where most women come but not all of them yet, because we cannot reach everyone.

Many of Ruth’s comments indicated that she was pleased with the work of the TRC, particularly as it allowed her to experience a sense of relief through telling her story (this relationship will be further developed in the next section). It is likely that because of her positive experience in the process, she felt that more people should have been given the same opportunity.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, in relation to the selection of “window cases” that were intended to depict patterns of certain types of abuse committed during the apartheid regime during the South African TRC public hearings, Byrne (2004) commented:

Although this idea of ‘window cases’ may have been clear to those working within the TRC’s mandate, it was not clear to many victims whose expectation involved testifying and having the truth in their own case revealed and who talked of feeling ‘left out of the process’ (p. 252).

Thus, the sense of being ‘left out’, may be disempowering for some victims when they are not chosen to give testimony in the public hearing process, as they are, in essence, denied an opportunity to have *voice*.

In addition to the sense that the TRC should have heard a greater number of stories, Charles also indicated that he found it problematic that the TRC did not do enough to ensure the confidentiality of witnesses who preferred not to have their trauma widely publicised. He suggests that because some victims were concerned about the publication of their testimonies in the media, many may have elected not to tell their stories when he said:

The things I see that are not good about the TRC: about information. Information must be confidential, they shouldn't tell out the information of us who told our story. Another thing, sometimes, some things we would like to try to tell out, we find hard to tell out to the media at the public hearing. The TRC can take a private hearing with this man and themselves, for him to tell his story so it will not go through the media, so that only the TRC takes the story. It will be difficult to tell the story to the public. We can tell the story only to the Commissioners. Some can go through the media but the rest [should do it this way].

Comments in Chapter Two highlighted that some truth commissions such as Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission have offered various options that may increase victims’ comfort while giving testimony, such as public, private, or *in camera* hearings (Nowrojee, 2005). Although the TRC also conducted private interviews as a part of their work, Charles’ comment suggests that the availability of this option should have been better communicated as more people may have wanted to testify if their stories would not be shared in the media. Increasing the confidentiality of victims’ testimonies may have helped to better facilitate *voice* for victims, as allowing them an opportunity to control the way in which they told their stories may help to facilitate a sense of empowerment (d’Estrée, 2006).

Additionally, Ruth described that cultural norms in Solomon Islands may have precluded some victims from telling their stories. Regarding the statement-taking process of the TRC, she said,

but one problem is that a man cannot approach a woman. A woman cannot talk freely with a man...I cannot tell what is hidden inside me to a man. If I was raped, I cannot approach a man...They should bring a woman too as part of the [statement-taking] team, a woman and a man; for the woman to counsel the women and the man to counsel the men.

Sexual violence is “a sensitive topic for victims and families and a culturally taboo topic in Solomon Islands” (TRC, 2012, p. 539), and as Ruth points out, speaking about this issue, particularly with members of the opposite sex, should not be done according to cultural norms. In this way, *voice* may have been limited for some victims in Solomon Islands as they were not given a “safe space” in which to give testimony by having the opportunity to tell their story in private, exclusively to someone of their same gender. Ruth’s comment alludes more toward the cultural inappropriateness of speaking about sexual violence in “mixed company” than to how family or community members may respond; however, it has been found that cultural norms can preclude victims from sharing their stories in truth-telling processes because some individuals, particularly women, may fear being socially stigmatised or ostracised after speaking about issues such as sexual violence in public (Aguirre & Pietropaoli, 2008; Allden, 2007; Brounéus, 2008b; McKay, 2000; Wandita et al., 2006). Thus, this issue (which will be discussed further in the next chapter) may have also played a role in female victims’ decision not to give testimony to the TRC.

Peter further highlighted this issue when he said,

and culturally, they [the TRC] shouldn’t ask [about past trauma]...another example, for a woman, you don’t tell a Solomon man, if you’re a woman... issues belonging to women belong to the women. Before, if a woman brings these issues up with a brother or another man, they can cause a tribal war... This thinking still belongs to people here. So, TRC has no sense. They come and put out these problems of people [into the public] and totally ignore this thinking.

This sentiment indicates an awareness of the cultural norm that ‘women’s issues’, that is, issues relating to sexual violence, should not be discussed in the presence of men. Not only does Peter convey that this is inappropriate, but he more pointedly reflects that it can also lead to retaliatory actions toward those that perpetrated such acts. Peter indicated his discontent with the lack of consideration of this issue by the TRC, stating that the Commission did not adhere to *kastom* in choosing to hold hearings where sexual violence would be spoken about in public to people of both genders. In this way, the cultural taboo surrounding speaking about sensitive issues in public may have

further constricted some victims' ability to have *voice* in the process as they may have been fearful of how their story would be received by others and/or may provoke further violence. The issues surrounding the cultural inappropriateness of sharing stories related to sexual violence may also be a reason for the perceived underreporting of sexual abuse against women that occurred during the Tensions as mentioned in the TRC Final Report (TRC, 2012).

5.4.2 Catharsis

As discussed in Chapter Two, it has been suggested that repressing traumatic memories can result in both psychological consequences including “stress, anxiety and depression” (Dowdall, 1996, p. 34), which may also cause physiological symptoms for victims (Hamber, 1995). Based on the assumption that sharing one's traumatic story with others may result in a sense of catharsis or relief (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Avery & Quiñones, 2002; Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983; Freeman & Hayner, 2003; Kiss, 2000; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010), I propose that *voice* is a causal mechanism that helps to facilitate these feelings for victims, which can be considered as a possible pathway to healing.

Supporting this theoretical expectation, responses from nine of the 12 interviewees in Solomon Islands suggest that a sense of catharsis resulted from sharing their stories with others during a public hearing held by the TRC. Within this context, interviewees remarked on: returning to ‘normal’, ‘letting go’ of/ ‘clearing out’ difficult memories, feeling ‘better’, feeling ‘free’ or ‘relief’ as well as experiencing a sense of reduced burden, fear, anxiety or worry, or reduced physiological symptoms—which I propose are all aspects of catharsis.

The sense of feeling free after giving testimony was commonly described by interviewees, indicating that the process helped to remove feelings that were hindering them from living their normal lives, essentially being captive to their memories. This sentiment is likely reflective of the Christian beliefs that pervade Solomon Islands culture, paralleling the act of giving testimony to confession in Church, which allowed them to remove the burden they had been living with since the Tensions. Michael's comment, “I must confess whatever the burden is in my mind”, exemplifies this link.

Although Caroline acknowledged that giving testimony to the TRC might not have been beneficial for everyone, she remarked: “When I told these things to the TRC, my feelings, I felt happy to tell these things...it made all my feelings free from those things”. Like Caroline, when I asked Ruth whether there was anything that did not make her feel “good” when she told her story to the TRC, she mentioned, “no, because I felt free when I told it out”. The comments from both Caroline and Ruth mirror a remark made by an interviewee from Androff’s (2012) study who described feeling a sense of freedom and liberation after testifying in the Greensboro TRC. Wilson elaborated more extensively about the feelings of liberation he experienced after telling his story to the TRC when he said:

This story of mine at the TRC was really good, it was very helpful. It really helped me to recover my life and to see the way out and to help me to continue to live, even though it is a hard struggle, I have to organise, but still it helped me to continue in life—this story with the TRC...the differences before and afterwards I can tell. Like before telling my story to the TRC, I was just like a man handicapped, just like a man with his hands tied and I'm not free to use my hands and I'm not free to move around. But after I told my story to the TRC, I feel very flexible, I feel very free. I feel like I can talk [about these things]. A new kind of thinking has come into my mind: just [to] help myself and my family and not to retaliate to the same situation before.

The way Wilson speaks about his experience giving testimony in the TRC very much reflects elements of the definition of healing used in this study with the emphasis he placed on being able to continue his life which had been disrupted by the abuse he suffered during the Tensions after telling his story to others. Although a difficult experience, his comment suggests that in conveying the narrative of his experiences in public, he was able to experience a sense of freedom from the burden of his traumatic memories. The comment Wilson makes about noticing a difference in his thinking and feelings after he gave testimony in the TRC is also important to consider, as it illustrates how telling his story publicly helped him to overcome feeling “handicapped” while also decreasing a desire for retaliation or revenge against those who harmed him and his family. Thus, the relief he felt may have also helped to facilitate improved relationships with others, which has been considered to be another facet of healing (Herman, 1992).

When I asked how he felt after telling his story in the public hearing, Clarence, who was both a victim and ex-militant, said:

Well, regarding the TRC, it was good. When I told out everything, my mind was clear...I felt free. I mean, what stayed inside the mind, that thinking, it, it was hard for me to tell it out. Then it would still stay in my heart and I would still be cross about when I recalled it back and it would make me feel no good...it [the TRC] was a good experience for freeing my life because it [what happened during the Tensions] burdened me a lot...I feel free and I don't think about those things that happened too much...It helped me... I settled down. My life went back [to normal].

Clarence's comment is similar to a reflection of the Greensboro TRC process made by an interviewee from Androff's (2012) study, who said, "if you're able to get this anger out, to talk about it, that's helpful" (p. 42). Through reducing his burden by sharing his story during a TRC public hearing, Clarence suggests that he was able to overcome his anger about the past and thus move past his traumatic experiences because he felt free from them.

Michael, another victim and ex-militant, similarly spoke about how the experiencing giving testimony helped to remove a burden as he remarked:

It was good for me to tell out my story that had stayed in my mind...so it was good for me to tell out my story...it made me clear out [my thinking], like the big burden that I took [as a consequence of the Tensions], so it cleared me out.

Because Michael and Clarence are ex-militants in addition to being victims, it is possible that the burden of which they are speaking relates to both abuses they may have committed themselves as well as ones that were committed against them. The specific expression of removing the "burden" in relation to giving testimony was only mentioned by these two respondents. As they both come from the same *wantok*²⁴ and were part of the same militant group, it is possible that they were both encouraged to testify in the TRC through the use of this terminology relating to the potential benefits they may experience from telling their stories in public. Regardless, it appears that they both felt as if telling their stories offered an opportunity to unburden themselves in front of others and thus feel a sense of catharsis, which is in line with existing literature relating to how giving testimony can contribute to healing (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Avery & Quiñones, 2002; Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983; Freeman & Hayner, 2003; Kiss, 2000; Martín-Beristain et al., 2010). In their interviews with 21 victims who gave testimony in Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Laplante and Theidon (2007) also found that "most participants had a sense of relief after sharing their stories

²⁴ The term *wantok* is used to describe people who speak the same tongue and is also a system of social responsibility, obligation and support in Melanesian culture (Richmond, 2011)

in public and felt like a weight was lifted off their shoulders” (p. 239)—which was also mentioned during my interviews in Timor-Leste—further indicating the possibility for publicly telling the stories of their suffering within the context of truth commissions to lead to a sense of catharsis for victims.

Several other interviewees also spoke about how telling their story to others helped to ‘clear out’ or remove the traumatic thoughts from their minds. Charles described this when he stated:

Telling out the story was a good thing... It will help others tell out what is hidden in their lives...the TRC made this process for me to tell out what stayed inside me... So when I went through the TRC public hearing, I really said, ‘It was like that’ and I let go of everything [It was finished].

In addition, although Azinta expressed that she was concerned that hearing stories of abuse perpetrated during the Tensions would be difficult for many people, she commented:

I think in a way, it’s good, but you share it out... lots of things, sort of relieving, releasing everything out from your system... in a way it’s good. It takes out a lot of, you know, stress and pain.

Regarding the Greensboro TRC, Androff (2012) also found that some interviewees experienced a similar sense of catharsis from sharing their stories, which was exemplified by a comment made by one interviewee who recalled that giving testimony was “a releasing sort of thing. You’re not bound by this history anymore” (p. 43). Further, as discussed in relation to the South African TRC process, it has been suggested that the process of telling one’s story allows victims to say “what’s in their hearts, in their chests, what was closed up”, which can help them to feel better afterwards (Hayner, 2011, p. 149). Based on the comments made by the above interviewees, it appears that sharing their stories in a public hearing during the Solomon Islands TRC allowed them to have a cathartic experience in a similar way by revealing the pain that had been bottled up inside of them and thus letting go of those traumatic memories.

Charles also described how giving testimony enhanced his life by encouraging him to feel less reliant on alcohol after telling his story during a TRC public hearing. He remarked:

Some ways in which the public hearing improved my life were, for example, my drinking problem and behaviour. When I hadn't gone through [the public hearing], I was almost always drinking and I wanted to get rid of [the memories] that were there.

Substance abuse has been considered to be a means of coping with pain, which is a possible problem that can result from experiencing trauma (Baranowsky, Gentry, & Schultz, 2005; Hayner, 2011). It appears that Charles experienced this as he spoke about drinking to get rid of his memories. His comments suggest that it was through sharing his story with others that helped him to feel the sort of relief necessary for reducing his substance dependency and resulting behavioural issues. The social support that he received from his community after giving testimony may have also contributed to his sense of relief, which will be further discussed below.

5.4.2.1 Relief and returning to work

The following exchange with Junior during our interview also suggests that he experienced a sense of catharsis, which in turn restored his ability to return to work.

HG: What was your experience of the TRC? Was it good?

Junior: Everything went straight.

HG: How did it go straight?

Junior: It helped me with my work.

HG: How do you think it helped you?

Junior: I felt better.

HG: It took out that experience²⁵?

Junior: Yes.

The phrase 'everything went straight', means that things went back to normal, or were straightened out through Junior's experience giving testimony to the TRC. He indicates his sense that telling his story in a public hearing made him feel better as it helped everything to 'go straight', providing him with a sense of relief from his previous traumatic memories, which also facilitated his ability to return to work. Michael also indicated that he felt as if his ability to return to work was restored after the TRC process as he commented: "When I told my story to the TRC, I mean, for my work, I

²⁵ This is a way of expressing that the experience was removed from his mind in Pijin English.

recovered in my work. I just recovered in my work”. His previous comments relating to how he experienced a sense of catharsis from sharing his story suggest that it was this relief that allowed him to overcome his past trauma and carry on with his life and his work. This was also illustrated in comments from Claudina in Timor-Leste.

5.4.2.2 Reduction of worry or fear

Four interviewees also spoke about feeling a reduced sense of worry or fear, which can be considered to be an aspect of catharsis that resulted from sharing their stories with others during the TRC. Erena, for example, said, “what we really liked about telling out our story to the TRC was because it was about healing”. I then asked how she thought the process had healed her, to which she responded:

It healed me from that worry or fear; it was only that which was healed. I don't know, now I cannot recall back or have any problem or worry or sorrow. I just have the feelings of a normal life.

She further commented: “After I told out every true story, one difference I felt, was this healing—of this thought that stayed with me. [It] started to go out, and this fear of [from] the Tensions.” When I asked her to clarify what the fear was of, she replied,

fear, being frightened. I started to lose this fear and I began not to think back, I started to forget. Not like at first, when I had not told my story, I was affected a little bit by that fear.

Here, Erena mentions that she experienced a sense of being “healed” from the difficult memories that affected her because of her experiences during the Tensions, and she points to the process of telling her story as being responsible for lessening her sense of fear and worry. Similarly, Junior also stated:

When this different thing [the TRC] came, and they told lots of stories, and we heard some of the things that were said, at that time my mind just came back [to normal]...The thought [my mind] had first was removed and this straight thought, it started to follow. When my mind came back, I began to think that they are doing some good things at the TRC...It was not like that when the TRC had not come yet... I don't worry about anything now.

Both Wilson and Ruth felt that after giving testimony they were able to speak to others more freely, which suggests a reduction of worry about being subjected to further harm. Each of these interviewees also recalled publicly offering forgiveness to those that harmed them or their families during the Tensions as they gave testimony to the TRC. Wilson said,

I was able to ask for those who did this to me, ask for forgiveness²⁶, and I asked them, if they are listening, or if they can come personally and we can make some really concrete reconciliation ourselves, forgiveness...Before I told my story to the TRC, I was not really thinking what – the sort of dilemma I have, the sort of fear which I have, all these things accumulated into my mind, you see. And my mind could never see a clear point of view...after publicly telling my TRC story...actually I was more free and I was able to talk with more people, and I think I can tell my story more freely after that.

Similarly, Ruth commented,

I asked for forgiveness from anyone who hurt me, then my heart was clear, and I told my story in public. That's how I experienced it. So I don't have anything more to hide, that I feel bad about. I feel good after doing this. I can talk freely to people who were my enemies. Even those who took – for example, I recognize my pots and plates [that were stolen during the Tensions] with some families, but still I feel good that they use them, because I have been relieved. In the case where I had not told out the story and not done the counselling, as soon as I recognized my pot, I might slap that woman, and things like that; because my anger was still within me. But after I said that I forgave [everyone] in the public hearing – everyone in the village lives in fear at the moment, women in these village communities still live in fear because they are upset about these things – but I am relieved so I have forgiven them. I feel free. I don't have any more anger in me for my things [that were lost during the Tensions].

Ruth had many things stolen from her home during the Tensions and she suggests here that part of her process of ‘moving on’ involved publicly forgiving those who took her possessions, so that she no longer felt angry about the experience. Although she also attributes her sense of relief with the counselling she received (which will be discussed later in this chapter), the mention of offering her forgiveness during the public hearing indicates that giving public testimony allowed her to express her feelings to a wide audience so those who harmed her would be able to receive her message. Forgiving does not necessarily mean forgetting, but instead, as Clark (2010) writes, it “should be seen as a ‘complex act of consciousness’ that overcomes injury in order to restore lost relationships” (p. 43, citing Lambourne, 1999). This proposition mirrors the comments from Ruth that suggest she wanted to offer forgiveness in order to move past her trauma and be able to live in her community without fear or anger. Further, offering forgiveness has been described as being part of the healing process for some victims of violent crime (Enright et al., 1998; Kaminer et al., 2001; Moon, 2009; Shuman & Smith, 2000; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). From Wilson and Ruth’s comments it appears that offering forgiveness did have therapeutic value, as sharing their stories with others

²⁶ “Asking” for forgiveness is equivalent to “offering” forgiveness, as expressed in Pijin English.

and expressing that they are no longer angry about the past led them to feel a sense of catharsis as well as a decreased sense of fear within their communities, which has similarly been considered to be a component of healing (Ajdukovic, 2004).

5.4.2.3 Relief and physiological symptoms

The responses from three interviewees suggest that the feeling of catharsis they experienced from telling their story to others during the TRC public hearing helped to reduce physical symptoms that had resulted as a consequence of their traumatic experiences during the Tensions. Junior, for example, mentioned, “the feeling in my body after I went to the TRC was just good, from many things... It was all right when I told my story at the TRC”. Similarly, Erena said:

For example, before [the response to the] ethnic tension, when this peace and reconciliation had not yet happened, I had some pain in my body, headaches from stress. After I told out my stories and the feelings I had, I started to feel better. From that time, I haven't been sick. So I can be present and happy and join every good activity... One area that helped me [regarding giving testimony in the TRC] was the healing of my body.

For Erena, the experience of giving testimony resulted in a reduction of various symptoms that she directly linked to having shared her story during a TRC public hearing. She suggests that she began to “feel better” because her physical symptoms had been ameliorated through her experience in the process. Her comments also indicate an enhanced capability to enjoy activities again without the weight of her trauma affecting her life. A renewed pleasure in activities has been described as an aspect of healing (Herman, 1992), which through Erena's remark about being able to now “join every good activity” appears to have been achieved as a result of experiencing a sense of catharsis from telling her story in public.

Ruth also commented:

As I said, it relieved me. I sleep well, because when the thoughts came, I could not sleep. I thought, especially my shell money, Baegu²⁷ shell money, when I worked so many years before I earned it. In just a few minutes, it was gone. And no one has returned anything. My pots, my plates, my clothes, everything, the whole of me; that's my heart, it broke. So when I told out about this, it relieved me and I can sleep well.

²⁷ Baegu, area of north Malaita.

Clearly the loss of Ruth's possessions—along with traumatic abuse inflicted upon her husband—during the Tensions affected her immensely, which she indicates resulted in disruptions to her sleep. The consequences that Junior, Erena, and Ruth felt from their trauma fit in line with Hamber's (1998) suggestion that suppressing traumatic memories may result in physical symptoms. Each of these interviewees indicated that through telling their stories to others during the public hearing process, they experienced relief of these symptoms, which I suggest resulted from having *voice* while giving testimony to the TRC.

5.4.2.4 *Feeling distress associated with giving testimony*

Although responses from nine interviewees suggest they experienced a sense of catharsis from sharing their stories, eight interviewees spoke of feeling some type of distress or discomfort in relation to giving testimony to the TRC—an issue also highlighted in Timor-Leste. Caroline, Charles, Clarence, and Erena conveyed generally positive attitudes about giving testimony to the TRC; however, they each remarked on experiencing some type of distress or discomfort associated with the process as well. Clarence, for example, said:

I have a feeling like, when I told something that had happened, my heart is a bit, like when something happened to me in the past, I feel no good. To me, I feel when I told it [my story], I felt angry because of what happened, as I was victimised, it was a big thing.

Although Clarence spoke about his sense that telling his story helped to relieve the burden of his traumatic memories, this statement indicates that when it came time to tell his story, the anger and hurt he felt from being a victim during the Tensions re-emerged as he remembered the events of his victimisation in public. Both Erena and Charles, who also indicated that they ultimately felt relief after telling their stories, similarly mentioned how it was a painful experience to remember and disclose what happened to them during the Tensions. Charles said, “my experience when I came through the public hearing was that I had stress and worries about the things I experienced as I relived the [past] experience [during the Tensions]”. A related comment was offered by Erena, when she recalled: “When I told my story, I just felt again this pain of that day. That was all I felt, how I remembered back to that day. So it made me feel sorry about that day I told about”. Caroline also expressed, “what happened, when I first told the

story, I was a little upset, I was nervous, I felt sorry [sad], that this thing should not have happened [the violence during the Tensions], but it happened”.

Peter, although he did not convey that he experienced any sort of catharsis after telling his story, said, “you see, all the victims have trauma and when people came and asked us to express what happened during the Tensions, it wasn’t an easy thing at all, this public hearing”. In relation to the South African TRC, Byrne (2004) found that several of her interviewees were similarly troubled while giving testimony as, in the words of one respondent, it was like “going back to get the pain for the second time” (p. 246). Based on his interviews with victims who gave testimony to the Greensboro TRC, Androff (2012) also mentions that some “described having strong emotional reactions” during the process (p. 42), which mirrors the responses from these interviewees in Solomon Islands.

Unlike Caroline, Charles, Clarence, and Erena, however, Peter very passionately described his distaste for the work of TRC (no other respondent did so with such vehemence), which was in part related to his sense that the public hearing process would re-ignite traumatic memories that had been forgotten or suppressed, which was a source of distress for him. After I asked him whether he felt as if telling his story to the TRC had made his life worse in any way, he responded:

What is the use, wasting our time? Telling our story, it didn’t have any benefit. Like, the time we finished telling our story, we have gone through a lot of trauma, and as time goes on, these traumas here, they start to... they start to die down, then all of a sudden, this TRC programme comes and starts to light them on fire, then they come back again, that’s how it [testifying] makes it worse again. This programme ignited them [memories of trauma].

The interview with Peter was quite different from the 11 other interviews I conducted in Solomon Islands, as although others expressed experiencing some type of distress related to the experience, no one else did so with such fervour. In his research regarding the South African TRC, Backer (2007) mentions that truth commissions may “trigger or exacerbate discontent” for those who have suffered in the past as the process may perpetuate disillusionment with or alienation from political society (p. 167), which is reflected in Peter’s comment. Peter’s sentiment about the process being a “waste of time” was also mentioned by victims interviewed in Hamber et al.’s (2000) research on the South African TRC, which appeared to be particularly related to their sense that they had not received substantive assistance after their participation (an issue that will

be discussed further below). Peter suggests that he felt as if he did not receive any type of benefit from telling his story to the TRC, which was clearly a source of discontent, however, it appears that he was also angry that the TRC process had not appropriately considered the cultural context of the Solomon Islands and its relationship with publicly disclosing stories of past crimes.

He also commented:

It [the TRC] should wind up and go home. Tell it [that] it should wind up and go home. This programme is for white people.... this problem is not South African... this is not a problem of Fiji, this is a problem of Solomon Islanders. It belongs to Solomon Islands.

In this comment, Peter expresses his sense that the TRC programme was not adequately suited for the Solomon Islands context. He mentions Fiji and South Africa specifically because of the involvement of one TRC commissioner who was from Fiji as well as the role of Bishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa who inaugurated the Commission. As mentioned above, the Solomon Islands TRC was modelled after the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and Peter very clearly thought that it was not sufficiently adapted to the needs of his country. Because of these issues, he felt as if the TRC should finish their work and leave the Solomon Islands.

In addition to Peter, three other interviewees suggested that they experienced some type of distress associated with giving testimony, which as their comments suggest, was linked to their perception that the TRC was incompatible with the cultural norms of Solomon Islands. Referring to the traumatic events that occurred during the Tensions, Caroline reflected, “why bring all these things up again? They’re forgotten now; they should be forgotten. Then the TRC comes and reminds us of those things we’ve forgotten”. Solomon Islands’ culture prefers to leave the past in the past and not relive traumatic experiences, particularly as such experiences may provoke further conflict or tension between people. As mentioned above, the indigenous conflict resolution practice in Solomon Islands centres around reconciliation ceremonies where compensation (particularly shell money) is exchanged to rectify the wrongdoing (Moore, 2004). This is followed by a feast between conflicting parties to mark the mending of relationships which may have been compromised by the abuse. After this occurs, the event is not to be spoken of again, and is in essence buried because social

harmony has been restored and there is no need to dwell on the wrong that has been righted (Jeffery, 2013).

Azinta further spoke to this point, while also highlighting her discontent with the TRC exhumations programme as she said:

I think, I feel that they are re-opening old wounds, I think it should be buried, forgotten and we should forget about everything rather than go and re-open them [the wounds] again like the graves [where] we dig up the bones. I don't think it's a good thing... We shouldn't talk about those [things], I think that we should, you know, just take the remains, the bones and everything and put them properly and everything... We don't want to hear what happened... I don't know what is the thinking behind it, whether after sharing with them they will feel better, but I would rather, I think we should forget about the whole thing. We just forgive if our cultures want us to say we've got to give compensation of some sort, then that's it. It should be the finish. I think we should close it with prayer and that should cover the whole thing.

Not only does Azinta express that these stories should not be talked about, but she also believes that if exhumations are to be done, they should be conducted quietly and out of the public eye. Her comments suggest that she felt a sense of distress associated with the public airing of past traumas as well as a sense that graves should not be unearthed in front of spectators who are not part of the victims' family. For Azinta, her preference would be to move on from the past through forgiveness and/or compensation if necessary, illustrating her perception that the role of *kastom* was largely ignored in the TRC's work.

The South African TRC proposed that the way to heal was through opening wounds and cleansing them through storytelling (Tutu, 1999). For Azinta, reopening wounds appeared to run contrary to healing, as she suggested that it may be preferable to forget in order to move on from the past. Despite these concerns, Azinta did however mention that she thought it was ultimately good that people had the opportunity to share their stories to gain some relief from what they had 'kept inside' and that she personally experienced a sense of relief from the process. The conflicting sentiments of feeling disappointed about one aspect of the process while feeling satisfied with another was mentioned in several interviews, and again underscores the complexity of interviewees' thinking about the TRC process. This dualistic experience of the process was also expressed by other interviewees who exhibited a wide range of perceptions about giving testimony and the TRC in general, often mentioning both beneficial and detrimental factors within the same interview. A similar occurrence has also been

described in other research regarding victim participation in truth commission processes. As Backer (2007) found in his study, “victims often express distinct feelings at different points, alternating between positive and negative sentiments” (p. 185). Thus, it may be common for participants to express ambivalence about their experiences in post-conflict justice processes. These mixed reactions evidence the complexities of truth-telling processes and their potential contribution to healing, which is not often a clear cut path but instead a complex journey. The presentation of the continuum of responses ranging from aspects of *voice* which appear to contribute to healing as well as ways in which *voice* was inhibited, thus compromising the healing process, aims to capture these inherent complexities, hence illuminating insights into the overarching puzzle alluded to throughout this thesis.

According to cultural norms in Solomon Islands, Charles also reflected on his feeling that stories about past conflict should not be revealed in public. He spoke quite directly to the point that stories of abuse may be suppressed in order to preserve social harmony, which made him somewhat fearful of the possibility that someone might seek revenge in response to his testimony. He said,

Some things... According to *kastom*, some stories that we have forgotten, we tried to dig out and they became public; it was a little confidential for us to tell these out, and at the same time when we told them out, maybe other people will hear them and have bad feelings towards us – "that man told such-and-such a thing". So that was one fear I had. To tell a story, for example, someone injured me, maybe when I tell the story, I'll say this man did this [to me]; maybe someone else will hear and want to take revenge. That is one fear which I have a bit. But for myself, I did not have any experience of anything like that. I see [telling out the story] as a good thing.

In this case, Charles became worried prior to giving testimony as he feared that some might react negatively toward those who publicly implicated perpetrators in Tensions' crimes. As discussed above, an important cultural norm in Solomon Islands is preserving social harmony. One way that this is manifested is in the avoidance of offending or speaking poorly of others—referred to as *tok spoilem* in Pijin English. Indeed, offending others can sometimes result in a need to pay compensation to the person who was insulted, or it may provoke revenge. As this concept is woven into everyday life in Solomon Islands, Charles' remark shows a hesitation to expose the wrongdoings of others because this is not appropriate behaviour in Solomon Islands' culture. While he expressed that he had some concern about this before testifying, it did

not preclude Charles from telling his story to the TRC. In relation to other truth commissions, Hamber et al. (2000) indicated that some of those interviewed in his study felt anxious before testifying during the South African TRC. Similarly, Androff (2012) commented that some interviewees felt a sense of anxiety or fear before participating in the Greensboro TRC related to “how their statements would be perceived”, although they ultimately chose to give testimony regardless of these feelings (p. 42), as did Charles.

Wilson similarly recalled, “I was also thinking [in] telling stories I will trigger more tension with the others and cause more problems”. Although Wilson also expressed that he felt relieved and less fearful after he gave testimony, this worry prior to testifying reflects concerns found in existing literature that truth commissions could provoke more conflict through revealing the truth about past violence. Further, Faye described feeling concerned about revealing information about the crimes committed by others as well as that her friends might perceive that she received some type of benefit from testifying during the TRC that they did not receive themselves. She commented:

Sometimes when I told my story, that thought came into my mind; I didn't feel good – I tell my story about what people did but somehow some other of my friends might talk against me, because I came and told what they did. So I didn't feel happy when that thought came to me. I was happy to tell out my story but afterwards I thought, my sisters will be angry with me because I told the story and what would be the benefit for everyone.

The culturally ingrained norm of not revisiting past conflict in order to maintain peace and preserve security clearly affected how these interviewees perceived the public hearing process of the TRC. As such, exposing previous traumas in public was a source of distress or anxiety. As mentioned previously, it has been suggested that victims need a “culturally supportive setting” in which to deal with their past traumas in order to heal (Allan & Allan, 2000). However, the sense that the Solomon Islands TRC did not appropriately consider cultural norms when undertaking their public hearing programme appeared to be a source of distress for these interviewees, which I would argue was disruptive to the healing process as it caused them to feel anxiety and fear about publicly sharing their stories. Although no interviewee indicated that they felt fearful *after* giving testimony²⁸, as has been found in cases such as Rwanda (Brounéus,

²⁸ Faye's comment above about her sisters being angry after she testified was more related to worry about how her receipt of benefits would be perceived by others and thus was not indicative of fear in this way.

2008b), this sense of distress prior to giving testimony in the Solomon Islands TRC is a source of concern. In this way, I argue that *voice* was inhibited as interviewees did not necessarily feel as if they were given a ‘culturally supportive’ environment in which to give testimony, which may have also precluded the cathartic benefits that have been associated with sharing one’s story. The next section will deepen this discussion by examining the relationship between healing and how victims’ suffering was acknowledged by others, including community members or truth commission staff through the receipt of empathetic support or feedback.

5.4.3 Social acknowledgment

As described in previous chapters, the receipt of acknowledgement, recognition, and empathetic support have been widely attributed to promoting victim healing (Allan & Allan, 2000; Androff, 2012; Campbell et al., 2001; Freeman & Hayner, 2003; Staub, 2011) and it has been suggested that having *voice* can facilitate such acknowledgment of victims’ past suffering (d’Estrée, 2006). Thus, I suggest that receiving empathetic support or feedback is an aspect of *voice* which can lead to healing through providing victims with a sense of acknowledgment. Four interviewees in Solomon Islands indicated that they received empathetic feedback and support from people in the community and/or TRC commissioners after they told their stories in a TRC public hearing.

Azinta, for example, said,

When you look at the people who were listening and the TRC people [commissioners], especially when you look at them, most of them [people in the audience], I think they felt very emotional listening to the stories and they sort of share the pain... So it makes you feel good that they too are sharing your pain, that’s one good thing about the TRC thing. It makes you feel happy that they are sharing your pain...and it makes you feel light and good. You feel good.

Having people listen to her story and commiserate with her experience appeared to be affirming for Azinta, allowing her to feel supported by the commissioners and others in the audience who were sharing her pain. She did, however, also suggest that the TRC could have been improved had they made effort to ensure that each witness had someone in the audience such as a family member or close friend to support them as they told their stories because as she said,

It more gives you confidence... you feel you, sort of know, you have people out there listening, and people are out there who will be sharing the same kind of feelings like I said... and it's good. Just like you know, sometimes our very close friends are like family to us.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, it has been suggested that a “space for survivors of violence to feel heard and for every detail of the traumatic event to be re-experienced in a safe environment” is necessary for healing and “psychological restoration” (Hamber, 1998, p. 10). Azinta suggests that she was able to experience this type of safe space in which to tell her story as people shared the pain expressed in her story, which I suggest helped to acknowledge her past suffering.

Charles, who was abused by militants during the Tensions spoke about feeling “good” that people heard him tell his story in public in relation to the empathetic support he received afterward. He said,

Some people who heard my story didn't know who I was. But when I told my story and it went through the media, people know, ‘oh it was you that they did that to’, so when they heard the story, I shared the story of how they beat me, then they came and said, ‘we're very sorry to hear your story’...many times I went to town and met people who said, ‘hey man, I'm very sorry to hear your story’.

Charles' comment echoes the sentiment expressed by Azinta in that they both seemed to feel positively about sharing their past experiences because they were offered sympathy by others after they told their stories. In a study undertaken by Modvig et al. (2000) which looked at the experience of trauma in Timor-Leste, it was determined that many survivors of the Indonesian occupation “look primarily to family members, the church, and the local community for assistance” (p. 1763), indicating that family or community support networks are important for healing. In the cases of Azinta and Charles, members of the community offered their sympathy and support after hearing each of their stories—support that was facilitated by the fact that they told their stories in a public hearing and were thus publicised as victims. This was also suggested within comments made by Jose in Timor-Leste.

In addition to feeling sympathy from members of their community, Charles and Azinta also commented on receiving empathetic support from TRC commissioners as they told their stories. Charles remarked:

When I told my story, the Commissioners heard me well. At the same time, this feeling that I told in my story, they also worried about and felt [it]. The pain and feelings I had when they beat me, when I told the story of it, they felt it too; and even the whole nation who heard it on the radio at that time, felt it too, when I told my story.

Further, when I asked her if she felt as if the TRC commissioners listened well to her story, Azinta mentioned, “yeah, I think they were, they were, most of them, but I think the whole thing, they are so good, they always stay helpful, how they assist everybody, everybody who’s been sharing, they are always there for everything”. In relation to the South African TRC, Hamber et al. (2000) similarly found that “those who felt the experience was positive spoke fondly of the TRC commissioners and felt they were received compassionately” (p. 29). Also mentioned by Claudina in Timor-Leste, it appears that this type of support had a positive effect on helping victims to feel as if their past suffering had been acknowledged, which I suggest contributed to their sense of healing.

Ruth and Wilson also indicated that they experienced a sense of empathetic support from the TRC commissioners, which they perceived to be beneficial. However, they both suggested it was not enough to only feel their sympathy, but something more should be done to recognise their past suffering. Wilson said, “well, they have sympathy but they can do nothing. But it's good that they come and hear my story, which makes me feel more relaxed”. Ruth also remarked:

The commissioners heard and felt sorry for me. What we experienced, they felt that we truly suffered at that time... It was a good thing they heard me and at that time every leader [bigman] in the government sat down there too and heard for themselves... We were live on SIBC and the media stations and they heard what we wanted. But the government there should take note because every leader in the government was there at that time.

Although Ruth and Wilson felt that receiving empathetic support that acknowledged their past suffering was a positive aspect of telling their story to the TRC, they both indicated that they desired to be acknowledged in a more tangible way as well, that is, through the receipt of some type of benefit or outcome. This issue will be further discussed below.

In the above sections, I have presented field research findings from Solomon Islands in accordance with the analytical framework provided in Chapter Three, which has illustrated three pathways toward healing that may be created by *voice* based on

theoretical expectations: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. First, by being able to share their stories with others and increase awareness about the violence perpetrated during the Tensions, interviewees were able to have *voice* in the process. I suggest that the resulting sense of empowerment contributed to healing. Next, telling their stories in public and being heard by others helped victims to feel relief and catharsis by removing the burden of their traumatic memories, illustrating another way in which *voice* can lead to healing. For some, this also facilitated a renewed ability to work, enjoy activities as well as reduce physical symptoms and improve relationships with others, which have all been previously cited as components of healing. Lastly, I suggest that receiving empathetic feedback and support from community members or TRC commissioners was an aspect of *voice* which resulted in a sense of acknowledgment that also had a healing effect for those interviewed. However, in addition to these pathways created by *voice* that I argue helped to facilitate a sense of healing for victims, I also found several ways in which *voice* was hindered for victims during the TRC process, which in turn inhibited healing. Although no interviewee indicated that they were personally affected by this, several respondents commented on how the TRC did not provide enough opportunities for other victims to tell their stories, which may have been a source of continuing disempowerment and marginalisation for those not chosen to give public testimony. Responses from interviewees also suggest that giving testimony to the TRC was a source of distress because it caused victims to relive their traumatic memories as well as feel fear or anxiety before they told their stories. Some interviewees also attributed this distress to the disconnection between the work of the TRC and their culture. No interviewees indicated that they received a negative social response after giving testimony that jeopardised acknowledgment of their suffering, however, it was mentioned that official acknowledgment from the government was desired in addition to social acknowledgment, which will be further discussed below.

5.5 Other findings

In addition to the findings related to the three pathways created by *voice*, three other areas strongly emerged as themes during the interviews, which suggest other ways in which truth-telling can affect victim healing, thus warranting their inclusion in this case study analysis. These are: the clarity of communication about the purpose and goals of

the TRC process; the outcomes that resulted from victims' participation; and lastly, the relationship between counselling and victim healing.

5.5.1 Clear communication of TRC purpose and intended outcomes

Similar to the majority of respondents in Timor-Leste, seven of the 12 interviewees in Solomon Islands cited being uncertain about the aim or the intended outcomes of the TRC, which their comments suggest was a source of frustration and dissatisfaction. Not being given clear and/or accurate information about the intention or outcomes of a justice process may be disconcerting for victims as the receipt of misleading or vague information can lead to unrealistic expectations which may result in disappointment and even anger when the expectations are not ultimately fulfilled (Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013). Mary from Malaita commented,

Our thought was: what was the TRC formed for? Will it ask people about what happened and then give money to them? But we just came back without anything. So we think, what has this group, the TRC, really come for?

Questioning whether the TRC would ultimately give money to the victims that testified indicates an expectation that this would be one outcome, but Mary's comment illustrates an uncertainty whether this was actually the case, particularly because she ultimately did not feel as if she received a substantive benefit from her participation in the process. Michael and Peter also spoke about being unclear about the aims or goals of the TRC. Michael remarked, "as for the backbone of the TRC, I didn't know what is their interest. And I don't know what their interest is, and why they asked us to tell out what we did during the Tensions". Peter similarly commented, "after the hearing, what will the TRC [do], for me as a victim, what is the goal of the TRC?".

Charles remarked that he had tried to ask some individuals involved with the TRC about the purpose of their work, but was not able to gain much clarity. He said:

Before we went through the public hearing, I tried to question the counsellors, and I asked them, what is the real purpose that you want to bring us for counselling and to go through the public hearing? And what is the government's position after we tell out these things; what will the government do for us? That was the question we tried to ask. But the counsellor said they will go through the process of putting everything to the government to talk about and look at everything; then the government will know what to do.

Charles actively sought to find information about the purpose of the TRC programme, however, he indicated that his questions were largely unanswered. Although he was

told that the government would consider the information that was provided and then make a plan to go forward, he still suggests that it was unclear what would ultimately result from his participation.

Caroline, Faye, and Charles remarked that they were uncertain how their stories would be used after they shared them with the TRC. Caroline and Charles wondered if their testimony would be used to hold those responsible for the violence perpetrated during the Tensions accountable. Caroline said:

When I told my story to the TRC, my question was: What would happen afterwards? What is going to happen after my story? Will there be people to go find the people [mentioned in my story]? Or what if they can't find them? That was my question. And maybe another question, will they [the TRC] really find who really instigated the social unrest?

Charles further spoke of an incident that happened just prior to our interview in which a former militant who was a member of the “Black Sharks”²⁹ was arrested after he gave testimony to the TRC. In light of this event, Charles commented, “that took my thoughts back [and makes me wonder] whether the TRC tries to take all the information and afterwards follow up [for criminal charges] on all the people [who testify]”. Faye also indicated that she was not sure what the outcome of telling her story would be and whether some type of reward would follow for those who gave testimony to the TRC. She commented, “what will the TRC do with our stories? What time will the reward for our stories come?”.

Ruth suggested that she understood that one purpose of the TRC was to facilitate community-level reconciliation to reckon with the violence perpetrated during the Tensions. However, her remarks illustrate that she was not clear whether and how this would be done when she said, “But I don't know, I'm not really sure what their program and plan [for promoting reconciliation] is”. In relation to the South African TRC, Byrne (2004) also found that nearly half of her interviewees “commented in some way about a lack of informational clarity and their frustration with the TRC process and procedures” (p. 245). Such disappointment, in believing a certain outcome would result from the

²⁹ The members of the Black Shark were engaged by the Western provincial government to provide security during the ethnic tension on Guadalcanal from 1998-2000 (Solomon Star, 18 July 2011). Ex-Black Shark Samson Laketo was arrested by the RSIPF with the assistance of RAMSI after testifying at a closed TRC hearing at Taro, Choiseul. There was a longstanding warrant out for his arrest for murder. The TRC protested that the TRC's amnesty provision had been breached but since he was arrested after he testified and not during the hearing, the TRC took no further action beyond protest to the RSIPF (Personal Communication, Bishop Terry Brown).

process, can further perpetuate cycles of mistrust and may leave open the possibility that victims will continue to feel uncertain about their futures as they expect benefits but do not really know if or when they will receive them—both of which have been suggested as hindrances to the healing process (Backer, 2007).

5.5.2 Process outcomes and healing: Unmet expectations and continuing needs

Another issue which emerged as a common theme among the interviews in Solomon Islands was that many were dissatisfied and frustrated that no substantive outcome had resulted from their participation in the TRC, which was mentioned by 10 of the 12 respondents. This was also highlighted by all of those I interviewed in Timor-Leste. Interviewees mentioned a range of expectations or desires about how giving public testimony to the TRC would benefit them, including the provision of monetary or material support or assistance, as well as reconciliation within communities that they sensed had not yet occurred.

A general sense of dissatisfaction with the perception that they had given their stories but had not seen any outcome was mentioned by some interviewees. Michael, for example, said, “we told our stories when the TRC was here, then nothing came out of it”. Peter, Mary, and Junior expressed a similar sense that nothing had happened after they gave testimony to the TRC. Although she found the experience telling her story to others to be beneficial in some ways, Mary expressed disappointment because she did not receive any substantive benefit afterwards as she said:

When the two of us told our story, it was good but afterwards we haven't seen anything happen yet...The story was left there and it has stayed there...I am not happy about it. Because we went and told our story many times but nothing...All the interviews, nothing good comes out of them. Because we have not received anything.

Likewise, Peter commented that after he told his story, “then [it] goes on and finishes and nothing happens”. Junior similarly remarked:

Once the TRC has this kind of idea [to give something good], it will go straight. But when the TRC cannot give any help [it will not go straight]. But once the TRC has this idea [to give something good], it will go straight. Otherwise, you go tell your story, then [that experience will] finish, and finish for ever.

In this sense, Junior felt that his experience of giving testimony was somewhat unfinished as the TRC had not delivered any type of benefit to address the suffering

victims experienced during the Tensions. In a similar way, Faye depicted the negative emotional consequence she experienced from receiving no outcome after telling her story to the TRC as she remarked, “people complain about the people coming around and taking stories, but the TRC has never helped people... I feel a bit hurt because I told my story and told my story and nothing happened afterwards”. Faye’s comment relates to a remark made by an interviewee in Hamber et al.’s (2000) study who said that because their expectations were not fulfilled after the South African TRC process, they felt “heartache”.

Regarding expectations of their participation in the TRC, three interviewees suggested that they had anticipated that the TRC would do something to assist victims who had suffered during the Tensions. Michael expressed that interviewers working for the TRC had told him that the TRC would “do some other project for rehabilitating victims... if you tell your name and then tell whatever story, then they will do a little bit of funding”. Clarence also commented: “We expected that after doing the public hearing, that the TRC would work closely with us for doing something, about rehabilitation or something like that because that’s what had been *promised*”. In Solomon Islands, the term “rehabilitation” was often used to talk about restoring or building up an individual’s capacity to live their lives, which parallels the definition of healing provided by Cienfuegos and Monelli (1983) utilised in this study. Generally, interviewees suggested that the way in which such rehabilitation would be achieved was through the receipt of monetary/material assistance or support, which have also been described by Owens and De la Rey (1998) as important elements in the healing process for victims of mass violence. The desire for this type of recompense may have been particularly relevant in this context because of the importance of compensation according to *kastom* in Solomon Islands.

When asked whether the TRC had provided such funding to him, Michael said “No. It did not”. This theme came through in the interview with Michael on several occasions, which although he generally felt positive about the process, shows that he was disappointed that nothing actually materialised from his participation in the public hearing. He further commented that:

When I told out my story, it [TRC] promised me that ‘I will do something for you’...I mean, in my opinion, maybe it missed. They missed... That kind of talking, it [the TRC] promised me. For example, it promised me [that it would

do something], so when I look forward, I see the promise has not been done [kept].

Michael described that the interviewers who worked for the TRC promised him benefits from giving testimony in the public hearing, and as such, he mentioned that a reason that he was motivated to give testimony was because he anticipated receiving a material benefit that would assist him in rebuilding his livelihood. To this end he commented:

From the promise [that they gave], that made me tell the story. Because for me, when I heard, oh it will be very easy for us to get funding, then I told out my story because what I wanted, just regarding my work, that's the reason I came out to the TRC. I wanted something like that. When you ask me what I want, then I say, I just want tools for my work. This was just my interest in telling out my story, not a big project or anything.

Michael then mentioned that he had not yet received this type of support that he desired and said, "I am a little bit down [about that] now". Because this was not ultimately achieved, Michael felt a bit deceived as he was led to believe that some assistance would be given to him in exchange for telling his story, which did not, in the end, occur. Ruth also commented, "the Commissioners listened at that time, because one question they asked was, 'What would you like the government to do in cases like this?'" Being asked such a question may have further increased Ruth's expectation that she would receive some type of benefit because, as Backer (2007) writes, "in particular, being asked what one desires in the way of reparations makes the unmistakable connotations that compensation will be forthcoming" (p. 189).

In an emerging state which suffers greatly from a fragile infrastructure and economic hardships, the promise of benefits for those that suffered during a period of conflict can reflect the promise of a more stable future. Laplante and Theidon (2007) found similar sentiments among their interviewees who gave testimony during Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. They indicate that those interviewees who expressed the most disappointment with Peru's TRC had "mistakenly believed their testimony would result in immediate compensation for their suffering" (Laplante & Theidon, 2007, p. 241). This was clearly the case in the interview responses from Solomon Islands as well. Indeed, the lack of fulfilment of such promises may ultimately be damaging to victims as it raises a false expectation about outcomes that could ameliorate their present suffering which resulted from the violence perpetrated during the Tensions.

5.5.2.1 Rebuilding/replacing property

Likely because of the high incidence of property crime that occurred during the Tensions (TRC, 2012), many interviewees suggested that they anticipated that their participation in the TRC would result in the replacement of their lost property or damaged homes. It was suggested that this would help to rehabilitate their lives in the wake of the Tensions. Although he said that giving testimony was beneficial as it helped to provide him with a sense of relief and decreased his reliance on alcohol, Charles said:

I have some expectations of some good things what would benefit me and my family, as feedback from the government after we go through the public hearing...I think, concerning the rehabilitation of the life of the family and things like that, I hope [the TRC] can support us because so far we lost many things, I and my wife...she is a victim too. She lost her house and everything when they went and burnt her house; they lost their properties. And I am a victim. We are both victims...I think to improve the life of the family, a family project, or build a house, I think, would help us.

Faye also commented:

For myself, I am still a victim at this time, because in the tension, my house was burnt down, until this time. That's why I want the TRC to help me too; to replace what I lost, to make me feel happy, after I told my story to the TRC. Even though I have gone to the TRC, I am still not happy because of everything I lost at that time and I am finding things hard financially now. After everything was lost, I still struggle to rebuild back what was lost. I find finances hard now...They must also recognize me too and help my family because I lost many things, I lost my house...If the government can replace every such house, people will recover... I hope and think that if the government replaces the lost property, people will be happy.

As Backer (2007) writes about his study of victim participation in the South African TRC, “the common sentiments [expressed by interviewees] was that such financial payments would show consideration and help mitigate their present hardships, which many traced to political violence and/or repression” (p. 190), which is clearly also reflected in Faye's statement.

Ruth remarked that she desired “that they should rehabilitate us a bit. Assist us a little for our houses [that were destroyed during the Tensions]”. She mentioned that regarding this expectation, it has not yet been fulfilled, but “only relieving me [of my feelings] helped me so far”. Thus, although she felt a sense of catharsis from sharing her story to others as mentioned above, Ruth still desired that some outcome needed to

be realised in response to her participation in the TRC. The above comments from Caroline and Wilson also suggest that they experienced relief after giving testimony to the TRC; however, they both indicated that they felt that they should also be provided with monetary or material benefits to replace what they lost during the Tensions, which has persisted as a source of suffering until the present. To this end, Caroline remarked:

Even during the tensions – it’s very funny – because during the tension, the Government said it would replace lost properties. We lost everything in our house; I lost everything in my house...I lost everything, my kitchen utensils were stolen, my house was broken. During the tension, the Government gave something to the people, many people. Those of us who really suffered, we got nothing. We can’t voice this one out too, so we just mind our own business and we do what we can for our survival.

Wilson also said:

Only what I was expecting is the government should really pay me some kind of compensation for that harassment and things they have done to me. And also the loss of my property, a tremendous loss I had. All my properties... completely disappeared; even up to today, I never got a cent back from those properties of mine... I said, man, for me to start right from scratch, even right now, I was not able to get my cash flow covered to maintain my family. It is very hard.

For many, the receipt of some type of tangible benefit in exchange for their participation would allow them to feel recognised or acknowledged. In Solomon Islands, recognition was spoken of in terms of monetary compensation, or a “token of appreciation”, suggesting that the receipt of recompense for suffering would validate their experiences during the Tensions. Wilson conveyed his sense that victims during the Tensions should be recognised by the government as he said:

If anything comes at the end of the process— this is my hope— if anything comes at the end of the process, at least the government recognises the harassments and sufferings where we all the victims [went through] and there must at least be a token of appreciation from the government to each one of us. That would also uplift our lives; not only spiritually but also physically.

With this comment, Wilson indicates his sense that some sort of benefit should be delivered to victims upon the completion of the TRC’s work (the process had not ended at the time of our interview), which would validate their past experiences through enhancing their lives. In relation to Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Laplante and Theidon (2007) also found that the “absolute majority” of the victim-survivors they interviewed “explicitly justified their participation with the hope of some

concrete redress from the government” (p. 240), which mirrors the comments from the above interviewees.

Peter also stated that from his participation in the TRC he expected “some financial programme, some financial reparations programme for those affected...after this hearing”. He also expressed a sense of contempt for the TRC commissioners who appeared to be profiting unfairly—as he perceived that “these commissioners...are living as kings”— from their work with the TRC while victims received very little (if anything) as recompense for their suffering during the Tensions. To this end, Faye also commented:

I expected them to give me a bit of money so I could do some projects at home, to help the women at home... No, I wasn't happy [with the result of telling my story]. The Commissioners and those who work with them receive a lot of money. But what they gave us was very small.

Faye mentioned in the interview that she received a small amount of compensation from the government in response to her losses during the Tensions, although she indicated that in relation to the salaries of the TRC staff, this sum was paltry at best. Related to the South African TRC, Backer (2007), Byrne (2004), and Hamber et al. (2000) similarly found that many victims were disappointed that no substantive outcome resulted from their participation. Backer (2007) reflected that “most victims embraced the opportunity to offer their input, but these discussions fuelled expectations of financial support as well as a wide range of service and interventions” (p. 190), which was evident in the interview responses Solomon Islands. The lack of fulfilment of such expectations was clearly a source of disappointment and frustration, which I argue hindered many interviewees’ sense of healing in relation to their participation in the Solomon Islands TRC.

In addition to monetary assistance or recompense for their suffering, six³⁰ interviewees desired the initiation of community-based projects that would enhance their livelihoods by helping them to become self-sustaining. For example, Erena said that the government should “do their part to rebuild again things like houses and the things we lost”, but “we’ll do the rest”, indicating that she and her community did not expect mere hand-outs, but instead assistance that would support their journey in beginning to rebuild their lives. Clarence also commented, “we expected as long as anything, the

³⁰ Faye, Mary, Ruth, Junior, Erena, and Clarence.

government, as long as it gives some project, or gives a class or you make it halfway, like half in material or half [with assistance]...then we are happy”. Further, in response to being asked whether she expected to receive anything when she told her story to the TRC and what was her expectation if so, Ruth said:

No... Yes... Because when we went out [from the village] we went out with nothing, not even clothes or things like that. So, rehabilitation... Or help us with a piggery; help us start something from which we can earn a little money to replace what has been lost. Assist us in a way that we ourselves will work on things to help ourselves. Don't give us money directly for us to buy things but assist us, for example, you buy one pig for me, then I will keep breeding pigs to help me. That kind [of assistance].

Junior similarly commented that he felt as if he and his community would benefit from “small projects and things like that. Pigs and poultry and things like that”. These comments all indicate the perception that assistance with developing community projects was necessary to promote healing. Indeed, the ability to carry out such programmes and deliver such assistance is dependent on the political will and financial capabilities of the emerging state, as mentioned in Chapter One, but is an important consideration when designing processes which have the intention to heal victims, as this is one area that may enhance the possibility of achieving that outcome as illustrated in interview responses in Solomon Islands.

5.5.2.2 Reconciliation

Another desired outcome of the process that five interviewees indicated had not been fulfilled was reconciliation and/or the achievement of lasting peace. Wilson expressed that he was motivated to tell his story to the TRC in order to contribute to the goal of promoting peace in his country. He said:

I'm telling my story because I want the Solomon Islands to become a peaceful country. These are my contributions in the process, you see, the peace-building process in the Solomon Islands. So I hope that these stories in some way or other will help the process to bring back peace to the nation and the people of Solomon Islands.

In addition to the motivations of some interviewees who suggested they chose to give testimony with the expectation of receiving some material or monetary benefit, Wilson also clearly sensed a need to be a part of contributing to the restoration of peace in Solomon Islands in the aftermath of the Tensions. Van Camp and Wemmers (2013) suggest that some victims may choose to participate in restorative interventions because

they believe it is a “logical thing to do to contribute to a better society” (p. 133). Such a contribution “allows them [victims] to transform their suffering into something meaningful” (Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013, p. 136), which has been considered to be part of the healing process (Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983).

Other interviewees spoke of their continued desire for peace and reconciliation, which they felt was not achieved through the TRC process. Both Caroline and Clarence said they are still waiting for peace to come to Solomon Islands. Ruth more explicitly spoke about the continued need for reconciliation, which may be a part of securing peace, when she commented:

I haven't reconciled with the community. The government has promised to reconcile me with the villages, but what happened, the village was not included [in the TRC process] but what happened [during the Tensions], happened in the village. We have to reconcile with the village people...That reconciliation we still wait for. We should reconcile with the community, we should reconcile – the government has promised to reconcile us with the community and with ex-militants... The TRC is supposed to assist, to come down to the community level, to assist us to reconcile with the community level. The reconciliations they do at the higher level do not reach the grassroots at all.

Likewise, although Erena mentioned that she personally felt “good” after telling her story to the TRC, she said:

I expected to receive a good result [from telling my story], especially concerning peace and reconciliation...It [the TRC] was very nice, but what is just needed is to make really true peace and reconciliation for families and the community as a whole who were affected by the tension. So the TRC should come, or tell the government to come down to the grassroots level, just to show out true peace and reconciliation...I am one person who was affected and [now] I really feel good. Apart from me, I don't know about the others. The whole community requests the TRC to speak to the government to do peace and reconciliation.

Further, Peter reflected:

Compensation, if we take it for support, it's a sign that we come together, it's in the past and we start a new beginning...There is no consolation, no consolation for victims... nothing for bringing people together, bringing face-to-face, to solve these issues...After this hearing, the TRC, it should make a programme... [for] reconciliation.

Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission sought to promote reconciliation, as its name clearly implies, this goal was not perceived to have been achieved by these interviewees. Reconciliation in Solomon Islands is a cornerstone of culture and

tradition and, as mentioned above, marks the true end to a conflict (Jeffery, 2013). In this way, reconciliation ceremonies have the potential to contribute to healing in that they can provide an opportunity for victims of conflict to resume the course of their lives by ensuring that both the victims and perpetrators of the abuse can live together again in peace. The lack of reconciliation was experienced to be a disconcerting aspect of the TRC process and may have inhibited the healing process for victims.

5.5.2.3 Apology

Three interviewees (Faye, Erena, and Michael) said that they received an apology from those who harmed them during the Tensions, which they felt was beneficial. Charles, however, indicated that this still had not happened for him. He suggests that receiving an apology from those who harmed him would be helpful for him as he said:

But what I would like is that they must come out clearly to me and apologize and come to say "sorry". That's all I want. To say, "You must pay such-and-such compensation", that I'm not interested in. They must just come and apologize and say "sorry" to me, then maybe shake hands or pray or something like that. That I would accept.

This comment from Charles illustrates a sense that an apology would, in essence, take the place of compensation. As mentioned, apologies from perpetrators can help to facilitate healing by providing victims with a sense of acknowledgment of their past suffering (Staub, 2000). Hence, the lack of apology for the abuse that Charles was subjected to during the ethnic conflict may have been a way in which healing was impeded.

5.5.3 Counselling and victim healing

Another finding that emerged from the interviews in Solomon Islands, which I had not originally intended to explore, was that nine interviewees mentioned that they had received counselling either through the church, an independent counsellor, or the counsellor working with the TRC before testifying in a public hearing³¹. Of these, seven³² indicated that going through such a counselling process was beneficial for them. Erena, for example, said:

³¹ The TRC hired a counsellor to speak with victims before they gave testimony and was also available just after the public hearings to debrief victims if necessary.

³² These were: Charles, Junior, Erena, Ruth, Wilson, Azinta and Clarence. In contrast, Faye and Peter indicated that they did not feel as if the counselling they received had been helpful to their sense of

After I had the counselling with the woman, I felt good because she advised me in some ways, in many ways. So it was easy to come back [recover]... When the TRC came, they asked me and I told them out my feelings about ethnic tension. Then it was good for me to tell it out. Before I could not tell it out, I could not tell the story because there was no counselling. After the TRC did counselling, I was brave. Even if I told and retold the story, nothing would happen.

In addition to Wilson's comments above indicating that his experience giving testimony to the TRC provided him with a sense of catharsis, he also remarked that the counselling he received prior to telling his story in public helped him feel more secure to share his story as he stated:

My story in the TRC was good, in terms of—it clears out my mind, especially when I went to the trauma counselling. And the trauma counselling gave me the chance to open up to the TRC public hearing, so I was able to speak and to tell the whole story in the TRC public hearing at that time... So only through the trauma counselling enabled me to say those things but before that it was quite difficult to tell the story because you had certain fears within you.

Both Erena and Wilson expressed that they found the experience of testifying during the TRC to be beneficial, but these statements also suggests that their ability to tell their stories to the TRC was related to their having received counselling before the TRC process began. These comments indicate that the counselling increased their confidence and sense of safety in retelling their stories during the public hearing process. My initial interview questionnaire did not ask about counselling, but this subject began to be mentioned in the second interview I conducted, making it apparent that this could be an area that helped contribute to victim healing and was thus included in further interviews. Although many interviewees proposed that the counselling they received was beneficial, or that continued counselling would promote further healing, Peter commented that he did not think counselling would be of any benefit. To this end, he said:

You see, what happened is beyond counselling. It's beyond counselling. I don't know about white people, but us Melanesians from Solomon Islands, we don't do it this way...the level of trauma that people went through, counselling is not the solution... it's nowhere near the experience that we went through.

As mentioned above, Peter was highly critical of the TRC for not adhering to the cultural norms of Solomon Islands, which could be a reason why he also felt that the “western” style counselling employed by the TRC would not address their suffering.

healing. It is unclear whether Caroline, the first interviewee, received counselling as this theme only emerged during the second interview and was then included in my questionnaire.

Other respondents felt that there should be more counselling after the TRC finished its work. Illustrating this, Faye remarked on the necessity of a community-based counselling programme to further facilitate healing in the aftermath of the Tensions. She said, “the TRC must go out to the community and do counselling for everyone. Not just to counsel those really affected, but many people needing counselling are in the communities. Talk with us in the communities”. She further described the order in which she felt various forms of assistance should happen, commenting that “counselling would be first, then lost property of the people, replace what was lost”. Ruth also indicated that she felt that her husband was still suffering from the abuse he was subjected to during the Tensions, which she felt that counselling would help to assuage as she said, “[his memories] make him aggressive yet [still], because he is not yet healed”.

The lack of adequate psychological follow-up work offered to victims who told their stories in a public hearing has been a critique of numerous truth commissions (Backer, 2007; Byrne, 2004; De Ridder, 1997). Many commissions seek to include victims in the process by asking them to tell the stories of their trauma, as they are often the only ones who may be able to offer eye-witness accounts of the past (Doak, 2011; Humphrey, 2003). However, this could almost be considered as a form of exploitation if victims are not cared for after opening themselves up in such a public forum. Existing studies have suggested that public truth-telling can be retraumatising for some victims (Brounéus, 2008b; Byrne, 2004; Rimé et al., 2011), and the lack of continued attention to the psychological needs of victims has been identified as a significant gap in the work of truth commissions (De Ridder, 1997). Although some interviewees received counselling that they felt was beneficial for their sense of healing, others such as Faye and Ruth communicated that more should be done. The issue of follow-up support and its role in victim healing will be further discussed in the next chapter.

5.6 Conclusion

After having described the background of the ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands, known as the Tensions, as well as the transitional justice mechanisms created to address the past period of violence, findings from the 12 interviews conducted in this country were presented in accordance with the analytical framework found in Chapter Three. In relation to how the causal mechanism of *voice* can be seen to have facilitated victim

healing in Solomon Islands, it was found that having *voice* in the process for those interviewed supported the theoretical expectations of three pathways toward healing: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment. I argue that interviewees were empowered through the ability to fulfil their desire to share the stories of their suffering as well as raise awareness about past violence perpetrated during the Tensions, which I suggest are aspects of *voice* that contributed to their sense of healing. Further, many victims commented on feeling a sense of relief or catharsis from sharing their stories with others that I argue resulted from having *voice* in the TRC process, which for some, also resulted in their restored ability to work, a reduction of fear and worry, improved relationships with others, and the reduction of physical symptoms. Lastly, receiving empathetic support or feedback from community members or TRC commissioners was another aspect of *voice*, which helped to facilitate healing for those interviewed.

However, it was also found that *voice* was inhibited in several ways, which I argue was hindering to the healing process for those interviewed. Although speaking on behalf of others, interviewees remarked that storytelling was limited for some victims because either the TRC did not invite them to participate or as a consequence of cultural norms, which can be considered to be ways in which *voice* was hindered. Additionally, although responses from many interviewees indicate that they experienced a sense of catharsis by sharing their stories with others, many also expressed various forms of distress associated with giving testimony. This distress was related to reliving traumatic memories in public, fear or anxiety about how others would respond to their testimony, or a perception that publicly revealing traumatic stories was not appropriate according to cultural norms in Solomon Islands, which I suggest inhibited *voice* and may have in turn compromised healing.

In addition to the findings related to how having *voice* affects victim healing, three other themes emerged from the interviews that shed further light on the role of truth-telling in healing. First, interviewees commented that the purpose and goals of the work of the TRC process were not clearly communicated to them, which was a source of confusion and frustration. Next, many interviewees were disappointed, frustrated, and hurt that they did not receive a substantive outcome from their participation in the process. These individuals had hoped to receive material or monetary assistance/support and also reconciliation between formerly conflicting groups after

they gave testimony. However, these were largely not experienced, leaving some interviewees to feel discontent with the process. In some cases, it was suggested that these outcomes must be realised in order for interviewees to experience a sense of healing after the trauma they experienced during the Tensions. Lastly, the majority of those interviewees who received counselling³³ after the abuse they experienced during the Tensions felt that it was beneficial to their sense of healing and, for some, counselling appeared to make them feel more secure when telling their stories during the TRC public hearing process. Thus, based on the interview responses, counselling may be another way in which healing can be promoted for victims of mass violence.

The nature of the conflict and the post-conflict context in Solomon Islands are important to consider in making sense of these findings. Compared with atrocities committed in other contexts, the duration and gravity of abuses experienced during the Tensions can be considered to be relatively less severe. This factor may have played a role in the ability of those interviewed to more readily experience a sense of catharsis in relation to giving public testimony during the TRC. Disappointment with the lack of outcome mentioned by 10 interviewees may have been related to the dire socioeconomic conditions in the country, particularly following the Tensions, that victims continue to face, with a government which has little capacity to remunerate or provide support to all those affected by the ethnic violence. Additionally, unlike many other post-conflict settings in which victims seem to largely call for bringing former perpetrators of violence to justice, this was not conveyed as a desire by those interviewed in this context. Instead, reconciliation and creating lasting peace were expressed as important outcomes of the post-conflict process to promote healing. The findings that have been presented in this chapter will be compared and contrasted with those findings obtained from Timor-Leste, along with their relationship with existing literature in order to further develop insight into how truth-telling may lead to victim healing in post-conflict settings in the next chapter. In addition, the following chapter will discuss overall conclusions that can be drawn from this study, policy recommendations, and directions for future research.

³³ As mentioned above, those interviewed received counselling either from an independent counsellor, church-affiliated counselling, counselling as part of the TRC's work, or a combination thereof.

6 Discussion and Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

In an effort to begin answering one piece of the complex puzzle of why truth-telling has been both helpful and harmful to victims of mass violence, this thesis has explored how public truth-telling may be beneficial for victims' sense of healing. Previous studies have illustrated a number of benefits as well as negative consequences that victims may experience from their participation in truth-telling processes, which range from feelings of relief to retraumatisation. Within the spectrum of post-conflict justice mechanisms, truth commissions have been valued as the mechanism that is most conducive to promoting victim healing, largely because of their participatory and victim-centred nature. However, relatively few studies have explored why some victims may experience a sense of healing after giving testimony to these institutions while others feel worse off after the process. This study has intended to begin filling this gap.

Being subjected to violence can render victims powerless, marginalised, and physically and psychologically vulnerable (Agger & Jensen, 1996; Doak, 2011; Mollica, 1988). As it has been suggested that addressing the consequences of victimisation at the individual level may be beneficial for promoting lasting peace in societies recovering from conflict (Galtung, 1996), exploring this question of how transitional justice strategies may better promote healing for victims is an important endeavour for post-conflict countries.

Recent research has suggested that for victims of violent crime, experiencing a sense of procedural justice while participating in restorative justice processes can have a healing effect (Wemmers & Cyr, 2005). Furthermore, *voice*—a component of procedural justice that is defined as the ability to express one's views and opinions (Folger, 1977; Lind & Tyler, 1988)—has been described as beneficial for healing (d'Estrée, 2006). This relationship has, however, not previously been investigated in an empirical comparative study within post-conflict settings. d'Estrée (2006) has argued that *voice* can help to restore victims' sense of power, status, and self-worth, which are often compromised as a consequence of victimisation (Govier, 2009). Based on these propositions, I suggest that having *voice* within the context of truth commissions—institutions considered to be “instruments of restorative justice” within the transitional

justice spectrum (Villa-Vicencio, 2000c, p. 68)—may have a healing effect for victims of mass violence.

Of particular interest to this study is the understanding of *how* truth-telling leads to victim healing. Thus, it was valuable to undertake a qualitative study to explore possible causal mechanisms that may underlie this linkage, as causal mechanisms can help to explain how an independent variable (truth-telling) affects a dependent variable (healing) (Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010). In light of the propositions about the utility of *voice* for victims of mass violence in the context of restorative justice initiatives, I chose to explore *voice* as a possible causal mechanism that may create pathways that lead from truth-telling to victim healing. The public hearing component of truth commissions has been seen to ‘give victims a voice’ (Hayner, 2011; Phakathi & van der Merwe, 2008) and a space in which they may reclaim their dignity and be empowered (Hayner, 2011; Minow, 1998). Hence, examining the potential healing effects of *voice* for victims giving testimony in this context was a suitable pursuit to examine how truth-telling may lead to victim in post-conflict settings.

To address this question, I have utilised a comparative case study research design using what George and Bennett (2004) refer to as ‘least similar cases’. Investigating cases which are different in more ways than they are alike has the potential to result in a degree of external validity where the findings generated may be applicable in other research contexts (George & Bennett, 2004). I chose to explore the cases of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands because, aside from each country’s creation of a truth commission which had a high level of focus on victims and healing, they share few others similarities. As discussed in Chapter Three, the key differences between these cases are the type of conflict that precipitated transitional justice strategies, characteristics of perpetrators, and the duration and severity of human rights abuse. Because of these particularities, it could be expected that the findings would be quite different between the cases. However, in comparing the results obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with a total of 19 victims of past conflict in each country (seven in Timor-Leste and 12 in Solomon Islands), who also gave public testimony in their country’s truth commission, many similarities were found. The first section of this chapter will discuss the primary similarities among the research findings, first focussing on the three identified pathways facilitated by *voice*—empowerment,

catharsis, and social acknowledgment. Then, a discussion of similarities between others key findings between the cases will follow, including: first, the relationship between each truth commissions' work, cultural norms, and healing; and, second, how clarity of communication about the purpose and goals of each truth commission related to the disappointment in lack of outcomes resulting from victim participation in these processes. After this, the differences between the cases will be discussed. Throughout these sections, the implications of the case study findings will also be considered, along with various insights into how future truth commission processes may be better designed to address victim needs. Finally, conclusions will be drawn from the study as a whole and several directions for future research will be outlined.

6.2 Similarities between Cases

When comparing the cases of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands, a multitude of similar findings were discovered from the interview responses, despite the differences between the nature of conflict, severity and duration of abuse, and characteristics of perpetrators in each case. First, it can be seen that having *voice* facilitated the creation of three pathways toward healing within the context of truth commission public hearings in both cases, namely: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment, which is in line with theoretical expectations. Additionally, several ways in which healing may have been disrupted through the inhibition of *voice* were also similar between the cases. These were: the mismanagement or limitation of storytelling by truth commissions, cultural norms, and distress associated with giving testimony. Although the focus of this thesis is to determine the possible pathways that lead from truth-telling to victim healing, the various aspects of each truth commission process that may have detracted from interviewees' sense of healing are important to include as they may provide insight into how healing can be better be facilitated. Two other findings that were not intentionally explored at the outset of the research project, but emerged from the interview responses as having an effect on healing were also consistent between the cases. These include: inadequate respect of culture, unclear communication about the purpose and goals of the truth commission, and a lack of substantive outcomes from victim participation in the process. The interview responses suggest that these issues had a negative impact upon healing, thus it is possible to surmise that if these aspects of the truth commission processes had been improved, a sense of healing may have been more likely to result.

6.2.1 Empowerment

Regarding empowerment, interviewees in both contexts were satisfied to have the ability to publicly share their stories with others. There appeared to be an underlying feeling of contentment among interviewees that communicated their stories to a wider audience, which is congruent with the proposition in existing literature that victims desire to share the story of their trauma with others (McKinney, 2008; J. Smyth & Pennebaker, 1999). Comments from interviewees included feeling ‘happy’, ‘content’, and ‘good’ about sharing their past experiences in a way that their compatriots and people abroad would be able to hear them.

There was, however, a nuanced difference between the responses from each case in relation to this pathway. In Timor-Leste, respondents expressed satisfaction with contributing to the documentation of experiences during the Indonesian occupation in order to develop an historical, national narrative of what happened in the past; whereas in Solomon Islands, interviewees spoke more explicitly about their contentment with increasing awareness about the violence perpetrated during the Tensions. In essence, the basic sentiment guiding these responses was the same—the fulfilment of a desire to let others know what happened in the past—although the way in which interviewees were satisfied with how their stories would be used was expressed slightly differently between cases, which will be discussed further below. It has been suggested that this ability to share one’s story in one’s own way and letting others know what happened in the past can be empowering for victims of mass violence (French, 2009). As these aspects can be considered to be facets of *voice*, I suggest that *voice* facilitated empowerment by allowing interviewees to have some control over the narrative of their traumatic story to be shared with others in the context of truth commission public hearings. Considering that restoring control or being empowered have been cited as important components of victim healing (Hamber, 2009; Hayner, 2011; Herman, 1992; Minow, 1998), the empowerment resulting from *voice* helped to facilitate a sense of healing for those interviewed in my study. To this end, truth commissions may be able to better facilitate healing if they provide opportunities for victims to be empowered by controlling how the stories of their suffering are communicated in public. In this way, there is potential to transform past trauma into something meaningful in the present and for the future, which has been considered to be valuable for promoting healing for victims of mass violence (Agger & Jensen, 1990; Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983).

6.2.2 Catharsis

A sense of catharsis was also experienced by interviewees in both research contexts. As mentioned in Chapter Two, some have proposed that concealing or suppressing one's traumatic story can lead to negative psychological consequences as well as physical symptoms (Dowdall, 1996; Hamber, 1995). Thus, many believe that revealing the narrative of one's own trauma for others to hear can be a source of relief. Hence, *voice* may be able to facilitate a sense of catharsis. Responses from interviewees in each context suggest that catharsis resulted from feelings of relief and a lessening of the burden of past trauma from publicly sharing their stories with others. As mentioned previously, similar findings were discovered in relation to other research contexts, including South Africa, Peru, and in the Greensboro TRC in the United States (Androff, 2012; Byrne, 2004; Hamber et al., 2000; Laplante & Theidon, 2007). Thus, the findings from my study support the proposition that truth-telling can lead to healing in this way. In addition, the findings show that *voice* is a possible underlying causal mechanism that can explain the linkages between truth-telling, catharsis, and healing. Further, some interviewees suggested that the relief they experienced facilitated a restored ability to return to work, which I propose illustrates an aspect of improved quality of life resulting from the experience of having *voice*. Such improvements in interviewees' quality of life were mentioned more frequently among interviews in Solomon Islands than in Timor-Leste—a difference that will be further discussed among the differences between cases below.

6.2.3 Social acknowledgment

Lastly, some interviewees in each research context indicated that they received some type of empathetic support or feedback in response to telling their stories during a truth commission public hearing. Interviewees from both countries expressed that they received sympathy from either truth commission staff or their communities, illustrating that others accepted their story and acknowledged the pain that their past trauma had caused. The responses of some interviewees relating to this issue convey that the receipt of sympathy and feedback from community members helped them to feel supported in their communities, which Ajdukovic (2004), for example, indicates is important to victims' healing process after experiencing mass violence. It could also be argued that receiving this type of support helped to create an environment in which

victims were able to experience an increased sense of safety, which has been considered to be crucial for the facilitation of healing (Herman, 1992). I suggest that being supported by community members and/or truth commission staff in response to giving testimony is indicative of *voice*, which may enhance victims' sense that their past suffering has been acknowledged and is worthy of attention (d'Estrée, 2006). As acknowledgment has been linked to victim healing in existing literature (Hamber, 2009; Herman, 2005; Minow, 1998; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013), I suggest that the social acknowledgement that resulted from receiving empathetic support and feedback from others in response to interviewees' public testimony contributed to healing in each of these research contexts.

6.2.3.1 Relationships between pathways

In comparing the interview responses both within and between cases, I discovered a possible relationship between being acknowledged through receiving empathetic support and a sense of catharsis from publicly sharing their stories with others. In Solomon Islands, each of the interviewees (Charles, Azinta, Wilson, and Ruth) who reported that they felt sympathy from either their community or TRC commissioners after they told their stories also experienced a sense of catharsis. Similarly, in Timor-Leste, two of the three interviewees³⁴ (Jose and Claudina) who mentioned feeling relief after giving testimony also reported that they received empathetic support or feedback after participating in the CAVR. Considering the responses of these interviewees, it is possible that having one's suffering acknowledged through the receipt of empathetic support can provide victims with a feeling of psychological security that may facilitate or enhance the potential cathartic benefits of giving testimony.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Hamber (1998) proposes, "psychological restoration and healing can only occur through providing the space for survivors of violence to feel heard and for every detail of the traumatic event to be re-experienced in a safe environment" (p. 10). Although Hamber (1998) does not refer to the concept of *voice* as

³⁴ Hugo suggested during our interview that he experienced a sense of catharsis after giving testimony, but he did not explicitly say that he received sympathy after telling his story during a CAVR national public hearing. He did however mention that he experienced this in relation to his participation in the Community Reconciliation Process, which was part of the CAVR's work. As mentioned, because the Solomon Islands TRC did not have an equivalent to the CRP in their work, comparisons were made only between experiences during the national public hearings. Thus, although Hugo's experience of having his suffering acknowledged is not included in this comparison, it is worth mentioning that the receipt of sympathy may have impacted upon his overall sense of catharsis from the process.

creating the link between being heard, telling one's story in a safe environment, and healing, his comments readily suggest that *voice* could be the mechanism that facilitates this relationship. Thus, it is possible to surmise that in order to enhance the possible cathartic benefits of giving testimony within truth commission processes, greater attention should be placed on providing victims with supportive social networks that will help to affirm and acknowledge their suffering. One aspect of truth commission processes that may affect the ability of victims to receive such support may be related to the congruence of the process with local cultural norms—an issue that will be further discussed below.

In addition to this possible relationship between the pathways of catharsis and social acknowledgment, interview responses from Solomon Islands suggest a relationship between catharsis and empowerment facilitated by victims publicly offering forgiveness. As mentioned in Chapter Five, comments made by Ruth and Wilson depict a link between feeling relief, the reduction of fear within their communities (aspects of catharsis), and forgiveness. I suggest that in addition to their sense of catharsis, these two interviewees experienced a degree of restored control, or empowerment. It has been suggested that through forgiveness, “the victim decides to let go of negative feelings towards the offender, no longer wishes to see the offender hurt or punished, and is willing to repair and continue the relationship with the offender”, which can in essence, assert a sort of moral high ground over the perpetrator by choosing not to seek revenge (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010, p. 402). Ruth commented that before telling her story and offering forgiveness, she sometimes felt angry when she saw people using her things that were stolen during the Tensions, but she mentioned that because of her feeling of being relieved and her decision to forgive those who had stolen her property, “I don't have any more anger in me for my things [that were lost during the Tensions]... I can talk freely to people who were my enemies”. Similarly, Wilson highlighted that he forgave those who harmed him during the TRC public hearing so that “we can make some really concrete reconciliation ourselves... after publicly telling my TRC story... actually I was more free and I was able to talk with more people”. As previously mentioned, these comments suggest that offering forgiveness helped these interviewees to overcome their anger toward their perpetrators and was thus a source of catharsis. However, it is also possible that overcoming feelings of anger and reducing vengeful desires may also be illustrative of a sense of empowerment. It has been

suggested that through acts of violence, perpetrators can be seen to have “illegitimately appropriated status and power over the victim” (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010, p. 404). By actively deciding to forgive and determining the way in which forgiveness will be offered, “forgiveness puts the victim in control and returns power to the victim” (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010, p. 404). Thus, having control over their expression of forgiveness can be seen to be indicative of *voice*, which may have facilitated the creation of two pathways toward healing for Ruth and Wilson, catharsis and empowerment.

Many have suggested that forgiveness is a process that can help to facilitate victim healing (Enright et al., 1998; Hope, 1987; Kaminer et al., 2001; Moon, 2009; Shuman & Smith, 2000; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). However, this relationship has been only sparsely investigated from an empirical standpoint in the context of truth commissions. With regard to the South African TRC, in Kaminer et al.’s (2001) study about the relationship between forgiveness and victims’ psychiatric status after the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it was found that low levels of forgiveness were associated with higher levels of PTSD, thus they propose that forgiveness may have a healing effect on victims. Stein et al. (2008) similarly assessed the relationship between psychological distress and forgiveness in relation to the TRC and discovered that forgiveness was inversely related to distress and anger (p. 467). Both of these studies, however, acknowledge that they did not determine a causal link between forgiveness and healing (Kaminer et al., 2001; Stein et al., 2008). Thus, considering the findings from my research in light of these two studies, I suggest that *voice* may begin to help to explain the causal relationship between forgiveness and healing. Although some have suggested that the receipt of an apology can increase forgiving attitudes (Allan, Allan, Kaminer, & Stein, 2006), it should be mentioned that neither Ruth or Wilson received an apology for the crimes committed against them in the past, thus apology did not appear to play a role in the healing effects of forgiveness for these interviewees. Extrapolating from the experiences of Ruth and Wilson giving forgiveness to their perpetrators during a TRC public hearing, I suggest that having *voice* by controlling the way in which forgiveness is offered can lead to feelings of catharsis and empowerment, which can thus lead to victim healing.

6.2.4 Limitations of *voice* and hindrances to pathways toward healing

In addition to how having *voice* can promote victim healing, there were various instances that illustrate ways in which *voice* was hindered. This, I argue, impeded the creation of pathways that may facilitate the healing process. Although my study is focussed on determining aspects of truth-telling that lead to healing, it is important to highlight the ways in which healing may have been compromised in order to understand how the healing potential of these processes can be enhanced. In both contexts, interviewees commented that there was some form of limitation placed on victim storytelling during the truth commission public hearing process. Interviewees commented that either the TRC or the CAVR did not provide enough opportunities for victims who may have wanted to give testimony. Although not all of those who mentioned this issue were personally affected by the limitation, one interviewee (Claudina) in Timor-Leste commented that her own story was limited by the CAVR as she was only asked to speak about the abuse she was subjected to during the Liquiça massacre despite also being victimised in relation to the Santa Cruz massacre. Such limitations on storytelling may have restricted *voice* by denying victims the opportunity to share their story and be heard by others which, as d'Estrée (2006) comments, can officially validate victims' experiences as true and worthy of attention. Arguably, such a limitation is a consequence of the temporal and budgetary restraints that each commission faced, but this issue represents a way in which victims may be disempowered by being either implicitly or explicitly denied the opportunity to tell their stories, which may fulfil their desire to let others know what happened to them in the past. Hence, it could be valuable for truth commissions to consider developing ways for all of those who desire to share their story to be able to do so, perhaps by encouraging the creation of local-level survivor groups where victims may be able to give testimony about their abuse, albeit in an unofficial capacity.

Another way in which *voice* may have been limited (that could be seen as a potential source of disempowerment) is reflected in the comments about 'forgetting' made by interviewees. In these contexts, forgetting may be equated to a form of silence that could have helped victims to restore a sense of control. In Chapter Two, silence was discussed as a tool that is sometimes used to reclaim or retain one's dignity (Lykes & Mersky, 2006) or "to protect oneself from shame, humiliation, or future repression" (Stanley, 2009, p. 65). Although not implicit to the investigation pursued in my field

research, which intended to understand ways in which *truth-telling*—which inherently implies the need for remembering and sharing—leads to healing in post-conflict settings, interviewees from both countries appeared to perceive ‘forgetting’ as an acceptable solution to overcoming their past trauma. For these interviewees, forgetting may relate to the importance of silence that allows victims to control the narrative of their trauma by choosing to not speak about it. In Solomon Islands, for example, where speaking about incidences of past conflict is considered to be culturally taboo, it may be more appropriate to ‘forget’ what has happened in the past. Forgetting, however, does not necessarily mean that the mark of the trauma has been erased (Shaw, 2007), but rather that traumatic experiences are not spoken about in favour of adhering to cultural norms that are intended to maintain social harmony.

Illustrating this, Azinta in Solomon Islands described that “we should forget about everything rather than go and re-open them [old wounds] again...I don’t think it’s a good thing...We shouldn’t talk about those [things in the past]”. Similarly, Caroline commented: “Why bring all these things up again? They’re forgotten now; they should be forgotten. Then the TRC comes and reminds us of those things we’ve forgotten”. These comments exemplify the sense that it may be preferable to “forget” about the past instead of sharing the stories of previous trauma in public. In addition, Jacinta from Timor-Leste said: “I have already forgotten about all of these things because I think they make me very sad” and remembering such thoughts just “remind[s] me about what suffering I experienced”. This comment indicates that in order to cope with her trauma, Jacinta endeavoured to forget about the past, although she was made to remember and share these experiences during her participation in the CAVR. These respondents spoke about their sense that it may have been better just to ‘forget’ what happened to them so that they could move on. Forgetting, or effectively, being silent, is illustrated as a coping mechanism which may facilitate healing through restoring individuals’ capacity to resume the course of their lives. Indeed, as Quinn (2011) suggests:

Not everyone agrees that memory is capable of playing a role of any importance in the process of moving forward...others argue that remembering horrific experiences such as the Holocaust is almost certainly guaranteed to produce a tainted future. Remembering, they argue, will serve only to poison present and future acts of living (p. 23).

In encouraging public truth-telling, truth commissions should consider that forgetting may be a valuable tool for some to enable themselves to continue living their lives and

caring for their families and it may also be reflective of cultural norms, as particularly illustrated in the interview responses in Solomon Islands. Within the public hearing component of truth commission processes, it is unlikely that victims will be able to control the environment in which they give testimony, the possible after effects of testifying, or the dissemination of their stories. Thus, ‘forgetting’, or silence, may be an effective tool of empowerment in the wake of mass violence as it results from victims having control over how their stories are conveyed, or having *voice*.

Voice, and thus healing, may have also been inhibited by the feelings of distress that some interviewees associated with their participation in the truth commission process. Although speaking about past trauma was a source of catharsis for some interviewees, a feeling of sadness related to remembering their past trauma in order to give public testimony was conveyed as being a negative part of the process. Although some have suggested that remembering can help to facilitate victim healing (Herman, 1992; J. Smyth & Pennebaker, 1999), Ross (2003), for example, has remarked that remembering traumatic experiences to be shared in public can be a source of distress in itself. This was illustrated by several interviewees who commented on the pain that they experienced in reliving their past traumas. As highlighted in previous chapters, other studies conducted in Rwanda, South Africa, and in relation to the Greensboro TRC, have similarly found that truth-telling can cause individuals to be revictimised or retraumatised (Androff, 2012; Backer, 2007; Brounéus, 2008b, 2010; Byrne, 2004). In light of the possible relationship mentioned above regarding the interaction between social acknowledgment and catharsis, it could be that retraumatisation may be more likely when victims do not feel as if they are supported by their families or communities after they give public testimony. This resonates with the findings from Brounéus’ (2008b) study, in which the women she interviewed experienced both physical and psychological insecurity before, during, and after they testified during Rwanda’s *gacaca* hearings. In my study, many of those who spoke of experiencing distress associated with giving testimony also experienced a sense of catharsis, which could in part be because they were not subjected to threats or abuse that compromised their sense of safety. Although some interviewees in Solomon Islands commented about being worried prior to giving testimony, no one indicated that these concerns came into fruition after they told their stories. Thus, having *voice* by controlling the

narrative of one's traumatic experiences in a safe and supportive environment may enhance the healing potential of truth-telling.

6.2.4.1 Enhancing opportunities for voice to better facilitate healing

Based on the interview responses from each case, it appears that *voice* may help to increase the healing potential of truth-telling within the context of truth commission public hearings. In comparing the two cases, many victims valued communicating their story to a wide audience, which served to contribute to their country's national narrative and/or increase awareness about past violence. In doing so, I have argued that victims were able to feel a sense of empowerment in transforming their past trauma into something meaningful, which Cienfuegos and Monelli (1983) have suggested is a factor of giving testimony that can facilitate healing. As several victims commented on being dissatisfied with the limited amount of victim testimony that each truth commission was able to hear, it appears that more victims desire this opportunity to share their story, which may help to restore a sense of control through communicating their past experiences.

Additionally, having *voice* through sharing the stories of past trauma with others may be a way in which catharsis can be facilitated. Illustrated in both cases, distress appeared to have resulted because of the pain associated with reliving past trauma. This potentially retraumatising aspect of truth-telling could be reduced by enhancing *voice* by allowing victims to better control the process of disclosing their stories in public and the provision of a safe and supportive environment in which to give testimony. One way to address this issue is by more thorough preparation of witnesses who will participate in truth-telling processes (Martin-Beristain, Paez, Rime, & Kanyangara, 2010; Staub, Pearlman, & Miller, 2003). If victims are made aware of what to expect from their participation in a truth commission, they may be more likely to feel in control during the process, which can contribute to the realisation of *voice*. Further, in light of the potential positive relationship between catharsis and social acknowledgment, having a strong support network present while giving testimony may be another way in which retraumatisation within truth-telling processes can be minimised (Staub, 2000; Staub et al., 2003). Several interviewees from my study indicated that this would have helped them to feel safe and supported as they gave

testimony, which are components that have been considered to facilitate victim healing (Ajdukovic, 2004; Herman, 1992).

As social acknowledgement was seen as a beneficial component of victim healing, more should be done to facilitate *voice* through promoting or ensuring that victims receive empathetic support and feedback after they give public testimony. In addition to the family or community support networks, the development of more effective and long-lasting victim support mechanisms may also help victims to feel as if their past trauma has been acknowledged. Previous truth commissions, such as the South African TRC have been criticised for encouraging victims to open up old wounds and then doing little to address the resulting pain that follows (De Ridder, 1997; Hamber, 2009). Although some victims may experience an immediate sense of catharsis after telling their story, negative psychological consequences may not resurface until weeks or months after participating in the Commission, at which time, help is often unavailable (De Ridder, 1997; Hamber, 2009; Laplante & Theidon, 2007). A lack of continued support that affirms that the wounds of past trauma are deep and must be addressed may detract from the initial feelings of validation that some victims experience from being involved in a truth commission.

6.2.5 Cultural sensitivity and healing

Although I did not set out to investigate the role of culture in victim healing within my study, it became apparent that respondents had several grievances related to cultural norms and the way in which the TRC and CAVR undertook their work, which was suggested to be a source of distress, dissatisfaction, confusion, and frustration. There were some differences between how respondents from each case spoke about these cultural incompatibilities. However, roughly half of the respondents in each research context indicated ways in which their country's truth commission did not appropriately consider cultural norms in some capacity illustrating that this overarching theme is similar between cases. One grievance expressed by interviewees was that sensitive stories, particularly those involving sexual violence, should not be spoken about in public or to people of the opposite gender. In both Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands the purity of women is highly valued, which means that females may be stigmatised when this purity is violated through, for example, acts of sexual abuse (Allden, 2007; Pollard, 2000a). Interview responses from both Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste

suggested that the cultural taboo surrounding speaking about sexual violence in public was a negative aspect of the truth commission process. Testifying about such past experiences may result in negative social reactions, thus impeding the receipt of empathetic support or feedback, which I have suggested is a facet of *voice* that can facilitate victim healing through acknowledging victims' suffering. Two interviewees in Timor-Leste (Jacinta and Cidalia) were negatively affected personally by sharing these types of stories during the CAVR public hearings, as after they testified about sexual abuse, they were shamed and stigmatised by their communities. This issue will be expanded upon further below. The cultural inappropriateness of publicly disclosing the experience of sexual violence in each country may have also precluded the reporting of these abuses as victims may have been fearful about how their stories would be received by others, or simply that these experiences were not suitable to be shared in public because of cultural norms. As mentioned in Chapter Two, Stanley's (2009) research in Timor-Leste also highlighted this issue with one interviewee indicating that her husband did not want her to testify in the CAVR because public knowledge of her abuse may bring shame to the family, although she personally desired the opportunity to give testimony. To this end, *voice* may have been hindered for victims in Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste as some victims who may have desired to share their stories might have been implicitly or explicitly denied the opportunity to do so.

Comments from several interviewees in Solomon Islands suggest that testifying in the TRC was, at least to some extent, at odds with the cultural norm in which past conflict is not spoken about in public as a means of maintaining social harmony. Interviewees remarked that this issue may have discouraged some victims from testifying and also caused some to worry that their testimony may provoke further conflict between groups or personal retaliatory attacks. It has been suggested that, in the wake of conflict, victims must feel that their culture is respected within processes that are designed to repair the consequences of trauma experienced from periods of mass violence (Allan & Allan, 2000; Kaminer et al., 2001; Staub & Pearlman, 2010). To this end, Allan and Allan (2000) remark: "Ideally, in order to rid survivors of these psychological sequelae, and to return to a pre-trauma level of functioning, survivors must receive treatment and have the opportunity to work through their experiences in a culturally supportive setting" (p. 465). In light of these propositions, it is possible that the aspects of cultural insensitivity of each truth commission process—particularly as related to the perceived

incompatibility between the public hearing programme and cultural norms—was not helpful in promoting victim healing. Thus, truth commissions should take care to develop culturally appropriate processes and support that are specifically adapted to the context in which they are initiated. The design of the process itself as well as follow-up support programmes should be considerate of cultural norms and needs in order to better promote victim healing. This recommendation relates to the development of culturally tailored victim support that relies on, or at least incorporates, traditional methods of healing as opposed to strictly Western conceptions of counselling.

6.2.6 Process clarity and unmet expectations

Another finding that was consistent between the two cases, but was not explicitly explored at the onset of my research, was that interviewees had negative feelings about what they perceived to be a lack of clarity about each truth commission process in addition to disappointment in the absence of substantive outcomes resulting from their participation. It can be argued that these issues were detrimental to victims' sense of healing, thus, should they be improved upon, healing may be more likely to be facilitated. Roughly half of the respondents in each country mentioned that they felt uncertain about some aspect of the truth commission process, including its true purpose and the outcomes that it was intended to achieve. I did not explicitly ask about respondents' perceptions about the clarity of the process, but this quickly emerged as a negative aspect of the process for interviewees. It has been suggested that the clarity of the procedures to be undertaken in restorative initiatives are important to victims, and when victims feel as if the procedures of the process were misrepresented, they can become frustrated (Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013). Interviewees in both Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands were confused about what would be done with their testimonies and when and if they would receive benefits from participating in their country's truth commission process. Additionally, comments from interviewees in both countries suggest that they were not clear about what each truth commission was actually intended to do. Interviewees in Timor-Leste indicated that they expected that justice for the architects of the violence perpetrated during the Indonesian occupation would follow their participation in the CAVR, although this was not a primary aim of this commission. Likewise, respondents in Solomon Islands questioned when and if the TRC would facilitate peace and grassroots reconciliation, which they had expected to result from the process; however, promoting village-level reconciliation was not

necessarily explicit in the TRCs mandate. Each of these expectations illustrates a disconnection between the anticipated outcome of the truth commission from the perspective of victims and the intended outcome as manifested by the truth commission itself, thus depicting the need for better communication about the role that truth commissions will play in victims' lives at the onset of their creation.

This issue can similarly be seen in regard to the South African TRC. Graybill and Lanegran (2004) recount that the goals of the South African TRC, particularly those relating to reconciliation, were not adequately clarified by the Commission, which left some victims disappointed. They write that although the South African TRC was predominantly concerned with “‘national unity and reconciliation’, the greater popular expectation was for the TRC to foster ‘interpersonal or individual reconciliation’” (Graybill & Lanegran, 2004, p. 7). Verwoerd (2000b) suggests that, in South Africa, there was “a lack of consensus about what can and what cannot be reasonably expected from this bold experiment in responding to (some of) the wrongs of our past”, which he believes is most likely the primary source of criticism and confusion about the Commission's work (p. 156). Ruth in Solomon Islands exemplified this issue when she recalled that she had expected that the TRC would facilitate “grassroots” reconciliation, but then she said, “I'm not really sure what their program and plan [for promoting this type of reconciliation] is”.

Ruth's comment illustrates another concern relating to the need of truth-telling processes to effectively communicate their purpose and goals to those who will participate. As mentioned, reconciliation is a key facet of Solomon Islands' culture (Braithwaite et al., 2010; Fraenkel, 2005; Jeffery, 2013). However, the TRC, which included the term ‘reconciliation’ in its name, actually had little if any relationship with traditional notions of reconciliation as understood in Solomon Islands. This disconnection between terminology may have been a source of confusion for Solomon Islanders as they were presented with an institution which uses a word that is very familiar to local people, but that did not necessarily intend to undertake the process of reconciliation in the way in which it is commonly understood. Although the TRC arguably intended to promote national reconciliation over (or at least in addition to) individual or community-level reconciliation, it is believed by some interviewees that it did little to promote either. This issue indicates that truth-telling institutions must be

keenly aware of the terminology that they use not only in their official names, but also in their mandates in order to avoid confusion between the goals intended by the institution itself and what individuals may expect based on local understanding of words and terminology used within the process.

In such cases where the purpose and goals of a commission are not necessarily clear to those who participate, victim expectations may be unreasonably high which can lead to disappointment when expectations for a particular outcome are not met (Doak & O'Mahony, 2006; Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013). Experiencing unmet expectations was suggested to be a factor detrimental to victim healing in Chapter One based on empirical findings from studies undertaken in South Africa by Backer (2007), Byrne (2004), and Hamber et al. (2000). Related to this issue, Doak and O'Mahony (2006) articulate that "there are also fears that victim participation may impose additional burdens on victims themselves, and that they could end up feeling even more dissatisfied if they believed their expectations were not met" (p. 158). Thus, receiving clear information about what they should expect from the process may be beneficial for victims and can temper unreasonably high expectations about the outcomes, which could lead to further feelings of disempowerment and frustration when those expectations are not met. The absence of clear communication about the intended result of the CAVR and TRC, which appeared to do nothing to moderate high expectations of the process, may have been at the heart of interviewees' disappointment and frustration with the lack of substantive outcomes that resulted from the process.

To this end, the majority of respondents (all seven in Timor-Leste and 10 out of 12 in Solomon Islands) indicated that they were disappointed because their participation in their country's truth commission had not facilitated the delivery of some substantive outcome. Although it has been suggested that "some [victims] may be satisfied with hearing the truth spoken for the first time", other victims desire some type of recompense for their suffering which may be an equally, if not more, prominent need after experiencing mass violence (Stanley, 2002, p. 8).

Interviewees in my study indicated that their expectations about what would result from their participation in the CAVR or TRC came from either being explicitly told they would receive some type of benefit by truth commission staff or that the anticipation of receiving a benefit was implicit in their decision to participate. Michael and Clarence

from Solomon Islands commented that they were told by individuals working with the TRC that they would be provided with some type of assistance after their participation. However, as Michael, for example, said, “it promised me...[but] when I look forward, I see the promise has not been done [kept]”. Although Cidalia in Timor-Leste mentioned that she was not directly told what sort of benefit she should anticipate from giving testimony, she said that she had expected to receive some type of recompense to recognise her suffering during the Indonesian occupation. Similar to Michael and Clarence, she stated that “the promises to the victims are not fulfilled”. One might have expected that interviewees in Timor-Leste would be more disappointed or resentful of the lack of outcome realised from their truth commission participation because of the greater amount of time elapsed between the end of the CAVR and the time at which data was collected for my research. However, the vast majority of respondents in each case indicated being disappointed with not receiving a result from their participation. Considering the responses from these two cases, in addition to findings related to the South African TRC, it can be seen that if victims do not feel as if their participation in a truth commission resulted in an outcome that would ameliorate their personal or family situation, they may feel disappointed regardless of the amount of time that has passed after giving testimony.

Based on findings from their studies about victim participation in the South African TRC, Byrne (2004), Hamber et al. (2000) and Backer (2007) similarly cite that victims had clearly expected to receive some type of substantive outcome from giving testimony to the Commission, including material, financial, and medical assistance or support. One of the interviewees from Hamber et al.’s (2000) study indicated that although they felt that the South African TRC was beneficial in the sense that it raised awareness about what happened during apartheid, “we were told that we would be helped but we’re still waiting for that. So in a way the TRC is good but on the other hand things have been slow in terms of delivering to victims”. In comparing the satisfaction of victims who gave public testimony or only submitted a statement to the South African TRC, Backer (2007) comments that it is possible that “the additional experience of testifying before the public hearings increased the victims’ expectations about the tangible (reparations, assistance) and intangible (acknowledgment, respect) benefits that would be forthcoming from the TRC, the new government and society at large” (p. 187). Although I cannot compare whether those I interviewed were more

disappointed with the lack of outcome from either the TRC or the CAVR than their counterparts who only submitted written statements, it could be inferred that, like respondents in Backer's (2007) study, the expectations of interviewees in my study were intensified because of their 'additional experience' of participation in the public hearing process. A further investigation of the relationship between how giving public testimony and submitting only a private statement affect victim expectations could be an interesting avenue for future research.

Regarding the relationship between clear communication about the work of truth commissions and the disappointment in a lack of substantive outcome from participation, Byrne's (2004) study in South Africa found that victims' expectations appeared to be tied to "miscommunications or a lack of clarity on the part of the TRC in educating the public regarding its mandate" (p. 247). The results from my study indicate that process clarity, including the provision of clear information about the purpose and intended outcomes of a truth commission process, is important for tempering high expectations that may be unrealistic given the limited capacity and resources of truth commissions and the emerging states in which they are created. In concert with the similar findings in South Africa, this issue is evidently a challenge faced by truth commissions across multiple contexts and should thus be managed in order to avoid further disempowering or disappointing victims who give public testimony in hopes of receiving recompense for their suffering but do not ultimately receive any tangible benefit.

This sense of disempowerment may be related to the lack of outcome realised from truth commission participation in that there was a lack of a sense of reciprocity for their testimony from the truth commission or government through the receipt of some benefit or assistance. This can be particularly detrimental as it may further instil power imbalances that Staub (2011) has suggested can perpetuate the cycle of victimisation. Additionally, in general, truth commissions have been criticised for objectifying or instrumentalising victims in order to achieve their greater macro-level goals without providing substantive personal benefits (Doak, 2011; Humphrey, 2003; Robins, 2012). Stanley (2009) calls attention to this issue as she comments that "victims often find that they are subject to further denigration or control and that their needs are ultimately downplayed during or following these mechanisms" (p. 55). Thus, this may have been a

further source of disempowerment for those victims in my study who felt “used” by the process. The lack of outcome may be considered as a failure of the process to officially recognise the suffering of victims during the period of mass violence, which can be seen as a factor which inhibits the healing process of victims. Not only may the lack of outcome be experienced negatively from an intangible, psychological perspective, but also from a material perspective because the lack of tangible monetary or material assistance may further hinder victims’ ability to restore their livelihoods, which has been considered to be important for healing on a psychological level (De la Rey & Owens, 1998). Hence, as these issues appeared to have a negative effect on victims’ healing process, it can be surmised that if truth commissions more clearly communicate their purpose and intended aims and also deliver on promises to victims, healing may be more readily facilitated.

Thus, it may be important that truth commissions take considerable care in communicating their purpose and goals to those who will participate. As evidenced in my study, many interviewees were unclear about what the benefit of the truth commission would be for them and several had expectations from the commissions that were unrelated to the goals specified in their mandates. Byrne (2004) suggests that the disappointment and frustration that can result from unmet expectations can even be a source of retraumatisation, hence, this problem needs to be mitigated in future truth commission processes.

One way to address this issue is to ensure that statement-takers and other truth commission staff do not inflate the expectations of victims by promising them outcomes that may never be realised. For example, Michael from Solomon Islands had been told explicitly by those that interviewed him that he would receive some sort of rehabilitation, particularly material support, after he testified. However, when this did not occur, he was disappointed and confused about what his role was in the TRC. In relation to the South African TRC, Henry (2000) comments:

The TRC created an expectation within the hearts and minds of those who came before it that it would be able to provide a form of immediate reparation. This happened at different stages and levels but was compounded by the statement-takers and the Commissioners (p. 168).

This illustrates that the problem of statement-takers suggesting greater benefits than might actually be realised has occurred across multiple contexts. It could be that the

optimism of the statement-takers about the truth commission process is perceived by victims as the promise of benefits. This may be understandable, but it does nothing to temper the expectations of victims who may be further hurt when they receive nothing from their participation. To this end, Backer (2007) has commented that when victims are asked about what they may like to receive from a TRC process (whether or not they are told it will occur), this can be taken as a tacit promise of benefits to come. When such benefits do not result, victims may be inclined to further distrust the new government and/or its institutions. Thus, in order to promote a sense of process control and empowerment as well as avoid frustration and disappointment, victims should be told explicitly what they should and should not expect from their participation in a truth-telling process. Both the development of community awareness meetings, which was suggested by several of my interviewees in Solomon Islands, and better training of statement-takers and truth commission staff could help to facilitate increased clarity about the purpose and goals of truth commission processes, thus allaying the potential for disappointment that may hinder victims' sense of healing.

6.2.6.1 The role of truth and apology in mitigating insufficient process outcomes

Another finding related to the outcomes of truth commission processes is that several interviewees in each case suggested that truth revelation or receiving an apology may have had a mediating effect on the lack of realisation of other anticipated outcomes. In Timor-Leste, roughly half of the interviewees indicated that they desired that justice be done to reckon with the abuses committed by the Indonesian military. Among these interviewees, Jose and Hugo proposed that the revelation of truth may be more satisfying than justice, perhaps because they perceived it to be a more realistic expectation in light of the lack of political will and capability to prosecute past crimes. Justice has been described as a means through which healing may be achieved, but truth revelation has also been considered to be a component of healing for victims of mass violence (Aldana, 2006; Doak, 2011; Hamber, 2009). As illustrated in Chapter One, victims interviewed by Byrne (2004), Hamber et al. (2000), and Stanley (2009), were similarly disappointed with the insufficient perpetrator engagement, and thus lack of truth about past crimes, in the truth commissions of South Africa and Timor-Leste. Based on these findings as well as the comments from Jose and Hugo, the need for truth revelation following periods of mass violence can also be considered an important part of facilitating a sense of healing.

Further, although not generally specified as an explicit goal of transitional justice processes, interviewees from both Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands suggested that the receipt of an apology may assuage the disappointment of not receiving other outcomes from the transitional justice process. Jose in Timor-Leste, for example, insinuated that receiving an apology from the Indonesian government might lessen the sting of the failure of retributive justice measures to bring the ‘big fish’ perpetrators to justice as he said, “there is no justice, so at least come to apologise”. Although referring more directly to the specific perpetrators that harmed him, Charles in Solomon Islands mentioned that he would prefer an apology from those that abused him to compensation as he remarked: “But what I would like is that they must come out clearly to me and apologise and come to say ‘sorry’. That’s all I want. To say, ‘You must pay such-and-such compensation’, that I’m not interested in”. This illustrates another example of how apologies may soothe the frustration or disappointment that can result from not receiving more substantive outcomes in the aftermath of mass violence.

Van Camp and Wemmers (2013) propose that “the offender’s recognition of responsibility and apology could restore the image of a just world, which was disrupted by the victimization” (p. 126). Thus, receiving an apology from their perpetrator may help to affirm that what they have suffered is wrong, which may help to restore a sense of dignity (Staub, 2000). When perpetrators acknowledge and validate victims’ plight by offering an apology, this action may also “impl[y] that other facets necessary for recovery are forthcoming, namely safety and reconnection” (d’Estrée, 2006, p. 114). Although it has been suggested that justice and reparations are both means that may facilitate healing, the receipt of an apology has also been proposed to be a potential source of healing (Doak & O’Mahony, 2006; King, 2011; Staub, 2000). For the above interviewees, it appears that an apology might have served to acknowledge their past suffering in the absence of justice or compensation, which may have been beneficial for their sense of healing.

Overall, although the sample population of victims interviewed in this study is small, the comparison of the least similar cases of Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands begins to provide insight into how truth-telling can facilitate victim healing. In each case, *voice* appeared to enhance the healing potential of truth-telling by facilitating the creation of three pathways toward healing: empowerment, catharsis, and social acknowledgment.

The findings, in concert with existing literature, have also suggested that when *voice* was limited, healing may have also been hindered. Hence, it appears that providing opportunities for *voice* to be realised within the context of truth commission public hearings may be important for promoting healing. Furthermore, interview responses from both cases illustrate how inconsistencies between cultural norms and the work of the CAVR and TRC were perceived negatively by interviewees and may also have impacted upon the healing potential of each truth-telling process. Hence, it is likely that greater attention placed on victims' cultural needs when they participate in truth commissions may help to improve the possibility for healing to result. Lastly, the absence of clear communication about the purpose and goals of each truth commission along with a disappointment in the lack of substantive outcomes resulting from participation in the process were dominant themes among interviews in both cases. Considering this finding along with findings from previous research, I have suggested that these issues were detrimental to victims' sense of healing. Thus, it is likely that improving upon these issues in future truth commissions may more readily encourage healing. Having now discussed the similarities between the field research findings obtained from Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands in concert with previous research, the following section will outline three main areas of difference between the two cases.

6.3 Differences between Cases

6.3.1 Differences in primary pathways between cases: Empowerment and catharsis

On the whole, while the healing pathways created by *voice* were quite similar, there was an interesting difference in the degree to which empowerment and catharsis were experienced between the case studies. In Solomon Islands, catharsis was the most widely experienced pathway, whereas in Timor-Leste, empowerment appeared to be the most prominent. The majority of interviewees in Timor-Leste discussed satisfaction with letting others know what happened during the Indonesian occupation, and being able to contribute to their country's national narrative, which I have suggested is an aspect of *voice* that facilitated a sense of empowerment. In Solomon Islands, on the other hand, the majority of interviewees reported experiencing a reduction of physical and psychological symptoms, a minimisation of worry and fear, and a restored ability to return to work, which can be seen to be indicative of a sense of catharsis.

So, why may the primary pathway depicted in each case differ? As mentioned previously, many have suggested that periods of repression are often characterised by the silencing of victims, which can conceal the truth about crimes and can perpetuate feelings of marginalisation, isolation, and disempowerment (d'Estrée, 2006; Danieli, 1984; Hayner, 1994; McKinney, 2008; Stanley, 2009). In Timor-Leste, individuals were victimised by a foreign-led military regime which sought to control the population through usurping their power by way of repression. As many of those interviewed were highly involved in the struggle for independence from Indonesia, the ultimate achievement of independence following the UN-led referendum in 1999 was the ideal outcome for those who were part of the resistance. This could be why there was notable satisfaction among some interviewees about their ability to communicate what they endured during the occupation in order to secure their freedom from Indonesia, which I argue was the primary source of empowerment in this context. Victimisation in Solomon Islands, on the other hand, occurred as a result of two indigenous ethnic groups fighting over land and resources (particularly at the onset of the conflict) and not a resistance against a foreign occupying power who aimed to quell resistance against their leadership. To this end, it is possible that victims in Solomon Islands may have experienced feelings of marginalisation or disempowerment to a lesser extent because they were not dealing with abuses inflicted by an occupying power. On the other hand, victims in Timor-Leste perhaps had more to regain in terms of establishing a sense of control than did victims in Solomon Islands. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that the sense of empowerment that resulted from contributing to their country's national narrative was the aspect of *voice* that was most commonly alluded to as being beneficial for these interviewees.

In further comparing the two cases, it is possible that the degree of trauma exposure experienced by victims played a role in the difference between the higher prevalence of catharsis experienced in Solomon Islands than in Timor-Leste. Although I did not endeavour to assess victims' degree of trauma exposure or level of PTSD, the level of trauma collectively experienced during the Tensions in Solomon Islands was arguably less severe than during the Indonesian occupation in Timor-Leste. Srinivasa Murthy (2007) has remarked that in assessing existing research regarding the impact of mass violence on mental health, there is a "direct correlation between the degree of trauma and the amount of the psychological problems...the greater the exposure to trauma–

both physical and psychological—the more pronounced are the symptoms” (p. 189). Thus, because of the relatively lower amount of trauma exposure in general in Solomon Islands, catharsis might have been more readily facilitated. To illustrate, loss of property was one of the most commonly reported human rights violation in Solomon Islands (TRC Report, Vol. II), which was similarly mentioned as a source of victimisation by the majority of those I interviewed in this research context³⁵. In Timor-Leste, on the other hand, the most commonly reported non-lethal violations were torture, detention, and ill-treatment (CAVR, 2006 Vol. 6). It has been suggested that victims of violent crime experience a higher degree of traumatisation than do victims of, for example, property crime (Van Camp & Wemmers, 2013). Thus, although victims in Solomon Islands were also subjected to violent crime, it is possible that the large number of property crimes during the Tensions resulted in relatively lower levels of perceived victimisation, which may in turn have allowed catharsis to be experienced more readily than for victims in Timor-Leste. Because this issue appeared to be much more prevalent in Solomon Islands than in Timor-Leste, one could surmise that the duration and severity of conflict plays a role in the potential for victims to experience catharsis, which for some interviewees was also related to perceived improvements in their quality of life. This issue could suggest that truth commissions may be more beneficial in promoting improvements in victims’ quality of life when the degree and extent of trauma experienced is relatively low.

6.3.2 Desired outcomes of truth-telling processes: Justice v. reconciliation

Another difference between the two cases relates to outcomes victims wanted to result from their participation in the truth commission. Although the majority of interviewees in both cases commented on a desire to receive either material or monetary recompense for their suffering, two other desired outcomes were mentioned, namely, justice and reconciliation. In Timor-Leste, interviewees indicated that they wanted those most responsible for atrocities committed during the Indonesian occupation to be brought to justice. On the other hand, the need for justice was not mentioned by any interviewee in Solomon Islands. Instead, interviewees suggested that they desired reconciliation and/or peace. In each respective case, justice and reconciliation were discussed as important for victims to be able to restore the capacity to live their lives. In Timor-Leste, for

³⁵ This information was provided voluntarily by interviewees to contextualise their responses to other questions as I did not specifically ask about incidences of past abuse.

example, Alberto commented that he expects that justice “can recover other people that still feel traumatised” after their suffering during the Indonesian occupation. Although two interviewees in Timor-Leste mentioned that the reconciliation which was undertaken in the Community Reconciliation Process was beneficial, as Claudina said, “there is reconciliation, but it can’t just stop there. The search for justice must keep going!”. In relation to Stanley’s (2009) research in Timor-Leste, one interviewee similarly highlighted that “there must be justice...how can we make reconciliation without justice?...There will only be good relations among the people if there is justice....The peace can only be maintained if there is justice” (p. 109).

As mentioned in Chapter One, securing retributive justice has been viewed to be valuable in facilitating victim healing (Kira et al., 2006; Moon, 2009) as it can provide official acknowledgment (David & Choi, 2005; Weinstein & Stover, 2004) and may help to re-establish feelings of control (Hamber, 2009; Kira et al., 2006; Villa-Vicencio, 2006). Reflecting on Brandon Hamber’s research in South Africa, Doak (2011) writes that

although many victims appreciated the need to pursue reconciliation for the greater good, they felt the impunity afforded to perpetrators was unfair to them at a personal level. Unsurprisingly, the absence of substantive justice was ‘psychologically difficult’ for many victims to accept (p. 284).

Although victims may desire justice as they sense that it will restore a balance of power between themselves and the perpetrator, or will officially acknowledge that what they experienced in the past was wrong in the eyes of the state, it has often been the case that *if* retributive justice is sought in transitional nations, it frequently results in the acquittal of those most responsible for past abuse. In describing how Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and the Agrupación de Familiares Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD) in Chile pursued justice after the fall of the brutal military regimes in each country, Stanley (2002) comments that victims were essentially victimised twice—once during the period of state repression and again because of “the state’s disregard for implementing the rule of law over those who unleashed systematic terror on the nation’s people” (pp. 8-9). As such, victims may sense that if justice is achieved, a sense of healing may follow; however, when human rights abusers ultimately escape punishment through pardons or acquittals, victims may experience a renewed sense of disempowerment in the end. This caveat is not mentioned to downplay the potential

role that justice may play in victims' healing process, but is intended to highlight the potential shortcomings of post-conflict criminal trials in securing justice for widespread human rights violations. Considering the linkages between justice and healing in existing literature and the above responses from interviewees in Timor-Leste, justice appears to be a valuable need that must be addressed for the East Timorese people in the wake of the Indonesian occupation in order to better facilitate healing.

In contrast to the desire for justice mentioned in Timor-Leste, respondents in Solomon Islands highlighted their desire and need for reconciliation. Ruth, for example, commented that "we have to reconcile with the village people...That reconciliation we still wait for". She suggested that in order to 'move on; from the violence perpetrated during the Tensions, reconciliation was necessary. Caroline directly spoke to this point when she said that participating in a church-led reconciliation ceremony helped her to heal from her experiences during the Tensions. Because of the high value placed on reconciliation in Solomon Islands' culture, achieving this goal—particularly on the local level as mentioned by interviewees in my study—may contribute to a sense of healing. As described in Chapter One, reconciliation can increase victims' sense of safety and security by reassuring them that previous violence will not reoccur (David & Choi, 2005; Staub & Pearlman, 2010; Villa-Vicencio, 2000b). A sense of closure can also be facilitated when recompense is provided by the perpetrator, which can mark the end of a conflict (Stanley, 2002), which has also been specifically described in relation to reconciliation in Solomon Islands (Jeffery, 2013).

As the nature of conflict in Timor-Leste was a foreign-led military regime who abused the East Timorese population, while the Solomon Islands conflict was based on ethnic tensions between Solomon Islanders, it is perhaps not surprising that pursuing justice for the Indonesian military and leaders who no longer live in the country took priority over reconciliation with these leaders in the case of Timor-Leste. Similarly, both because of the culturally ingrained importance of reconciliation in Solomon Islands as well as the identity of the perpetrators—who are Solomon Islanders and who continue to live in close proximity to those they victimised—the desire for reconciliation over justice may be logical. Certainly the ability and capacity of truth-telling processes to meet these large-scale societal needs (which are also evidenced as individual victims' needs) is often limited in economically fragile post-conflict settings such as Timor-Leste and

Solomon Islands. However, these aspects appear to be beneficial to victims' sense of healing and thus effort should be made to promote the realisation of these goals in post-conflict settings. In light of these differing themes from the interviewees, it can be seen that truth-telling processes may be more effective at promoting victim healing if they more aptly consider the context in which they are created and the unique needs of victims that may result from the type of conflict encountered.

6.3.3 Negative social reactions to testimony in Timor-Leste

In contrast to the above discussion of how receiving empathetic support and feedback helped to acknowledge victims' previous suffering and was thus healing, in Timor-Leste, it was found that social acknowledgment was lacking for some interviewees. Comments from Cidalia and Jacinta suggest that they felt worse after giving testimony, which is likely because of the negative way in which their testimonies about sexual violence were regarded by members of their communities, leading them to feel shunned and embarrassed. As there is a cultural taboo that surrounds speaking about this type of abuse in public in Timor-Leste (Allden, 2007; Harris Rimmer, 2010; Wandita et al., 2006), the public hearing component of the CAVR may have opened these women up to further vulnerability and marginalisation. In this way, it appears that the relative lack of cultural sensitivity of the truth-telling process inhibited their ability to receive empathetic support that would acknowledge the wrongness of their past abuse. As speaking about sexual abuse in public can result in feelings of shame and ostracisation for victims, the CAVR's encouragement of sharing these stories during public hearings may have precluded the potential for these women to experience a sense of healing because their sensitive stories were destined to be regarded derisively by others because of cultural norms.

Regarding Solomon Islands, in the final report of the TRC, it was mentioned that sexual violence was vastly underreported in relation to its occurrence during the Tensions (TRC, 2012). According to the transcripts of their TRC testimonies, no interviewee in Solomon Islands spoke about personally experiencing sexual violence during a public hearing. Many victims may have chosen not to reveal stories about experiencing sexual violence, because as Ruth, for example, commented during our interview: "If I was raped, I cannot approach a man [during the statement-taking process]", suggesting that even if she had experienced this type of abuse, she did not speak about it to anyone

associated with the TRC because of gender norms. It is possible that because the women I interviewed in Solomon Islands did not publicly disclose stories about this type of trauma, they were not scorned by their communities after giving testimony in the way Jacinta and Cidalia in Timor-Leste had been. This point highlights the need for truth-telling processes to consider cultural norms and traditions in undertaking their work, as neglecting to take into account how victims' stories will be received can result in consequences, such as shame and loss of dignity (Stanley, 2009), which may inhibit the healing process. As mentioned, the experience of sexual violence can be particularly detrimental for women not just because of the resulting trauma, but also because of the social stigma that is often attached to these types of violations (Allden, 2007; Brounéus, 2008b; McKay, 2000). Thus, creating a process in which victims of sexual violence are encouraged to publicly disclose these abuses can open them up to further vulnerability and marginalisation. Ultimately, it could be argued that if a truth-telling process takes into consideration the cultural context in which it is created, the likelihood that victims will receive empathetic support after giving testimony may be increased, which has been seen to contribute to the healing process for victims (Aldana, 2006; Allan & Allan, 2000; Staub, 2011).

The interview responses from Cidalia and Jacinta also relate to the findings of Brounéus' (2008b) study undertaken in Rwanda as well as Backer's (2007) research in South Africa. Although Jacinta and Cidalia did not express that they felt physically unsafe after giving testimony, their feelings of shame and lost dignity indicate feelings of psychological insecurity after the CAVR. Findings from Backer's (2007) study—in which he conducted a survey of 404 direct and indirect victims of apartheid related violence in South Africa as well as focus group discussions involving 70 victims—illustrate a similar outcome from victim participation in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Although the presentation of his results largely does not distinguish between victims who gave private statements or those that gave public testimony to the South African TRC (he mentions that 17 per cent of the sample population gave public testimony), he proposes that one reason why a higher level of participation in the Commission, i.e. giving public testimony, did not result in higher approval of the process was because “some victims who testified actually felt stigmatized, a result of being in the public spotlight” (p. 187). Backer (2007) mentions that this was particularly highlighted in the focus group discussions where “participants

frequently described being marginalized, shunned, ostracized, and abandoned by their community and, sadly, even their own family members” (p. 187). In addition, responses from female victims of the Rwandan genocide interviewed by Brounéus (2008b) indicate that they similarly felt insecure and isolated both during and after testifying in Rwanda’s *gacaca* hearings. As Brounéus (2008b) comments, one reason for this sense of insecurity could be because of the presence of former *génocidaires* (literally, those who committed genocide) at the *gacaca* hearings, which could have caused “survivors [to] feel threatened in this environment” (p. 72). Based on the primary characteristics of perpetrators in Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands, one might assume that the outcome of insecurity would have been more likely to occur in Solomon Islands where all of those responsible for past abuse were Solomon Islanders that continue to live within the same communities as those they victimised. However, no interviewee in Solomon Islands indicated feeling this type of insecurity after giving testimony to the TRC. Instead, these feelings of shame and social ostracisation were only alluded to by two female respondents in Timor-Leste, which as mentioned, could be because of the type of stories that they revealed during the public hearings. As Hamber et al. (2000) propose, “the process of healing depends on how we reveal, the context of the revealing, and what it is that we are revealing” (p. 19). It has further been suggested that negative social reactions to victim testimony may inhibit healing (Campbell et al., 2001; Laxminarayan, 2012), which can occur from disclosing stories of sexual abuse in public (Aguirre & Pietropaoli, 2008; Allden, 2007; Brounéus, 2008b; Harris Rimmer, 2010; Kendall & Staggs, 2005; Stanley, 2009). The relationship between what one shares in public and the environment in which they share appears to be particularly relevant in the context of my study when considering the responses that Jacinta and Cidalia received from their communities after giving testimony. Thus, these findings further support the need for truth commission processes to consider the risks that may be associated with public truth-telling.

6.4 Conclusion

As an exploratory, theory-building study, this thesis has begun to shed light on one piece of the complex puzzle relating to why truth-telling is experienced to be both harmful and beneficial to victims of mass violence. In line with theoretical expectations, *voice* was found to be a possible causal mechanism that facilitates the creation of three pathways toward victim healing: empowerment, catharsis, and social

acknowledgment. As such, it appears to be important that future truth commissions endeavour to enhance opportunities for victims to have *voice* by providing a forum in which they can communicate their story to a wide audience, if they choose to do so. It is important that victims are able to control the narrative of their trauma and transform the experience into something meaningful by, for example, contributing to their country's national narrative and/or raising awareness about past violence, thus restoring their sense of control. Further, the experience of sharing their stories with others appeared to be a source of catharsis for some interviewees, which may be enhanced by having a safe and supportive environment in which to give testimony. *Voice* can also be promoted by ensuring that victims have a support network available when they give testimony so that they may be more likely to receive social acknowledgment of their suffering. To this end, it also appears to be important that truth commissions take into account the cultural norms of the context in which they are created to ensure that public storytelling does not result in reactions from community or family members that are detrimental to victims. As some cultures may not encourage speaking about past incidences of conflict, this is another issue that should be considered by truth-telling entities. Encouraging victims to share stories in a way that conflicts with their cultural beliefs can invoke a sense of worry or distress because of both the inherent disconnection between the act of telling and one's beliefs, as well as the potential for retaliatory attacks.

It was also found that the lack of clear communication about the purpose and goals of the truth commission process coupled with the lack of outcome resulting from victims' participation led to feelings of frustration and disappointment. I have argued that these issues may have been inhibiting to victims' sense of healing and thus it could be that clear communication and the realisation of substantive outcomes can be additional pathways toward victim healing. Although these shortcomings may be reflective of the lack of political will of emerging nations or the limited capacity of truth commissions themselves and are not necessarily intentional, I would argue that if it is unlikely that transitional states will be able to deliver on either explicit or tacit promises, perhaps they should question whether to begin the operation of these mechanisms at all. If victims are left waiting for some result that they expected to occur from their participation, they may feel further disenfranchised and disempowered, which may be a recipe for renewed conflict.

As mentioned, this thesis has begun to fill one of the gaps in existing research in the field of transitional justice by undertaking an empirical, comparative study of the relationship between truth-telling and victim healing. However, more remains to be done. The findings obtained from this study have built upon the theory that truth-telling can be beneficial for victims of mass violence, but it would be useful to further test these results in other research contexts. In considering the difference between the degree to which interviewees experienced improvements in their quality of life between Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands, I have suggested that truth commissions may actually be better suited for settings which experienced relatively low levels of intra-state conflict³⁶. As illustrated in the case of Timor-Leste, it is possible that benefits such as feeling a sense of empowerment from contributing to one's national narrative may also result from truth-telling in settings that have experienced high intensity conflict; however, perhaps future truth commission initiated in similar contexts would be seen as more legitimate and effective if their mandates emphasise this potential benefit over 'healing' where victims may inherently expect that their personal or family situations will be ameliorated after their participation.

Conducting a similar study in contexts which experienced different types of conflict could be valuable for testing this proposition. Also, to further examine the value of *voice* as a causal mechanism that links truth-telling to victim healing, it could be useful to investigate whether individuals who gave public or private testimony experienced the process of storytelling to be more or less beneficial for their sense of healing. Additionally, to further determine the role of truth-telling in victim healing, a comparison could be made between victims who gave public testimony, those who only submitted a private statement, and those who did not participate in the process at all.

In all, this thesis has contributed to existing transitional justice literature by beginning to shed light on the possible pathways that lead from truth-telling to healing through the causal mechanism of *voice*. However, this area of study must continue. It is crucial that these institutions which are developed with goals such as promoting victim healing and restoring the dignity of those that have suffered do not further harm victims who choose to participate. In inviting victims to be part of a purportedly healing enterprise that intends to contribute to building a context capable of sustainable peace, it is essential

³⁶ This suggestion is made particularly regarding the national public hearing component of truth commissions, which was the focus of this thesis investigation.

that victims are not side-lined by more macro-level goals which further disempower and marginalise them. Healing is a long-term and complex process for victims of mass violence and must be treated as such by the institutions that assert themselves to be designed to address victims' needs.

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Appendix One: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire

I would like to start with a few questions to find out more about you.

1. Where are you from?
 2. Are you married?
 3. Do you have any children?
 4. Do you work? What do you do?
 5. Have you gone to school?
-
1. [Topic 1] General perceptions about truth commission participation
 - a. I would like to invite you to talk about your experience telling your story to the TRC/CAVR.
 - i. Did you feel that telling your story was a good experience? If so, how was it good? Was there anything that made telling your story a bad experience? If so, how was it bad?
 - b. Did you expect to gain something from telling your story in the TRC/CAVR? What was it?
 - i. Did telling your story to the TRC/CAVR meet your expectations? If so, how?
 1. If not, what was missing?
 - c. In what ways did telling your story to the TRC/CAVR make your life better or easier?
 - i. In what ways did telling your story in the TRC/CAVR made your life worse or harder?
 - d. When you were telling your story, did you think you were listened to?
 - i. If so, what made you think this way?
 - ii. If not, what made you think this way?
 - iii. Did the people you told your story to feel sympathy for you? How did you know?
 - e. What did you like best about telling your story in the TRC/CAVR?
 - i. What did you like least?
 - f. How could the experience of telling your story to the TRC/CAVR have been better?
 2. [Topic 2] Other factors related to healing
 - a. Sometimes the people that caused harm offer an apology to those they harmed or their families.

- i. Did you receive an apology from the person that harmed you?
 - 1. If yes, did that make you feel good or bad? How?
 - 2. Does receiving an apology have an effect on your ability to recover from the Tensions/the Indonesian occupation?
 - b. Did you receive any compensation as a victim? From whom?
 - i. If yes, how did that make you feel?
 - c. Sometimes those who harmed people during conflict are shamed or humiliated by the public after they tell their story in a truth commission.
 - i. Did this happen to anyone that told their story to the TRC/CAVR?
 - 1. If yes, how did that make you feel?
- 3. [Topic 3] Effect of public truth-telling on personal healing
 - a. The Tensions/Indonesian occupation brought about many difficult experiences for many people.
 - i. Do you think telling your story to the TRC/CAVR helped you recover from the Tensions/Indonesian occupation?
 - 1. If yes, how did it help?
 - 2. If no, how did it not help?
 - ii. How could the TRC/CAVR have better helped you to recover after the Tensions/Indonesian occupation?
- 4. [Topic 4] Counselling and healing
 - a. Did you go to counselling before or after the TRC/CAVR?
 - i. How do you think that helped?