Chapter 6
Collective Memory in the Basque Country: The Interplay Between Construals of Victimhood and Perpetratorship

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6.1 Introduction

Communities that are transitioning to peace face a need to find answers to a series of painful questions. What has happened? Who is responsible for what has occurred? Who are the victims of violence that has taken place (see Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019)? Usually, no single memory emerges, but rather multiple, frequently conflicting, “memories against memories” arise while other memories fade (Jelin, 2003). In the case of traumatic political pasts, which bring major threats to national cohesion and critical changes in social relationships (Hilton & Liu, 2008), the plurality and the dynamic nature of narratives about the past are even more evident, and their complexity and emergence (vs. silencing) may depend on political interests.

Yet, research on narratives of collective victimhood and perpetratorship has frequently failed to account for this complexity. It often has studied only selected conflict and post-conflict societies from Western societies and the Global North (Vollhardt, 2020; see also Chaps. 4 and 5 in this volume) and mostly contexts where the moral roles of victims and perpetrators are clear-cut or binary. However, these
mutually exclusive construals are too simplistic and frequently counterproductive for a transition to peace (e.g., Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019; Dixon et al., 2020; Jankowitz, 2017). Even in the European context, many cases of conflict are underrepresented in the literature, frequently because they do not “fit” neat models and theories based on the dominant oversimplified understanding of intergroup relations. In reality, most violent conflicts involve “dual” social roles of groups involved as both victims and perpetrators (e.g., SimanTov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014). Moreover, in the cases of within-group conflicts, such as State violence perpetrated against the citizens of a country, the “sides” of the conflict are particularly “blurred” and difficult to define (Bobowik et al., 2017). Addressing these issues in the context of collective remembering of experiences of victimization and perpetratorship is of utmost importance because collective memories have been shown to carry long-standing consequences, including difficulties in repairing damaged social relations. Thus, there is a pressing need to unveil the complexity of an intergroup conflict that goes beyond mere differentiation between “us” and “them” (Dixon et al., 2020) and top-down approaches to transitional justice (see Chap. 4 in this volume), encompassing the reality of transitional societies and thus enriching our understanding of intergroup relations more broadly. This can be achieved by taking into account sensitivities of the sociopolitical context of interest, such as multiple and intersecting experiences of victimhood and perpetratorship (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019).

To expand research on collective victimhood and responsibility to less visible and more complex sociopolitical realities, we study narratives of past collective violence in the context of the Basque Country. This region suffered one of the most enduring violent political conflicts in Europe. In this context, victimhood and perpetratorship social roles are frequently intertwined or blurred. For example, members of the police bodies have been responsible for the deaths and tortures in the framework of the State repression but are also victims of threats and murders by the leftist Basque nationalist and independentist organization Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA, meaning “Basque Country and Homeland”). In parallel, ETA members have been perpetrators of terrorist attacks but also victims of State repression. Finally, some have suffered from multiple forms of victimization, namely, State violence during the Francoist regime and ETA attacks while occupying political responsibilities in the democratic period.

This chapter includes five sections. In the first section, we introduce the context of the Basque Country, largely underrepresented in research on transitional justice and peace. Second, we define collective responsibility and review literature on the importance of perpetratorship construals in transitional societies, as well as present data on their structure in the Basque context. Third, we identify and contextualize collective victimhood, providing empirical evidence for the existing types of collective narratives of suffering in the Basque Country. Fourth, we highlight the need for addressing the complexity of social roles in transitional societies and describe the interplay between the construals of responsibilities and victimhood in the Basque society and their link with personal experiences of victimization. Finally, we delineate implications for practitioners and researchers in transitional justice and peace.
6.2 The Basque Context

The conflict over the independence of the Basque Country has been the longest-running violent conflict in Western Europe (Espiau, 2006). In response to Franco’s dictatorship and the repression of Basque culture, language, and self-governance, an armed organization, ETA, emerged in 1959. Over the decades of the conflict, ETA caused 837 deaths, with hundreds of people kidnapped or injured (1959–2009). In 2011, ETA declared a permanent and general ceasefire.

At the same time, State forces were involved in political violence during the dictatorship but also in democracy. The Anti-Terrorist Liberation Groups (GAL) (i.e., parapolitical groups that worked between 1983 and 1987) are responsible for 27 murders, mainly including ETA members or Basque nationalists but also people who were known to have no ties to political violence. Besides these groups, State repression caused more than a hundred deaths and injuries during the protests, with thousands of complaints of torture currently under investigation. A recent report by Etxeberria et al. (2017) evidenced 4113 cases of torture between 1960 and 2014, with the Civil Guard, national police, and the autonomous regional police in the Basque Country involved or responsible for 1792, 1785, and 336 cases, respectively.

To understand the dynamics of visibility and invisibility of different types of victimization and responsibility in the Basque Country, it is essential to account for the complexity of these processes. For instance, some of the groups that were victims of the State during the Franco regime came to power in the democratic period, and their police forces were involved in the arrest and application of torture to other nationalist groups situated more to the left (Etxeberria et al., 2017). Further, public opinion has maintained for many years a serious social concern about ETA’s terrorism exclusively (Llera & Retortillo, 2004), and only recently have victims of torture during democracy received a wider recognition (Etxeberria et al., 2017).

In this context, due to social polarization, the different parties involved in the conflict have built defensive memories, emphasizing their suffering and minimizing or denying the suffering of the other (Martín-Peña & Opotow, 2011). However, after the ceasefire declared by ETA, a more inclusive narrative about the violent past emerged. One of the most significant experiences that facilitated the development of this narrative was the initiative known as “Glencree,” which was a space for sharing experiences between victims of all types. After five years of work, participants of this initiative jointly published a manifesto in which they described their experiences, including, among others, the search for a common language to refer to the violent past and the need for reparation for all victims. Other relevant steps have taken place in Basque municipalities, including tributes to different types of victims with the participation of historically confronted political parties.
6.2.1 Narratives of Perpetratorship: From Denial to Acknowledgment

In the aftermath of violence, societies face a need to identify the party responsible for the transgressions that have occurred. While in clear-cut contexts this may be straightforward (i.e., perpetrators should accept the responsibility), in societies where all sides committed atrocities, the picture is more complex, and all parties must address their wrongdoings. One of the important dimensions on which attribution of responsibility varies is the target of responsibility (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019). On the one hand, it includes denial of one’s responsibility and attributions of responsibility to the others and, on the other, acknowledgment and acceptance of one’s group responsibility for inflicted harm.

6.2.2 Denying One’s Group Responsibility While Blaming the Adversary

Groups tend to deny their responsibility for committed transgressions (Cohen, 2001) or are reluctant to recognize violence inflicted upon the adversary (e.g., Vollhardt, 2013). For example, in the Basque context, the armed organization ETA used the concept of ekintzak (i.e., actions) as a euphemism for attacks to reduce the moral conflict involved in political assassination. For its part, the State called for a fight against terrorism as a strategy to legitimize the practice of social control and political repression. The lack of recognition both in the legal sphere (i.e., equal rights or compensations) and in the sphere of group esteem may further increase tensions and impede efforts to restore damaged relations. The denial of responsibility for past harm may obstruct the reconciliation process by increasing intergroup animosity and reducing hope that justice or relationships between members of former adversary groups can be restored. Furthermore, this group denial is usually complemented with attributing responsibility to other actors in the society, either an adversary group or some third party, which can decrease support for reparations and promote pro-war attitudes (Bilali, 2013; Bilali et al., 2012).

6.2.3 Acknowledgment of One’s Group Responsibility: Inclusive Construals of Perpetratorship

In contrast, accepting the responsibility for in-group crimes is necessary to break the cycle of violence (Christie et al., 2008). The acknowledgment of responsibility for perpetrated violence serves as recognition of others’ suffering. It brings back intergroup equality and delivers a message that violence will not recur (Cohen, 2001; Staub, 2006). Research has indicated that taking responsibility for harmful
acts restores empathy toward victims (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2009) increases willingness to offer reparations (Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011) or establish intergroup contact (Mazziotta et al., 2014), as well as shapes different intergroup processes important for improving intergroup relations (e.g., guilt and shame Čehajić-Clancy & Brown, 2014; Wohl et al., 2006). In addition, reinforcing a common perpetrator-ship identity (i.e., acceptance that all parties involved in the conflict committed crimes) was shown to facilitate increased willingness to forgive (Shnabel et al., 2013). However, existing empirical evidence has not accounted for the interplay between acknowledging one’s group and the adversary group’s wrongdoings. The acknowledgment and assignment of responsibility may act as a bidirectional and simultaneous process.

6.2.4 Responsibility Constellations: Beyond the Binary Perspective

Post-conflict scenarios usually trigger processes of searching for the meaning of what has happened (Arnoso-Martínez et al., 2012). In most sociopolitical contexts, the ways of representing the past (i.e., forms of violence and its perpetrators) include multiple visions, which reflect divergent psychosocial trajectories, motivations, identities, ideologies, or generational cohorts socialized in different contexts and narratives of the past (e.g., Arnoso-Martínez et al., 2012; Reidy et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2020). In the following section, we provide evidence that responding to a question about who is responsible for the harm done can unravel multiple, frequently denied, forms of violence perpetrated.

6.3 Exploring Reconciliation Processes in the Basque Country

We analyzed these processes in the context of the Basque Country. Our sample were 351 Basques from diverse segments of society who responded to an online survey about political violence that has occurred in the region (56.2% female; $M_{age} = 41.95; SD = 14.36$). Most of the participants resided in three regions of Basque Country, namely, Gipuzkoa (51.6%), Bizkaia (29.5%), and Araba (9.3%). Around 85% of participants had a university education and were strongly identified as Basque ($M = 5.55, SD = 1.69$) and weakly as Spaniards ($M = 2.45, SD = 1.71$), even though the first language of the majority of participants (69%) was Spanish.

As a subset of a larger questionnaire about the reconciliation process in the Basque Country, respondents indicated their experience of victimization during the conflict (i.e., whether they or somebody they know has suffered the violence) and also reported to what extent they agreed or disagreed that specific social agents were
victims of or responsible for violence in the Basque Country. As for victimization, 29.6% of the sample reported that they had not been affected by the violence that occurred in the Basque context, while 70.4% have suffered some form of violence directly (i.e., themselves) or indirectly (i.e., a family member or a known person). More than one-third of the sample (37%) reported having suffered political violence (25% of whom were arrested, 7.1% tortured, 7.1% imprisoned, 15.1% threatened, 3.2% extorted, 4.8% exiled, and 35.7% experienced other types of psychological violence). Additionally, around three-quarters of the sample (73%) expressed having a close relative or friend who had suffered political violence due to arrest (69.4%), torture (51.6%), imprisonment (55.2%), or being threatened (56%), and nearly one-third (31.5%) reported murder. Out of those who experienced violence, one-third (34.2%) attributed responsibility only to the State, and 16% viewed ETA as the only responsible agent for this violence. Around 20.2% of the sample perceived both ETA and the State as responsible.

First, we examined participants’ attributions of responsibility, using a factor analysis with the principal axis factoring extraction method and direct oblimin rotation. We found four factors with eigenvalues greater than one, explaining in total 65% of the variance. As a robustness check, we also ran a principal component analysis (PCA) based on the K1 rule and additionally conducted parallel analysis (O’Connor, 2000), following best practices for factor analysis (see Costello & Osborne, 2005). The results of both PCA and parallel analysis confirmed the four-factor solution.

Factor one included Spanish nationalism, Spanish police and justice forces, political parties, and media and explained 33% of the variance. Factor two comprised ETA, the abertzale (i.e., nationalist) left movement, and Basque nationalism, accounting for 14% of the variance. Factor three contained items on personal or community responsibility (12% of the variance explained). Factor four referred to antiterrorist and parapolice groups (GAL, GAE, BVE), and extreme right, accounting for 8% of the variance. This fourth construal of perpetratorship distinguishes State responsibility, linked to Spanish nationalism, from ETA responsibility, connected to Basque nationalism and the abertzale left, further differentiating the repression perpetrated by the parapolice groups and extreme right. Descriptive data indicated little clarity and consensus regarding the acknowledgment of these multiple and nuanced responsibilities, whereas social responsibility was completely rejected (see Table 6.1). Specifically, participants ascribed equal levels of responsibility to the Spanish State and ETA, \( t(336) = -0.84, p = 0.403 \), and attributed greater responsibility to the parapolice groups than both of these groups, \( t(318) = -10.16, p < 0.001 \) and \( t(327) = -7.64, p < 0.001 \), respectively. An exception to this was social responsibility, which was lower than for the remaining social agents (the Spanish State: \( t(333) = 21.30, p < 0.001 \); ETA: \( t(338) = 20.80, p < 0.001 \); parapolice groups: \( t(322) = -26.73, p < 0.001 \).
The concept of “collective victimhood” means that people who identify as members of a social group share a belief that their in-group has been intentionally and unfairly harmed by another group (Bar-Tal et al., 2009; Noor et al., 2017). Cultivated through generations, perceptions of collective victimhood make a conflict intractable and resistant to resolution because they imply a biased memory of intergroup conflict, that is, a perception of rival groups as more hostile and downplaying their suffering (Noor et al., 2012; Schori-Eyal et al., 2017). The perception of collective victimhood has been shown to incite hostile behavioral responses in the context of intergroup violence, such as support for military actions or unwillingness to compromise (Schori-Eyal et al., 2014). In the aftermath of conflict, collective victimhood may substantially hinder intergroup relations, including trust toward the adversary, willingness to forgive (Green et al., 2017), or disposition to socialize with the other parties (Jasini et al., 2017).

Yet, the implications of group victimhood likely depend on the way it is collectively construed. Members of wronged groups experience and construe their group’s victimization subjectively. These subjective construals of victimization are called collective victim beliefs (Vollhardt, 2012, 2020). Importantly, scholars have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.1</th>
<th>Exploratory factor analysis for responsibility items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Responsibility: Spanish State</td>
<td>4.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Responsibility: ETA</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Responsibility: society</td>
<td>2.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Responsibility: parapolice groups</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>4.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial system</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous police</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish nationalism</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National police, Civil Guard</td>
<td>5.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abertzale (i.e., nationalist) left</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basque nationalism</td>
<td>3.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETA (and its environment)</td>
<td>5.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been responsible</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My group (my people)</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society in general</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiterrorist groups (GAL, GAE)</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basque-Spanish Battalion (BVE)</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parapolice groups, groups of the extreme right</td>
<td>5.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: We used the principal axis factoring extraction method with direct oblimin rotation. ** $p < .01$
differentiated between two types of collective victimhood beliefs, namely, exclusive (including competitive) and inclusive ones.

6.3.2 Exclusive Victimhood Beliefs: One Group’s Suffering

Perceiving the victimhood of one’s group as unique and distinct (i.e., exclusive collective victimhood, Vollhardt, 2012) or considering one’s group suffering to be more severe than that of the adversary (i.e., competitive victimhood beliefs, Noor et al., 2012) has been linked to intergroup competition and further fueling the conflict. One correlate of these narratives is the delegitimization of the other’s narrative. For example, in the Basque Country, some have denied the existence of torture in police stations, accusing victims of lying and thereby denying their suffering and recognition as victims of political conflict (Pérez-Sales et al., 2016).

Empirical findings demonstrate that such exclusive victimhood consciousness is associated with decreased trust and/or empathy toward the adversary in Rwanda and Burundi (Vollhardt & Bilali, 2015) and Northern Ireland (Noor et al., 2008). These beliefs also obstruct efforts to repair damaged social relations, reducing willingness to grant intergroup forgiveness in Northern Ireland (Noor et al., 2008), post-dictatorship Chile (Noor et al., 2008, Study 1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Rupar & Graf, 2017), and the Israeli-Palestinian context (Shnabel et al., 2013), in addition to reducing willingness to engage in contact with members of the adversarial group in Central Africa (Vollhardt & Bilali, 2015) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Rupar et al., 2020).

6.3.3 Inclusive Victimhood Beliefs: The Adversary’s Suffering

However, it is possible to transcend the interests of one’s group to produce memories that converge in the construction of a culture of peace based on respect for human rights. The awareness of “inclusive victimhood” emphasizes similarities between victim experiences of one’s group and those of the other’s group. This form of victimhood includes a recognition that others have also been or are victims, in a similar way to one’s own group (Shnabel et al., 2013; Vollhardt, 2012, 2020). Such construals require strengthening a category of a superordinate social identity (Gaertner et al., 1993), based on common experiences of oppression or collective violence shared by different victimized groups either in the same conflict (e.g., recognizing that both victims of the Spanish state and ETA victims suffered in the Basque context), in an unrelated social context (e.g., recognizing that Basques suffered as Irish Republicans did), or involving broader perceptions of similarities between the suffering of the in-group and other groups worldwide (e.g., acknowledging that other groups in the world have suffered in the similar way Basques did; see work on
“general inclusive victimhood beliefs,” Vollhardt et al., 2015). That is, inclusive con-
struals of victimhood can be either universal or specific (see Cohrs et al., 2015).

Furthermore, inclusive victim beliefs are expected to improve intergroup rela-
tions in post-conflict settings. Research has shown that the sense of inclusive vic-
timhood improves intergroup relations across different contexts. These perceptions
were linked with prosocial responses and the acknowledgment of out-group suffer-
ing among American Jews (Vollhardt, 2013), willingness to reconcile in the Israeli-
Palestinian conflict (Noor et al., 2015), prosocial responses toward the adversaries
in Central Africa (Vollhardt & Bilali, 2015), willingness to engage in intergroup
contact in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Rupar et al., 2020), or lessening support for
aggressive policies across diverse contexts (Adelman et al., 2016). However, these
presumably inclusive construals may have limited potential to improve (or even
worsen) intergroup relations when they are not entirely universal but rather selec-
tive. In this line, Cohrs et al. (2015) showed that inclusive victimhood correlated
positively with intergroup forgiveness when it was based on a universal notion of
inclusivity and tended to correlate positively with competitive victimhood when
based on a selective notion of inclusivity.

6.3.4 Victimhood Constellations: Beyond the Binary Perspective

The concept of inclusive victimhood calls for approaching identities as a complex
structure, based on the relationship between multiple and compatible victim identi-
ties. Yet, existing research has been mostly limited to examining shared narratives
involving two groups in conflict, and less is known about the intersection of multi-
ple, non-binary narratives of victimhood. In the context of multiple forms of vio-
ence, different victimization experiences result in the propagation of a politicized
“hierarchy of victims” (e.g., Jankowitz, 2017), that is, beliefs about who deserves
the status of “victim,” which may have detrimental consequences for transitions to
peace and overcoming clashing identities and narratives.

Public debates over the moral status of victims are usually front and center in
transitional societies because it determines who deserves compassion and support
(Jankowitz, 2017) and thus symbolic (e.g., apologies) and instrumental (e.g., finan-
cial compensations) reparations. In this sense, an official classification into the cat-
egory of “victim” may favor access to reparations for damages suffered. However,
sometimes, victims can also move away from that definition and claim the status of
political activists (Arnoso-Martínez & Pérez-Sales, 2013). In the Basque Country,
some ETA victims have established the Association of Victims against Terrorism
and have received compensations and institutional commemorations. In the case of
State victims, self-definitions of “victim of torture” have been marginal (i.e., State
victims tended to believe that being a victim of State repression was a consequence
of their commitment to the social and political struggle in the territory).
In this context, we examined to what extent different social agents could be included in the social category of “victims of violence.” Using the principal axis extraction method, a factor analysis yielded three factors with eigenvalues greater than one, accounting together for 68% of the variance. Additional factor analysis as well as parallel analysis, both conducted with a principal component extraction method, confirmed the three-factor solution. More precisely, we found three dimensions of victimhood, differentiating between victims of State repression (Factor one), direct and indirect victims of ETA (Factor two), and political prisoners as victims of State repression (Factor three). Factor one included individuals injured or killed by police or parapolice forces and tortured in police stations and explained 35% of the variance. Factor two (24% of variance explained) referred to those threatened or injured in the ETA attacks and their families, as well as direct victims of ETA (e.g., killed, kidnapped, or threatened by the armed organization). Factor three (9% of variance explained) included former ETA members who were imprisoned outside of the Basque Country (under the prison dispersion law) and their family members, as well as ETA members who died handling explosives or fled to other countries. Further, our analysis revealed that participants strongly agreed that both the Spanish State and ETA victims deserved the status of the victim equally, $t(328) = -1.59, p = .11$ (see Table 6.2). An exception to this generally high recognition of victimhood was political prisoners responsible for acts of terrorism, who were considered to be “victims of political conflict” less than the Spanish State and ETA victims, $t(328) = 19.82, p < .001$ and $t(328) = 16.33, p < .001$, respectively.

### 6.4 Victimhood and Responsibility Narratives Intertwined

As we argued earlier, violent conflicts are usually characterized by “dual” social roles of both victims and perpetrators (Gausel et al., 2018; Siman-Tov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014; Vollhardt & Bilewicz, 2013), “blurred” group boundaries (Bobowik et al., 2017), or even multiple types of responsibilities or victimizations. That is, victimhood and perpetratorship of a group, either in the same conflict or at different moments in history, can intertwine and thus have consequences for intergroup relations (Green et al., 2017).

Typically, each party in a conflict delineates boundaries between the innocent (i.e., victims) and guilty (i.e., perpetrators), construing wider, and normally conflicting, perceptions of victimhood and responsibility (Jankowitz, 2017). The claim for victim status thus serves to exclude oneself from the perpetrator role (Noor et al., 2012). Research has corroborated that the notion of collective victimhood thwarted the acknowledgment of past in-group wrongdoings committed among non-Jewish Poles during the Second World War (Vollhardt et al., 2015) and among Serbs in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Čehajić-Clancy & Brown, 2010). Yet, empirical evidence has also indicated that collective victimhood was positively associated with acknowledgment of the suffering inflicted by one’s nation on others during the First World War (Bouchat et al., 2017), suggesting that, when a group assimilates
dual roles in a conflict, collective victimhood does not necessarily translate into a denial of others’ suffering.

Moreover, research from the Basque Country (Bobowik et al., 2019) showed that the defensive construals of perpetratorship (i.e., the responsibility assigned to police forces and the Spanish State) were related to greater perceptions of collective victimhood. In contrast, the attributions of responsibility to Basque nationalism and ETA were negatively associated with the endorsement of collective victimhood. However, when the narratives accounted for each other, attributions of responsibility to Basque nationalism were no longer associated with victimhood, suggesting that these narratives may coexist and cannot be reduced to a zero-sum relation.

In this setting, to delineate a collective narrative typology based on the interplay between responsibility and perpetratorship attributions, we performed a cluster

Table 6.2 Exploratory factor analysis for victimization items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Victims of the police forces</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Victims of ETA</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Victims of the Spanish State (former ETA members)</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons killed by police forces</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>–.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons killed by parapolice forces</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>–.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of abertzale (i.e., nationalist) left tortured at police stations</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETA members tortured at police stations</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons wounded by police forces during protests</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who died under police custody</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>–.04</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons threatened by ETA</td>
<td>6.37</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>–.04</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>–.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons threatened by ETA who had to leave Basque Country</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>–.12</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who suffered economic extortion because of ETA</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>–.06</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons kidnapped by ETA</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>–.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons wounded by ETA</td>
<td>6.08</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>–.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members of ETA victims</td>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>–.09</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persons killed by ETA</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>–.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners accused of terrorist acts (guilty of blood crimes)</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>–.14</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners imprisoned outside of Basque Country (penitentiary dispersion)</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>–.04</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prisoners accused for terrorist acts (not guilty of blood crimes)</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>–.04</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETA members that are refugees in other countries</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who died manipulating the explosives with which they intended to attack</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>–.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of prisoners that are imprisoned outside of Basque Country</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: We used the principal axis factoring extraction method with direct oblimin rotation.
** p < .01

In this setting, to delineate a collective narrative typology based on the interplay between responsibility and perpetratorship attributions, we performed a cluster
analysis with the scores obtained in the victimhood and responsibility dimensions. We used k-means clustering and compared four different cluster solutions to select the most optimal and informative number of clusters. We opted for a cluster solution with four collective memory profiles (see Table 6.3).

The first cluster (named VICTIM), including 17.4% of participants, reflected partially inclusive representations of victimization, recognizing police victims and ETA victims and, to a lesser extent, ETA members who might have been retaliated against by the State. This partially inclusive victimization opposed a rejection of societal responsibility, with a tendency to minimize the responsibility of paramilitary groups or that of the State. Thus, a selectively inclusive victimhood construal emerged, with overall lower levels of collective responsibility.

The second cluster (30.2%, named STATE) was characterized by greater demand for accountability from the State and vigilante forces and a minimization of the responsibility of ETA and society. This responsibility of the State was combined with a greater perception of victimization of police victims and the recognition of ETA members as a victimized group (although the victimization of those harmed by ETA was still recognized). The prominent in this cluster narrative of violence caused by the State can be supported with quotes by participants surveyed in an independent study (unpublished data, Bobowik et al., 2012), such as: “There has been torture, murder, humiliation, [and] prisoners separated from their families and friends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6.3</th>
<th>The collective narrative typology: cluster analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster 1</td>
<td>Cluster 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICTIM M</td>
<td>STATE M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>3.42</td>
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<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.18</td>
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<td>5.44</td>
<td>6.75</td>
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<td>6.01</td>
<td>6.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>5.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Cluster 1, high inclusive victimhood, moderate inclusive responsibility; Cluster 2, responsibility and victims of the Spanish State; Cluster 3, responsibility and victims of the ETA; Cluster 4, high inclusive victimhood and responsibility. In order to select a cluster solution, we compared several alternative options. A four-cluster solution fitted the best theoretical reasoning behind the complexity of different construals. The two-cluster solution was too simple to explain the complexity of the different representations of victimization and responsibility (two groups with either high or low scores on all variables emerged). The three-cluster solution, although it did reflect some of the existing tensions in relation to responsibility, did not allow us to identify those who share a more competitive notion of perpetratorship where the State responsibility would be emphasized and ETA responsibility minimized. The five-cluster solution in addition differentiated those who scored low on most representations with exception of the victims of the ETA (with also a relatively low mean). However, the cluster that emerged included 20 participants only, while the remaining clusters had from 2.7 to 5.4 times as many participants.
incarcerated until today” or “detained, prisoners, tortured, denial of the rights to our culture and language.”

The third group (28.8%, named ETA) highlighted ETA victim’s status but also acknowledged people affected by repressive practices of the police and parapolice groups. However, this group of participants refused to categorize the retaliated ETA members as victims. As for responsibility, this group highlighted the role of both ETA and the parapolice forces, whereas it minimized the State responsibility and rejected social responsibility. This cluster portrays a part of the society that, although capable of recognizing State violence in the dictatorial context, denies the State’s responsibility in the democratic period and highlights the responsibility of ETA. Quotes obtained from an unpublished dataset (Bobowik et al., 2012) are in line with this construal: “Attacks of ETA, threats to right-wing people, revolutionary tax, politicians threatened, not being able to say your ideas on the street,” “most of the ETA attacks have targeted my political group,” or “death threats and extortion by ETA; ETA in different attacks against socialist politicians.”

Finally, the fourth cluster (23.6% of participants, named INCLUSIVE) portrayed an inclusive construal both in terms of victimhood and perpetratorship, with similar recognition of all victims of violence (slightly more moderate in the case of ETA members persecuted by the State but still including them in that category) and a consideration of the responsibility of multiple agents (with a tendency toward greater responsibility of the State and the parapolice forces). This inclusive narrative also has support in quotes contained in an unpublished dataset (Bobowik et al., 2012): “Damage done by political parties, terrorist activities, by both sides, bad choices and decisions, lack of forgiveness and humanity,” “in general, there has been damage everywhere and everyone has their share of responsibility,” or “aggressions by the State and by ETA gunmen.”

We further checked the relationship between each cluster and personal experiences of victimization, namely, whether individuals victimized by ETA, the State, both, or were not affected by political violence fell into specific narrative profiles reflected in the cluster analysis. We found that there was an interdependency between the type of collective narrative endorsed and self-reported personal experience ($\chi^2(9)= 69.68, p < .001$). We observed that 48.2% of ETA victims tended to construct a collective narrative of conflict based on the suffering of ETA victims (cluster ETA), and almost a third of them (28.6%), although partially recognizing inclusive victimization, are still reluctant to admit that the State bears responsibility (VICTIM). Despite this, a fifth part (19.6%) of this cluster shared an inclusive view of the past (INCLUSIVE). Among State victims, 45.8% emphasized the responsibility of the State and paramilitary groups (cluster STATE). A third (31.7%) shared an inclusive construal of the past (INCLUSIVE), but still, 16.7% of these victims downplayed the role of the State as compared to ETA (cluster ETA).

In the case of the victims on both sides, we observed that 31% shared a selectively inclusive representation of victimhood but still deemphasized the responsibility of the State (cluster ETA). Further, 29.6% viewed victimhood and perpetratorship in unselectively inclusive terms (INCLUSIVE), whereas 28.2% downplayed the responsibility of ETA (STATE). Finally, among the non-victimized participants,
30.8% were primarily concerned with violence perpetrated by ETA (ETA), and 28.8% minimized responsibility of the State and paramilitary groups (VICTIM). Yet, 27.9% tended toward minimizing ETA’s responsibility (STATE), and 12.5% shared an inclusive narrative of both victimhood and responsibility (INCLUSIVE).

6.5 Implications for Transitional Justice and Peace Research and Practice

The Basque society has witnessed how different narratives of collective violence emerged or had been silenced, depending on political interests and subjective experiences of those in power at a particular time in history. After the ETA ceasefire in 2011, a peace process began in which different agents had been reconsidering their positions and taking steps toward recognizing others, although at present this is an ongoing process. Our findings have important implications in the context of this political reality. Accordingly, the data presented in this chapter, collected in 2016, illustrate either more selective or undiscriminating inclusive narratives of victimhood (and to a lesser extent in the case of perpetratorship).

The narratives of the past in the Basque context have likely been transforming over time from ones of polarization to more inclusive versions, oriented toward the acknowledgment of others’ suffering. Although our data points out the recognition of a more inclusive narrative of victimization, in the case of acknowledging responsibility, and specifically the responsibility of the State, a more protracted process of collective memory-building might be necessary. One also needs to consider that this reality is embedded in a historical trajectory where the Spanish State, with high impunity concerning human rights violations perpetrated since Franco’s dictatorship, has not made progress in implementing policies promoting transitional justice. For example, the political debate sparked by the exhumation of Franco accounts for the resistance of the Spanish State to take measures oriented at seeking truth, bringing justice, and reparation concerning different forms of violence and repression in which the State participated. Hence, although our data are a valid photograph of the mosaic of collective memories, they reflect a specific moment of the history of the Basque conflict, and longitudinal research is necessary to develop a fuller picture of collective remembering and the interplay between victimhood and perpetratorship narratives in this setting. For instance, accounting for the period in which actors were victims or perpetrators and the power held by each of the groups in the dictatorial past and the democratic present is essential to understand the complexity of the representations of collective violence in this context.

Furthermore, the literature suggests that different roles in intergroup violence, their construals, and power dynamics between groups in conflict (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019; Vollhardt, 2020) impact how people respond to policies and interventions designed to deal with the violent past. Thus, a remaining question is what are the implications of these complex construals for the reconstruction of the sociopolitical fabric in a post-conflict society. There is plenty of scope for further progress in
understanding these narratives’ consequences not only in terms of common reconciliation outcomes but also considering their consequences for the present-day power dynamics between social actors involved and their collective behavior. For example, shifting the focus from forgiveness and intergroup harmony could help to understand how these narratives translate into particular behaviors or support for specific policies, including financial reparations but also the disclosure of the truth regarding violations of human rights, or whether these construals motivate the victimized groups to engage in collective action to contest discriminatory treatment in the present. Further work is certainly required in the Basque context to facilitate both the reconciliation and the truth-seeking processes.

In this sense, there is still a long way to go. Further peace and justice research and initiatives should consider unequal power distribution during and after the conflict to restore full political participation and ensure true social coexistence. Recent literature suggests that in societies where violence has been symmetric, that is, has affected different sides of the conflict, community members are more in favor of reconciliation and see it as compatible with seeking justice; in contrast, asymmetric violence was found to hinder pacification processes (Penić et al., 2020). Yet, defining a conflict as symmetric or not is a complex task because multiple factors determine it. Among other things, it depends on who held or holds the power to define the conflict itself and grants the status of “victim,” whether it has occurred in a context of open war or not, the number of victims, and forms of violence employed by each of the sides. In the case of the Basque Country, although the number of people tortured by the State is much higher than the fatalities caused by ETA, the seriousness of the mortality of violence inflicted by ETA and the systematic denial of torture have been used to define the conflict in asymmetric terms, which explains the existing tensions in the current process toward pacification.

To overcome these tensions, it is necessary to provide open spaces for debate and collective sharing of all memories, including those that have been silenced, and — once all types of violence are acknowledged — to explore to what extent they can coexist and/or deserve equal recognition. In addition, this process requires constant cultivation of democratic practices, based on humanizing experiences of others, dialogue nurtured by empathy and trust, and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding (see Gready & Robins, 2014 on transformational justice; see Chap. 4 in this volume). Literature confirms that transitional processes aimed at building an inclusive and integrated memory of the violent past stimulate a public debate that further contributes to forging a collective conscience about what happened and increasing respect for human rights (Martín-Beristain et al., 2010).

### 6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have shed light, on the one hand, on the construction of clashing collective memories of political violence, which may further obstruct the processes of dialogue and transitions to peace. On the other hand, we have highlighted that the
reconstruction of these memories, based on mutual recognition of suffering and acknowledgment of responsibility, can bring about peacebuilding and social change oriented at ending the unequal power distribution among the involved parties in many transitional or post-conflict settings. These latter goals are still in process in the Basque context, and good progress has been made in recent years. The rebuilding of the social fabric in the aftermath of collective violence requires identifying the common bases between those who have had divergent victimization experiences and between those who have been direct victims and those who have not. We believe that a careful examination of the complexities in existing collective memories can help to recognize more sensitively the multiple necessities of all parties involved in a conflict. Such a nuanced, plural, and shared collective memory in transitional societies should be a basis for both institutional policies and social activities that can further contribute to peace, equality, and respect for human rights.

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