

Understanding trauma for reconciliation and peace-building journalism in Colombia.

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Abstract

This study argues that a better understanding of trauma can support a journalism that seeks to build peace in Colombia. Based on a participant observation, it presents the experiences of four local journalists living and working in a context of protracted violence in one of the country's most dangerous regions. Through an application of Newman and Nelson's (2012) conceptual framework of the three tensions or "dances" of trauma, it is argued that an ethical and trauma-aware practice can underpin a more inclusive narrative of peace and conflict. An emotionally literate journalism, which seeks out the voices and experiences of the marginalised, has the potential to promote social cohesion in the aftermath of suffering and pave the foundations for reconciliation within a community. This people-focused approach strengthens resilience in both the reporter and the reported by equipping local journalists with the skills and knowledge they need to live up to the contemporary expectations of peace-building that have been placed upon them.

Key words

Colombia, trauma, peace-building, reconciliation, peace journalism

Introduction

Since peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the country's leftist FARC guerrillas began in 2012, it is generally accepted in the country that journalism has a responsibility to nurture peace and that "the media can positively influence reconciliation" in the aftermath of violence (Yamshon and Yamshon 2006, 422). It is also widely acknowledged by scholars that peace-building occurs at the local level and is sustained through people-centred approaches (Mahmoud 2019). In a 2014 survey of regional and local reporters in Colombia, 80% believed they should be promoting reconciliation, but only 61% said they were actually doing so. The President of Colombia's Federation of Journalists (FECOLPER), Adriana Hurtado, believes that the reason many reporters are unable to promote reconciliation is because there is what she calls "an over-reliance on the state and its official sources" (Hurtado 2018). Hurtado concludes that local and regional journalists need to include a wider range of voices in their work if they are to truly promote peace. This idea is supported by academic research. Yeny Serrano's (2014; 2015) analysis of domestic news coverage of the Colombian conflict found that the voices of victims were distinctly absent, and that only a small percentage of airtime was given to experts or academics. The overwhelming majority of coverage involved official sources from the Ministry of Defence and other state institutions.

Bashir Ahmed Tahir (2009, 1) writes that in post-conflict situations, "the media keeps an eye on the enforcement of peace agreements that have been put in place," but at a local level, this article argues that journalism can move beyond this monitorial or watchdog role and actively contribute to peace-building through the construction of a more inclusive narrative, one which promotes reconciliation and helps to strengthen resilience in both individuals and society. In contrast to a journalism that relies heavily on the official sources of the state, such an inclusive narrative embodies a people-focused approach that seeks out the voices and experiences of the marginalised in the name of social cohesion. It therefore depends on emotionally literate reporting and a deeper understanding of trauma specifically.

According to Elsebeth Frey (2016, 179), this "conflict sensitive journalism" sharpens journalism's traditional tools and "provides new insight." For Frey (2016),

this means reporting responsibly without contributing to further violence or overlooking peace-building opportunities. Likewise, Ross Howard (2009, 16) argues that a heightened sensitivity around trauma helps journalists identify conflict structures and “patterns of conflict resolutions.” He highlights the media’s potential “benefits for peace building and democratisation” (2009, 11), and stresses the potential to promote participation, encourage dialogue and foster an increased understanding.

Based on the experiences of a group of four local journalists working in one of Colombia’s most violent regions, this article argues that Newman and Nelson’s (2012) conceptual framework of the three tensions or “dances” of trauma can guide an ethical newsgathering practice, which underpins this inclusive narrative and its peace-building objectives. Subsequent sections of this article explore this framework in detail and present the argument for a fourth “dance,” which also needs to be considered in this particular context of reconciliation-building during times of violence – that of risk. Debates surrounding the so-called journalism of attachment and peace journalism are also briefly explored. But first, there is a short analysis of the method used in this study.

The ethnographic approach

The ethnographic approach within journalism studies remains limited by a “structural blind spot,” which privileges particular “ethnographic locations” (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009, 26). Karin Wahl-Jorgensen’s main point is that the ethnography of news production has been dominated by studies of the “over-determined setting” of the newsroom (2009, 23) and those which “study down” and pay “a disproportionate amount of attention to elite individuals, news organisations and journalistic practices within them” (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009, 27). If the preoccupation of newsroom ethnographies has thus far been the routine and the ordinary, then this research aims to “study up” (Wahl-Jorgensen 2009) and consider “the performative dimension of news production,” identified by David Ryfe (2017) as additionally deficient within journalism studies. Indeed this study focuses on local journalists, who work outside mainstream corporate structures and in contexts of protracted violence and conflict.

This study is based on a participant observation of four local reporters (R1/R2/R3/R4), which was conducted intermittently over the course of three years and for eight months in total. The location of the study is not named in order to protect the identities of the research participants, who continue to face the risk of anti-press violence. The specific location was chosen because it is one of the 170 municipalities labelled by the Colombian government and the United Nations as a peace-building priority in the so-called “post-conflict” era. It is a region which has suffered and continues to suffer from disproportionate levels of violence. It is also a region where the risk in relation to conducting the research could be mitigated.

The number of journalists and news organisations in such places is incredibly low. The aim of this study was to include those who work in print, video and text, and of the five reporters identified in the region, four chose to participate. Each of the research participants is a journalist who lives in the community in which they work and are what we might consider to be self-employed or freelance, a specific characteristic of the local news ecology in Colombia. Indeed the situation of the journalists involved in this study might be considered “typical” of Colombian journalism, when matched against the findings of Jesús Arroyave and Marta Milena Barrios (2012). Their study of news reporters in the country found low levels of education; poor job compensation and satisfaction; inadequate personal lives; and poor security and high levels of risk.

It is acknowledged that all the participants of this study are male, but this is for the simple reason there is only one female journalist working in the region concerned and she chose not to take part in the study. It is also worth pointing out that Colombian women are underrepresented in news organisations. In some regions, men make up 80% to 90% of the journalism workforce, according to Alejandro Manrique and Ivan Cardona (2004).

The general aim of participant observation is to provide a deeper understanding of human experience. Although a detailed exploration of this method is beyond the scope of this article, participant observation is presented as a counterpoint to more positivist methods and methodologies. In short, the aim of a participant observation is not to “produce a single, unified and complete description

of the world" (Longino 1999, 339), which stands alone and apart from others. On the contrary, it is precisely within the distinctive characteristics of a particular standpoint, or through the uniqueness of a particular experience, that participant observation hopes to find and generate new knowledge (Hill Collins 1990; McCarl Nielsen 1990; Longino 1999; Brooks 2007).

Though this study is based on the particular experiences of one group of local journalists, it is argued that there are clear opportunities for transferability through the conceptual framework of Newman and Nelson (2012) applied and developed below.

Reporting peace and reconciliation in Colombia

Journalism has a long history of interviewing vulnerable people caught up in natural disasters, conflict or tragedy and it is widely recognised that journalists have an important role to play in telling the stories of those traumatised by such events. Former BBC correspondent Martin Bell (1996, 16) coined the term "journalism of attachment" at the height of the Balkans conflict, speaking of a journalism that "cares as well as knows." He dismissed objectivity as an illusion and as "bystander journalism" (1996, 14). He argued that journalism could not stand neutral between right and wrong, good and evil or victim and oppressor.

Critics point to the "self-righteous" and "moralising" nature of this model of reporting (Ward 1998; Tumber and Prentoulis 2003), but other scholars highlight how attachment triggers more positive values, not always associated with de-sensitised war coverage (Maras 2013,152; Allan 2004, 15). A journalism of attachment invokes emotions and involvement. Dominant attitudes held to be or "objective, rational, abstract, coherent, unitary and active" give way to a "subjective, irrational, emotional, partial, fragmented and passive" outlook (Allan 2004, 15). In other words, attachment "disturbs the inherited structures of objectivity in a very fundamental way" (Maras 2013, 153).

Bell (1998, 106) stresses the importance of individual judgment and makes it clear that his vision of attachment is part of a "principled journalism... There is a time to be passionate and a time to be dispassionate... I would not report the slaying of

innocent people in the same tone and manner that I would use for a state visit or a flower show or an exchange of parliamentary insults." Bell's assessment is perhaps a little over-simplified in order to make his point, but more contemporary studies in journalism and trauma conclude that emotionally engaged journalism produces not only more responsible coverage, but also a coverage, which can promote dialogue and understanding in violent contexts (Howard 2009; Frey 2016).

The peace journalism model has also frequently elicited a negative reaction in traditional Anglo-American journalistic circles. But it is important to note that in Colombia, away from the media world of the global North and in a society that has suffered more than 50 years of conflict, the responsibility of journalism to promote peace is "a simple given" (Hurtado 2018).

Based on the peace research of Norwegian scholar Johan Galtung, peace journalism emerged as an alternative to conventional war reporting. In recent years a small, but growing number of journalism scholars and practitioners have argued a case for it (see Tehranian 2002; Hanitzsch 2004; 2007; Lynch and McGoldrick 2005; Hackett 2006; Shinar 2007; Ross and Tehranian 2009; Keeble, Tulloch and Zollman, 2010). The practice of peace journalism is intended to highlight ways that might bring an end to violence. Peace journalism actively promotes change and cultivates, supports and gives voice to "change agents" that can intervene in cycles of violence (Maras 2013, 159). For Thomas Hanitzsch (2003, 5-6), the practice of peace journalism is made viable through individual journalists. Samuel Peleg (2007, 4) also believes that an individual journalist can positively influence public opinion and public debate, while Majid Tehranian (2002, 74) similarly states that "at the individual level, peace journalism appears the simplest to define." These arguments, which highlight the individualistic and voluntaristic nature of peace journalism, are supported by this study. That is to say that for the local journalists concerned, operating outside of the corporate structures of legacy media, there is a freedom to develop a distinctive approach to newsgathering.

However, peace journalism remains a controversial approach (Kempf 2007; Loyn 2007). One of its fiercest critics has been the BBC's David Loyn, himself a veteran foreign correspondent with experience of reporting the conflicts of the Balkans,

Afghanistan and Iraq. In a critique of Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), Loyn (2007) writes that journalists need “to preserve their role as observers rather than players,” adding:

The peace journalism approach describes an active participation that is simply not the role of a journalist, and is based on a flawed notion that the world would be a better place if we reported wars in a certain prescribed way, encouraging peace-makers rather than reporting warriors.

But in Colombia, views on peace journalism diverge substantially from the dominant debate in the global North. In Colombia, local journalism is expected to be a force for change and journalists have become agents for peace. Perhaps this is unsurprising if one considers how journalism has evolved differently in the country, where there is an acceptance that both personal and editorial preferences inevitably slant news (Waisbord 2000a; 2000b).

As Jesús Arroyave and Marta Milena Barrios (2012, 401), write “there has been no such thing as an independent press in Colombia.” The impartiality that has historically emerged has not given rise to the neutrality, which at times has held sway in European schools of journalism. As Arroyave and Barrios argue (2012, 400), these are positive developments, which distinguish the country’s journalistic tradition and what they call “a special type of advocacy reporting:”

Colombia’s continuing struggle with large-scale social, economic, and cultural contradiction has led many journalists to develop a special style of advocacy reporting that goes beyond normal news coverage. Instead, journalists tend to take part in solving community problems, in some cases by pressuring public officials, and in other cases by asking the private sector for support.

This special type of advocacy reporting is a particular feature of the local news ecology in Colombia, which is beset by a host of unique challenges. First, local reporters are expected to report peace, while often living with war and with the very real threat of anti-press violence. Second, local reporters tend to lack any formal training or education, which can generate a lack of ethical awareness. Many also have a second job to support their income. Local journalists in Colombia barely make the monthly minimum wage (roughly the equivalent of £180/\$230). Third, this is a news ecology

based on informality and irregularity. Newspapers are not published to a set schedule, for example, but are instead printed when the reporter can afford it and has had the time to produce the relevant content. Likewise with radio schedules, programmes depend on the individual journalist's ability to pay or "rent" air time, rather than a set agenda.

Against such a backdrop, the challenge to produce reconciliation and peace-building journalism may appear impossible. But across the country, journalism unions and organisations are engaged in various schemes and programmes to promote and support the peace-building work of local reporters (see, for example, the work of *la Liga Contra el Silencio* or projects from *el Consejo de Redacción*). This study is intended to support such work, making the case for an inclusive narrative, based on a more emotionally literate style of reporting.

The three "dances" of trauma and peace-building journalism

As Gavin Rees (2013) of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma has noted, "Interviewing the powerless requires more skill and awareness than interviewing the powerful." It is, however, not the intension of this article to outline effective interviewing techniques, but on the contrary to highlight how a better understanding of trauma and how it affects both individuals and the collective of society can inform a more ethical newsgathering and support peace-building. Newman and Nelson's (2012) framework of three tensions, or the so-called three "dances" are presented here as a knowledge base on which to build this ethical practice. These tensions or dances include "the dance of avoidance" (defined as fight or flight); "the dance of fragmentation and integration" (in short, the ability to connect to one's emotions); and "the dance of resilience and vulnerability" (our capacity to overcome). These "dances", which are not totally distinct from one another, are important because they make clear the link between trauma and reconciliation, and present the foundations on which a more inclusive narrative can be constructed. The framework is applicable not only to contributors or those being interviewed, but also to journalists themselves, which should also provoke a reflection of one's own position in relation to the story and the newsgathering process.

The dance of approach and avoidance

The first dance refers to the well-known fight or flight scenario. In terms of reporting peace, this dance provides journalists with a better understanding of suffering and the varied human responses to it. When faced with a traumatic event, our survival instincts take over and we either run for our lives (avoidance) or we fight back (approach). This “dance” is directly linked to the part of the brain called amygdala, which processes fear, anger and hate. During a catastrophe, the temporal lobes stifle the signals so that we act automatically in order to rescue ourselves (Rees, 2013).

Most journalists run towards the danger, of course. It is a reporter’s job to account for the severity of the situation and assess the number of dead, injured and damage caused, while gathering the testimony of eyewitnesses and those involved. Perhaps the most basic understanding of trauma for a journalist is to recognise that human beings vary greatly in their response to it. Only a small minority will become hysterical, but others may talk endlessly, while some remain silent. For example, victims with muted, frozen or numb feelings “appear to untrained observers to be indifferent, unconcerned and unharmed; when, in fact, they are in a state of profound post-traumatic stress” (Ochberg 1996). As Frey (2016) has pointed out, with knowledge of the three dances of trauma, journalists can more effectively decide who to approach and comprehend for whom it might be damaging to talk to reporters. In short, with knowledge of trauma studies, the patterns of emotional responses are more easily recognised (Ochberg 1996).

The reporters in this study each report an adrenaline kick when in the aftermath of a traumatic event, which they claim “helps to focus the mind” (R1). This is a natural defence mechanism, which helps us to concentrate on what is important, but this “tunnel vision” (R2) can also sometimes blind us to the trauma of others. After a shooting in a disco, R2 was interviewing the mother of the young boy killed. He did not introduce himself, asked three times how it felt to lose her son and then “tutted” and walked away in anger when he did not get the coherent response he wanted. With each of the reporter’s questions, the interviewee’s crying got louder. She was too traumatised to speak after having just identified her son for the authorities at the

scene. When questioned afterwards, R2 admitted he was “lost in the moment” and had not even been aware of his reaction.

In contrast to R2, a more trauma-aware journalist would behave more respectfully, viewing contributors as human beings and taking into account their situation before posing the first question or indeed any question at all. Newman and Nelson (2012, 26) argue that journalists “should be aware of how the tension of approach and avoidance may influence their own journalistic behavior and beliefs, the beliefs and behaviours of sources and victims, and the interaction between journalists and sources.” That is to say that journalists must decide which questions are suitable in the context, and which could be overwhelming to the interviewee or even irrelevant to the story (Frey 2016, 174). When interviewing the affected, journalists should also be careful with language. Certain words and phrases can act as triggers and cause strong reactions and exacerbate suffering. These triggers will depend on the specific situation, but could include words such as “crash”, “horror,” “shooting,” or “painful,” anything that relates directly to the trauma in question. Phrases that include “imagine” or that directly encourage contributors to re-live their experiences may also invoke negative or damaging responses. The challenge is to use neutral language in a way that exhibits a sense of understanding over indifference.

The dance of fragmentation and integration

The second dance is linked to another part of the brain. The hippocampus is tied to short-term and long-term memory, as well as spatial orientation, identifying coherence and the ability to connect senses with emotions (Ripley 2009; Rees 2013). Disturbance leads to fragmentation or disconnection, and after a confrontation with trauma, it is not unnatural for a person to remember odd details while, at the same time, completely forget other factors (Frey 2016, 177). It is this “fragmentation” or disconnection, which requires a healing process. In this context, healing requires a process of “integration” in which memories, senses and emotions are re-connected. For local journalists reporting peace, this dance is about promoting social cohesion and repairing the social bonds fractured by conflict and violence.

In a “culture of silence” (Freire 1986), implanted and policed by armed groups to protect their illicit networks, news carries not only information, but additionally

embodies the wider human experience. The publication of newspapers and radio or social media broadcasts by local reporters are eagerly anticipated. In one instance during the fieldwork for this study, the police had to be called to control crowds that had gathered to buy a local newspaper hot off the presses. This “thirst for news” symbolises a desire to participate in public life (Charles 2019). News becomes the vehicle through which individuals enact their citizenship and carries not only information, but additionally embodies the wider human experience. Against this backdrop of “collective trauma” (Abromowitz 2005) and “social suffering” (Kleinman et al. 1997) journalists become the facilitators of a “civil sphere,” which “stresses the critical role of social solidarity” (Alexander 2006, 43) and repairs the social bonds fractured by conflict.

In the absence of effective institutions within this sparse state legitimacy, a reporter potentially assumes the role of police officer, judge and prosecutor, investigating and exposing the criminal and corrupt, while simultaneously providing assistance for their victims. R1 would regularly publish “wanted posters” of local warlords and gather information to be handed over to the military.

This “integration” approach means that individuals or fellow citizens are not only sources of information for the reporter, but also constituents, who require support and guidance. Reporters may also adopt the role of social worker. R1 befriended one of his young sources and helped him leave the narco-gang behind and start a new life:

Most want to stop doing what they are doing. We are all caught up in the same violence, after all. It is my job to show them there is a way out of this. But they are often alone and need support (R1).

For many observers, such behavior in which the reporter becomes a surrogate of the state, will not resemble journalism at all, but this is precisely the “special type of advocacy journalism” mentioned above, in which “journalists tend to take part in solving community problems” (Arroyave and Barrios 2012, 400).

“Integration” can also be explored or promoted by a journalism that covers the causes and solutions of conflicts, instead of just the consequences. Conversely,

journalists who produce sensationalist stories risk increasing “fragmentation.” The reporters involved in this study rebuked a national press that only turns up to cover the violence as a body count: “They just exploit us and only come here to take gory pictures of dead people” (R3). In contrast, a more responsible journalism questions the structures, which have brought about the violence in the first place:

It is important for us to show the corruption, the poverty. We don’t need to focus so much on the what, but the why and the how. This is what local journalism can do. Let’s not focus on the killers, but on what has driven them to kill in the first place (R2).

The above examples of news as state surrogacy and simple body counts are perhaps extremes at either end of the “dance of fragmentation and integration,” but the argument is that the media can choose to convey symbols that unite and mobilise togetherness or “the myths and symbols that justify hostility” (Kaufman 2006, 209). Thus journalism can facilitate peace-building by promoting participation, dialogue and increased understanding.

The dance of resilience and vulnerability

The third dance relates to our capacity to overcome traumatic events and to our vulnerability. Finding and reporting on acts of kindness or resilience and hopeful initiatives could strengthen reconciliation and help people to overcome the violent conflict by setting examples and by identifying particular challenges and strategies. For reporters who seek to promote peace, this dance is important because it highlights a community’s strength through the equal treatment of its citizens and explores the underlying structural causes of violence rather than victimising or scapegoating certain groups.

In its most simple form this is perhaps about seeking out positive stories, but for R3, this is about including more voices from within the community:

We show how normal people are dealing with conflict and how they are trying to solve it for themselves. These people can be examples for the rest of the community. We don’t talk to the police, to the army, but we talk to our friends and neighbours (R3).

R1 and R4 believe their local understanding ensures that contributors are not exploited in their coverage. As Lee Wilkins et al. (2012) point out using “inappropriate stereotypes in words and images” (Wilkins et al. 2012, 29) could imply missing the balance between resilience and vulnerability (Ochberg in Newman and Nelson 2012, 25).

The “politics of listening” is of course a key aspect of inclusion (Dreher 2010; Threadgold 2006). For Dreher (2010, 99), entrenched news values and existing story agendas focus on “the stereotypes and concerns of a mainstream audience rather than providing an open forum for speaking up.” By including the voices of those who have lived, suffered and also perpetrated conflict, journalists can therefore begin to compose a more complex narrative of conflict devoid of cliché and stereotype. But in the 2014 survey of regional and local journalists, 44% thought perpetrators of violence should be ignored in their coverage.

On the surface, this is a shocking figure for a journalism charged with dismantling the polarisation of post-conflict. However, in the absence of the state, the journalist must sometimes adopt a judicial role and seek to identify and hold to account criminal actors or warring factions, as we saw above, which makes approaching armed groups difficult:

Do you think they’ll agree to an interview when they see you as the police? It’s a difficult balance for us. We need to hold armed groups accountable while at the same time try and understand why they do what they do. But they just see as agents of the state (R1).

Such reporting highlights ongoing state failures and identifies continuing structural issues, but by its very nature, does little to deconstruct the victim/perpetrator dichotomy, which has been identified as key to building to reconciliation (Morelo Martínez 2014).

In contrast to the state surrogacy approach, R2 covered a story of an activist visiting local prisons to work together with leftist guerrilla and right-wing paramilitaries. He used the workshop as a vehicle for a narrative on prejudice and concluded that “the point is to challenge the audience and make them realise that ex-

combatants – and even current fighters – are just the same as us” (R2). Newman and Nelson (2017, 25-27) observe that “most news stories tend to focus either on survivors who transcend their difficulties heroically or on those who are still suffering from the misfortune post-disaster.” In contrast, R3 said his aim was to produce “a more complete and realistic picture of the situation.”

Another of R3’s stories focused on how local farmers are producing their own brand of chocolate in order to provide sustainable alternatives to cocaine production. But such efforts are fraught with challenges, including the threat of violence from criminal actors opposed to coca substitution programmes and the government’s lack of resources to fulfill the financial pledges it has made to assist these farmers:

This story is positive in that it shows how people are trying to change their lives, but it is real in that it highlights the challenges involved. The idea is to encourage more farmers to do the same and put the pressure on the authorities to do what they said they would (R3).

For R4 promoting reconciliation is comprised of “lifting the community out of the misery of conflict to show that “life goes on.” This included stories about inadequate healthcare provision and river pollution.

The fourth “dance” of risk

The fourth dance of risk, presented by this study as an addition to the Newman and Nelson framework, encapsulates the particular challenge faced by local reporters in contemporary Colombia who are expected to promote peace, while surrounded by violence. This fourth dance of risk is therefore about ensuring the safety of both the reporter and the reported.

For the journalist, this is essentially about deciding how far to go with a story:

Every time, I have to ask myself: is this going to get me killed? And if so, is it worth it? (R3).

The journalists involved in this study have created an unofficial risk matrix:

If we mention names, it's risky. If we make links between armed groups and politicians, it's risky. If we mention places, it's risky. I think in this job, you just develop a sense of how best to stay alive (R1).

For outsiders or non-local reporters, it can be difficult to get people to talk in this dominant "culture of silence" that characterises Colombia's marginalised communities. That is to say that people know the best way to stay alive is to hear nothing, see nothing and most definitely say nothing. But the local journalists, who also form part of this community, are uniquely placed to understand the networks of silence that are in operation. Most outsiders would not for example be aware that even being seen with a journalist can place sources in unnecessary danger. What might for the outsider appear to be indifference or even hostility towards potential interviewees is in fact simple bluntness, intended to protect the contributor:

I introduce myself and leave my card. I do not need to be more explicit. I am simply ready in case they decide to talk. I can't force them to and I can't hang around. It's dangerous for all of us and someone is always watching (R1).

Conclusion

It has been argued that in Colombia local journalism is expected to be a force for change and that in particular, journalists have become agents for peace. This article has shown that although reporters have largely acknowledged their peace-building responsibilities, the vast majority say they are failing to meet these obligations. This is because there is an over-reliance on institutions and agencies of the state in Colombia at the expense of victims with first hand experiences of conflict. It has been made clear that a journalism, which seeks to promote peace and reconciliation must, however, engage and include a wider range of voices. A more emotionally literate coverage can underpin a more inclusive narrative, which has been identified as an essential foundation for a journalism, which pursues peace and reconciliation.

Based on the specific experiences of a group of local journalists, this article has outlined how Newman and Nelson's (2012) framework of the three dances of trauma can be used as the basis for a more ethical and emotionally aware newsgathering. This

study has shown how knowledge of the so-called “dance of approach and avoidance” can equip a reporter with a deeper understanding of the varied human responses to suffering, while a grasp of the “dance of fragmentation and integration” can promote social cohesion. A recognition of the “dance of resilience and vulnerability” can build a community’s strength by avoiding scapegoating and the reproduction of over-simplified dichotomies of victim/perpetrator. Finally, this study added a fourth dance to the framework, that of risk, which emphasises the safety and security of both the reporter and the reported within this particular violent context of Colombia. This emotionally literate journalism therefore paves the foundations for peace-building within a community by providing local journalists with the skills and knowledge they need to live up to the contemporary expectations of reconciliation-building that have been placed upon them.

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