# The Practice of Reflection in the Field of Peacebuilding

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By

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# DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the woman who raised me – my great grandmother.

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ABSTRACT

THE PRACTICE OF REFLECTION IN THE FIELD OF PEACEBUILDING

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The study explores the meaning and practice of reflection among peacebuilding professionals. Although originally it intended to focus on the concept of reflexivity and the benefits of incorporating it into practice, the data collected revealed the conflation of reflexivity with other types of reflection, including instrumental, critical, intuitive, contemplative, existential, spiritual, and physical aspects of it. The lack of conceptual and methodological clarity was apparent in the literature reviewed as well. Moreover, the data analysis revealed a correlation between the type of practice and the type of reflection practiced, with analytical types of work relying primarily on analytical reflection and direct engagement with clients relying primarily on integrative types of reflection. This finding suggested a multi-level conceptual framework of reflective practice that can be thought of as composite lenses comprised of reflexive, critical, and technical layers that converge analytical and embodied

feedback and are temporally embedded. The framework, in turn, suggested a range of practical implications for peacebuilding training and self-care for practitioners.

# INTRODUCTION

The topic of this dissertation – the practice of reflection in the field of peacebuilding – has come into being as a result of reflections on my own personal experiences, which led to curiosity about the nature of human reflection and its role in personal and professional development. The choice of topic was partly dictated by what could be approximated, in the words of John Keats, as the "vale of soul making" – the process of acquiring appreciation for the dark side of life, including the experience of failure and suffering. The sequence of personal and professional trials that made very little sense at the time very much resonated with Keats' stoic appeal to the reader: "Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul? A place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways...."[1] That is not to say that I was a stranger to such experiences before - I can assure the reader of the opposite, while sparing the details of the various types of trauma experienced since early childhood. But what was remarkable about this particular experience is that I did something counter-intuitive – instead of hiding from pain, as I normally would, I stepped right into it. Needless to say, reflecting *on* suffering is much more manageable than reflecting *while* suffering, but, at the time,

[1] Hyder Rollins, *The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821* (Harvard U.P., 1958), pp. 100-104.

moving toward such unsettling experience felt like the necessary evil that reveals an aperture into the tunnel of soul-making and draws one in to the depths of darkness before emerging as a more healed mindful version of oneself on the other side. This curiosity toward and acceptance of the dark side of human existence, Keats would argue, is a *sine qua non* to living a meaningful examined life – the spirit that is at the heart of this study.

The project of self-understanding began with an inquiry into the nature of inner turmoil, reflecting on which generated a series of important personal and professional discoveries – beginning with a fundamental recognition of limited self-understanding. The genuine attempt to understand the lessons that the inner turmoil had to offer was reinforced by reflections on journal entries, which suggested the idea of taking diverse self-report inventories in order to deconstruct habitual cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns. For example, to my surprise, the most recent personality type identified by Myers-Briggs self-inventory raised deeper questions about the preexisting concept of self and personal strengths and limitations. Of interest was the following description: "Your passion, impatience for routine maintenance, idealism, and extreme privacy tend to leave you with few options for letting off steam. People with this personality type are likely to exhaust themselves in short order if they do not find a way to balance their ideals with the realities of day-to-day living." This observation aptly reflected my state of mind at the time. Working with conflicts and issues I was passionate about had unleashed powerful critical reflection, on one hand, but exhausted me on a personal level, on the other hand, by

turning me into a cynic unable to accept the realities of intractable conflicts, explore creative approaches to working with them, persist in the face of failure, retain a sense of optimism, or develop resilience to remain engaged. What came to mind initially was the conventional wisdom that working with conflicts too close to home might not be a fitting professional choice, which nonetheless is often disproven by practitioners who do work on such conflicts precisely because they care deeply about them. However, a closer examination revealed that what the conventional wisdom fails to recognize is that a more relevant factor in understanding one's limitations is not whether practitioners have a deep personal connection to a conflict, but whether they have qualities and skills necessarily to thrive personally and professionally while working with those conflicts. Among such skills is the ability to maintain emotional and analytical distance and honesty about whether a practitioner is able to exercise it. In this particular case, an honest look at personal shortcomings led to the recognition that working with conflicts too close to home is not one of my fortes, in addition to other significant, albeit unsettling, self-discoveries of personal and professional nature. This recognition naturally led to recalibrating personal and professional choices and expectations, including questioning the choice to work directly with conflicts that are too personal and recognizing the need to develop a wide range of qualities and skills if I choose to do so. But more importantly, a deeper understanding of myself underscored the fundamental recognition of the critical role of self-awareness in guiding personal and professional development.

This recognition may come across as commonsensical. Naturally, one may argue, who would not know how to do so? Perhaps a good indicator of that would be to examine how often practitioners engage in a systematic self-reflection personally and in a professional setting. I personally have never witnessed a situation when a team of professionals reflected on lessons learned in a systematic fashion (and certainly hope that my experiences were an aberration), let alone on personal shortcomings in an organizational setting. I did however witness instances whereby my peers acted in culturally insensitive and tasteless ways without realizing it. I myself would not be surprised if I came across that way to others, given the limitations of self-perception. The cultural arrogance and personal hubris are a part of the broader challenge of working with people of diverse backgrounds – the task which demands exceptional communication, inter-personal, and cultural competence. As tempting as it is to assume that everyone entering the field is already equipped with these skills and a wide range of other skills and qualities required of competent practitioners, more often than not novices have not been exposed to training in developing such skills prior to practice. In that was perhaps the most eye-opening revelation - soft skills appear just as important, if not more important, than the purely technical skills in the helping professions, yet, throughout my academic training, I was expected to develop a wide range of critical personal skills on my own, without professional guidance or training. Such expectation is certainly reasonable when a student has been exposed to training in mindfulness, self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, communication, resilience, and a range of other critical skills before

entering academia. However, at the moment, such training is required neither in primary, nor secondary education, which implies that training programs operate based on the assumption that children and young adults would receive such training outside of the system of education, which may not be the case. Another possible explanation for the absence of training in critical for the profession personal qualities is the belief that they can be learned on the job, which, again, may or may not turn out to be the case, given that there are no established professional requirements, standards of practice, or a code of ethics that would shape organizational cultures, as in other helping professions. In fact, as some practitioners observe, it is not uncommon to see organizations pay lip service to reflective practice instead of engaging in meaningful reflection due to various challenges, including shortage of resources and misunderstanding or misuse of reflection[2]. In addition, the absence of training in soft skills may be explained by the absence of basic understanding of their importance in academia. In fact, this assumption was echoed by one of the respondents in this study, who admitted that he is "more interested in what works in practice instead of myself". This ethos of positivism that elevates objective knowledge and limits academic training to technical skills is still prevalent in many institutions and is very much in sync with the literature on reflective practice in the field of peacebuilding.

[2] Linda Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice'", *PBPL Paper 52* (2008), p.1.

Needless to say, peacebuilding educators should be credited for drawing attention to the concept of reflective practice and the idea that experience alone does not necessarily guarantee learning. Developing practice and practitioners' skills requires an intentional disciplined approach to continuous learning and, most importantly, curiosity toward learning about learning. Those peacebuilding authors who do draw attention to reflection tend to focus on the practice itself, its broader context, and effectiveness of tools and approaches used to achieve concrete goals, while still continuing to overlook the significance of practitioners' role in shaping practice and to underutilize reflexivity as a result of that. However, the emphasis on the technical aspects of reflective practice makes practice *reflective*, but not *reflexive*. Although the preliminary literature review registered an appreciation for the importance of reflective practice in the field of peacebuilding, the latter failed to develop a more nuanced understanding of it and did not keep up with recent developments in reflective practice in other helping professions. As a result, reflexive practice is largely absent in both, peacebuilding training and practice. While such absence can be justified in some professions, helping professions carry much greater responsibility for the wellbeing of clients. In fact, as some authors advise, "when practitioners do choose to live a life devoid of reflection and self-awareness, they should seek employment that does not involve working directly with other people"[3]. At the same time, the conceptual understanding of reflective practice in other fields

[3] Parker Palmer et al., *The Heart of Higher Education* (Jossey-Bass, 2013), p. 49.

continues to evolve and gradually come to terms with the fact that reflecting on experience is always situated and influenced not only by the object of examination, but by the subject of it as well. For example, besides psychology, whose *raison d'etre* is to understand human psyche, and, to some extent, sociology, which studies the relationship between individual agency and social systems, other fields, including education, healthcare, social work, counseling, and management, begin to acknowledge and incorporate reflexivity as one of the elements of effective practice.

The initial recognition of the missing *reflexive* dimension of reflective practice in the field of peacebuilding suggested the need for understanding and bridging this gap in theory and praxis of reflective inquiry and a broader task of problematizing the traditional understanding of practice, its epistemological assumptions, and the role of practitioners in shaping it. Moreover, the preliminary literature review, in combination with personal self-exploration and its transformative effect on self-perception, led to an assumption that the practice of reflexivity extends the promise of advancing practice, building upon practitioners' expanding self-awareness and tailored approach to skill development. In fact, the study aimed to prove that reflexivity, or understanding the self and its impact on practice, is indeed a critical component of successful practice and an effective mechanism of its development that deserves recognition rather than being subsumed into technical or critical aspects of reflection or dismissed altogether as irrelevant to understanding practice. In order to support this claim, I set out to design a qualitative study aiming to explore the meaning and role assigned to reflexivity by peacebuilding practitioners. Reflexivity

here was understood in a purely analytical sense, focusing on individual capacity to exercise introspection, as suggested by the term *reflectere,* or mirroring the object of examination, in this case - the *self*. With that in mind, forty-two seasoned peacebuilding professionals were asked to reflect on a range of questions, including the following: "How do you define the phenomenon of self-reflection?" and "What role does it play in your practice?" The collected data was then analyzed using thematic analysis described in the methodological section and the main findings were synthesized in the discussion section. The initial stipulation that reflexivity is a critical, yet, often dismissed, component of a meaningful reflective practice was partially supported by both, literature review and collected data. The findings suggested an integrative multi-level conceptual framework of reflective practice that is constituted by technical, critical, and reflexive aspects of reflection and converges analytical and embodied types of insight. The framework, in turn, generated a range of practical implications for peacebuilding training and self-care for practitioners, followed by final reflections on the study and suggestions for future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Contextualizing the literature on the phenomenon of reflexivity (used here interchangeably with self-reflection) is an ambitious undertaking fraught with challenges. Among these challenges is the lack of conceptual clarity and uniformity across the vast literature on reflection and the conflation of self-reflection with the concepts of reflection, reflective practice, critical reflection, and reflexivity, among others. Given the nebulous and eclectic nature of the concept of reflection drawing on a wide range of epistemological threads across disciplines, it appears appropriate to examine salient approaches to reflection that tend to focus on instrumental reflection, critical reflection, reflexivity, or a combination thereof. As the concept of reflexivity began to gain visibility in recent years, traditional models of reflective practice that focus predominantly on instrumental reflection have been around in the fields of education, healthcare, and management for several decades and are gradually gaining appreciation in other fields as well, including the field of peacebuilding[4] [5] [6]. While it appears evident that the latter stands to benefit enormously from synthesizing

[4] Tamra Pearson d'Estree, "Conflict Resolution as a Profession and the Need for Communities of Inquiry", *IJCER* 1, no. 1 (2013), pp. 83–95.
[5] John Paul Lederach et al., *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring, and Learning Toolkit*, (JKIIPS, 2007).
[6] Michael Lang, *The Guide to Reflective Practice in Conflict Resolution* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

various approaches to reflection, we are yet to find ways of doing so to maximize its benefits. With this goal in mind, we will explore the extant literature on reflection, trace its genealogy, explore overlaps between reflexivity and other forms of reflection, acknowledge criticisms and challenges, and draw main conclusions.

Reflection is an essential part of human experience that sets us apart from other species. Its original meaning can be traced to Latin *flectere,* which can be translated as "to bend", and its derivative *reflectere* meaning "to bend back"[7]. And while initially it was used in the context of mirroring in a literal sense, the term acquired its alternative meaning around 1600 AD, namely, "to turn the light of consciousness back on itself". As reflection had seen several renditions over the course of its evolution in the West, it can also be applied to some Eastern philosophies. In Buddhism, for example, self-reflection resonates with the concept of *mindfulness*, which, among other interpretations, means bringing one's full attention to the present in whatever form it is experienced subjectively, be it a bodily sensation, feeling, thought, or a combination thereof[8]. However, unlike Eastern philosophies, where reflection was used to further the state of mindfulness and the search for a balanced life, Western traditions, for the exception of several contemplative traditions, used reflection primarily as a tool to further objective knowing by way of exercising reason, thus marking the onset of a hierarchical relationship between

[7] Linda Finlay and Brendan Gough, eds., *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences* (Blackwell Science, 2003), p. ix.
[8] Ruth Baer, "Mindfulness Training," *Clinical Psychology* 10, no. 2 (2003), p. 125.

superior objective knowledge and inferior subjective insight, which had a direct and lasting impact on how we understand and employ reflection today.

Socrates, for example, is widely credited with drawing attention to the practice of critical inquiry into underlying assumptions and premises. In fact, the Socratic method of interactive deconstruction of knowledge claims, in line with the Delphic maxim *know thyself,* views self-examination as one of the pillars of living a virtuous examined life[9]. His student Plato, a monumental figure in the Western philosophical tradition, captured the spirit of Socratic dialogues in his writings and highlighted the role of reason in self-regulation. For example, a human soul, which is endowed with reason, spirit, and desires, is capable of wise discernments, when not disturbed by bodily desires[10]. Plato's student, Aristotle, viewed reason as essential not only to producing true knowledge, but also to living well, which requires lifelong activities that actualize the virtues of the rational part of the soul and shifts the emphasis from *being* to *doing*[11]. These early attempts to elevate mind over body laid the foundation of their estrangement and were furthered by a long lineage of Western philosophers and theologians. Saint Augustine, for example, also argued that the soul, likewise endowed with the capacity for reason, is superior to the body and thus governs it[12]. Thomas Aquinas, following in the footsteps of Aristotle, recognized the importance of human capacity to reason and know immediately accessible phenomena, especially

[9] Xenophon, *Memorabilia, Recollections of Socrates*, translated by H. G. Dakyns, 4.2.24.
[10] Hendrik Lorenz, "Ancient Theories of Soul", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2009.
[11] Richard Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2018.
[12] Christian Tornau, "Saint Augustine", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2019.

that which is derived through senses, but argued that true knowledge may not be attained without the help and direction of the divine[13]. This body-mind chasm was later cemented by Descartes' ontological dualism claiming that the two substances, the short-lived material body and the immortal soul endowed with the capacity to discern true knowledge by the will of the divine, operate in different realms, and it is the job of the latter to guard against the deceiving influence of sensations by "withdrawing the mind from the senses"[14]. Such elevation of mind over nature in Western religious and philosophical traditions gave the concept of reflection a "swelled head from birth"[15], while turning the body into an obstacle to be overcome and locating the human faculty for producing reliable knowledge at the furthest possible remove from human corporeality[16].

Contemporary conceptualizations of reflection tend to be contingent upon the nature of practice, theoretical lenses employed, and the degree to which they allow a practitioner to be visible in practice, ranging from minimizing the role of practitioner in shaping practice in traditional models of reflective practice to the self being a function of its social environment in critical reflection to elevating subjective insight at the expense of social context in some models of reflexivity. In fact, a common thread that persist across the vast literature on reflection in various fields is the absence of

[13] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica Part I-II* (Jazzybee Verlag, 2012), Q. 109.
[14] Gary Hatfield, "René Descartes", Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014.
[15] Richard Jordi, "Reframing the Concept of Reflection", *Adult Education* 61, no. 2, p. 183.
[16] Elana Michelson, "Usual Suspects: Experience, Reflection and the (En)Gendering of Knowledge", *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 15, no. 6 (1996), p. 440.

consistent understanding of reflection and ways to go about it[17], despite its seeming accessibility. Yet, if we are to distill the essence of the phenomenon of reflection across various models, it could be framed as the process of learning through experience toward gaining new insights for the purpose of enhancing practice[18]. A reflective practitioner recognizes the inherent value of learning from experience and uses it to fuel her professional development[19], as opposed to traditional models of formal learning, whereby the latter takes place in a classroom setting and relies heavily on theoretical knowledge that is transferred down from an instructor to students.

Moreover, favoring either of the two extremes on practice-theory continuum can be attributed to the lack of uniformity in views on integrating theory and practice, with some authors arguing that reflective practice is a radical shift away from theory toward practice and others viewing it as a project of integrating theoretical and experiential knowing. The former observe that theory often fails to prepare for practice and that the two have significant disconnects[20]. The latter point out that, in order to be enduring, changes in practice must be accompanied by changes in thought, thus urging to understand the barriers to merging theory and practice[21]. In support of this approach, some authors propose to look at reflective practice as a

[17] Helen Hickson, "Critical Reflection: Reflecting on Learning to Be Reflective" *Reflective Practice* 12, no. 6 (2011), p. 829.
[18] Linda Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice,'" *PBPL Paper 52* (2008), p. 1.
[19] Karen Osterman and Robert Kottkamp, *Reflective Practice for Educators* (Corwin Press, 2004), p.18.
[20] Ramin Akbari, "Reflections on Reflection," *System* 35, no. 2 (2007), p. 198.
[21] Osterman and Kottkamp, *Reflective Practice for Educators*, p. 18.

theory-in-practice (or inside-out lens) rather than theory about practice (or outside-in lens), stripping theory of its privileged status in this way [22]. In that is perhaps the ultimate appeal of reflective practice for many practitioners, as it acknowledges that practice, unlike theory of practice, is fraught with puzzles and dilemmas that theory does not have the capacity to address. Instead, it takes us on tortuous and often painful learning journeys into the heart of discontent.

The brief overview of the origins of Western rationalism appears to suggest that it laid the foundation of the modern mainstream understanding of reflective practice, which was further developed by John Dewey, one of the most prominent exponents of American pragmatism, in the first half of the XX century. While breaking away from the outdated paradigm of force-feeding knowledge to students and pioneering ideas of reflective practice and experiential learning, Dewey inherited the rationalists' distrust for the embodied knowing. Similarly to early thinkers, Dewey believed in inferiority of the "limiting influence of senses"[23] and sought to recover all that is relevant to the project of human development in experience or practical wisdom by way of exercising reason. For Dewey, reflection is a specialized form of thinking stemming from questions arising in practice that leads to its improvement[24]. In his five-stage model, Dewey illustrates that reflection is a purposeful action-oriented activity, triggered by a problem or doubt encountered over the course of

[22] Ann Cunliffe, "On Becoming a Critically Reflexive Practitioner," *Journal of Management Education* 28, no. 4 (2004), p. 417.
[23] John Dewey, *How We Think* (D.C. Heath and Co., 1933), p. 277.
[24] Linda Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice'", p. 3.

practice. This disconnect between the intended and the actual further stimulates the inquiry and motivates the learner to reexamine the issue, seeking a deeper understanding of factors that led to the current outcome. Refining of the problem leads to the development of hypothesis on the nature of the problem, its origins, and possible solutions. Upon carrying out the analysis, this changed perspective becomes a stimulus for experimentation, which leads to further observation, hypothesizing, and testing in the perpetual cycle of reflection [25].

Dewey's idea of cyclical reflection, in turn, laid the groundwork for a host of other experiential learning models. For example, Kolb, inspired by Dewey's cyclical problem-solving approach to overcoming inconsistencies in practice, created his influential experiential learning model, which viewed learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience"[26]. In this model, reflective observation takes place after an encounter with concrete experience, when a practitioner considers what has happened from a variety of perspectives, followed by abstract conceptualization, which, in turn, leads to active experimentation, when we approach a similar situation armed with an expanded understanding [27]. In such circular fashion, a learner builds on continuously accumulating experiences that eventually translate into knowledge. Moreover, Kolb's model pointed toward idiosyncrasies of learning preferences, which appear

[25] Dewey, *How We Think*, pp. 199-209.
[26] David Kolb, *Experiential Learning* (Prentice-Hall, 1984), p. 38.
[27] Ibid. p. 94.

significant to the process of reflection, given that learning and development are the ultimate goals of reflective practice. With that in mind, Kolb suggested that there are four preferred learning styles based on where the learner is located on *perceiving* (with *Concrete Experience* and *Abstract Conceptualization* extremes) and *processing* (with *Reflective Observation* and *Active Experimentation* extremes) continuums[28]. While a learner may be comfortable with all learning styles, the author believed that one has a predisposition for either feeling or analytical thinking in terms of *perception* and for experimentation or observation in terms of *processing* styles. This led Kolb to suggesting four main types of learners, who prefer to feel and observe (*diverging* type), analyze and observe (*assimilating* type), analyze and experiment (*converging* type), or feel and experiment (*accommodating* type), with a caveat that the learning styles should be treated as fluid points on continuums rather than binaries. Moreover, similarly to Dewey, Kolb stressed the importance of such qualities as openness to judgment, criticism, and feedback and warned against the habits of professional arrogance, defensiveness, and failure to set aside time to reflect[29].

Building on Kolb's model, Boud, Keogh, and Walker offered an experiential model that recognizes different levels of reflection. In their three-stage model, they recommend that learners first reflect on the experience by mentally replaying, recording, and describing it in a non-judgmental way. The second stage involves attending to feelings, positive and negative, triggered by the experience. The goal here

[28] Ibid. p. 145.
[29] Ibid. p. 352.

is to identify and eliminate negative emotions, which could obstruct the reflection. A practitioner then seeks to re-evaluate the experience, which is followed by planning for what should be changed going forward[30]. What set this experiential model apart was the recognition of the role that emotions play in reflective process and their influence on cognition. For example, learners who feel positive about themselves are more likely to persist with reflective activities[31]. It is worth noting that the authors recognize the utility of only positive emotions and view negative ones as obstructing learning. This process of clearing undesirable feelings out of the way of rational interpretation of experience is very different from embracing all feelings and emotions as an important source of knowledge [32]. A further elaboration of the reflection phase was proposed in Gibb's reflective (or structured debriefing) cycle, also acknowledging the importance of emotions. The structured debriefing approach proposes to look at experience and describe it without making judgments, which is followed by recollecting initial reactions and feelings related to that experience. During the reflection stage, comprised of evaluation and analysis phases, a practitioner attaches value judgments to that experience. During the conclusion phase general and specific insights are drawn, which are then followed by the design

[30] David Boud et al., *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning* (New York, 2015), p. 18.
[31] Linda Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice'", p. 9.
[32] Jordi, "Reframing the Concept of Reflection", p. 185.

of action plan to propose alternative ways of dealing with similar experiences in the future[33].

Thus, traditional reflective practice models, mainly prescriptive and cyclical in nature, suggest that experience alone does not guarantee effective learning unless it is complemented by the phase of reflection on it. Moreover, the learning cycle is never complete, as the ultimate goal of the learning process is the formation of a habit of questioning rather than a mere accumulation of knowledge. But perhaps the most influential model of reflective practice to date was offered by Donald Schön, Dewey's scholar who noted the disconnects between theory and practice and proposed reconcile them by way of a "dialogue of thinking and doing" through which a practitioner becomes more skillful[34]. Like Dewey, Schön saw value in retrospective reflection, or *reflection-on-action*, whereby a practitioner reviews, describes, analyzes, and evaluates past experience for the purpose of gaining insights to improve practice. But, unlike Dewey, who relied on reason alone to enhance experiential learning, Schön viewed practice as a lot more than a mere application of theory or reason. He observed that practitioners "usually know more than they can say" about their practice, thus exhibiting the kind of tacit *knowing-in-action* that is hard to put into words[35]. Moreover, as practitioners gain more experience, some of them develop

[33] Graham Gibbs, *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods* (Oxford Brookes University, 2013), p. 14.
[34] Donald Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (Jossey-Bass, 1987), p. 31.
[35] Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner* (Basic Books, 1983), p. viii, 59.

the skill of *reflection-in-action,* which involves not only technical, theoretical, or intuitive knowing, but also reflecting on how this knowledge is being applied while performing a task at hand[36]. In fact, this propensity for reflection and ability to "think on one's feet" are at the core of "professional artistry", which sets apart a reflective practitioner from unreflective one who clings to rules and procedures that are applied mechanically[37]. Thus, while drawing on Dewey's ideas, Schön's approach synthesizes rational and intuitive (or tacit) insight that a skillful practitioner relies upon in the midst of practice. Moreover, unlike its predecessors, Schön's model pointed out that reflection can be done not only in retrospect, but also simultaneously, or in action. It is worth noting that, while the concepts of *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action* gained wide popularity, some authors believe that they should be complemented by a distinct phase of planning for future action, and thus expand the model to include the missing dimension of *reflection-for-action*[38]. These temporal dimensions are sometimes framed as retrospective (or Schon's *reflection-on-action*), contemporaneous (or *reflection-in-action*), and anticipatory (or *reflection-for-action*)[39].

The framework of levels of reflection was further developed in Schön's collaboration with Argyris, who introduced the concepts of *single-* and *double-loop*

[36] Ibid. p. 49.
[37] Linda Finlay, "Reflecting on Reflective Practice," p. 4.
[38] Joellen Killion and Guy Todnem, "A Process for Personal Theory Building," *Educational Leadership* 48, no. 7 (1991), p. 15.
[39] Joseph Raelin, "Public Reflection as the Basis of Learning," *Management Learning* 32, no. 1 (2001), p. 19.

*learning*. *Single-loop learning*, according to them, occurs when errors are corrected without altering the underlying governing values, while *double-loop learning* takes place when errors are corrected by reevaluating the governing variables, modifying objectives, and changing the course of action accordingly[40]. These, in turn, gave rise to the concept of *triple-loop learning,* inspired by Gregory Bateson's *levels of learning,* which introduces a higher level of abstraction – meta-learning, or learning about learning[41]. Moreover, Argyris later pointed out how our beliefs, often untested, are based on conclusions inferred from selected observations, which reinforce the habit of paying attention to and validating certain facts and ignoring others. He coined the term *reflexive loop* to describe the circular process by which we select particular data, ascribe meaning to it, make assumptions, draw conclusions, and ultimately take action. We thus remain in a *reflexive loop* while our unexamined beliefs affect the type of data we tend to select[42] - the process, which can be also framed in terms of *confirmation bias*, or a tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms one's preexisting beliefs[43]. In addition, Argyris and Schön's theory of action suggested the use of the terms *espoused theory* (or what we believe) and *theory-in-use* (or what we actually do) to highlight the disconnects in theory and practice. However, in order to address them, a practitioner has to be able to register

[40] Mark Easterby-Smith, ed., *Organizational Learning and the Learning Organization: Developments in Theory and Practice,* (SAGE, 2001), p. 3.
[41] Paul Tosey, "Bateson's Levels of Learning" (University of Tilburg, 2006), p. 9.
[42] Barbara Larrivee, "Transforming Teaching Practice", *Reflective Practice* 1, no. 3 (2000), p. 295.
[43] Scott Plous, *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making* (McGraw-Hill, 1993), p. 233.

inconsistencies between her implicit mental maps and explicit theories of action and then work toward closing the gaps between the espoused theory of action and the actual action[44]. The authors also dispel the assumption that the accumulation of knowledge that comprises espoused theories will trigger changes in theories-in-use, as there is little evidence that the former leads to significant and lasting change in the latter[45]. While adopting an espoused theory does play an important role in learning, substantial behavioral changes depend on revising deeply internalized mental maps and ideas, which are the essence of theory-in-use[46]. Argyris also observed that practitioners who claim to practice *double-loop learning* are often unable to actually do it and are blind to their incompetence. This pattern was so persistent in his observations that he termed it a "generic anti-learning pattern"[47], which prevents practitioners from improving their practice until the root causes of defensive reasoning are addressed[48].

Building on the models above, among others, the emergent field of reflective practice generated a considerable amount of literature on analytical reflection that tends to focus on higher-order mental processes, from shallow descriptive levels of reflection to more sophisticated forms of meta-cognition, with different authors conceptualizing these stages in different ways. For example, Mezirow, an adult

[44] Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness* (Jossey-Bass, 1992), pp. 6-7.
[45] Osterman and Kottkamp, *Reflective Practice for Educators*, p.15.
[46] Ibid. p. 16.
[47] Chris Argyris, "Double-Loop Learning, Teaching, and Research", *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 1, no. 2 (2002), p. 206.
[48] Chris Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn," *Harvard Business Review*, 1991.

educator, discerned three types of reflection, which focus on the *content* of the problem, *process* (or stages employed in solving a problem), and *premise* (or underlying beliefs and assumptions)[49]. Moreover, he believed that reflection leads to deep learning when it involves *perspective transformation.* In his transformative learning theory, Mezirow describes the process of perspective transformation as having psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revisions of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in behavior) dimensions. As in most models, reflection here is induced upon encountering a difficulty or novelty in practice, which is then followed by the stages of self-examination, a sense of alienation, relating discontent to others, exploration of possibilities, planning for a new course of action, acquiring knowledge and skills for carrying it out, testing new hypotheses, building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and eventual reintegration of newly formed knowledge into one's life[50]. A significant role here is assigned to self-directed learning, which is not so much the result of natural accumulation of experience as individuals consciously shaping the course of the learning process. Moreover, the author suggests that adult learners are often held back by their own self-limiting beliefs, which trap them within a *meaning perspective* that restricts their potential[51]. The basic assumption here is that individuals not only do not stop developing upon entering adulthood but may pose complex learning goals

[49] Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (Jossey-Bass, 1991), p. 104.
[50] ] Mezirow, *Learning as Transformation* (Jossey-Bass, 2000), p. 290.
[51] Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning,* p. 139.

and self-direct toward achieving those objectives, as the author observed in many adult learners. According to Mezirow, *problem-posing*, not *problem-solving*, becomes the most significant characteristic of adult development[52], which complemented Piaget's influential cognitive development theory that claimed that the acquisition of abstract reasoning skills is the final stage of cognitive development in humans that lasts from adolescence throughout adulthood[53]. In fact, Mezirow believes that adulthood is far from static and can generate intense learning, when adult learners critically reflect on ways in which they perceive, think, feel, and act, including underlying assumptions acquired during formative years, which may have resulted in distorted views of reality or the self[54].

The theme of self-examination is also common for c*ritical reflection* theories, although it appears problematic to categorize them in light of their diversity. For example, some authors equate critical reflection with meta-cognitive self-inquiry, which aligns with Mezirow's approach. However, critical reflection can also be understood as a critical sociocultural examination of distribution of power, including our own, in a given social context[55] [56], especially when reflection is blended with the strands of critical, postmodern, or feminist theories[57]. Reynolds, for example,

[52] Joseph Raelin, "Public Reflection," *Management Learning* 32, no. 1 (2001), p. 18.
[53] William Huitt and J. Hummel, "Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development", *Educational Psychology Interactive* (2003), p. 1.
[54] Mezirow, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood* (Jossey-Bass, 1990), p. 14.
[55] Stephen Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (Jossey-Bass, 1995), p. xiii.
[56] Helen Hickson, "Critical Reflection: Reflecting on Learning to Be Reflective", p. 832.
[57] Sue White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care* (Open University Press, 2008), p. 42.

considers four features that distinguish critical reflection from other forms of reflection, such as social, rather than individual, focus, analysis of power relations, questioning our underlying assumptions, and the pursuit of emancipation[58]. In line with this approach is Habermas' view of reflection as "a process of critical self-determination and becoming aware of the influence of societal and ideological assumptions, especially ethical and moral beliefs, behind professional practice"[59]. Critical reflection is thus concerned not only with the question of *how* to reflect but also with *why* by elevating ethical and moral aspects of reflection. A critically reflective practitioner acknowledges that, since our practice, the process of knowledge production, and we ourselves are products of our cultures, we have to "creep underneath" our habitual individual and collective lenses in order to examine their influence[60].

Elaborating further on merging reflection and social justice, Brookfield, while admitting that the former is an essential element of learning, views its full potential in linking our personal experience with social power structures through clarifying our assumptions about and relationship to power[61]. This process of self-exploration is fraught with anxieties of unearthing and confronting our own beliefs, thus demanding a certain level of intellectual maturity on the part of the practitioner. In

[58] Linda Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice", p. 6.
[59] Kam-shing Yip, "Self-Reflection in Reflective Practice: A Note of Caution", *The British Journal of Social* Work 36, no. 5 (2006), p. 777.
[60] Sue White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care*, p. 50.
[61] Hickson, "Critical Reflection", p. 831.

addition, the author proposed to explore practice through four complementary lenses, when applicable:

*Lens 1*: Our autobiography as a learner, whereby we turn inwards for tracing our personal and professional growth;

*Lens 2*: Our learners' eyes, a confidential feedback channel revealing how our practice is interpreted by learners, so that it remains responsive;

*Lens 3*: Our colleagues' experiences, when our colleagues serve as critical mirrors of our practice;

*Lens 4*: Theoretical literature, which can help us identify general elements of what we may think are idiosyncratic experiences[62].

Echoing Brookfield's emphasis on social aspects of reflection, Hatton and Smith view reflection as a progression from unreflective description, to reflective description, to stepping back to analyze experience from multiple perspectives, to the most advanced skill of critical reflection, whereby a practitioner weighs in ethical considerations, while questioning social, political, or cultural status quo[63]. Among other critical reflection theories is *345 model*, which acknowledges that reflection does not take place in separate stages or activities in real life, but instead presents itself as a tangle of thoughts and emotions, pointing toward interconnectedness and multi-directional nature of reflection[64]. As an entry point of examination, the model

[62] Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, p. 25.
[63] Sue White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care*, p. 14.
[64] Ibid. p. 206.

looks at three levels of reflection, such as *content*, *meaning* a practitioner assigns to it, and critical reflection that leads to transformative *action*; four reflection processes, such as *investigation*, *explanation*, *understanding*, and *transformation*; and asks five questions, which are:

- *What is this about?*
- *What more do I need to know?*
- *How do I understand this?*
- *What other perspectives are there?*
- *How could this be different?*[65]

Moreover, critical reflection and critical reflexivity are often used interchangeably with reflexivity. For some authors the latter becomes a condition under which practice transforms into critical reflective practice[66]. Cunliffe, for example, understands it as a medium of addressing *existential* (or questions such as *Who am I?* and *What kind of person do I want to be?*), *relational* (*How do I relate to others and to the world around me?*), and *praxis* (the need for self-conscious and ethical action based on a critical questioning of past actions and future possibilities) components of being[67]. As practitioners work through volatile and ambivalent situations in practice, they actively engage in constructing and negotiating the self in

[65] Ibid. pp. 206, 211, 261-262.
[66] Neil Thompson and Jan Pascal, "Developing Critically Reflective Practice", *Reflective Practice* 13, no. 2 (2012), p. 318.
[67] Ann Cunliffe, "On Becoming a Critically Reflexive Practitioner", *Journal of Management Education* 28, no. 4 (2004), p. 408.

relation to the broader professional landscape. In the process of this ongoing construction, described by some authors as a heuristic searching process, practitioner gradually enhance their ability to learn, analyze, synthesize, and develop strengths, abilities, and potential [68]. The goal of critical reflexivity here is to examine not only the sociocultural context, but also their own assumptions, blind spots, or anything that prevents them from attaining a more accurate and nuanced understanding of reality.

Similarly, Larrivee, draws attention to the task of examining our personal screens that guide the process of meaning construction by proposing a multi-level framework that examines practitioners' core beliefs (values, ethics, and intellectual commitments), underlying principles (a framework for interpreting experience), daily practice (linking beliefs with a general plan of action), and strategies (linking of beliefs with specific action)[69]. In her view, critically reflective practice is a sequence of cognitive and emotional states, marked by incremental fluctuations of irregular progress, which involves examining experience, observing behavioral and emotional patterns, identifying needed changes, surrendering to the inner conflict and the unfamiliar, which culminate in a reconciling phase that brings about a deeper understanding and transformation in the way we think and feel[70]. It is of particular interest here that the author goes beyond the purely analytical deliberation over

[68] Kam-shing Yip, "Self-Reflection in Reflective Practice", p. 783.
[69] Larrivee, "Transforming Teaching Practice", p. 301.
[70] Ibid p. 304.

which meaning is to be assigned to experience and acknowledges the state of uncertainty as equally important. Upon entering the phase of inner doubt and turmoil, when the old ways no longer make sense and the new ones have not yet been born, the temptation to stick with the familiar action may be hard to overcome. However, it is by stepping into this unsettling and potentially overwhelming state of uncertainty, a practitioner is able to transform her practice by developing alertness to shifts in our thoughts and senses, infusing professional identity with personal values and beliefs, and nurturing a mindset of a curious life-long learner[71].

With the rise in popularity of critical reflection and reflective practice, the concept of *reflexivity* begins to gain currency in its various renditions, from an internal dialogue and a mechanism mediating between the self and social structures to the way of being in the world. The former, an inner dialogue, is synonymous with Plato's interpretation of a "reasoning soul" capable of distilling knowledge through deliberate reasoning[72]. This "looking inwards" (going back to Latin *spect intra* that gave its name to the process of *introspection)* in the capacity as both, observers and participants, poses a formidable question of who is speaking and who is listening[73]. While some thinkers, including Kant, believed that, although our capacity to know ourselves is an "indubitable fact", it cannot be explained, given the conflation of subject and object of examination, and the best we can do is to eavesdrop on our inner

[71] Ibid p. 306.
[72] Margaret Archer, ed. *Conversations about Reflexivity* (Routledge, 2010), p. 4.
[73] Margaret Archer, "Reflexivity", *Sociopedia* (2013), p. 2.

conversations to get a glimpse of our consciousness at work[74]. In response, Comte declared that introspection was "null and void", because "the thinker cannot divide himself into two, of whom one reasons, while the other observes him reason"[75]. However, some authors counter this claim by inserting a time lapse, thus turning *introspection* into *retrospection*[76]. The latter's appeal of accessibility to the study of memory of experience and temporality as a way to solve the split consciousness puzzle resonated with American pragmatists and sociologists, who equated reflexivity with critical reason and active inner dialogue, rather than a passive act of self-examination[77]. For example, Norbert Wiley proposes to fuse ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead into a dialogical model of reflexivity and temporality [78]. Peirce's account uses a courtroom analogy to capture how deliberations are conducted between present "I" and future "you", which Peirce defines as "that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time". Mead, on the other hand, views reflexivity as an internal dialogue between "I", or present self, and "me", or past self. Both accounts are then synthesized by Wiley into a triadic relationship of "me–I–you", whereby the dialogical self is the present "I" talking directly to the future "you" and indirectly or reflexively to the past "me". In doing so Wiley accomplishes several goals. By extending the "I-me" loop into the past and the

[74] Ibid. p. 1.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid. p. 2.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Margaret Archer, e*Conversations about Reflexivity*, p. 17.

"I-you" loop into the future, he unites the two "semi-circular views" into a 360-degree view that allows us to see the entire range of temporality and envision past, present, and future simultaneously. This "omniscopic" vision goes beyond the mere recollection of memories or envisioning the desired future, but also serves as an interface between internalized social structures represented by the wealth of experience of past "me" and personal agency or potential for novel non-habitual action of future "you"[79]. As Wiley observes, the size of the felt present is in constant fluctuation, because "we are three-legged stools, simultaneously in the past, present and future", moving through the "stream of consciousness" with our bodies growing old and our selves in constant flux and renewal[80]. This brings us to a larger question on the elusive nature of the self, stripped of identity, substance, or essence and reduced to self-awareness, reflexivity, and inner speech, with the latter serving as a key process in steering the self and acting as our compass throughout life[81]. This temporal embeddedness of reflection evokes the "rolling snowball" analogy: as the snowball of reflexivity rolls down the hill, it changes shape, yet still embodies the continuity of human experience, with the present drawing on the past and projecting itself into the future, thus implying that the experience of "here-and-now" is far from homogeneous and always historically and culturally situated[82].

[79] Ibid. p. 18.
[80] Ibid. p. 19.
[81] Ibid. p. 36.
[82] Julius Elster, "The Temporal Dimension of Reflexivity: Linking Reflexive Orientations to the Stock of Knowledge", *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory* 18, no. 3 (2017), p. 281.

Similarly, Gillespie views reflexivity as a dialogical process driven by multiple social perspectives on experience, during which one's positionality alternates, while taking on actor and observer perspectives. According to the author, this double evocation allows the self to be viewed as both, self and other, which can be arrived at in two ways - through *self-mediation*, or taking an observer perspective on the self, and *short-circuiting*, or shifting from an (often critical) observer perspective on the other to an observer perspective on the self [83]. The partially integrated actor and observer perspectives are the pre-condition for self-reflection, which is further developed upon encountering four proximal causes: *ruptures* that present problems with the subject-object relation, *social feedback* where another actor acts as a mirror, *social conflict* in the context of struggle for recognition, and *internal dialogues* through internalizing the perspective of another actor on the self[84]. Yet the origin of self-reflection is not just in social acts, but also in social settings, which structure actor and observer perspectives and provide mechanisms for integrating them. In addition, by introducing the concept of the *sign* (or significant symbol), which allows us to differentiate and construct social experience, the author abandons the assumption that complex semiotic systems "mirror" the world and instead views them as

[83] Alex Gillespie, *Becoming Other: From Social Interaction to Self-Reflection* (Information Age Pub, 2006), p. 252.
[84] Alex Gillespie, "The Social Basis of Self-Reflection" In *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociocultural Psychology* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 688.

architectures of intersubjectivity, thus enabling the translation between actor and observer perspectives within a social act[85].

Moreover, the obscurity of reflexivity generated diverse views on the relationship of individual agency and social structure among sociologists, who draw attention to the rapid development of the dynamic modern *risk society*, which simultaneously liberates individuals from social structure and tradition and propels them toward individualization[86]. In order for a modern society to accurately anticipate and mitigate possible risks, it has to examine and confront itself, thus engaging in a continuous process of change and adaptation. The onset of risk society weakens individuals' reliance on social structures and leads to substituting traditional action with reflexive action. Individuals are now pressured to become more reflexive in a globalized, or, as Giddens put it, *runaway* world presenting them with novel and unexpected information[87] – as opposed to the elitist approach to reflexivity, whereby only the chosen few were deemed well-equipped to engage in it. As social agents become more preoccupied with potential risks and challenges, they have a greater autonomy in navigating novel social landscapes, while anticipatory reflection becomes a more dominant mode of reflection rather than looking back on past experience[88].

[85] Ibid. p. 689.
[86] Archer, "Reflexivity", p. 5.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.

While some authors view extended reflexivity as a subjective phenomenon gradually replacing objective social structure, others view them as interdependent. Archer, for example, views personal reflexivity as inner dialogues through which individuals consider themselves in relation to social settings. According to her, we are witnessing the emergence of a new form of systemic reflexivity that serves as a mediating mechanism between social agents and structures, which results in either *morphostasis*, a reproduction of cultural and structural status quo, or *morphogenesis*, a configuration that introduces change and disrupts cultural and structural continuity, whereby previous guidelines are no longer relevant[89]. Moreover, the author points out that a dominant mode of reflexivity will depend on the social context and, based on that, distinguishes four types[90]:

*Communicative reflexivity,* whereby internal conversations are confirmed and completed by others before they lead to action and thus reproducing normative conventionalism;

*Autonomous reflexivity,* when internal conversations are self-contained, leading directly to action and characterized by instrumental rationality;

*Meta-reflexivity,* when internal conversations critically evaluate previous inner dialogues and are critical about effective and rational action;

[89] Margaret Archer, *The Reflexive Imperative in Late Modernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 6.
[90] Ibid. p. 50.

*Fractured reflexivity,* a situation when internal conversations do not lead to action and only intensify personal distress and disorientation, leading (temporarily) to passivity.

The last point, the tendency of reflexivity to lead to inertia, has been pointed out by other authors as well. Pollner, for example, endowed reflexivity with "unsettling" properties, instilling insecurity regarding the basic assumptions, discourse, and practices used in describing reality[91]. Davis and Klaes also remind that reflexivity can pose a threat to logical reasoning, which led them to distinguish *benign* and *malign* types of reflexivity, with the former being self-reinforcing and the latter undermining itself[92]. When encountering malign aspects of reflexivity, a successful response requires simultaneous consideration of various levels of reflexivity and sociohistorical perspectives. Thus, one has to be able to shift between *immanent* (confined to the object of investigation), *epistemic* (resting on the individualistic reflection on the nature of the phenomenon), and *transcendent* (drawing attention to the sociohistorical context) levels of reflexivity, while keeping in mind that they are often nested within one another[93]. For example, reflexivity can be malign or self-defeating on one level, but preserve characteristics of the earlier forms of reflection on the next level.

While reflexivity is generally viewed as an inner activity, some authors emphasize both, internal and external, manifestations of it. Caetano, for example,

[91] Cunliffe, "On Becoming a Critically Reflexive Practitioner", p. 407.
[92] John Davis and Matthias Klaes, "Reflexivity: Curse or Cure?", *Journal of Economic Methodology* 10, no. 3 (2003), p. 333.
[93] Ibid. p. 332.

points out that the relationship between internal and external dimensions of action is mediated on three levels: *structural* (serving as the bridge between material conditions of existence and embodied dispositions and guiding agents' actions on intuitive level), *contextual* (involving intra-personal and inter-relational frameworks and parameters used by social agents), and *individual* (or reflexivity *qua talis*, which mediates between social structure and individual agency)[94]. In her research into personal reflexivity, she arrives at five profiles of reflexivity that cross-connect structural conditions (socioeconomic backgrounds of social agents), contextual stimuli (or activation of reflexivity), and individual perspectives at different points in life (such as main concerns of subjects, reflections on the past, projects, and decision making) in terms of formation, exercise, and causal efficacy of reflexivity, illustrated below[95]. According to the author, the *self-referential*, *pragmatic*, and *functional* reflexive profiles are deeply connected to living conditions, resources, and competences acquired in various social environments, including school and work, while the *resistant* and *resilient* profiles are of conjectural character and illustrate how changes at the macro and micro levels deeply influence people's mental schemes[96]. Moreover, the author does not see the pressure to accept the deterministic view of social structures or individual agency, as both are part and parcel of daily

[94] Ana Caetano, "Coping with Life: A Typology of Personal Reflexivity", *The Sociological Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (2017), p. 36.
[95] Ibid. p. 37.
[96] Ibid. p. 49.

social lives and contribute to conscious and subconscious dynamics of human behavior.

**Table 1. Caetano's Reflexivity Profiles**

| | Reflexivity | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Self-referential | Pragmatic | Functional | Resistant | Resilient |
| Socioeconomic background | Highly qualified | Disadvantaged | Diverse | Disadvantaged | Diverse |
| Contextual activation of reflexivity | Strong stimuli in different contexts | Weak stimuli in different contexts | Moderate stimuli in different contexts | Social differentiation as a stimulus | Contingency as a strong stimulus |
| Main concerns in life | Personal accomplishment | Work and family | Academic and professional projects | Work and economic situation | Health, family, sociability |
| Reflection on the past | Ongoing questioning | No questioning | Sure of their past options | Moderate questioning | Accept past options without remorse/ regret |
| Projects | Long-term | Short-term | Short/ medium-term | Short-term | Short-term |
| Decision-making process | Extensive pondering | Little pondering | Very focused, moderate pondering | Great pondering for financial issues, less for other issues | Moderate pondering |
| Dominant exercise of reflexivity | Internal conversations; autobiographical writing | Internal conversations; interaction (family) | Internal conversations | Internal conversations; interaction (family, friends) | Internal conversations; interaction (family, friends) |

As noted earlier, while reflexivity is often used interchangeably with reflection and critical reflection, some authors find it helpful to understand reflexivity in relationship to them. For example, Finlay and Gough think of reflective practice as a continuum, on the one end of which is reflection on experience and on the other end is reflexivity, "a dynamic process of continuing self-awareness, with critical reflection somewhere in between"[97]. Another alternative is a synthetic model, which views

[97] Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice", p. 6.

reflective practice as an overlap between reflection on experience, self-awareness, and critical thinking[98]. Similarly, Van Manen, in his early work on hierarchical taxonomy of reflection, moves from the more simplistic level of *technical rationality*, which encompasses basic proficiency in theoretical understanding and skills, toward *contextual level,* at which clarification of the problem, potential solutions, analysis, and validation of guiding values and principles take place, followed by *critical dialectic level* addressing moral, ethical, or sociopolitical issues[99]. In his later work, Van Manen introduces the concept of *pathic knowing*, where *pathos* is defined as one's "general mood, sensibility, sensuality, and felt sense of being in the world"[100]. When this *pathic knowing* is in tune with tacit knowledge, a practitioner develops *tact*, a form of embodied knowing, which brings awareness to the corporeal self. However, the *pathic know*ing, while being intuitive in nature, is different from Schon's *reflection-in-action,* given that *pathic knowing* is an independent and valuable source of embodied knowing attuned to emotions, which does not have to be rationalized; it is a bodily rather than cognitive awareness. In fact, attempts to rationalize non-rational phenomena may hinder tacit action[101]. In a similar vein, Bleakley characterizes reflection as action that necessitates the awareness of self and environment by way of the body. However, the author goes beyond the framing of

[98] Ibid. p. 5.
[99] Cathy Thorsen and Simone DeVore, "Analyzing Reflection on/for Action: A New Approach", *Reflective Practice* 14, no. 1 (2013), p. 92.
[100] Cristyne Hébert, "Knowing and/or Experiencing: A Critical Examination of the Reflective Models of John Dewey and Donald Schön", *Reflective Practice* 16, no. 3 (2015), p. 367.
[101] Ibid. p. 367.

reflection as a fusion of introspection and bodily experience toward a more complex form of reflection termed *holistic reflexivity*, which conceives of practice as the "act of participation in the world"[102]. His eclectic vision of reflection calls for synthesis of critical, reflexive, ethical, and aesthetic components of practice and places emphasis on the ontological aspect of it. The ethical dimension here plays a critical role in shifting from descriptive to critical reflexivity, whereby the latter theorizes action against value perspective. In fact, the author distances from Schön's interpretation of artful practice, as it does not situate itself in either the broader social context, or in a value perspective[103].

Furthermore, Jordi proposes to "rehabilitate" the concept of reflection by rescuing it from its reputation for distilling rational knowledge from "the mess of human experience"[104]. Reflection here is not merely an analytical puzzle to be solved or an afterthought on experience, but a fluid process of continuous feedback in the form of thoughts, memories, emotions, sensations, and feelings that are in need of being processed and integrated. Because purely cognitive reflection excludes much of the richness and complexity of the learning process, the author views experiential learning as a process that converges cognitive and embodied feedback and cites cases when practitioners admitted to making serious mistakes when they ignored

[102] Alan Bleakley, "From Reflective Practice to Holistic Reflexivity", *Studies in Higher Education* 24, no. 3 (1999), p. 328.
[103] Ibid. p. 322.
[104] Jordi, "Reframing the Concept of Reflection," p. 182.

embodied forms of knowing[105]. He goes on to remind that human mind and consciousness are deeply embodied processes and consults contemporary neuroscience pointing to physiological proclivities toward integration and dissociation of thought and emotion. For example, the functional separation between left (dominant for reason and language use) and right (dominant for bodily felt experience) brain hemispheres makes it possible for a thought to become disconnected from a body, which may lead to difficulties with naming feelings, reading symbols, empathizing, or imagination. At the same time, the relationship between integration and dissociation is fluid, meaning that, as we are prone to dissociation due to past traumatic experiences, we are also equipped with resources necessary to integrate different aspects of our experience and consciousness. In fact, the author understands such integration of cognitive and embodied knowing as the calling of reflection[106]. Among other skills, a practitioner is also expected to develop an ability to stay with an unclear or uncategorized bodily experience - the practice of *focusing,* to borrow Gendlin's terminology - a natural form of self-reflection accompanied by insights into the self and one's reality. Practicing *focusing* through witnessing how an implicit feeling generates explicit content allows us to gain deeper insights into the state of our being-in-the-world[107]. Moreover, recent therapy literature suggests the concept of *systemic* reflexivity, comprised of *self-referential*

[105] Ibid. p. 186.
[106] Ibid. p. 193.
[107] Ibid. p. 191.

and *relational* reflection, which builds on the idea that understanding our context and relationships should be complemented by understanding what is occurring within us[108]. While reflective practice models are traditionally associated with the left hemisphere of the brain responsible for reasoning and problem solving, systemic reflexivity is associated with the right hemisphere, attuned to the embodied knowledge and relational contexts. McGilchrist's notion of "betweenness" is often cited as a meeting point between the left and right hemispheres, which can enrich our practice by infusing it with activities related to functions of both hemispheres, such as series of practical exercises that incorporate both, analytical tasks and exploration of felt experiences and relational contexts[109].

Interestingly, these claims resonate with findings on the relationship between creativity and reflective learning, which confirm that learning is only partly a cognitive process, and that deep learning occurs when the whole self is brought to bear on the task[110]. Creative learning is often accompanied by anxieties of facing the unknown and the urge to control the learning process, letting go of which can be especially difficult for a novice, who has the need for more structure, direction, and external authority before acquiring internal authority. A more experienced practitioner, on the other hand, is more comfortable with a sense of uncertainty, surrendering control, and listening as much to her body as to her mind. Such learner

[108] Julia Jude, "The Practice of Systemic Reflexivity", *Journal of Social Work Practice* 32, no. 1 (2018), p. 47.
[109] Ibid. p. 49.
[110] Sue White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care*, p. 93.

is able to use a full range of emotional resources and oscillates between *syncretic* and *analytic* modes of perception during the learning process[111]. The syncretic perception is relatively undifferentiated and involves scanning of whole objects and their interrelated parts without zooming in on a particular detail or dominant pattern, while the analytic mode breaks up the object into components or extracts a *gestalt*. The suspension of analytical deconstruction allows for a different type of relationship between self and object, in which creative unconscious associations are at free play, while the analytic phase reestablishes the distance in which skeptical consciousness reflexively interrogates the relationship to the object and the object itself[112]. The ability to alternate these moments of psychological merger and separation is linked to Piaget's work on the syncretic and analytic faculties, which reveals that at around the age of eight children's creative output tends to change and lose spontaneity, as children begin to match and compare their work. They tend to become more literal-minded, concerned with accuracy of representation, and are encouraged in this by educational practices that privilege analytic modes of thought and suppress syncretic faculties. When such practices become institutionalized, they generate practitioners who are skilled in critical deconstruction, but lack the skill of creative illusion that allows one to imagine that which does not yet exist and to immerse oneself into that possibility[113].

[111] Ibid. p. 102.
[112] Ibid. p. 103
[113] Ibid. p. 94.

As the above suggests, the scope of holistic approaches to reflection expands the traditional understanding of practice as a purely professional activity toward embracing the visibility, subjectivity, and impact of a practitioner as an individual on practice. Among such approaches is Johns' interpretation of reflection that evolved considerably over decades, moving away from being overly prescriptive toward a more holistic guidance that recognizes various dimensions of practice, including technical, reflexive, intuitive, affective, critical, ethical, aesthetical, existential, and spiritual[114]. While admitting that his understanding of reflection always evolves and is not easily captured by words, he identifies various types of reflective practices, including reflecting on past experience, being present to internal and external events, and being mindful of systemic issues, including power dynamics. The author adopts an experiential-intuitive approach to reflective practice as a "lived reality" and believes that understanding and advancing our practice requires understanding and advancing ourselves. Reflection here begins with being "mindful of self and everything that enters into the gaze of the curious practitioner" and willing to interrogate it "from the center of our being"[115]. The author recognizes the potential of mindfulness (or awareness) to liberate practitioners from the routine mindless action, as the practice of mindfulness alerts us to negative mental events, distortions, and distractions. A mindful practitioner operates simultaneously in two dimensions: in her mundane mindful practice she realizes the objectives posed by the project at

[114] Christopher Johns, *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), p. 1.
[115] Ibid. p. 5

hand, while the transcendental dimension continually poses objectives of higher order[116]. Moreover, by fusing analytical and embodied forms of knowing the author extends *doing* reflection into *being* reflective, whereby reflection becomes not just an action, but rather a way of being. Thus, practicing reflection serves as the epistemological platform for the ontological transformation, whereby "who I am" eventually envelops "what I do"[117].

The recognition of ontological aspects of reflection in recent models naturally led to the increase in appreciation for the role, skills, and qualities of practitioners. That is not to say that the traditional approaches overlook the figure of a practitioner entirely. For example, Dewey's model emphasized open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, intellectual responsibility, and good observation and reasoning skills[118]. Fay valued patience, curiosity, flexibility, commitment and warned against defensiveness, habit, resistance, and ignorance[119]. Critical and integrative theories also cite the need to develop certain individual qualities. A *reflective* practitioner is viewed by Banks, for example, as someone who is ready to face ethical dilemmas, does not shy away from risks and responsibility, and whose practice is congruent with individually espoused valued. A *defensive* practitioner, on the contrary, is a "technician", someone who is close-minded, rigid, clings to defensive behavior, and

[116] Ibid. p. 4.
[117] Ibid. p. 2.
[118] Vivienne Griffiths, "The Reflective Dimension in Teacher Education", *International Journal of Educational Research* 33, no. 5 (2000), p. 540.
[119] Johns, *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*, p. 4.

prioritizes external rules and procedures over individual values [120]. In addition, for some authors, reflective practice entails the skill of *being,* which demands openness to experience, vulnerability, and suspension of certainty and prior beliefs, so that a practitioner does not defend herself against experience[121]. Such openness produces a reflective response, realistic expectations, develops patience, listening skills, and humility, to name a few. However, while admitting that practitioners' qualities have a direct impact on practice, traditional approaches to reflection tend to emphasize technical or critical dimensions of practice and reduce its reflexive dimension to a supplemental list of desirable professional qualities instead of recognizing it as fundamental to capturing the depth of the learning process.

In light of this brief overview of the literature on reflection, it appears appropriate to draw conclusions and acknowledge main challenges and criticisms. The diversity in conceptualizing reflection suggests the following dimensions of analysis:

- The scope of reflection ranges from inquiries into individual practice to organizational culture to complex social issues. As noted previously, the more recent theories synthesize the traditional understanding of reflective practice, critical reflection, and reflexivity or offer a continuum of reflective practice whereby practice is influenced by both, individual and social contexts. Different scopes of inquiry will

[120] Sarah Banks, *Ethics and Values in Social Work* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 139-140.
[121] Raelin, "Public Reflection as the Basis of Learning", p. 24.

also generate different types of benefits, among which are instrumental, emancipatory, transformational, and ontological, among others.

- The process of reflection ranges from more structured and prescriptive approaches characteristic for early reflection models to general guidance prevalent in holistic and integrative approaches embracing a more pronounced role of a practitioner and thus reflexivity. Reflection can be thought of as a cycle, hierarchy, continuum, composite lenses, or a non-linear sequence of stages. Practitioners concerned with not only technical but also ontological aspects of their work recognize that there are no universal recipes to becoming reflective and view reflection as a mind-set, culture, and process, rather than a goal. As some authors remind us, it seems neither possible nor desirable to fixate on any one model, as different models may work in some contexts, but not others[122].

- The temporal dimension reveals that the focus on the past experience in early analytical models has gradually shifted to embrace present and future experience, with some models conceptualizing reflection as a multi-temporal process simultaneously present in the past, present, and future[123].

- The positionality dimension, when reflection is prompted by various actor and observer perspectives, ranging from internal dialogue to collegial exchange. Although self-reflection is often viewed as an internal process of experiencing the self that

[122] White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care*, p. 15.
[123] Archer, *Conversations about Reflexivity*, p. 19.

should be as informative as interactions with external actors, it is often complemented by exchanging reflections with peers, coaches, and mentors[124].

- Ethics dimension employs reflection for the purpose of evaluating practice against espoused values, appraises value perspectives, and recalibrates individual value systems.

- Horizon of analysis, which signals the type of vision for self-development that practitioners bring to the table. For example, some of the more recent models of reflection aiming to reconcile epistemological and ontological aspects of reflection shift from the skill of *doing,* emphasized in traditional reflection models, toward the skill of *being*, concerned not only with technical proficiency, but also with deeper existential questions, including our impact on the world and practice.

Needless to say, these observations are not meant to serve as an exhaustive typology that covers all models of reflection but are merely an attempt to introduce various aspects and challenges of conceptualizing and engaging in it. Besides the already mentioned challenges associated with engaging in reflection, some practitioners see it as too theoretical, philosophical, impractical, or time-wasting[125]. As illustrated above, one of the drawbacks (and, one may argue, advantages) of reflection is its conceptual pliability and openness to theoretical appropriation, which in turn contributes to the lack of consistent evidence that engaging in reflection brings

[124] Johns, *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*, p. 20.
[125] Richard Malthouse et al., "Reflectivity, Reflexivity and Situated Reflective Practice", *Professional Development in Education* 40, no. 4 (2014), p. 608.

about tangible positive outcomes. For example, some authors describe reflection as "one of the few intellectual quests so enthusiastically lauded for such meager, unsatisfactory returns"[126], while others argue that it is not possible in principle to detach oneself from the lived experience to reflect in the moment[127], which leaves us with an illusion of an attempt at reflection. Furthermore, we are warned against reflection becoming a "narcissistic, introspective musing" and a "cultural obsession … and self-absorption, whereby we are carried away with an act of thinking about thinking"[128]. A possible side effect of such narcissistic pondering is that not only do we get distracted from the original task of reflection, but also lose grounding in our bodies and thus neglect senses, emotions, intuition, or any other valuable feedback that is recalcitrant to rationalization.

Furthermore, there is a substantial debate about the extent to which practitioners should focus on practice and their own performance rather than the larger social context. Some authors reject traditional reflection approaches due to their atomism and apolitical nature and view the neglect of power relations as a serious mistake that prevents us from addressing deeper structural issues[129], while critical and integrative approaches tend to view reflexivity and the larger social context as complementary. Nonetheless, we have to be realistic about the potential offered by different models of reflection. While technical reflection promises the

[126] Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice'", p. 9.
[127] Ibid. p. 4.
[128] Bleakley, "From Reflective Practice to Holistic Reflexivity", p. 320.
[129] Thompson and Pascal, "Developing Critically Reflective Practice", p. 318.

benefit of enhancing practice on individual and organizational levels, its implementation may not be feasible in organizational contexts that fail to create safe spaces to exchange critical feedback among colleagues[130]. Critical reflection may promise the most in terms of system-wide changes, yet such reach is often beyond practitioners' control - the point especially relevant for peacebuilders who face formidable challenges while working with intractable conflicts in need of deep systemic changes and coordinated effort by various stakeholders. Moreover, reflexivity, although promising the least in terms of system-wide changes due to focusing primarily on the practitioner herself instead of broader organizational or systemic context, offers the most in terms of developing a sense of agency and direction in advancing personal and professional skills. It is also critical to acknowledge that the concept of reflective practice (similarly to the concepts of peacebuiding and international development) is a Western construct[131], which may or may not work in non-Western contexts – an assumption that suggests a healthy dose of humility before assuming the universal applicability and appreciation for reflection as it is understood in the West.

Regardless of the type of reflection practitioners engage in, one of the least discussed pitfalls of doing so is its dark side and personal risks involved[132]. While the practice of reflection assumes openness to critical feedback and uncertainty, not

[130] White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care*, p. 201.
[131] Michelson, "Usual Suspects", p. 439.
[132] Hickson, "Critical Reflection: Reflecting on Learning to Be Reflective", p. 832.

every practitioner can afford to do so, especially when it does not deliver the promised benefits. Moreover, it is not uncommon for those of us in pursuit of self-knowledge to discover that it is not necessarily good news[133]. A practitioner may find it difficult to stand back from painful experiences and seek to be analytical about them[134]. The feelings of discomfort and unease prompted by reflection may reawaken personal weaknesses and inner conflicts that may have not been stirred up otherwise, which brings up the question of having the skills and qualities needed to process and integrate such disruptive knowledge and mitigate its impact on practice. Thus, a practitioner has to understand the risks involved in undertaking reflection and be equipped with effective tools to navigate them. As some authors suggest, until the capacity to face the darker side of reflection is developed, it may be counter-productive to introduce reflection too early in one's career[135]. Finally, some organizations assume such demanding workloads and expectations from often over-stretched practitioners, while providing little to no support, that setting time aside to learn from experience may lead to mechanical, routinized, and unthinking ways of reflecting[136]. In fact, reflecting on practice in unreflective ways may lead to rationalizing exiting ineffective practice, which brings up the issue of adopting criteria for what an authentic reflection should look like and who is to be the judge of that.

[133] Sharon Begley, "How Much Self-Knowledge Is Too Much?", *Mindful* (2020).
[134] Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice'", p. 1.
[135] Akbari, "Reflections on Reflection", p. 200.
[136] Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice'", p. 9.

Although the concepts of reflection and reflexivity may generate more questions than answers, the following conclusions appear to capture the salient points:

- Reflection and reflexivity are often conflated and interpreted differently by different authors. Even when they agree that reflection is a skill worth pursuing, they have a hard time agreeing on what it should entail.
- There are no universal recipes or short-cuts when it comes to the methodology of reflection, as different practitioners will rely on different models of reflection in different contexts. As some authors suggest, "reflection cannot be preplanned" or "prescribed" – "it must be lived"[137].
- Reflection, like any other skill, requires commitment on the part of the practitioner and takes time to develop[138], and that, in turn, requires patience and a mindset of a life-long learner set on a path of perpetual growth[139].
- The recent scholarship on reflective practice begins to acknowledge the inalienable unity of practice and practitioners, whereby reflection merges *knowing how* to perform professional tasks and a *way of being* in the world[140].
- The general state of discord and confusion in conceptualizing the phenomenon and methodology of reflection demands an ongoing conversation on ways to tailor the practice of reflection to the needs of practitioners and communities they serve.

[137] Larrivee, "Transforming Teaching Practice", p. 306.
[138] Hébert, "Knowing and/or Experiencing", p. 368.
[139] Larrivee, "Transforming Teaching Practice", p. 306.
[140] Hébert, "Knowing and/or Experiencing", p. 369.

# METHODOLOGY

The choice of methodology and research design was dictated by the nature of the studied phenomenon. Reflexivity is an elusive subject that is not easily captured or measured. As highlighted in the literature review, there is no consensus when it comes to defining reflexivity or reflective practice, which makes it difficult to operationalize these concepts or translate them into a set of variables. In fact, the goal here was not so much to measure or quantify the practice of reflexivity, as to explore what it means to professionals in the field of peacebuilding. The subjective and nebulous nature of reflexivity, on one hand, and exploratory and interpretive nature of the study, on the other hand, seemed like a natural fit for a qualitative research design. Moreover, it appears appropriate to clarify broader ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that guide a qualitative study. For example, the latter seeks answers to ontological questions about reality, while recognizing the socially constructed nature of it[141]. As multiple interpretations emerge, the concepts of *reality* and *human nature* become unstable. Moreover, the relationship between the researcher and the researched is mediated by interpretive

[141] Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, eds., The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage Publications, 2005), p. 8.

lenses, through which they interact, situate, and shape one another[142]. As the researcher collects data in an uncontrolled environment, she does not claim to collect facts or generate laws, but merely offers her own representation of the phenomenon. The latter here is less of a final product, but rather, in Arendt's words, an "ongoing inquiry, in constant change and variation, of reconciling ourselves to reality"[143]. This view resonates with Gadamer's point concerning the possibility of reducing the non-linear process of *understanding* to a set of standardized steps. Instead, he suggests approaching the task of knowing through the lens of hermeneutic epistemology – the type of knowledge production that is deeply influenced by the researcher's own historical and cultural situatedness, subjectivity, and positionality, which are impossible to avoid or ignore[144]. In fact, *understanding* always involves interpreting or "fusing horizons", a co-influence of the researcher and object of inquiry in a fluid, situated, and creative process of producing meaning[145]. In the process of generating new understanding over the course of the study, the researcher interrogates familiar meanings, when taken-for-granted ideas become so normalized that they become virtually invisible[146]. The researcher here is expected to suspend her individual screens in order to allows her to register the naturalized phenomena, make it strange and visible again, so that alternative meanings could be generated. In addition, a

[142] Ibid. p. 21.
[143] Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki, *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*, (University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 175.
[144] Ibid. p. 22.
[145] Ibid. p. 25.
[146] Kristin Luker, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*, (Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 3.

qualitative inquiry is often guided by the researcher's individual value system and ethics. What this implies is that the emphasis may shift from primarily mapping the social world with respect to *what is* to *what could be* and, in this way, reframe the research agenda in terms of "opening new possibilities of thought and action as a means of transforming culture"[147]. In fact, the current research design was also approached with the goal of understanding why self-reflection is underutilized in the field of peacebuilding in hopes of drawing attention to reflexivity as a resource available to the peacebuilders community to advance practice.

While designing a qualitative study, a researcher has a choice of consulting the existing literature on the topic before or after the research has gotten under way, depending on the nature of inquiry. For example, it may make sense to forego literature review in the case of grounded theory, when theory building is primarily driven by the data collected. This approach works against *a priori* research design – a confirmatory, as opposed to exploratory, research that aims to test a preexisting hypothesis[148]. The current study can be thought of as mixed, given its confirmatory and exploratory elements. For example, before designing the study, I wrote a dissertation proposal, which required familiarizing with the literature on the topic to some extent. This, in turn, increased the appreciation for the phenomenon of self-

[147] Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Sage Publications, 2009), p. 259.
[148] Carol Warren, "Qualitative Interviewing", *Handbook of Interview Research* (SAGE Publications, 2001), p. 87.

reflection and its potential to transform practice, shaped the initial list of questions, and raised an assumption that the practice and the skill of self-reflection are underutilized and underappreciated in the field of peacebuilding. Moreover, I had an inkling that education is one venue that could offer a space to nurture this skill, yet there was no clarity as to what type of training it should entail, in addition to a range of other issues that emerged over the course of data collection. Moreover, the research design was driven by the hypothesis that self-reflection is indeed as applicable and advantageous to the field of peacebuilding as it is to other helping professions, and, in order to confirm that hypothesis, I posed the questions of "How do peacebuilding practitioners understand the phenomenon of self-reflection?" and "What role does it play in their practice?"

Given that the study aimed to explore the meanings of the concept of self-reflection, a qualitative interview appeared to be a natural fit as it grants access to the respondents' unique lived experiences. However, it should be noted that the researcher is not peeking into someone else's life through a clear window but is rather interpreting respondents' interpretations of those experiences[149]. Moreover, as some authors warn, the self is both, a fiction and non-fiction, unified and fragmented, authentic and invented, and always in the process of being constituted[150]. This peculiar amalgamation of seemingly incompatible qualities

[149] Denzin and Lincoln, The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research, p. 19.
[150] Susanne Gannon, "The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self-Writing", *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 6, no. 4 (2006), p. 474.

implies internal inconsistencies, lack of clarity, fluidity, and complexity of the task of assigning meaning to an experience shared by different individuals. Moreover, some authors argue that participants – understood as both, respondents and researchers – speak to each other "not from stable and coherent standpoints, but from varied perspectives", and therefore embody "fractured subjectivities"[151]. What this implies is that, in addition to the meaning of the topic discussed, participants negotiate their social positions, identity, and perspectives even during the process of interviewing. But however rich the information gathered in an interview setting may be, we have to keep in mind that the stories shared with us have to be tied to interviewees' professional and personal intricate biographies, which, for the most part, remain invisible and inaccessible, thus making it virtually impossible to gain a deeper understanding of how and why a respondent assigned a particular meaning to what is being discussed.

This point resonates with Kvale's view that a researcher may approach the process of data collection as a *miner* collecting knowledge or *traveler* constructing it[152]. In the former case, knowledge is understood as a buried precious metal that is waiting to be unearthed in the subject's interior during the interview, which is then described as an objective reality, uncontaminated by the researcher. The traveler metaphor, on the other hand, understands research as a journey that leads to a tale

[151] Warren, "Qualitative Interviewing", p. 84.
[152] Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann, *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, 2nd ed. (Sage Publications, 2009), p. 48.

to be told upon returning back to the researcher's own country, after the researcher–traveler wanders through the landscape of the studied phenomenon with various fellow travelers. In a sense, a researcher becomes more attuned to who she is traveling with and where her fellow travelers take her, rather than setting out a precise route to travel and in this way embracing a greater role in co-authoring the travel narrative – the position that appeals the most to the nature of the current study. But while adopting the traveler metaphor may alleviate concerns that come with the pressure of producing uncontaminated objective knowledge about a phenomenon, a researcher should also be prepared to face the criticism of producing "unscientific" work and being labeled as a "journalist" rather than a social scientist[153]. For the purposes of this study, it is worth reiterating that, given the nature of the phenomenon studied here, before operationalizing it, the researcher needs to first explore the meanings of what self-reflection means to the respondents, which may then be followed by another qualitative or mixed method study to deepen the understanding of the studied phenomenon.

In addition, it is important to note the nature of the data collected in the current study, given that it relies exclusively on expert interviews, which offer access to their sophisticated analytical skills and decades of experience, which contributed significantly to the process of data conceptualization. But, at the same time, the researcher has to pay close attention to dilemmas associated with interviewing an

[153] Denzin and Lincoln, The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research, p. 7.

expert. For example, how do we define an expert, given the topic of self-reflection in peacebuilding practice? I could attempt to interview experts who dedicated their careers to the issue of reflective practice, yet those respondents were outside of the field of peacebuilding, thus, pointing me in the direction of peacebuilding practitioners, who did not explicitly focus on this topic in their careers. It may also seem natural to assume that, given that the study focused on peacebuilding practice, an expert would be defined as someone focusing exclusively on practice, rather than theory or research, but it turned out that some respondents were no longer working in the field, while the majority of respondents had academic ties. Thus, it appears appropriate to acknowledge that the current study may have been also influenced by the divide between real-world practice and academia mentioned in the Literature Review. Acknowledging this possibility of reifying professional hierarchies suggested the need to examine the nature of responses and professional backgrounds of respondents, which were then compared. It also became apparent that education, research, and scholarship were considered to be a form of practice by some respondents, which prompted the author to rethink the original definition of peacebuilding practice and include different types of work, while still acknowledging ties to academia. Moreover, as some authors remind us, expert knowledge is part of the broader "institutional reflexivity"[154], which has several implications for the field of peacebuilding. Given the interdisciplinary and fluid nature of the latter, it was

[154] Alexander Bogner et al., ed., *Interviewing Experts* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 4.

expected to receive wide-ranging responses, thus, making it difficult to negotiate the substance of the studied phenomenon. But, at the same time, heterogeneity of responses can be offered à la carte to practitioners open to exploring unfamiliar or untested methods of reflection. It also became apparent that respondents would tend to adhere to broader ontological, epistemological, and methodological paradigms of their institutions. For example, practitioners working in secular organizations tended to mirror the secular humanistic institutional discourse, while practitioners working in organizations whose mission was openly driven by spiritual values tended to go beyond the humanistic and cognitive confines of the secular discourse.

One of the main advantages of qualitative data collection process is its flexibility in response to new context, meaning, and circumstance. For example, the initial stage of data collection in this study brought to light several realizations. Given the type of respondents I was interviewing (seasoned experts with busy schedules), the original research plan had to change. It became apparent, for example, that I was unable to secure interviews. As I continued to have difficulties with securing positive responses outside of my immediate circle, I began to look for a "hook" that would make my study attractive enough to invest time in. For instance, I had to reduce the interview time from "up to two hours" I was asking for initially to "no more than 30 minutes", in addition to sharing the results of the study and an opportunity to reflect on practice, which I hoped would be of benefit to a busy professional. The time constraints made me also realize that it would not be possible to carry out phenomenological interviews, which require lengthy in-depth, possibly multiple,

interviews. The initial interviews also made it clear that I was unable to get answers to all of my questions within the time allotted. Once one of the interviewees proposed to skip the introductory questions and focus on the phenomenon of self-reflection instead, I realized that I would have to follow that practice if I wanted to explore the phenomenon in more depth with other respondents. Finally, the process of selection of subjects had to change also. Given the difficulties with securing interviews with practitioners, I began to reach out to peacebuilding professionals currently engaged primarily in analytical types of work who could reflect on their past practical experience. The interview questions included:

- *How do you define the nature of your work? Would you consider it to be a part of peacebuilding, conflict analysis and resolution, or perhaps another field? How would you describe your role/s in it?*
- *Why do you do it? Where do you draw inspiration from (spiritual traditions, schools of thought, other sources)?*
- *How did the understanding of your work and role in it change over time? Can you recall any life or world events that affected those changes?*
- *Can you recall your biggest professional successes? How do you know those were your biggest successes?*
- *Can you recall your biggest professional failures? How do you know those were your biggest failures?*
- *How would you define self-reflection? What role does it play in your work?*

*- In what ways do you employ self-reflection in the construction of your way of being in relationship to the past, present, and future?*

*- In what ways do you incorporate feedback as an individual and as a professional? How would you describe the relationship between the two?*

*- What professional and personal qualities are critical for a reflective practitioner?*

*- What would be your suggestions for the formal (academic) and informal (non-academic) training on self-reflection for practitioners in the field of peacebuilding?*

*- Could you recommend resources on how to deal with difficult emotions and wellbeing?*

The study used a non-probability sampling strategy, as it did not intend to extrapolate conclusions drawn in the current study onto the rest of the field of peacebuilding. What was intended instead is an examination of a small segment of the field of peacebuilding for the purpose of generating conceptual, methodological, and practical suggestions, using purposive and snowball samples. The purposive sampling allowed to identify research participants who possessed the characteristics sought – seasoned professionals with extensive experience in the field of peacebuilding, while snowball sampling allowed to identify additional respondents with the help of previously interviewed participants. Although the study does not pose the claim of generalizability, its discoveries merit attention and might be of help to colleagues in different segments of the field of peacebuilding and potentially other helping professions. Moreover, the emerging common themes throughout data

permits to conclude that it tapped into socially shared phenomena and not merely disconnected individual experiences[155].

Over the course of three months, forty-two semi-structured interviews were carried out, during which participants answered between six and twelve questions listed above, depending on the length of an interview and the stage of data collection, during which some of the interviewees recommended to add or remove some questions.

Of the forty-two interviews, eighteen took place in person, eleven over Skype, and thirteen by phone. In-person and Skype interviews proved to be more informative as they allowed to treat the unfolding context of interviews as data. It was of particular interest to observe respondents' reflections on their experience and their communication styles. For example, one of the respondents who spoke about the importance of having the quality of open mind began to take notes when I mentioned that it sounded like she accumulated enough material to write a book on that particular topic. This display of humility and open mind was surprising, given that the respondent was a distinguished practitioner and educator with decades of experience who could have easily overlooked an observation from a junior colleague, which is often the case when power imbalances come into play. What this episode suggested was that not only this practitioner recommended to practice the quality of open mind to others but embodied this quality herself by opening herself up to insight

[155] Luker, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*, p. 167.

from all sources – something that I would not be able to register during a phone interview. Yet phone interviews were still informative and allowed to register some of the qualities embodied by the respondents. For example, another respondent, when talking about the effect of power on social interactions, noted that, regardless of what I say, he was still in a more privileged position compared to mine, given that he was a male and a native English speaker.

In addition, it is of interest to note the general tone of interviews, which ranged from a more formal tone of passing down expertise, to an empathic conversational exchange, an interview-confession, or a combination thereof. Embodying openness myself reciprocated openness in many respondents: when sharing my own story, admitting my weaknesses, and positioning myself primarily as an individual driven by very personal questions often elicited sincere and empathic tone. Given the nature of interviewing process, it is also of interest to note the echoing effect that often accompanies it[156]. It is often assumed that the interviewer and respondent are strangers before the actual interview occurs, which was not the case for many of my interviews, given how interconnected different segments of the field is. Yet now, after having been exposed to the hitherto veiled deeply intimate personal side of my senior colleagues, I will never be able to view them in the same light, because first and foremost I perceive them as friends rather than colleagues. The same goes for those respondents with whom I have never met before the interviews and whom I might

[156] Warren, "Qualitative Interviewing", p. 97.

never see again. I consider these interviews life-changing encounters that affected how I view the world and myself now and the choices I will make in life going forward. Some of my respondents' stories became an inspiration for me personally, even though I did not know what their words, generosity, openness, and wisdom meant to me at the time of the interview. It is my hope that none of the respondents were harmed in any way as a result of participating in interviews and instead benefited from taking the time to understand their practice and themselves better, while helping me to do the same.

Before we look closely into the method of data analysis, it appears appropriate to address several caveats that any qualitative inquiry faces. As it has been alluded to above, the logic and means of a scientific method are inevitably inadequate to capture the fullness and complexity of human experience. This failure can be attributed, in part, to the limited and limiting medium of knowledge production process – language. As van Manen reminds us, a qualitative researcher understands that "it is impossible to truly say something, because language may kill whatever it touches"[157]. This may be interpreted as a distortion of or production of surrogate reality, which is, paradoxically, a hurdle we strive to overcome and its goal at the same time. To reconcile this contradiction, it is helpful to recall Riessman's levels of representation in the research process, which remind us that, by the time research results are read

[157] John Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, (SAGE, 2013), p. 180.

by the audience, they have been filtered through five porous levels of reality representation depicted below[158].

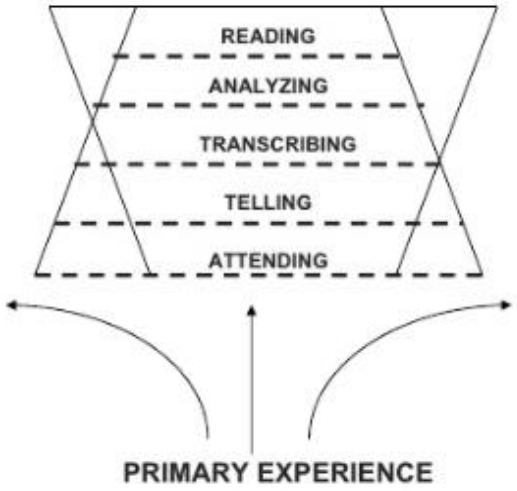


**Figure 1. Riessman's Levels of Representation**

In line with phenomenological tradition, Merleau-Ponty argues that human experience has a quality of inalienable presence in the world before reflection begins - our unprocessed primary experience [159]. Given the selective nature of our attention, memory, and the impact of prior experiences, we then consciously or subconsciously select particular stimuli to attend to within the reality we have just experienced and thus construct the first level of representation. The second level of representation is associated with the already mentioned challenge of bridging the gap between the lived experience and communicating it, or, in the words of Nietzsche, navigating the

[158] Catherine Riessman, *Narrative Analysis* (Sage Publications, 1993), p. 10.
[159] Ibid. p. 8.

labyrinth of the "prison house of language"[160]. On this level, we have to consider multiple possibilities, because respondents' memory, attention, or mood do not hold still, as they revisit their experiences, and that the story might have been told differently to a different researcher or under a different set of circumstances. The third level of representation, transcribing, while offering an illusion of accurately mirroring the social interaction during an interview, collapses the fullness of data by flattening it to fit the one-dimensional format of written language. This process of data thinning is then followed by data analysis, the fourth level of representation, the point at which a researcher makes an entrance as a co-author, who tends to emphasize data that resonates the most with her, as her task is to condense data to make it palatable to a reader. A respondent's agency is obviously still central to constructing knowledge, but so is the researcher's, as she begins to distance from individual narratives in order to be able to see emerging common themes across different interviews. Alternating proximity between the whole and its parts allows her to tap into broader analytical interpretive elements. This creative act of drawing parallels and conclusions, depending on a researcher's theoretical allegiances, is eventually read by various audiences, who then filter the results through an additional set of perception lenses. This level of representation may be likened to photography[161], when a photographer presents an image reflecting her views on what is meaningful to share, the angle, and the distance of camera. The audience then

[160] Ibid. p. 10.
[161] Ibid. p. 13.

evaluates the image and generates an interpretation of it. Thus, maintaining the awareness of the layered, partial, and selective nature of representing reality serves as a reminder of the interpreter's individual screens, on one hand, and demands to be more conscious, reflective, and cautious about the claims we make, on the other hand[162].

With that in mind, let us turn to thematic analysis, the method used in this study in order to trace shared social experiences of interviewees across their individual stories. One of the main advantages of using this method are creativity and flexibility that it affords in making sense of data, which allow researchers to adapt it to a variety of theoretical and epistemological lenses. While theme analysis permits researches to devise their own strategies of carrying it out[163], most authors typically agree that it translates into five to seven steps[164]. The first step of analysis begins with familiarizing with data in order to get a sense of the whole and register initial reflections and broader ideas. This step is followed by identifying meaning units, or words, sentences, or even paragraphs, which contain a description of an event, idea, state, condition, or a combination thereof. As a result of comparing meaning units, a researcher is able to generate a usually long list of initial codes, which are then reduced to a smaller number of codes in order to begin to group them into distinct thematic categories. The process of coding is cyclical and iterative in nature and can

[162] Ibid. p. 16.
[163] Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2011), p. 214.
[164] Kvale and Brinkmann, *InterViews*, p. 205.

be theory (or deductive) or data driven (or inductive) driven[165]. The current analysis had both, deductive and inductive elements in it. Deductive themes were identified prior to data analysis, which were driven by the literature review and interview questions. For example, I knew that the central theme of the examination would have to do with defining the phenomenon of self-reflection. I was also interested in personal and professional qualities, which I assumed were needed in order to become a successful reflexive practitioner. Inductive elements, on the other hand, allowed for the emergence of subthemes and additional themes to be driven by data. For example, after the first few interviews it was clear that the themes of self-care and challenges associated with engaging in self-reflection had to be included. The ensuing process of reviewing themes entailed checking if themes corresponded accurately to the coded meaning units and the entire data set. The final step consisted of tying various themes and subthemes to theoretical constructs and models presented in the literature review and broader literature, which are analyzed in the discussion of findings and followed by the proposed conceptual framework of reflective practice.

But before illustrating the steps above, it appears appropriate to highlight challenges and limitations of theme analysis. For example, the convenience of illustrating massive sets of data with a condensed grouping of themes and subthemes comes at the expense of missing rich nuanced data[166] and absent analysis on the use

[165] Ibid. p. 202.
[166] Greg Guest et al., *Applied Thematic Analysis* (SAGE, 2012), p. 17.

of language[167]. The former means that the emphasis here is not so much on including everything that was said in interviews as on what appears relevant to the subject of examination, and the latter implies that what was said is more important than how it was said. Another major concern with theme analysis is its reliability, given that the process of grouping and interpretation of themes and subthemes relied primarily on the author's own perception of what is important and relevant, which, in turn, was grounded in her personal and professional experiences. It is important to recognize that other researchers may have offered different interpretations based on what they saw in data. Moreover, what makes theme analysis highly subjective is that it allows the same codes to inform multiple themes and subthemes, which complicates the process of themes formation and meshes themes and codes together sometimes[168]. What also complicated the process of grouping codes is that the long list of initial subthemes had to be reduced to between seven and fourteen in each theme, which, in turn, had to be reorganized over the course of several iterations of theme analysis in order to accommodate the long list of initial codes. Moreover, in some cases, it was difficult to maintain a sense of consistency of data across data sets, given that some answers were given to questions that were not asked, which made me aware that I was not asking what I should have been asking, while some answers were given to previous or upcoming questions, which also raised questions about the number of

[167] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006), p. 97.
[168] Kathy Charmaz, "The Grounded Theory Method: An explication and interpretation" in *Contemporary field research: A collection of readings* (Waveland Press, 1983), p. 109.

subthemes those codes belonged to and whether they should migrate to different themes or remain where they are.

Moreover, it is not uncommon for an interdisciplinary researcher to find herself struggling with a feeling of being a dilettante[169] and a sense of liminal identity when she does not have the luxury of working within the confines of the scholarship and methodology of a single established discipline. In addition to that sense of inner discomfort, she might be perceived as unwise or undesirable by her discipline's gatekeepers, as her work may challenge the established divisions of authority and expertise that the disciplinary borders conventionally reflect[170]. For example, even the field of peacebuilding, which originated in large part due to both, secular humanistic and spiritual discourses, has its own institutional gatekeepers who privilege fragmented and secular narratives over holistic and spiritual ones, which inevitably constrains the application of insights offered by the latter. However, to compensate for the lack of comfort of belonging to a well-defined established discipline, one can appreciate the intellectual diversity of working on the margins of a variety of disciplines, as was the case in the current study, which drew on insights from the fields of education, health care, management, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and peacebuilding, to name a few.

When undertaking an interdisciplinary qualitative inquiry, it is helpful to think of the researcher's role as that of a *bricoleur*, a term used by Levi-Strauss to emphasize

[169] Cerwonka, and Malkki, *Improvising Theory*, pp. 8-9.
[170] Ibid. p. 9.

the eclectic and interpretive nature of the process of knowledge production, comparable to weaving a blanket of social landscape or making a film by assembling images into a montage, while "always putting something of himself during that process"[171], just like a film director or a craftsman always puts their own imagination into the design and production process. The methodological *bricoleur* learns to perform a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to intensive self-reflection and introspection[172], which allow a researcher to make incisive discoveries along the way. Moreover, a reflexive researcher thinks critically of her *self* as a researcher and individual, given that the *self* becomes an interpretive lens that shapes the course and outcome of the research. And if a researcher is reflexive enough, she notices the formation of reciprocal relationships in the research process, when what is researched is influenced as much as who is researching. In fact, some authors claim that it is helpful to think of multiple selves in the process of research: "research-based selves, brought selves (the selves that historically, socially, and personally create our standpoints), and situationally created selves" with all three having a distinct voice in helping us investigate our binaries and blind spots[173].

Maintaining reflexivity about our past experiences, emotional investments, and intellectual and political agendas allows a researcher to pose better questions about the depth and nature of her own commitments. As Rubin admits, "no matter

[171] Denzin and Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, p. 4.
[172] Ibid. p. 6.
[173] Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Sage Publications, 2000), p. 183.

how far we travel, we can never leave our roots behind, as they may claim us at the most unexpected times and places"[174]. For example, I found it appropriate to open interviews with a personal story of why we were about to talk about self-reflection, as I felt the need to disclose how deeply I was invested in understanding this puzzling to me personally phenomenon. While some respondents wanted to hear more than others, sharing more intimate details of what propelled me to approach this topic helped to establish a rapport quicker and invited a more intimate tone with some respondents. In fact, discussing self-reflection often led to broader questions of what it means to be a practitioner and a human being. In short, it was virtually impossible to bracket personal and professional experiences, identities, cultures, gender, social class, race, or ethnicity, given their impact on shaping my interpretive lenses. In fact, some authors view a researcher's personhood as preconditions for fusing the objective and subjective and forming knowledge claims rather than being a deterrent to understanding[175]. Thus, while a positivistic inquiry aims to minimize a researcher's influence, an interpretive one is rather interested in maintaining an awareness of such influence and its implications[176].

Another caveat pointed out by multiple authors is that, regardless of how great the role of a researcher is in a qualitative interpretive study, the latter is a social practice rather than "a private odyssey"[177]. Briggs, for example, cautions researchers

[174] Warren, "Qualitative Interviewing", p. 97.
[175] Cerwonka, and Malkki, *Improvising Theory*, p. 28.
[176] Ibid. p. 31.
[177] Ibid. p. 131.

against importing one set of linguistic and cultural assumptions into another when interviewing between cultures[178]. In fact, even within the same culture, seemingly transparent meanings may not be shared by everybody. For example, when I asked follow-up questions, respondents often rejected my initial interpretation of what they said, which suggests that, had they not been clarified, the responses would probably be coded differently. This, in turn, prompted me to test different types of follow-up framing to confirm, clarify, or disprove the initial understanding. What this implies is that, no matter how hard we try to look at the world through the eyes of respondents, misinterpretation seems common, which may amplify when a researcher does not share similar experiences or cultures with interviewees. As Derrida reminds, "no experience, no matter how intimate or individual, can be explained solely with reference to oneself"[179], thus suggesting an a priori missing piece of what is shared during interviews – our lack of understanding of the nature and impact of the cultures that a respondent is a part of. For example, at first glance, I was not an outsider in a conventional sense since I interviewed colleagues in my own field (however ill-defined it is), some of whom I had known for years. Moreover, I was a biased listener, since I was quite familiar with the nature of the field, its history, politics, and jargon, which most likely prevented me from hearing insights an outsider would catch. At the same time, I attempted to cross several cultural boundaries, which separated me from respondents based on age, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religious and

[178] Warren, "Qualitative Interviewing", p. 97.
[179] Gannon, "The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self-Writing", p. 486.

professional affiliations, level of accomplishment, and mastery of English language, to name just a few. It was of particular interest to register how my own individual, professional, and cultural experiences and identities emerged, as I observed similar dynamics in respondents.

Moreover, given the nebulous topic of this study, it is important to acknowledge concerns about the study's subjectivity, validity, and reliability. Although the referenced *traveler* metaphor assumes "co-authoring" the study by the researcher and participants, the researcher employed a range of checks and balances to counter her biases, including consulting with peers and mentors, maintaining reflective journals, continuously revisiting emerging themes and subthemes, and adhered to the standard procedure of the coding process detailed above. Moreover, it is critical to note that the study does not aim to operationalize or measure reflexivity, only to explore what it means to participants. In connection with that, some authors remind us that the answer to the methodological question of "How do we know the world or gain knowledge about it?" is shaped in large part by ontological and epistemological premises. What this means is that the researcher, in choosing a method of data collection, prioritizes methods that allow greater access to studying how social experience is created and interpreted from the point of view of subjects who embody the studied phenomenon. Whatever the shape such inquiry takes, relinquishing the positivistic quest for objectivity liberates the researcher from posing burdensome claims of generalization (or asserting that what describes a part could be applied to the whole) and reliability (or asserting that the results would be

replicated if repeated), given the situated, fluid, and subjective nature of a qualitative inquiry. The latter has no way to control the studied phenomenon (or variables) and is carried out in a natural setting, which influences data and may not be replicated in a way that a controlled environment affords. Moreover, anti-method authors view any canonized scientific method as not adequate enough to grasp the subtleties and richness of human experience. In fact, the only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend it is another human[180]. Thus, it is due to the researcher's lived personal experiences, situatedness, and subjectivity that the meaning is assigned to the lived experience of another human being. With these observations in mind, the next chapter presents findings that emerged over the course of theme analysis.

[180] Kvale and Brinkmann, *InterViews,* p. 83.

# FINDINGS

Over the course of carrying out the abovementioned steps of theme analysis, the following categories of data emerged: interviewees' self-identification and areas of expertise, general observations of the field, motivation for doing this work, definitions of success and failure, qualities of successful reflective practitioners, description of the practice of reflection, suggestions on ways to develop it, challenges associated with engaging in it, and ways to maintain physical and psychological well-being while doing so.

**Interviewees' self-identification and background**:

*Peace and conflict studies: 25*

This group includes international relations, alternative dispute resolution, facilitation and mediation.

*Social sciences: 18*

Among these are anthropology, business administration, education, communication, counseling, history, mental health, philosophy, and psychology.

*Theology and religious studies: 8*

*Legal studies: 8*

These respondents have experience of working as prosecutors, attorneys, or public servants.

*Hard sciences: 2*

Two respondents received original academic training in chemistry and engineering.

Moreover, two respondents identified themselves as "pracademics" or "practitioners-academics". To borrow this terminology, 36 "pracademics" were interviewed, who teach university-level classes and are (or have been) engaged in some form of peacebuilding practice. Only six respondents were either practitioners or non-academic educators and did not teach university-level courses. In fact, four respondents pointed out that the advantage of being a part of an academic environment is in having the language to frame experience.

Moreover, peacebuilding was viewed as a wide range of activities that promote peace, including:

*Grassroots work: 24*

Among various projects on this level are community organizing, local capacity development, building up peace movement, workshop facilitation, mediation, training local trainers, community and inter-personal conflict management, to name a few. These respondents viewed their work as "bringing people together", "understanding where their bonds are broken", reminding people of their connectedness, and rebuilding those bonds (including across religious, ethnic, racial, political, class, or other divides). One respondent pointed out that we live in a time of deep divides and polarization in our communities and hence have a lot of

opportunities to bridge those divides and learn more about each other, which can translate into multiple formats, including public dialogues and town halls.

*Youth training, education, and mentoring: 17*

For example, one respondent said that he was inspired by the idea of "raising the next generation of peacebuilders".

*Scholarship and research: 12*

These respondents produce scholarship that identifies conflicts, understands their roots, and suggests ways of addressing them. Seven respondents view their scholarship as something that has to be translated into practice and benefit local communities, while viewing practice as something that fine-tunes theory. One respondent stressed that practice is "what gives rise to theory".

*Advocacy, activism, systemic issues: 7*

Here, one respondent said that we do not have to draw a line between activism and peacebuilding and saw a way to be an activist without sounding threatening or alienating different groups. Yet another respondent said that, while advocacy might not be a part of the field of peacebuilding, it helps to draw attention to certain issues and added that intensifying conflicts is what may bring about the desired outcome.

*Third party work: 6*

These respondents mainly focused on negotiation processes on various levels, problem solving in complex social settings, and Track II diplomacy.

*Curriculum development: 5*

Trauma healing and resilience training on individual and communal levels: 5

Four respondents viewed this component as central to conflict transformation and communal reconciliation, which was missing in the field for a long time.

*Evaluations: 4*

*Inner peace: 4*

These respondents believed that peacebuilding practice starts with finding inner peace and that we are ill-equipped to help others to build peace if we do not have it ourselves. One respondent noted that "peace is like an onion and we have to peel back its layers" to get to the root causes of violence. Thus, while it is customary to pay attention to structural, group or relational conflicts, we often lose sight of intra-personal conflicts that give rise to other forms of violence.

*Policy analysis: 4*

*Restorative and transitional justice: 4*

*Serving the vulnerable populations: 4*

According to one of the respondents, our work is about "being in solidarity with those who suffer" and is "driven by compassion".

*IDPs and refugees: 3*

*Negotiations: 3*

*Prison work and work with sex offenders: 3*

*Public service: 3*

*Conflict transformation: 2*

*Extremism and violent political conflict: 2*

*Hate crimes and human rights: 2*

*Minority groups: 2*

*Organizational conflict: 2*

*Schools: 2*

*Spreading ideas and raising awareness about the impact of conflict: 2*

*Genocide prevention: 1*

*Media: 1*

**General observations of the field**

While exploring the phenomenon of self-reflection, several respondents shared general observations of the field, which can be grouped into the following themes: multiple professional identities of peacebuilders, challenges of the field, adopting elicitive approach, and openness to experimentation.

*Multiple professional identities of peacebuilders*

Twelve respondents alluded to multiple professional identities among peacebuilders. While most respondents identify with the field of peacebuilding in general, several respondents acknowledged a unique inter-disciplinary nature of the field. For example, one respondent viewed his work as falling into the broad category of "peace writ large" that results in both, tangible or intangible outcomes. Another respondent reminded that "we come from very different intellectual backgrounds" and tend to bring in those perspectives with us. In addition, several respondents said that they acquired a valuable set of skills and qualities over the course of their original professional training. Two respondents, for example, said that they acquired valuable

communication and self-mastery skills as a result of being originally trained as lawyers. One of them noted a more measured emotional engagement, and another one stressed interviewing skills, such as making people feel comfortable, eliciting the right information, and dealing with emotions. Two other respondents noted that being trained in philosophy and ethics hones critical inquiry and abstract thinking. Moreover, one respondent noted that our field is still "in flux…and in the state of confusion". Four respondents have noted that their professional identities evolved and multiplied over time, especially as the field of peacebuilding became more "recognized and respected", while also maintaining the original professional identity. Several respondents noted their shifts in focus and interests over time. For example, one respondent became more interested in trauma healing and working with conflicts on a personal level, while another respondent became more engaged in analytical work and less in facilitation and trainings. One interviewee believed that what sets our field apart is that it is "interlaced with deeply spiritual values". In addition, two respondents noted that they were not so much interested in defining their identity or practice, as in doing the actual work to reduce the negative impact of conflicts, whatever that may be viewed as.

*Challenging field*

Ten respondents emphasized the importance of this line of work, but warned about the challenges of the field, such as working with highly contentious issues, the lack of tangible results in some cases, high competition and difficulty finding a niche to survive in the field, ethical dilemmas, and "rampant burnouts", to name a few.

*Openness to experimentation*

Five interviewees mentioned the importance of openness to trying on new roles and tools. One of them said that our field is entering a new phase of experimentation, in which we may find ourselves facilitating discussions among people who have different ideas, but do not know how to talk to each other, thus, establishing channels of communication and new forms of dialogue. Two respondents noted that a practitioner has to keep on exploring various tools as the social landscape changes. For example, one of them said that "now is the time to revise the previously used tactics to bring the nation together". Two other interviewees said that they were pondering about what should be the next steps in their careers, or, as one interviewee put it, she was having "a positive professional crisis".

*Adopting elicitive approach*

Five respondents noted the importance of elicitive approach to peacebuilding. One respondent, for example, viewed his work as a ground-up effort, which "begins and ends with people". Another respondent noted the challenges associated with adopting elicitive approach, which demands attention to local needs and respect for the local vision of peace. Thus, as we design an intervention, we have to pay attention to who gets to define the needs and which narratives are privileged. A locally driven concept of and path to peace, in turn, implies that what works in one context may not work in other contexts. Yet many practitioners apply their Western analytical lenses and tools to complex and unique foreign contexts in a blanket fashion. In fact, a practitioner, according to this respondent, is ought to distance herself from the term

"conflict resolver", as we are not in a position to resolve conflicts to begin with, only the local communities are. A practitioner's job is to merely "assist local communities" to generate locally driven solutions by sharing knowledge and skills. Another interviewee posed a question of "What does it mean to work with another human being?" and "How can I position myself to show that I am here to help?" One interviewee also noted that it can be challenging to understand in what ways we can be supportive to those who live in conflict contexts without imposing our own system of values and vision of how they should live their lives.

**Motivation and inspiration**

The respondents' motivation to enter the field of peacebuilding and sources of inspiration are captured in the following subthemes: a sense of shared humanity, a sense of calling or responsibility, ideas and models, religion and spirituality, mentors and inspirational figures, personal values and ethics, personal experience of conflict, search for meaning, context-specific, satisfaction, and social justice.

*Sense of shared humanity*

Eleven respondents expressed a concern for the well-being of people in conflicts and viewed it as a motivating factor to stay in the field of peacebuilding, and two respondents believed that it is the essence of our profession. Another respondent viewed the idea of "serving people" as his "way to give back". Three respondents viewed the people and communities they work with as a source of inspiration and

motivation, especially when listening to "people who do this work in far more difficult circumstances". One of the respondents noted the personal courage of people in conflicts, who bring about change against all odds. One respondent viewed human beings as "designed to live in harmony with each other" and "wired to bond", and his work's aim as to find "where the bond is broken in order to rebuild it". Another respondent expressed no confidence in the capacity of human beings to live in harmony, while admitting his choice to remain hopeful that people can find ways to coexist based on the sense of shared humanity. Similarly, one respondent viewed her work as a way to help people build more productive relationships and equip them with tools they need in order to accomplish that.

Moreover, six interviewees noted that they were deeply affected by violence domestically (among which are 9/11, hate crimes, assassinations of public figures, etc.) and abroad (wars, genocides, or global issues), and, as a result, wanted to contribute to ameliorating the impact of conflict on people. Even though these conflicts did not affect the respondents personally, they maintained a more inclusive social identity and viewed other people as members of their extended human family.

Another six respondents were motivated by witnessing transformation in people. Two respondents expressed a belief in "human potential", the "innate good nature of people", and the desire to change, and one respondent also noted that "seeing change over and over again" continues to inspire to do this work.

*Sense of calling or responsibility*

Six respondents had a sense that they were "called" to serve a cause "bigger than me". One of them said that this sense of mission became "a way of life". Two other respondents said that they are doing the work on community-oriented trauma healing out of necessity, as this central to conflict transformation approach was missing in the field for a very long time. Two other respondents recalled that they were conscious of the destructive effects of conflicts since early childhood and felt the orientation toward being a peacemaker.

Five respondents alluded to the sense of personal responsibility for mitigating the impact of violence due to being a part of the culture that promotes violence in the world, including wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, among others. One respondent, for example, recognized that on a cognitive level he understood the far-reaching implications of US foreign policy, but still was not prepared to deal with 9/11 emotionally when it happened.

Four respondents were motivated by the challenges and promises of the field and "how much we still have to do". One of them said that he works mostly on "lost causes, because many people tend to steer away from things that do not work". Another respondent said that "the American dream is just that - a dream, not a reality for many people still".

Three respondents said that they are inspired by working with youth, which was framed by one respondent as "raising the next generation of peacebuilders" and "making a difference in the lives of young people" by another one. Another respondent said that what keeps him in the field is the work with youth from conflict

zones, who suffer from conflicts, yet choose to talk to each other, and believed that this work is more meaningful and effective than academic scholarship.

*Ideas and models*

Seventeen respondents said that they draw inspiration from a wide range of ideas, including humanistic, cognitive, and positive psychology, philosophy, ethics, secular humanism, feminism, environmentalism, neuroscience, and progressive academic thought, among others. Six of them were motivated by the task of tying theory and practice of building peace. For example, one interviewee was inspired by "creative scholarship that breaks down the divides between academia and practice". Several respondents were also motivated by spreading their ideas and models that deal with issues of power, structural conflict, non-violence, identity, dignity, and trauma healing, to name a few.

*Religion and spirituality*

Fourteen respondents viewed their work as an offshoot of their faith and spirituality. As one of these respondents put it: "I found myself in this field because of my faith". Among the traditions mentioned here were Judaism, Christianity (Catholicism, Protestantism, Anabaptism, Mennonites, Quakers), Buddhism, and indigenous native cultures.

*Mentors and inspirational figures*

Thirteen respondents mentioned that they draw inspiration from the life and work of world, national, and local community leaders, including leaders of non-violent, Civil Rights, and Black Lives Matter movements. One respondent, for example,

recalled that he was moved by Nelson Mandela's vision, who, "when leaving prison refused to feel hate, because he wanted to leave as a free man and not as a prisoner of hate. And here [the US] we also fought our own apartheid". Another respondent added that it is also important not to idealize people, recalling that Gandhi, for example, while preaching non-violence in public, "was still beating his wife at home" at some point. Nonetheless, it is important to believe that people can change, mobilize, and inspire others. Six respondents also mentioned that they were motivated by their intellectual or spiritual mentors, or as one respondent put it, "older wise folks". Followers of the Christian tradition noted several spiritual figures, such as Thomas Merton, Morton Kelsey, Richard Foster, Richard Rohr, in addition to some of the Buddhist teachers, such as Thich Nhat Hanh, to name a few.

*Personal values and ethics*

Eleven respondents were motivated by their values and moral commitments, such as non-violence, sanctity of all life, and human connection, among others. Some respondents were exposed to these values since early childhood. For example, one respondent was inspired by the activist work of her mother, and another respondent was taught to use his advantage to help the disadvantaged. Another interviewee said that the values of kindness, compassion, mercy, justice, and dignity, among others, guide his work and give the youth he works with a vocabulary to speak from.

*Personal experience of conflict*

Eleven respondents were impacted by conflicts on a personal level to a varying degree, including direct, indirect, intra-personal, relational, or social conflicts. Three

respondents, for example, were raised in hostile or conflict-prone environments or were exposed to "a lot of criticism" since their early childhood. One of them expressed appreciation for both positive and negative impact of trauma on him, as it made him more empathetic and self-aware. One respondent recalled being affected by the loss of a colleague and a community member to violence. Two other respondents grappled with issues of human nature and inhumanity after learning about family members who perished in the Holocaust. Two respondents were affected by their immigrant experiences and a sense of otherness early on in their lives, which impacted their professional choices later on.

*Search for meaning*

Ten respondents associated being drawn to their line of work by the search for meaning. An encounter with conflict, for example, was often accompanied by the search for what that experience meant and an attempt to understand others and self for six respondents. As one respondent, interested in the issues of human freedom, free will, and reason, believed, nothing teaches us as much about human beings as conflicts, which allow us to peak into the issues of not only inhumanity, but also the formation of higher consciousness and more inclusive identity. Two other respondents' existential quests were similarly generated by the absence of inner peace. One of these respondents entered the field in order to understand violence and anger, which were in abundance in her own life since early childhood. Another respondent, who used to be an "ivory tower professor of theology" began to search for answers after a series of hardships, which led him to discover new ways of

understand and dealing with conflict and a new and rewarding career path. One respondent expressed uncertainty over being able to truly understand why he does this work. Four respondents viewed their work as "an intellectual exercise" and "a puzzle to solve". The emphasis was made on figuring out what works and learning something new. The purely pragmatic approach was expressed by one of the respondents who did not see himself as a peace activist or motivated by a "normative impetus", but rather driven by a problem-solving analytical angle. Another respondent approached his work in a similarly pragmatic way and said that he does it because "it pays the bills, simple as that…and hopefully does some good".

*Context-specific*

Ten responses viewed motivation to do their work as fluid, eclectic, and context specific. Five of them said that they draw on multiple traditions and "sources of wisdom". For-instance, one interviewee said that she was inspired by a variety of traditions and movements, including Civil Rights Movement, Liberation Theology, Paulo Freire's Popular Education (and the *praxis* model, centered around action-reflection cycle), Mennonite tradition, and neuroscience, among others. In addition, five respondents believed that their priorities and motives have shifted over the years. As one respondent said, she would give different answers during different stages of her life. The early stages of her career, for example, focused more on herself, yet, over the years, her work became "less about me and more about others". Similarly, other respondents noted the shift from focusing more on outcomes to the process itself, or from advancing a career to advancing a cause.

*Satisfaction*

Nine respondents expressed a deep sense of satisfaction for doing "meaningful work". Among these respondents were those who noted "the promise of the field" and that the peacebuilding practice is a "profession above all others", which allowed these respondents to live out personal values and find their calling. One respondent said that he couldn't think of "a more rewarding way to live life", and another one described his work as "the dreamer and the dream becoming one". One respondent also said that he had seen change, and even if he didn't, he would still continue to do it. Another respondent viewed her work as something that changed her as a person in profound ways and made her more humble, grateful, humane, and aware. Finally, two other interviewees expressed gratitude for working with their colleagues and in teams.

*Social justice*

Eight respondents were motivated and inspired by the work directed toward social justice. As one of them said, "it feels good to help others and contribute to bringing about a more just society".

**Defining "success"**

When the respondents were asked to define "success", their responses clustered around the following subthemes: its context-specific nature, helping people to manage conflict and trauma, self-actualization, institutionalizing peace, and perseverance.

*Context-specific*

Of twenty-eight responses that suggested that success is context-specific, eleven cited that it is hard to measure, given that it is "often mixed with failure" and that it is hard to agree upon which indicators to use when evaluating the effectiveness of a project. One respondent said that "anyone who is honest will tell you that it is not clear-cut", and another respondent noted that "we are still a new field exploring what works". One respondent gave an example of partial success when he was engaged in community organizing to protest the invasion of Iraq, which "felt like a failure", since it did not stop the war. But, at the same time, it was not a complete failure, given that many good things came out of it. In addition, two respondents said that local capacity development takes a very long time, and, for the most part, one does not know whether it is a success or a failure right away. One respondent said that "you know with certainty only if you fail in my line of work [conflict prevention]". Two other respondents believed that traditional tools of measuring success are not reliable, and one of them added that she is not sure if she is "interested in measuring it in a traditional sense".

Seven respondents said that the success of their work has to be evaluated by communities and participants they work with, while citing the participatory and elicitive nature of their work. For example, one respondent said that his work is about building relationships, and the outcome of it is less about him and more about what the reaction of local community is. Another respondent said that he measures success by eliciting feedback from participants before, during, and after his workshops.

Four respondents said that their perception of success, similarly to motivation, evolved over time. Two respondents for example learned to recognize and value their ability to "last longer" as opposed to some of their colleagues over the years, regardless of what the tangible outcomes of their work had been. Another respondent who perceived one of her projects as her biggest professional success, over time, realized that focusing on the relational level of conflict and not engaging with systemic issues led to improvements only in the short-term, and began to view this success also as the biggest failure.

Another four respondents viewed success as something that means different things to different people. Depending on the nature of work, it can come from academia (getting tenure or being published) to acquiring public recognition as an expert and a skillful practitioner.

In addition, two more respondents viewed success as volatile, with "no guarantees that it will last", according to one of them.

*Helping people to manage conflict and trauma*

Of the twenty-seven responses in this group, eighteen defined success as "work that benefits local communities" and equips people with tools to "improve lives in small and big ways", such as mediation, advocacy, policy work, education, training, healing, prison, and other community programs. One respondent, for example, after having carried out hundreds of such workshops on five different continents and translated training materials into twelve different languages, believed that every workshop on trauma healing she facilitated was a success. Another respondent

recalled that some of his projects that started in the 1970s were adopted in 70 countries around the world. Similarly, several respondents cited the projects that they initiated decades ago that are still around. Three other participants viewed local capacity building as the ultimate goal of their work, when a facilitator assists workshop participants to learn to self-facilitate and communicate effectively on their own. Seven participants also viewed "bringing people together", "getting people to talk", "contributing to negotiation process", and "rebuilding relationships" as the purpose of their work.

The latter, rebuilding relationships, is often viewed in the context of individual and relational healing. For example, nine respondents witnessed personal and relational transformation in people over and over again, which inspired them to continue their work. Moreover, one respondent defined success in terms of transforming relationships and "turning indifference into love". According to him, the deepest successes did not come from academia, but from the moments of opening hearts when representatives of different communities crossed political, religious, or ethnic divides. Similarly, five other respondents did not see analytical work as rewarding in terms of success as working with real people and emotions, as it does not get to the heart of people and conflicts. One of these respondents said that "if a practitioner is unable to create an empathic environment, then I am not sure if it makes sense to do this kind of work". Another practitioner also said that "sharing pain and deeply personal experiences is what reaches the other side" and allows to transform conflicts.

*Self-actualization*

Of the twenty responses that linked success to self-actualization, eight framed it as being appreciated, valued, recognized, or heard. Four respondents had an experience of hearing words of appreciation upon encountering people they worked with in the past. For example, one respondent recalled a student who said: "You have changed my life". Several respondents noted that over time they get invited to speak at public events more often and their ideas gain more attention and recognition. One respondent recalled that when he became gravely ill, numerous people of various religious, ethnic, and sociocultural backgrounds, including prison inmates with life sentences, reached out to wish him a speedy recovery.

Seven interviewees experienced success as a sense of thriving as an individual and professional, including advancing professional skills, publishing scholarly work, and spreading ideas. These respondents believed that facing difficult challenges, as difficult as that was, led to professional and professional growth. One respondent noted that it is easy to continue to do what we are good at, but that comes at the expense of professional growth. Thus, we have to define what we want to do, stick with it for a while until we feel comfortable doing it, and then gradually grow out of it by exploring new areas of interest. Another respondent viewed her gradual transition from enduring a series of deeply traumatic personal experiences of emotional abuse, bullying, and hardships to thriving professionally and becoming a lot more aware and accepting of herself as her biggest success.

Another five respondents viewed professional success as doing the type of work they enjoy doing and find meaningful. As one respondent said, "I have to enjoy what I do in order to be successful". Similarly, another respondent expressed gratefulness and appreciation for his work saying that he feels fortunate, because he does what he really wants to do [teaching people peace] – "a luxury that many people do not have". Three other respondents viewed being whole, authentic, and having found their true calling as a success, which for two respondents was possible only after recognizing the disconnects between their values and the type of work that they did in their previous careers [law practice].

*Institutionalizing peace*

Eleven respondents viewed the need to institutionalize peace as one of the pillars of success. Four of them noted their efforts to institutionalize conflict analysis and resolution or peacebuilding educational programs around the world. Three other respondents noted that it is the grassroots levels projects that are most successful and satisfying, unlike the efforts to address systemic or intractable issues, "where most of our failures lie". Two respondents noted the difficulties of coupling grassroots efforts with structural change when powerful interest groups are involved or legislation is designed to benefit the former. Another respondent came to question not the value of her work, but its efficacy and whether it was leading to the impact she was hoping for. Upon examining the *Reflecting on Peace Practice Report* by CDA

Collaborative Learning Projects[181], she realized that most of her work fell into the grassroots sector and adjusted the focus of her work from mainly grassroots projects to designing and carrying out evaluations of what works and why in an effort to marry grassroots efforts with systemic changes.

*Perseverance*

In addition, three respondents connected success to perseverance, "showing up", or dedication to the cause and process rather than the outcome. Two respondents, for example, said that it is "almost impossible to fail", given their "realistic expectations" and "a low bar for success".

**Defining "failure"**

When the respondents were asked to define "failure", their responses clustered around the following subthemes: opportunity for improvement, lack of progress, inadequate skills or preparation, practitioners' personal qualities, context-specific nature, difficulty separating personal and professional failures, and causing harm.

*Opportunity for improvement*

Sixteen respondents viewed failure as an opportunity to learn and improve, and several respondents framed it as "a great teacher" and "a gift". In fact, one respondent reminded that "we have to keep in mind that much of what we do is an experiment", and another one warned against entering the field of peacebuilding if

181 *Reflecting on Peace Practice*, CDA, 2009, http://dmeforpeace.org/sites/default/files/CDA_RPP%20Manual.pdf.

they are looking for a "mistake-free life". Moreover, these practitioners believed that, as long as they learn from any experience, positive or negative, then it is no longer a failure. As one respondent put it, there has never been a situation, however bad it may have seemed at the time, when he did not learn something that he could apply going forward. One respondent also said that he uses his "failures" to develop role-plays for his students, which remind him "to remain humble". And another respondent admitted that failure happens on a regular basis, especially when "things turn out to be more complex" than initially thought, but what matters is whether we choose to respond defensively or to learn from it.

*Lack of progress*

Of eleven responses that linked failure to the lack of progress, six associated it with inability to address systemic and structural conflicts. One respondent said that he is "more successful at identifying systemic conflicts than solving them". Another one viewed technical facilitation that is divorced from engaging with deeper structural issues as ineffective. Similarly, one respondent regretted addressing the relational component of a community conflict without address broader systemic issues, thus, losing an opportunity to improve the life of that local community in the long term.

Five respondents also cited missed opportunities, stagnation, and lack of personal development contributing to the sense of dissatisfaction. Two respondents, for example, cited their disappointment with the lack of visibility of their approaches, ideas, and scholarship.

*Inadequate skills or preparation*

Ten respondents cited lacking particular skills or not being well prepared as one of the factors that contributed to the sense of disappointment. For example, one interviewee admitted that he did not take power dynamics into account during the mediation session, which led to a failure. Another respondent said that he was not prepared to deal with emotions. Two respondents said that they did not listen carefully or "deep enough" to workshop participants during the planning phase or to their colleagues. One of them said that not listening more carefully is "a bit of an ego thing". Two other respondents cited the failure to journal or evaluate a project individually or as a group at the end of each day, share lessons learned, and, as a result, learn from experience. In addition, one respondent said that he had no appreciation for the importance of living a balanced life and self-care skills for the most part of his career until only recently, which led to feeling burnt-out and 30 years older than he actually is. Moreover, one respondent said that he sees some practitioners as "plotters, not terribly artful", because they are not clear about *why* and *how* they engage in their work.

*Practitioners' personal qualities*

Nine respondents cited a range of personal qualities that played a role in experiencing a sense of failure. Seven respondents referred to inflated ego as one of them, which was also framed as "getting carried away", "letting hubris run the show", "bumping into myself", or "thinking I figured it all out". One respondent warned that it could lead to thinking that we know what local communities need when designing

a conflict intervention without asking them first. Another respondent also recalled times when he was "blinded by several early successes" in his career, presuming he came up with a universal formula for all conflict settings. Two other respondents viewed pessimism they experienced at the lowest points in their careers as a form of failure, citing being "aggressive", "cynical", "angry", and a "failure of imagination".

*Context-specific*

Eight respondents believed that failures are part and parcel of daily life, often mixed with successes, and have to be contextualized. One respondent cited that "sometimes people are not ready to do the work, regardless of how much effort I put in", and three respondents noted that evaluations have to take into account how psychologically stable those who give feedback are and whether the negative feedback comes from "a place of woundedness" or "jealousy".

*Difficulty separating personal and professional failures*

Four respondents admitted that it is hard to separate a sense of professional failure from a personal one. One interviewee, for example, said that most of his professional failures are personal, citing a failure to pay attention to his family and himself, and that he is deeply affected by the work that he does on a personal level. Another respondent reflected on losing a colleague to an argument and regretted not paying enough attention to circumstances that led up to that conflict.

*Causing harm*

Two respondents admitted that causing harm to those they work with, in whatever form, constitutes a failure.

**Qualities of a successful reflective practitioner**

When the respondents were asked which qualities are critical for a successful practitioner, the following subthemes have emerged: wholesome character, cognitive maturity, awareness skills, self-discipline, emotional and social intelligence, communication skills, overlap in personal and professional qualities, and dynamism.

*Wholesome character:*

One hundred and twenty-five responses centered around the task of cultivating a wholesome character, twenty-seven of which spoke to having a positive outlook, twenty-four to having a sense of shared humanity with other people, twenty to the value of positive self-regard, eighteen to the quality of humility, twelve to honesty, eleven to quality of integrity, eight to sense of agency and responsibility, and five to courage.

Twenty-seven of these responses highlighted the importance of having a positive outlook, twelve of which viewed a sense of hope and positive vision as important attributes of a successful practitioner. One of them, for example, said: "I have to have hope. I believe that any situation, however terrible it may seem now, will lead to a better place…but that requires work". Similarly, one respondent said: "As hurt as I am, I have to believe there is light on the other side. Eventually I will find my way…however long it might take me to get there". Other respondents also viewed the habit to see positive sides to everything we do as valuable. Two respondents said that it is also important to learn how to "reframe issues in positive terms". One respondent

framed his position as “ethical optimism”, which translates into an inclination to believe that “the arch of history bends toward justice” and that “people will eventually come to their senses and realize that it is more gratifying to love than to fear”. One respondent admitted that he is “not convinced that human beings are capable of coexisting peacefully” yet chooses to remain hopeful. One respondent said that we ought to practice “positive creative imagination”. Moreover, two respondents said that “convincing myself” and positive “self-delusion” can be beneficial to staying hopeful. Nine respondents also stressed the quality of being grateful, including a sense of appreciation for the work that they do and “the smallest gifts and joys of life”. As one respondent noted, he was humbled and inspired by what he had seen in the field and the stories shared with him. Another six respondents valued a sense of humor and its therapeutic effects. One respondent, for example, said that “one has to remain lighthearted when doing this work” and added that being “too serious” may lead to depression. Three respondents also said that it is “important to be able to laugh at myself”, and one of them noted that “not taking yourself too seriously should be high on the list of any practitioner”. One practitioner said that a “well-developed sense of absurd tends to ease tensions” when shared with colleagues. Moreover, when two respondents were asked to reflect on their failures, they said that the word “failure” was not a part of their vocabularies, and one of them reframed it as “a growing edge” that stands for an opportunity for improvement.

Twenty-four responses alluded to having a sense of shared humanity, seventeen of which spoke to the capacity to self-transcend as an individual or a

member of a particular social group. For one respondent, for example, this translated into a sense of openness, which, while not abandoning the interests of his own group, transcends his original social identity in favor of forming a more inclusive common identity that recognizes and respects the interests of all people, including those who might be described as the enemy group. According to him, we risk losing legitimacy when we advocate only for the interests of our own social group at the expense of someone else. Several respondents highlighted the ability to practice "open heart". Three of them, for example, viewed another human being as a chance to encounter both, themselves and God. One of them in fact understood God as a "loving relationship", which has to be restored wherever broken. Four respondents viewed their purpose as "to serve people" or "to serve a higher purpose". One respondent emphasized the concepts of honor and dignity, illustrating them by saying that "If I traumatize you, I traumatize myself" and "If I violate your dignity, I violate mine". Similarly, one respondent said that "in order to heal as an individual, you have to heal as a community", and vice versa. One respondent also believed that "we are all related to each other and nature in a beautiful web of interconnections". One respondent recalled his colleague starting his workshops by asking participants about who they are as individuals in addition to their professional credentials in order to generate overlaps in participants' identities and be able to connect on a personal level. Additional seven respondents drew attention to the need to like people and believe that they are good. In order to practice that, according to one respondent, we have to "decouple negative emotions from people" and try to keep in mind their positive

qualities instead of viewing them as purely "evil". Two other respondents also said that it helps to "compartmentalize" difficult emotions, so that they do not affect our work. Another respondent stressed that practicing compassion and valuing the needs of all people (and not only members of our own group) leads to a higher consciousness that allows to rehumanize and love all people, regardless of who they are. One respondent also added that "we have to acknowledge the relational and human side of conflict" and the need to separate people from ineffective ways of framing conflicts that focus mainly on their negative qualities.

Twenty responses alluded to the need for practitioners to regard themselves in a positive light, fifteen of which viewed self-acceptance as central to improvement, which translated into a "sense of comfort with myself", "kindness" and "compassion toward myself", and "self-forgiveness", among others. For example, one practitioner believed that self-acceptance is integral to being effective, one respondent advised to remember to "go easy on yourself" when reflecting, and another one recalled: "When engaging in self-reflection, instead of punishing myself, I try to educate myself about choices that I have". Similarly, another respondent said that when she reflects on her work and sees that she did not achieve the desired outcome, she is still critical of herself, but realistic about what was achievable and what was outside of her control. One respondent added that he keeps in mind that he is "always evolving" and "not defined only by mistakes". Five of these respondents noted a sense of confidence as a valuable quality. One respondent, for example, noted the value of recognizing our skills and giving ourselves credit, when it is due, and added: "If you don't bring

anything to the table, then why are you here?" Several other respondents similarly appreciated a "sense of competence, but not hubris", as one of them put it. Another respondent noted the need to balance a sense of professional competence with humbleness and added: "I have something to offer and something to learn…I have my own voice, but it doesn't have to come at the expense of silencing others". Moreover, one respondent felt that a sense of confidence comes with amassing professional experience, and another respondent noted that building up professional confidence over time allowed her to become more open to feedback and criticism.

Eighteen respondents stressed the importance of practicing humility. Three respondents recommended that practitioners examine their motivation for entering the field and what type of rewards they are looking for. One of them said that "it takes humility to serve others without being on some sort of ego trip". Another respondent admitted: "It is hard to talk about humility, because it is in the corner of the eye. It's gone the moment you talk about it". Two other respondents noted that cultivating humbleness allows them to maintain an open mind and learn from everyone, including children and students. Several respondents noticed that the ego demanded less and less sacrifices as they aged. One respondent, for example, said that his practice was no longer driven by his ego, as he was not looking to build a career or reputation. Another respondent added that, while some practitioners with inflated confidence may sound more appealing to particular audiences, he believed that our line of work requires a "certain degree of self-refusal and humility". Several respondents also alluded to the importance of humbleness and humility to being able

to practice elicitive approach, which puts local communities in charge of the peace process, while a practitioner merely assists with the design and facilitation of it, while continuing to elicit feedback. One of them, for example, added that he asked different IDPs of about what "healing" means to them and each time would receive different answers, which taught him that different people react to trauma in different ways and that there is no blanket approach to trauma healing.

Twelve respondents viewed honesty as a one of the qualities of a reflective practitioner, including honesty about our blind spots, triggers, personal and professional shortcomings and limitations, the level of self-awareness, and history of traumatic experiences, to name a few.

Eleven respondents noted the importance of integrity, authenticity, and congruence. Two of these respondents, for example, believe that "authentic interest in people" and "genuine curiosity" open people up. Four respondents said that they test on themselves what they teach as instructors. Two respondents said that it is important to "bring the whole of me" into everything we do. One of them explained that "you have to be a complete human being" and "integrate all aspects of our being" in order to be in touch with our mind, body, and spirit. According to this respondent, "being a good human being" is a requirement for our profession and added that we have to be aware of our inter-connectedness and conscious of our contributions and their consequences as members of our communities.

Eight respondents stressed the importance of nurturing a sense of responsibility, agency, and accountability. Three respondents believed that if we are

in control of anything, it is in how we choose to respond. “Everything is a choice”, according to one of them, including the level of our consciousness. There may be costs associated with those choices, but we are “not leaves in the wind” and have to question whether our actions are in alignment with our values. Another respondent spoke of the importance of personal choice when it comes to responding to what happens to us on emotional and cognitive levels. According to this respondent, we are the makers of our own thoughts and emotions and, thus, take responsibility for whether we construct positive stories to explain life or allow negative stories to “rule our lives”. Therefore, “being stuck” in negatives stories is a choice, just like it is a choice to step back and reevaluate the meanings we assign to particular events. Another practitioner noted that “we either contribute to peace or to the absence of it”, and we are responsible for making this choice in every situation.

Five respondents emphasized courage as one of the qualities of a reflective practitioner. One of the respondents said that it takes courage to be able to say “I don’t know the answer to that” or “I will not be able to handle that” and recommend someone else instead. Two respondents said that “looking at ourselves is the hardest thing”, because it takes courage to go “deep within”. Another respondent noted that facing challenges means that he is learning something important.

*Cognitive maturity:*

Seventy-one response drew attention to the quality of cognitive maturity. Of these, eighteen emphasized the need to nurture the drive to constantly search for ways to improve, position ourselves as “lifelong learners” and “students”, even when

we teach or assist others. This commitment to grow was framed as being "hungry for it", "driven by curiosity", "mature enough" to engage in the process of reflection, and "yearning to become the best version of myself". Two respondents, for example, said that they did not think that there are prerequisite qualities needed to be a reflective practitioner, besides the drive to learn that leads to "sincere questioning" when we experience difficulties. One respondent noted that he "cannot imagine doing something this meaningful and not want to get better at it". Another respondent said that some people enter the field with a learning driven mindset, and that's more important than the skills and experience they bring. According to one respondent, "our time here is all about learning and growing" and added: "Once I learn from my mistakes, I am not so injured by them in the future. If I embrace them, I can grow, but I have to allow myself to blossom into the person I would like to become".

Another eighteen respondents stressed intellectual humility or the capacity to be self-critical. Ten of them thought that a reflective practitioner has to be open to being wrong, admitting mistakes, and accepting criticism. One respondent framed this quality as the "ability to let go of the need to be right". Another respondent drew attention to the need to remind ourselves that "our way of seeing the world is not the only one", that what we know is not eternal or universal, and that we need to listen to different perspectives. Several interviewees admitted that criticism is upsetting initially, yet, as practitioners accumulate experience, they build up professional confidence. Three respondents also thought that it is important to analyze the sources and nature of criticism and whether it is constructive or aims to hurt us. If the latter,

confronting such criticism is ineffective, while being open to it neutralizes it, according to one respondent. Moreover, eight respondents stressed the value of practicing a sense of doubt and uncertainty. According to these respondents, it is beneficial not to assume that we know everything and to suspend judgment. Practicing the latter allows us to be "a fair witness" and notice more, according to one of them. Another respondent believed that "being judgmental is useless most of the time", but noted that her initial reaction is "almost always *no"*, which then prompts her to pause, track the steps of her thought process, and ask why. When she is tempted to judge someone, she tries to understand where that person is coming from, put herself in their shoes, and then asks whether she would not do the same thing herself. Moreover, these respondents valued the ability to accept that there is often no clear answer and to "sit with the puzzle". One of them, for example, said that, even though he formed many cross-race and cross-class relationships, he does not assume that he knows everything about those issues.

Sixteen respondents viewed the ability to maintain an open mind as central to being a reflective practitioner. Six respondents stressed the importance of one's ability to hear and understand different perspectives without taking sides. One of them stressed the value of listening to accounts that produce a more nuanced understanding of conflict, including extremist and radical groups. Similarly, one respondent said that it is important to "stay open" to new insights and "sources of wisdom", including criticism. Several other respondents noted the importance of comfort with complexity and heterogeneity. Three respondents, for example, noted

that it is important to cultivate "respect for difference", including "liking people who are different from us". One respondent believed that even when people disagree, they can do so without needing to feel the "intellectual superiority". Several respondents alluded to the importance of not using labels and simplifications. One of them noted that sometimes "we find ourselves in a bubble of self-righteousness and moral superiority", not knowing how to talk to those we disagree with. Moreover, these respondents believed that an open mind also means being open to other perspectives and suggestions, recognizing that what we know is only a "piece of the puzzle", and that we need to understand where our interests and expertise fit best. Finally, two other respondents believed that life is about learning and improving: "the moment we stop learning, we stop growing", one of them added.

Thirteen respondents stressed the importance of developing sharp analytical skills that allow to engage in critical, abstract, and systemic thinking. For example, two respondents said that, in order be able to step back and reflect on how effective we are as practitioners, we have to cultivate a sense of comfort with abstract thinking and curiosity about conflict and human psyche. One of them, in addition to work in the field, engages in scholarly work that grapples with such questions as human propensity toward violence and the formation of more inclusive social identities. Two other respondents also noted that having good technical skills doesn't mean that we are asking the right questions. "We might be good at negotiating peace agreements, but most of them fail, so having good negotiation skills is not what really matters apparently", one of them added. Moreover, one respondent said that he doubts if one

can be successful without reflecting on a broader theory of change. Similarly, another interviewee urged to think critically about our theory of change and ask questions about why we think the chosen strategy is the most appropriate, constantly examine assumptions that go along with it, and whether it takes into account the specifics of the local context. Moreover, several respondents brought up the need not to feel attached to a particular conflict to the extent possible in order to maintain the distance needed to remain objective.

Six respondents noted pragmatism and healthy skepticism as one of the qualities that benefited them. Two respondents said that we have to recalibrate our approach and expectations based on evaluating the capacity and readiness of project participants to do the work. Two other respondents pointed out that we have to be realistic about the extent of our impact. One of them added that "we either come in with an intention to fix the problem or to stay", and when we are not able to fix it or to see our own limitations, we get frustrated and discouraged. Two respondents illustrated that point by saying that they had no high expectations to begin with when they entered the field, which allowed them to view their work as an experiment.

*Awareness skills*

Fifty-three responses clustered around practitioners' awareness skills, thirty-two of which noted the importance of being self-aware and twenty-one responses acknowledging the role of mindfulness. Of the sixteen respondents who cited the need to be self-aware, several respondents believed that, before engaging with others, we have to begin with understanding ourselves, including own strengths, weaknesses,

biases, motivation, and values, with several respondents observing that people entering our field tend to have a natural predisposition toward being reflexive and inquisitive. Three respondents drew attention to the role of language, especially when it comes to the words we choose to frame our experiences and construct stories about them. Similarly, several respondents noted the value of being aware of personal and professional limitations. One of them, for example, said: "I am not here to change the world…I have to be realistic in my expectations". Another respondent also pointed out the need to question what is in our power to change and what is not and focus on the former. Two respondents suggested the need to reflect on whether what we are asked to do is in line with our values or "more than we can deliver". Two other respondents also admitted that they are aware that they are more effective when working in teams rather than individually, yet it is critical to know what kind of partners we can work with and ask questions about the types of qualities we are looking for in a partner. Several respondents reflected on the value of examining the path of personal development, in order to engage with destructive emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns. Two respondents said that the latter depend on where we are developmentally, while emphasizing the need to be aware of what prior events in our own life histories might be holding us back. In addition, two more respondents said that some practitioners seem to be more efficient without engaging in deep reflection but added that they would not want to be those practitioners themselves. Seven respondents believed that practitioners have to reflect on their native cultural contexts and viewed people as "products of their own cultures", being

pulled in different directions by various forces, including gender, age, socioeconomic status, professional standards, etc. One respondent, for example, noted that we are expected to project an image of a calm and collected expert, which may require balancing between being emotionless and being distracted by emotion. Another respondent drew attention to the need to be aware that our work is embedded in a variety of social structures that permeate every dimension of life and inevitably influence the course of our work and relationships. One respondent also admitted that she views herself as "a product of many different cultures", which prompts her to ask questions about ways in which they affect her and what she can do about it.

Three respondents stressed the value of reflecting on the challenges of professional identity politics, which raise the issues of activism, neutrality, and validating only certain types of discourses, among others. For example, one of them noted that the conflict analysis and resolution community often engages with only certain types of issues and groups, while dismissing others, and added that the predominant focus on the issues of discrimination and oppression puts practitioners in a position of "victims' cheerleading squad", instead of fostering a dialogue among all stakeholders.

Twenty-one practitioners viewed mindfulness as another attribute of a reflective practitioner. Several respondents, for example, said that it is important to "bring the whole of me", be present, aware, available, and "mindful with myself and others". One respondent stressed the need to "be less mindlessly active". Similarly, one respondent said that practicing awareness and mindfulness were a part of her

upbringing, and another one noted the need to cultivate a professional identity based on mindfulness and deep awareness. Two other respondents noted that a practitioner has to be extremely perceptive, constantly aware, alert, and curious. Moreover, eight respondents highlighted the ability to slow down, or, as some respondents put it, "stay quiet" or "stay with myself". One respondent expounded: "Because I am busy, I need to slow down and take time to reflect". Another respondent said: "Early on in my career I was on a mission; now I enjoy slowing down and quiet contemplation". One respondent added that one has to be able to take a step back, "sit with the puzzle", and accept that sometimes there is no clear answer to it. One respondent said that introspection is a solitary process, during which his mind "grinds experience". Another respondent also added that how we see the world is at the core of who we are, which demands attention to what we say and how we engage with the world.

*Self-discipline*

Thirty-three respondents alluded to the quality of self-discipline. Twelve respondents valued the ability to let go of the need to control, including what others think of us and our own ego and perfectionism. For example, one respondent admitted that she "cannot make everybody happy" and if she did, that would mean that she is doing something wrong. Another respondent said that he does not want to be "in charge of everything", except his own response. "I am still struggling with perfectionism", he added, but "releasing yourself from it is liberating", pointing out the need to give ourselves a permission to be imperfect. Another respondent recalled: "Facing death changed my relationships with the future. I worry about it a lot, but

there is only so much I can control. I have to stay with what I can control. Some struggles are way too big for me. When I try to control something, I find myself worrying even more. So I have to come up with practical things not to overwhelm myself and learn to take one day at a time". Two more respondents connected the ability to let go with the need to learn to stay in a "vulnerable space" and ask for help. One respondent admitted the need to let go of "beating myself up over what is in the past and cannot be changed". Another respondent also said that he is in control of what to leave in the past and what to bring into the present and added: "It's a mental thing. It is similar to carrying a basket. You cannot add anything new if it is full". Finally, one respondent said that it is helpful to remind ourselves that we do not have complete control over what happens to us on both, smaller and larger scales and added that having life experiences when goals were not met has taught her not to stress over the need to predict the outcomes and instead let them unfold. At the same time, she noted that "she does not let life happen to her" in a sense that she takes steps to steer it in the desired direction, but does not "obsess" about present or future, given that she is more aware of "life's contingencies", which allows to "hold on to ideas lightly" and avoid the state of constant frustration.

Seven respondents noted the qualities of adaptability and flexibility, which resonated with respondents' views of the nature of their work as demanding, volatile, and uncertain. For example, one respondent said: "I constantly have to evolve in any relationship, as it evolves". Another respondent stressed that we have to be prepared to face various issues on the spot, including shifting gears when underlying issues,

such as communal trauma healing, have to be addressed first. Two respondents believed that our field requires a certain type of personality, which, among other qualities, requires resilience. One of them said: “I’m not sure if we can teach resilience. Think of people in hospices. Not everyone can do it”.

Four respondents noted the value of patience, perseverance, and focusing not so much on the outcome as on the process itself.

Three respondents named caution as one of the valuable qualities. For example, one respondent warned to be mindful about how much we disclose about ourselves to different audiences.

Another three respondents highlighted time-management as a valuable skill, including setting time aside to reflect. One respondent framed the latter as “a culture of disciplined reflection”, which cultivates a habit to process what happened on cognitive and emotional levels on a regular basis. One interviewee said that most of the people who enter our field already have a reflective mindset, but we need to remind ourselves to set aside some time for reflection. One of the respondents similarly added that many people can be observant, but if we don’t take the time to reflect, the knowledge dissipates.

Two respondents pointed out assertiveness as a valuable quality, including an “ability to say no” and “being more selective with what I want to do and how”. One respondent viewed it also as “knowing when I have to recommend someone else instead”.

Two practitioners also highlighted that self-regulation and self-direction are requisite qualities. One of them said that "if you cannot regulate yourself, you cannot be effective" and that, in order to grow, we have to know ourselves well. Another respondent viewed non-reactivity as a form of self-regulation and self-control, but stressed that awareness of our shortcomings does not guarantee the ability to master them in the moment.

*Emotional and social intelligence*

Thirty-one responses brought up the quality of emotional and social intelligence. Fourteen of these respondents viewed empathy as one of the central characteristics of a peacebuilding practitioner. For example, one respondent believed that a practitioner should be "able to create the kind of space where people feel comfortable to talk from the heart". In such environment, a practitioner must possess a range of communication skills, including body language, voice, and gestures that embody openness and authenticity. Sometimes this ability comes naturally, but sometimes we need training to enhance those skills. The respondent concluded that "if you are not someone who can articulate and tap into empathy, I am not sure if it makes sense to do this work". Similarly, another respondent said that "we might have very bright people in the field, but if you are not able to connect to other people on emotional level, you will not be effective". In fact, the ability to appreciate and relate to the suffering and pain of others, according to one respondent, is at the core of conflict transformation. However, multiple interviewees admitted that the

experience of connecting to the suffering of other people puts practitioners in a vulnerable situation and "exposes" them to trauma, which has to be taken seriously.

In addition to empathy, ten interviewees believed that emotional intelligence is just as important as cognitive intelligence. One respondent, for example, admitted that "there is a lot of history of incompetent facilitation" and believed that "doing this work without profound psychological sensitivities is criminal". Another respondent noted that a practitioner has to be able to read, acknowledge, and express emotion clearly and accurately. Likewise, another participant said that he practices "reading the facial expressions of students at the end of their interaction with me" in order to reflect on his performance. Several respondents noted the value of cultivating advanced interpersonal skills. One of them said that "the most important thing is to be able to connect with whoever I talk to". Similarly, another respondent stressed the need to cultivate an inviting professional manner and personality, so that people feel comfortable to open up and do not feel threatened. Two respondents also mentioned the ability to bring people together and emphasize commonalities, whether when working in teams with other practitioners or with clients. One of these practitioners alluded to the skill to appeal to the best in people. For example, instead of engaging in confrontation or problem solving, he was able to lower the tension and open up clients by bringing up memories of shared intimate experiences that reminded them of their shared identity, which, in turn, led to the resolution of their dispute.

Seven respondents highlighted the comfort of working with emotions. One interviewee stated that, even though different people express emotions in different

ways, “an emotion is one of the most valuable expressions of how people think”. Yet not everyone can handle the work with emotions in a way that conveys our appreciation for sharing the emotion and that we understand what it must feel like. Another respondent observed that practitioners who feel comfortable with charged emotions in the room will be the most successful. Moreover, a good peacebuilder has to cultivate interest in conflict, “almost like it”, so that she can stay with and work through it. Several respondents believed that a successful facilitator is capable of finding a way to “channel the bad energy of the group” and express emotions constructively. For example, one practitioner viewed an emotion, including anger, as “a request to change something”, and added that when she facilitates a dialogue, she tries to create an environment in which people can express emotions as constructively as possible, so that others would be able to hear those “requests”. Another respondent admitted that she is comfortable working with emotions in a professional setting but is not as effective in her personal life. One respondent also said that the challenge with difficult emotions is that “they are quicker than me” and “contract me physically”, regardless of how well aware he is of emotional reactivity.

*Communication skills*

Twenty-five responses grouped around communication skills. Several of them viewed observation as a “crucial” skill allowing practitioners to learn from all sources, including other practitioners and clients. One respondent said that he is attentive to “the tiniest details” and when he needs to gauge the reaction of his audience, he stops and says: “I need feedback” in order to correct the course, if need be. Some

practitioners highlighted the need to be an active listener. One of them said that we need to "listen more to people than talk, because that's what they often need". Another respondent also said that often times "people need to be heard, not criticized". One practitioner said that "deep listening" must precede a dialogue or negotiation, because it makes people less judgmental and argumentative, and thus "prepares the soil for planting the seeds of peace" and added that "deep listening" leads to willingness to abandon the "You language" of blaming others and focus more on the "I language" of expressing our own overlooked needs instead. Another respondent noted that "deep listening means not just listening to others, but also listening within".

*Overlap in personal and professional qualities*

Sixteen respondents believed that their work demands the personal dimension and that the personal and professional qualities of a practitioner eventually merge. In fact, several respondents could not separate personal and professional qualities, because they believed that it is important to bring the whole of who we are to what we do, to question how our work impacts us on a personal level, and to understand whether who they are is in alignment with what they do. One respondent, for example, said that he became fully aware of who he was and was not as an individual by reflecting on who he was as a practitioner. Moreover, several respondents said that practitioners employ the same set of qualities and skills in individual and professional lives and that self-awareness in personal life leads to self-awareness in professional life and vice versa.

*Dynamism*

Sixteen respondents stated that their professional and personal qualities have evolved over time. Two respondents, for example, said that they became more realistic and pragmatic. One of them said that she did not change as a person, only as a practitioner. Another one said that when he was young, he saw "mostly possibilities", and as he grew older, he became aware of "what was possible", which was instrumental in lowering anxieties that came with life. He added that it is important to reflect on "what really matters in life" as we encounter profound suffering and put things in perspective. Moreover, as he got over the mid-life crisis, he felt more consistent, secure, and emotionally stable. Two other practitioners noted that they became more emotional over time, and one of them said that the older he gets, the more he is moved by love and life. One practitioner said that he became more spiritual and aware and, as a result, "ended up here". Similarly, another respondent said that he acquired a new set of values, as different "versions" of him emerged over time. Another respondent said that there were "several iterations of myself", which were "a function of time and place". Two respondents noticed that they began to feel less "defensive" or "threatened" over time, as they accumulated more professional experiences. One of them, while reflecting on the early stages of her career, recalled that she was driven mostly by the desire to succeed in her 30s, but slowed down when she began to appreciate the stories of deep suffering shared by her clients, and added: "I wish I knew back then what I do now". One respondent admitted that he became more assertive over time and admitted that he had made "a lot of mistakes" in that

past, and even though he learned from them, it does not mean that he will not make others. Two respondents observed that they have become "less certain of anything" over time. One practitioner remarked that he has changed tremendously as an individual and a practitioner, reflecting on his youth when he was motivated to join the army at the time of military assault on his country. He was unable to join due to the age requirement, but as he started to learn more about the history of that protracted conflict, he realized that his side was doing similar things to what the other side was accused of, which led to the transformation of his beliefs and a subsequent career of a peacebuilder.

**Defining self-reflection**

When the respondents were asked to define "self-reflection", the following subthemes have emerged: its context-specific nature, self-examination, merging of personal and professional dimensions, a way to transcend the self, the foundation of professional growth, and the practice of mindfulness and awareness.

*Context-specific*

When asked to define the phenomenon of self-reflection, eighty-six responses drew attention to its context-specific nature. Twenty-three respondents noted the evolution in their reflection skills over time, thirteen of whom believed that reflexivity is a byproduct of the natural process of accumulating experience, with several of them admitting that effective reflection requires maturity, which comes later in life. In fact, one respondent believed that "there are no short-cuts to wisdom", and another one

noted that a practitioner often arrives at a state of emotional clarity and cognitive maturity upon "reaching the forties". Two other respondents said that new stages of life trigger "moments of self-awareness" and new insights. One respondent said that what he thought he needed to do and how to think in order to be successful had changed a lot over time. Another respondent said that she was unaware of herself for the most part of her life, and added that she is "still figuring it out", but now she is a lot more aware and realizes that she is constantly evolving. One respondent observed that she is much better at dealing with negative feedback now that she is older: "If it happened 20 years ago, I would be really hard on myself, but now I have the tools to look at it from a distance". Similarly, two respondents admitted that, over the years, they became better at simply listening, being less defensive, and more open to feedback, and one of them mentioned that she tended to be more defensive when receiving negative feedback and would "question the intentions" of people providing positive feedback, but over time found it helpful to pause to examine her reaction: "I do not reject it right away, but look closely to see if there is a pattern". Another respondent said that the evolution of his self-awareness had a profound effect on his relationships, including with his spouse and children. One respondent said that at some point reflection became "conscious" and added that he is "more reflective now and more open with other people". He also noted that his professional self-reflection acquired an additional dimension over time: "I began to be more interested not only in what was happening inside of me, but in others reflecting as well" – the point also made by two other practitioners. One respondent said that "it does not take too long

to develop the habit of self-reflection", but we have to be aware of the need to develop it and that this is a powerful tool to use in our practice. In addition, nine respondents stressed that this habit can be developed, and one of them added that "no one was born incapable of self-reflection". One respondent also said that "we have everything we need to be reflective, but we have to direct the process". As she reflected on her life in retrospect, she "experienced tremendous transformations" over the past few decades. One respondent said that he was not able to reflect effectively until he learned to manage his "ego-driven needs" later on in his career. One respondent also said that his ability to reflect is a lot greater now when he is in his 70s than in his 20s and added that he "becomes less and less surprised over time". One respondent noted: "They say it's harder to change as we age. I'd like to believe the opposite. The more we understand as we age, the more tools we have access to". Similarly, one respondent said: "The more we improve, the better questions we ask".

Twenty-two practitioners cited the situational and individual nature of the phenomenon of reflection and believed that there are no "recipes", "universal definitions", "simple answers", "manuals", but "only guiding principles" for engaging in it, and that it "means different things to different people". Several respondents believed that the mode of reflection would depend on the nature of work, context, and practitioner herself. One respondent, for example, said that "different practitioners are drawn to different types of reflection", and another practitioner echoed by saying that different practitioners will have different needs at different times. Six respondents also believed that self-reflection is unevenly distributed, with some

practitioners having “a natural predisposition toward it” and others “unable to do it on their own” and, as a result, some practitioners have to invest more effort than others. Moreover, three respondents noted that self-reflection does not always work or bring the desired results, and several respondents admitted that reflection can cause both, positive and negative effects, such as genuine regret, frustration, discouragement, guilt, and loss of confidence, among others. In addition, two respondents warned against tailoring the project of self-reflection and reflective practice to the Western audience, pointing out that the Western approach to the nature and purpose of reflection may not necessarily appeal to people in other cultures. Two other respondents believed that the process and nature of reflection depend largely on who they are reflecting with, and one respondent admitted that sometimes she needs more reflection and sometimes less.

In addition, twenty-two responses noted the temporal dimension of reflection, of which twelve noted that it can be oriented toward past, present, or future. One respondent, for example, saw the need for an immediate post-action discussion of what went on at the end of the day or as he termed it “a hot wash”. Six respondents stressed that, in addition to such reflection on action, a practitioner has to also reflect in action, or as some respondents framed it, we have to practice “mindfulness in action”, “reflect on the go” or “in the moment”, “think on our feet”, and “feel our way through”. Several respondents mentioned the practice of questioning what is going on, what brought them to that moment, what their contributions are, in what ways they are being impacted, what should follow next, and one respondent framed this

process as a “dance between reflection and action”. Another respondent cited the need to develop a “habit to reflect in the moment and be present to what is taking place” and added that one should revisit past experiences at certain time intervals, whether it is a matter of days, weeks, or months and reflect on how that experience can inform present and future. In addition, five of these respondents stressed the anticipatory vector of reflection directed toward future action. One respondent, for example, said: “I always reflect on what I have done and wonder if I would change anything next time I do it”. Another respondent added: “Self-reflection helps me process anxiety about what the future may look like. Future is a riddle, which can distract me from the gift of being present here and now. I tend to reflect in the past tense, but sometimes I pause and say: “What about this moment right now?” In addition, ten respondents noted the temporal unity of reflection. One of them, for example, said: “I go to the past, present, and future. I’m not sure if I can separate these”. Two other respondents said that it does not help to compartmentalize tenses, as reflecting on the past affects present and future, and vice versa. One of them added: “The present and the past are inseparable, because the past always shapes my present”. Another respondent said that “understanding how to live a more meaningful life now by extension will impact the future”. Echoing this point, another respondent recalled a “butterfly effect”, which demonstrates that the small changes in the present can have substantial implications in the future. In addition, she believed that it is hard to separate time dimensions, which are “tied up”, and added

that she spends more time in the present rather than the past, unless past memories are triggered by a meaningful experience.

Moreover, while most respondents acknowledged the heterogenous nature of reflection, nineteen of them pointed out several types and sources of reflection, including shallow, or technical, and deeper types of reflection that demand different sets of skills and tools. One respondent, for example, cited micro (or project at hand and a practitioner's role in it) and macro (general observations of the self, commitments, and life direction) levels of self-reflection. Another respondent observed that self-reflection provides space for both, convergent (systematic and logical) and divergent (spontaneous and free-flowing) types of thinking. Several respondents noted various modes and sources of reflection, including those accompanied by writing, speaking, or silence, done independently, in pairs, or as a group, nurtured in a variety of networks, such as vertical, horizontal, formal, informal, intra- and inter-disciplinary, which can be done "on the go" or in retrospect and lead to healthy or unhealthy outcomes. In addition, several respondents noted various interlocutors who may assist practitioners in reflecting, including local communities, colleagues, personal relationships, experts, or those who "have nothing to do with our field", with two respondents noting that reflecting independently is different from reflecting in a conversation. Moreover, multiple respondents drew attention to the need to engage in reflection on various levels, including systemic, inter-group, inter-personal, and intra-personal.

*Self-examination*

Seventy-six responses associated self-reflection with the task of self-examination, thirty-one of which referred to a deeper level of self-inquiry delving into practitioners' life and career and the level of satisfaction with both, character, needs, values, beliefs, skills, personal history, state of well-being, or anything else that generates a deeper understanding of the self. One respondent, for example, believed that self-reflection is "a way to educate myself about who I am and how I engage with the world". One respondent said that "self-reflection allows to examine what is happening inside, so that I am better aware of my needs and do not project my anger". Three respondents viewed it as a tool to understand the gap between "the real and the ideal me", as one of them framed it. Another respondent said that self-reflection detects our biases, "reveals us as we are and not as we wish we were". Several respondents recalled that it allowed them to see the discrepancies between their interior and exterior lives. One of them, for example, said: "I first deconstructed what I thought I wanted to be [a lawyer or a judge] only to realize that it was not for me" and added that, because that work had nothing to do with what she called "justice", she began to focus on what resonated with her own understanding of it. Moreover, several respondents believed that self-reflection translates into a willingness to "descend into myself", "do the inner work", "ask tough questions", "hold myself accountable", and embark on "a deeper personal journey". One respondent said that self-reflection means "reflecting in a responsible honest voice". In addition, two respondents admitted that it took them a while to discover that their purpose in life was to help other people, and four respondents believed that self-reflection is about

understanding different stages of life and embracing that knowledge. One respondent, for example, said that "new stages of life trigger new insights", another one viewed the purpose of her current stage of life in sharing insights accumulated over lifetime with the youth, and another respondent said: "I am acutely aware that the path is over, and I am learning to embrace that".

Twenty-six respondents viewed self-reflection as an instrumental or technical analytical inquiry. For one respondent, the process of questioning how he engages with his work may lead to both, "trivial and life-altering" discoveries, thus, pointing to the overlap with the previous group of responses. Several respondents viewed self-reflection as "an ongoing learning process", "critical examination of what I am doing", "an intellectual exercise", "creative problem solving", "an invitation to examine my emotion", "grinding experience", "gauging my effectiveness", "taking a step back" or "thinking on my feet", among others. Several respondents noted the need to understand how their work affects them on a personal level. Another respondent noted that self-reflection invites to examine his relationships, especially difficult ones, which may offer cues and mirror the same dynamics that are present in us. Moreover, three respondents referred to "an inner dialogue with myself" as a method of steering the course or making sense of experience, and one of them noted that he often has to pose and answer the question "What's next?" when in the midst of practice. Another respondent broke reflection into three components, such as "theorizing change, implementing change, and the role I play in both". Moreover, two respondents believed that self-reflection allows to "separate the self from work", whereby practice

is examined as objectively as possible, regardless of practitioners' biases, feelings, or intentions, with one respondent noting that it is a way "to separate my feelings and emotions from mistakes I've made".

Another eleven respondents linked self-reflection to understanding how they are viewed by others. Three respondents, for example, cited the value of actively seeking feedback on what they project and how they come across to others. Two interviewees noted that they have to address the negative image associated with being an American citizen before the actual work begins when working abroad. Another respondent noticed that *who* he is talking to influences *how* his is talking, and, as a result, narrates the script that fits the choice of adopting a particular social identity in a particular social interaction. Two respondents believed that the process of reflection should leads to both, understanding experience and looking at it from an observer's perspective, and one of them framed it as "being a fair witness to myself". Four respondents viewed it as "the ability to step outside of myself" and "view myself objectively", as two of them put it, while another one likened this ability to see himself from outside to the idea of "an astral projection".

Moreover, eight respondents viewed self-reflection as a medium of meta-cognition generating insights into what, why, and how they think. One practitioner, for example, believed that "examining our consciousness is what develops it", and another one observed: "How I see the world affects how I engage with it". Moreover, one respondent believed that the concept of self-reflection has "a philosophical connotation", as it allows to gauge the impact of his perception on how reality is

conceptualized and poses such questions as "What is reality?" and "How do I construct it?" – a point mirrored by another respondent who stressed the sense of agency in and responsibility for constructing stories that interpret our life experiences. Similarly, two respondents believed that it is important to understand our theory of change and assumptions that go along with it.

*Merging of personal and professional dimensions*

Sixty-one responses suggested the fusion of personal and professional dimensions of practice, twenty-eight of which cited the reciprocity and integrative nature of personal and professional modes of reflection. These respondents acknowledged that the line separating personal and professional reflection is "blurry" and that they could not separate the two, because, as some of them framed it, their practice requires their presence as both, individuals and practitioners, and because "being a decent human being is the foundation for our profession", according to one of them. One respondent said that both types of self-reflection are "fully integrated" in his life and added: "The origins of who I am in my personal and professional lives are different, but closely intertwined." In addition, three respondents said that they apply knowledge and skills from their professional lives to their personal lives and vice versa, and several respondents observed that personal self-awareness leads to professional self-awareness and that the opposite is true. One of them noted: "If you are good at incorporating feedback as an individual, you are also good at it as a practitioner". Similarly, another respondent noticed that "if people are reflective in a professional setting, they are probably reflective in their personal lives also" and

added that both types of reflection work in the same way, which requires to pause, reflect, and incorporate new insights. In addition to similarities between personal and professional reflection, four respondents admitted that there are fewer opportunities to solicit personal rather than professional feedback. The latter, according to them, is more formalized and institutionalized and comes in a variety of forms, including evaluations. Moreover, several respondents noted the benefits of professional self-reflection on a deeply personal level, which were framed as "integrity", authenticity", "being whole", "improved quality of life", "living a more meaningful life", "having a sense of direction", "moving toward becoming the best version of myself", and questions such as "Am I whole?" and "Does my work reflect who I am?"

Twelve of these responses also pointed out the ethical and aesthetical dimensions of practice. These responses noted that self-reflection allows to continuously re-examine practitioners' values, actions, and whether they are aligned. For example, one respondent drew attention to examining whether our espoused theory matches our theory in use. Similarly, another respondent observed that often times we convince ourselves that our beliefs match our practice, "learn to say the right things", while in reality the opposite is often the case. One of the respondents added that our work is influenced by our values. Some of them stick with us, while others fall away over time, as we evolve, hence there is a need to be "updated about what is happening to us", so that the dated understanding of ourselves does not pull us back. As one respondent observed, even when practitioners learn to say "all the right things", it doesn't mean that they act in accordance with the professed values. Several

respondents admitted that, as a result of self-reflection, they realized that they were not doing the type of work that truly mattered to them, and four respondents recalled that they had to take the time off from what they were doing at the time to understand why they were not satisfied with their careers, and, as a result, either entered the field of peacebuilding or left the "ivory tower" of academia to engage in the actual work in the field. One respondent said that self-reflection means "being able to see myself realistically, examine my motives and consequences of my choices, and then relate all that to my values". In addition, two respondents observed the aesthetical dimension of their work, with one of them noting that the aesthetical sense is "just as important as having a methodology", yet it gets lost in the course of a scientific inquiry.

Another fifteen responses suggested the integrative type of reflection, with various aspects of it fitting into the mind-body-heart(spirit) nexus. For these respondents, self-reflection served as a way of "understanding and integrating all aspects of being", "getting in touch with feelings, thoughts, and spirit", "engaging my senses, heart, and mind…making it possible to connect on a deeper level", "attending to whatever comes up inside", and "learning to trust the wisdom of my heart". One respondent explained that self-reflection, among other things, involves going down the checklist of what her "body-mind-spirit needs" are at the moment and added: "Self-reflection is a place to come from. It is about who we are and the state of our consciousness. It is rather a way of being in the world, being conscious of our place in it, and our impact on others. It is a delicate back-and-forth dance of balancing different aspects of being." Similarly, one respondent believed that the practice of

reflection allows her to be "a complete human being in touch with my body, emotions, the divine in me, and a web of connections I am a part of" and added that "it should not be compartmentalized and cannot be purely analyzed" – the point mirrored by another respondent. One respondent observed that the practice of "deep listening" within allows "to integrate various parts of being" and "let whatever is happening inside speak for itself". Moreover, several respondents spoke to the need to attend to the spiritual aspect of reflection. One of them, for example believed that "it is important to develop sharp analytical tools, but they are not the highest value", and another one viewed self-reflection as a tool to bridge the gap between his mind and heart and believed that this is "the longest 18 inches one will ever have to overcome".

Twelve respondents associated self-reflection with self-care benefits, and one of them viewed the phenomenon of self-reflection exclusively through the prism of self-care. Among other benefits, these respondents noted that self-reflection helps to maintain "mental health", "a sense of balance", "recharge batteries", "work through difficult emotions", "be aware of my needs", "remain engaged in what I do", and "transcend my wounds", to name a few. Three respondents also noted that self-reflection is what allows them to develop kindness, acceptance, compassion, and forgiveness toward themselves.

In addition, six responses alluded to the intuitive aspect of practice. As one practitioner put it, because "our work is less of a science" and "there are no universal recipes", "sometimes we have to think on our feet" and "feel our way through", and another respondent admitted that "often times you know it intuitively". One

practitioner believed that being reflective means "learning to trust my intuition", another one noted that it is important to "be in touch with the knowledge that all of us have inside", and one respondent remarked that "we are way more knowledgeable than we allow ourselves to be". One respondent also believed that, over time, reflection becomes intuitive, "when I may not necessarily think about it, but embody it".

*A way to transcend the self*

Forty-six responses suggested that the practice of self-reflection allows to transcend the individual self, twenty-nine of which pointed out the critical role of feedback in doing so. These respondents admitted that it is difficult to see the self objectively and believed that self-reflection is far more effective when complemented by feedback, which expands the scope of reflection beyond introspection, or our own "echo", as one respondent put it. Several respondents believed that it is an integral part of their practice and building a learning community, although three respondents acknowledged that there are a lot more opportunities for professional rather than personal feedback, with one of them admitting that evaluations in a professional setting may generate the type of "feedback that I wasn't asking for, which may catch me off guard". Two respondents observed that they continue to ask for feedback and carry out evaluations even after years of practice. Three respondents also cited mentoring as an important source of insight and noted the value of eliciting feedback from someone whose opinion they value, and one of them admitted that the most honest feedback comes from people who are closest to him and this proximity allows

him to remain receptive to it. Three other interviewees echoed this point, citing "openness to critical feedback" and "a willingness to listen", "especially when something didn't work". It is worth noting that several respondents admitted being defensive and sensitive to criticism early in their careers but became more receptive to it over the years upon accumulating professional experience. One of them, upon realizing that he did not come across as he thought he did to other people, began to proactively seek external feedback. One respondent also viewed it initially as hostile, but later found it helpful. And one respondent, after establishing himself in the field, noticed that he began to get less and less of critical feedback and found it difficult to grow professionally because of that, especially when working alone. Moreover, several respondents believed that it is important to be assertive and "put things in perspective" when incorporating feedback, while keeping the source, nature, and the broader picture in mind.

Nine respondents viewed self-reflection as something that allows them to distance from their ego. For example, several respondents noted that it is a way "to connect to all people", "to recognize the divine in every form of life", "to notice that I happen in relationships", and "to open my heart to other people by trying to understand them". Another respondent framed self-reflection as a way to transcend "the smaller me" and "traps set up by my ego". One respondent said that self-reflection allows him to care less about "what others think of me", and another one admitted that "it allows me to laugh at myself".

Eight respondents drew attention to broader systemic issues and power dynamics. For example, one respondent highlighted the value of paying attention to "whose voices are heard" and which narratives are salient when trying to understand the needs of people in conflict. Some of these respondents also reflected on how their gender, race, and citizenship are perceived by various groups. Three respondents, for example, acknowledged privileges that come with being white Western males. One of these respondents recalled that, when working in Africa, he is perceived "as a savior" regardless of whether he deserves it and added that his male privilege usually earns him more credit than his female colleagues get for the same effort. Two respondents also acknowledged that they have "a lot of power" when they enter the classroom, whether domestically or abroad. Two other respondents raised the importance of practicing "political" and "critical" forms of reflection and believed that practitioners are implicated in power relations, especially when they come from privileged backgrounds or "a culture that promotes violence", regardless of who they might be as individuals.

*Foundation of professional growth*

Forty-five responses pointed out the significance of self-reflection in serving as the foundation of professional development. Twenty-one respondents believed that the skill of reflection is rooted in experiential learning. These practitioners said that the practice of reflection is an opportunity to learn from experience and improve their work. One of them also noted that it gives her the "flexibility to correct the course". Another respondent also admitted that most of his skills came from practice

and added that "we have to incorporate self-reflection into our daily lives". Similarly, another practitioner said that one does not have to go into the field to work on these skills, but rather practice them in everyday life. Two other respondents believed that reflection needs "more practice and less theorizing", according to one of them. Several respondents also stressed that it enables us to learn from successes and failures, and one of them said: "Understanding my experience is essential to how I evolve over time, but that is not the case for many people. It takes time and commitment to develop this habit". Moreover**,** several respondents stressed that self-reflection has to be intentional, done not just for the sake of reflection itself, but for the purpose of translating into action, thus, emphasizing the reciprocity of reflection and action. One respondent added that self-reflection ties the task of exploring our values and what they mean to us to applying those values in practice. Another practitioner cited that it is "a way to enhance practice" rather than an "aimless rumination". Another respondent also said that "reflection does not end with what I see, it extends into what I want to do with that", which, in turn, depends on our vision and values.

Fourteen respondents viewed reflection as a mechanism of professional development. Some of them framed it as "the engine of my work", "a tool to develop intellectual capital" and "to build up our field", "minimizing chances of doing harm", "an indicator of maturity", "a mechanism of accountability", "mechanism of self-regulation", "the future of our field", and the skill "gradually gaining recognition". In fact, one respondent observed: "It doesn't seem to have currency now, but twenty years from now it will be at the heart of everything". Moreover, several respondents

pointed out various functions of self-reflection, such as empowering, motivational, normative, regulatory, and therapeutic. For example, one respondent noted that self-reflection allows him to succeed, create empathy, motivate people to change, and motivate himself to continue to do his work, and another respondent observed that it allows him to learn and improve in ways that "do not undermine other people".

In addition, ten respondents noted that reflection "increases when things don't add up", to quote one of them. These respondents believed that difficult times lead to more self-awareness, and two of them thought that "there must be a good reason" to reflect. One of them noted that when he experiences difficulties, he treats them as a message to learn from, and another responded echoed this point: "I focus on what triggered me…[encountering] a challenge means that I am learning something important". One interviewee also noted that self-awareness continues to evolve over time, especially when "I discover that I don't know something I thought I did" and added that "big leaps come from doing something I haven't done before".

*Awareness and mindfulness*

Forty-three responses viewed self-reflection through the prism of awareness and mindfulness skills. Twenty-eight of them interpreted it as the ability to be present, mindful, or aware. In describing self-reflection, several respondents viewed it not so much as the process of examining the self, but rather as "the ability to be present", "being attentive", "being consciously present", "in-the-moment awareness", "reflexive awareness", "mindfulness-in-action", "deep listening", "being in a quiet observing mode", and a "matrix of tools to increase my awareness". One respondent

observed: “The more I pay attention to myself, the more effective I am”, and another one noted that the ability to be aware of “whatever is rising inside” leads to more informed responses instead of automatic reactions. In addition, two respondents believed that the more available we are to ourselves, the more available we are to others. One practitioner also viewed self-reflection as a mechanism of self-monitoring, and another respondent observed that “the more present I am, the less likely I will do harm”. One interviewee also cited that being a reflexive practitioner leads to “a deeper level of engagement” and over time develops into “a mindfulness-based identity”. Similarly, two respondents believed that the practice of staying aware develops naturally over time and “becomes a habit of mind”, although, as one of them put it, “the wisdom is not inevitable”. In addition, one respondent likened the process of self-reflection to engaging in “a dance between reflection and action”, and another respondent pointed out that “sometimes we have to think on our feet”. Several respondents gave examples of what such process of “thinking on their feet” entails. One respondent, for example, noted that he pays attention to facial expressions of his students during and at the end of his class. Another respondent “closely monitors participants’ reactions, body language, tiniest details to gauge reaction” and asks for feedback to make sure that all relevant points are addressed – a point echoed by two other respondents, one of whom noted the value of posing questions about the accuracy of his perception and the need to communicate clearly. One respondent also recalled times that required her to be flexible enough to respond on the spot to the unforeseen challenges, which dictated the change in topic and

activities for that workshop. Another interviewee also noted the need to listen carefully when encountering charged emotions in order to be able to decipher that "request to change something". One practitioner noted that he listens to insights that come from both, head and heart, and that "what comes from the heart ends up being the agent of change". In addition, one respondent observed that he learned to notice the habitually ruminating inner voice and what it has to say without necessarily identifying with it, and believed that self-reflection is made up of two main components - "awareness of who I am now and who I wish to become".

Another fifteen respondents, fourteen of whom viewed self-reflection as extending beyond reason to integrate various aspects of being, including the contemplative element of it. Similarly to respondents who linked self-reflection to the state of being present and aware, respondents in this group noted the state of being mindful and present, but, instead of the state of analytical alertness and observing outside, moved the emphasis inwards to describe a state that is accompanied by "slowing down", "being still", "being alone", "clearing distraction", "equanimity", "being in a quiet observing mode", and "deep listening inside". For example, one respondent noted that "most helpful insights come from clearing the mind, not analytical thinking". Another respondent added: "The physical component of calming down and taking a deep breath instills balance…helping me to see what it means to be alive" – a point echoed by another respondent who viewed self-reflection as a means of "listening to my needs … with a sense of gratitude and connectedness". This practice of deep listening within was coupled with the habit of "suspending

judgement" for five respondents. One of them, for example, framed it as "sitting with my emotion or thought in stillness". Another respondent described it as "catching what I am reacting to, accepting that it's there, and giving it space" without attempting to analyze what is behind it. Such curiosity in observing the inner state was also noted by another respondent who believed that deep listening to himself helps him to authentically connect to other people and added: "I have to pause and listen to what is happening inside, investigate where it is coming from, give space to it, and remember that I don't have to identify with it". Moreover, for five respondents, this "quiet time alone" translated into a "contemplative" or "centering" prayer.

**Developing reflection skills**

When the respondents were asked to reflect on ways to develop reflection skills, the following subthemes have emerged: environmental support, experiential learning, self-examination, more inclusive academic programs, mindfulness and contemplative practices, personal development, instructors' skills, analytical skills, and context-specific nature of the learning process.

*Environmental support*

Sixty-five responses clustered around the need to cultivate an environment conducive to reflection, with forty-one of them stressing the value of soliciting feedback, which was viewed as essential to learning and improving. Several respondents thought that it is important to solicit feedback from a variety of sources, including colleagues, students, clients and local communities, while using diverse

formats, such as individual, group, direct, confidential, personal, and professional feedback loops, to name a few. In fact, one of them noted that talking to colleagues is an opportunity to learn, as they can mirror our flaws and blind spots. Another respondent said that we have to schedule feedback regularly in order to debrief, exchange feedback, and reflect with colleagues. One respondent also added that over the years he began to realize the full benefits of feedback shared by his colleagues, including their help to process his own thoughts and emotions. Another respondent pointed out that "reflection tends to reproduce itself" in terms of blind spots unless practitioners seek feedback from a wide range of actors that generates a "360-degree view", and added that often times feedback is given in a "sandwich style" with corrective suggestions prefaced and followed by positive feedback, yet in some situations that may not work, thus demanding to adjust to whatever seems appropriate in each particular case. Four respondents also noted the need to be mindful of in-the-moment feedback, when a practitioner can gauge reactions by reading the body language, and one respondent said that sometimes he stops and asks: "What is your reaction?" Another respondent said that we have to listen carefully to what people are trying to tell us. Two respondents also noted the benefits of using shadow facilitators and reflective observers who can share constructive feedback with an observed practitioner. One respondent cited that he continues to ask for feedback even after many years of practice. Another respondent stressed that we have to look for ways to translate feedback into learning. One of the respondents also placed the emphasis on building relationships with clients, so that they are

comfortable sharing honest feedback, as "honesty and trust are critical to success". Several respondents also noted the need to learn to give and receive critical feedback in positive ways. For example, three respondents called attention to being assertive when incorporating feedback, putting things in perspective, reminding that sometimes criticism says more about those who give it than about a practitioner, not dwelling on the negatives, "learning to incorporate past, while remaining present", and balancing criticism with being kind and compassionate toward ourselves. One respondent added that, for whatever reason, the older he gets, the less he is criticized, thus making it more difficult to look at his work from someone else's angle. Moreover, two respondents noticed that the emotional proximity to their critics makes a difference: the closer practitioners are to those who give feedback, the more honest their feedback is and the more open practitioners are to receiving it.

In addition, eleven participants noted the need to get involved in learning communities outside of academia to advance both, personal and professional skills. One respondent, for example, found it beneficial to take trainings for facilitators, which helped him to hone the skills of both, reflection and facilitation. Another respondent mentioned that he participates in a community of like-minded practitioners by blogging, a form of public journaling. Some participants saw value in attending various identity and learning groups, such as men's, women's, AA groups, Landmark Education, Non-Violent Communication, Compassionate Listening, The Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR), or any other group or program that fosters personal and professional growth. One respondent mentioned

that he was involved in various trainings, including sensitivity training group, where participants shared how they perceived him and his behavior, which increased his self-awareness and helped him build better relationships, including with those he disagreed with.

Five respondents pointed out the benefits of maintaining supportive and healthy relationships when practitioners engage in self-reflection. As one respondent noted: "Everybody has the resources to reflect, but we have to be around people who can support us". Another respondent noted the need to form supportive relationships with colleagues, especially when working in the field. One respondent advised to "be around people who I can talk to without being judged". Two respondents also stressed the value of surrounding ourselves with people who have the qualities we value. One respondent, for example, believed that if we want to be psychologically healthy, we have to surround ourselves with psychologically healthy people, and added that she is inspired by "winners" and chooses to be around people who challenge and inspire her. Another respondent also stressed the value of choosing partners (personal and professional) who value the same qualities we do, including self-reflection.

Five respondents raised the need to teach youth reflection skills early on. As one respondent put it, self-awareness and peacebuilding literacy are just as important as learning how to read and write. Another respondent added that teaching youth self-awareness and mindfulness is the foundation of deep listening and observation skills. One respondent said that, in addition to self-awareness, children

also have to be exposed to the basic self-care skills. Another respondent also said that because these basic skills are not taught early on in life, "we don't know how to deal with conflict" and pointed out success stories, including the entire Berkley, CA school district, which adopted Toolbox by Dovetail Learning[182] – a mindfulness program that teaches children "resiliency, self-management, and responsible decision-making skills"[183]. Moreover, another respondent, an educator teaching in middle school, stressed the need to cultivate character in children and gave an example: "Middle-schoolers seek to create a sense of identity, and the concept of "being cool" is at the core of it. So what we managed to do here is to fill this concept with the idea that "being cool" means to care for another human being…The only thing that worked so far to engage students and open them up were first-hand accounts of extreme human suffering". Moreover, it is important to cultivate in children an intrinsic feeling of self-worth, according to him: "We teach kids that they are wonderful people. And wonderful people go on to do wonderful things in life".

In addition, three respondents saw the benefits of exposing ourselves to unfamiliar cultures through traveling domestically or internationally. One respondent noted, for example: "My practice [overseas] really changed me. It made me a lot more aware of how arrogant we [Americans] are".

*Experiential learning*

[182] *Dovetail Learning*, https://dovetaillearning.org/.
[183] "Toolbox: Social Emotional Learning Curriculum for K-6 Students," *Berkley Schools*, https://www.berkeleyschools.net/teaching-and-learning/toolbox/.

When asked about ways to advance reflection skills, fifty-three responses pointed toward the need to develop practical skills, with twenty-four responses emphasizing the need to include them in academic programs. As one respondent put it, "the more experiential the better". Among the skills recommended to teach students were facilitation and shadow facilitation, mediation, deep listening and observation, debriefing, interviewing, problem-solving, role-plays, simulations, and evaluations, among others. In addition, two respondents viewed teaching appreciative inquiry as a valuable skill, as it trains students to reframe issues in positive terms and turn negatives into openings for positive change by sharing stories of what worked in the past. Three respondents said that they incorporate meditation and mindfulness exercises before and after the class or experiential exercises, and one respondent viewed them as the foundation of all other skills. Another respondent believed that an instructor has to translate theoretical concepts into in-class and real-world experiential exercises and gradually add layers of complexity to advance them. Two respondents also cautioned to balance theory with practice. According to one of them, we have to avoid "fetishizing theory" and "value experiment over dogma" and explained that theorizing conflict resolution is very different from actually doing it and that "if all we do is focus on theory, we are missing what this field is about". Moreover, it is important not to project an image of an ivory tower divorced from the needs of practice and regular people who are not versed in academic jargon, but instead equip students with a practical language and skills to survive in the field. The respondent went on to say that "if there is not enough practice, reflection becomes

shallow", and students have a hard time relating to the material. Two respondents also noted that we should not expect theory to translate seamlessly into practice, because "we work with people, and people are messy and inconsistent", as one of them noted. Six respondents also pointed out the value of teaching reflective practice, which would aim at tying theory and practice. The latter may translate into various forms, including in-class exercises and real-world experiences, such as practicum. Three respondents mentioned that self-reflection can be incorporated into any topic on the syllabus or under the rubric of reflective practice, as opposed to teaching a separate class on it. In light of the limitations of an artificial classroom setting, some respondents recommended to seek out opportunities to practice outside the classroom, and, as one of them put it, "real world experience is the best teacher". Moreover, several respondents believed that informal training in reflection begins with examining our daily interactions and transforming conflicts in our personal relationships, and one of the noted that "this is where we learned about conflict, these are our challenges, and these are opportunities for us to practice what we learned in the classroom". Another respondent echoed by saying: "I would encourage students to take it to their personal lives, families, communities, and, instead of responding in familiar ways, pause, reflect on what is happening, and explore different ways of dealing with conflict". One respondent also noted that "we don't have to go into the field to practice these skills", given that there are ample opportunities to enhance self-reflection in our daily lives. For example, we can start by exploring why our

communities are we so divided and look for ways in which we can assist people to move forward.

Sixteen respondents believed that communication skills, including "active" or "deep listening" and observation, are "essential to our line of work", to quote one of them. One respondent said that it is important to engage in "deep observation" while learning to suspend judgment, which can be practiced with the help of various tools, such as sharing observations in small groups, recording and analyzing them independently, and practicing interviewing skills, to name a few. One respondent, for example, said that he teaches students how to listen deeply without saying anything, which challenges listeners to deal with whatever arises within in the process. Another respondent said that exercises on deep listening raise students' awareness of their biases by drawing attention to their own perception and analytical lenses. Two respondents stressed the need to train students in recognizing underlying needs and values of speakers as opposed to the language they use to frame issues. Several respondents cited the benefits of training in social intelligence, such as techniques used in sensitivity-training groups, in which participants learn about themselves and interactions with each other.

Thirteen respondents also stressed the importance of practicing evaluation skills. One respondent noted that we often view evaluations as accountability mechanism, but it can also be used as a reflection tool. Two respondents noted diverse types of evaluations, including developmental, formative, participatory, impact, and action evaluations, among others. One of them also suggested diversifying

evaluations by using internal and external evaluators. One respondent stressed the need to carry out evaluations before, during, and after the project or training, but one respondent said that evaluations are carried out only at the end of her trainings. One respondent said that evaluations are a part of reflective practice and explained that as we set goals during the planning phase, we have to be flexible and responsive enough to adjust to the changing social landscapes we work in.

*Self-examination*

Forty-eight responses stressed the role of self-examination in the development of self-reflection, twenty-one of which focused on building the skill of self-awareness. These respondents believed that the ability to understand who we are, what we do, and why is critical. Two respondents, for example, believed that it is imperative for practitioners to subject themselves to self-inventories before working with other people, and one respondent pointed out that "if you cannot pause and listen to yourself, you will not be successful". Five respondents said that they ask students to write on what attracts students to conflicts and the field in general, their personal style of dealing with conflict, personal and professional motives and values, expectations of rewards, personal background and experiences, and what they have to offer to the field, to name a few, and one respondent recommended various personality tests, such as Enneagram, which could serve as a starting point in students' journey of self-discovery. Four respondents placed emphasis on the need to explore our native culture and affiliations with various social groups that influence our views and social identity. Two respondents added that it is beneficial to identify

and practice the least developed skills. As one of them pointed out, people have "preferred" and "avoided" behaviors and added: "Reflective observation was hard for me, so I had to focus on that". Another respondent said: "People in our field tend to be reflective, so we have to begin by identifying existing tools and diversify them". One respondent also noted that he introduces students to Freud's ideas, including that "the child is the parent to the adult", drawing attention to the need to understand the impact that our early life experiences have on the rest of our lives. Several respondents also advised to reflect on our own positive and negative reactions and track their sources, blind spots, the language we use to frame issues, our role in any given relationship and what is expected of us, strengths and weaknesses, conflict styles and defenses, and our own contributions to conflict, to name a few. Another respondent observed: "When I have a reaction, I tell myself to remember it, because I know I should not have said it, and then investigate where that came from", and added that it is helpful to write down things that we think are helpful and things we would like to change. Moreover, one respondent noted the value of reflecting on the process of "othering", whereby we examine the reasons why we distance ourselves from particular people.

In addition, twelve responses drew attention to examining our emotions. As one respondent put it, "being triggered means that's what I need to focus on". Similarly, another respondent said that an emotion can be "a signpost" for something else and added that we should ask: "What is there?" and "Why am I hooked?", so that we do not act out on it. Similarly, one respondent saw the need to ask: "Why did I feel

this way? What is the source? Is it a legitimate emotion?" Another respondent echoed that an emotion often tries to teach us something, and another respondent viewed it as a "request to change something" and added that we have to learn how to listen to it. One respondent echoed this point and noted that, for most people, by the time they enter adulthood, their deeply held beliefs get fused with their identities, which leads to the feeling of being personally threatened when debates on those issues erupt. Moreover, three respondents also said that, when encountering difficult emotions, it is important to be fully present to that experience, instead of distancing from it. Another respondent cited the need to practice various tools to understand triggers, so that we become more aware of our wounds, instead of "projecting out and making it about someone else". One respondent said that her default reaction to conflict was to withdraw, which at times can be helpful, but not always and added: "When I realized that, I began to work on that and now feel comfortable working with emotions in a professional setting".

Moreover, fifteen respondents also stressed the need to engage in self-exploration through journaling and taking notes in and outside the classroom. One respondent framed it as "quiet time" that can be practiced in any setting, from jotting down anything that is happening inside upon waking up in the morning to work-related meetings and classes, individually or collectively and added: "Don't just follow the agenda, listen to what is happening in the moment". Another respondent said that it is helpful to answer at the end of the day: "What is the residue of today? What is still on my mind? What was I proud of? What could I handle differently?" One respondent

also noted that taking notes about what we do is essential to being able to evaluate ourselves. Moreover, another respondent said that journaling allows to approach our work in a more deliberate way, while discovering deeper analytical insights than what was noticed initially.

*More inclusive academic programs*

Forty-six responses clustered around the topic of designing more inclusive academic programs, with twenty-two responses citing the need to borrow ideas from other fields. For example, six respondents noted the need to study neuroscience and psychology, including cognitive, social, and positive psychology, to gain insights into relationship between emotion and reason, pro-social thought and behavior, and human psyche in general. Two respondents believed that teaching philosophy is instrumental for training students in abstract thinking, two more respondents noted the value of exploring resources on personal growth, and three respondents alluded to the pedagogy of adult learning. One of them noted that individuals continue to evolve as adults, in fact, a lot more than in childhood and adolescence, especially if the intent to do so is present. Several respondents advised to ask how other professions handle teaching self-reflection and what can be done to develop these skills in students. Four respondents, for example, expressed appreciation for clinical pastoral education and counseling supervision, when academic advisors mentor students and mirror real-world scenarios. Thus, one respondent noted the experience of building up reflection skills during his training as a chaplain in a mental health ward, when he had to analyze verbatim accounts of his interactions with patients in written reports

to his supervisor. Another respondent also noted that, given how new and inter-disciplinary our field is, we might want to learn from what is already being offered by other fields. That is why, according to him, it is important to be open to working with practitioners from other fields and not to label ourselves. Moreover, five respondents believed that reflection can be nurtured through exposure to various forms of art, including poetry, novels, plays, films, music, among others, and "studying human soul" in order to sensitize students to ethical issues and aesthetics. One of them noted, for example, that art is far more powerful than social sciences as it "appeals to human emotion" and cited experience of exploring conflict in literary form with his students, including literature on post-war healing. One respondent also said that the sense of aesthetics is central to our work and is "just as important as having a methodology", yet it gets lost in the course of scientific inquiry. Moreover, one respondent recalled an experience of a mediator and a literature teacher teaming up to engage her class in an insightful reflection on a literary piece.

Fifteen responses drew attention to the integrative learning approach. One respondent said that academia "tends to replicate the same rationalistic patterns" and "dissect the individual" and added: "What happens in academia is it takes ideas and tosses out the rest of the individual…Elevating the mind is a modern thing. We have to recognize that true wisdom comes from the heart". Another respondent echoed: "If we overlook physical and psychological aspects of learning in favor of analytical tools, we are not going to get very far" and added that he compensates for that by teaching an academic course on mind-body-heart integration with an art-based evaluation

approach to grading. One respondent said that "we have to offer full experience of learning that involves body and emotion" and added that only twenty percent of analytical material is absorbed by the learners, with several respondents observing that reflective practitioners are prone to rumination and "tend to stick to analytical toolkits". Three respondents shared that they teach students to listen to their bodies, including reflecting on tensions, sensations, breath, and body scans, to name a few. One respondent also added: "I bring the body into the classroom. If we don't, we do a disservice to our students. I have to bring the whole of me and model it for students, so that they understand it". Moreover, five respondents drew attention to the need to legitimize the concepts of "healing" and "trauma healing" in academia and other types of work with emotions. One of them added: "We shouldn't assume that students come prepared to do that", and another respondent admitted that instructors often have to hide their "psychological sensitivities" in order to be taken seriously by colleagues who would not consider them "scientific enough". However, one respondent, while reflecting on holistic approach to education, remarked that "we all come from very different places" and, when borrowing ideas from other fields, we need to be sensitive to what would be supported in different organizational environments, including when adapting spiritual values to secular contexts.

In addition, nine respondents stressed the need to offer "practice groups" or "safe spaces", where students and faculty could exchange experiences, give feedback, and reflect together. Several respondents said that it is beneficial to work in teams with people of various levels of experience, including students, faculty, and

practitioners. One of them cited an example of organizing gatherings for the faculty and students to offer communal support to deal with "the shock" of 2016 Presidential elections. In addition to cultivating a sense of community, these gatherings allowed attendants to share some basic self-care techniques with each other. In addition, one respondent said that there should be a rigorous discussion on what skills we need to develop in order to be successful. Another respondent also noted that we have to generate a conversation on what it means to educate reflective practitioners and what professional and personal qualities they have to have and added that "reflective practice should not be just a checkbox". While all respondents agreed that everyone can benefit from building professional communities where practitioners can reflect and share feedback in a non-judgmental and supportive way, several of them pointed out potential challenges. One respondent noted, for example, that, while mentoring and practice groups allow us to "communicate our difficulties and receive constructive feedback", we have to recognize that we are exposing our vulnerabilities, and another respondent added that doing so can be especially daunting for novices and junior faculty as opposed to seasoned practitioners. He and two other respondents also observed that it can be difficult to create such safe spaces to share and reflect because we are often expected not to have any weaknesses or failures, individually and collectively as a new field. In fact, one respondent said that, given that there is no format where colleagues could come together and share their successes and failures, she has to rely primarily on scholarship, in which other

practitioners offer their insights and lessons learned. Several respondents also noted the need to learn to share criticism in engaging non-threatening ways.

*Mindfulness and contemplative practices*

Thirty-one responses stressed the importance of cultivating contemplative skills through various activities, which were framed as "pausing and slowing down", "taking in moments of stillness and observation", "practicing silent awareness", and "quiet observing mode", among others. Eleven respondents cited various practices to advance contemplative skills, such as meditation, journaling, breathing exercises, yoga, exposure to art and nature, contemplative centering prayer, being in quiet spaces and retreats, and incorporating mindfulness in virtually everything we do. Several respondents viewed the habit of being reflective through the prism of developing personal mindful habits, including mindful reading, listening, observing, speaking, writing, and even eating, the benefits of which seep into the professional realm. One respondent said that we have to share instructions for reflection and create space and time for it and added that he teaches self-awareness by starting the class with a few minutes of silence followed by saying: "I know for a fact that no one sat here in silence. Does anyone want to share what was happening inside?" Three other respondents noted the benefits of being exposed to nature and one of them said: "I may ask a student to listen to the wind for 30 minutes or hug a tree for 10 minutes and then journal about what happened during that time. Some students have a hard time doing it in the beginning, but eventually they get it…It is a way to discover new dimensions of what it means to be a human being". Given how challenging it can be to

find the time to practice silence, one participant cited the time on the plane, in the shower, or taking walks as opportunities to do that. Nine respondents noted that having a hobby or something that is not work-related can be a way to nurture mindfulness and contemplation, such as music, gardening, drawing, or outdoor activities, among others.

*Personal development*

Twenty-nine responses drew attention to practitioners' personal development to complement professional development. Several respondents believed that academic programs tend to be skill-focused, "discard personal side as unimportant or inappropriate", and assume that students enter the field as mature individuals, which is "not necessarily the case". But before we focus on technical skills, we need to begin with introspection and "learn how to get in touch with what is happening inside", as one of them put out. Another respondent cited the value of teaching ethics, and another one the need for the "code of ethics" for our field, as in other helping professions. Two respondents also noted the value of studying biographies of prominent figures in non-violent movements, such as Mandela, King, and Gandhi, among others, and one respondent advised to study the origins of the field and issues around which it originated, including systemic issues, such as inequality and marginalization. In addition, three respondents said that it is important to cultivate a sense of responsibility, two respondents cited the powerful effects of exposure to human suffering, such as volunteering opportunities to serve the sick, dying, or poor populations, so that students can nurture empathy and

humility, and two respondents believed that it is important to practice being a "decent human being", as one of them put it, because it is the foundation of our profession. Moreover, nine respondents noted the value of seeking mentorship from academic advisors, scholars, community leaders, colleagues, family members, among others. One respondent said that it is especially important to seek mentorship early on in one's career and added that his way to "give back" is to mentor youth. Similarly, four other respondents said that they invest more time in mentoring students now, in later stages of their careers. Two respondents said that, when they are faced with difficult choices, they ask: "What would my mentor do?" One of these respondents, for example, considered scholars featured in the project "Parents of the Field of Peace and Conflict Studies"[184] as his "intellectual ancestors" and a source of inspiration and guidance. Another respondent said that her mother, formerly an activist, was the one who modeled "a way of being" for her. Another respondent observed that, while "self-reflection is often discovered in times of transition, when people are actively suffering and experiencing loss", in some cases it is possible to alleviate the suffering by receiving guidance from a mentor and added that she now teaches students mindfulness and well-being skills that at some point were modeled and taught by her mentors.

*Instructors' skills*

[184] *Parents of the Field of Peace and Conflict Studies*, George Mason University, http://activity.scar.gmu.edu/parents.

Twenty-eight responses drew attention to instructors' skills. Eleven responses pointed out that an instructor should model the skills and qualities being taught, including self-reflection. One respondent, for example, said: "You can't teach reflective practice without self-reflection. If you can't pause and listen to yourself, you won't be able to succeed as a practitioner" and added that not everyone can teach it. One respondent recalled bringing into the classroom her training in mindfulness and self-care she received outside of academia and reflections on her personal experience with conflict, framing it as "bringing the whole of me". Two respondents noticed that teaching increases self-reflection, but one respondent warned: "If an instructor is not grounded in practice, then it's a situation when the blind is leading the blind", and another one echoed the point: "We can't expect students to do things we ourselves are not good at". Three respondents also noted that an instructor has to "make ideas accessible to students without experience" and provide extra guidance to those who struggle with accessing deeper levels of reflection, and one respondent added that it is important to teach students how to reflect independently, as most of reflection is done outside the classroom. Six respondents stressed the need to continuously ask for feedback from students, including gauging students' reactions in the moment. Several respondents acknowledged power dynamics when teaching, and two of them stressed the need to teach in a way that doesn't alienate students. Two respondents also saw the need to balance support for students with challenging tasks. Moreover, one respondent cited the need to engage students in the design of exercises and later discussion of what worked for them. In addition, three respondents admitted that

traditional academic instructors lack skills on integrating self-reflection, and one of them added that "academics tend to have poor self-reflection skills in general". One respondent observed that "many instructors are not comfortable with integrating mindfulness exercises, even though students grow to like them over time".

*Analytical skills*

Twenty-one responses stressed the value of advancing analytical skills, abstract and systemic thinking, and comfort with complexity. Three respondents, for example, emphasized the need to form the habit of not labeling people and being able to maintain the analytical distance and the position of an observer, rather than participant, when working with conflicts. One respondent noted that it is important to nurture respect for difference and "like people who are different from us". The latter is especially relevant to practitioners working in their native contexts or on issues they are particularly passionate about. For example, one respondent said: "If you label [one party to a conflict] "a criminal", you won't be effective". Several respondents cited the need to look for underlying values and needs (which are often the same for all conflict sides) when analyzing conflict narratives. In addition, seven respondents stressed the need to teach tools to tie theory and practice, including applying theory to current and past experiences, which would be relatable yet challenging for students. Two other respondents pointed out the need to think more critically about theories of change, why we think they would work, as well as our assumptions and biases. Two respondents pointed toward the need to keep up with research and literature in the field, especially with reflections on project evaluations

and lessons shared on what works and what does not. Moreover, several respondents thought that an instructor faces a more fundamental task of helping students form the habit of practicing curiosity, open mind, and "hunger" for learning.

*Context-specific*

Eleven responses pointed out the lack of uniformity when it comes to the learning process, and that there is not "one correct way to do it". For example, one respondent admitted: "This is not something I can easily answer. You have to look for what works in each particular context". Another respondent echoed this point by saying that different tools will work for different audiences, depending on learning styles. One respondent believed that it is best to focus on professional skill development instead of self-reflection, and three respondents noted that self-reflection should be incorporated in all aspects of learning. One respondent advised to reflect on what comes easy when teaching and what does not and added: "We cannot be perfect at teaching everything. It doesn't mean you are a bad teacher; it means you have to keep exploring". One respondent also noted: "Our work is more of an art than science. How do you teach that to someone who has not been exposed to practice?"

In addition, while reflecting on ways to incorporate reflection into practice, the respondents cited the following questions to guide the process of reflection:

*Analyzing experience and context:*

What happened today? What is happening right now?

What worked now or worked in the past? What does not or did not work?

What questions came up during this experience?

Where is the relationship broken? How do I rebuild it?

Where are the real problems? Where are the opportunities?

Where do my skills fit in? Who do I need to partner with?

How do people perceive me?

How do I impact the local community and people around me?

Whose voices are salient and whose voices are silenced? Why?

Is the social landscape changing? How should I respond to that?

Does my culture contribute to conflict? In what ways?

Is reflection a part of my culture?

How do other practitioners approach the same or similar issues?

What could be done differently?

What would my mentor do in this situation?

How would I do it next time?

*Self-examination:*

What is in my power to change? What am I able to do?

Am I asking the right questions?

Am I communicating clearly?

How do I frame issues? What language do I use?

What is my theory of change? Why?

Does my work reflect my espoused theory?

What is expected of me in this situation?

What do I need to work on?

What am I looking for in colleagues? Who do I prefer to work with?

What kind of reward am I looking for?

What are my resources? How do I maximize them?

What are my strengths and weaknesses?

What am I most efficient at?

What is my conflict engagement style?

How do I respond to crisis?

Are my skills adequate?

What is my vision?

What are my goals?

What is my purpose here?

What is my intention?

What are my commitments?

What are my theoretical lenses?

What are my assumptions and biases?

What are my blind spots?

Where do I stand in my culture in terms of power and privilege? What do I represent?

What are my needs?

What are my fears?

Is my ego in check?

Do I need to apologize for anything?

Am I willing to hear criticism? Which criticism do I like the least? Why?

What was the impact of this experience on me?

Why did I feel this way? What triggered me?

What does my reaction or behavior say about me?

Where is my anger coming from? Is this emotion legitimate?

Who are my "others" that I tend to avoid?

What is the state of my mind, spirit, and body?

How does my work impact me personally?

Am I prepared to work with emotions?

Do I have the skills to maintain my well-being?

Am I living a balanced life?

What are my good and bad habits?

Am I evolving? In what ways?

Am I doing the right thing for the right reason and at the right time?

What are my values and beliefs? What do I stand for?

Is my work in alignment with my values? Does it feel right?

What does it mean to be a decent human being? Do I embody those qualities?

What do I invest my time in? Is it a wise investment?

What do I want to do with my life? Am I happy doing this work?

Am I whole? Is my work in alignment with who I am?

Why am I in this field? What do I have to offer?

How do I reflect?

**Challenges associated with engaging in self-reflection**

While defining the concept and practice of reflection, the theme of challenges associated with it emerged, which includes the following subthemes: negative side effects, resistance to the practice of reflection, absence of environmental support, time commitment, and self-awareness.

*Negative side effects*

Thirty-nine responses clustered around negative side effects of engaging in self-reflection. Among these, twenty-one responses associated self-reflection with painful or unpleasant experience. In fact, several respondents believed that self-reflection, although necessary for "moving toward integrity" and "reinventing myself", can also be "a painful journey" and "a dive into darkness". One respondent believed that because self-reflection is "scary" and "painful", we tend to avoid it, and another respondent thought that reflecting on negative feedback can be upsetting because "we are socialized to be right", while self-reflection assumes that we have flaws and have to continuously improve upon them. Another respondent also said that "people might resist self-reflection because they like to see themselves in a positive light, which might be hard to maintain when reflecting". Similarly, one respondent said that she did not enjoy making "unpleasant discoveries" about herself. While several respondents noted that self-reflection is "painful, but necessary" and is

“a growing pain”, eleven respondents noted that it can have “paralyzing”, “corrosive”, “debilitating”, “threatening” effects, or lead to “inertia”. One of them, for example, believed that “people who don’t seem to be reflective are either afraid to reflect or don’t know how to do it”. Several respondents also noted that self-reflection is more “painful” when a practitioner has low self-confidence, especially in the early career stages, and one respondent said that self-reflection tended to undermine her self-confidence throughout her career. One respondent said that the only downside to doing self-reflection is having genuine regrets, while not being able to do anything about it. Another respondent said that self-reflection is avoided because it requires “lowering the guard”, which makes us vulnerable. Similarly, one respondent noted the potential for trauma while reflecting: “I am catching very traumatic stories that will never leave my head. Some of them can motivate me and others may be harmful. I have to be careful about the effects of secondary trauma”. One respondent also noted that engaging in deep reflection may lead to an “existential crisis” and added that we have to prioritize immediate concerns and leave bigger questions for later. Two respondents also added that self-reflection may lead to a “crash of lofty expectations” and “becoming frustrated”, which both of them avoided by lowering their expectations and focusing on what was realistic to achieve. One respondent also noted that self-reflection may put personal and professional relationships at risk, while another one said that it has the potential to save them. Two more respondents observed that negative side effects of reflection amplify for psychologically unstable, especially practitioners with unhealed or ongoing trauma, and one of them noted that

many practitioners enter the field of peacebuilding due to their previous encounters with conflict and thus have to be acutely aware of what, if anything, still holds power over them.

Another twelve respondents admitted difficulties in directing and managing the process of reflection. Some respondents noted the danger of "overthinking everything", "slipping into aimless rumination", "getting stuck", or "dwelling on the negatives". One respondent said for example that she spends "too much time pondering" and "playing out different scenarios". Another respondent said that he tends to question whether he could have done something differently but admitted that he would still choose to overthink rather than "blast through the day without any reflection". Two respondents also said that unregulated reflection may distract us from work, and one of them noted: "My work is not about me… getting carried away with reflection is a betrayal of the very reason I am there". In fact, one respondent said that "our profession does not require a lot of self-reflection", to begin with. Similarly, another four respondents admitted that self-reflection may slip into narcissism, if an unsuspecting practitioner becomes smitten by the laurels of an expert and assumes that previous successes were a sign of future ones. Three other respondents drew attention to the opposite habit that practitioners in our field are prone to – "martyrdom", when practitioners are consumed with their work "to the point of self-effacement". In fact, several practitioners pointed out that, while driven by compassion and care for others, paradoxically, practitioners are often not skilled at setting boundaries and forget to maintain basic self-care. Several respondents also

noted the importance of learning how to "let go", when we are preoccupied with the demands of our own ego, what others think, the need to control, and our imperfections, to name a few. As one respondent noted, "I cannot make everyone happy; if I do, it means I am doing something wrong". Two other respondents noted the relief of letting go of the desire to be in charge of what is beyond their control. One of them said: "When I try to control something, I find myself worrying even more. So I have to come up with practical things, so that I do not overwhelm myself". Two respondents also said that it is liberating to feel "less than perfect". One respondent believed that one can choose what to leave in the past and what to bring into the present, and another respondent said that it helps to "hold on to ideas lightly", so that we are not frustrated when things do not go as planned.

Four respondents drew attention to the fact that self-reflection can be misused. One respondent, for example, observed: "Some folks turn it into a self-congratulatory exercise" and added that becoming less critical of our agenda and reasoning reinforces ineffective habitual ways of engaging in practice. Moreover, reflecting in a group setting can "stifle innovation" and "reinforce self-doubt" depending on power dynamics at play, which takes place in academia as well, when "professors shut students down". Two other respondents also stressed the importance of paying attention to the distribution of power in any given relationship or organization. Both of them found it difficult to accept feedback from those in a position of power, and one of them acknowledged the rule not to share anything of personal nature with colleagues. In addition, one respondent observed that self-

reflection may inadvertently lead to arrogance or complacency when practitioners being to think that they have "figured it all out".

Two respondents believed that there are no negative side effects of engaging in self-reflection, and one of them added: "I see no downsides to self-reflection whatsoever, but don't take too long to do it".

*Resistance to the practice of reflection*

Twenty-three responses noted that that the practice of self-reflection is often resisted. These respondents noted that most people resist it for a variety reasons, including the lack of clarity on the nature and methodology of reflection, cognitive maturity, honesty, courage, external support, or methodology, to name a few. As some respondents believed, practitioners "may not be sold on the benefits" of reflection and instead view it as a "waste of time". One respondent said that in cases when a practitioner is pressured to act immediately, taking the time to reflect may be perceived as "inaction", and added that it is critical to practice moments of deep reflection before proceeding to act. Another respondent noted the lack of appreciation for the need to develop this skill, because it is often assumed by some people that they can get by relying only on sharp analytical skills. In addition, several respondents viewed the lack of transparency and authenticity as barriers to benefiting from the practice of reflection. One respondent, for example, admitted the difficulties of acknowledging mistakes for practitioners in the relatively new field of conflict analysis and resolution, striving for credibility and recognition, and added that we are "allergic" to openly admitting that things did not go well - something that

would be unacceptable in the medical field, for example. Another respondent also said that we, as a professional community, have to learn to view *failure* as an opportunity to benefit from by reflecting together, as opposed to hiding it. Another respondent noted that opening up about our mistakes and weaknesses requires lowering our guards, while the competition in the field requires putting up a façade of "a competent expert". Several respondents noted the power of habit as an impediment to exploring new ways of learning. One respondent, for example, said that "we tend to stick with what we know", while another one said that "it is much easier to go through the day and sort of forget to reflect". Other respondents also viewed the habit of resorting to simplistic explanations and labeling as a hindrance to maximizing the benefits of reflection. Moreover, some respondents drew attention to the lack of understanding of the nature and methodology of self-reflection. One respondent, for example, said that it is "hard to put it into words". Another respondent believed that the reason self-reflection had enjoyed little visibility is because our field had traditionally been dominated by males who may view reflection as lacking theory or methodology, thus making it hard to measure and evaluate it. Moreover, one respondent believed that the practice of reflection suggests a set of guiding principles rather than a roadmap or a manual.

*Absence of environmental support*

Twenty-two respondents noted the need for environmental support and external encouragement when it comes to forming the habit of self-reflection. One respondent said that self-reflection depends "a great deal on the types of

relationships we are a part of", while drawing attention to the impact of organizational culture on the practitioner. According to several respondents, self-reflection is not taught, as it is often assumed that everyone is well-equipped with qualities and skills needed in order to reflect effectively. One respondent believed that over time training in self-reflection might get better, but at the moment, there is no understanding that not everybody can withstand the rigor of inner work of reflection and that training in self-care has to accompany it. Similarly, one respondent believed that the value of reflection is not recognized in his native culture in general. One respondent observed that because of the lack of training in positive reflection, we naturally gravitate toward "beating ourselves up" when engaging in it. Four respondents said that we have more opportunities for professional than personal feedback through employers, colleagues, group or teamwork, and other types of formal or informal reflection formats. Similarly, three respondents said that it is more challenging to reflect on our own, given how difficult it is to see ourselves objectively. Moreover, four respondents said that self-reflection requires both, personal effort and organizational culture of reflection, and two respondents said that their workplaces lack such "safe spaces" to exchange experience, because there are no institutional requirements to reinforced reflection, as in other professions, according to one of them. As a result, the practice of reflection largely depends on individual initiative and self-discipline. Two respondents also noted that because practitioners often have no support system when working in the field, self-reflection may be more

challenging than beneficial, in which case one may not have the "luxury" to reflect in the field.

*Time commitment*

Fourteen respondents noted the challenge of finding the time to reflect and believed that self-reflection has to be scheduled on a regular basis. One respondent noted that "knowledge dissipates if we don't take the time to reflect" and recalled times when his colleagues dismissed the need to engage in reflection because they did not have the time for it. Another respondent believed that most practitioners in the field already have a reflective mindset but need reminders to set aside some time for reflection. In addition, nine respondents believed that it takes time to develop the habit of reflection. One of them, for example, acknowledged that learning to reflect may feel unnatural in the beginning, just like learning any other skill, and likened it to learning how to drive, when a novice routinely shifts attention in lockstep to look ahead, in the mirrors, at the gauges – until driving becomes automatic over time.

*Self-awareness*

Ten responses pointed out the lack of self-awareness when reflecting on their history and habit of reflection. One practitioner noted that we "can miss a lot even if we are self-aware", and another one noted that even in cases when we "learn to say all the right things", it does not necessarily lead to authentic changes in behavior. Similarly, another respondent noted the importance of being reflective about our unconscious bias and personal background, which may lead to "projecting". One respondent also said that some practitioners may have a hard time doing their work

if they are unaware of why they are doing it. Similarly, another practitioner said that we often enter the profession blindly, without the awareness of how dangerous what we do is, what we are driven by, or how much social and psychological support we need. Another respondent admitted that sometimes he cannot figure out why he feels certain emotions, in addition to not being good at dealing with them. Two respondents also said that they were not self-aware for the most part of their lives, with one of them recalling that a serious brain injury presented a serious challenge and the need to understand her perception and cognitive processes. Similarly, two respondents noted that some people seek advice or satisfaction elsewhere instead of listening within, because they lack self-awareness, agency, and a sense of direction.

**Self-care tools to mitigate the challenges of reflection**

In addition, when respondents were asked to describe ways to mitigate the challenges of reflection, the following subthemes emerged: focus on inner work, hobby, body work, contemplative practices, relationships, spiritual and religious traditions, the benefits of learning from other fields, context-specific nature, holistic approach, and professional requirement.

*Inner work*

One hundred and six responses grouped around the theme of inner work. Thirty-two of them suggested that self-care begins with self-awareness, but far too often, as two respondents observed, we tend to “fetishize productivity” and “staying

busy", often under the influence of "the internal pusher", which leads to failing to "honor our mental and physical health", and one respondent believed that well-being begins with setting the intention to discover what our needs are. Two respondents believed that practitioners, before going into the field, have to understand psychological costs associated with their line of work and design a self-care plan. Two other respondents noted that those of us who are more reflective and empathic are in need of self-care the most, and one of them posed a question: "How can I make this work sustainable?" Another respondent posed similar questions: "How do I deal with pain? What keeps me healthy?" Three respondents believed that it is important for practitioners to examine whether they live a balanced life, and one of them said: "I don't do it enough, but at least I am aware of the need to take care of myself". Two respondents reminded that there is virtually no limit to the demand, while there is a limit to how much we can handle, and one of them added: "This is when I need to pause. We all have different thresholds, and it is important to know where mine is. This part is often hard to figure out. But if I can't take care of myself, I can't help others either". Several respondents suggested to watch out for symptoms of being traumatized, trace sources of anxiety, and ask questions, such as: "Where is the tension coming from?" Three respondents said that it is easy to miss the signs of trauma and "slip into the mode of ignoring it", and one of them noted: "If I say on a regular basis that I don't have enough time to take care of myself, that's a warning sign". Moreover, one respondent, likened trauma to getting sick, when it is easy to miss the early signs of sickness, and another respondent believed that if we do not

pay attention early on, we will end up paying a higher price later, when it eventually catches up. One respondent also noted that it took him years to learn how to recognize the first signs of depression, another one pointed out that just knowing that we are experiencing effects of trauma can be helpful, one respondent added that "a compassion fatigue" is something to look out for, one respondent noted that he learned that resorting to external remedies may "dull the pain" but would not address the root cause of the problem, and one respondent recognized the mutual reinforcement of negative thoughts and emotions. In addition, one respondent noted the need to examine our work environment and ask: "How does my work impact me? Am I working in a healthy environment? And if the answer is "no", is it time to change that?" Another respondent said that, in addition to being aware of the importance of self-care, it is also important to spread the awareness about it among others, from sharing practical self-care tools and literature on the effects of trauma [185] to encouraging to attend therapy if someone displays the signs of trauma. Moreover, several respondents recommended to pay close attention to personal upbringing and history of early life trauma as they are often linked to certain conflict engagement styles and destructive behavioral and cognitive patterns later in life. Some of them believed that people tend to be drawn to our field because of their previous encounters with conflicts, and some acknowledged that they themselves had

[185] Among some of the authors suggested were Caroline Yoder, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, Bessel van der Kolk, Richard Rohr, and James O'Dea.

experienced a history of neglect and abuse as children and adults, which in some cases led to a distorted self-image and low self-esteem. One respondent believed that some people are brought up in healthy families and some are "damaged" in the process of upbringing and are unaware of the need and ways to heal. One respondent said that, after all, trauma was educational and had a positive impact on him, another respondent did not believe that trauma ever goes away and requires constant work, and one respondent raised the question of whether working with conflicts is a fitting professional choice for someone in need of healing.

Thirty-one responses grouped around work with emotions and their role in maintaining self-care. Several of them suggested that difficult emotions are experienced differently by different people, and virtually all respondents alluded to the need to understand and process them, instead of suppressing. One respondent added that it is helpful to "normalize difficult emotions" and acknowledge that it is a part of what we do, and one respondent said that it is helpful to "face emotions head on, talk about them, step into it, and feel it". Two respondents said that it is important to know what triggers us and what to do about it by asking: "Why am I feeling this way? What is the source? Is it a legitimate emotion?" One respondent viewed a difficult emotion as an invitation to examine his own perception and noted that if the perception of experience changes, so does the experience itself. One respondent said that he deals with difficult emotions with honesty and self-love and added that he begins by acknowledging what he feels, that he has the right to feel this way, and then, similarly to two other respondents, makes sure to watch the boundaries with other

people when he expresses the emotion: “It is OK to experience the emotion. What matters is what I do with it. I have to sit with it, talk to people who are close to me”. Similarly, another respondent said that he took a training to help him articulate his emotions and be able to express them in a nonviolent way. One respondent also noted: “I negotiate with my emotions and pay attention to how I express them. Often times the response is automatic, but I try to remind myself that I don’t have to react this way” and added that he imagines the type of relationship he would like to build when a crafting response. One respondent pointed out that “emotions come in bundles” and that it is important to learn to untangle them, and another respondent said that it is helpful to compartmentalize anger, so that it does not affect practice. Another respondent distinguished strategies for dealing with difficult emotions in ourselves and in others. The former requires self-awareness and self-exploration, and the latter requires being present, still, receptive, and compassionate. She went on to add: “Be still when there are eruptions, put your arms around them, create a safe space…I have to be present and keep myself very clean. I have to recognize that it is not about me and stay with my compassion and connection…It is about becoming peace”.

Moreover, seventeen respondents viewed pain and struggle as catalysts of personal and professional growth. One of them noted, for example, that, unless we “hit the rock bottom”, we might not discover what needs to change in our lives and added: “I don’t wish that upon anyone, but it is almost necessary”. Another respondent agreed by saying: “I don’t think that people grow except through pain”,

and one respondent, while agreeing that pain is a catalyst of growth, was "not entirely convinced that it is necessary". Two respondents distinguished between different gradations of pain that we encounter over lifetime, from something that may heal fairly quickly to the type of pain that "strips away our illusions" and "shatters" us. One respondent said: "For several years I recognized I was hurting and there wasn't a quick fix…Pain of certain kind never disappears completely, but at least I don't feel shattered now". Similarly, another respondent said: "My experiences of trauma never goes away completely. It gets less painful over time, but it requires constant engagement and awareness. It becomes easier to manage". Several respondents observed that it is important to "give space to pain". One of them said: "When something difficult happens, I work on accepting that it hurts, give space to emotions instead of identifying with them, allow myself to experience it all, trust that it will get better, and remember to be kind to myself". Another respondent also noted: "Trauma doesn't stick to me as easily anymore, because I accepted that this is my journey…When I catch myself being triggered now, I don't need to know why, I wouldn't know if I got it right. So I try to just experience what I am feeling, give space to it, observe it, and notice what needs to heal". One respondent noted: "It is the fear of pain that trips people up. We are taught that negative emotions are bad, and that we shouldn't go there. We wall them off, and that creates only more pain…Before I heal, I need to accept what I feel". Two respondents pointed out that sadness can be our guide that invites us to "stop and listen to what is happening inside". One of them noted: "In the past I would seek pleasure to dull the pain. But I've learned not to run

from it and instead treat is as a gift" and added: "I still weather the storms, but I am more aware that I can cause them myself…People often think that pain is what separates them from God, but I think it does the opposite". Another respondent pointed out that our framing matters: "Instead of saying "I'm deeply wounded", I can say "I know that pain is necessary to learn" and added: "Since my youth, I've had several iterations of myself. Each time I went through a period of darkness gradually moving toward the light, I've built up an awareness that life is more of an oscillation than a resting place". Two respondents also believed that the experience of being deeply hurt is what allows us to be more empathetic than those who have not experienced it, and one respondent's perspective was informed by King's and Mandela's examples of overcoming extreme human suffering. Two respondents said that it is important to be aware of our own thresholds for pain, and one of them explained: "We have to learn to discern whether it's time to let go or whether we can stay with it". One respondent also noted: "I think anger is a natural reaction to injustice. It covers up my sorrow and pain, it is a buffer. But I have to embrace it and say: "Can I just be present to that suffering?" It allows me to be there for others instead of projecting my anger…How I frame the challenge is a part of the healing process, and I choose to frame it as a gift".

Twenty-one responses drew attention to the need to cultivate positive regard for the self through being attentive, appreciative, kind, accepting, and forgiving toward ourselves. For example, two respondents said that there is no need to punish, but rather to educate ourselves about choices we have and learn not to repeat the

same mistakes again, and one respondent cautioned against "beating myself up over something I cannot change" and the need to remember that it is a part of the learning process. Another respondent said that he has to first accept himself, and only then he can feel effective and added that only when he accepts himself, he also feels accepted by others. One respondent said that we have to balance honesty with being kind to ourselves. Another respondent advised to "take blame only for what was in my power to change", one respondent encouraged "to go easy on yourself and remember that none of us are perfect", and one respondent reminded to value our positive qualities. Another respondent said that it is important to "give myself at least some credit for things that I did right instead of just beating myself up", and two respondents believed that it is important to learn to accept positive feedback. One respondent admitted: "There are days when I'm off, no matter what I do. I just have to embrace it, not make any decisions, let it pass, and be gentle with myself". One respondent stressed the value of being able to express self-love, as he believed that having a loving relationship with ourselves is at the heart of peace and is a reflection of how we engage with other people. For-instance, he noted the value of practicing various self-affirmations, including being able to look in the mirror and sincerely say "I love you", which he himself was not able to do for a long time, and added: "This was the hardest thing to do. I wonder what the world would be like if everyone could do that". Moreover, nine respondents believed in personal responsibility when it comes to taking care of ourselves, captured by one respondent saying: "Well-being is a choice", and another respondent noting that creating a healing environment requires

intention. Another respondent, similarly, noted: “No one teaches us this, we have to figure this out on our own. When I set the intention to discover what my needs are, the whole Universe floods me with answers…and things fall into place”. One respondent believed that “sometimes we need to give ourselves a permission to heal and take care of ourselves”, which was echoed by another respondent: “At some point I decided to stop being miserable”. He also recalled being told that he ended up in the field of peacebuilding because he had no inner peace himself and added: “So I would scribble on a piece of paper "I love myself. I have peace. I am happy. It’s OK to be happy" and put it in my wallet. I think it is important, especially for Christians, to give yourself a permission to be happy, as Buddhists do”. In addition, five respondents noted that it is important to remember that human beings are resilient by nature. Two of them believed that positive attitude is “a big part of being resilient”, which translates into “looking for the silver lining in every situation”, and one respondent observed: “We have a far greater capacity to heal than we may think”.

Eight responses stressed the practice of letting go of things outside of our control. Some respondents framed it also as “accepting what is”, “not sweating the small stuff”, and “putting things in perspective”, with several respondents noting that we cannot control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond to adversity. Four respondents stressed the benefits of being more concerned with the present moment than the future or past. One respondent, for example, said that he does not do a lot of “archeological work, unless something comes up” and added that it is almost impossible to reconstruct the past accurately. Another respondent said

that, as we face our failures, it is helpful to remind ourselves that "things will not look so bad in a few months" and that what we do is worthwhile, while one respondent also noted: "I try not to believe too strongly in the painful pictures that the mind paints sometimes".

Seven respondents noted the impact of cultivating a sense of gratefulness on their sense of well-being, which can take the form of looking for joy in mundane every-day life experiences, recognizing beauty in the smallest gifts of life, nurturing a sense of awe and wonder, marveling at the miracle of life, or reminding ourselves "just how fortunate we are in comparison to those who have much more difficult lives". Two respondents also believed that it helps to ask: "What is the way back to myself?" and "What brings me back to my heart?".

Five respondents believed that "peace begins with us", as one respondent put it. One respondent, for example, said that "inner peace is essential for our profession", and another respondent noted that we have to "embody it, be the peace we want to see in the world". Similarly, one respondent said that in our own lives "we either contribute to peace or we do not". Several respondents also believed that the way we connect to ourselves affects the way we connect to others. One of them said, for example, that the more she works on herself, the more it connects her to others, which is impossible for someone "stuck in their wounds".

Moreover, two respondents drew attention to the benefits of practicing letting go of being judgmental. One respondent, for example, noted: "It continues to open up my heart to others, step outside of myself, and see things from someone else's

perspective. Non-judgmental awareness itself does the healing, when I am not hooked by negative emotion or thought. It gives me the choice of how to respond…But this doesn't mean that I do not get hooked. I still do, and some days I am not aware that someone else was in the driver's seat". These respondents also noted the value of practicing "detachment". For example, one of them said: "Buddhists talk about "detachment", which is often interpreted as "not-caring", but what it means is detaching from the frames of mind that are not helpful. For example, my practice allowed me to see my emotions: instead of allowing emotion to control me, I ask myself: What other choices do I have? I have to investigate why I feel this way. Can I suspend judgment for a while? It is a practice after practice, never a final destination". Another respondent, when talking about "genuine detachment", advised to look for ways not to be offended easily. For example, when encountering something that can be interpreted as offensive, one should pose a question of whether it is possible to know with certainty what someone's intent was or what was behind it.

*Hobby*

Sixty-six responses pointed out that it is important to take breaks from work and engage in activities that have nothing to do with it, which were framed as "doing anything that heals", "relaxes", "exposes myself to beauty", or "exploring my creativity". Several respondents suggested doing something new, fun, creative, or "stupid (but legal)". One respondent, for example, said that he learned to fly a plane. Another respondent said that she needs a hobby to slow her down, otherwise she is too "fired up to be effective". Eleven respondents mentioned the importance of being

out in the nature and enjoying long walks, hikes, ocean, forest, or stargazing, to name a few. Nine respondents suggested reading unrelated to work literature, poetry, and participating in book clubs. Eight respondents noted the benefits of practicing various types of sports, including running, swimming, biking, cricket, tai chi, and martial arts, among others. Five respondents stressed the benefits of listening to or playing music, another five said that it is therapeutic to explore drawing, painting, dance, crafts, or working with hands in general, and four respondents thought that film and photography help to cope with stress, with one respondent noting that movies help him relate to someone else's stories and apply those insights to his own life. Moreover, eighteen respondents noted the healing effects of being around animals, gardening, cooking, traveling, and exploring deep culture, including museums, theater, and fine arts.

*Body work*

Fifty-one responses stressed the importance of taking good care of the body. Sixteen of these respondents recommended exercising on a regular basis, and thirteen of them stressed the benefits of yoga. Another nine respondents pointed out the benefits of massage, acupuncture, progressive muscle relaxation, Reiki, emotional freedom technique, mind-body energy tools, chakra healing techniques, and other types of somatic work. Eight respondents stressed the need for a healthy diet or fasting, seven respondents stressed the immediate benefits of breathing exercises, and three respondents mentioned the benefits of healthy sleeping habits.

*Contemplative practices*

Thirty-nine responses clustered around the benefits of contemplative practices. Nineteen of them stressed the importance of practicing meditation, and two respondents said that they begin and end the day with it. Eight respondents stressed the need to practice "slowing down", "quiet time" and retreat to "quiet spaces", whether going on silence retreats or setting the time aside in our daily lives. One respondent, for example, said: "There is no formula that works for everyone, look for practice that takes you to your contemplative place", while another respondent noted that during the day he is a very public person, but after trainings he has to retreat to his private space and stay alone. Seven respondents noted the benefits of journaling. Three respondents said that they find the practice of visual techniques beneficial. One respondent, for example, practices visualizing being inside a lavender bubble or being protected by a shield, in addition to practicing the optimal distance, or setting mental boundaries between him and the outside world. Another respondent recalled visualizing his heart opening up and expanding while practicing relaxing inside in an extremely stressful situation when he feared for his life. Two respondents pointed out the benefits of steering focus toward intense tasks, such as reading, writing, or anything that requires intense focus.

*Relationships*

Thirty-six respondents believed that relationships are essential to maintaining a sense of well-being. As one of them mentioned, "it is important to keep the lines of communication open", especially when we go into the field and leave our support system behind. One respondent, for example, observed that Westerners going into

the field tend to be “thrill seekers” with high stress tolerance, yet have a hard time reaching out for help. Similarly, another respondent said that we have to maintain a healing environment through positive connection to other people and added that the most important things is not to become isolated or “bottle up” difficult emotions and be mindful of other people if we do. Several respondents said that it is important to surround ourselves with supporting and understanding community of people, including family members and colleagues who had similar experiences. One respondent recalled that he had been traumatized at different points of his life when he should have, but did not, undergone counseling. Thirteen respondents pointed out the benefits of supportive and insightful close relationships with friends, spouses, or other family members, and two respondents said that it is important to have at least one close relationship or confidant. One respondent, for example, said that he would have never succeeded without the support of his wife. Another respondent said that it is therapeutic to socialize and “break bread” with members of our communities in order to nurture a sense of belonging. In addition, one respondent warned against harming people who are close to us, given that they may not have the tools to deal with secondary trauma that we have. Three respondents said that it is important to socialize with like-minded, psychologically healthy, and insightful individuals in and outside of our profession, including those who understand trauma. Moreover, five respondents noted the benefits of “giving back” to our communities, including volunteering, being active in the community, and “doing something for others”. As one of them put it, “a sense of comfort comes from taking care of someone else”. Another

respondent stressed the benefits of mentoring youth by saying: "I am now in the third stage of my life, which is really about sharing the wisdom with others" and added that she practices that through teaching self-awareness, well-being, and mindfulness to emerging adults, including ways to connect to ourselves in order to lead more authentic and meaningful lives.

*Spiritual and religious traditions*

Twenty-four responses stressed the therapeutic benefits of exploring various practices of spiritual and religious traditions and being a part of communities that follow them. Nine respondents believed that it is important to be grounded in something "bigger than us", with one of them saying that "reflection requires a firm place to stand on"", another one noting the need to "find security in something bigger in order to feel less threatened", and one respondent noting that "reflection is balanced when we reach into spirituality". Among various traditions, these respondents said that they draw inspiration from Christianity (Catholic, Unitarian, Quaker, and Mennonite denominations), Buddhism, Daoism, Jewish rabbinic tradition, and indigenous and ancient traditions that recognize the heart as "the seed of wisdom" and believe that we are all connected to each other and the earth. Seven respondents noted the healing benefits of the contemplative Christian tradition, as it allows them to see themselves in other people, live out wholesome and balanced lives, and remain hopeful. One of them said, for example: "God is not a magic, but it can bring about healing". In addition, they also believed that it is important to engage in individual or group prayer and attend regular church meetings. One respondent, for

example, said that he attends such meetings once a week to pray for peace and justice and recognized the benefits of psychological and spiritual support of being a part of that community. In addition, several respondents noted the therapeutic benefits of confession, church singing, spiritual support groups, spiritual literature[186], fasting, among other resources available to practitioners seeking spiritual guidance. Six respondents also noted the value of contemplative tools available in Buddhist tradition, such as meditation, "clearing the mind", and practicing "genuine detachment".

*Borrow from other fields*

Twenty responses noted that practitioners would benefit from borrowing resources on self-care from other helping professions and programs, such as social work, pastoral and family counseling, nursing, neuroscience research, and medical field, among others. In addition to exploring inter-disciplinary resources on our own, these participants also recommended taking courses on self-care and well-being, exploring local well-being centers, attending therapy, when in crisis, but also when not in crisis.

*Context specific*

Nineteen responses believed that self-care is individual and should be tailored to one's needs. One respondent, for example, advised to "seek spaces of comfort and

[186] Among the authors mentioned were Richard Foster, Richard Rohr, James O'Dea, Thomas Merton, Morton Kelsey, Rabbi Nachman, and Dalai Lama, among others.

safety", whatever that means to each of us. Another respondent said: "I don't have a standard list of things to offer to someone. It will depend on what they do and what works for them". Another respondent also added that the same things that work in some cases may not work in other cases. One respondent distinguished between strategies that can be tailored to different personality traits, including being extraverted or introverted, whereby some practitioners might find it therapeutic to be alone, while others would prefer to be around people. Two other respondents also noted that sometimes they prefer to "spend time alone", "hide" watching a film or reading a book. Three respondents also distinguished between different types of self-care that one may need. Two of them said that in extreme cases of deep trauma or PTSD, it is best to ask for professional help instead of trying to manage it on our own, as opposed to stresses of daily "wear and tear". Another respondent noted: "It depends on what I am dealing with. If I am drowning, I need to socialize to pull myself out of it. If it's manageable, I try to understand my triggers and why I am reacting in this way". One respondent also noted that in her case it was difficult to recognize the symptoms of trauma because, unlike in situation of violent conflict, her trauma accumulated gradually over time. Five respondents believed that it is helpful to draw on multiple resources and traditions in order to experiment and see what works. For example, some respondents termed this as "weaving my own cosmology", "being open to multiple sources of wisdom", and "drawing on both, Western and Eastern traditions", and one respondent added that we have to ask ourselves what feels right in each particular case.

*Holistic approach*

Nine respondents noted the benefits of adopting the holistic approach to self-care, which integrates psychological and somatic tools. One of them stressed that "we can't separate different dimensions of self-care" and that we have to attend to the needs of the body, mind, and spirit. Another respondent believed that "we live in the head as much as in the body", one respondent observed the need to go through a "checklist of what my mental, physical, or spiritual needs are", and one respondent said that "taking care of the body is critical to having a healthy mind" and vice versa. Moreover, one respondent acknowledged the importance of holistic tools when working with trauma, including breathing exercises and expressing and sharing emotions, in order to release tension.

*Professional requirement*

Seven respondents acknowledged that burnouts are rampant and are a "professional hazard" and believed that training in self-care is a "professional requirement for our field", as one of them put it. As one respondent believed, "our field doesn't pay nearly enough attention to self-care" and added: "You are on your own when it comes to self-care". Another respondent, in fact, viewed the field of peacebuilding as an outgrowth of the field of social work, but, while "social workers recognize the need for self-care, we neglect it". Echoing that point, one respondent believed that self-care "should not be left up to individuals", and several respondents noted that, before engaging in practice, practitioners have to get trained on how to recognize and address the first signs of trauma, especially those who work with

survivors of trauma. One respondent believed that it is important to spread trauma awareness, share practical self-care tools and literature[187] on the effects of trauma, and encourage others to attend therapy if they displays the signs of trauma, which was mirrored by another respondent who acknowledged that it took him years to learn how to recognize the first signs of depression. Moreover, one respondent observed that "you have to give from of your abundance, not your need", which means that self-care should "come before altruism" - otherwise we become ineffective at what we do.

[187] Among the authors cited were Caroline Yoder, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, and Bessel van der Kolk, in addition to Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) training program at EMU.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As the summary of findings suggests, *reflexivity*, after a closer look, may leave one with more questions than answers, despite its seeming clarity and accessibility. As some authors point out, "attempting to understand reflexivity gives one the sense of trying to lift oneself by the bootstraps"[188]. While such attempts are often viewed as worthwhile, they generate a wide range of interpretations of what the phenomenon of reflexivity entails. This absence of coherence in conceptualizing reflexivity is clear in both, interview answers and literature review. For example, data analysis generated a wide range of themes grouped into six clusters describing the phenomenon of self-reflection as context-specific (86 responses), tasked with self-examination (76), facilitating the process of merging the personal and professional dimensions (61), offering ways to transcend the self (46), serving as a platform for professional development (45), and tying it to the concepts of mindfulness and awareness (43). In fact, the largest cluster that suggested the context-specific nature of reflection pointed out a range of properties that make it difficult, if not impossible, to think of self-reflection as a homogenous phenomenon, with twenty-three responses acknowledging the evolution in their ability to reflect over the years,

[188] Steven Bartlett and Peter Suber, *Self-Reference: Reflections on Reflexivity* (Springer, 2013), p. 6.

twenty-two responses citing situational and individual nature of it, another twenty-two responses referencing the temporal dimension of it, and nineteen responses recounting various types and sources of reflection. It is important to note that these answers suggest that some respondents, when asked to define the practice of self-reflection, described the practice of reflection instead, which may have several implications. For example, some respondents may not see the difference between the two, some may think in terms of one being closely related to another, some may see self-reflection as less deserving of attention, or a combination thereof. Moreover, the cluster of responses tying self-reflection to ways to transcend the self (46) suggests that some respondents were not able to separate the concept of reflexivity from the concept of reflective practice and critical reflection. For example, 29 responses cited the critical role of feedback in expanding the scope of self-reflection beyond introspection, so that the latter is "not just my own echo", according to one of them, while eight responses situated the self in close proximity to broader systemic issues and power dynamics. However, nine responses in this cluster did speak directly to the practice of reflexivity as something that allows them to distance from their ego by transcending "the smaller me", "traps set up by my ego", and to recognize the relatedness and "divinity" of all forms of life, among others, thus suggesting that reflexivity may be thought of as a culturally situated, often collaborative, inquiry, an indicator of maturity, and a form of spiritual practice of connecting to the self and the world on a much deeper level.

Similarly, the literature review confirmed the lack of conceptual clarity and uniformity across the vast literature on reflection and the conflation of self-reflection with the concepts of reflection, reflective practice, critical reflection, and reflexivity. Upon discovering the same pattern over the course of data collection, it became clear that the literature on self-reflection has to be examined in relationship to the abovementioned concepts. This examination began with tracing epistemological roots of the concept of reflection and examining ideas of early thinkers who laid the foundation of Western rationalist tradition, which continues to dominate the contemporary mainstream understanding of reflection. The early models of reflective practice offered by Dewey, Kolb, Boud, Keogh, and Walker, or Gibb are a case in point. Mostly cyclical and prescriptive in nature, they suggest that experience alone does not lead to effective learning unless it is followed by a phase of detailed analysis of that experience, including posing a set of questions about it, generating insights based on the answers, and incorporating them into the future course of action, thus entering the next cycle of reflection. A practitioner here is concerned with an in-depth understanding of experience in hopes that its analysis will lead to the improvement of practice, in addition to forming a habit of questioning over time, instead of merely accumulating knowledge. While these models can be credited for drawing attention to the value of reflecting on practice, the latter is the extent of their scope, thus failing to acknowledge the role of the practitioner. Virtually all respondents in this study saw the value of learning from experience when describing their practice of reflection, with some of them referencing various stages characteristic for early reflective

practice models, including being confronted with questions about why something does not go as planned when encountering difficulties in practice, reflecting on that experience, debriefing with colleagues, asking questions about what worked, what did not, how it can be improved going forward, experimenting and incorporating new insights into future action, and thus engaging in a continuous process of circular reflection. Forty-five responses, for example, clustered around the theme of reflection serving as the foundation of professional growth. Twenty-one of them believed that self-reflection is rooted in experiential learning, and several of these respondents stressed that reflection has to be intentional, done not just for the sake of reflection itself or turn into an "aimless rumination", but for the purpose of translating into action, thus emphasizing the reciprocity of reflection and action – the central premise of Dewey's original idea of cyclical reflection, which was further reflected in the ten responses citing that reflection increases upon encountering difficulties and novel tasks in practice, or, as one respondent put it, "when things don't add up".

Because traditional reflective practice models do not acknowledge the prominent position of the practitioner, it was not expected to encounter conceptualizations of self-reflection framed in these terms. However, fourteen respondents did not separate the phenomenon of self-reflection from the process of reflecting on practice, with several of them believing that their work is not about them, but issues at hand, and two of them suggesting to withdraw from psycho-analytical work on the self, so that it does not unearth deeper existential issues and thus "betray" the very reason for engaging in practice. Another four respondents

believed that reflection allows to separate the self from work, whereby practice is examined as objectively as possible, regardless of practitioners' biases, feelings, or intentions, with one respondent noting that it is a way "to separate my feelings and emotions from mistakes I've made", thus shifting the attention from the self onto practice and alluding to the experiential model offered by Boud, Keogh, and Walker, which was among the first to point out the need to identify and eliminate the influence of negative emotions on the process of reflection. Moreover, one respondent believed that "any mature person would have no trouble doing self-analysis", but then spoke exclusively in terms of traditional reflective practice, rather than the process of reflexivity, thus implying the conflation of the two. In addition, five respondents, when asked to define the practice of self-reflection, tied the practice of reflection primarily to the nature and challenges of their work, while also acknowledging their own impact on practice. One of them, for example, admitted that the term "self-reflection" does not resonate with him and proceeded to frame the practice of reflection in terms of traditional reflective practice, such as to understand the nature of conflict and raise awareness of its impact among those involved in it. Another interviewee stated that he does not view himself as "reflexive", but later on acknowledged the significance of the role of the practitioner and went on to demonstrate that he engages in a lot more reflexivity than he admitted initially, thus drawing attention to the need to explore the reasons why practitioners may not be able or willing to acknowledge the type and amount of reflection they engage in.

It is critical to note the influence of perhaps the most influential model of reflective practice offered by Dewey's scholar Donald Schön, who, while drawing on Dewey's model of experiential learning, departed from it in significant ways. For example, while Schön's concept of *reflection-on-action* may be viewed as a direct descendant of Dewey's model of cyclical reflection, his concepts of *knowing-in-action* and *reflection-in-action* have introduced the temporal and intuitive dimensions into the discourse on experiential learning. Although only three respondents actually ascribed the concepts of reflection in and on action to Schön, one can draw parallels between reflections on past experiences of virtually all respondents and the concept of *reflection-on-action,* which implies reflecting on experience either immediately right after individually or collectively ("a hot wash", as one respondent called it), or "taking a step back", as another respondent put it, to closely examine that experience and draw insights on it at a later point. In addition, as it was noted earlier, twenty-one responses viewed the practice of reflection as inseparable from the concept of experiential learning, implying that the more we practice and reflect on it, the more our skills, including that of reflection, improve, and ten respondents pointed out that *reflection-on-action* can be also activated by triggers or challenges associated with encountering difficulties or novelties in practice. However, relating the concept of *reflection-in-action* to the data presents a more challenging task, given that it does not translate seamlessly into terms used by respondents, some of which are obscure in meaning. One of such terms is *mindfulness*, which can be interpreted in several ways, including being mindful in a sense of being alert and aware in the present moment

and in a sense of being in a contemplative state that requires deeper level of inner work. While the latter obviously would not be applicable here, the former matches some of the characteristics of *reflection-in-action*. Thus, twenty-nine respondents connected self-reflection to the ability to be present, mindful, or aware, which was framed in various terms, including "mindfulness in action", "a matrix of tools" to increase awareness, "a dance between reflection and action", "thinking on our feet", "reflecting on the go", and "feeling our way through", to name a few. Moreover, Schön's splitting of temporal vectors into the past and present was also reflected in the twelve responses that pointed out the temporal nature of reflection, with three of them noting that they spend more time in the present than the past, and the rest consulting primarily the past experience to inform their present practice. In addition, five of these responses stressed the anticipatory vector of reflection aimed at future action, or *reflection-for-action,* which, as Schön's critics point out, is missing in his approach.

Furthermore, Schön's collaboration with Argyris went beyond problem-solving into the realm of critical reflection theories, with the latter often approached as either an inquiry into higher-order cognitive processes or a critical sociocultural examination. While Argyris' concepts of *single-loop* and *double-loop learning* were not identified in data collected, it is clear that some responses were alluding to his *reflexive loop* and *generic anti-learning pattern*[189], which also resonate with Mezirow's

[189] Argyris, "Double-Loop Learning, Teaching, and Research", p. 206.

transformative learning, given that both approaches emphasize the need to examine and correct individuals' underlying assumptions and beliefs, which may have resulted in distorted views of reality or the self. Argyris, for example, believed that practitioners who claim to practice double-loop learning but are unable to actually do it can overcome it only when the root causes of their defensive reasoning are addressed, while Mezirow suggested that people are often held back by their own self-limiting beliefs, thus pointing out that deep learning begins with self-examination[190]. Echoing this point, eight respondents viewed self-reflection as a medium of meta-cognition, generating insights into what, why, and how they think. One of them viewed self-reflection as a way to "examine our consciousness in an attempt to develop it", and another one observed: "How I see the world affects how I engage with it". Moreover, one respondent believed that the concept of self-reflection has "a philosophical connotation", as it allows to gauge the impact of his perception on how reality is conceptualized and poses such questions as "What is reality?" and "How do I construct it?" – a point mirrored by another respondent who stressed a sense of agency and responsibility in constructing stories that interpret our life experiences. Similarly, two respondents believed that it is important to examine our theory of change and assumptions that go along with it. It is also of relevance to note Mezirow's emphasis on the self-directed aspect of motivated adult learners, the most significant indicator of which is not so much the skill of problem-solving so prevalent

190 Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning,* p. 139.

in reflective practice models, as that of problem-posing[191]. Thus, eighteen responses emphasized the drive to constantly search for ways to improve and position ourselves as "lifelong learners" and "students", even when we teach or assist others. This commitment to grow was framed as being "hungry for it", "driven by curiosity", "mature enough" to engage in the process of reflection, and "yearning to become the best version of myself". Moreover, several respondents alluded to the skill of posing the right questions, one of whom in fact asked: "Am I asking the right questions?", when reflecting on how he engages in practice. Two other respondents also noted that having good technical skills does not mean that we are asking the right questions. "We might be good at negotiating peace agreements, but most of them fail, so having good negotiation skills is not enough apparently", one of them added.

In addition, a range of authors pointed out the role of feedback in learning. Brookfield, for example, suggested the use of four complementary lenses to examine the practitioner's own autobiography and growth as a learner, feedback from our learners or those we work with, our colleagues' experiences, and theoretical literature that may help us identify general elements of what we may think are idiosyncratic experiences[192]. To mirror the first point, twenty-three respondents noted the evolution in their reflection and learning skills over time, thirteen of whom believed that reflexivity is a byproduct of the natural process of accumulating life experience. One respondent, for example, believed that "you have to come from a

[191] Raelin, "Public Reflection," p. 18.
[192] Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, p. 25.

place of maturity", which comes later in life, one respondent said that "there are no short-cuts to wisdom", another one noted that a practitioner often arrives at a state of emotional clarity and cognitive maturity upon "reaching the forties", and two respondents observed that new stages of life trigger "moments of self-awareness" and new insights. Another respondent noted: "They say it's harder to change as we age. I'd like to believe the opposite. The more we understand as we age, the more tools we have access to", thus echoing Mezirow's model of transformative learning. Moreover, the trend of tracing personal transformations over time in respondents' biographies and the belief that "there are no short-cuts to wisdom" may imply that, even though the skills of reflection and learning develop when they are self-directed and intentional, their mastery might be hard to accomplish until a learner arrives at a more mature state, often at the expense of learning on past mistakes. Two other lenses of examination suggested by Brookfield – feedback from our learners or those we work with and from our colleagues – were also reflected in data. For example, twenty-nine responses pointed out the critical role of external feedback in expanding the scope of self-reflection beyond introspection so that it does not become "my own echo", even though several respondents suggested that there are a lot more opportunities for professional rather than personal feedback. Because it is difficult to see and examine the self objectively, these respondents believed that it is essential to have an openness to critical feedback and "being wrong", to ask for feedback even years after performing the same tasks, and to learn how to handle negative feedback and challenges that come with that. It is worth noting that several respondents

admitted to being defensive and sensitive to criticism early in their careers, but became more receptive to it over the years upon accumulating professional experience, with several respondents suggesting that it might be detrimental to expose a novice to negative criticism too early on in one's career. On other hand, one respondent, upon establishing himself in the field, noticed that he began to receive less critical feedback and found it difficult to grow professionally because of that, especially when working alone. In addition, several respondents believed that it is important to be assertive and "put things in perspective" when incorporating feedback, while keeping the source of it and the broader picture in mind. Finally, Brookfield's fourth source of learning – scholarship – was echoed by two respondents who believed that it is important to keep up with the latest research in the field and explore resources that examine experiences they can relate to.

As it was noted earlier, besides being viewed as a mechanism of meta-cognition, critical reflection is often framed as a critical sociocultural inquiry, especially when reflection is blended with critical, postmodern, or feminist theoretical strands. For example, Reynolds, Habermas, Brookfield, Hatton, and Smith, among others, pointed out some of the salient features of critical reflection, such as social, rather than individual, focus, analysis of power relations, questioning underlying assumptions, including moral and ethical ones, and the pursuit of emancipation. Here, critically reflective practitioners acknowledge that, since the process of knowledge production, the practice, and the practitioner herself cannot be thought of outside of the influence of their cultures, they have to "creep underneath"

their habitual individual and collective lenses in order to examine such influence[193]. Ten responses alluded to this type of reflection. For example, one respondent highlighted the value of paying attention to "whose voices are heard" and which narratives are salient when trying to understand the needs of people in conflict. Some of these respondents also reflected on how their gender, race, and status are perceived by various groups. Three respondents, for example, acknowledged privileges that come with being white Western males. One of these respondents recalled that, when working in Africa, he is perceived as "a savior" regardless of whether he deserves it and added that his male privilege usually earns him more credit than his female colleagues get for the same effort. Two respondents also acknowledged that they have "a lot of power" when they enter the classroom, whether domestically or abroad. Two other respondents raised the importance of practicing "political" and "critical" forms of reflection and believed that practitioners are implicated in power relations, especially when they come from privileged backgrounds or a culture that "promotes violence", regardless of who they might be as individuals. It should be noted that, while all ten respondents acknowledged power dynamics that affect their work, only three of these interviewees defined their primary mode of reflection in terms of critical reflection, rather than reflexivity, thus shifting the emphasis away from the practitioner to the broader systemic issues.

[193] White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care*, p. 50.

While emphasizing the outward, rather than the inward, aspect brings critical reflection closer to traditional reflection models, it can also overlap with the concept of reflexivity when the latter is framed as a mechanism mediating between the self and social structures. Giddens, for example, while not distinguishing between reflection and reflexivity, drew attention to the extension of social reflexivity associated with the rapid development of the dynamic modern *risk society*, preoccupied more with the future rather than the past in order to anticipate and mitigate possible risks. Engaging in a continuous process of change and reflection has several implications, one being that the onset of the risk society is weakening traditional social structures and is thus gradually substituting traditional action with reflexive action, whereby modern agents are now pressured to become more reflexive in a globalized, or, as Giddens put it, "runaway world", as opposed to the elitist approach to reflexivity, whereby only the chosen few were deemed as well-equipped to engage in it[194]. While the future dimension of reflection, or reflection-for-action, was discussed above, the unprecedented scale and rate of social change and the increase in individual reflexivity replacing social structures merit attention. For example, one respondent believed that we live in times when humanity develops a lot faster than ever before in our history, when reflexivity becomes more of a necessity than a luxury. Echoing the point on individual reflexivity taking over tradition and social structures, several respondents observed that reflexivity is gaining recognition

[194] Matthew Geiger, "Worldview Formation, Reflexivity, and Personhood: Their Essential Connectivity in Thick Perspective", *Religious Education* 112, no. 5 (2017), p. 512.

and framed it as "a professional requirement for our field", a way to "develop its intellectual capital" and "build up our field", and "the engine of my work", to name a few, with one respondent adding: "Self-reflection doesn't seem to have currency now, but twenty years from now it will be at the heart of everything". One respondent also observed that in cases when a practitioner is pressured to act immediately, taking the time to reflect may be perceived as "inaction", which implies the need to understand the widespread resistance to taking the time to reflect and the need to approach the process of reflection not just as something that accompanies past, present, or future action, but also as a *reflection-as-action*. However, while forecasting the predominance of reflexive over traditional action, some authors believe that a decrease in traditional action does not automatically lead to an increase in reflexivity[195]. This point was echoed by eight respondents who admitted that the propensity for reflexivity is unevenly distributed, observing that some people are not reflexive, while others may struggle with it due to lacking self-awareness and maturity, sensitivity to criticism, poor abstract reasoning and time management skills, and the lack of guidance, among others. At the same time, nine respondents believed that everyone is capable of developing the habit and skill of reflection with some guidance and structure, and two of them noted that people drawn to this field are already reflexive. Moreover, two respondents believed that it is not so much the question of being capable of reflexivity, as the question of whether our profession

[195] Archer, "Reflexivity", p. 5.

requires it at all. For example, one of them thought that some professions require a lot more reflexivity on the part of a practitioner, but in our field "there has to be a good reason" to engage in it, while the second practitioner viewed the practice of reflexivity as detrimental to the very mission of his work.

Similarly to Giddens, Archer viewed reflexivity as an inner dialogue through which individuals consider themselves in relation to their social settings, but, unlike him, viewed the subjective phenomenon of reflexivity and objective social structures as interdependent, whereby reflexivity results in either *morphostasis*, a reproduction of a status quo, or *morphogenesis*, a configuration that introduces changes and disrupts cultural and structural continuity[196]. While none of the respondents directly referenced this claim, it can be assumed that the ten respondents concerned with power dynamics in broader and local social settings referenced above referred to morphogenesis, or the need to challenge the reproduction of a status quo by disrupting traditional action and structure. Moreover, some authors distinguish different types and sources of reflexivity. Archer, for example, suggested communicative, autonomous, meta-, and fractured types of reflexivity; Gillespie distinguished four causes of self-reflection, such as ruptures, or problems with the subject-object relation, social feedback, social conflict in the context of struggle for recognition, and internal dialogues through internalizing the perspective of another actor on the self; and Caetano arrived at five profiles of reflexivity that cross-connect

[196] Archer, *The Reflexive Imperative in Late Modernity*, p. 6.

structural conditions, contextual stimuli, and individual perspectives at different points in life. While not all of these claims were reflected in data, nineteen respondents recognized more than one particular type, source, and mode of reflection. For example, some of them noted micro, shallow, or technical, and deeper, such as general observations of the self, practice, and life, types of reflection that demand different sets of skills and tools, while others practiced reflection on various levels, including systemic, inter-group, inter-personal, and intra-personal. Several respondents noted various modes of reflection, including convergent (systematic and logical) and divergent (spontaneous and free-flowing), independent, in pairs, or as a group, accompanied by writing, speaking, or silence and supported by a variety of networks, such as vertical, horizontal, formal, informal, intra- and inter-disciplinary, and which can be done "on the go" or in retrospect and lead to healthy or unhealthy outcomes.

Among the referenced approaches to reflexivity stands out Gillespie's view. While viewing reflexivity, similarly to Giddens and Archer, as an internal dialogue, he described it as a process driven by multiple social perspectives on experience, during which one's positionality alternates between actor and observer perspectives. This double evocation allows the self to be viewed as both, self and other, which can be arrived at in two ways - through *self-mediation*, or taking on an actor perspective, and *short-circuiting*, or internalizing the perspective of another actor on the self[197]. Four

[197] Gillespie, *Becoming Other: From Social Interaction to Self-Reflection*, p. 252.

respondents in this study echoed the claim that reflexivity is an inner dialogical process. Two respondents, for example, noted that who they talk to dictates what they say and how, which translates for one of them into narrating a script that fits the choice of adopting a particular social identity in a particular social interaction, another respondent recalled posing the question of "What's next?" to himself while in the midst of practice, and one respondent developed a practice of listening to the voice inside and what it has to say without identify with it. In addition, eleven responses mirrored Gillespie's alternating positionality claim by linking self-reflection to understanding how they are viewed by others. Three respondents, for example, cited the value of actively seeking feedback on what they project and how they come across to others. Two interviewees noted that they have to address the negative image associated with being an American citizen before the actual work begins when working abroad. Two respondents believed that the process of reflection should lead to both, understanding experience and looking at it from an observer's perspective, and one of them framed it as "being a fair witness". Some of them viewed it as "the ability to step outside of myself" and "view myself objectively", and one respondent likened this ability to see himself from outside to the concept of "astral projection".

Furthermore, the ideas of agency, positionality, and temporality were also echoed in Norbert Wiley's work, which synthesized ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead into a triadic relationship of "me–I–you", whereby the dialogical self is the present "I" talking directly to the future "you" (future "I", that is)

and indirectly or reflexively to the past "me"[198]. This "omniscopic" view that allows us to see the entire range of temporality and envision past, present, and future simultaneously, also serves as an interface between internalized social structures, or Mead's "generalized other" represented by the wealth of experience of the past "me", and personal agency or potential for novel non-habitual action of the future "you". As Wiley observes, the size of the felt present is in constant fluctuation, because "we are three-legged stools, simultaneously in the past, present and future" , moving through the "stream of consciousness" with our bodies growing old and our selves in constant flux and renewal, which raises a larger issue of the elusive nature of the self, stripped of identity, substance, or essence and reduced to self-awareness, reflexivity, and inner speech, with the latter being a key process steering the self and acting as our compass throughout life. In fact, this temporal embeddedness of reflection evokes the "rolling snowball" analogy: as the snowball of reflexivity rolls down the hill, it changes shape, yet still embodies the continuity of human experience, with the present drawing on the past and projecting itself into the future[199]. While the respondents did not reference Wiley's account of reflexivity directly, ten respondents noted the temporal unity of reflection. One of them, for example, said: "I go to the past, present, and future. I'm not sure if I can separate these". Two other respondents said that it does not help to "compartmentalize" tenses, as reflecting on the past affects present and future, and vice versa. One of them added: "The present and the past are inseparable, because the

198 Archer, "Reflexivity", p. 3.
199 Elster, "The Temporal Dimension of Reflexivity", p. 281.

past always shapes my present". Another respondent said that "understanding how to live a more meaningful life now by extension will impact the future". Echoing this point, another respondent recalled a "butterfly effect", which demonstrates that the smallest changes in the past or present may have substantial implications in the future. Moreover, this respondent believed that it is hard to separate time dimensions, which are "tied up" and admitted to spending more time in the present rather than the past, unless past memories are triggered by a meaningful experience.

Of particular interest are approaches that transcend the traditional analytical interpretation of reflexivity and attempt to integrate different aspects and sources of it. While such approaches can be thought of as integrative, it is essential to note that not all of them aim at integrating all aspects of reflection, with some authors addressing primarily the mind-body divide and others incorporating virtually all aspects of human experience. Van Manen, for example, in addition to analytical and ethical levels of reflection, introduces the concept of *pathic* knowing, which, while being intuitive in nature, is an independent and valuable source of embodied knowing attuned to emotions, which does not have to be rationalized[200]. Jordi's approach claims that, given that purely analytical mode of learning excludes much of the richness and complexity of the learning process, reflection should be framed not as merely an analytical puzzle to be solved or an afterthought on experience, but as a fluid process of converging various forms of continuous feedback, such as thoughts,

[200] Hébert, "Knowing and/or Experiencing, p. 367.

memories, emotions, sensations, and feelings that have to be processed and integrated. To better understand this process, the author references contemporary neuroscience, which reveals physiological proclivities toward both, integration and dissociation of analytical, prevalent in the left hemisphere of the brain, and embodied, associated with the right hemisphere, feedback, and concludes that the calling of reflection is the integration of the two by various means, including the practice of *focusing*, or staying with an unclear or uncategorized bodily experience and witnessing how an implicit feeling generates explicit content, while aggregating deeper insights into the state of our being-in-the-world[201]. Moreover, Bleakley, while characterizing reflection as "action that necessitates the awareness of self and environment by way of body", proposes a more complex form of reflection framed as *holistic* reflexivity, which conceives of practice as "the art of participation in the world" and draws on an eclectic vision of reflection, synthesizing critical, reflexive, ethical, aesthetic, and embodied aspects of practice, while placing emphasis on the ontological aspect of it[202]. In a similar vein, Johns aims to offer a holistic vision of deeper reflection, but recognizes the limitations of prescriptive approaches, as relying on any type of model undermines the very spirit of the experiential-intuitive nature of reflective practice. In order to do so, he suggests the idea of synthesis of critical, ethical, aesthetical, reflexive, intuitive, affective, embodied, and even spiritual dimensions of practice, which merges the domains of doing and being, whereby

201 Jordi, "Reframing the Concept of Reflection," p. 191.
202 Bleakley, "From Reflective Practice to Holistic Reflexivity", p. 328.

reflection becomes not a means to an end or something to know how to perform, but rather a way of being in the world[203]. The author suggests the following steps to assist a practitioner in her skill development: beginning with basic reflection-on-experience, a novice learns to reflect on the task while in action, which, complemented by continuous feedback from her mentor, leads to the ability to reflect-within-the-moment on the task and on herself, which, in turn, builds up into a state of mindfulness, whereby a practitioner becomes a mirror that reflects clearly all that comes before it.

While the overlap in ideas suggested by various integrative approaches is evident in the data, we are presented with a challenge to isolate and translate them. For example, it should be noted that twenty-eight respondents cited the reciprocity of private and professional modes of reflection. These respondents acknowledged that they could not separate personal and professional reflection, because, as some of them framed it, their practice requires their presence as both, individuals and practitioners, and because "being a decent human being is the foundation for our profession". In addition, multiple respondents observed that they apply knowledge and skills from their professional lives to their personal lives and vice versa, and several respondents believed that personal self-awareness leads to professional self-awareness and that the opposite is true. In addition to similarities between personal and professional reflection, four respondents admitted that there are fewer

[203] Johns, *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*, p. 2.

opportunities to solicit personal feedback, while professional feedback is formalized and institutionalized and comes in a variety of forms, including evaluations. Moreover, fifteen responses mirrored the tendency toward integration of various aspects of reflection, with twelve of them emphasizing the mind-body-heart(spirit) nexus and three attending more to reconciling cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects of reflexivity. For example, for some respondents, self-reflection served as a way of "understanding and integrating all aspects of life", "getting in touch with feelings, thoughts, and spirit", "engaging my senses, heart, and mind…making it possible to connect on a deeper level", "attending to whatever comes up inside", and "learning to trust the wisdom of my heart". One respondent explained that self-reflection, among other things, involves going down the checklist of what her body-mind-spirit needs are at the moment. Similarly, one respondent described the practice of reflection as something that allows her to be "a complete human being in touch with my body, emotions, the divine in me, and a web of connections I am embedded in" and added that "it should not be compartmentalized and cannot be purely analyzed". Another respondent also noted that "it is important to develop sharp analytical tools, but they are not the highest value". One respondent observed that the practice of "deep listening" within allows "to integrate various parts of being" and "let whatever is happening inside speak for itself". Moreover, one practitioner viewed self-reflection as a tool to bridge the gap between his mind and heart and believed that the 18 inches separating them is the longest distance one will ever have to travel.

It is essential to acknowledge that, while most reflection models recognize the importance of being present and aware, only integrative approaches are explicit about embracing the contemplative aspect of reflection. The already cited by Jordi technique of *focusing* entails staying with an unclear or uncategorized bodily experience and witnessing how an implicit feeling generates explicit content. Johns, on the other hand, explicitly embraces the spiritual dimension of practice and references the practice of mindfulness in Buddhism, when we are no longer held prisoners by our habits or unexamined feelings, thoughts, and behavior. Practicing mindfulness alerts us to the slightest negative mental events and distractions, such as anger, arrogance, resentment, envy, greed, and the like. Being on the lookout for such mental distractions is one of the pillars of mindful practice that cultivates practitioners' self-awareness [204]. As the latter deepens, practitioners' professional and personal lives become imbued with greater understanding, meaning, purpose, direction, and satisfaction. To mirror this point, several respondents noted the benefits of professional self-reflection on a deeply personal level, which were framed as "integrity", authenticity", "being whole", "improved quality of life", "living a more meaningful life", "having a sense of direction", "moving toward becoming the best version of myself", and questions such as "Am I whole?" and "Does my work reflect who I am?" Moreover, while twenty-nine respondents framed self-reflection in terms of mindful awareness, sixteen respondents moved the emphasis inward to describe a

[204] Ibid. p. 4.

state that is accompanied by “slowing down”, “being still”, “being alone”, “clearing the mind”, “equanimity”, “being in a quiet observing mode”, and “deep listening inside”. One respondent added: “The physical component of calming down and taking a deep breath instills balance…helping me to see what it means to be alive” – a point echoed by another respondent who viewed self-reflection as a means of “listening to my needs … with a sense of gratitude and connectedness”. This practice of deep listening within was coupled with the habit of “suspending judgement” for five respondents, one of whom framed it as “sitting with my emotion or thought in stillness”. Another respondent described it as “catching what I am reacting to and accepting that it’s there” without attempting to analyze what is behind it. One respondent believed that deep listening within allows to authentically connect to other people and added: “I listen to what is happening inside, try to understand where it’s coming from, give space to it, and remember that I don’t have to identify with it”. Moreover, for five respondents, this quiet time alone translated into a “contemplative” or “centering” prayer.

Furthermore, Johns’ mindful practitioner operates simultaneously in two dimensions: in her mundane mindful practice she realizes the objectives posed by the project at hand, while the transcendental dimension continually poses objectives of higher order toward spiritual growth, with the former gradually moving toward the latter. The author acknowledges the role of existential and spiritual dimensions of practice and recognizes that practice demands certain personal qualities on the part of the practitioner, which cannot be reduces to technical or analytical skills. In this

way, reflection serves as the epistemological platform for the ontological transformation toward being reflective, whereby "who I am" eventually envelops "what I do". This ontological aspect of reflection was mirrored by sixteen respondents who implied the fusion of personal and professional qualities of a practitioner. In fact, several respondents recognized that they employ the same set of qualities and skills in individual and professional lives and that self-awareness in personal life leads to self-awareness in professional life and vice versa. Moreover, these respondents could not separate personal and professional qualities because they believed that it is important to bring "the whole" of who we are to what we do, to question how our work impacts us on a personal level, and to understand whether who they are is in alignment with what they do. One respondent, for example, said that he became fully aware of who he was and was not as an individual by reflecting on who he was as a practitioner. Another interviewee noted: "Self-reflection is a place to come from. It is about who we are and the state of our consciousness. It is rather a way of being in the world, being conscious of our place in it, and our impact on others. It is a delicate back-and-forth dance of balancing different aspects of being." In addition, thirty-one responses referred to a deeper level of self-inquiry delving into the practitioner's life and career and the level of satisfaction with both, her character, needs, values, beliefs, skills, personal history, state of well-being, or anything else that generates a deeper understanding of the self. Several respondents viewed it as a tool to understand the discrepancies between their interior and exterior lives and the gap between "the real and the ideal me", as one of them framed it. Another respondent also observed that

self-reflection detects our biases, “reveals us as we are and not as we wish we were”. Moreover, several respondents believed that self-reflection translates into a willingness to “descend into myself”, “do the inner work”, “ask tough questions”, “hold myself accountable”, embark on “a deeper personal journey”, “taking an honest look at myself”, and reflecting “in a responsible confident voice”. In addition, two respondents admitted that it took them a while to discover that their purpose in life was to help other people, and four respondents believed that self-reflection is about understanding different stages of life and embracing that knowledge.

Moreover, twenty-three responses noted the evolution in their reflection skills over time, thirteen of whom believed that reflexivity is a byproduct of the natural process of accumulating experience, with several of them admitting that effective reflection requires maturity, which comes later in life. In fact, seven respondents noted that with age and experience comes a sense of professional confidence that allows to be more open to feedback and criticism, and several respondents acknowledging the need to be “less certain” and “hold on to ideas lightly”, while watching for hubris and inflated ego. Four respondents admitted that their practice was no longer driven by ego needs, such as striving to establish a career or reputation, and two of them noted the shift from advancing the self to advancing the causes they were passionate about. In addition, one practitioner acknowledged that learning to reflect may feel unnatural in the beginning, just like learning any other skill, and likened it to learning how to drive, when a novice routinely shifts attention in lockstep

to look ahead, in the mirrors, at the gauges – until driving becomes automatic over time.

It should also be noted that integrative approaches, besides utilizing analytical aspect of reflection, share other features in common with traditional and critical approaches to reflection, such as ethical, aesthetic, and intuitive aspects of it. For example, mirroring Dewey's early ideas, Schön's concept of intuitive *knowing-in-action*, extends into Johns' understanding of reflective practice as experiential-intuitive in nature. And while the nature of intuitive knowing is often presumed to be understood uniformly in the literature on reflection, the literature on intuition distinguishes various types of intuitive knowing, such as inferential, affective, and holistic. Here, inferential intuitions are judgments based on automated inferences, decision-making processes that were once analytical but have become intuitive with practice, affective intuitions are judgments based primarily on emotional reactions to decision situations, and holistic intuitions are judgments based on a qualitatively non-analytical process, decisions made by integrating multiple, diverse cues into a whole that may or may not be explicit in nature[205]. In light of these distinctions, it can be also hypothesized that various conceptualizations of reflection emphasize different aspects of intuition. To draw on the example above, one may assume that Schön's intuitive *knowing-in-action* may be inferential in nature, while Johns' embodied reflection may rely primarily on the holistic intuitive insights. Similarly, the intuitive

[205] Jean Pretz et al., "Development and Validation of a New Measure of Intuition", *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* 27, no. 5 (2014), p. 454.

aspect of practice, lacking further refinement, was mirrored by six responses. For example, one practitioner acknowledged that "sometimes you know something intuitively", one respondent admitted that being reflective means "learning to trust my intuition", one respondent believed that it is important to "be in touch with the knowledge that all of us have inside", one respondent remarked that "we are way more knowledgeable than we allow ourselves to be", and another respondent believed that reflection becomes intuitive over time, "when I may not necessarily think about it, but embody it". While four of these respondents practiced both, analytical and embodied forms of reflection, the concept of intuitive knowing was not further refined, which invites further research into clarifying and conceptualizing the embodied knowing.

Moreover, both, critical and integrative approaches often highlight the ethical and aesthetic aspects of reflection. For example, Reynolds, Habermas, Banks, Brookfield, Hatton, Smith, and Cunliffe pointed out the need to question our underlying assumptions, including moral and ethical ones, while Van Manen, Bleakley, and Johns, in addition to the ethical aspect of reflection, highlighted the aesthetic aspect of it. Bleakley, in fact, cites Merleau-Ponty's critique of philosophy's traditional reliance on reflection as a "thinking about thinking", which is necessary, but not sufficient, and believes that one "must go beyond the introspective reflection…to engage with the world in a total reflective act, whereby reflection is not a detachment, a second thought, but an aesthetic and ethical act of participation in the

world, which was also termed as higher or radical reflection[206]. Thus, mirroring the ethical aspect of reflection, twelve responses admitted that self-reflection allows to continuously re-examine practitioners' values, actions, and whether they are aligned, so that they can model in life what they teach in the classroom, decide whether what they are asked for is more than they can deliver, and are "not held back by the outdated version of the self", among others. As one respondent observed, even when practitioners learn to say "all the right things", it doesn't mean that they act in accordance with professed values. Several respondents admitted that, as a result of self-reflection, they realized that they were not doing the type of work that truly mattered to them, and four respondents recalled that they had to take the time off from what they were doing at the time to understand why they were not satisfied with their careers, and, as a result, either entered the field of peacebuilding or left the "ivory tower" of academia to engage in the actual work in the field. Moreover, two respondents observed the aesthetical dimension of their work, with one of them noting that the aesthetical sense is "just as important as having a methodology, which often gets lost in the course of scientific inquiry".

As it was noted previously, the more recent approaches to reflective practice tend to acknowledge various types, sources, and modes of reflection. While some authors find it helpful to understand reflexivity in relationship to reflection and critical reflection, integrative approaches attempt to synthesize various modes of it.

[206] Bleakley, "From Reflective Practice to Holistic Reflexivity", p. 328.

For example, Finlay and Gough think of reflective practice as a continuum, on the one end of which is reflection on experience and on the other end is reflexivity, "a dynamic process of continuing self-awareness, with critical reflection somewhere in between". An alternative to this continuum is the composite lenses of reflective practice, in which reflexivity is the most immediate layer of examination, followed by the layers of reflection on practice and critical reflection. Moreover, as it was shown previously, while integrative approaches tend to synthesize various modes of reflection, they go beyond analytical aspects of reflection, such as reflection on experience, critical reflection, and analytical reflexivity, in order to integrate various modes of thought and felt types of insight into what can be broadly conceptualized as the mind-body-spirit nexus. Similarly, over the course of data analysis, it became apparent that the respondents were describing different types of reflection depicted in the table below and a corresponding composite diagram built based on it:

**Table 2. Respondents' Reflection Profiles**

| | Primarily analytical work: academia and some practice - scholarship, teaching, training, etc. - 14 | Both, intellectual and field work: scholarship, teaching, training, dialogue, mediation, etc. - 18 | Primarily field work: trauma healing, police, prison, youth work, training, facilitation, etc. - 10 | Number of Practitioners |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reflection on practice: what works and how** | 3, 8, 18, 19, 20, 23, 26, 29 | 4, 17, 28, 31, 34 | 11 | **14** |
| **Critical reflection: systemic issues/power imbalances** | 3, 6, 20 | 4, 10, 17 | 12, {16}, 24, 32, 36 | **10** |
| **Analytical self-reflection, including meta-cognition** | 1, 3, 6, 7, 14, 18, 19, [20], 22, [23], 26, 29, 38 | 5, [10], 15, 17, 21, 27, [28], 31, [34], [35], 39 | 11, [24] | **26*** |
| **Deep self-inquiry: self-inventory, past trauma, life/career direction, values** | 1, 3, 6, 7, 20, 29, 38 | 2, 4, 5, 10, 21, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 39, 42 | 11, 12, 13, 24, 25, 32, 36, 40, 41 | **31** |
| **Mindful awareness: being present, in the moment** | 7, 14, 19, 20, 23, 29, 38 | 2, 4, 5, 9, 15, 21, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37 | 12, 13, 16, 24, 25, 32, 36, 40, 41 | **29** |
| **Contemplative mindfulness: slowing down, quieting the mind, deep listening inside** | {23}, {38} | 2, 4, 27, 30, 33, 37 | 12, 13, 16, 25, 32, 36, 40, 41 | **16**** |
| **Integrative reflexivity: thought and felt (mind, body, spirit/heart)** | {23}, {26} | 2, 4, 27, 30, 33, 37, [42] | 12, 13, 16, 25, 32, 36, 40, 41 | **17***** |
| *** [] - Reference to meta-cognition** | | | | |
| **** {} - Indirect reference** | | | | |
| ***** Reference to intuitive and aesthetic, mind-spirit, mind-body-spirit insights** | | | | |

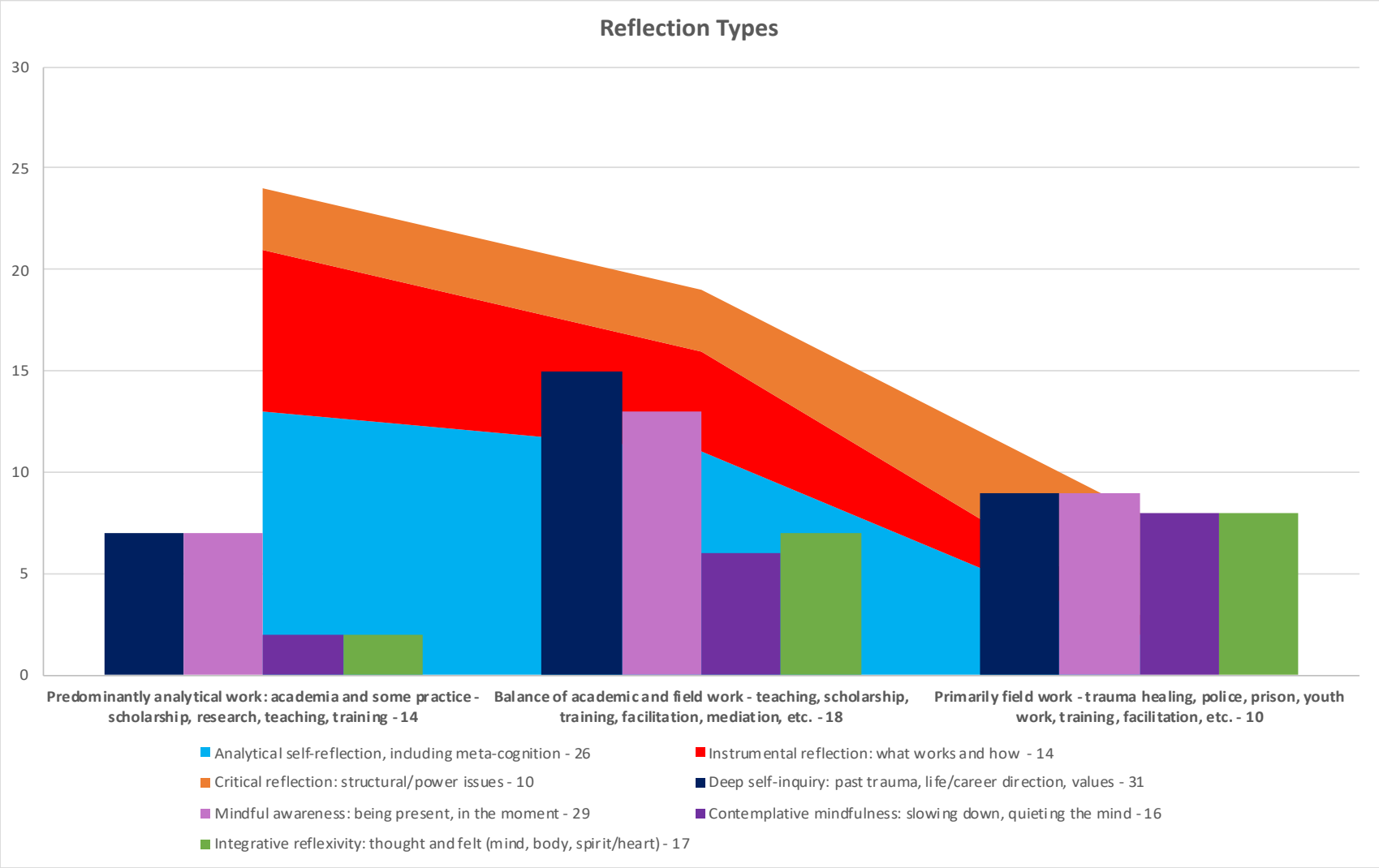


**Figure 2. Reflection Types**

As pictured above, forty-two respondents were grouped into three categories based on the type of work they did: the first category engaged predominantly in analytical work in academia and in some practice (14), the second category balanced a substantial amount of both, academic and field work (18), and the third category consisted of practitioners engaged primarily in field work (10). While none of the respondents explicitly situated reflexivity in relationship to critical and traditional reflection, forty-one of them revealed that they engage in more than one type of reflection, thus generating diverse reflection profiles based on the seven types of reflection that crystalized over the course of data analysis. These types of reflection consisted of *reflection on practice* focusing on what works and how, *critical reflection* emphasizing systemic issues and power imbalances, *analytical self-reflection* examining practitioners' skills and qualities, including meta-cognition, *deep self-inquiry* generating rich insights into the self, including past trauma, life and career direction, values, convictions, etc., *mindful awareness* focusing on being present and aware in the moment, *contemplative mindfulness* practiced through slowing down, quieting the mind, and deep listening inside, and *integrative reflexivity* converging the thought and felt insights mediated by mind, body, and spirit. It should be noted that, although these seven types of reflection have significant overlaps and could be condensed into two essential categories of analytical and embodied reflection, it appeared appropriate to generate a more detailed taxonomy of reflection in order to acknowledge nuances in responses. For example, because the same respondents in the second and third categories engaged in contemplative mindfulness and

integrative reflexivity, the former could be absorbed in the latter, if the respondents in the first category did not distinguish between the two. It should also be noted that, while the literature reviewed framed critical reflection as both, a critical sociocultural inquiry and a meta-cognition, the current study frames the former as critical reflection and the latter as part of analytical reflexivity that assumes the need for meta-cognition.

Although most responses grouped around cognitive modes of reflexivity, such as deep self-examination (31), mindful awareness (29), analytical self-reflection (26), reflection on practice (14), and critical reflection (10), a substantial number of them drew attention to the felt and integrative (15), in addition to contemplative (16) properties of reflection. Of interest here is the relationship between the nature of work and the type of reflection practiced. For example, the respondents who referenced the contemplative and integrative types of reflexivity were engaged either exclusively in field work or at least a substantial amount of practice, while cognitive modes of reflection were predominant among respondents engaged primarily in intellectual work, such as research, scholarship, teaching, and training, thus confirming the mind-body split clearly present in the literature on reflection. In fact, as some authors point out, the routine elevation of mind over nature and human body in Western thought gave the concept of reflection a "swelled head from birth"[207], while "locating the human faculty for producing reliable knowledge at the furthest

[207] Jordi, "Reframing the Concept of Reflection, p. 183.

possible remove from human corporeality"[208]. Indeed, the dream of reason to truly know and direct human experience is a dream of power over messiness and partiality of human experience[209]. While this contempt for embodied knowing continues to reign within the ivory tower of academia, it does not necessarily meet the needs of practitioners on the ground. In fact, the data suggests that respondents drawn to the analytical type of work were primarily inspired by theoretical models, ideas, "thought experiment", and the task to build up the "intellectual capital of the field", some of whom were also motivated by tying the theory and practice of building peace. While the hope was certainly for this "intellectual capital" to translate into practice and to break down the divides between scholarship and practice, the respondents in the second and third categories clearly differed in their approach to and the overall vision of the field work. For example, eight of the ten and seven of the eighteen practitioners in the third and second categories respectively adopted the integrative approach to reflecting on practice. Most of these respondents had no difficulties with separating the concepts of reflexivity and reflection on practice and practiced both, felt and thought modes of reflexivity. The integrative approach was especially evident in cases when practitioners engaged directly in the work on trauma healing, reconciliation, police, prison, youth work, and other types of practice exposing them to raw human emotions – the type of work that some of the respondents referred to as their "calling", something that intimately connects them to a "greater cause", and requires

[208] Michelson, "Usual Suspects," p. 440.
[209] Ibid. p. 451.

“a firm ground to stand on”. In addition, one practitioner pointed out what appears to lie at the core of working with deeply divisive conflicts, when he observed that he listens to insights that come from both, head and heart and “what comes from the heart ends up being the agent of change”. Concurrently, the further interviewees were removed from the exigent realities of the field work, the less prominent the role of the felt or integrative reflection was. For example, of the fourteen respondents in the first category, thirteen relied primarily on analytical forms of reflexivity, eight framed self-reflection in technical terms, only two indirectly referred to the contemplative aspect of reflection, another two alluded to the unspecified intuitive and aesthetic aspects of it, and none framed it in terms of mind-body-spirit nexus.

Moreover, the chasm between the two approaches to incorporating reflection suggests far-reaching implications that speak to the very nature of peacebuilding work and the field itself. One of such implications has to answer the question of who a peacebuilding professional is and what she can deliver – the question posed by several respondents as well. According to the respondents engaged primarily in intellectual work, for the exception of the two respondents who acknowledged the biased nature of their scholarship, a peacebuilder relies primarily on analytical tools that aim at dissecting a conflict, turning it into “a problem-solving exercise” and an “intellectual puzzle”. This task is usually about those who are directly engaged in conflict and aims to minimize the effects of her interference in the process, so that it does not “betray” the very reason for being there. On the contrary, practitioners dealing directly with human trauma and raw emotions, tended to distance themselves

from purely analytical toolkits of their peers in the first category in favor of integrative modes of reflection that facilitate a deeper level of conflict engagement, although it should be acknowledged that the merger of practitioners' personal and professional lives was evident in all three categories of respondents who infused their work with personal values, ethics, and the practice of self-reflection. This clear disconnect in analytical and integrative approaches also suggests that different types of work settings may demand different types of skills and levels of engagement on the part of the professional. While purely analytical tools that naturally align with the intellectual agenda and ethos of academia may work in relatively shallow conflicts, incorporating the subjective embodied knowing appears to be one of the few means of going beyond the limiting cognitive tools necessary to transform deeply protracted identity-driven conflicts. What this implies in turn is that before entering such conflicts, a practitioner has to closely examine her goals, expectations, and conflict engagement strategy – the point, which draws attention to the broader vision and promise of the field of peacebuilding. With the latter being "in flux" and "a state of confusion", as some respondents pointed out, the time is ripe to reflect critically on the widespread reliance on analytical models of conflict engagement, reflective practice, their success rate of transforming protracted conflicts, and whether they merit the privileged status and confidence of the peacebuilding community. For in the absence of such reflection, we might continue to observe the now common-place tendency for the proliferation of scholarship divorced from realities and needs of the field, the voices of practitioners being drown out by the privileged status of theory,

and the field of peacebuilding beginning to resemble the field of international relations more than the field of social work by prioritizing conflict analysis over practical means of conflict engagement. However tempting it may be to fetishize the power of reason over the messiness, ignorance, violence, and partiality" of human experience[210], the process of healing and transformation of social fabric and human psyche requires a holistic approach, whereby a practitioner fully immerses into a dynamic process of working as and with an entire individual and cannot afford to dismiss the diverse feedback loops of embodied reflection, which in some cases prove to be more reliable than purely analytical insights, as some literature and interviewees suggest.

Moreover, the data and literature appear to suggest that the diversity and inconsistency in understanding reflection across various fields of practice make the development of a universal model or methodology of reflection virtually impossible. In fact, as some authors forewarn, one is to consult theory when it illuminates a phenomenon more fully in itself [211] instead of inadvertently constricting, mythologizing, or reinventing it. The phenomenon of reflection is a case in point. It continues to be constricted by the traditional conceptualizations of reflective practice driven by the legacy of rationalism that obscures the role of practitioner, while being continuously appropriated and reinvented by various fields, including the field of peacebuilding. As we do, it is essential to acknowledge the needs of practitioners on

[210] Ibid.
[211] Cerwonka and Malkki, *Improvising Theory*, p. 118.

the ground and the promise and limitations of various approaches to reflective practice. Because reflexivity appears to be a critical component in the work of the majority of the respondents interviewed, it is imperative to problematize the theories of reflective practice that leave little to no room for reflexivity. The reason the latter is still very much absent in many approaches can be attributed to the lack of appreciation for the fact that any practice is designed and influenced by practitioners' individual lenses that shape their understanding of practice, social reality, and the self. Reflexivity thus becomes the skill that allows one to examine these lenses and the veracity of images they generate. Apart from that, it is critical to note that on a more fundamental level the traditional framing of reflective practice failed to fully embrace the humanity in all of its physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual forms of both, practitioners and their clients. To account for this failure, the mainstream framing of reflective practice has to be expanded in order to embrace all aspects of reflection. For example, reflective practice can be likened to composite lenses, of which the most immediate reflexivity lens is directed at understanding the practitioner herself, including life history and meta-cognition, and is sensitive to intuitive, aesthetical, contemplative, spiritual, and physical feedback, followed by the lens of critical reflection situating the practice in a broader historical and cultural context, and finally incorporating the reflection on practice lens that examines the challenges, goals, and methodology of practice – whereby each lens converges analytical and embodied insight and is informed by the past, present, and future. Such nuanced framing of reflective practice as a holistic activity that is equally sensitive to

practice, context, and practitioner herself and values all forms of reflection would reflect the experiences of the respondents of this study and allow practitioners to embrace fully their clients' and own humanity as an invaluable source of insight into merging theory and practice rather than an impediment to it.

Thus, this exploratory in nature inquiry posed the research questions of "How do peacebuilding practitioners understand the phenomenon of self-reflection?" and "What role does it play in their practice?", the answers to which generated a surprisingly diverse data set. For example, during the design of the research questionnaire, it was not expected to encounter responses conflating reflection on practice with reflecting on the self, expanding the framing of reflexivity beyond purely analytical reflection to include intuitive, embodied, spiritual, contemplative, and integrative aspects of it, or viewing it as a way to transcend or distance from the self. In fact, the most surprising outcome of this study is in its inadvertent contribution to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the respondents' type of work and the preferred mode of reflection, as a result of deviating from the initial plan to interview exclusively practitioners in the field toward including "pracademics" (according to two respondents, these are practitioners engaged in academia) and academics. Consequently, over the course of data analysis, it became apparent that respondents engaged in predominantly intellectual work relied primarily on analytical mode of reflection, while practitioners working predominantly in the field tended to integrate diverse aspects of analytical and felt reflection, which, as discussed above, posed fundamental questions about the role of

practitioner in practice and the nature or the field and suggested that the type of reflexivity would depend largely on the type of task at hand, with purely analytical work requiring little to no reflexivity and practice-oriented work more open to an integrative approach to reflective practice. While this knowledge claim may sound far from original, it draws attention to the need to problematize not only the very premise of the current reflective practice paradigm, but also that of conflict engagement, educating peacebuilding practitioners, and the nature of the field itself, bringing to the fore the role of an individual in helping professions and the demand to embrace fully the humanity of both, practitioners and their clients.

In addition, it appears appropriate to acknowledge the study's weaknesses and limitations, including those that challenge its validity, reliability, and generalizability. For example, the study's validity may be questioned due to the elusive nature of the phenomenon it seeks to demystify. As noted previously, the study did not intend to focus on different types of reflection, besides the analytical aspect of reflexivity of practitioners, yet, as it became evident that respondents often conflate it with reflection on practice, critical reflection, mindfulness, intuition, and other forms of embodied reflection, it became clear that reflexivity has to be situated in close proximity to other forms of reflection, the nature and boundaries of which appear nebulous at times. Because the study seems to have answered the question of "How do you incorporate reflection in your work?" instead of the intended research question, it has generated both, data on reflexivity and data that is closely related to it, but not necessarily on reflexivity itself, which forced the researcher to grapple with

the framing of the broader phenomenon of reflective practice. As acknowledged in the methodological section, the study did not intend to pose the claims of reliability (or asserting that the results would be replicated if repeated) and generalizability (or asserting that what describes the participants in this study could be applied to the rest of the field). In fact, any claim of reliability by a qualitative researcher should be met with suspicion, given the biased nature of the author's analytical lenses impacted greatly by the previous experience and the fact that a qualitative data is gathered in a natural setting rather than in a controlled environment. It would be equally unrealistic to expect the data to accurately represent the rest of the field of peacebuilding, given that the study relied on a non-probability sample to draw conclusions and was merely exploratory in nature. The study's methodological approach also merits several acknowledgements, as theme analysis has several inherent limitations. For example, the convenience of illustrating a massive set of data with a condensed grouping of themes and subthemes comes at the expense of missing rich nuanced data[212] and absent analysis on the use of language[213]. The former means that the emphasis here is not so much on including everything that was said in interviews as on focusing on what appears relevant to the subject of examination, and the latter implies that what was said is more relevant than how it was said. What complicates further theme analysis is that the process of grouping and interpretation of themes and subthemes relies primarily on the researcher's own perception of what

[212] Guest et al., *Applied Thematic Analysis*, p. 17.
[213] Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology", p. 97.

is important and relevant, which, in turn, is grounded in her personal and professional experiences, while other researchers may offer different interpretations based on their analytical lenses and experiences.

While qualitative research helps to explore a phenomenon, it could be further advanced through a range of other means, such as in-depth phenomenological interviews generating detailed psychological portraits of practitioners, longitudinal studies to track the evolution in their reflexivity, focus groups, observation, and participatory learning, among others. One of the main findings of this study – the correlation between the type of work and the type of reflection practiced – could be further tested by studying the reflexivity of practitioners with little to no involvement in scholarship and other types of intellectual work or by studying respondents involved in both, practice and academia, whose answers could then be plotted on the continuum that reflects the composite lenses of reflective practice offered in this study. Moreover, future research could rely on this study to fine-tune interview questions to focus exclusively on self-reflection instead of reflection in general by clearly defining that the phenomenon researched is the reflection on the self in practice rather than the practice itself and asking additional questions that were omitted in this study, such as "Can you quantify the amount of time you spend in the field and academia and what type of tasks do they involve? Can you describe ways in which you reflect while engaged in each?" and "Can you think of requisite conditions for effective self-reflection?", among others. Setting aside ample time for (possibly multiple) interviews, instead of 30 to 60 minutes, as was the case in the current study,

would allow a researcher to recognize the openings to clarify intended meanings assigned to particular statements, which were often missed in the current study. Moreover, working in a team with other researcher(s) would be preferred to working alone, as exchanging feedback and collaborative authorship would provide additional insights into the process of coding, theme formation, and the researchers' own biases. At the same time, although the biased nature of qualitative inquiries may be perceived as a weakness, the anti-method authors remind us that the canonized scientific method is not adequate enough to grasp the subtleties and richness of human experience. In fact, the only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend and learn about human existence is another human being[214].

[214] Kvale and Brinkmann, *InterViews,* p. 83.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: DEVELOPING REFLECTION SKILLS

While the task of developing reflection skills may seem fairly straightforward within the traditional framework of reflective practice, its linearity and reductionism were challenged by the findings of this study. The seven modes of reflection that emerged over the course of data analysis were likened to the composite lenses of reflective practice, of which embodied or analytical forms of reflexivity is the most immediate lens sensitive to intuitive, aesthetical, contemplative, spiritual, physical, and analytical feedback directed at understanding the practitioner herself, including life history and meta-cognition, followed by the lens of critical reflection situating the practice in a broader historical and sociocultural context, followed by instrumental reflection that examines challenges, goals, and methodology of practice – with each lens converging analytical and embodied feedback and informed by the past, present, and future. Such reframing reflects the belief that the richness of practice cannot be captured by purely analytical insights or fully developed by analytical means only. But before exploring ways to advance the proposed reflection lenses, it is worth reiterating the context-specific nature of reflection that was evident in both, data collected and literature reviewed. As some authors point out: "Reflective practice is highly context specific. Practitioners may reflect in different ways at different times

and in different contexts (environmental, organizational, and relational)" [215]. Similarly, twenty-two responses in this study cited the situational and individual nature of reflection and believed that there are no "recipes", "universal definitions", "simple answers", "manuals", but "only guiding principles" for engaging in it, and that it "means different things to different people". The admission of obscure and fleeting properties of reflection is further problematized by the challenge of mirroring real-world experiences in an artificial classroom setting without finding students disengaged or frustrated, with some authors questioning whether such nebulous skill as reflection should or can be taught. In fact, eleven responses pointed out the lack of uniformity when it comes to teaching reflection, and that there is not one correct way to do it, with one respondent noting: "Our work is more of an art than science. How do you teach that to someone who has not been exposed to practice?"

When designing a course on reflective practice, it appears appropriate to include an introduction to various conceptualizations of reflective practice and its context-specific nature that depends greatly on the nature of work and broader organizational and sociocultural settings, provide historical and philosophical background that explains the dominance of analytical modes of reflection in most organizational contexts, explore the promise of the peacebuilding profession and the skills required of peacebuilding practitioners, introduce different models, types, and aspects of embodied and analytical reflection, and acknowledge the experiential

[215] Finlay, "Reflecting on 'Reflective Practice'", p. 17.

nature of reflective practice and limitations of teaching it in an academic setting. The latter, in fact, stipulates that the classroom is a gateway that connects students to the real-world practice and provides a space to prepare for and reflect on it, while making it a priority to complement an abstract academic training with practical skills. In fact, when asked about ways to develop reflection, fifty-three responses grouped around the theme of practical skills with eighteen responses citing the experiential nature of reflection, captured in the words of one respondent: "the more experiential the better". Among practical skills highlighted by respondents were facilitation, mediation, problem-solving, role-plays, simulations, various types of evaluations, including developmental, formative, participatory, impact, and action evaluations, appreciative inquiry, and communication. At the same time, it is remarkable how little attention is often paid to developing skills to understand, communicate, and work with people, given that peacebuilding practitioners are expected to be skilled communicators. While describing required communication skills, twenty-five responses grouped around "active" or "deep listening", observation, and interviewing skills. One respondent, for example, said that he teaches students how to "listen deeply without saying anything", which challenges listeners to deal with "whatever rises inside" in the process, and two respondents stressed the need to recognize underlying needs and values of speakers as opposed to the language they use to frame issues, with one of them viewing emotion as "a request to change something". Advancing learners' ability to listen, observe, frame issues, deconstruct language, read body language, emotions, and underlying issues would benefit from introducing

approaches that build on mindful, empathic, and non-violent communication[216] [217] [218], among others.

While the format of reflective practice course may depend on learners' goals and needs, it should be also informed by *raison d'être* of the peacebuilding profession – serving communities in need, which, at the same time, would contribute to shaping learners' wholesome character, alluded to by multiple respondents when describing qualities of a reflective practitioner. Surprisingly however, the *service* element often gets lost in peacebuilding education, just like real-world *practice* is often lost in teaching reflective practice. Service-learning can take various forms, such as direct and indirect service, advocacy, and research, whereby direct service entails direct contact with populations served, indirect service focuses on organizational capacity-building, advocacy aims at educating and raising awareness, and research translates into identifying, gathering, reporting on, and disseminating information[219]. In fact, concerned with the needs of a community, service-learning can generate opportunities for students to understand and help alleviate those needs through participatory forms of research by seeking to give voice and empower disenfranchised populations, including the poor, homeless, imprisoned, disabled, undocumented, ethnic and racial minorities, among others, by being placed with

[216] Andrea Cohen, Leah Green, Susan Partnow, and Compassionate Listening Project, *Practicing the Art of Compassionate Listening* (2011).
[217] Oren Sofer, *Say What You Mean: A Mindful Approach to Nonviolent Communication* (Shambhala Publications, 2018).
[218] "Communication Resources", Friendly Press, http://friendlypress.com.
[219] *Service-Learning Toolkit*, Michigan State University (2015), p. 33.

organizations that specialize in addressing the needs of such communities. To maximize the learning benefits of a service-learning approach, an Applied Practice and Theory (APT) course could be offered that spans two semesters with the first semester exposing students to theories of practice and reflection on it and the second semester tying them to students' real-world experiences in learning journals, reflective essays and portfolios, class discussions, role-plays, group work, multimedia presentations, photo and video essays[220], or other creative forms of documenting students' learning progress, closing with a final reflective essay putting the past two semesters in perspective, reflecting on the types of reflection and skills developed, indicators of personal and professional growth, skills and qualities in need of further fine-tuning, and how this experience may influence future career choices, to name a few. Moreover, while service-learning is a form of community engagement, it should not be confused with other forms of community involvement, such as volunteering or community service. While the latter also provide opportunities for hands-on experience and character building, service-learning differs in several important ways: its goals closely align with learnings goals of the course, it incorporates reflection as a critical component, and it is measured by specific learning outcomes rather than by the number of hours served[221].

In addition to cultivating reflection through practice, almost all respondents alluded to the need for a multi-faceted approach to advancing reflective practice. For

[220] Ibid. p. 40.
[221] Ibid. p. 9.

example, sixty-five responses pointed out the role of environment in cultivating the practice and culture of reflection on individual and organizational levels. Forty-one of them stressed the role of feedback in doing so through the use of diverse formats, such as individual, group, direct, confidential, formal, and informal feedback loops, so that the process of reflection does not reproduce the "blind spots" or become "an echo chamber". Although some respondents noted the benefits of debriefing with colleagues and mentors, others suggested a more inclusive panoptic approach to establishing feedback loops from a wide range of actors, including students and clients, that helps practitioners maintain a "360-degree view", while acknowledging the need to balance honesty and challenge with support and sensitivity to the context when sharing feedback. At the same time, several respondents implied that it is just as important to learn to receive feedback skillfully as to share it skillfully. For example, three respondents called attention to being assertive when incorporating feedback, putting things in perspective, reminding that sometimes criticism says more about those who give it than about the practitioner, not dwelling on the negatives, learning to incorporate past, while remaining present, and balancing criticism with being kind and compassionate toward ourselves. Moreover, two respondents noticed that the emotional proximity to their critics makes a difference: the closer practitioners were to the feedback provider, the more honest the feedback was and the more open practitioners were to receiving it. With that in mind, various learning formats suggested by respondents and literature reviewed can be explored. For example, twenty responses indicated the need to participate in practice groups

and "safe learning spaces", nine of which alluded to the need for such spaces in academia (and lack thereof), where students and faculty could exchange experiences, give feedback, and reflect together in a supportive non-judgmental way, with several respondents acknowledging the challenges that come with revealing one's failures and exposing vulnerabilities in an organizational setting. Because these challenges often contribute to the chronic shortage of such learning spaces in many organizations, eleven responses noted the need to get involved in learning communities outside of academia to advance both, personal and professional skills, including communities of like-minded practitioners and various identity and learning groups and programs that foster personal and professional growth. Among the diverse approaches to creating such community of like-minded practitioners are *Critical Friend (or Friendship)* models that incorporate elements of peer coaching and mentoring and have been adapted to various professional and organizational contexts, including education [222], healthcare [223], and peacebuilding [224]. *Critical Friendship* entails two or more individuals with complementary skills working together to encourage reflection and learning based on trust, openness, respect, and shared vision. Another format mentioned by one respondent and alluded to by several other respondents was a *Reflective Observer* model, which incorporates live

[222] Monica Gonzalez Smith, "A Video-Mediated Critical Friendship Reflection Framework for ESL Teacher Education", *TESL-EJ* (2019).
[223] Michele Hardiman and Jan Dewing, "Critical Ally and Critical Friend", *International Practice Development Journal* 4, no. 1 (2014), pp. 1–19.
[224] *Critical Friend: An Innovation in Evaluation and Learning for Peacebuilding*, CMI (2018).

observations by an experienced colleague during a mediation session, followed by an in-depth debriefing that deconstructs the practitioner's decision-making process during critical moments[225]. It is worth noting that the basic premise of this model can be applied to building up other practical skill, including facilitation and communications skills. In fact, multiple respondents viewed the practice of debriefing, or "hotwash", as central to improving their practice and generating lessons learned. But, given that real-world learning may not always afford a presence of a trained observer, practitioners would benefit from incorporating digital tools for reflection, including video or audio analysis software [226] and self-assessment platforms[227]. The use of digital reflection tools, in addition to developing students' practical and reflection skills in an engaging way, prepares them to enter future workplaces that either already incorporate technology to advance employees' reflection skills or will do so in the future. Among the benefits of using self-assessment platforms is the ability to maintain a safe learning space restricted to the members of that particular group or class, who can reflect independently, directly with an instructor, and with their peers remotely, thus allowing to tailor feedback to individual needs, build in opportunities for more advanced forms of reflection in class, and stay in touch when opportunities to meet are scarce.

[225]Kathleen Moore, "The Reflective Observer Model", *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2014), pp. 403–19.
[226] V-Note Video Analysis Software, https://v-note.org/sharing.
[227] Panopto Video Recording Software, https://www.panopto.com/panopto-for-education/student-recording/.

Moreover, when designing training courses, it is critical to remain sensitive to the demands of the modern workplace undergoing a profound transformation. For example, some authors believe that modern individuals have to develop the ability to keep up with the *runaway world*, in which a future-oriented risk-minimizing reflexive action is gradually replacing traditional action[228] - something that was not required of individuals on this scale in the history of humankind. Moreover, Michael Quinn Patton observes that "creative, practical, and adaptive evaluators draw on the variety of inquiry traditions and use diverse techniques to fit the complexities of a particular social innovation and situation. It is in the sense that we think in generalities but live in details. And it is in this regard that we may be thought of *bricoleurs*", who can be likened to "a jack of all trades" open to experiment in conceptualizing ways to understand social reality[229]. Reflecting this need to nurture a more porous, inquisitive, flexible, and creative professional identity, seventy-one responses grouped around the theme of cognitive maturity that includes positioning oneself as a "lifelong learner", openness to criticism, comfort with complexity and difference, sharp abstract, systemic, and critical skills, pragmatism, and healthy skepticism.

The diverse literature on critical reflection offers a range of strategies that can be tailored to different learning formats and developmental stages of learners. These approaches, inspired by ideas of Freire, Habermas, Foucault, and other critical

[228] Archer, "Reflexivity", p. 5.
[229] Michael Quinn Patton, *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use* (Guilford Press, 2011), p. 264.

thinkers, draw attention to power, relational, and systemic dynamics of practice and acknowledge that, since our practice, the process of knowledge production, and we ourselves are products of our cultures, we have to "creep underneath" our habitual individual and collective lenses in order to examine their influence[230]. With that in mind, class discussions and writing assignments can be complemented by introducing students to activities that challenge their perceptions of power and privilege[231], analyze power and the context in which they operate[232], and explore ways to fuse critical reflection with other types of reflection before they engage directly with affected populations domestically or abroad. At the same time, students' exposure to critical reflection should be prefaced by two caveats. Unleashing the power of critical reasoning in learners who have not developed solid self-awareness and self-care skills carries the potential of radicalizing them, making it difficult to maintain an analytical distance, open mind, and a more nuanced inquisitive posture. In fact, one respondent noted that the conflict analysis and resolution community tends to advocate for certain populations, while dismissing others, and added that fixating on the issues of discrimination and oppression puts practitioners in a position of "victims' cheerleading squad" instead of fostering a dialogue among all stakeholders.

[230] Sue White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care*, p. 50.
[231] *Service-Learning Toolkit*, Michigan State University (2015), p. 104.
[232] Neil Thompson, *Anti-Discriminatory Practice: Equality, Diversity and Social Justice* (2016), p. 35.

While the process of developing instrumental reflection is fairly straightforward and can be advanced with the help of models discussed in literature review and a set of questions for reflection offered in the findings section, developing an inquisitive open-minded identity is a much more complex and obscure task. In fact, although several respondents shared an observation that individuals entering the field of peacebuilding tend to be inquisitive and reflective by nature, there is evidence in the literature[233] and in respondents' experience suggesting that even practitioners with decades of experience under their belt often dismiss, either consciously or inadvertently, opportunities to learn through reflection and the more fundamental need to cultivate an inquisitive mindset. This implies that, while exposing learners to various types and strategies of reflection, it is also beneficial to engage them in a discussion on the type of mindset, attitude, qualities, and skills expected of peacebuilding practitioners to thrive in the field and ways to develop them. For example, eighteen responses drew attention to the quality of intellectual humility, including an openness to being wrong, self-critical, and uncertain, and several responses highlighted one's ability to cultivate respect for difference, to hear and understand different perspectives without taking sides, and to strive for a more nuanced understanding of reality rather than viewing it in simplistic or dualistic terms. Several responses also pointed out the challenge of balancing the need to build

[233] Joseph Raelin, "'I Don't Have Time to Think!' Versus the Art of Reflective Practice", *Reflections: The SoL Journal* 4, no. 1 (2002), pp. 66–79.

up learners' sense of professional confidence with the ability to maintain intellectual humility, with one respondent warning against the former spilling into the need for "intellectual superiority", and another respondent observing that in instances when beliefs and ideas become a part of learners' identity, ideological challenges may be perceived as personal attacks. At the same time, some researchers believe that higher education may have the opposite effect on intellectual humility: "On one hand, the more people learn, the more they see how much they do not know and the more complicated, nuanced, and endless knowledge becomes. On the other hand, the more people learn, the more justifiably confident they become in their knowledge, particularly in areas in which they develop deep expertise. An expert in an area should be more confident of his or her beliefs in that area than a nonexpert"[234] – the point mirrored in some responses as well, with several respondents citing the need to maintain a balance between a sense of professional confidence that comes with an accumulation of experience and a sense of humility that comes with past failures and appreciation for the complexity of practice. Because some peacebuilding education formats, despite focusing largely on developing analytical skills, leave a lot to be desired in terms of equipping students with a sense of comfort with complexity, it appears appropriate to engage students in a discussion on ways to incorporate these skills.

[234] Mark Leary, *The Psychology of Intellectual Humility*, Templeton, p. 10.

To assist in guiding such discussion, various models can be consulted, including Kegan's model of adult learning. Briefly, the model assumes that, by the time learners enter the higher education, they have most likely attained what Kegan calls "the socialized mind", which assumes properly internalized cognitive structures, aesthetics, customs, mores, and cultural expectations demanded by their social identity. The next stage is the "self-authoring mind", in which an individual can internalize divergent points of view and author an independent one because her sense of self is aligned with her own beliefs and values. The final stage of consciousness development is termed "the self-transforming mind", which is characterized by the capacity to recognize our own ideology as limiting and partial and to transcend the individualized viewpoint by entertaining multiple dynamic and even contradictory viewpoints at the same time[235]. Although it is often assumed that "the self-authoring mind" is a worthy goal in itself, the inability to release dualistic or simplistic thinking, however closely it aligns with inner values and beliefs, suggests that a practitioner may be unable to hold competing narratives and contradiction necessary to work with conflicts. Thus, incorporating exercises to advance learners' comfort with uncertainty, complexity, nuance, and the ability to withstand the influence of emotional traps and biases should be coupled with involving students in reflection on the skills they believe are necessary to develop, including the ability to transcend simplistic polarized cognitive patterns. Doing so offers a chance to reflect

[235] Parker Palmer and Arthur Zajonc, *The Heart of Higher Education: A Call to Renewal* (Jossey-Bass, 2010), p. 104.

on their mastery of those skills and to practice holding a contradiction and contemplating difficult questions without succumbing to the pressure of demonstrating clear and morally superior viewpoints that the higher education often applies. Pursuing a similar goal of developing learners' consciousness, Mezirow's transformative learning theory seeks to highlight learners' agency in shaping learning processes and goals by shifting the focus from the task of problem-solving to problem-posing and examining not only the content and process of reflection, as most instrumental reflection models do, but also the very premise of reflection[236]. The author suggests that learners are often held back by their own self-limiting beliefs, which trap them within a meaning perspective that restricts their potential, thus pointing out that deep learning begins with self-examination[237]. As in most models, reflection here is induced upon encountering a difficulty or novelty in practice, which is then followed by the stages of self-examination, a sense of alienation, relating discontent to others, exploration of possibilities, planning for a new course of action, acquiring knowledge and skills for carrying it out, testing new hypotheses, building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and eventual reintegration of newly formed knowledge into one's life. While reflection exercises can be designed to address these steps of reflection process, they should also incorporate self-examination that aims at deconstructing not only learners' points of

[236] Raelin, "Public Reflection," p. 18.
[237] Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning,* p. 139.

view, but also their "habits of mind", or habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by deeply held attitudes, values, and beliefs[238].

Involving learners in reflection on the content, process, premise, and challenges of their own learning processes develops self-directed learning. While during the early stages of developing reflection the role of an instructor is expected to be more pronounced in directing students, more advanced courses should aim to integrate elements of pedagogy, andragogy, and heutagogy[239], with the goal of eventually developing the latter by the time a graduate enters the workforce. Whereas traditional courses tend to rely on an instructor-centered learning, andragogy encourages self-directed learning toward the goals set by the instructor, and heutagogy challenges learners to identify gaps in their knowledge and strategies to bridge those gaps independently, with an instructor playing a supporting rather than leading role in mastering new knowledge. Reflecting the emphasis on a more participatory approach to teaching reflective practice, one respondent advised to involve students in the design of class activities, in addition to six respondents citing the need to continuously solicit feedback and evaluations from students to gauge their engagement and learning. Two other respondents also alluded to self-directed learning by paying attention to "preferred" and "avoided" behaviors and practicing the least developed skills. This recognition of different learning styles, goals, skills,

[238] Ibid. p. 6.
[239] Laura Rendón, *Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice and Liberation* (Stylus, 2014), p. 131.

and accumulated to date professional and life experiences may dictate the logic of teaching reflective practice, including the shift away from a more traditional indiscriminatory approach assuming that all students would benefit equally from a teacher-centered approach, when teaching goals and strategies are set by the instructor toward a more participatory approach designed to help students identify gaps in their knowledge and skills that, in their view, require more practice.

The above implies that learners' self-awareness has a direct impact on their ability to deepen self-directed learning and reflection skills. In fact, the importance of self-awareness was highlighted by seventy-six responses to the question to define self-reflection, drawing attention to the need to reflect on our own motivation, skills, qualities, habits, strengths, limitations, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, emotions, needs, and meta-cognition, to name a few. Here, it is helpful to distinguish twenty-six responses that viewed self-reflection as an instrumental cognitive activity aimed at understanding practitioners' skills and qualities from thirty-one responses which viewed it as a deeper self-examination and a "personal journey" of understanding and transforming one's career and life path. In addition, forty-eight responses to the question on ways to advance self-reflection recommended to incorporate exercises on self-exploration, self-inventories, and journaling to examine the self and its impact on practice. In fact, three respondents believed that the most critical skill practitioners have to develop before any other skill is the ability to understand ourselves, who we are, what we do, and why, and two respondents believed that it is imperative for practitioners to subject themselves to self-inventories before working

with other people. The recognition of the impact that practitioners have on practice and learning process in data and literature demands that reflective practice training develops in students as much curiosity about themselves, as about practice. Here, it should be noted that, although it is common to rely on learning journals to develop students' reflection skills independently, this approach often misses the mark in part due to unclear instructions and the lack of training in abstract and reflective thinking. Hence, when assigning reflective journals, students should receive clear detailed guidelines[240] [241], including a list of questions and examples to follow to help them lay the foundation of journaling habits, in addition to providing detailed feedback. While it is customary for reflection journals and feedback to be typed up manually, audio and video software and online self-assessment platforms significantly reduce the time required to generate and reflect on both, while exploring creative and more engaging ways to reflect. Moreover, five respondents shared that they ask their students to write on what attracts them to conflicts and the field in general, their personal style of dealing with conflict, personal and professional motives and values, expectations of rewards, personal background and experiences, and what they have to offer to the field, to name a few. One respondent also recommended taking various personality tests[242] [243], which could serve as a starting point on the journey of self-

[240] *Service-Learning Toolkit*, Michigan State University (2015), p. 43.
[241] Cunliffe, "On Becoming a Critically Reflexive Practitioner", p. 418.
[242] *16 Personalities*, https://www.16personalities.com/.
[243] "Enneagram Personality Test", *Truity*, https://www.truity.com/test/enneagram-personality-test.

discovery for students who were not exposed to such training in the past. In fact, deepening learners' self-awareness through self-inventories and reflecting on their results and potential impact on practice introduces learners' not only to the need to analyze their personal filters, but also to the habit of maintaining an updated understanding of the self as it evolves throughout life – the point alluded to by several respondents. It should be also noted that, while independent self-discovery may work well for practitioners, they may also benefit from exploring more involved formats cited by respondents, including various types of therapy, counseling, coaching, mentoring, group work, and close personal and professional relationships.

In addition to analytical forms of inquiry, reflective practice, as both, data and literature suggest, is incomplete without the embodied or felt forms of reflection. Although the study did not anticipate to discover this type of reflection, it became apparent that some practitioners who engage predominantly in fieldwork rather than scholarship described a deeper engagement with practice and reflection than that of respondents engaged primarily in analytical types of work. While analytical forms of reflection can be directed at analyzing all aspects of practice, embodied reflection taps into the actual experience of embodied reflection that involves emotion, intuition, aesthetics, body, spirit, and heart. With that mind, integrative models of reflection, propose that the calling of reflection is in integrating all forms of analytical and embodied knowing, rather than distilling rational knowledge from the richness of

human experience[244]. Reflective practice here is not merely an analytical puzzle to be solved or an afterthought on experience, as in most instrumental reflection models, but a fluid process of converging continuously felt and thought feedback. As a result of embodied reflection becoming a part of professional reflection, reflective practice becomes partially recalcitrant to rationalization and viewed as "a radical act toward recovered unity", "a way of being", and "the act of participation in the world"[245]. In a similar vein, fifteen respondents described their vision of reflective practice, with various aspects of it fitting into the mind-body-heart(spirit) nexus. For these respondents, self-reflection served as a way of "understanding and integrating all aspects of being", "getting in touch with feelings, thoughts, and spirit", "engaging my senses, heart, and mind…making it possible to connect on a deeper level", "attending to whatever comes up inside", and "learning to trust the wisdom of my heart". Several respondents also shared examples of practicing integrative reflection. Thus, one respondent teaches an academic course on mind-body-heart integration with an art-based evaluation approach to grading, several respondents focus on integrating experiential exercises on trauma awareness and healing, some respondents integrate sections on deep listening and communication, several respondents build their courses around the goal of awakening students' spiritual, ethical, and humanistic potential by inviting guests who share personal stories of profound suffering or introduce students to people in underprivileged communities, several respondents

[244] Jordi, "Reframing the Concept of Reflection," p. 191.
[245] Bleakley, "From Reflective Practice to Holistic Reflexivity", p. 328.

cultivate in students a sense of aesthetics, ethics, and emotional intelligence through exposing them to art, including poetry, music, literature, or nature, and other respondents believe that it is crucial to teach students basic well-being skills, including self-awareness, mindfulness, and self-care, to name a few. In fact, thirty-one responses advised to explore mindful practices that allow to "slow down", such as meditation, journaling, breathing exercises, and yoga, develop a sense of awe and gratefulness, contemplate beauty in art and nature, practice "silent awareness" in quiet spaces and retreats, deepen spirituality through a contemplative centering prayer, and incorporate mindfulness in "virtually everything we do". Besides integrating all forms of knowing in the learning process, twenty-nine responses suggested that professional development should be complemented by personal development, including learners' self-awareness, ethics, and character training, which raises the issue of complementarity of *instrumental* and *ontological* reflection. While the former tends to be concerned with technical reflection and compliance with external standards, o*ntological* reflection involves the task of posing deeper questions, the search for professional self-realization, and prioritizing internal personal standards, which may or may not match the external standard. Naturally, accomplished reflective practitioners tend to find themselves preoccupied more with matters of ontological nature and are more comfortable with a sense of complexity, uncertainty, and dynamic emergence, while novices tend to gravitate toward the type

of reflection that gives a sense of structure, measurability, and stability[246] - the point raised by several respondents in this study as well.

Incorporating such holistic approach to training peacebuilding practitioners however is a tall order, given that the deeply entrenched in academia rationalistic tradition continues to perpetuate an incomplete and fragmented understanding of humanity, and, as a result, of peacebuilding practice and education. The inherent limitations of traditional approaches to education that prioritize advancing analytical skills and refuse to incorporate the whole learner continue to fail students at preparing them to face the challenges of a modern workplace[247]. In addition, unlike other professions working directly with people, such as educators, counselors, and healthcare professionals, peacebuilding education often aims to equip students with analytical and critical skills, rather than prepare them to deal with real challenges of practice and conflicts. While education formats continue to be designed around purely analytical objectives, the practice of "breeding tall professionals, but small human beings"[248] sets in. As holistic educators point out, "giving students knowledge as power over the world while failing to help them gain the kind of self-knowledge that gives them power over themselves is dangerous. We need to stop releasing students into the wild without systematically challenging them to take an inner as well as outer journey. Or at least in cases when practitioners do choose to live a life

[246] Ibid. p. 319.
[247] "Employer Survey", High Point University (2018), http://www.highpoint.edu/src/files/2019/02/CLevelMemo.pdf.
[248] "A Plea for Wholesome Education", Jung Centre (2017).

devoid of reflection and self-awareness, they should seek employment that does not involve working directly with other people"[249]. Several respondents in this study also believed that academia "dissects an individual" and "elevates the mind", while discarding the rest of the individual. This is not to say that analytical development should not be the focus of education – on the contrary, seventy-eight responses to the question about skills required of peacebuilding professionals grouped around the theme of cognitive maturity. But the fact that one hundred and twenty-five responses pointed to the need to cultivate wholesome character, fifty-three responses cited awareness skills, thirty-one responses alluded to emotional and social intelligence, and twenty-five to communication skills stipulates that developing soft skills deserves as much attention as technical and analytical skills. Moreover, the tendency to prioritize analytical and neglect non-analytical skills has generated a large body of literature on holistic education, which asks the fundamental question of whether we want the higher education to mirror real life[250] and acknowledges that for "education to be complete, it must be humane and include not only the training of the intellect, but the refinement of the heart and the discipline of the spirit"[251]. While faith-based colleges are at advantage as they explicitly emphasize reflection, calling, vocation, life of purpose, and an opportunity to introduce a contemplative curriculum[252], secular institutions must also take seriously students' interest in personal development and

[249] Palmer and Zajonc, *The Heart of Higher Education,* p. 49.
[250] Ibid. p. 36.
[251] "A Plea for Wholesome Education", Jung Centre (2017).
[252] Palmer and Zajonc, *The Heart of Higher Education,* p. 115.

search for answers to deeper questions about the meaning and purpose of life and practice. In fact, as the *National Study of Spirituality in Higher Education: Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose* reports, students' spiritual growth enhances academic performance, psychological well-being, leadership development, and satisfaction with college. The study also identifies a number of activities that contribute to students' spiritual growth, including study abroad, interdisciplinary studies, and service learning, because they expose students to new and diverse people, cultures, and ideas. Spiritual development is also enhanced if students engage in "inner work" through activities such as meditation[253] or self-reflection, or if their professors actively encourage them to explore questions of meaning and purpose[254] [255]. In fact, as the *Center for Contemplative Mind in Society* points out, one hundred and one college and university instructors "have been teaching courses that incorporate a range of practices, including mindfulness, *lectio divina*, yoga, tai chi, and discipline-specific practices. Together they are designing pedagogical methods and building a body of knowledge that is formulating a new way of teaching that complements critical thinking and scientific method. They demonstrate how contemplative development opens mind to new possibilities, cultivates wisdom through deepening one's relationship to the world, and encourages compassion and empathy through an

[253] Al Fuertes and Mary Wayland, "Cultivating Mindfulness Meditation in Class from Students' Perspectives" In *Innovations in Teaching and Learning* 7 (2015).
[254] Marc Gopin, *Healing the Heart of Conflict: Eight Crucial Steps to Making Peace with Yourself and Others* (CreateSpace,2016).
[255] "A National Study of Spirituality in Higher Education: Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose", Spirituality in Higher Education, https://spirituality.ucla.edu/findings/.

understanding of the interconnection of all life. At the same time, scientific research is confirming that contemplation and mindfulness develop such cross-disciplinary cognitive capacities as decision making, attention, intuitive understanding, and memory, as well as self-awareness, self-management, and empathy"[256].

However tempting it might be to assume that learners enter academia with solid skills in self-awareness, self-direction, mindfulness, communication, emotional intelligence, character, and other essential skills for helping professions, this is not necessarily the case, as several respondents pointed out. Although more and more school districts nationwide begin to cultivate character in children[257], awareness and mindfulness[258] [259], social skills[260], and peacebuilding literacy[261] [262] – the skills that are just as important as learning how to read and write, according to one respondent - it may take decades for a holistic approach to educating young adults to become mandatory nationwide. In the meantime, asking deeper and honest questions about ways to transform peacebuilding practice demands an expanded epistemology that does not deny, truncate, or dismiss the fullness of human experience. Although education systems may be viewed as reflections of societal values[263] (that leave a lot

[256] Palmer and Zajonc, *The Heart of Higher Education,* p. 163.
[257] Kent Schools, https://www.kentschools.net/parents/academics/character-education/top-10-character-education-traits/.
[258] Mindful Schools, https://www.mindfulschools.org/.
[259] Holistic Life Foundation, https://hlfinc.org/programs-services/mindful-moment-program/.
[260] Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), https://casel.org.
[261] "Solutions: Teacher's Guide", WNET, https://www.thirteen.org/peaceful/pstguide.pdf.
[262] PeaceBuilders, http://www.peacebuilders.com/.
[263] Palmer and Zajonc, *The Heart of Higher Education,* p. 165.

to be desired), their reciprocity should not be underestimated. At the same time, it appears that the main obstacle to challenging the antiseptic rationalistic approach to education is not the lack of confidence in the transformative power of education, but the failure to recognize that "the universe is far richer, more subtle, and more interconnected than reductionism allows"[264]. To understand ways in which this richness of practice and human experience could translate into an extended human-centered epistemology, the conversation can begin with reflecting on the following questions:

- What is the mission and identity of your institution?
- At your institution who are the champions or leaders in guiding students in their search for meaning and purpose?
- How are faculty and staff at your institution expected to guide students intellectually, socially, civically, physically, spiritually, and morally?
- What are the salient challenges, barriers, and opportunities your institution needs to address in creating a campus environment that fosters a global holistic development?
- How do you encourage and prepare faculty to work with students in the co-curricular context at your institution?
- How is community defined at your institution? What can you and your colleagues do to cultivate an even greater sense of community?

[264] Ibid. p. 64.

- How is your institution addressing the big questions of the "good life"?[265]

Asking deeper questions about the purpose and spirit of peacebuilding training has to be coupled with an exploration of various training formats tailored to the challenges of real-world practice. This study posits that, in order to do so, peacebuilding training has to expose future practitioners to an integrative understanding of reflective practice that synthesizes technical, critical, and reflexive levels of reflection while converging embodied and analytical insights illustrated below:

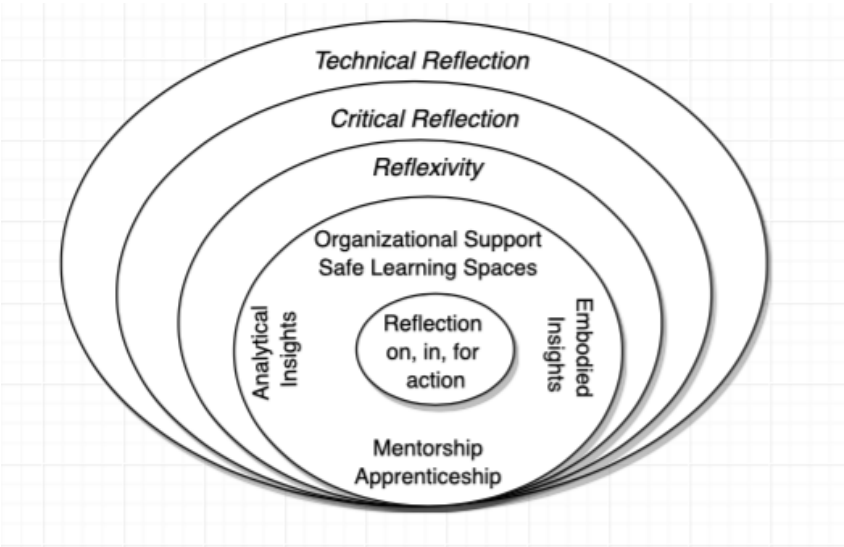


**Figure 3. Integrative Framework of Reflective Practice**

While doing so, training should be sensitive to learners' goals, needs, learning styles, levels of maturity, encourage self-directed learning, require mentoring and

[265] Ibid. p. 172.

supervision, and forge partnerships and apprenticeship programs with peacebuilding organizations that would equip novices with hands-on experience and contribute to the larger task of tying theory and practice of peacebuilding.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: SELF-CARE

Another practical implication identified in the process of data collection was the importance of maintaining practitioners' well-being as they engage in practice and reflection on it. Although initially self-care was not at all associated with the focus of this research, it became apparent after the third interview that a meaningful inquiry into reflective practice should be complemented by an inquiry into ways practitioners deal with challenges associated with it. As highlighted in the literature review, reflection has both, positive and negative effects - while extending the promise of enhancing practice, it also promises to be "a bumpy ride" that disrupts the comfort of the familiar[266]. Similarly, the data in this study captured several challenges associated with reflection, including negative side effects (39), resistance to it (23), absence of environmental support (22), time commitment (14), and low self-awareness (10). In fact, the biggest challenge associated with reflection – its negative side effects – had to do with unpleasant and painful experiences that can have "paralyzing", "corrosive", and "debilitating" effects, which traditional models of reflective practice failed to acknowledge time and again. Compounded by the demanding nature of work with conflict and trauma, absence or lack of environmental

[266] Fox and Allan, "Doing Reflexivity", p. 111.

support, and overwhelming workloads, corrosive effects of reflection demand a close attention to practitioners' often absent or inadequate training in self-care.

Practitioners' well-being comes into focus especially in light of this study's findings and the proposed reframing of reflective practice. While traditionally reflective practice focused largely on enhancing practice, incorporating the reflexive dimension expands the focus of reflection to include the practitioner herself, assuming that both, practice and practitioners are imperfect and are subject to improvement. In fact, the painful or unpleasant experiences associated with reflection cited above overlap with a tendency to resist reflection for various reasons, including due to inability to cope with corrosive side effects of reflection. For example, several practitioners cited challenges with acknowledging mistakes and vulnerabilities in part due to having been "socialized to be right" and being "allergic" to openly admitting mistakes – something that would be "unacceptable" in the medical field, as one respondent pointed out, coupled with the external pressures of appearing competent individually and as a field. The often discouraging and unpleasant process of self-discovery, coupled with the lack of experience and effective self-care, may lead to defensiveness or rationalization of ineffective practice for novices and experienced practitioners alike. For example, several respondents acknowledged that they began to feel less "defensive" or "threatened" over time, as they accumulated professional experience, and one respondent recognized that it can be especially daunting for novices and junior faculty to share their mistakes as opposed to seasoned practitioners. At the same time, several respondents observed

that even experienced practitioners may exhibit defensiveness that can be attributed to a range of factors, including lack of self-awareness, fear of change and failure, and viewing feedback and criticism of their practice as attacks on them personally, to name a few. The recognition that these habits of mind are antithetical to reflective practice was captured in some of the models reviewed. Argyris, for example, noted that unreflective practitioners who claim to be reflective are unable to improve their practice until the root causes of their defensive reasoning are addressed[267], Banks viewed defensive practitioners as close-minded rigid "technicians" who prioritize external rules over individual values[268], and Mezirow pointed out that the learning process is often impeded by learners' distorted takes on reality and themselves[269].

Not surprisingly, negative habits of mind, especially the lack of self-awareness, present roadblocks not only to reflective practice, but to practitioners' ability to maintain psychological and physical health and remain engaged in practice. In fact, the data suggests that practitioners' well-being requires developing an understanding into conditions under which they thrive and which have a negative impact, maintaining awareness of personal well-being on a regular basis, and practicing resilience tools to mitigate adverse impacts and turn them into learning opportunities. Understanding conditions conducive and detrimental to one's well-being begins with self-examination and situating it in the broader context of

[267] Argyris, "Teaching Smart People How to Learn".
[268] Banks, *Ethics and Values in Social Work*, pp. 139-140.
[269] Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning,* p. 139.

professional and personal lives. For example, thirty-two responses suggested that self-care begins with self-awareness that leads to a deeper understanding of factors that impact practitioners' psychological and physical health, including the nature of work, work ethics, environment, awareness of personal strengths and limitations, conflict engagement style, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive patterns, life history, and the ability to recognize the signs of trauma and cope with it, among others. Moreover, several respondents recommended to pay close attention to personal upbringing and early life trauma as they are often linked to destructive behaviors later in life. Some of them, in fact, believed that people tend to be drawn to our field because of their previous encounters with conflicts, and several interviewees acknowledged that they themselves had experienced a history of neglect and abuse as children and young adults, which in some cases led to a distorted self-image and low self-esteem. In connection with that, one respondent raised the question of whether working with conflicts is a fitting professional choice for someone in need of healing.

Needless to say, the exploration of resilience practices must be preceded by the recognition of the importance of self-care on individual, organizational, and systemic levels, which is often not the case. Seven respondents, for example, believed that burnouts are rampant and are "a professional hazard" for peacebuilders, in part due to the nature of work, and in part due to the field not taking the issue of well-being seriously. Two respondents observed that practitioners tend to "fetishize productivity" and "staying busy", often under the influence of "the internal pusher",

which leads to failing to "honor our mental and physical health", several respondents believed that well-being begins with "setting the intention" to discover what our needs are, and one respondent reminded that "if I can't take care of myself, I can't help others either", thus echoing the airplane oxygen mask metaphor used in some helping professions[270]. In addition, one practitioner viewed the field of peacebuilding as an offshoot of the field of social work and noted that, while social workers recognize the need for self-care, the field of peacebuilding neglects it. Several other respondents admitted that it took them years to learn to recognize the first signs of trauma and depression, echoed by one of the respondents' advocacy for a systemic approach to trauma awareness and a conviction that self-care "should not be left up to individuals".

At the same time, nineteen responses believed that self-care is context-specific and should be tailored to individual needs, situation, personality type, and severity of stress or trauma, with five respondents noting the benefits of drawing on multiple resources and traditions to discover what works and "feels right", framing this as "weaving my own cosmology", "being open to multiple sources of wisdom", and "drawing on Western and Eastern traditions". In addition, twenty responses noted that practitioners would benefit from borrowing resources on self-care from other fields and helping professions, including social work, pastoral and family counseling,

[270] Lisa Butler, "Developing Your Self-Care Plan", University at Buffalo, http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/developing-your-self-care-plan.html.

nursing, neuroscience, and medical field, to name a few. This context-specific understanding of self-care resonates with the concept of individual well-being, which, similarly to the concept of reflection, appears to be in flux and framed according to professional demands and theoretical lenses. Moreover, the recognition of the subjective, relative, dynamic, and integrative nature of wellbeing[271] makes it difficult to talk about universally accepted models and methods of measuring wellbeing. For example, the recent literature on wellbeing frames it as a higher order construct integrating physical, psychological (mental, intellectual, emotional), social, and spiritual domains[272] and as "a way of life oriented toward optimal health and wellbeing in which the body, mind, and spirit are integrated by the individual to live more fully within the human and natural community"[273].

The holistic conceptualization of wellness - mirrored by nine responses unable to separate the needs of the body, mind, and spirit - gave rise to various models that appear to aim at integrating physical, psychological, spiritual, and social dimensions of health. One of such models is the *Wellness Wheel* approach, whereby wellness is viewed not merely as the absence of illness or distress, but rather as a lifelong process of forming habits that support a balanced life leading to maximizing individual

[271] Troy Adams et al., "The Conceptualization and Measurement of Perceived Wellness: Integrating Balance across and within Dimensions", *American Journal of Health Promotion* 11, no. 3 (1997), p. 209.
[272] Tonya Schuster et al., "Wellness Lifestyles: A Theoretical Framework Linking Wellness, Health Lifestyles, and Complementary and Alternative Medicine", *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 10, no. 2 (2004), p. 351.
[273] Jane Myers and Thomas Sweeney, "The Indivisible Self: An Evidence-Based Model of Wellness", *Journal of Individual Psychology* 60, no. 3 (2005), p. 252.

potential, which begins with self-reflection and setting goals[274]. Some practitioners prefer such terms as *self-care* and *resilience*, which appear to have significant overlaps. Self-care models also focus on various domains of individual well-being, such as body, emotions, mind, work, relationships, and spirit, among others, and require a self-care plan that identifies individual needs, day-to-day routine to meet them (maintenance self-care), and strategies one can employ during crisis (emergency self-care)[275]. Similarly, resilience models tend to emphasize physical well-being, positive emotions, coping strategies, social support, and meaning in life[276]. Thus, by considering the entire individual within the larger context, the holistic approach recognizes a complex, interdependent, and composite nature of wellbeing, which has direct implications for developing resilience skills. One of such implications is the importance of institutionalizing a holistic context-specific approach to designing resilience training programs that would attend to physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and organizational aspects of well-being, captured in the model below:

[274] "Wellness Wheel & Assessment", Princeton University, https://umatter.princeton.edu/action-matters/caring-yourself/wellness-wheel-assessment.
[275] Lisa Butler, "Developing Your Self-Care Plan".
[276] "Resilience Model", George Mason University, https://wbu.gmu.edu/resilience-model/.


**Figure 4. An adaptation of the Wheel of Wellness Model**

The reason this study's adaptation of the *Wheel of Wellness* incorporates self-awareness is partially driven by the conceptual proposition cited earlier that any meaningful reflective practice includes an element of self-reflection, and partially by the admission by several respondents that it took them years to recognize trauma and learn how to cope with it, understand their needs, or even become aware of the need to take care of themselves. Attending to all segments of the model implies that practitioners have to develop an in-depth self-understanding, including of their needs, vulnerabilities, and coping strategies necessary to address them. Here, it

should be noted that, while user-friendly wellness measuring instruments[277] [278] [279] [280] [281] can be administered in a classroom setting or independently, serious cases of stress, burnout, and trauma require guidance of healthcare professionals – the point also noted by several respondents. Understanding individual needs, goals, and challenges should then inform the development of a self-care plan that factors in daily wear-and-tear[282] [283] and crisis strategies[284]. Among the fundamental goals of a self-care framework should be the development of the habit of routinely revisiting different domains of the model to reflect on and fine-tune the self-care plan. One way to help students develop this habit is to measure their wellbeing throughout an academic year, identify current strategies to maintain it, areas for improvement, incorporate new coping mechanisms, reflect independently or debrief in groups on

[277] Nancy Loving Tubesing, "Lifestyle Assessments, Appraisals, & Inventories", Whole Person, https://wholeperson.com/store/lifestyle-assessments-appraisals-inventories.shtml.
[278] "Wellness Self-Assessment", Princeton University, https://umatter.princeton.edu/sites/umatter/files/media/princeton-umatter-wellness-self-assessment.pdf.
[279] "Assessing Your Life Balance", University of California, Irvine, https://studentwellness.uci.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Assessing-Your-Life-Balance.pdf.
[280] "Self-Care", University at Buffalo, http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/self-care-assessments-exercises/checklists-and-measures.html.
[281] "Self-Care Resources", University at Buffalo, http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/additional-self-care-resources/online-resources.html.
[282] "Mind-Body Wellness Series", Whole Person, https://wholeperson.com/store/mind-body-wellness-series.shtml.
[283] "Mental Health and Life Skills Series for Adults", Whole Person, https://wholeperson.com/store/mental-health-adults.shtml.
[284] James Greenstone, *Emotional First Aid: A Field Guide to Crisis Intervention and Psychological Survival* (Whole Person, 2016).

what worked and what can be improved, followed by the next cycle of exploration, experimentation, and reflection on whether those coping strategies meet their wellbeing goals and needs.

Moreover, the data clearly cites various inward and outward types of self-care and segments of the *Wheel of Wellness* referenced above. Among the outward types of self-care, sixty-six responses pointed out the need to take breaks from work and engage in activities that have nothing to do with it, which were framed as "doing anything that heals", "relaxes", "exposing myself to beauty", or "exploring my creativity" and which could translate into being out in the nature, around animals, humor, gardening, cooking, dancing, playing music, panting, poetry, reading and writing something not work-related, traveling, exploring film and photography, sports, crafts, deep culture, or learning a new skill, to name a few. Fifty-one responses stressed the importance of taking good care of the body, sixteen of which recommended exercising on a regular basis, thirteen stressed the benefits of yoga, nine cited benefits of massage, acupuncture, progressive muscle relaxation, Reiki, emotional freedom technique, chakra healing techniques, and other types of mind-body energy tools, eight stressed the need for a healthy diet or fasting, seven noted immediate benefits of breathing exercises, and three noted the health benefits of rest and sleep. Thirty-nine responses clustered around therapeutic effects of contemplative practices, nineteen of which referenced the practice of meditation, eight cited the practice of "slowing down" and time alone, seven noted the benefits of journaling, three found helpful visualizations, and two recalled the benefits of

engaging in tasks that require intense focus. Thirty-six respondents believed that meaningful and supportive personal and professional relationships are essential to maintaining well-being, including with friends, partners, family members, colleagues, mentors, mentees, and like-minded, psychologically healthy, and insightful individuals in and outside of our profession, especially those who understand trauma and had similar experiences. Twenty-four responses stressed therapeutic benefits of exploring various practices of spiritual and religious traditions that offer a sense of security and being grounded in something "bigger than us", allow us to see ourselves in other people, live wholesome and balanced lives, and remain hopeful, with one respondent noting that "reflection is balanced when we reach into spirituality". Among traditions cited were Christianity (Catholic, Unitarian, Quaker, and Mennonite denominations), Buddhism, Daoism, Jewish rabbinic tradition, and indigenous and ancient traditions that recognize the heart as "the seed of wisdom" and believe that all humans are connected to each other, nature, and the planet. Moreover, five respondents noted the benefits of "giving back" to our communities, including volunteering and "doing something for others", because "a sense of comfort comes from taking care of someone else", as one of them put it.

Furthermore, the above practices were complemented by a range of inward practices. For example, as it was noted earlier, thirty-two responses believed that individual well-being begins with self-exploration, reflecting on life history and its impact on the way we think, feel, and behave, and knowing what our limits are, to name a few. Thirty-one responses acknowledged the need to identify, examine, and

process our emotions, nineteen of which viewed pain and struggle as catalysts of personal and professional growth. Twenty-one responses drew attention to the need to cultivate positive regard for the self through being attentive, appreciative, kind, accepting, and forgiving toward ourselves. Thirteen respondents believed in personal responsibility when it comes to making a choice to thrive and abandon the old ways that no longer serve them well. Eight responses stressed the practice of letting go of things outside of our control, which was framed as "accepting what is", "not sweating the small stuff", and "putting things in perspective", with several respondents noting that we cannot control what happens to us, but we can control how we respond to adversity. Seven respondents believed that peacebuilding practitioners have to embody peace themselves before they seek to implement it elsewhere and that the way we connect to ourselves affects the way we connect to others. Another seven respondents noted the impact of cultivating a sense of gratefulness on their sense of well-being, which can take the form of looking for joy in mundane life experiences, recognizing beauty in the smallest gifts of life, nurturing a sense of awe and wonder, marveling at the miracle of life, and appreciating that which connects us to ourselves and our hearts. Moreover, two respondents drew attention to the benefits of practicing curiosity and non-judgment.

While the outward self-care practices generally receive generous attention in the literature on self-care (examples of which can be found in Appendix 1), it appears appropriate to take a closer look at the psychological aspects of wellbeing referenced by the respondents that are often overlooked – namely, practitioners' attitude,

mindset, and self-perception – as they may wreak more havoc than the source of stress itself and thus require a life-long engagement depending on the depth of integration. In fact, it appears vital to attend to the relationship between self-perception, general disposition, and their influence on the ability to stay open to feedback and remain engaged in practice in the long run. While the data did not generate a clear understanding of this relationship, the literature on psychological resilience confirms this hypothesis. In fact, some authors believe that resilience requires optimistic outlook, sense of agency, positive sense of self, ability to bounce back, and adaptability to change[285] – the skills that can be developed over time either individually or with the help of a therapist or a wellness coach[286]. The work on optimistic outlook may begin with examining general life outlook, the influence of people we surround ourselves with, understanding obstacles in our work and life in general and what we need to overcome them, envisioning an optimistic outlook, and exploring practices that develop it[287]. The work on a sense of agency also requires measuring it, reflecting on our successes, disappointments, envisioning a path to acquire a sense of control in a daily life, an action plan to achieve it, and being realistic about what we can and cannot control[288]. The work on a positive sense of self begins with understanding our strengths and weaknesses, examining our self-perception,

[285] John Liptak and Ester Leutenberg, *The Building Resiliency Workbook: Reproducible Self-Assessments, Exercises & Educational Handouts* (Whole Person Associates, 2011).
[286] "Wellness Coaching", Whole Person, https://wholeperson.com/store/wellness-coaching-lifestyle-change.shtml.
[287] Liptak and Leutenberg, *The Building Resiliency Workbook,* p. 15.
[288] Ibid. p. 37.

and exploring exercises on fine-tuning self-perception and elevating self-image[289]. The ability to bounce back begins with measuring this skill, identifying signs of a victim mentality and designing a path toward overcoming it, taking on more responsibility, deconstructing experience to derive lessons from it, staying in the present instead of dwelling in the past while planning for the future, exploring new ways of engaging with challenges, and practicing exercises to train mental resilience[290]. Similarly, adaptability to change begins with examining our perception of change and reaction to it, acknowledging feelings toward it, understanding our strengths and skills to respond to it, regaining a sense of control, building a support system, recognizing positive aspects of change, and exploring tools to manage stress during challenging transitions[291].

To help achieve these goals, practitioners may also find it beneficial to reflect on whether their habits of mind serve them well. For example, Martin Seligman, the author of the concept of *learned optimism* whose work gave rise to the field of Positive Psychology, argued that an individual can cultivate a positive perspective in the face of adversity and previously acquired negative habits of mind by identifying and challenging automatic negative thoughts[292]. Moreover, his concept of *explanatory style* refers to cognitive patterns that can either enhance or diminish resilience depending on how we explain different types of adverse events, including

[289] Ibid. p. 59.
[290] Ibid. p. 81.
[291] Ibid. p. 103.
[292] Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism*. (A.A. Knopf, 1991), p. 205.

personalization, permanence, and pervasiveness[293]. *Personalization* deals with the question "Who caused the problem?" (internal/me or external/not me), *permanence* asks the question "How long will this problem last?" (long lasting or temporary), and *pervasiveness* poses the question "How much of my life does this problem affect?" (global or specific). For example, an individual with an explanatory style leaning toward *me, long lasting and global*, tends to perceive life challenges as overwhelming and a pessimistic outlook may lead to depression or anxiety. An explanatory style described as *external, long lasting, and global* may lead to anger and resentment. On the contrary, an individual relying on an explanatory style described as *external, temporary, and specific* leads to a more optimistic interpretation of events. In addition to recalibrating explanatory styles, practitioners may also benefit from exploring the concept of *growth mindset* which refers to the tendency to view intelligence, talents, and skills as qualities that can be developed and enhanced over time, as opposed to *fixed mindset,* which views these qualities as fixed traits[294]. While the latter hinders personal change and growth, a *growth mindset* offers significant benefits, including freedom from anxiety around skills and intelligence, appreciating effort and perseverance, and recognizing mistakes and setbacks as valuable opportunities for personal and professional growth. In fact, growth mindset and optimistic explanatory style were echoed in multiple responses. For example, when reflecting on qualities of a successful practitioner, twenty-seven responses drew attention to maintaining a

[293] Ibid. p. 40.
[294] Carol Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, (Ballantine, 2008), p. 6.

positive outlook, twenty cited positive self-regard (balanced by eighteen references to the ability to remain humble), and eight responses cited a sense of agency and responsibility and various ways of cultivating them. Another sixteen responses viewed failure as an opportunity to learn and improve, viewing it as "a great teacher" and "a gift", with two respondents admitting that the word "failure" was not a part of their vocabularies, and one of them viewing it as "a growing edge" that stands for an opportunity for improvement.

Appreciating and learning from negative experiences and setbacks, instead of agonizing over them, and maintaining a fluid concept of the self that is constantly in the process of change and growth is a tall order and requires practice. In fact, one respondent believed that our work requires a certain type of personality and questioned the idea that anyone can develop the level of resilience required to face extreme adversity. With that in mind, a wellness training module should include a rubric on psychological traits required to develop resilience, including explanatory style, mindset, attitude, locus of control, and a sense of self, to name a few, which would also measure practitioners' traits and design practices to recalibrate their response to adversity[295]. Several respondents also believed that practitioners would benefit from consulting therapists during crisis and even before, especially in cases of unresolved trauma. For example, cognitive therapies can be employed to transform destructive thought patterns, including mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs),

[295] Catherine Moore, "Learned Optimism", Positive Psychology (2020), https://positivepsychology.com/learned-optimism/.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), metacognitive awareness, defusing, reperceiving, and decentering[296], as well as cognitive restructuring to identify and dispute irrational or maladaptive thoughts known as cognitive distortions[297], which employs Socratic questioning, thought recording, guided imagery, and is used in various types of therapies, including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT). Moreover, in cases that require addressing underlying trauma, practitioners may benefit from complementing cognitive treatments with somatic approaches[298], although severe cases of trauma may be limited to purely somatic interventions to limit the experience of re-living traumatic events. For example, Trauma Resiliency Model (TRM) cultivates resilience by developing awareness of the body's inner state, training emotional flexibility, and teaching skills for steadying the nervous system and self-regulating.

Maintaining individual wellbeing will vary greatly depending on practitioners' personal and professional context and needs, which should inform and guide the design of a comprehensive wellbeing plan that takes into account not only practices to maintain short- and long-term self-care, but also a life-long commitment to thriving as an individual and practitioner. Developing physical, emotional, mental, and

[296] Andrea Grabovac, Mark A. Lau, and Brandilyn R. Willett, "Mechanisms of Mindfulness: A Buddhist Psychological Model", *Mindfulness* 2, no. 3 (2011), pp. 154–166.
[297] Samuel Gladding, *Counseling: A Comprehensive Profession* (Pearson, 2013).
[298] "STAR: Strategies for Trauma Awareness & Resilience", Eastern Mennonite University, https://emu.edu/cjp/star/.

spiritual resilience is essential to opening up to and reflecting on experience, however unpleasant it may appear. The task of moving toward difficult experience, rather than instinctively protecting the self or hiding from it, appears to require a wide range of qualities and skills noted earlier and reflected in data, including the fundamental acceptance of the idea that pain and adversity are a part of life and courage to learn and grow from them. The stoic spirit of *amor fati* was reflected in seventeen responses that viewed pain and struggle as catalysts of personal and professional growth, thus making a case that even extreme adversity has the potential to translate into substantial personal growth - the sentiment that is at the heart of literature on post-traumatic growth[299]. Moreover, it appears critical to recognize that admitting and learning from our mistakes does not take away from our inherent individual worth or credibility, but rather signals of practitioners' courage to be wrong instead of putting up a façade of an omniscient infallible expert and ability to view feedback and failure as gifts rather than personal attacks. Given that several respondents admitted that the process of developing these skills takes time and is wrought with challenges, individual practice of self-care to sustain them should be accompanied by fostering the type of organizational culture that views practitioners' wellbeing as important as their professional skills. At the same time, embracing a meaningful practice of self-care, similarly to embracing a meaningful practice of reflection, in the workplace is resisted in a variety of ways. While several respondents indicated that

[299] Stephen Joseph, *What Doesn't Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth* (Perseus Books, 2013).

reflection is often perceived as "soft" or "inaction" (but did not describe self-care in those terms), they have nonetheless admitted that the need for self-care is often overlooked on both, individual and institutional levels, either due to lack of trauma and burnout awareness, stigma associated with reaching out for help, or lack of organizational support and resources, to name a few.

The debate on whether to equip practitioners with self-care skills is long over in the helping professions that recognize that practitioners' wellbeing is not a luxury, but one of the pillars of effective practice[300]. The good news is one will find no shortage of training programs and resources that can be tailored to individual and organizational needs[301] [302] [303]. The bad news is self-care continues to be optional for students in the field of peacebuilding and relegated to offices of student affairs on many campuses, thus indirectly contributing to the culture of dismissing individual wellbeing as the "new age stuff"[304]. Ironically, the field of peacebuilding, the very nature of which assumes an exposure to trauma and toxicity of conflict, continues to fail to acknowledge the personal costs of entering the field and equip practitioners with tools necessary to cope with them. To challenge this pernicious practice, the

[300] Policy Statement "Professional Self-Care and Social Work" (Social Work Speaks, 2008), http://cantasd.org/wp-content/uploads/CWVE18_NASW.ProfessionalSelf-Care.pdf.
[301] Headington Institute, https://www.headington-institute.org/home.
[302] Shawn Goldberg, "Self-Care Toolkit", The Network for Social Work Management, https://socialworkmanager.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Selfcare-toolkit.pdf.
[303] "Bibliography on Professional Self-Care for Social Workers", University at Buffalo, http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/self-care-bibliography.pdf.
[304] "Why Self-Care Is Not Enough", MindfulNext, http://www.mindfulnext.org/why-self-care-is-not-enough/.

peacebuilding community has to come together in recognition of the role and urgency of self-care in the peacebuilding profession, exchange existing practices and resources, advance a culture of self-care and trauma awareness that would mirror the guidelines of the Green Cross community[305], and eventually realize its ethical obligation[306] to institutionalize mandatory self-care training programs for students and practitioners in the field alike.

[305] "Standards of Care", Green Cross Academy of Traumatology.
[306] Charlotte Min-Harris, "Staff Care and Humanitarian Aid Organizations: A Moral Obligation" (University of Denver, 2011), https://www.du.edu/korbel/crric/media/documents/charlotteminharris.pdf.

# CONCLUSION

As noted previously, this study came to life as a result of my curiosity about the nature of human reflection, which was initially sparked by a deeper search for answers to life's trials and a commitment to living an examined life, including when it requires stepping into the midst of inner turmoil. The intellectual curiosity about the experience of failure and suffering led to a series of inquiries and important self-discoveries, which illuminated the role of self-reflection in personal and professional development. Thus, initially reflexivity was approached through analytical lenses, focusing narrowly on individual introspection, as suggested by the term *reflectere,* or mirroring the *self* as the object of examination. The appreciation for the benefits of self-examination generated an assumption that the practice of reflexivity (used interchangeably with self-reflection) expands practitioners' self-awareness and boosts personal and professional development, which in turn has a positive effect on practice.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, which aimed at understanding the subjective and socially constructed interpretation of the concept of reflexivity, a qualitative research design appeared to be a natural fit. Using non-probability, purposive, and snowball sampling strategies, I identified and carried out semi-structured interviews with forty-two seasoned peacebuilding professionals currently

based in the United States. While initially it was planned to interview exclusively practitioners working in the field, difficulties with securing positive responses to invitations to participate in the study suggested including respondents engaged partially or primarily in analytical type of work as well. Moreover, some respondents viewed practice so broadly that, besides the narrow understanding of practice as a direct engagement with clients, it often encompassed research, teaching, and public engagement, among other activities. Over the course of the interviews, the participants were asked between six and twelve questions, including the following research questions: "How do you define the phenomenon of self-reflection?" and "What role does it play in your practice?" While initial interviews included questions about the nature of work, motivation, professional evolution, and past successes and failures, it soon became apparent that the limitations of the research format demanded that more attention should be paid to the immediate focus of examination. The collected data was then analyzed using thematic analysis, which had both deductive and inductive elements in it. Deductive themes were identified prior to data analysis and were driven by the preliminary literature review. For example, the design of interview questionnaire was driven by the central theme of examination that aimed to explore the phenomenon of self-reflection. Inductive elements, on the other hand, allowed for the emergence of subthemes and additional themes to be driven by data. For example, after the first few interviews it was clear that the themes of self-care and challenges associated with engaging in self-reflection had to be included.

A closer look at the data did not reveal trends correlating with respondents' demographic characteristics, but suggested to group respondents into three categories based on the type of work they did: the first category engaged predominantly in analytical work in academia and in some practice (14), the second category balanced a substantial amount of both, academic and field work (18), and the third category consisted of practitioners engaged primarily in field work (10). While none of the respondents explicitly situated reflexivity in relationship to critical and traditional reflection, forty-one of them revealed that they engage in more than one type of reflection, thus generating diverse reflection profiles based on the seven types of reflection that crystalized over the course of data analysis. These types of reflection consisted of (1) *reflection on practice* focusing on what works and how, (2) *critical reflection* highlighting systemic issues and power imbalances, (3) *analytical self-reflection* examining practitioners' skills and qualities, including meta-cognition, (4) *deep self-inquiry* generating rich insights into the self, including past trauma, life and career direction, values, convictions, etc., (5) *mindful awareness* focusing on being present and aware in the moment, (6) *contemplative mindfulness* practiced through slowing down, quieting the mind, and deep listening inside, and (7) *integrative reflexivity* converging the thought and felt types of insight. It should be noted that, although these seven types of reflection have significant overlaps and could be condensed into two essential categories of analytical and embodied reflection, it appeared appropriate to generate a more detailed taxonomy of reflection in order to acknowledge nuances in responses.

In addition, although most responses grouped around cognitive modes of reflexivity, such as deep self-examination (31), mindful awareness (29), analytical self-reflection (26), reflection on practice (14), and critical reflection (10), a substantial number of them drew attention to the felt modes of reflection, including integrative (18) and contemplative (16) reflection. Of interest here is the relationship between the nature of work and the type of reflection practiced. The respondents who referenced the contemplative and integrative types of reflexivity were engaged either exclusively in field work or at least a substantial amount of practice, while cognitive modes of reflection were predominant among respondents engaged primarily in intellectual work, such as research, scholarship, teaching, and training. For example, nine of the ten and seven of the eighteen practitioners in the third and second categories respectively referenced integrative reflexivity. Most of these respondents had no difficulties with separating the concepts of reflexivity and reflection on practice and practiced both, felt and thought modes of reflexivity. The integrative approach was especially evident in cases when practitioners engaged directly in the work on trauma healing, reconciliation, police, prison, youth work, and other types of practice exposing them to raw human emotions – the type of work that some of the respondents referred to as their "calling", something that intimately connects them to a "greater cause", and requires "a firm ground to stand on". In addition, one practitioner pointed out what appears to lie at the core of working with deeply divisive conflicts, when he observed that he listens to insights that come from both, head and heart and "what comes from the heart ends up being the agent of change".

At the same time, the further interviewees were removed from the exigent realities of the field work, the less prominent the role of the felt or integrative reflection was. For example, of the fourteen respondents in the first category, thirteen relied primarily on analytical forms of reflexivity, eight conflated self-reflection with reflection on practice, only two indirectly referred to the contemplative aspect of reflection, and another two alluded to the aesthetic and unspecified intuitive aspects of it. Thus, the deviation from the initial plan to interview exclusively practitioners in the field suggested that the preferred mode of reflection would depend largely on the nature of work. For example, purely analytical work may require little to no reflexivity, while fieldwork may benefit from adopting integrative approaches to reflection that value embodied forms of insight as much as analytical ones. Moreover, the seven modes of reflection generated over the course of data analysis suggested a more nuanced understanding of reflexivity and reflective practice. For example, some respondents viewed reflexivity as a purely analytical activity (understanding the practitioner herself, including life history and meta-cognition), others as an embodied insight (intuitive, aesthetical, contemplative, spiritual, and physical feedback), and some as both (analytical and embodied insights complement each other and cannot be compartmentalized). With that in mind, the study proposed that reflective practice can be likened to composite lenses, of which the most immediate lens converges embodied and analytical feedback, followed by the lens of critical reflection situating practice in a broader historical and cultural context, followed by the lens of reflection on practice itself focusing on challenges, goals, and methodology of practice –

whereby each lens is temporally embedded and informed by the past, present, and future.

At the same time, some authors recognize the limitations of prescriptive approaches to reflection, as relying on any type of model undermines the very spirit of the experiential-intuitive nature of reflective practice – the point highlighted by several respondents who warned against a mechanistic approach to reflection that often accompanies the use of models. With that in mind, this study did not aim to generate a model of reflection per se, but rather a multi-level framework of reflection that situates practice and individual experiences of practitioners in a broader sociocultural context. Moreover, the diversity in conceptualizing reflection in data reflects the absence of consistent understanding of reflection in the literature reviewed. The latter identified several major approaches to reflection, including (a) traditional models of reflection that are largely interested in improving practice and not so much in the role of practitioners in shaping it, (b) critical reflection models that tend to engage in critical examination of social context and its influence on individual, (c) models that either examine reflexivity exclusively or view it in the context of technical and critical reflection, and (d) models that view reflexivity as an element of an integrative or holistic reflection that merges cognitive and embodied feedback – the typology reflected in the data as well. Similarly to some of the models reviewed, this study proposes a view of reflective practice that thinks of reflection as a continuum or composite lenses, highlighting the idea that, in order to be *reflective*, the practice has to be also *reflexive*. However, the study does offer a more nuanced

understanding of reflexivity by adding an additional layer of embodied reflexivity that encompasses felt insight, including intuitive, aesthetical, contemplative, spiritual, and physical feedback, which may prove to be just as valuable as analytical insight, depending on the nature of work.

Another trend revealed by the data is that reflexivity plays a much greater role in the work of both, practitioners and analysts than expected. Although different groups of professionals tend to rely on different modes of reflection, the role of reflexivity in professional development and advancing practice deserves recognition in peacebuilding literature, which, at the moment, relies either predominantly on technical reflection [307] or indirectly acknowledges reflexivity when focusing on practice[308]. At the same time, the literature in other helping professions continues to evolve and gradually come to terms with the fact that reflecting on experience is always situated and influenced not only by the object of examination, but by the subject of it as well. In approaching the self as a set of interpretive lenses that direct our practice, practitioners assume responsibility for familiarizing with and fine-tuning these lenses. As we practice bringing awareness to our individual screens, we develop a more accurate and current understanding of ourselves, which is critical to personal and professional development, self-actualization, and living a full meaningful life[309].

[307] Pearson d'Estree, "Conflict Resolution as a Profession".
[308] Lederach et al., *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring, and Learning Toolkit*.
[309] Sue White et al., *Critical Reflection in Health and Social Care*, p. 236.

In addition, the data also mirrors the long-standing tradition of privileging superior rational insight over inferior subjective insight, which had a direct and lasting impact on how we understand and employ reflection today. In fact, the contemporary mainstream models of reflective practice tend to focus on reason as the only reliable way of learning from experience and dismiss subjective knowledge and the impact of practitioners on practice as something that muddies the waters rather than enriches our understanding of human experience. This "puritanism of the senses"[310] clearly present in scholarly texts and academia is reflected in data. For example, the mind-body split becomes evident especially when comparing the modes of reflection practiced by different groups of respondents, with the second and third groups of respondents (pracademics and practitioners) utilizing both, analytical and embodied forms of insight and the first group (respondents engaged primarily in analytical work) mentioning them indirectly while relying predominantly on purely analytical insights.

Reflecting on these findings raises a formidable challenge to merging theory and practice sustained by the long-standing tradition of privileging analytical and dismissing subjective and felt forms of insight in various training formats and especially academia. As some authors point out, the elevation of mind in the Western thought gave the concept of reflection a "swelled head from birth"[311], while turning senses into an obstacle to be overcome and locating the human faculty for producing

[310] Cerwonka and Malkki, *Improvising Theory,* p. 176.
[311] Jordi, "Reframing the Concept of Reflection", p. 183.

reliable knowledge at the furthest possible remove from human corporeality[312]. While purely analytical models and tools may work in relatively shallow conflicts, incorporating an integrative approach to practice and reflection enriches practitioners' understanding of human experience and complexity of working with protracted and often irrational conflicts, engaging with which demands going beyond the shallow analytical tools. However tempting it may be to fetishize the power of reason over the messiness of practice, the process of healing and transformation of social fabric and human psyche requires a holistic approach, whereby a practitioner cannot afford to dismiss the diverse feedback loops of embodied reflection, which in some cases prove to be more reliable than purely analytical insights, as some literature and respondents point out. Developing an appreciation for the diversity of modes of knowing, in turn, draws attention to glaring disconnects between theory and practice, reconciling which requires novel and honest ways of thinking about them. As some authors remind, one is to consult theory when it illuminates a phenomenon more fully in itself[313] instead of inadvertently constricting, mythologizing, or reinventing it. Nonetheless, both, practice and reflection on it, continue to be constricted by the legacy of rationalism that obscures the value of subjective knowing. Integrative approaches, on the other hand, embrace the latter and suggest that the merging of theory and practice goes in parallel with merging of various modes of knowing. *Praxis* is viewed here as an informed action of breaking

[312] Michelson, "Usual Suspects", p. 440.
[313] Cerwonka and Malkki, *Improvising Theory*, p. 118.

down any duality between theory and practice, practitioner and individual, epistemological and ontological, mundane and transcendental, doing and being, and reflection becomes more of a process, attitude, culture, and "a way of being in the world"[314], rather than simply a skill, goal, or a set of manuals.

Such understanding of practice and reflection suggests several practical implications, with perhaps the most obvious one being that the peacebuilding training has to match the needs and complexity of practice, including the skills and qualities required to meet its challenges. In fact, the data suggest that practical and soft skills are just as important as analytical skills, which means that the syllabus design should explore ways to tie theory, experiential learning, and professional development. Moreover, the majority of respondents either indirectly or directly alluded to overlaps between professional and personal dimensions of their work and sixteen of them believed that they eventually merge, because they bring "the whole" of who they are to what they do, which raises the question on ways in which the personal dimension can be incorporated into various training formats. Thus, before entering the field, one may benefit from training in emotional and social intelligence, working with trauma, cultural competence, communication, deep listening and observation, contemplation, mindfulness, self-awareness, self-care, and a range of other skills cited by respondents, besides technical and analytical skills. Furthermore, the offered framework of reflective practice inspired a framework of reflective

[314] Johns, *Becoming a Reflective Practitioner,* p. 2.

training that attends to technical, critical, and reflexive (analytical and embodied) levels of reflection. More importantly, such training has to involve learners in reflection on the content, process, premise, and challenges of their own learning process in order to develop the fundamentals of self-directed learning – the skill that is now expected by many employers, and aim to connect graduates to future employers through experiential apprenticeship programs.

Another valuable insight raised by the respondents early on in the process of data collection was the recognition that a meaningful reflection on practice should be accompanied by the practice of self-care. As highlighted in the literature review, reflection has both, positive and negative effects – while extending the promise of enhancing practice, it also promises to be "a bumpy ride" that disrupts the comfort of the familiar[315]. Similarly, the data captured several serious challenges associated with reflection, including negative side effects (39), resistance to it (23), absence of environmental support (22), time commitment (14), and low self-awareness (10). In fact, the biggest challenge associated with reflection – its negative side effects – had to do with unpleasant and painful experiences that can have "paralyzing", "corrosive", and "debilitating" effects, which traditional models of reflective practice failed to acknowledge time and again. Compounded by the demanding nature of work with conflict and trauma and overwhelming workloads, corrosive effects of reflection demand close attention to practitioners' often absent or inadequate training in self-

[315] Fox and Allan, "Doing Reflexivity", p. 111.

care. At the same time, the debate on whether to equip practitioners with self-care skills is long over in the helping professions that recognize that practitioners' wellbeing is not a luxury, but one of the pillars of effective practice[316]. As one respondent observed, while other helping professions recognize the need for self-care, the field of peacebuilding neglects it. With that in mind, the study, inspired by the data and the wellbeing literature, proposed a holistic approach that attends to physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and environmental aspects of practitioners' wellbeing and builds on expanding self-awareness. Among the fundamental goals of this framework is growing the habit of routinely revisiting different domains of wellbeing, developing resilience skills, and fine-tuning routine and emergency self-care plans. In addition, it is hoped that the peacebuilding community will come together in recognition of the paramount impact of self-care on practitioners and practice, exchange existing practices and resources, advance a culture of self-care and trauma awareness that would mirror the guidelines of the Green Cross community[317], and eventually realize its ethical obligation to institutionalize mandatory self-care training programs for students and practitioners in the field.

In addition, it appears appropriate to acknowledge the study's weaknesses and limitations, including those that challenge its validity, reliability, and generalizability. For example, the study's validity may be questioned due to the

[316] "Policy Statement on Professional Self-Care and Social Work" (Social Work Speaks, 2008).
[317] "Standards of Care", Green Cross Academy of Traumatology.

elusive nature of the phenomenon it seeks to demystify. As noted previously, the study did not intend to focus on different types of reflection, besides the analytical aspect of reflexivity. However, because respondents often conflated it with reflection on practice, critical reflection, mindfulness, intuition, and other forms reflection, it became clear that reflexivity has to be situated in close proximity to other forms of reflection, the nature of and boundaries between which appear nebulous at times. Because the study seems to have answered the question of "How do you define reflection?" instead of the intended research question of "How do you define self-reflection?", it has generated both, data on reflexivity and reflection, which raised the need to engage with the broader concept of reflective practice. Moreover, as noted in the methodological section, the study did not intend to pose the claims of reliability (or asserting that the results would be replicated if repeated) and generalizability (or asserting that the data applicable to the participants in this study would be applicable to the rest of the field). In fact, any claim of reliability by a qualitative researcher should be met with suspicion, given the biased nature of the author's perspective and the fact that qualitative data are gathered in a natural setting rather than a controlled environment. It would be equally unrealistic to expect the data to accurately represent the rest of the field of peacebuilding, given that the study relied on a non-probability sample to draw conclusions and was merely exploratory in nature. The study's methodological approach also merits criticism in light of inherent limitations of the theme analysis. For example, the convenience of illustrating a massive set of data with a condensed grouping of themes and subthemes comes at the expense of

missing rich nuanced data[318] and absent analysis on the use of language[319]. The former means that the emphasis here is not so much on including everything that was said in interviews as on what appears relevant to the subject of examination, and the latter implies that what was said is more relevant than how it was said. What complicates further theme analysis is that the process of grouping and interpretation of themes and subthemes relies primarily on the researcher's own perception of what is important and relevant, which, in turn, is grounded in her personal and professional experiences.

While a qualitative research helps to explore a phenomenon, it could be further advanced through a range of other means, such as in-depth phenomenological interviews generating detailed psychological portraits of practitioners and preferred modes of reflection that would mirror efforts in other fields[320], focus groups, observation, and participatory learning, among others. One of the main findings of this study – the correlation between the type of work and the type of reflection practiced – could be further tested by studying the practice of reflection of practitioners with little to no involvement in intellectual work or respondents involved in both, practice and academia, whose answers could then be plotted on the continuum that confirms or rejects the composite lenses of reflective practice offered in this study. Moreover, future research could rely on this study to fine-tune interview

[318] Guest et al., *Applied Thematic Analysis*, p. 17.
[319] Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology", p. 97.
[320] Caetano, "Coping With Life: A Typology of Personal Reflexivity."

questions to focus exclusively on self-reflection instead of reflection in general by clearly defining that the phenomenon researched is the reflection on the self in practice rather than the practice itself and asking additional questions that were omitted in this study, such as "Is there a difference between reflecting in/on practice and reflecting in/on analytical work? If so, can you describe it?" and "What are the conditions for effective reflection?" Also, setting aside ample time for (possibly multiple) interviews, instead of 30 to 60 minutes, as was the case in this study, would allow to delve deeper into the answers and clarify their meaning. Moreover, working in a team with other researcher(s) would be preferred to working alone, as exchanging feedback and collaborative authorship would provide additional insights into the process of coding, theme formation, and the researchers' own biases. At the same time, although the biased nature of qualitative inquiries may be perceived as a weakness, the anti-method authors remind us that the canonized scientific method is not adequate enough to grasp the richness and complexity of human experience and that the only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend human existence is another human being[321].

While some of the knowledge claims generated in this study may sound far from original, they draw attention to the need to problematize not only the premise of the current paradigm of reflective practice, but also epistemological assumptions of practice, the nature of the field, and the process of educating peacebuilding

[321] Kvale and Brinkmann, *InterViews,* p. 83.

practitioners, bringing to the fore the role of an individual in helping professions and the demand to embrace fully the humanity of both, practitioners and their clients. Such reframing of reflection carries a fundamental recognition that understanding and advancing our work goes in parallel with understanding and advancing ourselves, that *reflective doing* should be accompanied by *reflexive being*, and that asking deeper questions about practice is situated within a larger search for what a meaningful, rewarding, and wholesome life is. Another implication of such framing is that human experience is far too rich and complex to be reduced to its analytical understanding and that there is more than one way to generate insight. Here, an openness to cultivating a deeper contemplative attitude toward practice and the self becomes as important as attending to the method of engaging in practice. In fact, the complementary relationship of analytical and embodied insight and reflection on practice should problematize approaches to reflective practice that leave little to no room for reflexivity (both, thought and felt). Finally, the process of fine-tuning theory of reflective practice demands that the voices of practitioners are given the same level of legitimacy and visibility as those of theorists, and that the value of a theory is measured by how successful it has been in transforming conflicts.

Lastly, it is worth noting that this study came to light in part due to an illuminating personal journey that explored various analytical, psychological, spiritual, and physical modes of learning, which included journaling, self-inventories, courses on personal and professional growth, contemplative practices, retreats, and joining various communities of like-minded seekers, to name a few. It was hoped that

seeing the benefits of engaging in reflection on personal and professional levels could spark a wider conversation on the relationship between advancing practice and practitioners' personal and professional development. It is also worth noting that this journey would not be possible without curiosity about the humbling and disrupting experience of failure, learning to sit with deeper questions, accepting my limitations, growing more comfortable with revealing them, and asking for feedback and help. Learning from mistakes is far from being a pleasant experience. It is tempting and convenient to dismiss, justify, or overlook them. Nonetheless, failures often prove to be more significant than successes, because successes tend to reinforce our illusions about ourselves. Failures, on the other hand, bring us to a fork in the road where we either despair or go deeper[322]. This study was an attempt to "go deeper". Although I part ways with it feeling that it has barely scratched the surface, I am reminded of the ceaseless and tortuous nature of learning captured in the words of T.S. Eliot:

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time[323].

[322] James Finley, *Christian Meditation: Experiencing the Presence of God* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), p. 226.
[323] T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*, (Faber and Faber, 1942).

## APPENDIX 1: RESOURCES ON WELLBEING


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# BIOGRAPHY

Nina Selwan entered the field of peacebuilding upon joining The Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School at George Mason University in 2009 following her undergraduate studies in Law and Psychology. During her graduate studies, she focused on conflicts in post-Soviet spaces, human rights, and gender issues and participated in field research projects in Georgia, South Africa, and Indonesia. Over the course of several years, she was involved in various projects within the framework of the Georgian - South Ossetian "Point of View" process under the leadership of Dr. Susan Allen. After acquiring Master of Science Degree in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, she went on to join the Doctoral Program at the Carter School in order to contribute to understanding conflicts in post-Soviet spaces, which led to discovering the personal dimension of practice. The curiosity sparked by this discovery led to this study. It is her hope that it will generate a much-needed conversation on the type of reflective practice that does not deny, truncate, or distort the complexity and richness of practice and human experience.