

Evaluative Methods for Community Truth and Reconciliation Commissions:
A Case Study of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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“In matters of truth and justice, there is no difference between large and small problems, for issues concerning the treatment of people are all the same.”

~Albert Einstein

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Policy Question

Truth and reconciliation commissions (TRC's) are increasingly being used as a form of restorative justice at the national level. Arising out of post-conflict societies, TRCs saw a particularly significant increase from the late 1990's onwards. TRCs may have real utility at the local level as well. Today community-based TRCs have been implemented in at least nine states in the U.S. The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission holds the distinguished honor of being the first of its kind in the country. What is not well understood, however, is the impact TRC's have on the communities in which they serve. This study seeks to explore what evaluative methodology or combination of methodologies is best suited to capture a TRC's impact, and what practices future TRC's might employ to ensure evaluations are conducted in a systematic and sensitive manner.

Why Evaluation is Important

Understanding why evaluations of truth commissions are important may be obvious to some or something never considered by others. Regardless of one's stance on evaluation, there are several reasons why evaluation should be considered among future truth commissions. Firstly, evaluations can help cement a community's commitment to the truth and reconciliation process by continually confronting the public with assessments on the progress of their objectives. Secondly, evaluations allow donor agencies and non-governmental organizations to understand their contributions and give them an understanding of the lessons learned. Finally, at a broader level, public policy experts seek the best avenues to approach societal issues and, as truth commissions continue to make their way onto lists of alternatives to retributive justice mechanisms, understanding their impact is of critical importance to those who consider their use. Evaluations allow community expectations to be set at an appropriate level, and will allow policy makers to anticipate any gaps that may exist after a TRC has completed its work.

Methodology

Because every TRC seeks to address a different conflict, I examined this issue through the lens of one truth commission, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC), in order to orient the research in a specific context. In order to assess methodological strategies for evaluations of community-level TRC's, I surveyed the existing literature on empirical research and transitional justice mechanisms, as well as, the literature surrounding the GTRC. I also conducted ten in-depth interviews with practitioners who were involved with the GTRC in order to gain first-hand insight into the best possible means by which to understand the impact of the GTRC. Interviewees consisted of three advisors, four commissioners, the GTRC Public Hearings Coordinator, the GTRC Executive Director, and the Vice Chair of the Commission Selection Panel.

Results

Through analysis of the interviews I conducted and supplementary material, I found that each methodology that I examined (quantitative, qualitative, and narrative) were applicable and desirable in the evaluations of truth commissions. Despite considerable controversy over some methodologies, in particular quantitative methods, each methodology was considered as an effective measurement of impact by a number of practitioners. In this regard, I find that there is nothing inherent in the truth commission process that excludes quantitative measurements from being an effective tool of analysis. However, I also found that overreliance on any one method could severely damage a truth commission's assessment and that a quality evaluation of a truth commission *must* include elements of each methodology.

Recommendations

The principle recommendation put forth in this paper is that community truth commissions should include an evaluative team in the structure of their commission. The imbedded evaluation team would allow researchers to witness discussions surrounding the objectives of the commission, which will help clarify what indicators can serve as a proper form of assessment. A common criticism of current evaluations is that researchers are measuring truth commissions against indicators that the commission did not seek to address. In this regard, an evaluative team that remained a separate division of the commission would allow the researchers to understand the process without compromising their independence.

PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

Societies and communities have increasingly turned to truth and reconciliation commissions (TRC's) as a form of restorative justice, an approach that focuses on rehabilitating survivors and perpetrators of crimes, following periods of conflict or widespread human rights violations. While TRC's serve in a variety of contexts and for various reasons, they are largely designed to be temporary investigative bodies to account for the past and to clarify the circumstances that allowed conflict to arise in the environments in which they serve. TRC's are typically charged with producing a final report, which often carries with it recommendations for the community. It is important to note that TRC's are non-judicial bodies and are not necessarily created as a substitute for prosecutions. However, TRC's have begun to occupy a unique space within public policy when prosecutions are impractical or impossible due to the number of individuals involved or (of particular interest to this research) when judicial systems have lacked the capacity or independence to carry out prosecutions in a fair and objective manner.¹

Truth and reconciliation commissions are increasingly being used as a form of restorative justice at the national level. Arising out of post-conflict societies, TRCs saw a particularly significant increase from the late 1990's onwards. In fact, from 1996 to 2006, the amount of TRCs in the world more than doubled the total of the previous three decades, rising from a total of 18 completed or operational TRCs in 1996 to 41 in 2006.² However, TRCs may have real utility at the local level as well. Today community-based TRCs have been implemented in at least nine states in the U.S.³ The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission holds the distinguished honor of being the first of its kind in the country. Other local TRCs such as the Toronto Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission are in the process of being implemented.^{4,5} As communities continue to implement truth commissions or make decisions about whether to implement a TRC, it would be valuable for local communities to understand, in a variety of ways, what TRCs are able to achieve.

A precise understanding of what TRC's are able to accomplish remains a difficult and particularly elusive challenge for many researchers. The exact objectives of TRC's often vary depending upon an individual's perspective, which may add to the complexity in assessing TRC's. Eduardo Gonzalez, the Director of the Truth and Memory Program

1 "Rule-of-Law Tools for Post Conflict States - Truth Commissions." Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006. Web. <<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/RuleoflawTruthCommissionsen.pdf>>.

2 Hirsch, Michal Ben-Josef, Megan MacKenzie, and Mohamed Sesay. "Measuring the Impacts of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Placing the Global 'success' of TRCs in Local Perspective." *Cooperation and Conflict* 47.3 (2012): 386-403. p. 389.

³ These states are Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah. See: Ricks, Lenehn, Courtney Glass, Jeremy Skinner, and Sylvia Dove. "Southern Truth and Reconciliation: Narrative Summaries & Chart." Professor Ifill, 2007. p. 1. Web.

⁴ Stanton, Kim. "Looking Forward, Looking Back: The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 27.1 (2012): 81-99. Web.

⁵ "International Center for Transitional Justice." *Maine Truth Commission to Tell Story of Forced Assimilation of Wabanaki Children*. International Center for Transitional Justice, 19 Feb. 2013. Web. Apr. 2013. <<http://ictj.org/news/maine-truth-commission-tell-story-forced-assimilation-wabanaki-children>>.

for the International Center for Transitional Justice, explains the objectives of TRC's as having three primary components. The first of which is to, "primarily establish a record of human rights violations that have been committed over a period of a time that is of interest."⁶ Secondly, TRC's are meant to "restore some levels of dignity and recognition to the victims...and initiate, probably, a process of healing," and the third objective is to "facilitate a discussion in the public sphere and particularly among institutions about necessary institutional transformations."⁷

These three goals seem to resonate with the existing literature on TRC's, and provide solid footing in which to explore the purposes of TRC's. Neil Kritz, a Senior Scholar in Residence at the U.S. Institute of Peace, discusses the goals of TRC's in a similar framework. However, Kritz may be inclined to add that a TRC should seek to establish "a durable peace with assurance that a return to violence is fairly unlikely."⁸ This addition is certainly related to the institutional reform Gonzalez refers to, but is worth including as a separate component nonetheless. Others may develop these objectives further. However, for the purposes of this paper, I will consider these objectives as the fundamental goals of TRC's. While TRC's may be designed to achieve other tasks, it is nonetheless useful to have a general rubric that can be matched with the case study of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission in order for the analysis here to be pertinent for future truth commissions that place themselves within this tradition.

With these four objectives in mind, this paper will examine various methodologies in which to evaluate the impacts of TRC's. This project remains situated in the larger context of the debate around what TRC's can and cannot contribute to communities. However, due to time and resource constraints it will only go so far as to address the more focused question of how we begin articulating the capabilities of TRC's, and what practices may allow future TRC's to more effectively evaluate assess their strengths and weaknesses. To focus these research efforts further, this Master's Project will examine the methodologies in regards to community level, rather than national, TRC's. The primary purpose of this academic exercise, then, will be to put forth recommendations for empirical research and evaluative methodologies for future community TRC's. The principle questions that drive this research are:

1. What methodology or combination of methodologies is best suited to capture the impact of community-level truth and reconciliation commissions?
2. What practices might future TRC's utilize to ensure evaluations are conducted in a more systematic and sensitive manner?

⁶ Gonzalez, Eduardo. Personal Interview. 4 March 2013

⁷ It should be noted that Eduardo Gonzalez spoke in terms referring to "truth commissions" rather than "truth and reconciliation commissions" as he points out that not all of the commissions have a mandate to focus on reconciliation. While this distinction is important and warrants attention, I use the terms interchangeably throughout this paper for the purposes of simplicity. The term "commission" will also serve as a synonym. Taken from: Gonzalez, Eduardo. Personal Interview. 4 March 2013.

⁸ Kritz, Neil. "Policy Implications of Empirical Research on Transitional Justice." Ed. Der Merwe, Hugo Van, Victoria Baxter, and Audrey R. Chapman. *Assessing the Impact of Transitional Justice: Challenges for Empirical Research*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2009. p. 13. Print.

PART 2 - EVALUATIVE METHODS: A LACK OF CONSENSUS & CHALLENGES

Evaluating TRC's is not a clear-cut task. The scope of objectives involved in the TRC process and the intangible nature of much of the impact does not readily lend itself to any particular methodology. As Hirsch, MacKenzie, and Sesay point out, "currently there are no established methods or mechanisms for measuring the impacts of TRCs; furthermore, the few examples of efforts to measure these impacts have serious limitations."⁹ The lack of agreement on methodologies for evaluating TRC's is evident in discussions surrounding the effects of the process. Hirsh et. al. contend that a general consensus is arising that TRC's have generally positive effects, while other scholars such as Jack Snyder and Leslie Vinjamuri point out that TRC's may pose real risks as "they may foment divergent interpretations of history rather than producing one narrative, generate resentment on the part of victims, and insecurity on the part of alleged perpetrators."¹⁰

The lack of consistency in evaluations may account for divergent interpretations over the success of specific TRC's, and may even provide practitioners with erroneous conclusions about the *general* consensus on whether or not TRC's have positive or negative impacts. However, the lack of consistency may not necessarily stem from uncoordinated efforts, but rather controversies over how to measure specific indicators, what indicators matter, who are the primary stakeholders in the process, and how best to use available resources. These questions do not necessarily have uniform answers across the various contexts in which TRC's are employed. However, a systematic way of determining the answers to these questions may allow for comparable assessments across these diverse environments.

Challenges in Evaluating TRC's

The challenges involved in evaluating TRC's are numerous and are sometimes philosophical in nature. The above questions represent some major issues that plague evaluators; however, even if these matters are resolved evaluators face a myriad of other decisions that will affect the outcome of their work. Evaluators must face choices ranging from word choice to sample size and the process of selection. The challenges are so great that whole books have been dedicated to the subject.¹¹ While the following section is by no means exhaustive, it is meant to give the reader a general sense of the challenges that evaluators face.

⁹ Hirsch, Michal Ben-Josef, Megan MacKenzie, and Mohamed Sesay. "Measuring the Impacts of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Placing the Global 'success' of TRCs in Local Perspective." *Cooperation and Conflict* 47.3 (2012): p. 386. Web.

¹⁰ Quote taken from: Brahm, Eric. "Uncovering the Truth: Examining Truth Commissions Success and Impact." *International Studies Perspectives*, 8 (2007). p. 20. Available at: <<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/graduate-sup/ukr/pdf/Brahm%25202007.pdf>>.

¹¹ For instance: Höglund K and Öberg M (2010) *Understanding Peace Research: Methods and Challenges*. New York: Routledge.

The first challenge evaluators and commissions face is a question that may often be taken for granted – what does “success” mean for truth commissions? There may be several ways in which to differentiate between the successes of truth commissions, but three primary distinctions are readily apparent. One way in which to interpret success is whether or not the Commission fulfilled its mandate and provided a final and substantive report of its findings. A second manner in which to understand success may be to gauge the extent to which the commission’s recommendations were carried out. Still a third understanding of success may be its broader impact on the society it served or those directly involved in the incident, and if it has largely reduced tensions among conflicting parties.¹² Returning to the four general objectives set out in the introduction, it would seem as though all of these factors are important in determining the success of a truth commission. Yet, individual commissions will have strengths and weaknesses that are unique to the circumstances and environments that bore their creation. In this regard, evaluators face decisions over how to compartmentalize these understandings of success in order to gain a more robust understanding of a commission’s achievement.

Another dimension of success for truth commissions is in regards to effects on individuals and whole societies. Some scholars and practitioners emphasize the therapeutic effect of truth commissions on survivors. Some note that truth commissions may provide survivors with a necessary starting point in which to confront the past. Although, it may not be entirely sufficient for survivors to come to terms with past atrocities, it provides a springboard into the healing process.¹³ Others however, stress that truth commissions are meant to be catalysts for societal change, and should primarily focus on the community at-large.¹⁴ Striking a balance between attending to the personal level and to the social changes that are necessary is not only difficult for commissions but for evaluators as well. Often times, evaluators focus exclusively upon anecdotal evidence of individual transformations or, conversely, focus on quantitative methods that attempt to understand civil relations. In either case, the evaluation leaves a gap in one of these important elements of the TRC process.

One important issue for evaluations is the relationship that evaluators have with the truth commission in question. Hirsch et. al. note that bias remains a prevalent problem among evaluations. Many authors who provide assessments of truth commissions are often intimately tied to advocacy or support work and are personally or professionally invested in the outcomes of the commission. The possibility of professional bias has obvious implications because the community may not consider this type of work completely objective, even if conducted in good faith.^{15, 16} On the other

¹² Brahm, Eric. "Uncovering the Truth: Examining Truth Commissions Success and Impact." *International Studies Perspectives*, 8 (2007). p. 18. Available at: <<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/grad-etudesup/ukr/pdf/Brahm%25202007.pdf>>.

¹³ Hamber, B. (1998). "The Burden of Truth: An Evaluation of the Psychological Support Services and Initiatives Undertaken by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *American Imago*, 55(1), 9-28. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/197193123?accountid=10598>

¹⁴ Brahm, Eric. "Uncovering the Truth: Examining Truth Commissions Success and Impact." *International Studies Perspectives*, 8 (2007). p. 20. Available at: <<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/grad-etudesup/ukr/pdf/Brahm%25202007.pdf>>.

¹⁵ This is not to contend that this work does not have value or should not be carried out, but rather that this work cannot be considered an impartial evaluation. As a consequence, this work may not be regarded by the community as

hand, some scholars have conducted evaluations independently and without the input of the commission. While independence is typically valued for effective evaluations, in the case of TRC's complete independence may lead to professionals misinterpreting the contextual goals of the commission. For instance, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission dedicated almost two full pages of the final report to its interpretation of the term "reconciliation."¹⁷ However, as the Executive Director of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Jill Williams notes, professionals who conducted evaluations without being present during the nascent stages of the process would not have been aware of this definition until the release of the Final Report. This could have led some practitioners to use indicators for reconciliation that did not echo the Commission's understanding of the term, leading to conclusions that did not connect with the work the Commission set out to do.¹⁸ This type of evaluation can severely distort the work of commissions. Therefore, it is essential that evaluators be in sync with a commission's understanding of its mandate.

Another challenge of evaluations and truth commissions as a whole is an important epistemological and philosophical limitation that is not necessarily specific to the evaluations of truth commissions. As quantitative approaches begin to spread to the restorative justice field, serious discussion surrounding the indicators that are used and the language that is meant to convey ideas of success become a serious focus of the literature. A primary example of this limitation is the notion of "truth." Many contend that a truth commission's search for the "truth" may be an assertion of power that leaves little room for individual interpretation. The late philosopher Michel Foucault is often pointed to as the spokesperson for this philosophical perspective, perhaps adding that the production of knowledge is a primary mode of control for postmodern societies.¹⁹ While this notion is of concern for the truth commission as an entity, the same notions apply to the evaluator as they seek to understand how well the commission has disseminated the "truth."

Philosophical questions, then, plague the evaluator as to whether they are producing their own "truth," solidifying a new "truth," and if evaluators are cementing new power structures. While these questions bear critical importance in a larger discussion, the essential point for the purposes of this paper is to understand that evaluators must confront these epistemological limitations as they use methodologies such as surveys, which will exist within current power dynamics. Therefore, evaluators face challenges in understanding their limitations and taking great care not to design their

demonstrating the true value that the TRC had. If this is the only evaluation carried out, it may discourage the community from investing further in the commission's activities due to a sense that the process lacks a diversity of perspectives.

¹⁶ Hirsch, Michal Ben-Josef, Megan MacKenzie, and Mohamed Sesay. "Measuring the Impacts of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Placing the Global 'success' of TRCs in Local Perspective." *Cooperation and Conflict* 47.3 (2012): p. 386 - 403. Web.

¹⁷ Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report. "Introduction." Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 25 May 2006. p. 19 – 20 Web. <<http://www.greensborotrc.org>>.

¹⁸ Williams, Jill. Personal Interview. 11 March 2013.

¹⁹ Audrey R. Chapman. and Patrick Ball. "The Truth of Truth Commissions: Comparative Lessons from Haiti, South Africa, and Guatemala." *Human Rights Quarterly* 23.1 (2001): 1-43. *Project MUSE*. Web. 12 Mar. 2013. <<http://muse.jhu.edu/>>.

methods in a way that will stifle individual interpretations of the events and their feelings towards the commission in question.

This philosophical discussion leads to the final challenge for evaluations that I will mention. A number of critiques have arisen among restorative justice practitioners who are concerned with the potential bias of quantitative analysis as it is applied to truth commissions. Some scholars point to the fact that quantitative measurements of success may reductively undermine the goals of truth commissions. Spoma Jovanovic, an Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and former advisor to the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, stated that she “failed to see what a quantitative measure could capture that could tell people whether this was a process that worked.”²⁰ Jovanovic pointed out the personal nature of the restorative justice process and the difficulty of creating a statistical measurement that could faithfully demonstrate people’s attitudes. Jill Williams indicated that quantitative measurements could also be misleading depending on when the measurements are taken. Williams argued that quantitative measurements conducted shortly after the conclusion of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission may have shown that “there was more racial discord, less trust between races in Greensboro.”²¹ In this regard, Williams rightly indicates that any quantitative measurements need to be collected at various times and over an extended period of time in order to capture the true impact.

Others point out that while the construction of survey methods is an inexact science, quantitative measurements can be an essential asset to understanding a TRC’s impact. Former Commissioner to the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Mukhta Jost likened the process to the pain scale used by medical practitioners. Although the scale is understood to be limited in its ability to articulate the patient’s level of pain, it is necessary nonetheless for doctors to decide on medications and dosages. Commissioner Jost expanded by adding that quantitative measures alone are unable to tell the whole story, but when applied in a complementary manner with qualitative measurements a more complete picture is formed.²²

Similarly, Patricia Clark, former Commissioner to the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, stated that “we should use all the tools available” to understand the impact of commissions. She continued, “I can appreciate the hesitancy of some folks who might say so much of this is anecdotal, and how do you get at that with numbers and stats? On the other hand, I think that one of the outcomes, from my perspective, of having gone through the TRC process is really about public education.”²³ Public education, then, remains at the heart of the issue as evaluations can serve to strengthen or weaken any public education efforts. This tension in methodology is related to the above discussion over the individual versus societal impacts, where overreliance on any one method leaves a gap in other areas of concern.

²⁰ Jovanovic, Spoma. Personal Interview. 28 March 2013.

²¹ Williams, Jill. Personal Interview. 11 March 2013.

²² Jost, Mukhta. Personal Interview. 8 March 2013.

²³ Clark, Patricia. Personal Interview. 4 April 2013

Examples of Various Methods of Evaluation

This paper examines three principle methods of evaluation - quantitative, qualitative, and narrative. In order to proceed with the discussion of how these methodologies are applied in the context of truth commissions it may be worthwhile to explore examples of each method in the context of restorative justice. What should be noted is that this paper largely relies on qualitative methods, in that I have undertaken in-depth interviews with key restorative justice practitioners. However, in some regards I have also used narrative methods in order to arrive at independent conclusions (please see the beginning of Part 6).

A) Quantitative Evaluations

The distinguishing factor of quantitative evaluations is that these methods rely on mathematical models to determine if an observation or intervention (in this case a truth commission) is correlated with a behavior or an impact. An array of statistical models can be used in quantitative methods that vary in sophistication. Each model typically serves a particular purpose and is informed by the intervention that researchers are examining. However, the crux of any model is the degree to which a correlation is found to be statistically significant, meaning that the observation or intervention is thought to show a pattern that could not be attributed to pure chance.²⁴

What should be noted is that a correlation that is found to be statistically significant does not mean that the intervention or observation is the cause of the impact. For example, if a hypothetical researcher found a statistically significant correlation between owning a cell phone and higher wages, we cannot say that owning a cell phone *causes* people to earn higher wages. In this example, we can only conclude that if a person owns a cell phone they are more likely to earn higher wages than an individual that does not own a cell phone. No inference could be made as to *why* this correlation exists from the statistical model alone.

Due to the broad nature of objectives for truth commissions it may be difficult for some to imagine how statistical measurements could be applied to such things as “healing” and “reconciliation.” While no researcher would claim that this is an easy or exact task, some researchers have attempted to quantify these terms. In light of this concern, it may be useful to briefly discuss one of the most effective quantitative evaluations done on a truth commission.

James Gibson, a quantitative researcher and Professor of Government at the University of Iowa, conducted one of the most comprehensive quantitative assessments of a truth commission to date. Gibson created a survey to gather data on the feelings of South Africans during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Gibson began his research by creating a “conceptual map” of what reconciliation looked like for

²⁴ See: Moore, David S., Bruce A. Craig, and George P. McCabe. Introduction to the Practice of Statistics. New York: W.H. Feemand and, 2011. Print.

South Africa. He included four elements: 1) interracial tolerance, 2) political tolerance, 3) legitimacy of major institutions, and 4) support for human rights principles. Each element was then measured through multiple indicators, with a minimum of four indicators for any one element. For example, measuring of political tolerance involved asking respondents to identify a political group that they found objectionable. Subsequently, respondents were asked whether or not they would be in favor of restricting the objectionable group's ability to distribute information. The idea behind this measurement was that reconciliation would involve a higher level of tolerance for the dissemination of the most objectionable views. In all, Gibson carried out 3,727 face-to-face interviews with South Africans in order to find evidence of a change in community attitudes.²⁵ Gibson's surveys demonstrate that there are ways of identifying indicators for the open-ended concepts of "healing" and "reconciliation."

B) Qualitative Evaluations

Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative methods do not rely on mathematical models to search for correlations. Rather qualitative methods rely on first-hand data gathering techniques such as interviews and focus groups. Qualitative researchers, then, rely on analysis to examine the data for patterns in responses. Several methods exist to analyze the data; however, what is important for the purposes of this paper is that qualitative evaluations do not rely on mathematical measurements like quantitative evaluations.

Qualitative evaluations may be more straightforward in their application to restorative justice mechanisms than quantitative evaluations. Often, qualitative assessments, involve in-depth interviews and focus groups in order to highlight attitudes of key personalities who may be central to the truth and reconciliation process. One such study took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Corkalo et al. (2004) conducted interviews and focus groups in order to examine local perceptions of how justice should be sought and what role justice would play in the future of their communities. While respondents had a number of differing views on mechanisms of justice, the key insight gained from the study was that economic reconstruction was seen has a higher priority than formal justice.²⁶ This type of information may be missed with large quantitative research as the surveys are often firmly structured allowing little room for respondents to provide additional information.

C) Narrative Evaluations

²⁵ James, Gibson. "Taking Stock of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa." Ed. Der Merwe, Hugo Van, Victoria Baxter, and Audrey R. Chapman. *Assessing the Impact of Transitional Justice: Challenges for Empirical Research*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2009. 173 – 190. Print.

²⁶ Merwe, Hugo Van Der, Polly Dewhirst, and Brandon Hamber. "Non- governmental Organisations and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: An Impact Assessment." *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 26.1 (1999): 55-79.

Narrative evaluations (alternatively, anecdotal evaluations) are, perhaps, the most common assessments of truth commissions. There is no set methodology for narrative evaluations as they simply seek to create an account of the circumstances that gave rise to a truth commission, the process of truth seeking, and the general outcomes of the commission. Several examples of narrative evaluations of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC) have been published since the Commission concluded its work. Most notably, *Learning From Greensboro* by Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley, as well as, *Democracy, Dialogue, and Community Action* by Spoma Jovanovic. While these books were not necessarily written for the exclusive purpose of evaluating the GTRC, they do provide the reader with an overview of how well the Commission functioned and what impact the Commission had on the community. For example, Spoma Jovanovic devotes an entire chapter to the “measures of success” for the commission in which she discusses various changes within Greensboro that she attributes to the GTRC. The difference between Jovanovic’s assessment and a qualitative assessment is that Jovanovic does not rely on interviews or focus groups, rather she relies on her intimate understanding of the Commission and Greensboro to which she applies a thorough analysis of the changes she witnessed. In this way, Jovanovic provides the reader with a first-hand account of the truth commission process without diverging into, what some might regard as, reductionist measurements of community attitudes.

PART 3 - WHY EVALUATION IS IMPORANT

Understanding why evaluations of truth commissions are important may be obvious to some or something never considered by others. Ed Whitfield, a founding member of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project and Vice Chair of the Commission Selection Panel, suggested that he did not consider evaluation as something all that critical. Whitfield highlighted the fact that most people did not undertake the truth and reconciliation process for empirical proof of progress. He stated that the truth commission process is “one of the things people need to do because knowing and having access to the truth is better than not, but it’s not because it will have some particular impact measurable in a certain kind of way at a particular point of time.”²⁷ In this way, Whitfield shows that the importance of the TRC process lies primarily in the search for the truth and not with a measurable impact. Conversely, Robert Peters, former Commissioner to the GTRC, stated that he placed a high value on data collection and evaluation, recalling the old adage, “figures don’t lie, but liars figure.” Commissioner Peters stated that he applauded efforts to gather as much data as possible as it built a more robust picture of the process.²⁸ Regardless of one’s stance on evaluation, there are several reasons why evaluation should be considered among future truth commissions.

Firstly, truth commissions require considerable commitment on the part of participants. Evaluations can help cement a community’s commitment to the truth and

²⁷ Whitfield, Ed. Personal Interview. 16 April 2013.

²⁸ Peters, Robert. Personal Interview. 27 March 2013.

reconciliation process by continually confronting the public with assessments on the progress of their objectives. Publically available assessments that are conducted periodically after the conclusion of a truth commission can help ensure that interest in community transformations are not fleeting as citizens repeatedly encounter measurements of progress. In this sense, evaluations can act as a “community report card” that reminds citizens of the challenges their community faces and the strides that have been made. For example, a TRC may make considerable inroads in revamping school curriculums, but may not have achieved such success in equalizing employment opportunities. Evaluations will bring these issues to light, allowing the community to focus on the areas that have achieved the least amount of progress.

Secondly, Truth commissions, particularly at the community level, often rely on a number of donor agencies or receive support services from non-governmental organizations. Donor agencies often wish to see some sort of assessment to understand what type of impact they had on the community, while NGO’s often work in a number of environments and seek to improve upon their practices. Evaluations allow these organizations to understand their contributions and give them an understanding of the lessons learned, which can have positive impacts on any future work.

Finally, at a broader level, public policy experts seek the best avenues to approach societal issues and, as truth commissions continue to make their way onto lists of alternatives to retributive justice, understanding their impact is of critical importance to those who consider their use. Not only is there a need for policy makers to evaluate past and present truth commissions in order to understand issues that require further attention, there is a real need for these evaluations so that future truth commissions can better understand what role they will play in society. These understandings allow community expectations to be set at an appropriate level, and will allow policy makers to anticipate any gaps that may exist after a TRC has completed its work.

PART 4 - METHODOLOGY

Because every TRC seeks to address a different conflict, I examined this issue through the lens of one truth commission, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC), in order to orient the research in a specific context. As stated in the introduction, TRC’s can largely be understood as having four common purposes. Therefore, it is my hope that the implications of this case study will be applicable to a variety of community-level TRC’s.

In order to assess methodological strategies for evaluations of community-level TRC’s, I surveyed the existing literature on empirical research and transitional justice mechanisms, as well as, the literature surrounding the GTRC. I also conducted ten in-depth interviews with practitioners who were involved with the GTRC in order to gain first-hand insight into the best possible means by which to understand the impact of the GTRC. Interviewees consisted of three advisors, four commissioners, the GTRC Public Hearings Coordinator, the GTRC Executive Director, and the Vice Chair of the

Commission Selection Panel. It should be noted that some individuals occupied a number of roles within the Commission.²⁹

In the selection process of interviewees, over 30 practitioners who were involved in the GTRC were contacted via email. With the help of my faculty advisor, Catherine Admay, and the Executive Director of the GTRC, Jill Williams, practitioners were selected for their high-level of involvement in the Commission's process, as well as, the diversity of their perspectives. About 1 in 3 of those contacted responded to the invitation, and in only three instances did respondents decline to participate or were willing but unable to participate.

One limitation of the methodology employed for this research is that no survivors or individuals who were directly involved in the November 3rd, 1979 events were interviewed due to time constraints and Duke University's process for research that involves working with high-risk populations. Due to the trauma experienced by those involved in the November 3rd, 1979 events that the GTRC sought to address (for an account of November 3rd please see Part 5), survivors of the events were considered high-risk. The input of those directly connected to the incident may help expand notions of how the GTRC affected individuals on a personal level and would help shed light on areas that may be especially critical for evaluations. This lack of feedback may warrant further research.

PART 5 - CASE STUDY BACKGROUND

The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC) began its work in 2005 to address residual feelings from the "Greensboro Massacre" in 1979. The Massacre was a violent clash during an anti-Klan march between members of the Communist Workers Party and members of the Ku Klux Klan and American Nazi Party. The incident left five people dead and many more injured. The events that took place that morning have long been a source of tension and confusion within the community.³⁰

A contributing factor to the violence was police involvement and complicity in the KKK and Nazi attacks. A police informant had been assigned to infiltrate the KKK, however, the informant began showing support for the cause and was named by many as the "leader" of the caravan of KKK members that meet the CWP marchers. Reports also indicate that the police were aware that rumors were circulating of impending violence. Despite this, the police maintained a "low-profile" presence during the march, and had been given explicit orders to remain five to twenty blocks away from the march.

²⁹ For example, Ed Whitfield was an essential community activist involved in the establishment of the GTRC and he was also Vice Chair of the Commission Selection Panel that chose the GTRC's commissioners.

³⁰ Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. Rep. Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 25 May 2006. Web. <<http://www.greensborotrc.org>>.

Furthermore, the police made no effort to stop most of the fleeing vehicles as they left the scene after it had been reported that shots were fired.³¹

After all-white juries acquitted members of the KKK and the American Nazi Party of all criminal charges in two separate court cases, many in the community had felt that justice had never been served. A third civil suit did award three of the victims' estates monetary compensation for wrongful death, however, many felt it was too little too late as the trial had been delayed for five years after being filed in 1985. For decades after the November 3rd events, those who had been involved on both sides suffered from tarnished reputations. Some even faced employment discrimination, often finding it difficult to obtain jobs. Nelson Johnson, the leader of the CWP, suffered considerable damage to his reputation as some held him partially responsible for the incident.³²

In the years following the events the community held vigils and memorials on a consistent annual basis, which preserved the feelings of injustice, and on the 20th anniversary of the Massacre a ground swell of support created a community led initiative that established the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (which ultimately created the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission).³³ The idea of a Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission enjoyed considerable support from outside the community including that of Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, as well, as support from the International Center for Transitional Justice.³⁴

The community initiative appointed a Selection Committee that chose seven highly qualified candidates to serve as independent commissioners through a community-wide nomination and selection process. Once formed, the Project established objectives and drafted a mandate. The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC) was then created and given the mandate that included the Project's objectives. The GTRC sought to accomplish its objectives by relying on statements from experts and those who were involved in or connected with the incident, as well as, through a civic engagement effort that sought to open a community dialogue and educate the community about the TRC process. The GTRC also undertook research into official records and various other documents concerning the confrontation. In all, the Commission held three public hearings with statements made by over 50 individuals.³⁵

The public hearings were interspersed over the course of two years, ultimately leading to a detailed final report that put forth 29 recommendations for the City of Greensboro. However, the Commission faced considerable resistance from within the

³¹ Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. Rep. Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 25 May 2006. Web. <<http://www.greensborotrc.org>>.

³² Magarrell, Lisa and Joya Wesley. "Learning from Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States." University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 14. 2008. Print.

³³ "Civil Rights Greensboro." *Civil Rights Greensboro*. University of North Carolina at Greensboro, n.d. Web. 2012. <<http://library.uncg.edu/dp/crg/topicalessays/GreensMassacre.aspx>>.

³⁴ Magarrell, Lisa and Joya Wesley. "Learning from Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States." University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 54. 2008. Print.

³⁵ "The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *About: The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, n.d. Web. 19 Oct. 2012. <http://www.greensborotrc.org/about_the_commission.php>.

community as well as from public officials, and neither the report nor the recommendations received official recognition from the Greensboro City Council. Resistance from some parts of the community often came in the form of threats to the Commissioners, and evidence suggested that files were tampered with after a break in at the GTRC offices. Furthermore, the City Council motion to recognize the GTRC and consider its recommendations was rejected by a 5-4 split following racial lines.³⁶

PART 6 - EVALUATIVE METHODS ARISING FROM THE GREENSBORO TRUTH & RECONCILIATION COMMISSION CASE STUDY

The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission had four stated objectives in its mandate that was supplied by the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Project (the founding group of the Commission). These objectives were the guiding principles for the Commission; however, the Commission also expanded upon the objectives with its own definitions and by addressing interconnected issues. In order to gain insight into what the best methodology would have been to capture the impact of the Commission, I gathered the opinions of various individuals who were involved in the process regarding how they would go about evaluating the impact of the GTRC in respect to each of its stated objectives. While I believe that other measures exist to capture the Commission's impact, I would argue that evaluating a commission on other issues outside of its stated objectives may be counterproductive and may lead to conclusions that do not reflect the Commission's understanding of the terms used in its mandate.

The four goals of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission as stated in its mandate were:

1. Healing and reconciliation of the community through discovering and disseminating the truth of what happened and its consequences in the lives of individuals and institutions, both locally and beyond Greensboro. *(This was shortened to "healing and reconciliation of the community" for general use in GTRC publications and website services - the shortened version was used for the purposes of this research).*
2. Clarifying the confusion and reconciling the fragmentation that has been caused by these events and their aftermath, in part by educating the public through its findings. *(This was shortened to "clarifying the confusion and reconciling the fragmentation caused by these events and their aftermath" for general use in GTRC publications and website services - the shortened version was used for the purposes of this research).*

³⁶ Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. Rep. Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 25 May 2006. Web. <<http://www.greensborotrc.org>>.

3. Acknowledging and recognizing people’s feelings, including feelings of loss, guilt, shame, anger and fear. *(This was shortened to “acknowledging and recognizing people’s feelings” for general use in GTRC publications and website services - the shortened version was used for the purposes of this research).*
4. Helping facilitate changes in social consciousness and in the institutions that were consciously or unconsciously complicit in these events, thus aiding in the prevention of similar events in the future. *(This was shortened to “helping to facilitate positive changes in social consciousness and community institutions” for general use in GTRC publications and website services - the shortened version was used for the purposes of this research.)*

Recall that in the introduction four fundamental objectives were identified to be central to truth commissions in general. They are (in paraphrased form):

1. Establish a record of past events
2. Restore dignity and recognition to survivors with the hopes of initiating a process of healing
3. Facilitate a discussion about necessary institutional transformations
4. Initiate a positive peace that makes a return to violence unlikely

The objectives set forth by the GTRC largely match up with the general objectives of truth commissions that were laid out in the introduction. It may be useful to explore the issue at hand by pairing the GTRC’s stated objectives with the more general objectives of TRC’s in order to allow these insights to be transferred to new environments more readily. Because some objectives may have several linkages, I will use the shortened form of the GTRC’s objective for clarity sake.³⁷ I will pair them as such:

GTRC Stated Objectives	General TRC Objectives
Healing and reconciliation of the community	Initiate a positive peace that makes a return to violence unlikely

³⁷ It should be noted that respondents were asked only about the GTRC’s stated objectives and, when necessary, were asked to think about the GTRC specifically in order to elicit specific responses. The pairings and the generalized analysis that follows were created to allow for more readily transferable recommendations.

Clarifying the confusion and reconciling the fragmentation caused by these events and their aftermath	Establishing a record of past events
Acknowledging and recognizing people's feelings	Restore dignity and recognition to survivors with the hopes of initiating a process of healing
Helping to facilitate positive changes in social consciousness and community institutions	Facilitate a discussion about necessary institutional transformations

To be sure, arguments could be made to rearrange these pairings. However, after a painstaking analysis, I would contend that these pairings are the best for the purposes of this research. Nonetheless, a few explanations may be in order. The first pairing stems from the GTRC's explanation of how the Commission understood the term "reconciliation." The GTRC notes that "reconciliation means to bring together those parts that were torn apart and make them whole again, to repair the brokenness in our community."³⁸ This explanation of "reconciliation" resonates with the idea that reconciliation is central to a positive peace, and an understanding that to make the community "whole again" would imply that violence would tear apart the community.

While the first objective of the GTRC includes an element of establishing a record, I would contend that the second GTRC objective is almost exclusively dedicated to the establishment of a record and would be more closely in sync with the general notion found in the second column. The third pairing stems from the interviews I conducted and through my conversations with those involved in the GTRC. Those discussions made it clear that the goal of acknowledging people's feelings carried with it a sense of restoring dignity as well. Healing finds itself in both the first and third objectives of the GTRC, however it is clear that the third objective is mostly directed at the individual level while the first is in relation to the community at large.

The last pairing is almost an exact match. However, there is a small distinction between the two. While the first objective seeks to facilitate actual changes in institutions, the second seeks to facilitate a conversation about institutional changes. We can be sure that the second objective ultimately seeks institutional transformations and, as such, the difference between the objectives is largely semantic. What should be noted is that, for our purposes, in both objectives use of the word 'institutions' refers to both formally established institutions such as the justice system as well as broader community norms such as race relations. This broader understanding of the term 'institution' is largely informed by the work of Douglas North.³⁹ Understanding 'institutions' in this

³⁸ Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report. "Introduction." Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 25 May 2006. p. 19. Web. <<http://www.greensborotrc.org>>.

³⁹ North, Douglas C. "Institutions." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5.1 (1991): 97-112. Web.

manner allows truth commissions and evaluators to see their work as occupying all public spaces where norms have been established.

Before beginning a discussion of evaluative methods for each the objectives, there is one issue that I believe could be addressed by evaluators that may not be found within the stated objectives of a commission – the Commission’s ability to function. Like all truth commissions, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission faced numerous challenges and had to address a plethora of social issues ranging from details of the November 3rd events to race relations and fair wages. While these issues were interwoven throughout the goals of the GTRC, Commissioners and those who worked to support the process had to confront interpersonal dynamics and differing views on how to proceed with the Commission’s work. Commissioner Brown spoke to the challenges that the Commission faced in confronting these dynamics stating, “it was a challenge to have that many different personalities in the room and to try to manage ourselves in a way that we could stay focused on our task and deal with the conflicts and the tensions of having different perspectives.”⁴⁰ Moreover, individuals who were involved in the process undertook great personal risk to carry out their work, often facing harassment and threats. These elements of the Commission’s work are worth noting, not only because of the exceptional ability of those involved to overcome these serious challenges, but also because the success in overcoming these challenges will not readily come through in any discussion of the goals of the Commission.

In conducting the research for this project, I was continually amazed by those involved with the GTRC’s ability to overcome such obstacles. As alluded to above, my intention here is not to carry out an evaluation, but to gather ex post insights on what may have allowed for thorough evaluations of the Commission. I had not anticipated addressing the inner workings of the Commission, only its impact on the community. In conducting this research, however, it has become clear that no Commission can have a substantive impact on the community it serves unless the Commission functions in superior terms. I have also noticed a considerable lack of literature on this topic (comparatively speaking), and I have come to understand that a thorough evaluation of a TRC should include a description of the inner dynamics of those who carried out its work.

1. Healing and Reconciliation of the Community (Initiate a Positive Peace that Makes a Return to Violence Unlikely)

This first objective of healing and reconciliation of the community may be the most difficult to grapple with in evaluations. The suggestions for assessing the GTRC’s impact on these goals ranged widely. No consensus seemed to emerge as a result of the interviews I conducted, which may be an indication that these objectives are interpreted quite differently depending on the backgrounds or involvement of participants. This surely transfers to a broader difficulty when approaching the community in search of the impact the GTRC had on healing and reconciliation.

40 Brown, Cynthia. Personal Interview. 6 March 2013.

Not all respondents provided specific means of measuring this goal; however, five possibilities were explicitly stated as being practical ways in which evaluators could look for the impact. Two suggestions included the use of qualitative measurements. The first such suggestion, of which two respondents mentioned, included assessing statements of regret or apology that arose from the truth commission process. The use of such statements would provide an indication of how the conflicting parties understood their actions, and could help evaluators exhibit a change in attitudes from the feeling of victimization to an acceptance of responsibility. Similarly, one Commissioner suggested conducting before and after interviews of those who testified and those who gave statements to look for changes in attitudes.

Two suggestions fell more into the narrative evaluation realm. For instance, one Commissioner felt that the interest shown by the community might provide a good indication of “healing” and “reconciliation.” The Commissioner indicated that he had been invited to speak at a number of events and that research such as this paper could indicate the community’s ongoing attempts to understand what the GTRC uncovered and, in effect, the community’s interest in moving forward in a “reconciled” manner. The second suggestion that falls under the narrative umbrella indicated that “visible manifestations” of “reconciliation” in the community could serve as a powerful indicator of success. These changes may include monuments and other such structures that indicate the community has accepted the events as part of their history.

Noting any monuments that were erected after a TRC and analyzing the story surrounding the structure could help formulate a picture of the communal zeitgeist following a truth commission. However, understanding citizens’ interpretation of the monuments may be necessary to gain a more robust story of the monument’s meaning. Monuments may have negative effects as well, and could be used to glorify one of the conflicting groups. Therefore, community surveys regarding the monuments may help shed light on how citizens regard the monument, and may help evaluators understand whether or not a memorial is having positive or negative effects on community tensions.

One respondent suggested the use of quantitative surveys to understand the impact of the commission in regards to “healing” and “reconciliation.” However, two respondents stated that this objective was not quantifiable in any real terms, but gave no possible alternatives for evaluation. One Commissioner indicated that surveying constituencies who were most affected by the November 3rd events would be the most effective manner to evaluate this goal. In this respect, the Commissioner understood that not everyone in Greensboro felt deeply affected by the incident, and that the GTRC may have sought to focus on those who did feel affected.

The focus on primary constituencies may not be applicable to all TRC’s, as some seek to address larger events. As discussed above in relation to James Gibson’s work, surveys of this type have been conducted in the past with relative success. However, they require a considerable amount of resources and warrant words of caution. Gibson warned that surveys must be interactive with respondents and should try to capture the context of the situation within the questions. This could mean altering language or questions for

different demographics or similar tactics to make the surveys as representative as possible.⁴¹ Such tactics require the use of focus groups and a high-level of expertise in survey design methods.

The diversity in response to this question suggests that multiple approaches would be necessary to understand any impact on “healing” and “reconciliation.” As Commissioner Clark wisely proposed, evaluators should seek “to use all the tools available” in order to understand any impact.⁴² The need for all three components (qualitative, narrative, and quantitative) should be understood as the only means by which the best possible assessment could be made for this objective.

Table 1 below provides a summary of the recommendations broken down by methodology and the position of the individual who suggested the approach. The position of the recommender is meant to give context for the suggestion as an individual’s position within a TRC could affect what she or he views as important.

Table 1: Suggestions for Evaluating the Objective of “Healing and Reconciliation of the Community”

Position	Quantitative	Qualitative	Narrative
Commissioners	Survey primary constituents affected by events	N/A	Interest shown by the community such as research and events
Advisors	N/A	Examine statements of regret or apology	Examine visible manifestations in the community such as monuments (may have qualitative aspects as well)
Staff	N/A	Interview testifiers before and after testimonies	N/A

2. Clarifying the Confusion and Reconciling the Fragmentation Caused by these Events and their Aftermath (Establishing a Record of Human Rights Violations)

An evident theme among practitioners was that this objective was measurable in a number of ways. In all, seven definitive suggestions were made - several of which, were cited by more than one interviewee. Four of these suggestions were largely narrative, two were qualitative in nature, and one was a quantitative method.

Two respondents indicated that analyzing popular accounts of the incident through newspaper articles, books, articles, etc. would be essential to understanding the GTRC’s impact on clarifying any misinformation. For instance, Jill Williams indicated

⁴¹ James, Gibson. "Taking Stock of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa." Ed. Der Merwe, Hugo Van, Victoria Baxter, and Audrey R. Chapman. *Assessing the Impact of Transitional Justice: Challenges for Empirical Research*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2009. 173 – 190. Print.

⁴² Clark, Patricia. Personal Interview. 4 April 2013

that a distinct change in the popular accounts of the November 3rd incident included the fact that before the GTRC, many accounts stated that the police were unaware of the starting point of the CWP parade; however, after the GTRC proceedings popular accounts began indicating that the police were aware of the starting location.⁴³ The changes in popular media accounts before, during, and after the process may be one indication that the findings of a truth commission are serving to establish a record of the events. In a similar vein, two respondents indicated that examining local school curriculums would give evaluators insight into the formal integration of the record established by the truth commission. One respondent suggested that evaluators should look for the general availability of information regarding the TRC's conclusions, and stated that the more accessible and repetitious the information was the greater the impact evaluators could attribute to the TRC.

The last narrative suggestion was also seen in the first objective. One respondent stated that examining public memorials could also indicate how well a TRC's record was being received. Short narratives often accompany public memorials. These narratives would allow evaluators to compare the stories surrounding community symbols and the TRC's record. Any discrepancies or consistencies would indicate the community's acceptance of the TRC's findings.

Two qualitative suggestions were given that seemed to complement one another. The first of which was to understand how the TRC had clarified the incident in the minds of the citizens. However, the respondent did not specify how this could be achieved other than implying some sort of interview would be necessary. The second qualitative suggestion coming from another respondent may be able to capture the extent to which the TRC clarified the incident for the community. One respondent suggested the use of focus groups to measure the general agreement of participants with the facts arising out of the TRC record. For instance, after a report is issued, participants could be asked to indicate their level of agreement (strongly disagree, agree, strongly agree, etc.) with a statement taken from the TRC final report. Focus groups could be conducted in immediately following the release and after considerable time has past, allowing evaluators to capture changes in perceptions over time.

In the qualitative suggestion, two respondents recommended taking community surveys in an attempt to measure people's understanding of the events before and after a TRC. One difficulty in using a survey to measure understanding would stem from the selection of which facts to include in a baseline survey. Since there is no way of anticipating what a commission may find, a baseline survey may not gather data on some of the more crucial findings. Furthermore, delineating what facts people would have obtained from the commission and what facts they learned from other sources may be difficult. Commissioner Jost pointed to the fact that measuring knowledge is extremely problematic and a prevalent problem within the education field as well.⁴⁴

⁴³ Williams, Jill. Personal Interview. 11 March 2013.

⁴⁴ Jost, Mukhta. Personal Interview. 8 March 2013.

At this point in the analysis, it should be clear that a variety of methods could and should be employed in the quest to capture impact. In this regard, a combination of some or all of the above methods must be employed in order to reach both the individual and the communal aspects of this goal.

Table 2 below provides a summary of the recommendations for this objective with a breakdown by methodology and the position of the individual who suggested the approach.

Table 2: Suggestions for Evaluating the Objective of “Clarifying the Confusion and Reconciling the Fragmentation Caused by these Events and their Aftermath”

Position	Quantitative	Qualitative	Narrative
Commissioners	Community Surveys	N/A	Analyzing popular media accounts such as newspapers, etc. Examine school curriculums
Advisors	N/A	Focus groups to see how strongly individuals agree or disagree with TRC findings	Examine school curriculums Examine public memorials
Staff	Community Surveys	Examine how the TRC clarified the incident in the minds of citizens (implied interviews)	Examine the availability and accessibility of information put forth by TRC

3. Acknowledging and Recognizing People’s Feelings (Restore Dignity and Recognition to Survivors with the Hopes of Initiating a Process of Healing)

In the continuum of objectives that are meant to address the individual versus those that are meant to address society as a whole, this objective features heavily on the individual side of the scale. It is meant to focus on the survivors and those who were directly connected to the incident. Although it can address the community at large, these objectives largely seek to attend to the needs of the conflicting parties and to allow a space where meaningful dialogue can take place. To this end, Commissioner Brown spoke to the significance of hearing all sides of the conflict. She highlighted that this was one of the most important elements of the Commission’s work and stated, “I was struck by the fact that this space was created so that people’s humanity could be heard on all sides.” Commissioner Brown highlighted the fact that this objective was as important to the perpetrators as it was for the survivors.⁴⁵ This understanding will affect an evaluator’s focus and, in the case of this objective, will largely turn their attention to testifiers and those who gave statements outside of the public hearing.

⁴⁵ Brown, Cynthia. Personal Interview. 6 March 2013.

A consensus was evident concerning this objective. Six of the seven practitioners who recommended strategies felt that in-depth interviews could be carried out to explore any personal transformations that may have taken place during testimonies or other statements that were taken. On several occasions, practitioners highlighted the need to anticipate this type of qualitative research in order for evaluators to conduct interviews both before and after the testimony. Data may need to be gathered several years after the fact as well in order to gain a more complete understanding of the long-term effects of a TRC. The other suggested strategy was to examine the statements and testimonies that were collected in order to analyze how freely people were able to speak. However, this suggestion would be more appropriately paired with in-depth interviews so testifiers could respond to pointed questions regarding their feelings towards the process.

Chelsea Marshall, the former Public Hearings Coordinator to the GTRC, pointed out that there are two dimensions to this objective. The first is whether or not survivors feel that they are being heard by the commission.⁴⁶ This may relate to the previous point of a TRC’s functionality, and whether or not the commission approached survivors in an objective manner and went to reasonable lengths to hear all sides of the conflict. It also relates to whether or not survivors are able to tell the story they wished to tell or if they are lead into a certain line of questioning.

The second dimension is if the survivors feel heard by the community at large. This notion may be identified in a number of ways, but it may be most useful to primarily identify it through the question of whether or not survivors feel that their stories are validated in some way.⁴⁷ As noted in the background section, many survivors of the November 3rd incident had tarnished reputations within the Greensboro community. Whether or not these survivors felt that the community recognized their story as a valid part of the larger narrative is of critical importance to impact of the Commission.

Table 3 below provides a summary of the recommendations for this objective.

Table 3: Suggestions for Evaluating the Objective of “Acknowledging and Recognizing People’s Feelings”

Position	Quantitative	Qualitative	Narrative
Commissioners	N/A	Conduct in-depth interviews with those	N/A

⁴⁶ Marshall, Chelsea. Personal Interview. 13 March 2013.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

		directly involved in the incident (<i>recommended by 2 Commissioners</i>)	
Advisors	N/A	Examine testimonies Conduct in-depth interviews with those directly involved in the incident	N/A
Staff	N/A	Conduct in-depth interviews with those directly involved in the incident (<i>recommended by 3 staff members</i>)	N/A

4. Helping to Facilitate Positive Changes in Social Consciousness and Community Institutions (Facilitate a Discussion About Necessary Institutional Transformations)

It may be obvious that this last objective is focused primarily at the societal level. This objective elicited similar responses to that of the second objective. Five practitioners pointed to popular media accounts and discussions from public interest groups as one such way to understand a commission’s impact. However, the objective would require distinct indicators to look for discussions concerning institutional reform. Distinguishing the discussions that are a result of a commission and other community organizations may be difficult. For instance, The GTRC recommended a police review board in its final report; however, a community discussion concerning a police review board was underway well before the establishment of the GTRC. This could be problematic for evaluators as they attempt to sift through what popular media discussions of the issue are arising from the TRC and which are arising from other organizations. Perhaps, evaluators would only consider those discussions that make explicit references to the commission as an indication of its impact. Alternatively, evaluators could look for an increase in the amount of articles, publications, Internet activity, etc. surrounding the issue and attempt to control for the amount of publicity the commission has received and the amount other organizations that promote the issue have received.

Three practitioners stated that the creative arts should not be ignored in this assessment as many critiques of institutions can be found in theater productions, fictional books and movies, poetry, paintings, etc. In fact, many times the creative arts can be a catalyst for generating community discussions of power dynamics and need for reform. To this end, I would contend that these accounts be treated in much the same manner as newspaper articles or any other non-fictional discussion of institutional reform. Again, it may be difficult to ascertain what is the inspiration behind the art – was the Commission an inspiration or were there other factors. These assessments would benefit greatly from

in-depth interviews with the artists in order to understand what prompted them to depict issues that were relevant to the commission’s work.

Governmental institutions should be a focus of assessments for these goals as well. Three practitioners suggested reviewing discussions around these issues that take place in city halls, state legislators, police departments, etc. These areas are critical for evaluation as these objectives are likely meant to generate support for transformations from within the institutions as well. This type of analysis could be slightly quantifiable in terms of how many conversations, bills, ordinances, policies, etc. regarding the commission’s recommendations are considered, but it would also rely on anecdotal evidence, as accounts of the discussions and resolutions would be necessary to understand a commission’s impact. In-depth interviews of politicians and high-ranking government officials may also be an area worth investigating in order to understand what type of impact the commission is having on key players within institutions of concern.

Table 4 below provides a summary of the recommendations for this objective.

Table 4: Suggestions for Evaluating the Objective of “Helping to Facilitate Positive Changes in Social Consciousness and Community Institutions”

Position	Quantitative	Qualitative	Narrative
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Commissioners	N/A	Examine governmental policies and discussions (may also have quantitative & narrative dimensions)	Analyzing popular media and public interest group discussions (recommended by 3 commissioners) Examine creative arts (may also have qualitative dimension)
Advisors	N/A	Examine governmental policies and discussions (may also have quantitative & narrative dimensions)	Examine creative arts (may also have qualitative dimension)
Staff	N/A	Examine governmental policies and discussions (may also have quantitative & narrative dimensions)	Analyzing popular media and public interest group discussions (recommended by 2 staff members) Examine creative arts (may also have qualitative dimension)

PART 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE COMMUNITY TRC’S

Because TRC’s vary widely in their objectives and the circumstances they seek to address it would not be a worthwhile exercise to set a standard evaluation technique for every TRC. Instead, the above analysis is meant to highlight major areas where evaluators should focus their analysis. However, there are several design mechanisms that future TRC’s may want to consider in order to produce a more consistent form of evaluation. In this section I provide several recommendations for the design of future TRC’s.

As different communities will face different constraints and challenges, the following recommendations are not meant to be a one-size-fits-all package. Rather the recommendations represent a composite of separate possible policies that can be considered individually by each TRC. The unique nature of every TRC aside, I would strongly recommend that each TRC give the first recommendation serious consideration as it would likely be beneficial in most circumstances.

1. Evaluation Team

As discussed above, a major criticism of TRC evaluations stems from evaluators' professional relationship with the commission in question. Some evaluators play multiple roles within the commission and can be personally or professionally invested in the outcomes, which can bring their objective assessments into question. Others may assume a completely independent role, which may drive research that measures a commission against indicators it did not seek to address. Furthermore, the discussion of each of the objectives has demonstrated that foresight is needed in order for evaluators to have the opportunity to collect critical baseline data. Therefore, community level truth commissions could benefit greatly from an evaluation team that is imbedded within the structure of the commission. However, the individuals who make up the team should not assume any other responsibilities outside of their evaluative work in order to remain as independent as possible.

Community level truth commissions often face resource constraints and the addition of more staff may further strain already stretched budgets. An ex ante understanding of a need for an evaluation team would allow communities that are in the nascent stages of establishing a truth commission to issue invitations to available academics or practitioners to be part of the evaluation team. Many academics/practitioners in the area of restorative justice may be able to find their own financing through grants, donations, or other means to carry out the work, provided they have the time to undertake the necessary process for securing the funds. The earlier possible members of the team are identified and invited the better the community's chances of obtaining a quality evaluation team. Communities should look to local universities to identify possible researchers.

A particularly important element that a community should consider when identifying possible members of an evaluation team is the various roles that will need to be fulfilled. Ideally, an evaluation team should consist of three components (not necessarily three team members). The components should be divided into quantitative, qualitative, and a narrative component. Quantitative research can help evaluators reach the community at large, and will help gain a sense of communal attitudes. Qualitative approaches will help to illuminate individual transformations and will concentrate on the survivors and perpetrators. The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods will help to address both ends of the spectrum – society and the individual. The narrative component would focus its efforts on developing complete depictions of the inanimate aspects of evaluation such as the accounts of monuments that are erected, gestures or practices of the commission that would not necessarily be apparent from interviews, as well as, an attempt to capture the more visceral aspects of the process. While not necessarily scientific, this component would help develop a healthier understanding of the impact and would serve to fill in the gaps that are not captured by the qualitative or quantitative components. These entities should work in close coordination with one another in order to identify gaps in research and to supplement each other's work.

2. **“Inclusive Independence”**

As indicated above, one reason for an evaluation team to be built earlier in the process is so that the team can observe the emerging concepts that the truth commission will seek to address. The evaluation team can then witness the discussions of what the communities engaged by a commission seek to accomplish and how those communities understand various terms such as “reconciliation” and “healing.” This also gives the evaluation team a chance to clarify any aspects of the mandate or stated objectives that they anticipate to be a source of confusion. I have termed this semi-participatory approach “inclusive independence” as I would anticipate that the evaluation team would not contribute to or frame the larger discussion over the objectives. The evaluation team would be included only to allow the team to clarify any points of confusion, but would remain independent in that they would not drive the discussion in any way. This approach is ideal for TRC’s that have clear objectives. The idea of ‘inclusive independence’ is worth noting to distinguish it from the following recommendation.

3. Action Evaluation & Objective Team⁴⁸

Another approach may be more useful to a community if they are having difficulty articulating the goals of their commission. An approach known as “action evaluation” has been in use since the early 1990’s in conflict resolution. This approach would allow the evaluation team to participate more fully in the discussions. Action evaluation would depart from “inclusive independence” in that the evaluation team would help the community dissect their goals into identifiable indicators. (Although, for the purposes of truth commissions, some goals may be left open-ended in order to allow more non-tangible transformations to take place.) The evaluation team would, then, help the community understand what achieving their goals might look like, allowing for milestone indicators that may signify ‘success’ or ‘strengths’ of the commission. In this respect, the evaluation team would play a major role in establishing the objectives of the commission.

Action evaluation will call into question the independence of the evaluation team. Having two teams could potentially solve the issue of independence: an evaluation team (that remains “inclusively independent”) and an action team (that would disband after the goals have been set). The action team would ideally have a parallel composition to that of the evaluation team in order for the two teams to understand the nuances of their respective work (i.e. quantitative or qualitative methods). The action team would then understand what types of objectives may be easily captured and which could present difficulty in the evaluation stages. There is no reason to believe that the action team would require more than two or three academics or practitioners, and should not require a significant amount of resources to obtain. Similar to the evaluation team, the action team may be able to secure its own resources to participate in the process.

As an alternative to inviting individual practitioners to be a part of the action team, community TRC’s may want to consider contacting organizations that specialize in this work. The most prominent example is the Action Evaluation Collaborative (AEC). AEC has worked with such well-established organizations as the United Nations

⁴⁸ I must thank Chelsea Marshall for helping me develop this idea more fully during our very informative interview.

Development Programme, the Kellogg Foundation, the University of Washington, and many more.^{49 50} Such organizations can provide quick workshops on establishing objectives and how evaluation can help serve those objectives. Contracting organizations such as the AEC could save on costs and eliminate the logistical coordination of several individual researchers.

4. Suggestions for Feasibility

Resource constraints remain a particularly potent concern for community level TRC's. The costs of research and evaluation can be quite intimidating as they include costs of logistics, costs of goods (surveys, etc.), and labor costs. At times the sheer scale of quantitative research can be daunting enough for it to be avoided altogether. However, community TRC's should not avoid quantitative research because of the overwhelming nature of the task nor should resource constraints preclude community TRC's from enjoying the best possible means of evaluation. Fortunately, scores of resources exist to identify grants and assistance for working with data (please see Appendix 2 for suggested resources).

One way community truth commissions can attempt to overcome the issue of resource constraints is to work with local businesses to help distribute surveys and, perhaps, even collect data. Local businesses may be persuaded to assist in the endeavors of data collection if they can make in-kind and/or cash donations that can be considered tax deductions for charitable giving.⁵¹ Local newspapers may be willing to include surveys in their Sunday editions along with pre-stamped envelopes. Similarly, local grocery stores, convenience stores, and even gas stations could be approached to help distribute surveys, and could be approached to have clerks ask customers to complete the survey before concluding any transaction. Local community non-profits, faith-based organizations, community centers, youth groups, etc. should also be approached for assistance. Alternatively, if a local government sponsors the truth commission, local ordinances should be considered that give businesses the same tax incentives they would have if the commission were a non-profit organization. However, any quantitative researcher will be keen to note that this method, while convenient, must be approached with caution as the sample demographics should be as closely matched to the whole community as possible. Therefore, before proceeding researchers should seriously reflect upon which organizations and businesses to approach and how many surveys would be required from each entity.

⁴⁹ "Current and Past Work." *Action Evaluation Collaborative*. N.p., n.d. Web. Apr. 2013.
<<http://actionevaluation.org/clients-partners/>>.

⁵⁰ Note that this author makes no claim as to the quality of the Action Evaluation Collaborative's work.

⁵¹ This may seem like a simplistic recommendation to many; however, according to the Small Business Administration, 75% of small businesses donate to charities each year. This charitable spirit can often be overlooked in large projects such as TRC's. See: Beesley, Caron. "Understanding the Charitable Giving Tax Deduction – What Can Your Small Business Write Off? | SBA.gov." *Understanding the Charitable Giving Tax Deduction – What Can Your Small Business Write Off? | SBA.gov*. U.S. Small Business Association, 9 July 2012. Web. Apr. 2013.
<<http://www.sba.gov/community/blogs/understanding-charitable-giving-tax-deduction---what-can-your-small-business-write>>.

PART 8 - CONCLUSION

As TRC's continue to be utilized as a form of restorative justice around the globe, understanding their impacts will become increasingly valuable information. Evaluations of the truth seeking process not only serve to inform policy makers and future commissions, but also serve to hold the community responsible for the changes they desire. Because TRC's are borne out of horrific and divisive circumstances every tool available should be put to use in an effort to reconcile the divisions in the community. Evaluations of TRC's can help identify areas that need further improvement and, consequently, can continually ensure the community's commitment to a more peaceful environment.

I began this research with two initial questions. The first of which was, "what methodology or combination of methodologies is best suited to capture the impact of community-level truth and reconciliation commission?" In this regard, no methodology should be discounted in the execution of evaluations, as each method (quantitative, qualitative, and narrative) serves to capture different elements of impact. The use of all three methodologies is undoubtedly the best, and possibly the only, manner in which to illustrate a comprehensive understanding of a commission's impact. While researchers may continue to debate the merits of specific indicators, the purpose of this paper was to illustrate that the complexity involved in evaluating truth commissions requires the use of all research methodologies. It is my hope that I have illustrated the merits of quantitative measurements, and that practitioners can be more accepting of the contributions that quantitative research can make. This is not to say that quantitative measurements are the most effective evaluative instrument, but rather that these measurements have a place among evaluations of restorative justice practices.

The second question that drove this research was "what practice might future TRC's utilize to ensure evaluations are conducted in a more systematic and sensitive manner?" To answer this I have proposed that future TRC's include an evaluation team within the structure of their commission. The presence of an evaluation team will contribute to a more sensitive assessment by ensuring that evaluators are using indicators that are consistent with the commission's understanding of its objectives. In addition to the evaluation team, I have also suggested that the evaluations include all methodologies available and, in this way, evaluations will become more systematic by synthesizing the various methodologies. This synthesis will allow for TRC's to be assessed in a more complete manner rather than relying on piecemeal evaluations from various methodologies.

It is my hope that the principle contributions of this project will help to serve future TRC's in their pursuit of the truth. These principle contributions are: 1) evaluations are not only necessary, but can support the work of truth commissions in a critical capacity; 2) a comprehensive evaluation should be comprised of the three methodologies explored throughout this paper; and 3) evaluations should not be an afterthought to the truth seeking process, but should be an integrated component of a commission's structure. With these concepts in mind, future truth commissions can

better instill the principles they desire in their communities as commissions can move forward in a more informed and deliberate manner.

Appendix 1 – Interviewees

Respondent	Position at GTRC	Date Interviewed
Robin Kirk	Advisor	2/12/13
Eduardo Gonzalez	Advisor	3/4/13
Cynthia Brown	Commissioner	3/6/13
Mukhta Jost	Commissioner	3/8/13
Jill Williams	Executive Director (Staff)	3/11/13
Chelsea Marshall	Public Hearings Coordinator (Staff)	3/13/13
Robert Peters	Commissioner	3/27/13
Spoma Jovanovic	Advisor	3/28/13
Patricia Clark	Commissioner	4/4/13
Ed Whitfield	Vice Chair of Commission Selection Panel (Staff)	4/16/13

Appendix 2 – Resources for Community TRC’s

1. www.GrantWatch.com - Grant Watch provides up-to-date notifications of grants that are available in almost any location in the world. Perhaps the most comprehensive grant database, organizations can find grants for over 50 categories of social development including conflict resolution, justice and juvenile justice, and non-profit support services. The database is searchable by location or grant type, and should be the first stop for community organizations looking for grants.
2. www.Grants.gov - This website lists available funding from the federal government, and can be useful for both non-profits and individual researchers. Community TRC’s may wish to consider identifying grants that researchers could apply for before issuing an invitation.
3. <http://www.usa.gov/Business/Nonprofit.shtml> - Similar to www.Grants.gov this website provides guidance for new non-profit organizations including grant opportunities.
4. <http://foundationcenter.org/grantmakers/> - The Foundation Center provides several resources on how to find funders for community initiatives and non-profits.
5. <http://www.guidestar.org/> - Guide Star is a particularly useful website that contains numerous resources ranging from securing funding to analyzing data.
6. <http://www.prattlibrary.org/locations/ssh/?id=3130#HowToFindGrants> - Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland offers numerous guides and links to various funding resources.
7. <http://www.sba.gov/content/nonprofit-organizations> - The Small Business Association can help provide information on tax assistance, grants and other sources of funding for non-profits and can assist in locating charitable businesses.
8. <http://grantspace.org/> - Grant Space is also run by the Foundation Center and provides excellent how to guides for non-profits on using big data and locating sources of funding.
9. www.GrantGopher.com - This website is similar to Grant Watch, but is focused on the United States and is less comprehensive.

Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

1. How did you come to be involved in the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission? (Alternatively, what made you want to be involved in the GTRC?)
2. What was your initial reaction when first hearing of the prospect of a Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission?
3. Why do you think people wanted a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Greensboro?

Quantitative/Qualitative Research Focused questions

4. What did you see as the goals of the Commission?
5. Do you believe the Commission achieved those goals? (Probe: what makes you say that the Commission did/did not achieve those goals?)
6. Some people believe that researches can't measure the success of TRC's because it would reductively undermine the goals of a TRC's, others believe we should in order to understand what TRC's are capable of, what do you think?
7. If you do think we should use measurable indicators of success, do you think it would be a failure of TRC's if they didn't meet these measurements or include them?
 - a. Do you think it is important for TRCs to bring about changes that can be captured in observable measurements?
8. The GTRC had stated objectives in their mandate. How would you go about

evaluating the GTRC's level of success for the goal of:

- a. healing and reconciliation of the community
- b. clarifying the confusion and reconciling the fragmentation caused by these events and their aftermath
- c. acknowledging and recognizing people's feelings
- d. helping to facilitate positive changes in social consciousness and community institutions

9. What do you think is the most appropriate way to evaluate TRCs? Why?

TRC process and structure questions

10. Have you been involved in other restorative justice processes?

- a. If yes, which other processes have you been involved in and how do they compare with the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission?
- b. If yes, were there measurable means by which they evaluated their impact on their community?

11. Do you believe TRC's would benefit from a research division to help reflect upon the Commission's effectiveness?

12. Do you have any thoughts on how to make collecting data feasible for TRCs which face resources constraints?

Closing & catch-all questions

13. Overall, would you say the Commission was successful? Why or why not?

14. Is there anything that I'm not asking you that you would like me to? Or anything that you would like to add?

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