FORGIVENESS

A Sampling of Research Results

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"....the weak can never forgive.
Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong."
(Mahatma Gandhi)

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"…lasting peace cannot be brought about between different communities who have fought each other for many centuries if the cycle of violence (the aggression-revenge cycle) is not broken at some time. This cycle can be broken if the members of the different parties decide to do so and decide not only to negotiate but also to forgive (p.170)" Azar et al. (1999)

INTRODUCTION

Merry Bullock, Director, Office of International Affairs
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In 2006 the American Psychological Association began a series of Research Briefs brochures to provide short overviews of psychological research of topics relevant to the United Nations mission, priorities and agenda. This brochure is part of that series, with a focus on forgiveness. Its purpose is to suggest the kinds of questions and the kinds of studies that address forgiveness, to provide a bibliographic resource for those interested in reading further, and to suggest the questions we still need to address to facilitate better understanding and interaction across borders and over time. It was made possible by generous contributions from many researchers - not just those whose work is highlighted.

This brochure is a reprint of material originally compiled to complement a midday workshop that was presented in conjunction with the 2006 Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)/Department of Public Information (DPI) Annual Conference at the United Nations. The workshop, titled Forgiveness: Partnering with the Enemy was co-sponsored by the American Psychological Association, the International Union of Psychological Science, the International Council of Psychology, and the Armenian International Women's Association. Moderated by Deanna Chitayat, PhD, Representative to the UN from the American Psychological Association, the participants included Saths Cooper, PhD, Psychological Society of South Africa; Eileen Borris, EdD, Institute for Multi-track Diplomacy; Edward Majian, St. Peters College, New Jersey; and Ervin Staub, PhD, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

In this brochure you will find examples of contemporary behavioral research on the meaning, processes and effects of forgiveness. The goal of this research is to understand the interpersonal, intra-personal and group processes that lead to effective forgiveness; and to understand the effects of asking for forgiveness and forgiving. Collectively, the authors have studied participants' beliefs about and attitudes toward forgiveness in Australia, the Congo, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, the United States and Canada. They have addressed forgiving and asking for forgiveness and have explored the personal and group variables that affect the process and motivation of forgiveness.

Some distinctions form threads throughout the examples. Forgiveness is studied both as an individual and as a group phenomenon - to fully understand it and its effects, researchers address both how individuals forgive each other and how groups such as countries or societies forgive other groups. Researchers address the complex web of interrelations among forgiveness, apology, reconciliation and the effects of forgiving on the individual and societies.

Information about the work of psychologists at the UN and links to other Research Briefs brochures can be found at http://www.apa.org/international/un and http://www.apa.org/international/resources/links.html.

Forgiveness—Definitions and Effects

Adapted from Philpot, C. (2006). Intergroup apologies and forgiveness. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Religious scholars of many faiths, philosophers, and more recently, psychologists, have grappled with the notion of forgiveness and have sought to delineate its boundaries (18, 23, 38, 39).

Defining Forgiveness
Forgiveness is a process (or the result of a process) that involves a change in emotion and attitude regarding an offender. Most scholars view this an intentional and voluntary process, driven by a deliberate decision to forgive (6, 8, 26, 38). This process results in decreased motivation to retaliate or maintain estrangement from an offender despite their actions, and requires letting go of negative emotions toward the offender. Theorists differ in the extent to which they believe forgiveness also implies replacing the negative emotions with positive attitudes including compassion and benevolence (8, 17, 23, 25, 26). In any event, forgiveness occurs with the victim's full recognition that he or she deserved better treatment, one reason why Mahatma Gandhi contended that "the weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong" (12, p. 301).

Forgiveness and Reconciliation
Some theorists view reconciliation, or the restoration of a relationship, as an integral part of the forgiveness process (9, 17), and others as independent processes because forgiveness may occur in the absence of reconciliation and reconciliation may occur in the absence of forgiveness (4, 10, 21, 25, 39). Nonetheless, forgiveness does have behavioural corollaries. Reductions in revenge and avoidance motivations and an increased ability to wish the offender well are features of forgiveness that can impact upon behavioural intention without obliging reconciliation. Forgiveness can be a one sided process, whereas reconciliation is a mutual process of increasing acceptance (32, 33).

Forgiveness and Other Processes
Forgiveness is recognized as different from other processes, such as condoning (failing to see the action as wrong and in need of forgiveness), excusing (not holding the person or group responsible for the action), pardoning (granted only by a representative of society, such as a judge), and forgetting (removing awareness of the offence from consciousness; to forgive is more than just not thinking about the offence) (8, 21, 25, 29, 37). Many of the concepts that scholars keep different are treated as the same in lay conceptions of forgiveness (19).

Benefits of Forgiveness
- aids psychological healing through positive changes in affect (37)
- improves physical and mental health (7, 35)
- restores a victim's sense of personal power (9, 11)
- helps bring about reconciliation between the offended and offender (16, 20, 27)
- promotes hope for the resolution of real-world intergroup conflicts (1, 14, 24, 28)

Forgiveness Interventions

There are a large number of interventions designed to improve individuals' abilities to forgive, both at the interpersonal level (e.g., distressed couples, incest survivors, victims of parental abuse) (2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 13, 15, 30, 31), and at the group level (human rights abuses, intergroup conflict and war (18). Interventions that promote understanding the roots of violence can foster reconciliation and forgiveness after mass violence and after individual harmdoing (33, 34).

Results from experiments tracking the outcome of forgiveness interventions show that interventions:

- leads to improved affect (10, 13)
- lowers rate of psychiatric illness (18, 35)
- lowers physiological stress responses; thereby improving physical well-being and leading to a greater sense of personal control (3, 17, 36)
- facilitates the restoration of relationship closeness (9, 22)

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Forgiveness and Conflict Resolution in Marriage

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Summary of Findings

- Just as health is not the absence of illness, forgiveness is not the absence of unforgiveness. Two factors, reflecting forgiveness and unforgiveness, capture the data on interpersonal conflict resolution more accurately.
- Husbands' unforgiveness predicted wives' current reports of poorer conflict resolution. In contrast, wives' forgiveness predicted husbands' current reports of better conflict resolution.
- Over a 12-month period, wives' forgiveness predicted husbands' later reports of better conflict resolution controlling for initial levels of conflict resolution.
- Because of the documented association between forgiveness and marital satisfaction it is important to note that all findings are independent of spouses' marital satisfaction.

Introduction

Forgiveness usually occurs within a relational context and the nature of the relationship (e.g., closeness, quality) is related to forgiveness. Paradoxically, those we love are often the ones we are most likely to hurt. When interpersonal transgressions occur in such relationships they can elicit strong negative feelings and have the potential to disrupt the relationship. Perhaps not surprisingly, spouses report that the capacity to seek and grant forgiveness is one of the most important factors contributing to marital longevity and marital satisfaction. Our research program attempts to document how forgiveness impacts marriage and family based on the dual premises that (a) the family is the primary arena in which one learns to forgive and (b) forgiveness can be critical to sustaining healthy family relationships.

Forgiveness and Conflict

Conflict resolution is integral to a successful relationship and resentment engendered by partner transgressions is likely to fuel couple conflict and

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impede successful conflict resolution. In contrast, forgiving the partner for the transgression is one potential means of providing closure with regard to a painful or disturbing relationship event. Forgiveness may therefore have substantial implications for long-term relationship outcomes as well as short-term patterns of interaction.

Forgiveness is Not the Absence of Unforgiveness
Most research examines forgiveness in terms of decreased negative motivation, or unforgiveness (e.g., revenge, avoidance) toward the transgressor. Although decreasing unforgiveness is undeniably important, a benevolent motivational state toward the harm-doer that is not achieved simply by overcoming negative motivation is fundamental to forgiveness.

Just as health is not the absence of illness, forgiveness is not the absence of unforgiveness. We tested this perspective in 2 studies that examined the impact of forgiveness on conflict resolution in marriage.

Studies
Couples in Great Britain (n= 52) and the United States (n=96) participated in our studies during a laboratory visit.

Gender Related Differences
It appears that wives' forgiveness of husband transgressions is particularly important for conflict resolution in marriage both in the short term and over time. In contrast it is husbands' overcoming of unforgiveness that facilitates conflict resolution, at least in the short term. It is likely that these findings reflect gender differences in response to intimate partner conflict. Women are less likely to avoid and more likely to engage problematic areas in need of discussion than are men. In this context, factors that increase husband withdrawal, such as unforgiveness, might be particularly likely to fuel a destructive demand-withdraw cycle, leading to increased reports by wives of ineffective arguing.

Perpetrator and Victim Must Overcome Different Perspectives
There is a difference in perspectives between the perpetrator and the victim of harm-doing (e.g., see Kearns & Fincham 2005) in that each encodes and recalls harm-doing events in self-serving ways (victims tend to overlook details that facilitate forgiving and embellish their memories with details that make forgiving more difficult; perpetrators embellish details that facilitate forgiving). In the usual course of events the victim spouse has to cancel a debt that is bigger than one acknowledged by the transgressor spouse. Thus, the transgressor spouse may see the partner's reaction to the transgression as overblown and itself a wrongdoing. Should he or she act accordingly, the partner might feel doubly wronged and the couple could end up engaging in a chain of escalating, negative interaction.

Unforgiveness as a Public Health Problem
The current data add to a growing body of knowledge that points to the ubiquity of forgiveness for sustaining successful intimate relationships. Hence we have begun to explore unforgiveness as a public health problem (see Fincham & Kashdan, 2004) and stress alternative vehicles (e.g., the internet, mass media) for the delivery of psycho-education to facilitate forgiveness in intimate relationships (see Braithwaite & Fincham, 2006).

Further Resources

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Forgiveness Education with Children in Areas of Violence and Poverty

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Summary of Findings

- The authors developed a four-phase model to enhance forgiveness.
- This therapy model has been shown to reduce anxiety and depression and to improve hope and self-esteem in random controlled experimental trials.
- The model has been extended to a classroom based Forgiveness Education Curriculum.
- To date three studies involving 327 children in Northern Ireland and the US has addressed the classroom curriculum.
- Children in classrooms randomly assigned to receive this curriculum show a statistically significant reduction in anger compared to control classrooms that do not receive the curriculum.

Introduction

Since 1985, our research group has explored the psychology of forgiveness with the tools of social science. Although its origins are within the ancient religious traditions, forgiveness, through research and academic discourse, has now taken its place within the positivist and humanistic traditions.

Forgiveness Therapy

Forgiveness therapy is described by a number of clinicians and researchers as a promising new approach to anger-reduction and the restoration of emotional health (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997; Ripley & Worthington, 2002). Our approach at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the forgiveness process model, encompasses four phases: Uncovering, Decision, Work, and Deepening (Enright, 2001; Enright & Human Development Study Group, 1996). In the Uncovering phase, the individual identifies the psychological injury he or she experienced and recognizes his or her own subsequent anger, shame, and possibly distorted thinking. In the Decision phase, the person makes the attempt to more deeply understand what forgiveness is and is not. He or she then makes a conscious commitment to forgive the offender.

Robert Enright

In the Work phase, the person strives to understand the wrongdoer's perspective and may develop compassion and empathy toward that offender. By relinquishing anger as a psychological defense, the individual chooses

to fully experience his or her own pain. With this bearing of the pain, the forgiver may develop a sense of generosity toward the offending person. In the Deepening phase, the one who forgives acknowledges human vulnerability by reflecting on his or her own past offenses. He or she may begin to find new meaning in what happened, making deeper sense out of the experience. By finding positive meaning in events previously viewed as mostly negative, the forgiver releases resentment and may find a new life purpose. This allows for the possibility of healthy emotional regulation and a re-examination of self as more than just a victim.

Research on Forgiveness Therapy
This particular forgiveness therapy model has been used successfully with adults in a variety of settings, improving the emotional health of the elderly (Hebl & Enright, 1993); college students psychologically hurt by emotionally-distant parents (Al-Mabuk, Enright & Cardis, 1995); survivors of incest (Freedman & Enright, 1996); men emotionally hurt by their partner's abortion decision (Coyle & Enright (1997); adults in a residential drug rehabilitation unit (Lin, Mack, Enright, Krahn and Baskin, 2004); and emotionally-abused women (Reed and Enright, in press).

All the studies have employed the "gold standard" of randomized experimental and control group designs with follow-up testing. Typical responses to forgiveness therapy are reductions in anxiety and depression and improvements in hope and self-esteem. Effect sizes tend to be strong (Baskin & Enright, 2004).

Forgiveness Education with Children
For our recent efforts, in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and central-city Milwaukee, we launched our most ambitious forgiveness program to date: the implementation of a curriculum in first-grade classrooms (that has now extended to second, third, and fifth grades) in environments characterized by ongoing violence and poverty. In Belfast, we chose only schools in what the locals call the "interface" areas, where Catholics and Protestants live in close proximity. These areas are characterized by violence and poverty (Heatley, 2004).

Encouraged by our successes with the programs for adults, we wondered whether a forgiveness curriculum for young children might aid them in reducing anger and improving their emotional health. We reasoned that if we could implement such a curriculum in communities that have been oppressed by violence for decades (or even centuries in the case of Belfast), perhaps forgiveness education could be one missing piece to the peace puzzle in such societies.

Our primary vehicle for introducing forgiveness to the children is through story. We train the teachers, who deliver the program to the children. Results across three studies to date (N=327 children across all experimental and control groups in Belfast and Milwaukee) show a statistically significant reduction in anger, favoring the children whose classrooms have been randomly assigned to the experimental group relative to the control group. We currently are helping teachers in over 100 classrooms worldwide to implement these programs. We are in discussions with the Ministry of Education in Colombia, South America,

the Jerusalem Foundation, and English-speaking schools in Rome, Italy regarding the commencement of these programs.

The Future

The value of forgiveness for the United Nations may be within post-accord societies, in which a tentative peace is already established. Years of war can leave people with deep anger, which can compromise emotional health as well as healthy interactions. Research shows that forgiveness programs can restore healthy emotions, thus potentially aiding social reconstruction and dialogue.

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The Stanford Forgiveness Projects

Frederic Luskin
Stanford Forgiveness Projects: www.learningtoforgive.com

Summary of Findings

- Forgiveness is a skill that can be taught in a group format.
- It is helpful for a large variety of interpersonal offenses.
- Forgiveness improves physical and emotional well being.
- It can be provided through education and/or therapeutic modalities.

Psycho-Education for Forgiveness
The Stanford Forgiveness Projects are a series of research studies that investigate the effectiveness of a group psycho-education forgiveness methodology. The intervention uses a combination of narrative therapy (telling and reclaiming one's story), cognitive disputation (unenforceable rules), guided imagery, and stress management to create conditions where forgiveness of an offender is more likely. It is based on a three part model of grievance that includes offense, blame and victimhood, and forgiveness, which involves the unraveling of the grievance process. Forgiveness is defined as the affirmative ability to remain at peace when one is unable to get what one wants. In more colloquial terms forgiveness is defined as making peace with the word "no". Forgiveness is contrasted with reconciliation, justice, condoning, and acceptance.

Methodology
This methodology was first tested with 55 college students in a randomized wait listed controlled study (participants are randomly assigned to either an immediate treatment condition or to the waitlist for treatment control condition). Students were recruited who had an unresolved interpersonal hurt with someone in their life. The treatment condition consisted of one 50-minute session intervention per week for a 6 week period and a subsequent 2 month follow-up period. After this time the treatment group showed significant reduced hurt and state and trait anger, complemented with significant increases in hope, compassion, forgiveness, and quality of life.


Frederick Luskin

Then the largest random controlled forgiveness intervention study to date was completed. Participants were recruited who had any form of unresolved interpersonal hurt, and were randomized into treatment and wait-listed control. The treatment group received a 90-minute intervention over 6 weeks to teach the methodology's 9 steps of forgiveness. Treatment participants showed significant reductions in state and trait anger, perceived stress, hurt, and physical symptoms of stress, and showed increases in forgiveness both toward the offender and for difficult situations in

general, and increases in optimism. Follow up four months after the end of the intervention period showed stable gains.

Application in Northern Ireland
The Stanford Northern Ireland HOPE projects brought men and women from both sides of the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland to Stanford for a week of forgiveness training. The first group included mothers from both sides who had lost sons and the second group included 17 people who had lost an immediate family member to murder. There were no control conditions and the intervention was offered over 6 days with 2, 90-minute sessions per day. The group of mothers showed significant 50% reductions in perceived stress, a 40% reduction in depression, and a 23% reduction in trait anger at the end of a 6-month follow-up period. In addition, forgiveness of the offender increased significantly. In the second group participants showed a significant reduction in hurt, perceived stress and depression and a significant increase in physical vitality at the end of the intervention week. There was no follow up evaluation.

Other Interventions
Current, on-going research began after the stock market crash of 2000 with a Fortune 100 company to see if forgiveness training as a singular component of emotional competence would increase sales and reduce stress. The first group of volunteers showed a reduction in stress of 20% with a corresponding 20% increase in positive emotions. The group of advisors showed a 25% increase in gross sales year-to-year, compared to a 10% sales increase in the rest of their market group. Five other groups of advisors from different market groups on the East Coast have participated in the study, which includes a day-long workshop, the development of an individual plan for change, and regular support via telephone. Average increase in gross sales remains 25% compared with the average increase in gross sales for the remainder of each market group is 10%.

Other studies that used this methodology showed reductions in stress hormones in pre-menopausal women and decreases in blood pressure in moderately hypertensive cardiology patients who had elevated scores in trait anger. Currently the methodology is being utilized to offer help to family members of the victims of the attack at the World Trade Center on 9/11. In addition this methodology has been taught to tens of thousands of people through churches, conferences, workshops and seminars throughout the world.

Stanford Forgiveness Projects Methodology: 9 Steps to Forgiveness
1. Know exactly how you feel about what happened and be able to articulate what about the situation is not OK. Then, tell a trusted couple of people about your experience.

2. Make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better. Forgiveness is for you and not for anyone else.

3. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation with the person that hurt you, or condoning of their action. What you are after is to find peace. Forgiveness can be defined as the "peace and understanding that come from blaming that which has hurt you less, taking the life experience less personally, and changing your grievance story."

4. Recognize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings, thoughts and physical upset you are suffering now, not what offended you or hurt you two minutes – or ten years– ago.

5. At the moment you feel upset practice a simple stress management technique to soothe your body's flight or fight response.

6. Give up expecting things from other people, or your life, that they do not choose to give you. Recognize the "unenforceable rules" you have for your health or how you or other people must behave. Remind yourself that you can hope for health, love, peace and prosperity and work hard to get them.

7. Put your energy into looking for another way to get your positive goals met than through the experience that has hurt you. Instead of mentally replaying your hurt seek out new ways to get what you want.

8. Remember that a life well lived is the best revenge. Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving the person who caused you pain power over you, learn to look for the love, beauty and kindness around you. Forgiveness is about personal power.

9. Amend your grievance story to remind you of the heroic choice to forgive.

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Forgiving the Perpetrators of the September 11th Attacks: Associations with Coping, Distress, and Religiousness

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Summary

- Some people are able to forgive mass violence, even shortly after it occurs.
- Forgiveness appears to be part of a package of responses aimed at adjusting emotionally to an event, even when one does not expect future interaction with the perpetrator(s).
- Those ambivalent about forgiveness reported more psychological distress than those who either had forgiven or who were against forgiveness.
- Religiousness may encourage individuals to value forgiveness, but it does not necessarily enable them to forgive.

Introduction

Although research shows that forgiveness is an important positive response to negative interpersonal events, associations between psychological distress and forgiveness of mass violence have received less attention.

Despite the obvious difficulties with forgiving perpetrators of mass violence, some people do so. Within a week after the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, we found that Columbine students and parents reported responses ranging from not being able to consider forgiveness to having already forgiven the perpetrators (Hawkins, McIntosh, Silver, & Holman, 2004). Over half the respondents were already trying to forgive the assailants. The data we report here examine forgiveness in the early aftermath of another incident of mass violence: the September 11th, 2001, attacks on the United States (9/11).

Forgiveness after 9/11

Forgiveness appears to be part of a larger set of psychological processes that occur after negative events. Here, we report how forgiveness of the 9/11 perpetrators related to coping and involuntary responses to stress three to six weeks after the attack. Specifically, we investigated how being antiforgiveness, ambivalent about forgiveness, or pro-forgiveness toward the attackers related to involuntary engagement in thinking and feeling about the event, primary control coping (attempts to directly alter emotional reactions or to problem-solve) or secondary control coping (e.g., changing how people think about

Daniel McIntosh

events, positive thinking), and finding meaning in the event. We also examined associations between forgiveness and psychological distress, and between forgiveness and religiousness.

Because forgiveness may be a way of regaining control over a situation and its emotional aftermath when no direct action is possible, we predicted it would relate positively to primary and secondary control coping. Further, because forgiveness requires thinking of the transgressors and acknowledging the negative event, forgiveness should be incompatible with disengagement coping (e.g., avoidance, denial). Finally, because forgiving may facilitate the cognitive engagement with the event required for building new, meaningful understandings of the event, we predicted that it would relate positively to finding meaning.

The Study
We surveyed 488 college students and 154 early adolescents three to six weeks after 9/11.

Forgiveness and Coping
Among the college students, those who were trying or had forgiven (pro forgiveness) the perpetrators reported more primary and secondary control coping, less involuntary engagement, and more meaning finding than those who were unsure about forgiveness (ambivalent) and those who did not believe the perpetrators should be forgiven (anti-forgiveness). Findings were consistent among the early adolescents. Overall, more forgiveness was associated with more positive responses to stress. Thus, forgiveness may be part of a package of responses aimed at facilitating emotional adjustment to an event even when one does not expect future interaction with the perpetrators.

Forgiveness and Distress
The association with distress was less straightforward. Students ambivalent about forgiveness reported the most distress. Those who had either decided not to try to forgive or who had already forgiven the attackers were experiencing less psychological turmoil than those who had mixed feelings about forgiveness. This pattern suggests that forgiveness of non-interpersonal transgressors should not be thought of as a continuum in which being opposed to forgiveness is on one end, ambivalence in the middle, and being willing to forgive at the opposite end. Being ambivalent about forgiveness may be associated with spending more time thinking about and reacting emotionally to the attacks.

Forgiveness and Religiosity
The anti-forgiveness groups in both samples reported less religiousness than other groups; the ambivalent and pro-forgiveness groups were similar. This finding suggests that religiousness may prevent people from rejecting forgiveness, even for perpetrators of mass violence. However, at least for a national terrorist attack, it does not assure being pro-forgiveness. Religiousness may encourage individuals to value forgiveness without necessarily enabling them to forgive. The observed patterns raise questions about the development of a pro-forgiveness attitude following an offense such as 9/11. It suggests that a stage-model of forgiveness would be inadequate. People may be motivated to move away from ambivalence, but not necessarily toward forgiveness.

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Forgiveness in Northern Ireland

Ed Cairns, University of Ulster; Miles Hewstone, University of Oxford; Tania Tam, Legal Services Research Centre & Oxford University. *From the Project: Intergroup forgiveness and sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland (initially funded, 1998 - 2001, by John Templeton Foundation.Collaborators: Frances McLernon, University of Ulster; Ulrike Niens, University of Ulster; Elissa Myers, University of Oxford.*

Summary of Findings

- The conflict in Northern Ireland is best understood in intergroup rather than interpersonal terms. Therefore effective forgiveness must also take place at the intergroup (rather than the interpersonal) level.
- Identification with one's group (for example religious group) and attitudes toward the other community are especially strong predictors of forgiveness. Personal characteristics, such as personal religiosity, are not a very strong predictor of forgiveness.
- The specific emotion of anger, or anger-related emotions (hostility and resentment, rather than other negative emotions, such as fear and disgust), hinders forgiveness. Anger needs to be expressed and released before forgiveness may occur.
- Trying to impose intergroup forgiveness is likely to be counter-productive. Rather, actions that facilitate contact and acts of remembrance such dedicating a monument may give people the opportunity to share the loss and make forgiving easier.

A Role for Forgiveness

After thirty years of virtually continuous political violence, Northern Ireland has reached an uneasy peace settlement. Despite formal resolution of the conflict as well as a range of economic and social "objective" issues (such as differential employment, education, and housing for Catholics and Protestants), division is still highly symbolic and psychologically real, and the conflict pervades people's everyday lives. If this peace settlement is to take root it will need to go one step further than simply bringing the parties together.

We believe that forgiveness may serve to break the cycle of violence (Staub, 1991). People who forgive historical perpetrators act in more mutually beneficial ways toward them—for example they are more willing to become friends with members of that group and to buy products made by them (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). Not only is forgiveness beneficial on the societal level, but

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it is also psychologically beneficial to the individual: Those who forgive suffer less turmoil and experience more emotional stability than those who do not forgive (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001).

It is a basic assumption in our work that where ethnopolitical conflicts are concerned, forgiveness and reconciliation are intimately related. To assist the appreciation of this process we have focused on trying to understand forgiveness in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland and in particular the factors that promote or hinder forgiveness.

Forgiveness - From the Individual to the Group
Our work is based on the premise that the conflict in Northern Ireland is best understood in intergroup rather than interpersonal terms (Hewstone & Cairns, 2002). Therefore, effective forgiveness must also take place at the intergroup (rather than the interpersonal) level.

In our research program, we have conducted focus groups across a large range of participants to examine what people in Northern Ireland thought of forgiving the other community. We have also employed surveys in an attempt to chart the correlates of intergroup forgiveness and to clarify the psychological processes involved when intergroup forgiveness takes place, and have conducted experimental studies to examine factors that lead people to forgive the other side.

Forgiveness is a process that involves addressing the intensely negative emotions toward the other group that persist long after the violence itself has stopped. Our research shows the specific emotion of anger, or anger-related emotions (hostility and resentment, rather than other negative emotions, such as fear and disgust), hinders forgiveness (Tam, Hewstone, Cairns, Tausch, Maio, & Kenworthy, in press). Anger needs to be expressed and released before forgiveness may occur. Emotions are, however, involuntary, so even if a person wanted to stop feeling angry or resentful, he or she could not directly control or stop these emotions. Thus interventions that promote, but do not force, forgiveness between groups are important.

Intergroup Forgiveness as a Socio-political Process
We have found that people believe it is easier to forgive an individual than a group because it is easier to trust an individual than each member of the other community (Cairns, Tam, Hewstone & Niens, 2005). However, identification with one's group (for example religious group) and attitudes toward the other community are especially strong predictors of forgiveness. Personal characteristics, such as personal religiosity, are not a very strong predictor of forgiveness. This work has suggested that in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, intergroup forgiveness may be best thought of as socio-political than religious. An experiment reinforced the relative importance of ingroup identification: Intergroup forgiveness was closely related to collective guilt, outgroup perspective-taking, and outgroup trust.

We have also studied subtle processes involved in inhibiting and promoting intergroup forgiveness. Contact with the other community is an important predictor of forgiveness. Our research also demonstrates the importance of seeing the humanity of the other side in promoting forgiveness. When group members "infra-humanize" (see members of the other group as less human

than their own group), they are less willing to forgive them for perceptions of past wrong-doing (Tam et al., in press). Perpetrator groups that are seen as 'human' elicit forgiveness and through it the pro-social behaviors that benefit society as a whole (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005).

In a society as starkly segregated as Northern Ireland, we believe that cross community contact is an essential part of any solution, ultimately helping the two communities progress towards crosscommunity forgiveness and reconciliation. However, all groups we studied stressed that trying to impose intergroup forgiveness is likely to be counter-productive. Rather, actions that facilitate contact and acts of remembrance, such dedicating a monument, may give people the opportunity to share the loss and make forgiving easier. Provisions for people to deal with their grievances and anger – which clearly hold the potential to derail the peace process – must be provided. Deep engagement can help people see the humanity of the other by addressing prior hurts, pain, and violence that the groups have inflicted upon each other can be extremely helpful (Staub, 2001).

Forgiveness and Trust

In our more recent work we have begun to explore the relationship between forgiveness and trust. Trust can be seen as a potential benefit to the injured forgiving party that is likely to come with forgiveness, but it may also be a necessary precursor of forgiveness. We hope to address such issues in future longitudinal and experimental work, some of which will compare respondents living in mixed and segregated neighborhoods as Northern Irish society continues to undergo changes, we hope, from a deeply-divided, sectarian society split along lines of identity, to a mixed, tolerant polity with emerging forms of cross-cutting identity.

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Further Resources

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Forgiving the Ingroup or the Outgroup for Harm Doing

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Summary of Findings

- Reminders of historical victimization can instigate legitimization of contemporary harm committed by the ingroup against a new adversary.
- When harm committed against a current adversary is legitimized and perceived responsibility for that harm is reduced, group members are most inclined to forgive the ingroup for their harmful actions.
- Historically victimized group members are more likely to forgive historical perpetrator group members when members of both groups are categorized as being members of a super-ordinate group (e.g., Humans).

Antecedents of Forgiveness

Given that intergroup conflict has long plagued humanity, and the fact that the harm experienced during such hostile episodes can affect not only those immediately involved but also subsequent generations, intergroup forgiveness may be a crucial means of healing the wounds of a group's past. Despite the potentially global significance of intergroup forgiveness, there has been relatively little empirical research on the processes underlying intergroup forgiveness (but see Branscombe & Doosje, 2004, for recent international examples). We have investigated the antecedents of forgiveness with theoretically driven research focused on the North American Jewish community and their emotional reactions to the Holocaust and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Michael J. A. Wohl

Memories of the Past

How remembrance of historical victimization of the ingroup (the group that was affected) affects perceptions and actions toward other groups in the present is a critical question for understanding the link between the psychological past and present. Wohl and Branscombe (2004) argued that reminders of historical victimization might set the stage for mistrust and legitimization of harmful actions toward a new enemy. Specifically, reminders of harm experienced by the ingroup in the past might legitimize actions taken toward a new enemy in the present—who also might

Nyla R. Branscombe

represent a threat to the ingroup's existence. To test this hypothesis, North American Jews were either asked to reflect on the Holocaust (their own group's victimization history), the Cambodian genocide (another group's victimization), or no such instructions were given. Participants were then asked to complete a measure assessing ingroup forgiveness for Israeli harmful actions taken against Palestinians. As predicted, Jewish people who were first reminded of the Holocaust were more willing to forgive the ingroup's current actions toward another group compared to either of the other conditions.

Importantly, this increased ingroup forgiveness effect was mediated by both lowered perceptions of Israeli responsibility and increased perceptions of Palestinian terrorism as the cause of the conflict. Thus, reminders of the ingroup's historical victimization increased ingroup forgiveness for current harmful actions toward another group to the extent that participants (1) reduced ingroup responsibility and (2) legitimized ingroup behavior as being the result of Palestinian terrorism. These results are consistent with the notion that if the ingroup is perceived to be under threat, members of that group will mount defenses that protect the ingroup's image including legitimization of its harm to another group. If the past can serve to legitimize present harm doing, how then can forgiveness of the historical group that committed harm against the ingroup be achieved?

Expanding the In-Group

Because the self can be categorized at differing levels of inclusiveness—as a unique individual, a member of a social group, or as human being—it affects who is seen as like or unlike the self. With each increasing level of inclusiveness, more others are included in the same category as the self. Wohl and Branscombe (2005) assessed the effect of altering the level of inclusiveness of categorization for historically victimized group members' willingness to forgive contemporary members of the perpetrator group. It was hypothesized that categorization at the maximally inclusive level—the human level—where Jews and Germans are perceived as being members of a common group, would result in a greater willingness to forgive the historical perpetrator group. To assess this possibility, North American Jewish students read an article in which the Holocaust was described as an event in which humans victimized other humans. Such a frame made salient the common humanity of those involved in the Holocaust.

In the other group identity condition, participants were then asked to indicate whether they were Jewish or German (all participants indicated they were Jewish) to ensure they thought of the two groups as separate and distinct. As predicted, Jewish people who categorized the self in terms of their human identity (and who as a result saw Germans and Jews as more similar to each other) expressed greater forgiveness of the descendants of the historical perpetrator group Germans than those participants who categorized their group as different from Germans (and who saw those social groups as being less similar to each other). In addition, Jews in the human categorization condition expressed less desire to maintain social distance from contemporary Germans (e.g., more willing to make friends with a German), as well as less social distance from symbolic representations of Germans (e.g., more willing to attend Oktoberfest or buy a German car) than when their separate group identity was salient.

Thus, a crucial component of intergroup reconciliation may involve increasingly inclusive categorization where members of the victimized and perpetrator group are perceived as members of a common category, i.e., humans. In the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in order for there to be forgiveness and reconciliation between groups with a conflictual past, they must see that we all "belong in the one family, God's family, the human family."

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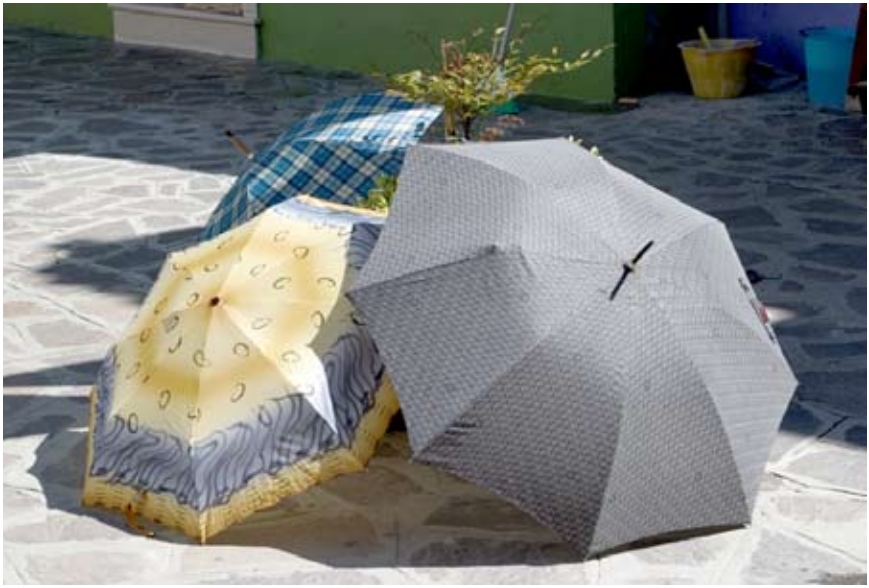

Forgiveness-Seeking Motives and Behaviours

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The Brock University Forgiveness Research Group, founded by Dr. Kathryn Belicki and Dr. Nancy DeCourville

Summary of Findings

- Concerns that motivate a perpetrator to seek forgiveness include: Damaged self-worth, justice, impression management, the victim and others, the relationship, religion/God.
- Forgiveness-seeking behaviors can be grouped into 4 categories: Approach, Avoidance, Denial and Hiding, and Groveling.
- The concerns that motivate a perpetrator to seek forgiveness and the forgiveness-seeking behaviors a perpetrator uses depend on the severity of the transgression and the amount of time that has passed since the transgression.

Forgiveness-Seeking
The flurry of forgiveness research since the 1980's has been exciting and consistent, and has made progress in understanding the processes and outcomes of forgiving. However, an interpersonal transgression, the very starting point of forgiveness, involves at least two people -- a victim and a perpetrator. Yet, for the most part, research has focused only on the victim. The focus of my forgiveness research is forgiveness-seeking, which is essentially forgiveness from the point of view of the perpetrator. Exploring forgiveness seeking, will not only be beneficial to the well-being of perpetrators, but will also serve to further enhance the well-being of victims.

Forgiveness as Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Processes
In the forgiveness literature, there is a debate concerning whether forgiveness is an interpersonal process (to re-establish the relationship) or intrapersonal process (to make the self feel better). My studies have addressed this difference from the perspective of the perpetrator. I explored the possibility that forgiveness-seeking is both inter- and intra-personal, and that the order in which these occur depends on features of the perpetrator such as personality.

Jessica Rourke

Intra-personal forgiveness occurs when a perpetrator seeks forgiveness from the victim in order to reconcile the relationship and/or help the victim to feel better. Intra-personal forgiveness (or more simply, self-forgiveness) occurs when the perpetrator turns inwards to come to terms with the negativity he/she is feeling, and in no way involves the victim.

Forgiveness and Personality
My research has shown that forgiveness-seeking depends on the severity of the act and on the perpetrator's personality (comparing introverts and extraverts). When an offending act was severe, most

perpetrators followed a similar sequence of forgiveness-seeking – they first reflected and sought to gain self forgiveness before they asked forgiveness from others, and this was true for both introverts and extraverts. However, in low and moderate guilt/severity situations, extraverts were more likely to immediately seek forgiveness from their victim (interpersonal forgiveness-seeking) while introverts were more likely to first turn inwards to try and soothe the self and forgive the self (intrapersonal forgiveness-seeking) before seeking forgiveness from others. The next step of the research is to explore the reasons why both turn inward in high severity situations, and also, whether or not both types of forgiveness-seeking are required for resolution. It may be that once extraverted perpetrators receive forgiveness from their victims, they are able to move on from the situation and do not need to seek forgiveness from themselves.

What Factors Motivate Forgiveness Seeking?

Why do perpetrators ask forgiveness? There are a number of reasons that may be of importance, including avoiding punishment, atoning for earlier actions, improving the lot of the victim, and responding to moral or ethical concerns. To explore these reasons, we developed a forgivenessseeking questionnaire that asks about perpetrators' concerns that underlie the motivation for asking for forgiveness. Preliminary results have shown that there exist 6 major areas of concern for a perpetrator once he/she has transgressed: Damaged self-worth, justice, impression management, the victim and others (friends and family), the relationship with the victim, and God. In addition, preliminary results also show that a perpetrator's concerns vary depending on the severity of the situation (we have assessed low, moderate and high severity transgressions). In addition a perpetrator's concerns immediately following the transgression are often quite different than concerns in the longer term (in order to eventually move on from the situation).

How Do Perpetrators Ask for Forgiveness?

We have also examined what behaviours perpetrators use in order to seek forgiveness. Results have shown the existence of four categories of forgiveness-seeking behaviours that we have termed: Approach behaviours (e.g. calling the victim), avoidance behaviours (e.g. giving the victim some space), denying and hiding behaviours (e.g. blaming someone else), and grovelling behaviours (e.g. doing whatever it takes for however long it takes). As with the concerns, preliminary results show that the forgiveness-seeking behaviours a perpetrator engages in after a transgression vary depending on the severity of the situation and the time frame (immediately following the transgression or in the longer term).

The very recent rise in forgiveness-seeking literature is uplifting because by understanding why perpetrators do, or do not seek forgiveness, it may be possible to promote the behaviour, and in doing so, perhaps facilitate the process of granting forgiveness.

Suggested Readings

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Asking Forgiveness for the Sins of Many: Does it Work?

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Summary of Findings

- Receiving an official group apology does not necessarily increase the strength of forgiveness.
- Receiving an official group apology does increase the positive perception of the perpetrator's subsequent actions and remorsefulness.
- Receiving an apology from an individual offender for a group offence generates forgiveness for the individual and for some group members.
- Group apologies may promote forgiveness if other conditions are present to facilitate the forgiveness process.

Introduction
Japan's apologies to its former World War II enemies, the Serbian government's apology to relatives of those massacred at Srebrenica, Canada's apologies to its native peoples, and Exxon's apology to Alaskans for the Exxon Valdez oil spill are all examples of the burgeoning phenomenon that is intergroup apology (see Lazare, 2004) or requests for group forgiveness.

We investigated the effectiveness of intergroup apologies in promoting forgiveness across a number of studies. Our participants were young Australians, who we asked to read of events in which outside groups harmed other Australians. Some examples of the events used include Japan's human rights abuse of Australian prisoners of war in World War II, and the indirect contributions of various financial organisations to the Bali bombings in which many Australians died. Participants were then told either that the offending group had not apologised, or were given a copy of an apology ostensibly given by an official representing the offending group. We then measured forgiveness by asking whether participants agreed or disagreed with a number of statements about the perpetrators.

Catherine Philpot

Matthew Hornsey

Forgiveness through Group Apologies
These studies showed that the receipt of an apology made no difference to the strength of Australian forgiveness for perpetrator groups. Whether an apology was received or not, people were relatively unforgiving of offender groups. For example, our

group of young Australian participants generally reported that forgiveness for Japanese soldiers involved in World War II was "in progress".They still felt some anger and resentment toward offenders and held offenders in a negative light. This pattern of results was repeated across a number of studies in which we varied information that should increase forgiveness —despite encouragement to forgive by other Australians, despite increasingly
elaborate apologies, and despite being given more time, group apologies did not increase forgiveness.

Indirect Effects of Group Apologies
However, in the same studies, apologies did affect other responses. They increased a sense of satisfaction with the offending group's behaviour after the offence. Apologies also increased a sense that offending groups were genuinely remorseful for wrongdoing. These two perceptions were closely related, so that the more remorseful an offending group was perceived to be, the more satisfied participants were with their behavior. In addition, the more participants believed that offenders were remorseful the more likely they were to forgive them. However, at the same time intergroup apologies aroused suspicions that the group was merely attempting to ease public pressure, avoid punishment, or improve group image.

The lack of forgiveness for offending groups was unexpected given the wealth of evidence in other psychological studies that individuals who apologize are more likely to receive forgiveness than those who do not (see for example McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). We wanted to understand the cause of this difference. Was it something in the way we were studying forgiveness? Or, is there something about intergroup apologies that makes forgiveness difficult?

Forgiveness through Individual Apologies
To test this, we conducted another study in which an individual Japanese soldier gave the apology for their actions and for the group's actions. Importantly, this individual apology did lead to increased forgiveness both for the individual Japanese soldier and for Japanese people generally (although Australians were no more forgiving of other offending Japanese soldiers). We also found that, in contrast to official group apologies, participants were not suspicious of apologies given by individual offenders. Thus, it may be that promotion of group forgiveness is more likely through apologies from individual offenders rather than official group representatives.

Group Apology—Can it be Effective?
Our experiments suggest that there is something in the nature of giving and receiving apologies on behalf of a group that impedes forgiveness. Follow-up surveys in Australia and the Philippines showed similar findings: that people have difficulty recalling intergroup apologies and that their recollections do not reliably predict forgiveness. Despite this, our quest to identify the circumstances in which group apologies promote forgiveness continues Researchers have shown that forgiveness for a group is more likely with increased intergroup contact (Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Moeschberger, Dixon, Niens, & Cairns, 2005) and through appealing to group classifications beyond "us" and "them" to a more inclusive "we" (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). Thus, apologies between groups that have greater interconnectedness may be effective. Our Australian studies have been of

groups and offences that are relatively distant in time and space where there may have been little motivation for forgiveness. Writers have also suggested that the remembrance of group victimhood can become "a very peculiar source of pride" (Buruma, 1999). Where this exists there may also be little motivation for groups to forgive when asked.

Together our results suggest that while official group apologies increase satisfaction with offending groups, forgiveness may not be aroused unless motivation exists for it to do so. The contrasting success of apologies given by individuals for group offences confirms the need for a distinct theory of intergroup apologies and intergroup forgiveness.

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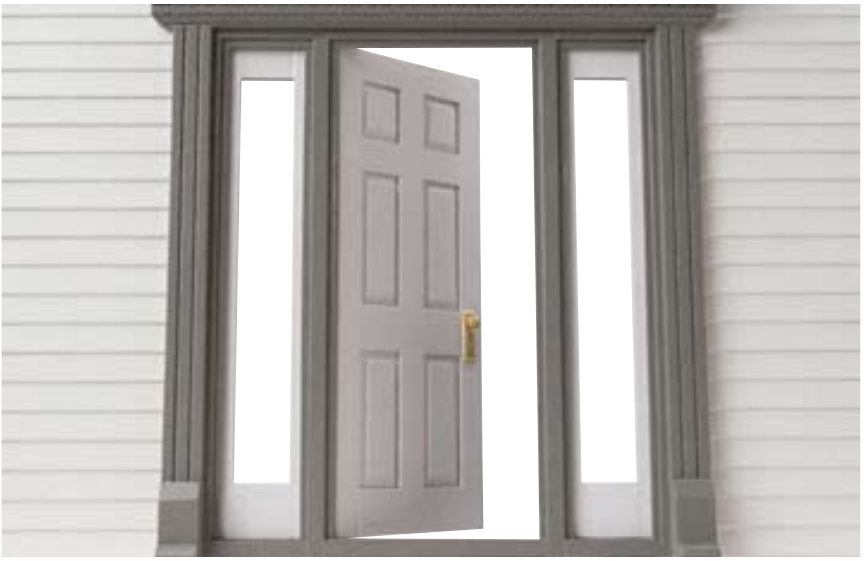

Promoting reconciliation and Forgiveness After Mass Violence: Rwanda and other Settings

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Summary

- We developed an approach to promoting forgiveness and reconciliation with four elements: understanding the psychological effects of violence on all parties, understanding the origins of violence between groups, understanding the impact of basic human needs in the origins of violence, and engagement with experience.
- Members of community groups in Rwanda led by facilitators trained in this approach showed fewer trauma symptoms, and more "readiness to reconcile" consisting of a more positive orientation to members of the other group and greater "conditional forgiveness."
- We used this approach with journalists, community leaders, national leaders and radio programs both in Rwanda (with positive initial results) and more recently in the Congo.
- Understanding the influences leading to violence seems an especially promising way to promote healing and reconciliation.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Ervin Staub

In forgiveness, someone who has been harmed lets go of anger and the desire for revenge, and develops a more positive, accepting attitude toward a harmdoer (McCullough, M., Fincham, F. D., and Tsang, J. 2003). Research has shown that this can lessen the psychological burden of people who have been harmed. Forgiveness is fostered by acknowledgment from harmdoers of their actions, empathy with those they have harmed, expressions of regret and apology (Worthington, 2005). Anecdotal information, for example, in Rwanda indicates that forgiveness can elicit such reactions from perpetrators. Genuine forgiveness is deeply felt and the result of an organic process. But when forgiveness is the result of the influence of religious authorities or government and political leaders, it can be shallow, limited and unstable (Staub, 2005).

Forgiveness can also be harmful under certain conditions, either in individual relationships or in the relationship of groups. After a mass killing, genocide, or intractable conflict when both sides engage in violence, perpetrators often continue to devalue their victims and claim that their actions were defensive and necessary. When members of perpetrator and victims groups continue to live together and the harmdoers do not acknowledge their responsibility

or express regret, forgiveness maintains or enhances the imbalance that the violence has created. This may contribute to further problems in the relationship between the groups (Staub, 2005).

In contrast to forgiveness, reconciliation, the mutual acceptance by two individuals or two groups, requires changes in both parties (Staub, in press) Constructive forgiveness, which requires changes in perpetrators as well as in victims, and reconciliation are similar processes.

An Approach to Promoting Reconciliation and Forgiveness in Rwanda and Elsewhere

When violence between groups stops, the attitudes of the members of the groups toward each other do not change, and violence often recurs (Cairns et al, 2005; de Silva & Samarasinghe,1993; Long & Brecke, 2003). Our work in Rwanda has aimed at promoting reconciliation and thereby helping to prevent future violence.

An important requirement for reconciliation is psychological healingVictimization creates feelings of vulnerability, mistrust and the perception of people as dangerous. When there is new threat this can lead to defensive violence (Staub, 1998). Perpetrators, and to a lesser degree passive bystanders, are also wounded as a result of their actions and passivity in the face of violence. Healing by them makes it more likely that they acknowledge their responsibility (Staub and Pearlman, 2006). We developed an approach to healing and reconciliation that we used in many forms in Rwanda, that is now being used in other settings. Its primary elements are:

• Helping people understand the psychological effects of the violence on all parties (Herman, 1992; Pearlman and Saakvitne, 1995; Staub, 1998).

• Helping people understand the influences—social conditions, elements of culture and institutions, group and individual psychological processes—that lead to violence by groups (Staub, 1989, 2003).

• Helping people understand the role of the frustration of basic human needs in the origins of violence and in victimization and trauma, and their fulfillment in healing (Staub, 1989; 2003; Staub and Pearlman, 2006).

• When possible, having people engage with their painful experiences under supportive, empathic conditions.

We first trained people from local organizations that worked with groups in the community and helped them integrate our approach with their own traditional approach. Some of these people then led newly created groups in the community with both Hutu and Tutsi participants, with the effects carefully evaluated in a field study.

Research Findings and Applications

Community members in groups led by facilitators that we had trained had fewer trauma symptoms two months after the end of the training, and a more positive orientation toward members of the other group and more "readiness to reconcile." This included what we called "conditional forgiveness," the willingness to forgive if members of the other groups acknowledge what

they have done or express regret. These changes were both over time and in comparison to various control groups, including groups led by facilitators we did not train (Staub, Pearlman, Gubin and Hagengimana, 2005). We then used this approach with a variety of groups, including community leaders, journalists, the training of trainers, and national leaders such as government ministers, heads of commissions, and advisors to the president (Staub and Pearlman, 2006).

Understanding the roots of violence between groups was of great interest to participants. It seemed to have special value in contributing to healing and to greater openness by members of the two groups toward each other, as well as in giving rise to the motivation to prevent new violence. Wedescribed the influences that lead to mass killing and genocide, used examples from other cases (see Staub, 1989; 2003) and then asked participants to apply the conception to Rwanda. They did this effectively in all but one instance (Staub and Pearlman, 2006).

Radio Programs to Promote Reconciliation and Forgiveness
This approach became the basis for extensive radio programs developed in collaboration with a Dutch NGO, La Benevolencija. We developed communication objectives based on our approach that guide the educational content of a weekly drama series Musekeweya or "new dawn", that began to broadcast in Rwanda in May 2004, and will continue until 2008. It is a story of two villages in conflict. The program is listened to by 92% of radio listeners, the primary media in Rwanda. Early evaluation indicates a number of positive effects. A more direct informational program, and a justice support program have also been broadcast.

Starting in early 2006, and using the same approach, new programs, including a drama series, have begun to broadcast in the Congo, where violence and its consequences (disease, starvation) have lead to the deaths of more than 3 million people. Our conceptual approach aims to identify general principles, such as influences leading to group violence, the impact of violence, avenues to healing, and so on. However, such principles have to be adapted to specific circumstances. The Congo is a country with many groups. The violence had to do, in part, with different groups, often local groups, striving for dominance and influence—and security. In creating the drama series in the Congo, the general principles have been applied to the specific history, culture, and group relations.

Other Principles/Practices of Promoting Reconciliation and Forgiveness
In addition to understanding the roots of violence, and promoting community healing, our work has been informed by other essential principles of reconciliation and forgiveness. One of them is establishing what has happened, a complex truth that represents all sides. Related to this is the creation or development of a shared history in place of the conflicting views of history that the different groups usually hold after group violence. Another principle is the need for justice; another is contact between groups, ideally working for shared goals. Active bystanders are essential in the prevention of violence and promoting reconciliation (Staub, in press).

Psychological and Structural Changes
The psychological approaches we describe are essential for promoting forgiveness and reconciliation. They also make it possible to create and maintain structures/institutions (an effective justice system, schools

that facilitate contact between children belonging to different groups and teach a shared history, and so on), which are essential to sustain and further changes in attitudes and mutual acceptance.

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Requesting Intergroup Forgiveness: A Congolese Perspective

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Summary

- The request for intergroup forgiveness is a public and symbolic process.
- Intergroup forgiveness is a dyadic process involving the perpetrator and victim groups only.
- The goal of intergroup forgiveness is reconciliation.

Forgiveness from a National Perspective

Many injuries, such as those in war, are collective. Offences are committed not only against individuals but against the society itself, and responsibilities for these offences are shared by many individuals. Justice for these offences is often intractable, in that to be complete, confession must be a collective enterprise that can only be undertaken at a community level.

The usual conception of forgiveness as a strictly interpersonal process does not address this collective process. The question motivating this research was whether nations can engage in processes that result in collective repentance and forgiveness. We examined the views of Congolese people who were recently involved in a civil war and who, for the most part, personally suffered as a result of the many regional and local conflicts.

Requesting Forgiveness

In this study, we assessed one aspect of intergroup forgiveness—requesting forgiveness—with participants in an area that experienced recent civil war. Participants were 500 persons living in the province of Kasaï, Congo, whose ages ranged from 18 to 97, most of whom had personally suffered from the conflict or had a close family member who had suffered from the civil war. Participants were given a questionnaire addressing attitudes about asking for forgiveness as well as concrete aspects of the process of requesting forgiveness. Most (58%) of participants agreed that forgiveness could be an intergroup process, 28% were neutral, and only 14% thought that it was not possible for a group of people to ask another group for forgiveness.

Etienne Mullet

Processes of Requesting Forgiveness

Participants indicated clear conceptions of the process of asking for intergroup forgiveness. It was conceived as a democratic process in which public discussion and voting must take place before concrete actions by politicians. They also believed the people who would speak on behalf of the whole group must be democratically designated.

Participants acknowledged a special role for religious authorities in helping to initiate the process of asking for forgiveness.Participants also conceived of intergroup forgiveness as a collective and global process that must be requested on behalf of the whole community and must involve all the people and offences committed. Asking for intergroup forgiveness was conceived as a public process with special deference to the offended group. Participants agreed that the process should take place in the offended party's territory, in its symbolic buildings (e.g., the presidential palace), and in its language. They also perceived intergroup forgiveness as a dyadic process, involving only the two groups concerned, not a regional or continental process.

Goals of Forgiveness

Participants saw the essential aim of requesting forgiveness as promoting reconciliation between the two groups. They agreed that concessions should be made, if needed, to facilitate the process and agreed that both parties should make plans for the future to live in a more interdependent and cooperative fashion. The process of asking for intergroup forgiveness was, however, seen as distinct from the initiation of a commercial agreement, a military treaty, or a judicial procedure.

Forgiveness Stands Alone

Finally, intergroup forgiveness was conceived as neither implying nor prohibiting the expression of particular sentiments or emotions from the people who ask for forgiveness. The specific item, "The demand of forgiveness should be accompanied by acts of contrition and repentance on the part of the persons responsible for the perpetrated offences," received a neutral rating. Other items referring to the offer of various kinds of compensations also received only moderate agreement.

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Short Takes

Encouraging Forgiveness in the Wake of Emotionally-Charged Events
Luzolo L. Luzombe and Karol E. Dean, Mount St. Mary's College
Los Angeles, California

This study with adults taking classes at a small Catholic college investigated participants' estimations of forgiveness for incidents of sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests. The results showed that dimensions such as frequency of offense, apology by offender, attempts at reconciliation and beliefs that the offender has changed all increased likelihood of forgiveness.

Understanding Group Differences in Forgiveness
Adam Cohen, Arizona State University

This study Investigated religion-based (Jew, Christian) differences in the attributed value of forgiveness, limits of forgiveness to highlight cultural and historical differences, and impact of religious attitudes on forgiveness. (Cohen, A. B., Malka, A., Rozin, P., & Cherfas, L. (2006). Religion and unforgivable offenses. Journal of Personality, 74, 85-118.

Self Forgiveness
Julie Hall, University of Rochester & Frank D. Fincham,
Florida State University

These studies provide a conceptual analysis of self-forgiveness and go on to identify commonalities and differences in forgiving another and forgiving the self. (Hall, J. H. & Fincham, F. D. (2005). Self forgiveness: The stepchild of forgiveness research. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 24, 621-637; Hall, J. H. & Fincham, F. D. (2006). The temporal course of self-forgiveness. Manuscript submitted for publication).

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