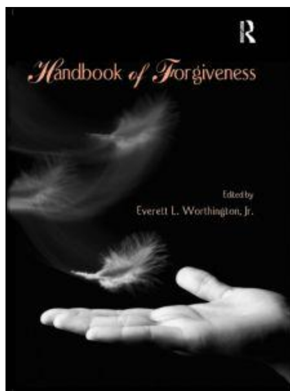
This article was downloaded by: *10.3.97.143*
On: 11 Dec 2023
Access details: *subscription number*
Publisher: *Routledge*
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK




# Handbook of Forgiveness

Everett L. Worthington, Jr.

# Constructive Rather Than Harmful Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Ways to Promote Them After Genocide and Mass Killing

Publication details
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203955673.ch27
Ervin Staub
**Published online on: 21 Jun 2005**

**How to cite :-** Ervin Staub. 21 Jun 2005, *Constructive Rather Than Harmful Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Ways to Promote Them After Genocide and Mass Killing from:* Handbook of Forgiveness Routledge
Accessed on: 11 Dec 2023
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

**PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT**

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# Part Seven

# SOCIETAL ISSUES INVOLVING FORGIVENESS

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 442 5/13/05 10:44:56 AM

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

Chapter Twenty-Seven

# Constructive Rather Than Harmful Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Ways to Promote Them After Genocide and Mass Killing

Ervin Staub

## INTRODUCTION TO FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION, AND PERSONAL ASSUMPTIONS

There is little empirical research or theory on forgiveness after intense violence between groups or between individuals who have harmed each other acting as members of their groups (but see Byrne, 2003a, 2003b; Hewstone et al., in press; Quinn, 2003; Staub, 2004; Staub & Pearlman, 2001, 2004; Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, & Hagengimana, in press; Worthington, 2001). In considering forgiveness after genocide or mass killing, I will draw on our work in Rwanda. That work involved both formal research and observations in the course of a series of interventions between 1998 and 2004 that aimed to promote healing, reconciliation, and forgiveness in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide (Staub, 2000, 2004; Staub & Pearlman, 2001, 2004; Staub, Pearlman, & Miller, 2003; Staub et al., in press). In that genocide, the majority Hutus killed about 700,000 Tutsis and about 50,000 Hutus because they saw them as opposing the genocide, as political enemies, or for other reasons. The killings were done by part of the army, by paramilitary groups composed of young men, and by neighbors. In some mixed families, even relatives participated (Des Forges, 1999; Mamdani, 2002; Prunier, 1995). Obviously, forgiveness after such violence is intensely difficult. What kind of forgiveness is "constructive" versus potentially harmful after a genocide? What avenues or practices promote it?

Research findings show that after more severe experiences with violence, people are less ready to forgive (Subkoviak et. al., 1995). In Northern Ireland, people who



RT9491_C027.indd 443 5/13/05 10:44:56 AM

themselves, their relatives, or the neighborhoods they lived in experienced more violence were less willing to forgive (Hewstone et al., in press). While it is the experience of violence that is likely to matter most, the actual amount of violence is incomparably greater in a genocide than it was in Northern Ireland, where about 3,000 people were killed in a 40-year period (Cairns & Derby, 1998). In genocides, usually hundreds of thousands if not millions of people are killed.

## Definitions of Forgiveness and Its Relationship to Reconciliation

When groups continue to live together after intense violence between them, reconciliation is crucial for the prevention of new violence. Without it, violence is likely to resume (de la Rey, 2001; de Silva & Samarasinghe, 1993; Staub, 2004). One reason for the importance of forgiveness is to help improve the lives of victims; another is its supposed relationship to reconciliation (Arthur, 1999; Hayner, 1999; Lederach, 1998; Shriver, 1995; Staub, 2004; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003; Staub & Pearlman, 2001).

A strong relationship between the two concepts/processes is suggested by their definitions. McCullough, Fincham, and Tsang (2003) see central elements of forgiveness as change from negative emotions and thoughts about the offender, such as anger, resentment, and the desire for revenge, to more positive, benevolent ones. This definition overlaps with the definition of reconciliation my associates and I have offered (see Staub, 2000, 2004; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003; Staub & Pearlman, 2001, 2004). One version of this is the following:

> Reconciliation may be defined as mutual acceptance by groups of each other. The essence of reconciliation is a changed psychological orientation toward the other. Reconciliation means that victims and perpetrators, or members of hostile groups, do not see the past as defining the future . . . [that they] . . . come to see the humanity of one another, accept each other, and see the possibility of a constructive relationship (Staub & Pearlman, 2001; Staub & Bar-Tal, 2003). This definition is consistent with other definitions that focus on restoring a damaged relationship and on both the processes involved and the outcomes (de la Rey, 2001; Kriesberg, 1998a, b; Lederach, 1997). (Staub, 2004, p. 8)

A change from a negative to a more positive, benevolent orientation to the other seems a core component of all definitions of forgiveness (see also Worthington, 2001).

Although the literature clearly suggests that the other party has a role in forgiveness, for example, by apologizing or asking for forgiveness, still forgiveness can be one-sided—a change in the harmed party. In contrast, the essence of reconciliation is mutuality—a change in both parties. However, I see beneficial, constructive forgiveness, especially after genocide and when people who were harmed continue to live next to or have contact or a relationship with perpetrators, as requiring acknowledgment of harmdoing by perpetrators, empathy for the victims, and expressions of regret. Without this, forgiveness can be harmful rather than beneficial. Such feelings

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 444 5/13/05 10:44:56 AM

and actions require significant change in the perpetrators and, in the case of mass violence, in other members (supporters, passive bystanders) of the perpetrator group.

Forgiveness and reconciliation can both vary in degree. The two processes seem intertwined. Some degree of forgiveness, of letting go of fear and anger, may be required for reconciliation to begin. In continuing relationships, it is likely that reconciliation has to proceed before deep forgiveness can occur. Deep forgiveness is the end of a process and of a continuum ranging from anger, hostility, even hatred and the desire for revenge, to understanding the other's actions, acceptance of the other, and an ultimate form of acceptance. The influences I will describe as promoting constructive forgiveness also promote reconciliation. Given the overlapping definitions and my argument about the essential role of mutuality after genocide, it may be that reconciliation, which is inherently mutual, should be the primary process to focus on after genocide, with forgiveness as an aspect of it.

## Some Views of Forgiveness in Rwanda: Religion, Authority, Culture, and Genocide

I conducted informal interviews in Rwanda, asking people what forgiveness is, whether it is possible after the genocide, and what may be required for it to occur.

What is the cultural/societal background to forgiveness in Rwanda? Rwandans are a religious people, mostly Christian and predominantly Catholic, a religion in which forgiveness is a deeply held value (Auerbach, 2004). Religiousness has been assumed to promote forgiveness. However, Hewstone et al. (in press), did not find this in Northern Ireland. There religion was the basis of conflict, and religious authorities often supported the violence. This is the case in many instances of group violence. According to Quinn (2003), not to forgive those who belong to other religions is explicit in the Koran because religions draw a line between those who follow the true faith and those who do not. Religiousness may not contribute to and may even inhibit forgiveness when perpetrators are members of another religious group.

In Rwanda, many people who work in the community to promote reconciliation, many of them Tutsis, have strong religious beliefs. In addition, the government actively promotes reconciliation. The government also promotes the notion that the division between Hutu and Tutsi was imposed on the people by Belgian colonialists, that no differences exist, and that all the people in the country are Rwandans. Talking about Hutus and Tutsis is discouraged. Implicit in this is the need to forgive.

At the same time and in contrast, there are trials of perpetrators of the genocide in the international court set up for Rwanda, in regular Rwandan courts, and in special courts—the *gacaca*, where perpetrators are tried by groups of elected judges in front of and with the participation of local communities (Honeyman et al., 2004; Staub, 2004). Moreover, taking revenge is deeply embedded in Rwandan culture. Revenge is a family duty. Proverbs advocate and express the obligation for revenge.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203995673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203995673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 445 5/13/05 10:44:57 AM

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203395673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203395673.ch27



Adding to this complex picture in Rwanda, when a person is asked to forgive, he or she is supposed to forgive. We have seen and heard of instances in Rwanda when, presumably due to the cultural norm, perpetrators asked for but did not receive immediate expressions of forgiveness, they responded with anger (see Formative Research Report, 2004).

In response to the question, "What is forgiveness?" an army Colonel said (paraphrased from my informal interviews in Rwanda), "Forgiveness is necessary. We cannot live by revenge. We can't live in the past. We must look to a positive future. To bring about forgiveness requires that we discuss the issues between us." Two boys, 13 and 14 years old, whose Tutsi family, refugees from Rwanda, returned after the genocide, agreed that to forgive means to give people a second chance. They also said (paraphrased from my informal interviews in Rwanda), "You cannot forgive people who have killed. They would kill again. If the killers have been punished, you can forgive them but only if they have changed. And one can only judge that from their actions. Hutus who did not kill one can forgive. But maybe one does not even have to. They did not do anything."

The most complex information about forgiveness came from several writers of radio programs. One informant said, "Perpetrators have to ask forgiveness. They must say 'I recognize what I have done and I am sorry.' Then the victim is responsible to give forgiveness. Only those who have been saved by God can forgive without being asked." It is relatively rare that those who forgive will give up anger and feel benevolent toward the perpetrator. It seems that this writer sees forgiveness as usually more form than substance.

Another writer said that when people cannot do anything against the perpetrator, in order to forget what happened they say, "I forgive." Real forgiveness, the writer continued, comes after answering several questions. Did a person who killed have enough time to think before acting? Did the person really plan the actions? Was the person sent by others? How was this person affected by his or her actions? In apparent reference to the powerful role of authorities and obedience to them in Rwanda, this respondent said, "Finding that the person was sent by people he is not in agreement with would contribute to forgiveness." This respondent's son was killed by a neighbor. She told him, "I forgive you, because I realize you did not do it in your own behalf." (Interestingly, immediately after this, the neighbor moved away.) Forgiving gave her relief. This consideration of the context of perpetration as important in forgiveness is consistent with our findings about the importance of understanding the roots of violence, as discussed later in this chapter.

## Constructive Versus Harmful Forgiveness: Mutuality and Evolution

Forgiveness as a unilateral rather than mutual process can have harmful effects (Perlman, 2002). Victimization creates wounds, as well as an imbalance in the relationship between victim and perpetrator (Berscheid, Boye, & Walster, 1968). It diminishes the

status of the former in relation to the latter in the eyes of harmdoers and of people in general. After one-sided perpetration, as in a genocide—in contrast to mutual and relatively equal group violence, as in some intractable conflicts—when the two groups continue to live together, as in Rwanda, forgiveness without mutuality can be destructive. It supports impunity, offers acceptance without effort and change by perpetrators, and may make violence by them more likely. The more perpetrators acknowledge their actions and the harm they have created, assume responsibility, express regret and apologize, show empathy and concern for the pain and suffering of the victims, and offer money or compensatory action as reparation, the more they help survivors feel safe, affirm their worth, and balance the relationship. After genocide, it is probably necessary to punish the planners and the perpetrators of the most heinous acts as individuals, and for the group as a whole to be forgiven.

Regret and apology are important but may be transitory. For forgiveness to be "deserved," for it to affirm the survivors and create balance, and for it to be part of a genuine change in relations that make violence by former perpetrators less likely, compensatory actions are also important. Genocide usually evolves progressively. Important changes occur along the way in perpetrators as individuals and as a group. However, beneficial changes are also gradual. To an important extent, people learn by doing. People change as a result of their own actions and others' responses to them (Staub, 1989, 2003). Initial positive actions by former perpetrators can result in a positive cycle of interactions and lead to more genuine regret and deeper forgiveness.

Unilateral forgiveness enhances the imbalance. It accepts impunity. Descriptions of their acts by perpetrators without indications of regret appear to harm survivors (see also Byrne, 2003a, 2003b; and Gibson, 2002, on the role of perceptions of justice). Members of the perpetrator group who did not participate in perpetration may greatly contribute to forgiveness and reconciliation by acknowledging the harm done by their group and apologizing for its actions.

## Genuine and Superficial Forgiveness

Some of my informants in Rwanda indicated that people may say they forgive because they believe they are expected to by religion, authorities, or cultural custom. Genuine rather than superficial forgiveness requires significant psychological change. Religion and authorities may but do not necessarily promote the processes that bring these about.

Limited procedures that guide people to make a decision to forgive do not work (see McCullough & Worthington, 1995). The more that procedures engage people in processes theoretically considered important, the more successful they have been (Enright & Coyle, 1998; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; see chapter 26 by Wade, Worthington, and Meyer). Apparently, people have to engage in an extended, deep process—even if harm is limited, as in much of the forgiveness research, and certainly when harm is as extreme as in a genocide. The influence of authority or the authority of religion is ongoing and continuous. However, if people simply obey authorities

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

rather than engage with processes that create change, they may develop two separate systems—one a way of talking and expressing forgiveness when expected, the other a way of thinking and feeling. Genocide and mass killing create a permanent imprint, like a fault line or cleavage in the earth. This can probably heal over but is not erased. In the face of new conflict and threat driven by extreme ideas—destructive ideologies (Staub, 1989)—that activate memories of past experiences and deep feelings, the cleavage opens up. Neighbors come to kill neighbors again. Deep change in attitude toward the other person makes this less likely.

## Who Is to Be Forgiven?

When members of one's family have been killed, the perpetrators are potential recipients of forgiveness. Other potential recipients include perpetrators as a group, passive bystanders, and the whole group of which the perpetrators are members. Although it was evident to us in Rwanda that Tutsis hold both individual perpetrators and the Hutus as a group responsible, most Tutsis find forgiving members of the group who were not actual perpetrators to be the easiest. Given that they are usually the great majority, this is essential for reconciliation.

Forgiving people who harmed oneself or one's family is partly an individual or family process. The other kinds of forgiveness can be either individual or group processes. But what does it mean to forgive as a group? Is it a matter of how many individuals in the group forgive? Is it a matter of forgiveness by leaders? Can leaders forgive in the name of the group? Leaders and group actions expressing forgiveness are likely to promote forgiveness by group members. But unless individuals experience genuine forgiveness with a change in leadership and circumstance, negative attitudes, anger, and persisting desire for revenge are likely to come to the fore.

Identification with a group (Hewstone et al., in press), increased by shared suffering, may interfere with forgiveness. One of my students, a mother of three young children, came to my office one day and broke down crying. In applying course material to her life in her papers, she began to understand her parents and to forgive them for the abuse she has suffered as a child. But she felt that she thereby betrayed her similarly abused, hurt, and angry siblings. Leaders forgiving in the name of a group may lessen such feelings of betrayal by individuals who forgive.

## Benefits of Forgiveness After Mass Violence

Research indicates that forgiveness helps relieve the pain and distress of those who have been harmed, injured, or victimized by other individuals. The beneficial changes include enhanced self-respect; more positive mental states not dominated by negative thoughts and resentment; improved emotional states with less anger, anxiety, depression and guilt; and the ability to pursue constructive goals in place of revenge (see

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

chapter 21 by Toussaint & Webb). These benefits are similar to what one would expect in people who are healing from emotional traumas (Herman, 1992; McCann & Pearlman, 1990; see chapter 22 by Noll). Healing from the trauma created by victimization is an important avenue to forgiveness. Forgiveness, in turn, may promote healing.

A significant potential benefit of forgiveness is its contribution to reconciliation. Forgiveness means acceptance, which can lessen the perpetrators' defensiveness. It can make it less likely that they engage in violence motivated by fear of revenge and more likely that they acknowledge the harm they have done. Small changes in survivors may initiate changes in perpetrators, leading to a positive cycle. Forgiveness can also make contact in working for shared goals possible. Anger, hostility, and unforgiveness (Worthington, 2001) interfere with the possibility of such contact. Forgiveness can also contribute to the creation of a shared history, which is essential to avoid future violence (discussed later in this chapter).

## REVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL LITERATURE

### Apology, Acknowledgment of Harm, Regret, Sorrow, and Empathy

As reviews of research on forgiveness by individuals indicate, apology or a show of remorse facilitates forgiveness (Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). Is this also the case after intense violence between groups?

In one study (Byrne, 2003a), Black survivors in South Africa who testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) were exposed to different "accounts" of their actions given by perpetrators. These survivors suffered brutal violence either to themselves or to close relatives—torture, murder, acts as extreme as children or adults burned to death. Survivors were exposed to justifications, excuses, or apologies, offered not by the perpetrators who harmed them but by other perpetrators testifying in front of the Commission. Their anger was reduced more by excuses (e.g., "I had to follow orders given") and apologies (e.g., "I am sorry") than by justifications (e.g., "We were at war"). Apologies had numerically slightly greater effects.

In all three conditions, more survivors said they would not forgive than said they would forgive. Among those who said they would forgive, excuses and apologies were more likely to lead to forgiveness, consistent with past research (Hewstone, et al., in press; Subkoviak, et al., 1995). People gave the severity of the acts and lack of remorse as reasons for not forgiving. In addition, the apology in the study consisted only of perpetrators saying they were sorry and was not directed at participants. Apology may be regarded as a summary term for acknowledgment of harm done, assumption of responsibility for it, expression of seemingly genuine regret, sorrow for the harm one has caused, and empathy for the victims—each important in its own right.

These emotions and actions are, however, extremely rarely shown by perpetrators of group violence. Perpetrators defend themselves from shame, guilt (Staub, 2004), and the feeling that their actions placed them outside the moral order (Nadler, 2003).

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 449 5/13/05 10:45:01 AM

They surround themselves with a psychological shield, maintaining that their actions were justified by the need to defend themselves against their victims or by "higher ideals" of ideologies that perpetrators usually adopt (Staub, 1989, 2004; Staub & Pearlman, 2001; Staub et al., 2003). In the healing and reconciliation section that I moderated at a *New York Times* Internet conference in 1995, members of each ethnic group in the former Yugoslavia blamed the other groups for the conflict. Hewstone et al. (in press) found that members of both Protestant and Catholic paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland saw their actions as justified at the time and were less likely than other members of their group to ask for or give forgiveness.

Very few perpetrators in front of the TRC did more than describe their actions, which was a requirement to be considered for amnesty. But confessing to extremely violent deeds without apparent regret causes renewed pain for survivors (Byrne, 2003a, 2003b). In Rwanda as well, when some perpetrators who were brought back to their communities described their actions and even asked for forgiveness without apparent regret or empathy, this created distress in survivors.

Asking for forgiveness is a type of apology, although indirect. However, such requests can be difficult to refuse, especially in cultures like Rwanda's, where people are expected to respond to them positively. When people say they forgive without actually forgiving, rather than benefiting them, this may create added stress and psychological damage.

## Healing As an Avenue to Forgiveness

Survivors of mass violence are deeply wounded. They experience great loss, grief, and pain. They feel diminished and see the world as dangerous, a combination that makes them feel vulnerable. Their suffering also creates anger and hostility toward the perpetrators and toward a hostile world. New conflict or threat may give rise to an intense need for self-defense. This can lead to violence to protect the group and its members, even when this is unnecessary (Staub, 1998, 1999, 2004; Staub & Pearlman, 2001, 2004).

Healing may reduce pain and vulnerability, enable survivors to lead better lives, and reduce the likelihood of violence by them. Especially in combination with other influences, healing can make survivors more open to and empathic with perpetrators. One avenue to healing is engagement with painful experience. Following group trauma, this is especially useful when it happens in groups. The presence of people with the same experience can provide support. The presence of empathic others can provide acknowledgment of suffering and the opportunity to reconnect with people (Herman, 1992; Staub & Pearlman, 2004; Staub et al., 2003). Acknowledgment of the group's suffering by perpetrators as well as any parties outside the victim group is another avenue to healing.

Testimonials, ceremonies, and memorialization can help larger numbers of people engage with their victimization. The nature of such group ceremonies matters,

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 450 5/13/05 10:45:02 AM

however. They can focus on the cruelty and violence in the world and on the harm done to the group, making the wounds persist, or they can help people grieve but also point to the possibilities of a better future. As an increasing amount of literature indicates, perpetrators of extreme violence are also wounded (Laufer, Brett, & Gallops, 1985; McNair, 2002; Parson, 1984; Rhodes, 1999; Rhodes, Allen, Nowicki, & Cillesen, 2002). To do their terrible acts, they must distance themselves from victims, devalue them, justify their suffering, and exclude them from the moral universe (Fein, 1979; Staub, 1989, 2004). In the end, devaluation and a destructive ideology combine to create a reversal of morality in which killing the victims becomes the moral thing to do. All of this is wounding, especially killing large numbers of people in cruel and inhumane ways. When the genocide is stopped, perpetrators face loss of power and status, shame, and potential guilt, all of which activate powerful psychological defenses.

Healing may enable perpetrators to feel empathy with themselves and in turn with people they have harmed, to acknowledge their actions, and to apologize. Empathy for the perpetrators and passive bystanders (Gobodo-Madikezela, 2003), although it can be difficult to offer, may be important for healing by them. Understanding the influences that led to their actions may promote healing and empathy while also helping perpetrators avoid using these influences as justification or exposing themselves to the stories of survivors, both part of our procedure in Rwanda in the study described in the next section (Staub et al., in press).

Acknowledging people in the perpetrator group who were not passive bystanders—who either opposed the genocide or rescued or attempted to rescue victims—may be important to help members of the group feel reincluded in the moral community. A combination of our advocacy of this in seminars with national leaders in Rwanda (see Staub & Pearlman, 2002) and other influences, such as a book on rescuers (Africa Rights, 2002), might have led to rescuers being acknowledged in the 2003 commemoration of the genocide.

## Promoting Healing, Reconciliation, and Forgiveness in Rwanda

In an intervention, we trained 35 people, Tutsis (about two-thirds of the group) and Hutus who worked for local organizations involved with groups in the community (Staub et al., in press). The participants then used our approach, integrated with their prior approach, with groups in the community. This integration was an aspect of the training.

There were brief lectures and extensive discussions. We explored the impact of traumatizing events, such as genocide. The purpose of this was to help people understand changes in themselves and others around them, and to help them see these changes as a natural, normal consequence of extreme and abnormal events. We examined avenues to healing. A third topic was understanding the origins of genocide, with the group applying this understanding to Rwanda.

RT9491_C027.indd 451 5/13/05 10:45:03 AM

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

A fourth topic was basic human needs. I see the frustration of these needs giving rise to the psychological and societal processes leading to genocide (Staub, 1989). Victimization and violence, in turn, profoundly frustrate these needs (McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Staub, 2003; Staub & Pearlman, 2001). The needs for security, a positive identity, positive connection to other people, a feeling of effectiveness and control, and an understanding of the world and of one's place in it (Staub, 1989, 1996, 2003) require some degree of fulfillment for healing to occur.

Participants also shared their experiences during the genocide. People were asked to think about and then talk about them in small groups. There was a great deal of open and highly emotional sharing of painful experiences (Staub et al., 2003; Staub et al., in press). Although it was Tutsis, the survivors of the genocide, who talked about their experiences, they did this in a mixed group, with Hutus present as empathic witnesses. This was likely to contribute to another important element of healing—reconnecting with other people. Reconnecting with members of the other group may contribute to healing by members of both groups.

The effects of the training were evaluated, not on the people who participated in the training but on people in community groups with which they subsequently worked (Staub et al., in press). New groups were created, led by some of the people we trained. They integrated their traditional approach with the content of the training they received (*integrated* groups). Other newly created groups were led by facilitators who did not receive the training (*traditional* groups). These groups met for 4 weeks, twice a week for 2 hours. In *control* groups, community members did not receive treatment but were evaluated using questionnaires, the same way and about the same time as participants in the treatment groups: before the treatment, immediately afterward, and 2 months later.

The participants in the integrated group showed a reduction in trauma symptoms from before the treatment to 2 months afterward, both over time and in relation to the two other groups, which showed some deterioration. They also showed a more positive orientation toward members of the other group, both over time and in relation to the traditional and control groups, which did not change on this dimension. This positive orientation consisted of an awareness of the complexity of the roots of violence; a willingness to work together for a better future; some positive views of Hutus (that some endangered their lives to help); and "conditional forgiveness," which is greater openness to forgiving members of the other group under certain conditions ("I can forgive those who acknowledge the harm they have done . . . who requested forgiveness of my group . . . who make amends for what their group did").

We used elements of this approach in our work in Rwanda with community and national leaders, journalists, and the staff of Non-Governmental Organizations. We also trained trainers in this approach. Starting in May 2004, a twice-weekly radio drama series that incorporates the elements of this approach began to broadcast in Rwanda. There will also be a second informational radio program. In most of this work, we provided information about the traumatic impact of victimization, about

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 452 5/13/05 10:45:04 AM

avenues to healing, and about the origins of genocide and violence by groups against other groups.

## Understanding the Origins of Violence As an Avenue to Forgiveness

Understanding is a way-station to forgiveness. Inherent in understanding is taking the other's role (Staub, 1979). One of the resilient survivors of childhood abuse in O'Connell Higgins's book (1994), as he comes to understand the reasons for his father's great rage and violent behavior, says that he accepts his father but cannot forgive him. Most likely, his acceptance represents a limited degree of forgiveness.

We could not independently evaluate in our study the impact of understanding the origin of genocide. But in the course of the training and in work with other groups in Rwanda, such information seemed to have powerful effects. In discussions after presenting how genocide originates and giving examples from other societies, survivors seemed to feel humanized. They no longer felt they were the objects of incomprehensibly evil acts or uniquely selected by God for such suffering. Understanding seemed to help survivors heal, fulfill their need for a comprehension of reality, and develop a meaningful story about their painful experiences (Staub, 2004; Staub et al., in press), which is important in healing (Herman, 1992; McCann, & Pearlman, 1990; Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995).

Understanding the origins of violence also offers hope. It points to avenues to prevention. In describing social conditions (e.g., economic problems, political disorganization, group conflict), their psychological effects (e.g., the frustration of fundamental psychological needs), and the resulting destructive social processes (e.g., scapegoating, the creation of destructive ideologies, the evolution of violence), such understanding also suggests alternative ways to respond to such conditions. By indicating what characteristics of culture make mass violence more likely, such as devaluation of some group, overly strong respect for authority, and past victimization and woundedness, it points to societal changes that people can strive to attain (Staub, 1989, 2004). Understanding how their actions came about also humanizes perpetrators and passive bystanders. It creates some openness to them and increases the potential for forgiveness. We found that discussing the origins of genocide had powerful appeal to every group we worked with in Rwanda.

Although the extent to which we focused on understanding the roots of violence is probably unique, one element of change procedures that has been found effective in promoting forgiveness (see Enright & Coyle, 1998; McCullough et al., 1997) is a focus on the offender's psychological state and general situation in life on their effect on the context in which the offender acted. Successful procedures also helped victims explore the impact of the harm done to them, similar to the information we provide about the traumatic impact of victimization. Thus, our procedures are consistent with past research but focus more on healing and understanding.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 453 5/13/05 10:45:05 AM

## Truth, Justice, Creation of a Shared History, and Contact As Avenues to Forgiveness

All of these topics are important for reconciliation (*Proceedings*, 2002; Staub, 2004), and all have a role in forgiveness. Survivors of mass violence desperately want justice. Justice affirms their innocence. It affirms the moral order, thereby increasing feelings of safety. It negates impunity and creates some balance in the relationship between victims and perpetrators. Forms of justice can include retributive, restorative or compensatory, and procedural justice. But to promote forgiveness, victims must *experience* justice. Truth is a prerequisite for justice. It is important, however, to establish the truth in all its complexity. Even in a genocide, the perpetrators may have suffered at an earlier time at the hands of their current victims. For example, in Rwanda, Tutsis ruled over and oppressed Hutus before 1959 under Belgian colonial rule, and Hutu civilians were killed in the course of fighting before, during, and after the genocide (des Forges, 1999; Mamdani, 2002). Acknowledgment of the prior suffering of perpetrators should make it easier for members of a perpetrator group to acknowledge and take responsibility for their actions during the genocide. However, because survivors' suffering is usually so much greater and because it is difficult for groups to acknowledge harm they have done, survivor groups find it extremely difficult to acknowledge their own harmful actions.

The creation of a shared history is essential to avoid renewed violence between groups. Usually, groups hold conflicting views of what happened between them and, even more important, of the causes of events. Each tends to blame the other, unable to consider the experience of the other. Some level of forgiveness may be required for working on the creation of a shared history. As such a history emerges, it contributes in turn to further forgiveness.

We have experimented in Rwanda with using information about the origins of violence as a tool in building a shared history. We discussed the Hutu revolt in 1959 against severe Tutsi oppression, which some in Rwanda called genocide, as an example of a response to severe and persistent injustice. We suggested that Hutus were psychologically wounded by their oppression. However, the persecution of the Tutsis by Hutus after 1959, rather than helping Hutus heal, further wounded them, increased fear of revenge, and made the subsequent genocide more likely. We also applied understanding of genocide at the societal level to describing the evolution of a particular perpetrator, a member of the militias composed of young men (Staub, 2004).

Both theory and research show that significant contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000), working together for shared goals, whether children in a classroom (Aronson, Stephan, Sikes, Blaney, & Snapp, 1978) or adults in a community (Wessells & Montiero, 2001), can help overcome devaluation, prejudice, and hostility. Although some degree of prior forgiveness may be required for such contact, in turn it can promote further, deeper forgiveness.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

## RELEVANCE FOR CLINICAL AND APPLIED INTERVENTIONS

Elements of our approach can be used in applied clinical interventions. They include (a) basic psychological needs and their role in violence and trauma (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995; Staub, 1989, 2003); (b) the traumatic impact of violence (as well as of acting violently) in terms of symptoms, psychological changes in the self in attitudes toward people and the world; (c) avenues to healing—given the huge number of people affected in a genocide, we emphasized person-to-person healing, how people in the community can help each other, especially by empathic listening and support; (d) understanding the origins of violence between groups and the implications of this for preventing violence and for reconciliation; and (e) people sharing their experiences during the genocide, which we did only in long seminars and workshops because it requires prior building of trust and enough time for debriefing.

## NEW RESEARCH DIRECTIONS NEEDED IN THE AREA

Forgiveness after genocide is an unexplored domain. A major proposition in this chapter requiring study is that when there is ongoing relationship, forgiveness without mutuality can make future violence more likely and worsen rather than improve the psychological well-being of the victim. Continued power imbalance can add to the problem.

Research is needed on what leads perpetrators to heal, on the extent to which healing by them leads to acknowledgment and regret, and on the extent to which this facilitates forgiveness by survivors after genocide and other intense group violence. More generally, further research is needed on all of the influences I identified as contributing to forgiveness: how can we help large numbers of people—whole groups—heal after mass violence; whether such healing contributes to forgiveness; the contribution of understanding the origins of violence to helping survivors (and perpetrators) heal, forgive, and reconcile; and the contributions of contact and the creation of shared history to forgiveness and reconciliation. The proposition that some avenues to forgiveness require some prior forgiveness and can in turn promote higher levels of forgiveness also needs to be empirically explored.

## PERSONAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FIELD

I see reconciliation, which is inherently mutual, as essential for preventing new violence and promoting a peaceful future after genocide and mass killing. The beginning of healing by survivors may lead to less fear and anger by them. Public manifestation of this can lead to responses by perpetrators and a cycle or evolution of increasing forgiveness and reconciliation.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

Forgiveness and reconciliation are the "tasks" of the people who have been involved in conflict and violence. But third parties can have an important role. They can be active bystanders who offer their services to the extent the parties involved are open to them and who provide information and initiate and facilitate interaction, acting with sensitivity and respect.

## CONCLUSION

Reconciliation after mass violence is a difficult task that is essential to prevent new violence and create a peaceful future. Forgiveness is an important component of reconciliation. Without mutuality, forgiveness can be harmful. Understanding the origins of violence and healing by both parties is an essential tool or aspect of forgiveness and reconciliation.

## REFERENCES


Africa Rights (2002). *Tribute to courage*. Kigali, Rwanda and London: Author.

Aronson, E., Stephan, C., Sikes, J., Blaney, N., & Snapp, M. (1978). *The jigsaw classroom*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Arthur, P. (1999). The Anglo-Irish peace process: Obstacles to reconciliation. In R. L. Rothstein (Ed.), *After the peace: Resistance and reconciliation* (pp. 85–109). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Auerbach, Y. (2004, July). *Forgiveness and reconciliation: The religious dimension*. Presented at the meeting of International Society for Political Psychology, Lund, Sweden.

Berscheid, E., Boye, D., & Walster, E. (1968). Retaliation as a means of restoring equity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 10*, 370–376.

Byrne, C. (2003a). Responses of victims to perpetrators' justifications, excuses, and apologies: Accounts in the context of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, DAI-B 63/10, 4963, April, 2003.

Byrne, C. (2003b). *Benefit or burden: Victims' reflections on TRC participation*. Manuscript submitted for publication. Solomon Asch Center for Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Cairns, E., & Darby, J. (1998). The conflict in Northern Ireland. *American Psychologist, 53,* 754–776.

de la Rey, C. (2001). Reconciliation in divided societies. In D. J. Christie, R. V. Wagner, & D. D. Winter (Eds.), *Peace, conflict, and violence* (pp. 251–262). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Des Forges, A. (1999). *Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda.* New York: Human Rights Watch.

de Silva, K. M., & Samarasinghe, S. W. R. de A. (Eds.). (1993). *Peace accords and ethnic conflicts*. London: Pointer.

Enright, R., & Coyle, C., (1998). Researching the process model of forgiveness within psychological interventions. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Dimensions of forgiveness: Psychological science and theological perspectives* (pp. 139–162). Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.


Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203395673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203395673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 456 5/13/05 10:45:08 AM

Fein, H. (1979). *Accounting for genocide: Victims and survivors of the holocaust.* New York: Free Press.

Formative Research Report (2004). Labenevolencija Radio Project. Rwanda.

Gibson, J. L. (2002). Truth, justice, and reconciliation: Judging the fairness of amnesty in South Africa. *American Journal of Political Science, 46*, 540–556.

Gobodo-Madikezela, P. (2003). *A human being died that night: A South African story of forgiveness.* Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Hayner, P. B. (1999). In pursuit of justice and reconciliation: Contributions of truth telling. In C. J. Arnson (Ed.), *Comparative peace processes in Latin America* (pp. 363–383). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books.

Hewstone, M., Cairns, E., Voci, A., McLernon, F., Niens, U., & Noor, M. (in press). Intergroup forgiveness and guilt in Northern Ireland: Social psychological dimensions of "The Troubles." In N. Branscombe & B. Doosje (Eds), *Collective guilt: International perspectives.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Honeyman, C., Hudami, S., Tiruneh, A., Hierta, J., Chirayath., L., Iliff, A., et al. (2004). Establishing collective norms: Potentials for participatory justice in Rwanda. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 10,* 1–24.

Kriesberg, L. (1998a). Intractable conflicts. In E. Weiner (Ed.), *The handbook of interethnic coexistence* (pp. 332–342). New York: Continuum.

Kriesberg, L. (1998b). Coexistence and the reconciliation of communal conflicts. In E. Weiner (Ed.), *The handbook of interethnic coexistence* (pp.182–198). New York: Continuum.

Laufer, R. S., Brett, E., & Gallops, M. S. (1985). Symptom patterns associated with posttraumatic stress disorder among Vietnam veterans exposed to war trauma. *American Journal of Psychiatry, 142*, 1304–1311.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies.* Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Lederach, J. P. (1998). Beyond violence: Building sustainable peace. In E. Weiner (Ed.), *The handbook of interethnic coexistence* (pp. 236–245). New York: Continuum.

Mamdani, M. (2002). *When victims become killers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McCann, I. L., & Pearlman, L. A. (1990). *Psychological trauma and the adult survivor: Theory, therapy, and transformation.* New York: Brunner/Mazel.

McCullough, M. E., & Worthington, E. L., Jr. (1995). Promoting forgiveness: A comparison of two brief psychoeducational group interventions with a waiting-list control. *Counseling and Values, 40,* 55–69.

McCullough, M. E., Fincham, F. D., & Tsang, J., (2003). Forgiveness, forbearance, and time: The temporal unfolding of transgression-related interpersonal motivations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*, 540–557.

McCullough, M. E., Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Rachal, K. C. (1997) Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*, 321–336.

McNair, R. M., (2002). *Perpetration-induced traumatic stress*. London: Praeger.

Nadler, A. (2003, October). *Opening comments on the social psychology of reconciliation*. Presentation at the conference on Social Psychology of Reconciliation: Moving from Violent Confrontation to Peaceful Coexistence, University of Connecticut, Storrs.

O'Connell Higgins, G. (1994). *Resilient adults overcoming a cruel past.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Parson, E. O. (1984). The reparation of the self: Clinical and theoretical dimensions in the treatment of Vietnam combat veterans. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy, 4*, 4–56.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 457 5/13/05 10:45:09 AM

Pearlman, L. A., & Saakvitne, K. W. (1995). *Trauma and the therapist: Countertransference and vicarious traumatization in psychotherapy with incest survivors.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Perlman, D. (2002). *Reparalogy: Toward a scientific evolutionary model of healing after protracted collective trauma*. Unpublished manuscript.

Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2000). Does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Recent meta-analytic findings. In S. Oskamp (Eds.), *Reducing prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 93–114). London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

*Proceedings of the Stockholm International Forum on Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation*. (2002, April). Stockholm: Sweden.

Prunier, G. (1995). *The Rwanda crisis: History of a genocide.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Quinn, J. (2003). *The politics of acknowledgement: Truth commissions in Uganda and Haiti.* Unpublished dissertation, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario,.

Rhodes, R (1999). *Why they kill*. New York: Knopf.

Rhodes, G., Allen, G. J., Nowincki, J., & Cillesen, A. (2002). The violent socialization scale: Development and initial validation. In J. Ulmer & L. Athens (Eds.), *Violent acts and violentization: Assessing, applying, and developing Lonnie Athens' theories* (Vol. 4, pp. 125–144). New York: Elsevier Science.

Shriver, D. W., Jr., (1995). *An ethic for enemies: Forgiveness in politics.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Staub, E. (1979). *Positive social behavior and morality: Socialization and development* (Vol. 2). New York: Academic Press.

Staub, E. (1989). *The roots of evil: The origins of genocide and other group violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Staub, E. (1996). Cultural-societal roots of violence: The examples of genocidal violence and of contemporary youth violence in the United States. *American Psychologist, 51,* 17–132.

Staub, E. (1998). Breaking the cycle of genocidal violence: Healing and reconciliation. In Harvey, J. (Ed.), *Perspectives on loss: A sourcebook* (pp. 231–241). Washington DC: Taylor and Francis.

Staub, E. (1999). The roots of evil: Personality, social conditions, culture and basic human needs. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3,* 179–192.

Staub, E. (2000). Genocide and mass killing: Origins, prevention, healing, and reconciliation. *Political Psychology, 21*, 367–382.

Staub, E. (2003). *The psychology of good and evil: Why children, adults, and groups help and harm others.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Staub, E. (2004). *Reconciliation after genocide, mass killing or intractable conflict: Healing, understanding the roots of violence and the prevention of new violence.* Unpublished manuscript, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Staub, E. (in press). The roots of goodness: The fulfillment of basic human needs and the development of caring, helping, and nonaggression, inclusive caring, moral courage, active bystandership, and altruism born of suffering. In G. Carlo & C. Edwards (Eds.), *Moral motivation*. Nebraska Symposium on Motivation. Lincoln: Nebraska University Press.

Staub, E., & Bar-Tal, D. (2003). Genocide, mass killing and intractable conflict: Roots, evolution, prevention and reconciliation. In D. Sears, L. Huddy, & R. Jervis (Eds.), *Handbook of political psychology* (pp. 710–754). New York: Oxford University Press.

Staub, E., & Pearlman, L. A. (2001). Healing, reconciliation, and forgiving after genocide and other collective violence. In R. G. Helmick & R. L. Petersen (Eds.), *Forgiveness and recon-*

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 458 5/13/05 10:45:10 AM

*ciliation: Religion, public policy, and conflict transformation*, (pp. 195–217). Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.

Staub, E., & Pearlman, L. A. (2002). Facilitators' summary of observations and recommendations from leaders seminar. Retrieved from *www.heal-reconcile-rwanda.org*.

Staub, E., & Pearlman, L. A., (2004). *Advancing healing and reconciliation in Rwanda—and elsewhere.* Unpublished manuscript, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Staub, E., Pearlman, L. A., & Miller, V. (2003). Healing the roots of genocide in Rwanda. *Peace Review, 15*, 287–294.

Staub, E., Pearlman, L.A., Gubin, A., & Hagengimana, A. (in press). Healing, reconciliation, and the prevention of violence after genocide or mass killing: An intervention and its experimental evaluation in Rwanda. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology.*

Subkoviak, M. J., Enright, R. D., Wu, C., Gassin, E. A., Freedman, S., Olson, L. M., et al. (1995). Measuring interpersonal forgiveness in late adolescence and middle adulthood. *Journal of Adolescence, 18*, 641–655.

Weiner, B., Graham, S., Peter, O., & Zmuidinas, M. (1991). Public confession and forgiveness. *Journal of Personality, 59,* 281–321.

Wessells, M., & Monteiro, C. (2001). Psychosocial Interventions and post-war reconstruction in Angola: Interweaving Western and traditional approaches. In D. J. Christie, R. V. Wagner, & D. D. Winter (Eds.), *Peace, conflict, and violence* (pp. 262–277). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Worthington, E. L., Jr. (2001). Unforgiveness, forgiveness, and reconciliation and their implications for societal interventions. In R. J. Helmick & R. L. Petersen, (Eds.), *Forgiveness and reconciliation: Religion, public policy, and conflict transformation* (pp. 171–193). Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27

RT9491_C027.indd 459 5/13/05 10:45:11 AM

Downloaded By: 10.3.97.143 At: 00:04 11 Dec 2023; For: 9780203955673, chapter27, 10.4324/9780203955673.ch27
RT9491_C027.indd 460 5/13/05 10:45:12 AM