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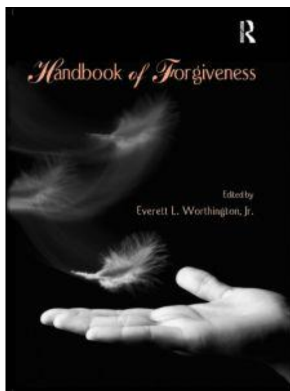

Handbook of Forgiveness

Everett L. Worthington, Jr.

Intergroup Forgiveness and Intergroup Conflict: Northern Ireland, A Case Study

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Chapter Twenty-Eight

Intergroup Forgiveness and Intergroup Conflict: Northern Ireland, A Case Study

Ed Cairns
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Miles Hewstone
Ulrike Niens

I get down on my knees and do what must be done
And kiss Achilles' hand, the killer of my son.

—*Ceasefire,* Michael Longley, 1994[1]

With the end of the Cold War, the world has had to come to grips with new or at least hitherto hidden types of conflict. In these conflicts, the combatants inhabit the same battlefield. This means that even when the actual fighting fades, the lives of the opposing groups remain interlocked. Subjective elements of conflict often persist long after its "objective" elements disappear. They can become independent of the initiating, more objective causes of the conflict and contribute to an escalation and continuation of violence even after the initial causes have become irrelevant (Deutsch, 1973; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, the formal resolution of a conflict is often merely the first step toward peaceful coexistence. To promote peace and reconciliation, a psychological process is required to change people's often deeply-entrenched beliefs and feelings about the outgroup, their ingroup, and the relationship between the two (Bar-Tal, 2000). Group loyalty and the maintenance of group boundaries are dominant features of such conflicts, as are communal memories of victimization. Together they create psychological processes that, if not countered, will lead to further cycles of violence.

In this chapter, we examine the contributions that a fuller understanding of intergroup forgiveness can make in an attempt to resolve or at least contain these identity-based conflicts. To do this, we will begin by sketching out some of the more important

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psychological processes involved in protracted ethnic conflicts, in particular, their intergroup (as opposed to interpersonal) nature and the role of the past. We will then draw on our research in Northern Ireland to illustrate the process of intergroup forgiveness.

PERSONAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT INTERGROUP CONFLICT AND INTERGROUP FORGIVENESS

Intergroup Conflict

One of these psychological factors is undoubtedly the intergroup nature of the conflict. Tajfel (1978) proposed that *intergroup* behavior could be distinguished from *interpersonal* behavior when it involved two clearly identifiable social categories and when there was little variability of behavior or attitude within each group. Also, members of one group should show little variability in their perception or treatment of members of the other group (i.e., "they" are "all alike"). There is now extensive evidence that people's behavior is indeed qualitatively different in intergroup and interpersonal settings (see Brown & Turner, 1981; Cairns & Hewstone, 2002; Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002).

In a similar vein, Brewer (1997) has proposed three principles likely to operate in any social situation in which a particular ingroup/outgroup categorization is made salient. The "intergroup accentuation principle" suggests that all members of the ingroup are seen as more similar to the self than are members of the outgroup. The "ingroup favoritism principle" refers to the selective generalization of positive affect (trust, liking) to fellow ingroup, but not outgroup, members. The "social competition principle" suggests that intergroup social comparison is typically perceived in terms of competition, rather than comparison, with the outgroup. Indeed, intergroup conflict is often perceived as a zero-sum game by the parties involved (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998).

The Past in the Present. The "social competition principle," we believe, is key to understanding the role of the past in the present. Groups involved in intergroup conflict are often encouraged to "move on" or to try to "face up to" the past. The problem about the past where ethnic conflict is concerned, however, is that it is intimately part of the present. Instead the past forms part of the ongoing intergroup competition central to any intergroup conflict, with people in Northern Ireland apparently clinging tenaciously to battles fought long ago. As a result, certain dates appear to be fixed like beacons in the folklore and mythology of people in Northern Ireland so that they "trip off the tongue during ordinary conversations like the latest football scores in other environments" (Darby, 1983, p. 13).

Of course, rituals, symbols, commemoration, and reparations can play an important role in any process of healing, bereavement, and addressing personal trauma. They can help grieving by allowing individuals to focus exclusively on their grief and

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to share their feelings with others (Cairns & Roe, 2003). However, we would argue that only the promotion of intergroup forgiveness will lead to long-term intergroup reconciliation.

Intergroup Forgiveness

Because intergroup bias is such a pervasive phenomenon and is present at public and private, explicit and implicit levels (see Hewstone et al., 2002), we should not be surprised if we find evidence that "we" are reluctant to forgive "them." Indeed, intergroup forgiveness may be thwarted not only by blatant feelings of hatred but also through very subtle processes, such as the tendency for more differentiated, secondary emotions to be attributed to ingroup than outgroup members (see Leyens et al., 2000). In the context of an ongoing ethnic conflict, promoting intergroup forgiveness is a difficult issue to broach and not just to those who have suffered directly. As Duncan Morrow, Director of Northern Ireland's Community Relations Council, put it, "What makes forgiveness so burning in Northern Ireland is not that many victims are left with their injury, but that so many of the injuries are understood as the grief not only of individuals but of whole communities."

Notwithstanding our expectation that intergroup forgiveness will prove different from interpersonal forgiveness, we are convinced that it is a hugely important topic (especially for a society such as Northern Ireland), although one that has so far generated remarkably little research (for an exception, see Roe, Pegg, Hodges, & Trimm, 1999; see also a study investigating religious groups, Azar, Mullet, & Vinsonneau, 1999).

Intergroup forgiveness has, however, begun to take its place on the world stage (Montiel, 2002), either in the form of apologies, as a means to promote reconciliation, or in truth commissions, aimed at supporting a process of reconciliation after political violence and human rights abuses (Borris & Diehl, 1998).

Apologies. The 1990s have seen a dramatic increase in apologies offered by political, social, and religious leaders (Dodds, 2003). For example, in 1994, German President Roman Herzog asked the Polish people for forgiveness for the suffering they had to experience during World War II. In 1998, U.S. President Bill Clinton apologized for a failure to act during the Rwandan genocide. In 2000, Pope John Paul II asked God's forgiveness for the wrongs committed by Roman Catholics in the past, including offenses against specific minority groups. In Northern Ireland in 2002, the IRA published an apology addressed to the families of "noncombatants" who had been killed or injured by the IRA. All of these apologies were positively received by some people but criticized by others for not being explicit enough or falling short of an acceptance of guilt.

Truth Commissions. Over the past 30 years, truth commissions, public enquiries, and tribunals have been set up across the world in countries and societies that had experienced political violence. The commissions sought to deal with the past, construct

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collective memory and history, and move forward a process of reconciliation. The majority of truth commissions focused either on giving a voice to the victims of political violence or on issues of social justice. For example, in Rwanda, a reduced penalty was granted only to those perpetrators who admitted their offenses and expressed their remorse. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa has probably been the most widely discussed of these, partly because it was the first to attempt to give a voice to victims of injustice as well as to provide amnesty to perpetrators under the condition that they reported full details of past crimes. In a keynote speech at the "Peacebuilding After Peace Accords" conference organized by the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, Archbishop Tutu recalled a victim of apartheid who said, "We would like to forgive. We would just like to know who to forgive" (Stowe, 2003, p. 20). However, although the TRC provided a forum for victims to hear who to forgive and for all people to debate reconciliation and a shared memory of the past (Hamber & Wilson, 2002; Kulle & Hamber, 2000), it has also been criticized for providing insufficient support to victims and perpetrators (Hamber, 1998).

REVIEW OF RELEVANT EMPIRICAL AND THEORETICAL LITERATURE

Empirical Research

Although forgiveness and reconciliation at an interpersonal level are now being extensively researched (as evidenced throughout this book), there is little systematic research on intergroup forgiveness. Azar et al. (1999) conducted a survey in Lebanon using scenarios. The scenarios described politically motivated shootings and experimentally varied four factors to test for their effect on propensity to forgive. These factors were: proximity to the offender (own community/other community), intent to harm (deliberate/accidental shooting), long-term consequences (negative/positive), and apologies from the offender (apologized/did not apologize). The sample included people from the three main Lebanese Christian communities: Catholics, Maronites, and Orthodox. Results indicated overall relatively high levels of forgiveness in all three communities with lack of intent to harm, cancellation of consequences and, in particular, apologies, significantly increasing respondents' propensity to forgive.

Using attribution theory, Gibson and Gouws (1999) investigated assumptions underlying the work of the TRC in South Africa and factors affecting the willingness to forgive perpetrators of political violence in South Africa. The representative panel survey sample included respondents identified as Asian, Black, Colored, and White. Again, short vignettes describing acts of political murders were employed in order to vary four factors: actor roles (African National Congress or South African Police), obedience (leader or follower), consequences (harming innocent people or people directly involved in violence), and motive (hatred or ideology). These factors were hypothesized as affecting attributions of blame and the propensity to forgive. In contrast

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to the findings of Azar et al. (1999), results indicated a significant main effect for actor roles, with respondents expressing lower levels of blame if the perpetrator was identified as a member of an organization associated with the respondent's community (Gibson & Gouws, 1999). A slightly weaker main effect was revealed for obedience, with respondents blaming leaders more than followers. No significant effects were found in relation to motive and consequences or motive. Forgiveness, in turn, was positively related to attitudes toward amnesty and negatively related toward the belief that it was right to sue the perpetrator. More generally, Hamber, reporting on the effectiveness of the TRC in South Africa, points out that the truth-telling process led to psychological benefits for individuals and society but that knowledge and "truth alone will not lead to reconciliation" (1998, p. 26).

Staub (2000; chapter 27) summarizes the experiences of an intervention project aimed at promoting forgiveness and reconciliation in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. Although he affirms the importance of knowledge about the origins and possibilities of solving conflict, the necessity for forgiveness as a precondition for reconciliation is emphasized. In different sociopolitical contexts, a lack of cancellation of wider consequences, especially through persisting inequalities between communities, is thought to impede the process of reconciliation (Hamber, 1998; Staub, 2000).

Empirical research on intergroup forgiveness in societies emerging from ethnopolitical conflict is particularly difficult for ethical, political, and psychometric reasons. For example, the very mention of the term *forgiveness* as part of a qualitative or quantitative survey may cause individual trauma or revive intergroup anxiety and distrust (McLernon, Cairns, & Hewstone, 2002; Staub & Pearlman, 2000). Hence, researchers need to take care when designing the research in order to minimize the possibility of a negative impact on participants. The measurement of intergroup forgiveness must also go beyond personalized trauma to ensure that forgiveness is explored at a community or societal level rather than at an individual level. Scenarios or other measures priming the participant to the intergroup context or group research, such as focus groups, help to facilitate responses at the level of intergroup forgiveness.

Intergroup Forgiveness in Northern Ireland: A Case Study

Surprisingly, for a society that is struggling to overcome the effect of prolonged political violence, intergroup forgiveness is not high on the agenda. For example, although Northern Ireland is a particularly "churched" part of the world, and although the main churches have all officially condemned violence, one has to look to exceptional individual church leaders to find attempts to encourage the recognition and acknowledgment of past wrongs and injustices by both sides. For example, one church leader (Stevens, 1986) had suggested that in Northern Ireland, "without forgiveness there cannot be reconciliation" (p. 63), and another (Dunlop) has suggested that some acknowledgment of collective guilt could help to promote forgiveness in Northern Ireland (Giffin, McDonagh, Dunlop, McMaster, & Smyth, 1996).

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Politicians in Northern Ireland appear to be even more reticent to speak about forgiveness. One has to look not to *local* politicians but to politicians from other nations to find references to the need for forgiveness in Northern Ireland. In an address during the 1995 visit by U.S. President Bill Clinton to Belfast, he likened the conflict in Northern Ireland to the American Civil War when he said:

> We have all done wrong. No one can say his heart is altogether clean, and his hands altogether pure. Thus as we wish to be forgiven, let us forgive those who have sinned against us and ours. That was the beginning of America's reconciliation, and it must be the beginning of Northern Ireland's reconciliation.

Exceptions exist, however, and private individuals from both sides of the religious divide in Northern Ireland have called for forgiveness even in the face of personal hurt. The best known of examples of public demonstrations of intergroup forgiveness have come from two bereaved fathers—Michael McGoldrick and Gordon Wilson (McKittrick, Kelters, Feeney, & Thornton, 1999). Michael McGoldrick's 31-year-old son was shot by Protestant paramilitaries in July 1996, yet he felt able to say, "Bury your hate with my boy. Love one another. I can love the man that murdered my son" (p. 1996). Similarly, Gordon Wilson, whose daughter, Marie, was killed in an IRA bomb attack in 1987, said: "I bear no ill will. I bear no grudge. That will not bring her back" (p. 1098). For most survivors in Northern Ireland, however, the journey to forgiveness appears to be a bridge too far.

Intergroup Forgiveness in Northern Ireland: Empirical Research

Despite this lack of interest in the topic of intergroup forgiveness in Northern Ireland, we have over the last 5 years begun a program of research to investigate this topic. In this section, we will briefly describe our ongoing research in which we have used a range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate intergroup forgiveness and its correlates in Northern Ireland (see Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, McLernon, Niens, & Noor, 2004). We focus here on our studies developing and using a new measure of intergroup forgiveness in this context, but we have also undertaken research using the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (see McLernon, Cairns, Hewstone, & Smith, 2004), which we believe is less able to capture the specifically intergroup aspects of forgiveness in Northern Ireland. In our research program, we first conducted a series of focus groups to examine what people in Northern Ireland thought of forgiving the other community. Second, surveys elucidated psychological processes involved in intergroup forgiveness. Finally, an experimental study systematically examined factors that lead people to forgive the other side.

The Conflict in Northern Ireland. Before discussing our work on intergroup forgiveness in Northern Ireland, it is necessary to consider the background to the "Troubles," as they are commonly known. In common with many if not most of current ethnic

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conflicts, the conflict in Northern Ireland has a long history. It is possible to trace the Irish conflict with the English to at least the 16th century. Northern Ireland really came to the world's attention, however, only because of the violence that has dominated the last 30 years, leading to some 3,000 deaths and tens of thousands of injuries due to increasing community divisions. Today, despite the recent peace process, the conflict in Northern Ireland remains largely a struggle between those who wish to see Northern Ireland remain part of the United Kingdom (the Protestant/Unionists) and those who wish to see the reunification of the island of Ireland (the Catholic/Nationalists). Complicating this picture, however, is the fact that the conflict is underpinned by a mix of historical, religious, political, economic, and psychological elements (Cairns & Darby, 1998).

Focus Groups. People from lay and church-based organizations devoted to the reduction of conflict, ex-paramilitaries, and victims themselves participated in a series of focus groups conducted between June 1999 and February 2000 (see McLernon et al., 2002). All saw forgiveness as based on ideas of compassion, mercy, humanity, or empathy, which parallels previous research on *interpersonal* forgiveness (e.g., Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991). However, most agreed that it was easier to forgive an individual than a group, because it was easier to trust an individual than each member of the other community.

There were, however, disagreements about intergroup forgiveness; victims, particularly from the Catholic/Republican side, were hostile to the idea of forgiveness and thought that in forgiving, they were justifying the wrongs that were done to them. Members of the ex-paramilitary groups also felt that their acts were fully justified at the time and that they did not feel the need to ask for or to offer forgiveness.

The focus groups also showed that many participants felt that forgiveness becomes easier if others acknowledge and validate the pain of a hurtful act; in Northern Ireland, they felt, intense bitterness develops without this acknowledgment. Indeed, a show of remorse from the perpetrator promotes forgiveness. Finally, it was stressed by all groups that preaching forgiveness or trying to force it was likely to be counterproductive, but an act of remembrance such as a monument might give others the opportunity to share the loss and make forgiving easier.

Survey 1. University student sample—Collective guilt, outgroup attitudes, and ingroup identification as predictors of forgiveness. Hewstone et al. (2004) developed a forgiveness scale from the focus-group sessions to examine the relation between forgiveness and variables such as religiosity, contact with members of the other community, and personal experience of victimhood during the Troubles. Using a sample of Catholic and Protestant university students in Northern Ireland, they found that the strongest predictors of forgiveness were collective guilt and outgroup attitudes, whereas identification with one's own religious community was a negative predictor. This model explained a large proportion of the variance in forgiveness (31% for Catholics and 52% for Protestants). Interestingly, personal self-reports of religiosity did not relate to intergroup forgiveness at all. On examining victimization experience

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of the Troubles, Hewstone et al. (in press) found that those who had experienced high levels of victimization reported significantly lower collective guilt and forgiveness than those who experienced little victimization.

Survey 2. Representative sample—Trust, perspective taking, and ingroup identification as predictors of forgiveness. Hewstone et al. (2004) then surveyed a representative sample of the Northern Irish population, adding measures of perspective taking, trust of the other community, and an objective index of participants' exposure to violence (based on how much sectarian violence had taken place in their area of residence). Forgiveness was positively associated with more contact with outgroup friends, more positive outgroup attitudes, greater ability to take the perspective of the other community, and greater outgroup trust. The strongest predictor of forgiveness for Catholics was trust, which alone explained 23% of the variance in forgiveness, whereas for Protestants, there were two strong positive predictors (trust and perspective taking) and one strong negative predictor (identification with one's own group); these three predictors together explained 41% of the variance in forgiveness for Protestants. As in Survey 1, respondents who experienced more violence reported significantly less forgiveness than those who experience less violence.

Surveys 3 and 4. Infrahumanization as mediator of the effect of contact on forgiveness. Tam et al. (2004) focused on the link between intergroup contact and forgiveness. They replicated the finding that higher levels of contact between Catholics and Protestants predict intergroup forgiveness. They also examined how this occurs. According to the psychological essentialism perspective on intergroup bias (Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000; Hirschfeld, 1996), people tend to infuse an essence (biological, cultural, religious, etc.) into social groups to explain their differences. An ingroup perceived as superior may be endowed with the human essence (Schwartz & Struch, 1989), whereas outgroups are seen as "infra-humans." This form of bias has been suggested to lead to "delegitimization" (Bar-Tal, 1989, p.358) and "moral exclusion" (Opotow, 1990, p.1; Staub, 1989) in extreme cases; for example, Nazi Germans regarded Jews as being subhuman.

Researchers (e.g., Demoulin et al., 2004) have observed that people perceive what emotion researchers (e.g., Ekman, 1992) call *secondary emotions* (e.g., nostalgia, guilt) as more unique to humans than are primary emotions (e.g., anger, pleasure). Evidence suggests further that individuals attribute more specifically human secondary emotions to the ingroup than to the outgroup—infrahumanizing the outgroup (Leyens et al., 2000). Tam et al. (2004) selected primary and secondary emotions from a pretested list (see Demoulin et al., 2004): positive primary emotions (surprise, calmness, attraction, enjoyment, caring, excitement, pleasure), positive secondary emotions (optimism, love, passion, elation, nostalgia, admiration, hope), negative primary emotions (pain, fear, anger, fury, panic, fright, suffering), and positive secondary emotions (humiliation, shame, guilt, disgust, melancholy, disconsolate, disenchantment). They found that both Catholics and Protestants indeed attributed more secondary emotions to their ingroup than to the outgroup, thus infrahumanizing members of the other community.

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Tam et al. (2004) further examined this process of infrahumanization as a mediator of the effect of contact on forgiveness. They found that higher levels of contact with members of the other community in Northern Ireland predicted lower levels of infrahumanization. Furthermore, lessening the tendency to attribute secondary emotions to the ingroup than to the outgroup (i.e., seeing the outgroup as *more* human) mediated the effect of contact on willingness to forgive the outgroup for past wrongdoings over and above other variables, such as the attribution of primary emotions, as well as feelings of empathy, respect, and lessened anxiety. This model explained 11% of the variance in forgiveness.

Tam et al. (2004) replicated this result in a second study, which adopted a more refined scale measure of secondary and primary emotions. The attribution of secondary emotions to members of the other community again mediated the effect of contact on forgiveness, over and above the attribution of primary emotions and feelings of empathy, positive and negative emotions toward the outgroup. This model explained even more of the variance in outgroup forgiveness: 16%. Catholic-Protestant contact is thus a possible means of humanizing the other community in Northern Ireland, thereby promoting the vital act of forgiving.

Experimental (Scenario) Study. Finally, in an experimental study, Hewstone et al. (2004) presented participants with one of several versions of a scenario describing an act of paramilitary violence (based on Gibson and Gouws' [1999] methodology). The conditions in the scenario were manipulated in a four-factor between-subjects design: 2 (religious group membership of participant: Catholic vs. Protestant) × 2 (religious group membership of perpetrator: Catholic vs. Protestant) × 2 (intention to kill the victim: intentional vs. unintentional) × 2 (motivation: retaliation vs. no apparent motivation). Participants were asked to attribute blame and forgiveness in these situations and whether they would make a recommendation for the perpetrator to be granted early release. Under the terms of the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement, signed April 10, 1998, prisoners convicted of terrorist offenses could be released immediately or be required to serve a minimum of 2 more years. Participants also completed measures of the importance of religion, intergroup contact, outgroup perspective taking, outgroup attitudes, intergroup forgiveness, and ingroup identification.

Both Catholics and Protestants were biased in favor of their own groups. Catholics were more forgiving of a Catholic than a Protestant perpetrator. Protestants were more forgiving of a Protestant than a Catholic perpetrator. Blame attributions and recommendations for early release followed a similar pattern. Interestingly, however, forgiveness was moderated by participants' identification with their own religious groups; those who were "low" in identification with their religious groups (i.e., as Catholic or Protestant) were not more forgiving of the ingroup perpetrators than the outgroup perpetrators, but those who highly identified with their religious groups showed an even stronger pattern of bias toward forgiving *ingroup* members than in the overall analysis. This reinforces the survey results, highlighting the importance of ingroup identification in forgiveness, because ingroup identification was clearly

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driving the intergroup forgiveness bias in this experiment and was much more important than manipulations of the perpetrator's intention or motivation.

CONCLUSIONS FROM OUR ONGOING CASE STUDY

In the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, forgiveness may be best thought of as an intergroup, rather than as an interpersonal, construct—as sociopolitical rather than religious. Whereas religiosity was a weak predictor of forgiveness, identification with one's religious group and attitudes toward the other community were especially strong predictors. An experiment reinforced the relative importance of ingroup identification over sectarian perpetrators' intention or motivation. Intergroup forgiveness was also closely related to collective guilt, outgroup perspective taking, and outgroup trust.

We also showed subtle processes involved in inhibiting intergroup forgiveness, such as the tendency to attribute more secondary emotions to the ingroup than to the outgroup. Contact with the other community was an important predictor of forgiveness, and this process was mediated by infrahumanization. In other words, attenuating the tendency to infrahumanize was a mechanism by which this works. When people in Northern Ireland have higher levels of contact with members of the other community, they humanize the other community more, thereby becoming more forgiving of the outgroup. In a society as starkly segregated as Northern Ireland (see Hewstone et al., 2004), we believe that cross-community contact is an essential part of any solution to the Troubles, ultimately helping the two communities progress toward cross-community forgiveness and reconciliation.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

More research that focuses specifically on intergroup forgiveness is needed. To begin with, research should explore the similarities and differences between intergroup and interpersonal forgiveness. As this volume shows, a great deal of information is being accumulated about interpersonal forgiveness. Too often, however, authors assume that this literature can be applied directly to intergroup forgiveness. As we noted previously, interpersonal and intergroup *conflict* are distinct phenomena, and it is therefore likely that interpersonal and intergroup *forgiveness* are distinct phenomena. However, this is an empirical question that as yet remains to be answered.

We believe our research has blazed an important trail in this area. Other important issues are still to be resolved. In particular, even if we accept that intergroup contact plays an important role in promoting intergroup forgiveness in the context of the conflict in Northern Ireland, what we need to know is whether this is generalizable to other conflicts in other, for example, non-Christian cultures. Also, it would be essential to learn at what stage of any conflict attempts to foster intergroup forgiveness can be made. Our research in Northern Ireland has been carried out in a postconflict

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phase. Would it have worked as well at an earlier stage of the conflict? Indeed, would it work better if we had waited until the peace process in Northern Ireland had made even more progress?

Future research should, therefore, at the very least, attempt to replicate our Northern Irish research in the context of other conflicts and, we hope, at other periods in the life cycle of a conflict. In addition, research that addresses the relationship between intergroup forgiveness and three key concepts in any intergroup conflict—forgetting, revenge, and reconciliation—is needed. The current literature does include some mention of these relationships (Hewstone et al., 2004) but mostly in the context of interpersonal forgiveness (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998).

PERSONAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Forgiving and forgetting are regarded as closely linked, sometimes synonymous concepts. Therefore, often the admonition is to "forgive and forget." Despite this, it can be argued that there can be no forgiving if forgetting has already occurred. This is because some form of remembering is necessary if forgiveness is to take place. For these reasons, forgiveness must not be confused with forgetting (see Enright & Coyle, 1994).

Current theoretical accounts of the process of forgiveness indicate that the concepts of revenge and forgiveness are, implicitly or explicitly, placed at the opposite poles of a single dimension (see Enright et al., 1998: McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). In contrast, acceptance of reparation or forgiveness of perpetrators may be perceived by relatives of the dead and injured as a disrespectful act that betrays the memory of their loss. Finally, there is disagreement in the literature on the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation. What is perhaps most often debated is whether there can be reconciliation without forgiveness and/or forgiveness without reconciliation.

Enright, Gassin, Longinovic, and Loudon (1994) argue that it is possible to forgive without reconciliation and maintains that the process of forgiveness does not involve any predictable gains on the victim's part (such as restored relationship/reconciliation). This implies that forgiveness should not be thought about or calculated in terms of equity or reciprocity. Rather, an unconditional process of forgiveness frees the victim from the control of the transgressor. A less positive implication of this notion of unconditional forgiveness is that the burden or responsibility of forgiveness may be placed solely on the victim, who may already be carrying a heavy load due to the infliction of a severe transgression. Power (1994), in contrast, regards any acts of forgiveness that do not point in the direction of reconciliation as incomplete. Including the concept of reconciliation in the process of forgiveness implies a shared responsibility of forgiveness between the wronged party and the offender.

Although, as this volume testifies, work is proceeding at pace on interpersonal forgiveness, intergroup forgiveness remains a "quandary" (Smedes, 1984) still to be understood. Unfortunately, as Pargament et al. (2000, p. 308) note:

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There is no shortage of deep-seated social and political conflict. Mistrust and hatred represent powerful naturalistic laboratories for the study of forgiveness.

APPLICATION FOR PRACTICE: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A problem for many societies torn apart by civil war or racial conflict, according to Ignatieff (1966), is that "what is mythic—and hence what is poisonous—about the past . . . is that it is not past at all." This, he cautions, makes the process of coming to terms with the past much more complicated than "simply sifting fact from fiction, lies from truth" (p. 121). With the apparent success of the South African TRC has come the belief in some societies that truth commissions are the *open sesame* to lasting peace in deeply divided societies.

Work on intergroup forgiveness may have implications for the conduct of future truth commissions. It could certainly be argued that if the poisonous past is to be dealt with, some form of intergroup forgiveness is likely to play an important role. For this reason, non-governmental organizations, governments, and others involved in peacemaking and peacekeeping (in its broadest sense) should pay close attention to work in this area. Similarly, those involved in peace education in its broadest sense would do well to learn from this literature. One of the clearest challenges to peacemakers is to prevent the recurrence or reemergence of long-standing conflict. Again, an acknowledgment of the potential role of intergroup forgiveness in this area could lead to important progress.

This is not the only area in which we believe intergroup forgiveness can play a role in promoting reconciliation in situations of ethnic conflict. As Worthington (2001) has suggested, what is required is for policy makers to adopt a "multilayered war . . . against the centrifugal forces that threaten to disintegrate society" (p. 181). In this war, we believe that policy makers should take note of the research outlined above that points to a key role for intergroup contact in helping to promote forgiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

Although we have tried to approach our work with a certain amount of dispassion, we are mindful of the hurt and suffering that the words *the Troubles* contain. One insight into the human side of the Troubles can be seen in the book *Lost Lives* (McKittrick et al., 1999), which chronicles the deaths of Northern Ireland's 3,600 victims in some detail. Of course, the political conflict in Northern Ireland is a mere blip on the graph of world deaths in similar conflicts. It is our belief, however, that if the world is to stem this tide of suffering in Northern Ireland and in many other societies, what is needed is not just sympathy but hard-nosed theoretically based research. Given the suffering that has gone on, an essential part of this research we believe will, of necessity, have to focus on intergroup forgiveness. As the recent joint declaration of the British and Irish governments notes, although it is not "possible to complete the transition to . . .

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peace and stability by dwelling forever on . . . the past, neither is it possible to create a new beginning without taking account of, and addressing, its legacies (April, 2003).

NOTE

1. This poem, a reworking of a section of Homer's *Iliad* about the reconciliation of Achilles and Priam, was first published in the *Irish Times* in 1994. A few days later, the IRA announced its own ceasefire.

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