

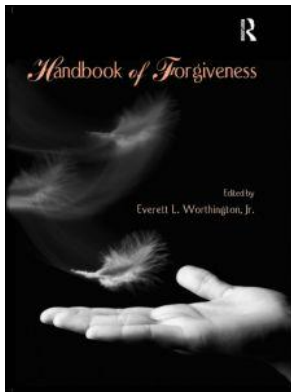
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## Handbook of Forgiveness

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## The Social Psychology of Justice and Forgiveness in Civil and Organizational Settings

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## Chapter Twenty-Nine

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# The Social Psychology of Justice and Forgiveness in Civil and Organizational Settings

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**T**his chapter will focus on the role of justice in civil and organizational relationships, with a particular focus on when that sense of justice has been violated. To do so, we must consider how people think of justice, how they perceive injustice, and how they react to a sense of injustice, whether they are the aggrieved party or not.

Consider the following true story. Three 12-year-old girls in Garden Grove, California recently faced trial for sending an innocent man to jail for 8 months (“Three preteens get up to...”, 2004). The girls, one of whom feared her parents’ reaction to being 20 minutes late coming home from school, lacerated themselves and concocted a tale about a homeless drifter attacking them. Collectively, they identified a man from a police photo lineup as the guilty party. At the man’s trial 8 months later, one of the girls confessed, and the man was freed. At their own trial, the girls expressed remorse (“Girls express remorse...”, 2004), with one penning a letter addressed to the court saying that if the man who was wronged were present, “I would kneel down in front of him and ask for his forgiveness” (p. 5). Though the girls were eventually sentenced to 45 days in prison (with the possibility of early release for good behavior), the District Attorney originally asked that the girls be incarcerated for 253 days—1 day more than the wronged man had served. The homeless man himself was willing to forgive the girls, claiming that “Kids are kids. Kids do bonehead things. If the police had done their job right, this wouldn’t have happened” (“Three preteens get up to...”, 2004, p. 1).

Though the age of the girls is undoubtedly a mitigating factor, this story involves many of the key principles that will be discussed in this chapter: injustice (sending an innocent man to jail), the scope of distributive justice (a homeless drifter perhaps perceived as an easy target), remorse and guilt (from the girls over the accusations),

retributive justice (the DA wanting the girls incarcerated for 1 day beyond the period of incarceration for the innocent man), perceived procedural injustice (perceived by the homeless man at the hands of the police; the harsh punishment perceived by the girls for being late), confession (by one of the girls at the innocent man's trial), and forgiveness (of the homeless drifter toward the girls), among others. We'll return to this story as we discuss some of these principles.

## PERSONAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

The guiding premise of this chapter, as it applies both to the workplace and in civilian relationships in general, is simple: People maintain some sense of what is right or just in human relationships, and when that sense has been violated (whether against one's self or others), there is a tendency to recapture that sense of justice through a myriad of possible reactions. Forgiveness is but one of those many ways to react (Worthington, 2001). However, other reactions (e.g., retaliation, seeking retribution) may appear to be better tactics if the goal is to reestablish justice. (For a detailed review of issues related to justice and forgiveness, see Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003.) Some tactics are likely to result in a lingering unforgiveness where the individual remains mired in negative emotion. Other reactions to reassert justice may actually have similar effects of reducing the negative emotions of unforgiveness. However, as Worthington argues, it is only as those negative emotions are replaced by such positive emotions as empathy and compassion that the individual will experience forgiveness. Therefore, this paper will focus on research, particularly within an organizational and civilian context, that centers primarily around the following issues: (a) how people conceive of justice as a prescriptive norm for social relationships, (b) some factors that influence the perception that the justice norm has been violated, and (c) ways in which people can respond to justice violation. We will conclude our review of the literature with a special focus on implications for forgiveness.

## REVIEW OF THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Given the interdependent nature of the workplace, one might expect that the recent surge of research interest in forgiveness would extend to organizational psychology. In fact, only recently have organizational researchers begun theoretically (Aquino, Groer, Goldman, & Folger, 2003) or empirically (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001; Bradford & Aquino, 1999) to study forgiveness and reconciliation. Instead, organizational researchers on interpersonal relationships (e.g., Bies & Tripp, 1996, 1998) have focused far more on revenge and related problem behaviors such as violence (Folger & Baron, 1996), aggression (Folger & Starlicki, 1998), and employee theft (Greenberg, 1990) in response to perceived wrongdoing.

## JUSTICE AS A PRESCRIPTIVE NORM

Justice norms that help regulate behavior are developed as guidelines for fair interactions that are mutually beneficial. Our sense of justice makes us aware of boundaries of acceptable behavior, provides a sense of predictability in human relationships, and instills confidence that future outcomes will be adequately distributed (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Research suggests that actions are viewed as just when the allocations or outcomes that individuals receive are believed to be equitable (*distributive justice*) and when the procedures for allocating resources, often influenced by how decisions are made, are perceived to be fair (*procedural justice*). To the extent that distributive and procedural justice criteria are met, negative emotions associated with a sense of injustice (e.g., hurt, anger) may not occur; thus, forgiveness may not be an issue (Volf, 2001). When either of these justice principles is violated, however, individuals may find that they are engulfed by unforgiving emotions (Worthington, 2001, 2003; Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Though people desire to maximize both long-term and short-term self-interests, equity theory (Adams, 1965) proposes that they also recognize the importance of equitable distribution of benefits relative to the effort put into the relationship. That is, people are happier when both parties receive appropriate benefits based on their respective contributions. The ill will of those who do not receive a fair appropriation is paralleled, in equity theory terms, by the guilt of those who are overcompensated. As a result, both parties are motivated to restore balance or equity in the relationship. Though perhaps counterintuitive and fascinating, the utility of the distributive justice construct is limited because judgments of distributive justice are subject to bias (Thompson & Lowenstein, 1992). Thus, two interactive parties using different standards in determining the degree of favorable outcomes they deserve will have differing opinions on whether distributive justice has been achieved.

It also appears that concerns about the allocation of resources are perhaps even *less* important than the procedures for distributing those limited resources (Alexander & Ruderman, 1987). For example, if procedures used in making decisions are perceived as fair, people are sometimes willing to accept decisions by authority figures that negatively affect them (see Tyler & Smith, 1998). Research on organizational justice (Folger, 1977; Greenberg & Folger, 1983) has documented the importance to a sense of procedural justice of *voice* (Thibaut & Walker, 1975)—the opportunity to be heard and the perception that one's say is given due consideration by decision makers, even if it has little or no desired influence on the outcome (Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990).

Furthermore, research suggests that what often appears to be key in perceptions of procedural fairness and justice is the quality of interpersonal treatment, or *interactional justice* (Bies, 1987; Bies & Moag, 1986). Though concerns of allocation and procedures remain important in one's perception of justice, what is also important is *how* the distribution outcome and procedures are communicated. Therefore, the degree to which an authority figure displays interpersonal sensitivity, which may (or

may not) communicate a sense of respect and dignity, will often play an important role in perceptions of justice (Greenberg, 1993).

### Violations of Justice

When basic principles of distributive, procedural, and interactive justice are violated, an *injustice gap* (Worthington, 2003) is established. The size and personal importance of the injustice gap is predicted by many factors, including the intentionality behind the offensive behavior, the severity of the offense, and the extent to which the victim was deserving of the offense. When these factors are heightened, it may be especially difficult for a victim to respond with forgiveness (see Exline et al., 2003, for a review.)

**Intentional Offenses.** Offender motives are important. To the extent that a person purposely violates a justice principle, the perceived injustice should be greater, and it may be more difficult to forgive. Relative to unintentional offenses, intentional offenses lead to greater assessments of responsibility and blame (Shaver, 1985), more anger (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998), harsher punishments (Darley & Huff, 1990), and less forgiveness (Boon & Sulsky, 1997).

**Offense Severity.** More severe offenses are seen as more unjust, and thereby may be more difficult to forgive. People judge even accidental offenses harshly if the offenses violate one's sense of distributive justice due to severe negative consequences (Walster, 1966), especially if they involve a betrayal of trust (Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2000). Offenses prompt harsher judgments and more retaliation when they violate procedural justice norms through insults or symbolic harm (Gabriel, 1998), particularly when committed against collectives as opposed to individuals (Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997).

**Undeserving Victim.** Distributive, procedural, and interactive justice are all potentially violated when the offended party, including oneself, did nothing to deserve harm (Feather 1999). Justice, however, is maintained and less sympathy given to people who, as offended parties, are seen as somehow responsible for their negative outcomes (Lerner, 1980; Weiner, 1993).

The true story presented at the beginning of this chapter highlights all three forms of (in)justice which, when taken together, may make the expressed forgiveness by the homeless victim toward the girls whose story placed him in prison for 8 months somewhat remarkable. The girls' offense was clearly intentional and deliberate. The story they concocted and the extreme measures they went to, simply so that one of the girls might avoid being punished for coming home 20 minutes late, clearly could add (despite their age) to an assessment of greater responsibility, to more blame, to harsher punishments (the DA's suggestion that they serve 1 day longer in jail than the innocent victim), and to less forgiveness. The severity of the offense drew considerable

attention to their actions (daily newspaper accounts in a county of almost 3 million people), especially when they jointly pointed to one helpless individual who perhaps, as a homeless individual, became for the girls a depersonalized model without identity and, therefore, beyond the “scope” of justice (Clayton & Opatow, 2003). Indeed, as Clayton and Opatow point out, both personal and group identities evoke assessments of value, status, and power, which in turn influence justice judgments and when, why, and how justice matters. The procedural injustice by law enforcement authorities that the victim suffered by (a) allowing the girls collectively rather than independently to identify him as the supposed perpetrator and (b) not seeking verifying information (e.g., other witness accounts) could very well have been different had the individual been a respected leader or even a common tax-paying homeowner in the community. Indeed, the newspaper accounts made little or no mention of these procedural injustices beyond the victim’s sole comment that, from his view, the police were to blame for not having done their job right (“Three preteens get up to...”, 2004). Yet the victim was willing to forgive the girls.

### Responding to Perceived Injustice: Retribution and Restoration

If one experiences an injustice, how can that sense of justice be restored? The criminal judicial system has established formal means that focus either on punishing the wrongdoer (retributive justice) or on compensation to the victim and/or restoration of the offender to a status of productive member of the community (restorative justice; see chapter 30 by Armour & Umbreit). We will consider some social psychological dynamics that underlie these two orientations, again particularly as they apply to civil and organizational relationships.

**Motives for Retribution.** The desire for punishment, or what Darley and Pittman (2003) call the “impulse to punish” (p. 326), is a core part of retributive justice reasoning (Darley & Pittman, 2003; Miller, 2000). The *deterrence* view, the predominant contemporary retribution perspective, justifies the use of punishment presumably because it deters people from breaking the law, thereby maximizing the general social good (see LaFave, 2000). Thus, suitable punishment “in proportion to the moral gravity of the offense committed” (Darley & Pittman, 2003, p. 326) has become standard fare in justice reasoning and is perhaps one reason why retaliation that allows one to get even in the amount of punishment received, as pointed out earlier, is often morally justified (Tripp & Bies, 1997) and even aesthetically pleasing (Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2002). Such retributive desires can reflect (a) self-interested or *material* aims, as when offended parties retaliate to regain power (perhaps based on a sense of violated distributive justice), (b) *relational* aims, such as feeling protective anger when loved ones are harmed (Exline, 2002), (c) *esteem-related* aims in which people who feel demeaned seek to bolster their self-esteem (Miller, 2000; Worthington, 2001), or (d) *deontic* aims (Folger, 2001; Turillo, Folger, Lavelle, Umphress, & Gee, 2002) that

emphasize a moral commitment to ethical standards of fairness. Whether the motive for retribution is driven by self-interest, as in the first three aims, or, as in the last aim, driven by a principle beyond self-interest (even to the point of self-sacrifice, see Turillo et al., 2002), people often see punishment as an effective way to maintain social order, safety, and equity in the wake of an offense.

Thus, the idea that an individual “should get what he or she deserves” is not necessarily bad, provided that it is grounded in some morality-based principle, such as the correction of harmful behavior on the part of the wrongdoer or the restoration of the victim’s status (Tripp & Bies, 1997; Tripp et al., 2002). Under such circumstances, however, retributive reasoning gives way to a second means of reestablishing a sense of justice: restorative justice. A revenge orientation, in and of itself, may find that its only benefit is some sense that the injustice gap has been reduced.

**Motives for Restoration.** Whereas retributive justice focuses on reestablishing justice through punishment for the offender, restorative justice focuses on preserving the rights and dignity of both victims and offenders, a philosophy that has had considerable reforming influence on the justice system, both in the United States and elsewhere (see chapter 30 by Armour & Umbreit; Bazemore, 1998; Umbreit, 2001). Proponents of restorative justice argue that it is a process offering hope to three co-participants: the victim, the offender, and the community. Bazemore (1998) points out that restorative justice processes (e.g., providing opportunities for offenders and victims to meet together in carefully supervised settings; providing opportunities for correspondence via letter writing, video, or phone conversation; providing opportunities for the offender to provide services to the victim or others) offers (a) victims greater opportunity to be heard and greater hope for restitution, (b) offenders the opportunity to express remorse and other expressions of accountability directly to victims and communities (e.g., restitution through community service), and (c) the community more accessible justice processes and potentially greater crime prevention and control but also greater accountability and obligation for involvement. Defenders of the restorative justice view (e.g., Brunk, 2001) argue that restoration is a sufficient deterrent to potential offenders because the long-term effects of integrating offenders back into a constructive relationship with the community are far greater and more positive than are the psychological and moral debilitation resulting from the penal system.

Motivations to restore fairness after a perceived injustice can be viewed as part of procedural and interactive justice, described earlier. For the victim, justice may be restored simply through “voice,” or the opportunity to be heard (Folger, 1977). Restoring justice may also create a greater sense of distributive justice, especially if the restoration process involves some form of restitution to the victim or community. The extent to which the interaction (either direct or indirect) between perpetrator and victim is done with respect and dignity may help establish a greater sense of interactional justice.

### Implications for Forgiveness

Of the many conceptual models of forgiveness, we find Worthington's (2001, 2003; Worthington & Wade, 1999) model, because of its strong focus on *unforgiveness*, particularly relevant to considerations of the violation of justice in the workplace and society. Worthington proposes that forgiveness is best conceptualized as an emotional replacement of negative unforgiving emotions (e.g., anger, bitterness) with positive pro-relational emotions, such as empathy and compassion. However, this does not imply that unforgiving emotions necessarily impede the development of forgiveness; in fact, to the extent that unforgiving emotions help reduce or close the injustice gap, an individual may find it easier under some circumstances to replace such emotions with empathy and compassion that may lead to forgiveness.

On the other hand, purely from a justice perspective, one could argue that forgiveness becomes irrelevant if justice needs are adequately met by other means. If one's only motive is to reduce the injustice gap by "getting even," for example, then retaliation is all that is necessary. Still, however, the desire to reestablish justice, whether through retributive or restorative means, has important implications for forgiveness. In fact, a psychophysiological study by Witvliet and her colleagues (Witvliet, Root, Sato, & Ludwig, 2003) found that unforgiving emotions and motivations decreased, whereas positive emotions, empathy, and forgiveness increased when going from no justice to punitive justice to restorative justice conditions (also see chapter 18 by Witvliet).

Listed below are some factors that might influence the forgiveness decision.

**Retributive Motives.** A key factor in forgiveness is the extent to which retributive motives in the victim reflect cold emotions of revenge or retaliation driven by self-interest, or reflect a genuine societal concern for the welfare of others and/or commitment to an ethical standard of fairness (Worthington, 2001, 2003). To be sure, it is far too simplistic and inaccurate to equate the desire for retribution with unforgiveness, because a retribution motive can not only potentially lower the injustice gap and therefore reduce negative emotions (Worthington, 2003) but also reflect concerns beyond the self.

Punishment motives affect how both a victim and offender react to an offense. For the victim, the motive will frequently lead to a desire for punishment for the sake of fairness, whereas for the offender, the motive will often involve avoiding punishment. In both cases, there may be a justice motive at work because victims and offenders frequently see and remember the offense in different terms (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997). For the victim, unforgiveness driven by a desire for retribution may be influenced by such factors as the offender's blameworthiness (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999) and the offender's level of unrepentance (Schwartz, Kane, Joseph, & Tedeschi, 1978). For the offender, the unwillingness to seek forgiveness may be influenced by whether the offense was perceived as justified in the first place.



**Restorative Motives.** A poignant example of the power of a restorative motive to forgiveness is provided by Gobodo-Madikizela (2002), a former member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. She reports a face-to-face meeting between two women, Pearl and Doreen, with Eugene de Kock, the head of the apartheid government's covert operations and commander of an army of death squads. de Kock begged for forgiveness, and the following quotation was an explanation provided by one of the women, Pearl, on why she forgave de Kock.

I was profoundly touched by him, especially when he said he wished he could bring our husbands back.... I felt the genuineness in his apology. I couldn't control my tears.... I was just nodding, as a way of saying yes, I forgive you. I hope that when he sees our tears, he knows that they are not only tears for our husbands, but tears for him as well.... I would like to hold him by the hand, and show him that there is a future, and that he can still change. (p. 17)

Many factors are at work where both justice may be restored and forgiveness facilitated. For example, forms of procedural justice, such as the simple opportunity (under proper circumstances) to interact with the offender, may be enough to satisfy the victim's yearning for justice. As Bazemore (1998) points out, having a say in what will happen to the offender, having the choice to express forgiveness, or even having the knowledge that just seeing the victim and perhaps the victim's suffering might create a greater sense of remorse in the offender may help reestablish a sense of equity. Likewise, for the offender, the opportunity to express remorse, either verbally or behaviorally (e.g., engaging in community service) may create a greater sense of justice.

Perhaps nothing is more central to a sense of restorative justice than a direct and forthright apology. Suggesting that empathy may be "the central facilitative condition that leads to forgiving" (p. 322), McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) found that when an offending party apologizes for offensive behavior, the apology results in increased empathy in the offended party, which may in turn facilitate a willingness to forgive. Interaction between the offender and the victim may promote greater empathy in both parties, thereby perhaps reducing motivation for retribution and increasing motivation for restoration, as communicated in the earlier quotation by Pearl's forgiveness of Eugene de Kock. Also, greater empathy may evoke a greater sense of genuine remorse in the offender, once the damage to the victim is further realized. Expressions of apology that clearly communicate a sincere remorse, though perhaps difficult to discern, are more likely to lead to forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1997, 1998).

In the case presented at the beginning of this chapter of the young girls who wrongly implicated a homeless man for a crime he did not do, restorative justice procedures along the lines described here were not employed. In fact, one girl desired the opportunity to express her remorse directly to the victim. It is very possible that the experiences of forgiving and being forgiven would have been even further enhanced with more opportunity for the perpetrators and victim to interact.

## NEW RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Our brief analysis suggests many crucial avenues for future research linking concerns for justice to forgiveness. One such avenue is to explore further on what basis people think that justice or injustice has been served. That is, despite repeated demonstrations of the importance of fairness in human relationships, little research has examined what comprises fairness judgments—taking into account that people are subject to bias with regard to considerations of justice, such as differential notions of what constitutes justice and differential perceptions of the offense (e.g., the recent Kobe Bryant case) that may have important implications for what constitutes a just resolution (Baumeister, 1997). We encourage further research such as that reported by Blader and Tyler (2003) that begin to analyze a combination of specific criteria used by people to evaluate, in their research, judgments of procedural fairness: two aspects of group formal procedures (those that relate to decision making and those that relate to quality of treatment) and two aspects of group authorities (quality of decision making by such authorities and the quality of treatment from those authorities). Further understanding of such criteria may help us disentangle the conditions under which the fulfillment of justice concerns promote (or fail to promote) forgiveness.

Similarly, victims often feel entitled to a sincere apology, and people are more likely to forgive when they judge apologies to be genuine (McCullough et al., 1997, 1998). Are people good at judging the authenticity of an apology? Though research has examined offender accounts, it remains unclear on what basis (and how accurate) are judgments of the genuineness of an apology. We further note that it may be hard for people to evaluate, even within themselves, the extent to which concerns for justice as a morality-based principle are involved in strongly felt negative emotions that may motivate revenge; yet little research to date has been conducted on how people make such judgments.

Another important avenue to consider for future research is a differential understanding of justice as influenced by cultural processes (also see chapter 4 by Sandage & Williamson). For example, perceptions of justice and its violation in a collectivist society may involve considerations beyond the self, even when it appears that an offense has been committed against one person alone (Sandage, Hill, & Vang, 2003).

Differences may also exist between religious groups. For example, in Christianity, forgiveness is a supreme value, even to the point of discounting considerations of justice (Marty, 1998), whereas in Judaism, forgiveness is predicated more on concerns of justice (Cohen, Hall, Koenig, & Meador, 2005; Dorff, 1998). Thus, for example, the Christian may think it right to forgive whether the offender has apologized; the Jew may (and perhaps should) withhold forgiveness until the offender has engaged in a process of repentance, or *tshuvah*.

## RELEVANCE FOR CLINICAL AND APPLIED INTERVENTIONS

When considering the utility of forgiveness in justice-oriented settings, it is crucial to remember that people vary widely in their ideas about what forgiveness means and how it relates to justice (Exline et al., 2003). Some believe that forgiveness, by its very nature, opposes justice or negates the need to restore justice. Although forgiveness researchers are unlikely to share these views, the views are nonetheless common within the broader public. As such, we urge the use of caution and clarity when addressing forgiveness-related issues in justice contexts. For example, it may be unwise to use the term *forgiveness* unless there is ample opportunity to define the term—that is, to clarify that forgiveness does not imply condoning, excusing, forgetting, trusting, or reconciling. Despite this difficulty with terminology, it may still be useful to discuss anger-related issues with offended parties. In what ways is their anger helping and/or hurting them? What strategies might be helpful in reducing their anger?

We also propose that, where possible, apologies should be encouraged when perpetrators seem to be experiencing genuine (which, again, is often difficult to discern) remorse. Apologies are robust predictors of forgiveness, as reviewed earlier. Apologies also serve the important moral function of acknowledging the social norm that has been broken (Tavuchis, 1991), which is a key factor in restoring a perpetrator to the community. Granted, there are cases in which an apology can in no way repay the debt, and it may even be helpful to acknowledge this shortcoming as part of an apology. Despite its limitations, we contend that the careful and compassionate use of apology can be a key factor in restoring a sense of justice.

## PERSONAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE FIELD

For decades, researchers who study relationships in the workplace and in civilian life have focused extensively on justice and have conceptualized many different types of justice concerns. We agree with the underlying assumption that the establishment of justice is, in many circumstances, a healthy and moral response; that is, not only are concerns about justice often a noble reaction to an offense but efforts to reduce injustice can provide potential benefits to all parties involved and, to the extent that a healthy concern for justice becomes normative, to society as a whole. Justice researchers, however, have been slow in extending their research to forgiveness (Aquino et al., 2003, Aquino et al., 2001), perhaps implying that rectifying injustice should itself be the ultimate goal in restoring damaged relationships. Thus, for example, though forgiveness is an implicit concept in much of the restorative justice process (Zehr, 1990), the focus has been primarily on restoring justice rather than promoting forgiveness (Worthington, 2000). In fact, *forgiveness* has become an unpopular term among many writers in the crime victims' movement because it might be seen by some victims or communities as exculpating offenders, forgetting or trivializing the offense, or victims might feel coerced to forgive implicitly (if not explicitly), suggesting that the

ability to forgive is somehow related to greater worthiness for social concern (for a review, see chapter 30 by Armour & Umbreit). In this sense, it is argued, the victims are further victimized, thereby increasing the injustice gap.

Although certainly these concerns are legitimate, it may also be true that the potential benefits of a restored justice include not just the reestablished sense of equity. Rather, restored justice may also be the means by which other healthy interpersonal and intrapersonal responses are facilitated. We have argued that one such response—through the victims' ability to overcome negative feelings associated with injustice—is forgiveness. Thus, by replacing negative feelings of unforgiveness in some form other than one of external coercion, the victim is not further victimized but rather may be empowered to place the victimization experience behind him or her and thereby move on in life with a greater sense of hope, meaning, and perhaps restored dignity. In this sense, fulfilling a justice concern may facilitate forgiveness.

## CONCLUSION

Justice is, within the individual, both perceived and multifaceted. When a sense of justice is violated, whether in the workplace, in civil relationships, or in other types of relationships, forgiveness is but one of an interdependent myriad of possible responses. Further investigating the combination of individual, interactional, and contextual variables in considerations of justice that may facilitate forgiveness is a potentially fruitful research endeavor.

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