

Injury, Grudges, and Restoration: Forgiveness and Relationship Repair at the Workplace

Alan Clardy, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus

Psychology Department

Towson University

8000 York Road, Towson, MD 21252

United States of America

Abstract

In workplaces, conflicts can generate a dynamic process of injury and transgression, embedding distrust, hostility and hatred into relationships between individuals and between members of groups. This conflict-injury-grudge process is reviewed. When relationships are based on grudges and the desire for vengeance, conventional conflict resolution methods are unlikely to be effective. Four kinds of relationship repair interventions for dealing with grudges – apologies, forgiveness, reconciliation and restorative justice -- are considered and propositions for practice are provided. Needs for future research are noted.

Key words: relationship repair, grudges, workplace conflict, forgiveness, apology, reconciliation, restorative justice

Close, personal relationships among intimates, family, friends and others are a proverbial double-edged sword: while such relationships satisfy the most of profound human needs and motivations (Fiske, 2008), at the same time they offer an ever-present framework for conflict, distrust, brutalization, betrayal and more. When the wounds from these encounters cut too deep, relationships can be transformed to the point of termination. As Baumeister, Exline and Sommer (1998, p. 79) put it, “when one person does something to hurt another, the relationship between the two of them can be permanently damaged.” The victims, consumed by hurt, harden their hearts from the rage and agony they feel into grudges and hatred, creating virtually insurmountable barriers to resuming the relationship, much less its repair. The counterweight to these crushing forces is the possibility of various approaches to relationship repair and restoration.

Shift the context and circumstances to organizational or work settings where conflict among people is also ever-present (Brett, 1984), and the same dynamic can unfold. One particular aspect of this dynamic involves the process of injury and grudges that embeds persistent hostility and aggression into a relationship. Under this dynamic, elbows are figuratively (and perhaps literally) thrown, lines are drawn, and motives aroused that often have the intent to obstruct, interfere with or in some way injure the opponent. Conflict as it is covered in the organizational literature, though, is presented with a certain bloodless or disembodied quality so that the visceral and emotional dynamics of barbed, injurious behavior are typically slighted (Allred, 1999). The hurt from conflict can generate a range of powerful negative emotions that can in turn fester into an on-going legacy of animosity, dislike, anger and even hatred. It is this seething reservoir of emotion, anchored as a grudge, that can make real conflict resolution so difficult. To the extent that a grudge becomes the defining, even institutionalized characteristic of a relationship between co-workers or organizational units and departments, inefficient and dysfunctional outcomes occur for all.

One important antidote to this hurtful dynamic of injury and grudge would be various kinds of conflict management interventions that focus on relationship repair; forgiveness is the leading but not exclusive example. While the study of forgiveness and related relationship repair interventions among organizational and management scholars has picked up since the 1990's, these studies have little inter-disciplinary cross-referencing (Bies, Barclay, Tripp, and Aquino, 2015). References to forgiveness, for example, are not found in organizational conflict management texts. A signal example is the recent text on *The psychology of conflict and conflict management in organizations* (de Dreu and Gelfand, 2008) which does not list forgiveness, grudges, reconciliation, retribution or vengeance in the index. A search in the ABI database using the key words *forgiveness, organization development* and *conflict management* (28 October 2014) yielded only a handful of sources directly bearing on forgiveness as a method for conflict resolution at the workplace.¹ Meanwhile, in more traditional management venues, aspects of conflict and approaches to forgiveness have emerged more recently.²

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature on both the dynamics of conflict and grudges as well as approaches to relationship repair as they apply to the study and practice of conflict management in organizations. The first section summarizes the dynamic processes of harm and grudge formation; this includes a consideration of how this dynamics applies to inter-group relations. Second, four kinds of relationship repair interventions are presented, including propositions for practice. The final sections draw out some general implications for the practice of organization conflict management along with needs for future research.

The Dynamic Process of Injury, Blame, Grudge and Relationship Repair

Several scholars have ably examined the dynamic process of injury and grudge, typically seen, however, through the lens of forgiveness (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003; Aquino, Tripp and Bies, 2006; Bies, Tripp, & Kramer, 1997; Tripp, Bies & Aquino, 2007; Worthington, Jr. and Wade, 1999). The following provides a summary integration of that process. The context is interpersonal relationships that are *emotionally valenced*, that is, relationships that are important and carry strong affective engagement. Workplace relationships can meet this criterion. This process applies not only to *interpersonal* relationships but also to emotionally valenced *inter-group* relationships as well (DeCremer, 2006; Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson and Schmader, 2006). The trigger to start this dynamic is a *negative relational event* (also called a "sparkling event"; Bies, Tripp and Kramer, 1997) when something happens in a relationship whereby one party commits an offense that hurts and injures the other.

In organizational settings, such an event is often a byproduct of conflict, although such events could occur accidentally.³ A number of studies have catalogued the variety of such events. Bies and Tripp (1996), for example, found that the most common triggers of revenge reactions among the MBA students they studied were violations of organizational rules, norms or promises, and damaged social identity. Two studies looked at incidents that generated anger among employees at the workplace. Booth and Mann (2005) recorded examples of interpersonal disrespect (being ignored or publicly ridiculed), incompetent work by others, and mostly managerial ineptitude (in the form of unfair treatment, lack of support, poor communications, no recognition or rewards, and so on); Fitness (2000) found unfair treatment, morally reprehensible behavior, job incompetence, and acting in an arrogant and disrespectful manner. Gibson and Callister (2010) identified three main kinds of triggers: unfair treatment (a robust finding across several studies), goal interference, and interpersonal conflict. As shown in Table 1, these events can be reduced to five main categories: violating shared values and norms, disrespectful and derogatory behavior, goal obstruction, unfair treatment, and interpersonal (or personality) conflicts.

Table 1. Sources of conflict and transgressions at the workplace

	Violating shared values and norms	Goal obstruction	Disrespect	Unfair treatment	Interpersonal conflict
Bies, Tripp (1996)	Norm, rules		Damaged identity Derogating status, power		
Booth and Mann (2005)	Incompetent work		Interpersonal disrespect	Management ineptitude ?	
Gibson (2010)		Goal interference		Unfair treatment	Interpersonal conflict
Okimoto (2010)	Violating shared values		Violating status and power		
Tripp, Bies and Aquamino (2007)	Violating rules	Goal obstruction	Status, power derogation		
Fitness (2000)		Goal obstruction	Falsely accusing of theft, performance errors Unfairly criticized	Work overload	

Yet it is not the event per se that is as important as how the event is interpreted. In short, it is the attribution that imputes meaning to an event that is decisive (Alicke, 2000; Bies, Tripp and Kramer, 1997; Domagalski and Steelman, 2005). For example, some negative events – unintentionally bumping into someone that leads to a coffee spill – almost automatically is understood as an accident (Scobie and Scobie, 1998). In other words, negative relational events are not all cut from the same cloth. Shaver (1985), for example, used a “blameworthiness” continuum for classifying offensive actions. Offenses to another party could be: *observed* (witnessing an offense to others); an *accident* (harm produced by a mistake); *negligence* (doing or not doing something that results in harm that could otherwise have been avoided); or an *unjustifiably intended offense* (which is significant, harmful, and intentional). Each progressive level indicates a potentially more blameworthy action that is also more difficult to forgive. The cognitive process of interpreting an event happens automatically, attributing (or not) responsibility, foreseeability, intentionality and/or external causality for the event to the other party (Alicke, 2000; Bies and Tripp, 1996). At the same time, attributions do not have to be accurate because of several likely attribution errors, such as imputing selfish or malevolent motives to the other party, and/or possibly even paranoid visions of conspiratorial intent (Allred, 1999; Bies, Tripp and Kramer, 1997). An illustration of this attributional effect can be seen in the study by Bradfield and Aquino (1999) who found that the perceived severity of the offense and the likability of the offender both moderated forgiveness responses; more severe offenses were associated with a greater desire for revenge, and this was more decisive than the modest effect the likability of the perpetrator had on revenge reduction. Moreover, the same action can be defined differently by different people. Some individual difference factors have been found to affect how harmful actions are perceived as well as the ability to forgive. For example, both narcissistic individuals and people with strong degrees of pride are more likely to be unforgiving (Worthington, Jr, Sandage, and Berry, 2000). Likewise, religious orientations can affect propensity to forgive (Davis et al., 2013).

One particularly important type of negative relational event is a *transgression* (McCullough, Root and Cohen, 2006; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, and Platow, 2008; Reina and Reina, 2006, refer to transgressions as *betrayals*). A transgression is an action seen to be so heinous that it either is “(a) wrong or morally offend(s) one’s partner, or (b) inflict(s) psychological or physical pain or injury” (Worthington, Jr and Wade, 1999, p 389).

A transgression violates the most profound tenets of a relationship, ignoring a basic, even sacred trust between the parties, violating the most fundamental norms or etiquette for respecting the other person. A transgression cuts the deepest, wounding the other party at its most vulnerable sense of self. Actions become particularly likely to transmute into transgressions when they are repeated, delivered with strong hateful emotions, severe in effects, and/or done unapologetically by the offender. Transgressions are particularly likely to extend and deepen a conflict (Struthers, Dupuis and Eaton, 2005).

Negative relational events, particularly those seen as transgressions or betrayals, are apt to trigger anger and vengeful ruminations of various kinds (Allred, 1999; Gibson and Callister, 2010). Once triggered, anger can persist and fester, dragging along with it serious longer-term organizational problems (Booth and Mann, 2005). “Through rumination, the hot emotions of anger and fear, like forged steel, cool and harden into unforgiveness. The cold emotional unforgiveness complex includes bitterness, resentment, and hatred, and it motivates avoidance of the transgressor or revenge” (Worthington, Jr, and Wade, 1999, p 391f). By obsessively thinking about the event, dwelling on the injury, and re-experiencing the intense emotions evoked, revenge motivation fuels thoughts and plans for retaliation. At the extreme, there can be a sense of towering indignation or self-righteous rage motivating a desire for vengeance and harm to the offender (Bradfield and Aquino, 1999; Horowitz, 1981, McCollough et al., 1998). The more victims of a transgression think about their injury and the harm they’ve experienced, the more they became certain of the perpetrator’s intentionality and culpability (Bies and Tripp, 1996).

The behavioral responses from victims to negative relational events can range from passive coping to active retaliation. “Passive responses include affects, behaviors, or thoughts that are not communicated directly to the offender—including stonewalling, passive-aggressive acts, brooding reticence, internalization of blame, resignation from lack of hope, silent forgiveness, and rumination” (Worthington, Jr, and Wade, 1999, p 391f), not to mention fantasizing about taking harmful actions. More overt responses could include private problem-solving or negotiating sessions, withdrawal and disengagement, moving to a different job or department, public complaints about or demands for apologies intended to embarrass the perpetrator, spreading rumors, whistleblowing, litigation or even aggressive or violent confrontations (Bies and Tripp, 1996).

A hardened and persistent attitude of animosity and bitterness to another actor is a *grudge*. Holding onto a grudge does have several useful functions for the victim: (1) it maintains a sense of distrust of and attention to the perpetrator, helping protect the victim from further victimization; (2) a grudge allows the victim to persist in feeling anger, righteous indignation, and so on, keeping the transgression alive and present as on-going as a reminder of the injury; (3) it allows the victim to retain a sense of control and potency in a situation that might otherwise be humiliating; (4) it can fuel an ongoing motivation for exacting revenge; and (5) it can be taken as a principled example of upholding certain moral standards of conduct the violations of which can never be condoned (Baumeister, Exline and Sommers, 1998; Martens, 2013). In short, grudges sustain a justifiable rejection and condemnation of the offender, effectively prohibiting forgiveness. Grudges are also likely to be associated with both physical and emotional problems over the longer-term, however, as holding a grudge has both personal and relationship costs (McCullough, Root, and Cohen, 2006).

Inter-group conflict and Grudges

Workplace conflicts can occur not only between individuals but also between people as members of groups. As such, grudges can operate at the group level. Several theories and supporting research show how an injury from conflict can spread through a group of people and become a collectively held grudge. Social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989) holds that a strong level of identification with a group makes membership in that group an important or salient aspect of a person’s self-concept. As the group in general or some of its individual members are treated, so will others in the group be affected. The theory of intergroup emotions (Leonard, Moons, Mackie and Smith, 2011) posits that group identification and experienced offenses to the group produce emotional effects that can become a driving motivational source for collective action. For example, simply seeing oneself as belonging to a group with a history of poor treatment can generate a level of anger, even if the individual has not experienced a specific harmful event directly.

For example, in a series of studies, Brown, Wohl and Exline (2008) were able to show how witnessed offenses to members of one’s work or identity group spread to others in that group, even though the witnesses were not directly affected.

“If group membership becomes part of the self, events that harm or favor an in-group by definition harm or favor the self, and the self might thus experience affect and emotion on behalf of the in-group” (Mackie, Devos and Smith, 2000, p. 602). In short, conflicts that damage or injure a group generally or specific members of that group can be amplified and distributed to everyone in that group to some degree. In these ways, an injury can spread and be shared among group members like a contagion.

The intensity of group identification (or group solidarity) will make a difference in the nature, speed and extent of distribution of the contagion. Strong member identification with the group makes both the effect of the injury greater and the likelihood of forgiveness less (Brown, Wohl and Exline, 2008). In low solidarity groups with little group identification, the variability in member feelings of injury, in the creation and maintenance of a grudge, and in forgiveness propensity and ability would likely be high; fewer members would be as likely to take offense as easily or be as strongly motivated to vengeful actions as in high solidarity groups. When high solidarity groups are involved, though, it is likely that the opposite reaction will occur. Mackie, Devos, and Smith (2000) tested what effect the perceived strength of a group would have on member emotional reactions. They found that when members saw their group as strong, the resulting emotion to an offense was anger; when the group was seen as weak, the reaction was fear. Further, the experience of anger created motivations and intentions towards the offending group that could presumably escalate animosities between different group members and lead to an increasingly polarized inter-group relationship. The outcome would be a persistent foundation of ill-will and animosity (that is, a grudge) to the other party. As found in the meta-analysis of 28 reports dealing with forgiveness and solidarity (Van Tongeren et al., 2013), strong in-group identification was negatively associated with forgiveness. One limitation of this study, though, is that many of the research reports dealt with injurious conflicts in an international, between-country context. In general then, individuals who share a strong identification with the work group are more likely to spread and share a sense of injury, grudge and desire for revenge in response to a perceived injury to their unit as a whole or to some specific member of that group than individuals in low cohesion, low identity groups.

In summary, in relationships (at the workplace as elsewhere) that are emotionally engaging, conflicts can lead to injuries and damages. These negative relational events can vary in nature, but when they are seen as intentional, severe, forceful, done unapologetically and repeatedly, they are likely to generate high levels of animosity and hostility. Transgressions are particularly grievous kinds of negative relational events. Under these conditions, victims may assume or acquire grudges against the perpetrator. While grudges do provide certain benefits to the victim, they also tend to institutionalize conflict and provide the fodder for revenge motivation. The manifestations of a grudge can range from passive avoidance to active hostility and more. Regardless, the embedding of hostile and active opposition ultimately compromises organizational functioning.

Intervening to Repair Damaged Relationships

Grudges add a level of intensity and bitterness to conflicts in work relationships, creating attitudes of animosity and ill-will, motivations of revenge and retaliation, and actions of opposition, aggression and more. A key question becomes how damaged and broken relationships can be mended and repaired (Dirks, Lwewicke, and Zaheer, 2009; Kidder, 2007). Okimoto and Wenzel (2014, p. 443) define *relationship repair* as “restoring feelings of benevolence and empathy to the relationship between parties, encompassing both reconciliation (that is, relationship repair between individuals) as well as reintegration (that is, an individual’s support from and commitment to the organizational community.”

There have been several efforts to identify what relationship repair interventions should be. Ren and Gray (2009) used Goffman’s *Interaction Rituals* framework for identifying these relationship restoration methods: accounts (explanations given by offenders for their offending actions that can be used to either deny, reduce, or explain away their culpability); apologies; demonstrations of concern; and/or penance which would be the imposition or acceptance of punishments by the offender. To create their framework of relationship repair interventions, Dirks, Lewicki, and Azheer (2008) identified three factors that are damaged by transgressions: trust, positive affect and interaction exchanges. As they put it, when a transgression occurs, individuals “form inferences about the future behavior of the other party, positive expectations disappear and replaced by negative expectations, and individuals become unwilling to expose themselves to further vulnerability” (p 70). In consequence, relationship repair treatments should focus on repairing trust (by cognitive reframing of what happened with accounts, apologies, denial or penance), reducing negative affect, and restoring positive exchange (that involve implementing structures, systems, or incentives to discourage or prevent future transgressions).

A different framework (shown in Table 2) will be used here to identify four approaches for dealing with severely damaged work relationships. These approaches are classified according to whether they are unilateral or interactive in nature, and then in terms of the degree to which they involve changes to the larger system in which the relationship is embedded. The approaches are apology, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restorative justice. Propositions for practice applicable to each approach are also included.

Table 2. The common core of forgiveness intervention methods

Step	Theme and Commentary	Change Process Activated	Technique examples
1	<u>Defining what Forgiveness</u> means to avoid misconceptions with reconciliation, condoning or forgetting	Differentiating forgiveness from other misconceptions; allows forgiveness without requiring other reactions	* Presentation and handouts * Discussions in which P's talked about what forgiveness means to them
2	<u>Recalling the Hurt:</u> remembering the hurt in a supportive environment; P's revisit the experience and their feelings and thoughts	By focusing on a specific event, forgiveness should be facilitated. Open sharing of hurt promotes therapeutic alliance, and encourages catharsis.	* P's tell their stories * Facilitated discussions * Experience checklists * Reflection exercises about how much time and energy has been spent ruminating
3	<u>Building empathy:</u> P's consider the offender's situation and motivations to promote self-forgiveness	By building empathy, forgiveness is made easier. The danger with this step is that it could slide into seeming to condone and accept an offender's truly hideous hurtful actions. It could also dampen what might be an appropriate therapeutic response: allowing the expression of anger and revulsion to the offender. This step requires careful and selective application.	* P's encouraged to share any struggles they've had with self-forgiveness
4	<u>Acknowledging One's Own Offenses</u> by recalling times when they offended others and needed forgiveness.	Process creates a degree of humility by developing some sense of guilt, promotes making amends, and to define forgiveness as an altruistic gift to the offender. Care and selectivity must be exercised with this step, too.	* P's reflect on times they offended others and needed forgiveness
5	<u>Committing to Forgiveness:</u> creating a plan or bond to forgive	Making a public commitment creates pressure to the action	* Discuss consequences of committing, the need for courage * P's write a letter to offender
6	<u>Overcoming Unforgiveness:</u> taking steps to dampen the contrary motivation to withhold forgiveness and maintain a state of hostility to the offender	By reducing this counter-force, conditions for forgiveness may be increased	* Discussion of anger and pain * Self-reflection on typical ways one handles pain in interpersonal conflict

P = participant

Derived from Wade and Worthington, Jr., 2005

Apology

As Lazare (2004, p 1) put it, an apology is has “the power to heal humiliations and grudges, remove the desire for vengeance, and generate forgiveness on the part of the offended parties” and can be the basis for “reconciliation and restoration of broken relationships.” An apology is as a communication that must come from the transgressor. Since an apology make not be accepted, it is essentially a one-way offer. The essential features of an apology have been variously identified as including: an acknowledgement that duties were breeched and norms violated; taking responsibility for the offending action; expressing empathy with the victim’s plight and suffering; and stating an intention to refrain from similar acts in the future. One additional elements of an apology is to make amends by offering compensation or comparable kinds of actions that can make the victim whole and/or offset damages to standing, reputation and so on. Amends would be particularly indicated when the injuries were material or substantial (Goodstein and Aquino, 2010).

Several factors can affect whether an apology is interpreted as genuine and authentic. One is the victim’s prior knowledge about the perpetrator and the offense (someone with a bad track record will likely not be trusted), and a second is the time lag between the offense and the apology. As found in the study by Jui, Lau, Tsang, and Pak (2011), when the apologies from perpetrators are inconsistent with those criteria, forgiveness is less likely. Using a scenario-based experiment with more than 300 working Chinese adults, they manipulated a perpetrator’s behavioral consistency or inconsistency of an apology. As expected, when apologies were inconsistent with perpetrator’s prior behaviors, forgiveness was less likely.

In their review of their literature on apologies in situations of intergroup conflicts, however, Hornsey and Wohl (2013) concluded that the act of apology alone is seldom sufficient to generate intergroup forgiveness. For example, the victimized group can harbor doubts about the sincerity of an apology. If an apology comes from the leader of the transgressor group, doubt may linger as to whether the leader really represents the sentiments of most of the people in the transgressor group. Further, is the transgressor genuinely sorry or is there some ulterior motive?

Proposition 1: To increase the chances of being effective in promoting relationship reconciliation, apologies must be seen as sincere.

Proposition 2: To be most effective, apologies should include the key components noted above. Proposition 3: While there is no evidence of apologies creating harm, they are neither necessary nor sufficient to cause relationship repair. That is, apologies can be helpful but are not inherently sufficient to promote repair. On the other hand, apologies may be an important element of the other relationship repair interventions.

Forgiveness

By growing consensus, *forgiveness* is understood to involve two related psychological processes: (1) a reduction in vengeful ruminations (that is, less frequent angry and bitter thoughts, emotions, planned vengeful behaviors and the like) directed at an offending party, and (2) an increase in positive counterpart reactions (Wade et al., 2014). In other words, forgiveness is a process that often includes “(a) decreasing motivation to retaliate against a (perceived) offender, (b) decreasing motivation to maintain estrangement from the offender, and (c) increasing motivation toward conciliation and goodwill for the offender” (Escher, 2013, p.101). In this light, forgiveness can be seen as giving up the self-selected prerogative or right to retaliate against the offending party (Sells and Hargrave, 1998). As Thoresen, Luskin and Harris (1998, p. 163) put it, “forgiveness asks you to reappraise the hurt and its source and to go through a shift in how you think and feel about both the offender and yourself.” Forgiveness is a voluntary or willful decision that can be made regardless of what the offender does (Enright, Freedman and Rique, 1998), making it in essence a unilateral action. It can be given to others and/or to oneself. On the other hand, unforgiveness can also find its expression in the motivational state of “forgiveness aversion” which has three dimensions, according to Williamson, Gonzales, Fernandez, and Williams (2014): protecting the self against further abuse, lack of readiness to forgive because the event is too recent or the action too severe, and concerns about saving face and reputation loss by forgiving too soon.

Proposition 4: When there is a grudge, reminding a victim that forgiveness is an option or choice is unlikely to be sufficient to repair a relationship.

Forgiveness has been proposed as either a *trait* (when a person would be inclined to forgive consistently across time, people and events) or a *state* (a reaction that depends on the event and circumstances) (Davis, Worthington, Jr, Hook and Hill, 2013). In addition, forgiveness can be either true and genuine, or shallow and hollow. Baumeister, Exline and Sommer (1998), for example, referred to two dimensions of forgiveness: the internal or intrapsychic process of how the victim actually thinks and feels about forgiveness, and the interpersonal behaviors of forgiveness. Since either dimension can occur or not (there might or might not be real forgiveness in the mind of the victim; forgiveness behaviors might or might not be shown), there are four possible forgiveness states. Takada and Ohbuchi (2013) extended this line of reasoning by noting that while it would seem that genuine forgiveness behaviors first requires the attitude of real or true forgiveness, forgiveness behaviors can be feigned without the requisite attitude (hollow forgiveness). Three common motives for people when forgiving others are: maintaining a relationship; self-oriented presentation to appear as reasonable and engaged; and moral obligation. Tahada and Ohbuchi (2013) studied two of those -- relationship-maintenance and self-oriented forgiveness -- and found that hollow forgiveness would more likely be associated with self-oriented motives; true forgiveness would be more associated with relationship-oriented behaviors.

Proposition 5. Individuals who have strong self-interests and orientations are less likely to be genuinely forgiving.

Forgiveness yields several beneficial outcomes (Fitzgibbon, 1986). First, forgiveness can help victims put the offense behind them, thus freeing them from the control (subtle or compulsive) that the event has on them. When a person waits on an apology from the perpetrator before forgiving, that person remains in a victimized status; forgiveness is a gift to oneself as much as anything, allowing one to shed the shackles of the grudge and invite that perpetrator back into one's life (Reina and Reina, 2006). Second, forgiveness can aide in reconciliation and the repair of a relationship. Third, forgiveness thwarts the build-up of anger over time, a festering that could be transferred and applied to other and/or future relationships. Fourth, there should be a lessening of harmful emotions like anger, rage, shame and anxiety, which should be both physically and psychological healthier for the victim. By the same token, though, forgiveness does not have to mean reconciliation, nor would it mean "excusing, overlooking, denying, [or] forgetting..." what happened (Williamson, Gonzales, Fernandez, and Williams, 2014, p. 379). Indeed, one could forgive and still end a relationship. Neither should forgiveness be simply equated with conflict resolution *in toto* (Wade and Worthington, Jr., 2005; Worthington, Jr and Wade, 1999).

Proposition 6. Forgiveness will lead to the victim's improved psychological, emotional, and physical health forgiveness and can help improve the functioning of a work relationship.

Fehr, Gelfand, and Nag (2010) did a meta-analysis of 175 studies of forgiveness (N = 26,000 adults). They found, for example, that victims are less likely to forgive when offenses against them are seen as severe, intentional, and when the victim ruminates or dwells on the offense. Apologies were positively associated with forgiveness, while negative mood and state anger were negatively correlated with forgiveness. Traits and dispositions that predispose individuals to forgiveness included agreeableness, trait forgiveness, and perspective taking. Closeness of the relationship, relationship satisfaction, and relationship commitment were situational constraints that had modest impact on forgiveness. Religiosity was also significantly related to forgiveness, but with a very small effect. Women were not necessarily more forgiving than men, nor did people become more forgiving with age. The effect of time on forgiveness was non-significant, based on between-subjects studies; within-person studies do show forgiveness declining over time.

McCullough, Fincham and Tsang (2003) studied levels of forgiveness longitudinally over five- and nine-week intervals among university students who had self-reported having a recent interpersonal hurt or transgression. They found that both the motives of avoidance and revenge tended to decrease over time, but that benevolence motives (really, the actions of forgiveness) did not change in the time periods studied. In a set of scenario-based experiments, Wohl and McGrath (2007) found a comparable decline over time in motives for aggressive behavior.

Proposition 7: While grudge-induced motives of opposition and unforgiveness will tend to naturally dissipate over an extended period of time, in work settings, that time lag may be too long and too uncertain to rely upon its extinction as the basis for conflict resolution.

McCullough et al. (1998) argued that there are four progressively more proximal determinants of forgiveness. First, the most distal cause involves personality traits; research suggests the Agreeableness trait is positively associated with forgiveness while Neuroticism was negatively associated (Maltby and Day, 2004). Another learned individual difference factor would be religious affiliation (Escher, 2013). Second, a bit more proximate is the quality of the relationship involved: in general, partners in close relationships should be more inclined to forgive because they wish to preserve the relationship. Third, more proximate still is the perceived nature or severity of the offense; this would include whether the offender apologized and the genuineness of the apology. The most proximate determinant of forgiveness is how the victim thinks about the offender. Does the victim feel any empathy towards the offender, for example? Specifically, what attributions are made about the offender and the offense? The following attributions attached to an event would powerfully mitigate *against* forgiveness: the offender was seen as responsible and should be blamed, the harmful actions were intentional and/or could have been avoided, and the effects were severe.

Proposition 8: The likelihood of forgiveness is minimized if the triggering event was seen as under the control of the offender, intentional, and creating severe effects.

From a clinical context, Worthington, Jr, and Wade (1999) indicate that in order for the hardened attitude of unforgiveness to be converted into a more forgiving response, some kind of “emotionally arousing event” that is incongruent with the hardened attitude should occur. Such things as receiving a plausible explanation from the offender, witnessing restorative justice, or remembering good things about the relationship or signs of affection all could be an emotionally arousing event. In these cases, forgiveness becomes a choice to give up on anger, hatred and revenge responses, to explore forgiveness, and possibly to seek some kind of reconciliation.

Proposition 9: The potential for producing a more open and conciliatory attitude for forgiveness and reconciliation is improved by processing some kind of unifying or placating remembrance or event.

Various programs for promoting or encouraging forgiveness have been proposed. Reina and Reina (2006) may have the only one specifically intended for the workplace. Based on the grieving model of Kubler-Ross, they recommended a seven-step process that includes acknowledging what happened, allowing feelings to come forth, redefining the experience and forgiving oneself and others. Sells and Hargrave (1998) proposed a two-phase process. First, the victim begins to *exonerate* the perpetrator, starting to melt the hardened attitudes of grudge and hate. Exoneration is prompted by personal *insight* into the harmful and even destructive nature of the victim’s vengeful state, and *understanding* of the perpetrator’s motives and limitations (even if still holding the perpetrator accountable). Second, *forgiveness* begins with the offender’s atoning for the original offense. The victim must communicate genuine forgiveness to the perpetrator or else “it may not bring about constructive conflict resolution” (Takada and Ohbuchi, 2013, p. 185).

Two primary models of forgiveness interventions come from the therapeutic counseling literature (Wade, et al., 2014). The Enright treatment protocol (Enright and Coyle, 1998; Enright, Freedman and Rique, 1998) includes 20 flexible steps, organized into four phases. The first *uncovering* phase examines the defense mechanisms the victim may be using to protect him or herself; this will undoubtedly involve acknowledging personal feelings of shame or embarrassment, becoming aware of the deep emotional hurt involved and how that has consumed the victim’s thoughts and feelings, and addressing anger and other unhealthy reactions. The second *decision* phase commits the person toward finding a resolution, including seeing forgiveness as an option. The third *work* phase involves reframing the hurtful episode by empathizing with the offender, absorbing the pain, and deciding to offer a gift of forgiveness. Finally, the *deepening* phase extends the single act of forgiveness to a broader understanding of one’s own biographical history in this area and obtaining a broader or new purpose in life.

The second REACH Forgiveness model by Worthington (1998) has five steps. First, Recall the hurtful incident for the purpose of deconditioning or extinguishing the fear response that had been conditioned to the hurtful action. In a supportive atmosphere, by repeatedly recalling the event without the painful consequences, the event can be reduced of its traumatic baggage. Second, by Empathizing with the offender, the victim thinks about what the other person might have been thinking and feeling leading up to the hurtful event. This can create a motivational foundation for forgiveness. Third, examine if forgiveness can be seen as an Altruistic gift to offer forgiveness to the offender. Fourth, Commit to forgive by taking public actions that puts one on the pathway to actions of forgiveness. Finally, Hold onto that commitment in tough times; when there are potential second thoughts or the likelihood of relapsing back into a grudge, having the commitment to proceed becomes important.

Several studies have examined these intervention programs. For example, after reviewing the available research on such interventions, Worthington, Jr, Sandage and Berry (2000) offered these conclusions. First, such programs are often carried out in temporary clinical group settings (which raise issues about the external validity of these programs for work settings). Second, there is a distinct dose-effect curve: the more time spent dealing with the issues and processes of forgiveness, the better the outcome; they recommend a minimum of six hours focusing on promoting forgiveness. Multiple sessions should be spaced apart rather than massed in a single marathon event. Third, “conducting groups on forgiveness in which both partners are present is riskier than conducting groups of individuals who forgive an absent offender” (p. 237). They found that all of the intervention techniques they studied had these common features: participants were invited to reflect on the specific offenses involved; empathy was stressed; forgiveness was presented as a multi-dimensional (emotions, behaviors, cognitions) process; participants were moved toward a decision to grant forgiveness; and participants were prompted to “reframe” or characterize the offense in a new way. The programs varied in terms of whether or not cognitive-behavior methods were used, for example, as well as whether anger management techniques were covered, whether humility was sanctioned, or whether the fundamental attribution error was discussed.

Wade and his associates (2014) found 54 studies about forgiveness interventions (mainly the Enright and REACH models noted here) for their recent meta-analysis. They concluded that interventions targeted to promote forgiveness were more effective than no treatment conditions. This beneficial outcome also included improvements in hope and reductions in both anxiety and depression. Intervention (or treatment) dosage (the amount of time spent on the treatment) makes a difference; the more time in treatment, the better the treatment outcomes. Among the studies used, the longest treatment plans were 10 hours. There were no significant differences in the effectiveness of either model. That is, while the Enright model seemed to be more effective than the REACH model, that outcome appears to be because the Enright plan takes more time, not because of any unique features to the treatment plan. In this vein, Fitzgibbons (1986) suggested that “emotional forgiveness, that is, when one truly feels like forgiving another is normally preceded by a significant amount of time and energy spent in intellectual forgiveness” (p. 630). Individually-based treatments were more effective than couple or group interventions. The effectiveness of a forgiveness treatment plan improves as the severity of the offense gets worse.

Proposition 10: The forgiveness treatment interventions derived from the counseling field do work, particularly as more time is spent on the treatment, the greater the severity of the offense, and as the victim is worked with individually and without the perpetrator present. It is unclear if and/or to what extent these effects apply to workplace conflicts, however.

When conflict leads to injury, actors may use two kinds of interpretative frameworks to try to understand and find meaning in what happened: a retrospective *sense-making* attempt to analyze and give coherence to what happened, and a prospective *benefit-finding* process of looking for something of value from the trauma (Rotella, Richeson, and McAdams, 2015). The latter should create a narrative of redemption. In their experiments, undergraduates were instructed to use different themes in writing about the historical events in which they were cast in the role of perpetrators. They found that benefits-finding redemptive narratives were effective in moving the perpetrators to a more conciliatory and cooperative approach for addressing the conflict. McCullough, Root and Cohen (2006) tested a similar approach, this time having victims write about the benefits of a transgression as a way to promote forgiveness. In an experiment, 304 undergraduates were asked to recall transgressions they had experienced (which were mostly personal, given the nature of the sample); they were randomly put into three groups: a control group, a group that wrote about the features of their traumatic experience, and the treatment group who wrote an essay about the benefits of an experienced transgression. All groups had 20 minutes to write the essay. Forgiveness, the perceived severity of the transgression, and several other factors were measured. The group that wrote about the beneficial outcomes of the transgression had significantly less revenge scores and greater forgiveness scores than the other two conditions.

Proposition 11: Perpetrators should become more inclined to resolve grudge-based conflict by writing benefits-finding redemptive narratives of how the transgression changed them. By the same token, one way to encourage forgiveness is to have the victim write about the beneficial effects of the transgression on themselves.

To examine whether there is a common core set of techniques and procedures to different forgiveness intervention programs, Wade and Worthington (2005) did a content analysis of various published reports about such programs.

Reaffirming that most of the intervention models occur in a group counseling format, they identified six common steps to these programs. Their findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Approaches to relationship repair

Approach	Communication Basis	Comments
Apology	Unilateral offer by offender	May or may not be accepted
Forgiveness	Unilateral decision by victim	May or may not be communicated to offender
Reconciliation	Interactive adjustment to regain a minimal working relationship	Allows but does not require changes in the larger relationship framework in place
Restorative justice	Requires full interaction between three sets of actors	Requires changes to the relationship framework in place

They offer several caveats to their review. First, as noted, some steps are potentially volatile and could be counter-productive. This is very much the case with trying to create some empathy with the offender and acknowledging one’s own offenses to others. Further, some interventions apply religious (particular Christian) theology. Such overtures could misfire by invoking guilt about not forgiving, or putting off non-believers. Second, forgiveness should not be automatically seen as an immediate outcome of any intervention: a number of factors may be involved and it may take a lot of time to work through them.

When conflicts and grudges are between groups, the resolution process becomes more complicated because of the numbers of people involved and the effects of group identification issues. As Van Tongeren et al. (2013) put it, “in some cases, forgiveness requires psychologically abandoning resentment toward a group rather than a single individual... intergroup forgiveness is an internal transformation [by a number of people] of motivation toward a perceived perpetrating out-group...” (p. 81). They identified three main sets of factors that can affect intergroup forgiveness. First, *affective* factors are those emotions that can either facilitate or inhibit forgiveness; three specific affective factors are the empathy experienced, the negative emotions associated with the out-group, and finally, the perpetrating group’s sense of collective guilt or remorse. Second, *cognitive* factors involve the thought process of understanding the injury and attributions of responsibility. Finally, *constraining* factors include the extent to which identification and differentiation creates a strong sense of group identity among the members.

Reconciliation

Intense, grudge-based conflicts often lead to severed relationships or revenge-driven interactions. Either way, what had been a working relationship is transformed into a non—working or dysfunctional one. In such a case, for whatever reason, apologies, and/or forgiveness may not be sufficient to restore some minimal form of the *status quo ante*, even though it can be vital to put the working relationship back into a more functioning capacity. Such a condition might be particularly likely in workplace conflicts where, in spite of the unforgiven hurt, some minimally productive interaction between people in independent work roles is necessary. Reconciliation is the process of resuming the form and mechanics of a relationship, settling for cooperating behaviors even if deeper attitudes are unchanged. In short, reconciliation is a different than either apologies or forgiveness (Freedman, 1998) because it involves achieving some minimal level of interaction without the necessity of either forgiveness or apology. As Freedman (1998, p 205) put it, “the injured person may consciously decide to interact with the offender on a superficial level, even though he or she has not forgiven.” Reconciliation, thus, is a mutual or two-way process of adjustment that involves minimal changes to the larger system in which they interact.

Tomlinson, Dineen, and Lewicki (2004) looked at reconciliation as a way to rebuild trust by focusing on and settling the underlying problems that eventuated in a transgression. Specifically, what factors would affect a person’s willingness to reconcile following a trust violation? Using 45 surveys from graduate business students, they found that victims were more likely to reconcile with offenders who offered a timely and sincere apology in which the offender took full responsibility for the offense. Reconciliation was more likely when the relationship had been a good one and had future potential, and where there was little probability of future violations. The sincerity of apology had the strongest main effect. They concluded that offenders should always give an explicit apology that is both timely, sincere, and takes responsibility for what happened.

Proposition 13: A complete and sincere apology is necessary in order for reconciliation interventions to be successful.

Struthers, Dupuis, and Eaton (2005) proposed what they called *social motivation training* (SMT) as a way to promote relationship reconciliation through “attributional retraining”. The social motivation training they tested attempts to alter the victim’s normal process of blame attributions. Their SMT included the following features. First, using a SMT workbook, participants read about examples of the social motivational process and how people have a tendency to make quick attributions of others. Next, they recall and write about one of their own work experiences in judging a coworker. With that, they are instructed to think about the actual offense scenario and generate alternate judgments. Finally, they are asked to identify their feelings and to think about the process and its influence on how it affected their interactions with others. They tested this approach to studies with undergraduates who were asked to imagine themselves as victims of a presented coworker transgression. They were randomly put into either job satisfaction or social motivational training groups. The training lasted approximately 40 minutes. The overall finding was that social motivation training led to more forgiveness of a coworker and produced a greater willingness to restore the relationship.

Unfortunately, this approach can have several negative aspects. It can signal to individuals that their perceptions of the transgression are invalid, threatening their self-respect. It could be understood to imply that forgiveness actually may not be needed. Finally, transgressors may come to think that there was no real harm involved and that they don’t need to be accountable for their actions.

Proposition 12: SMT can be used to promote forgiveness and relationship repair when the conflict or grudge is based on misunderstanding about what happened, because it provides a vehicle for redefining what happened. It would not be appropriate when the originating injury was substantial (not just a misunderstanding).

Another approach to reconciliation was Seu and Cameron’s (2013) PIN framework, a layered model of Positions, Interests, and Needs that opposing sides have in a conflict. At the level of enacted behaviors are their articulated *positions* on the dispute. Underlying their positions are their real but probably unarticulated *interests*. Interests in turn are based on the must-have *needs* that the actors require for satisfaction or fulfillment; the needs are the real drivers of the conflict (in the context of a grudge-laden relationship, one “need” could be retaliation and revenge in some form). Reconciliation requires dialogue between the parties that goes beyond stated positions to deal with and resolve interests and needs. To do this, Seu and Cameron (2013) proposed a process of *empathic mutual positioning* (EMP). Here, *positioning* refers to the communications through which people attempt to explain or account for what happened in a negative relational event. Positioning theory refers to three main features of a position. First are with the positions that a person takes in relationship to another. In a grudge-based relationship, “positioning someone negatively denies them specific rights and grants the speaker the moral high ground. It may contribute to the dehumanizing of the other” (p 268) and malignant positioning. Second, there are the storylines that are the articulated and expressed positions made by the actors to each other. Storylines also establish constraints and barriers to what the actor may say and do. Third are the speech acts which create the history of communicated storylines. In grudge-based relationships, speech acts refresh and renew hostility and antagonism between the actors.

EMP tries to stop the broken record of belligerent speech acts and vindictive story lines by granting the other actor in the reconciliation process the right to be listened to and to have their position and experience considered empathetically. This requires, in turn, a certain openness and willingness to change oneself. Empathic mutual positioning works in three ways. First, an expansive function allows the parties to experience broader, new and different understandings of the other party. Second, an embracing function permits the acceptance of differences, and a third, reflexive function is that of participant’s awareness and mindfulness of how the other party may be affected by one’s own speech acts. Empathic mutual positioning prepares the groundwork for progressing into understanding the needs and interests of the other actor. By doing so, empathic mutual positioning should foster reconciliation.

Proposition 13: EMP should lead to a new and different understanding of the transgressors actions and of the injury experienced by the victim.

Proposition 14: For EMP to be effective in relationship repair, both parties must be willing to suspend grudges in order to listen and negotiate with the other parties.

Restorative Justice

When conflict erupts into injurious actions, victims typically want justice, and justice is often understood to mean *retributive* punishment, often administered by a third-party (Kidder, 2007; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, and Platow, 2008). Indeed, in organizations, retributive justice is institutionalized through various kinds of due process and disciplinary procedures. Beginning in the 1970s in the criminal justice realm, however, an alternative *restorative* justice paradigm emerged that focused on relationship repair rather than exacting a proverbial eye for an eye. According to Kidder (2007, p 8), the fundamental approach of restorative justice “is concerned with healing the suffering of the victim, making restoration, and trying to reintegrate the offender into the community”. Restorative justice requires taking into account the viewpoints of the three main actors in a conflict: the victim, the offender, and third parties (Okimoto and Wenzel, 2014). Victims are concerned with regaining their prior standing and self-respect; offenders, on their own “moral repair”; and third-parties (here, management), on upholding the organization’s order and values. Since retribution only satisfies the victim, the chances for full relationship repair are minimal; chances for a more complete repair are maximized by taking into account all three perspectives. Thus, restorative justice is a multi-directional process that implicates changes to the larger interactive system in which the various actors find themselves.

Restorative conferencing provides a process for addressing these varying perspectives (Okimoto, Wenzel, and Platow, 2010). In such conferences, the three parties (victim, offender and an organization representative) meet to share their perspectives about the event in order to reach a shared agreement about the harm, the offender’s responsibility, and what to do to restore justice. Restoring a sense of justice is usually required in order for individuals to be willing to forgive and undertake relationship repair activities. Three kinds of dyadic reconciliations are expected. *Interpersonal reconciliation* is between the victim and the offender, which requires both parties to “transcend of their own perspective to adopt the other’s” (p 456). This involves redistributing power from the offender to the victim and giving the offender an opportunity to repair his or her moral integrity. *Offender reintegration* is between the offender and the organization, which attempts to rehabilitate the offender to be able to function more effectively; no doubt, the offender must acknowledge the transgression was wrong and signal conciliatory intentions. *Victim reintegration* is between the victim and the organization; this likely involves empowering the victim.

Meetings between the parties (that is, the victim/s and the offender/s) and a facilitator, where everyone is expected to participate, can be a very difficult process, with many negative emotions being expressed. If done correctly, everyone in the process will feel that they have a better understanding of what happened, but they understand the other person, that they believe that they can have a better relationship with the other party in the future. (Kidder, 2007, p 14.)

In short, restorative conferencing involves all the parties involved in a particular transgression meeting to talk about the issues. The offender is given an opportunity to make a sincere apology and amends and thereby earn the possibility of forgiveness while victims have the opportunity to communicate their suffering, acknowledge reconstruction efforts, and express their forgiveness; the organization should have the opportunity to support both the victim and the offender in order to facilitate reintegration. Participants can then discuss reparations. Such a posturing allows the offender to make a sincere apology.

Proposition 15: The restorative conferencing process requires the commitment of the organization in terms of supportive policies, appropriate procedures and skilled facilitation assistance.

Proposition 16: if a perpetrator or transgressor does not want or care about his or her restoration, the restorative conferencing process is not likely to be effective. Thus, prior to using this approach, it would be best to ascertain the true motives of the offender for seeking restoration.

Grudges and Relationship Repair: General Propositions for Practice

Beyond the propositions specific to each relationship repair intervention noted, there are several general guidelines for relationship repair practices that can be advanced. First, the presence of a grudge is a symptom or diagnostic indicator of an unforgiven, continuing and emotionally intense conflict. Grudges would have such symptoms as actively demonizing stereotypes of the other party, intentional avoidance, or motivated vengeful actions on an on-going basis. Relationships conflicted by grudges are likely to be among the most intractable to resolve. Thus, the ability to detect grudges and diagnose their origins and history becomes an important skill for conflict management practitioners.

Proposition 17: Teaching practitioners how to diagnose conflicts in terms of grudges and forgiveness readiness will improve conflict management practices. The techniques for these relationship repair interventions should be included in conflict management training for managers, also.

When a workplace conflict is characterized by a grudge, it is assumed to be better to take actions that promote forgiveness, repair and restoration than do nothing in the hope that the conflict will resolve itself. A variety of relationship repair interventions noted in this paper offer approaches for addressing such conflict. Based on a study of conflict, Ayoko (2016) recommended that apology and forgiveness be included in conflict management training for managers. As noted in the further research section below, though, there remains some uncertainty as to what the best forms of action should be.

Proposition 18: Conflict management competencies for change agents of whatever stripe should include being able to implement the various relationship repair interventions noted here.

Second, conflicts in general and grudge-based relationships in particular carry potential legal and ethical risks. For example, a conflict *qua* transgression between two people at the workplace may basically be a private matter between them. This might be the case between co-workers who were in an affair that ended badly. More organizationally relevant instances of interpersonal transgressions would be sexual harassment, bullying or intimidation. Transgressions like these may well be subject to legal procedure and remedy, and while helping the victim come to some resolution in these matters can be important, it would be unethical to use forgiveness or related relationship repair interventions as a way to dodge legal accountabilities.

Proposition 18: Forgiveness interventions for victims of certain legally proscribed transgressions should be offered through a private counseling relationship at the discretion of the employee/victim, and not conducted by the organization as a substitute for investigating and acting on claims of harassment or other sources of transgression.

Future Research Needs

The research literature of forgiveness, while extensive, often was not done in the context of workplace relationships; the other forms of relationship repair practices have an even more limited research base. All together, these different approaches to relationship repair have not been well integrated into a more complete theoretical or applied framework (Kim, Dirks, and Cooper, 2009). Several research needs in this field are pressing.

First, more descriptive studies are needed that describe the formation and nature of injury, transgressions and grudges in workplace relationships. How often do workplace conflicts evolve into hard-edged grudges? How long do they persist and/or do they naturally resolve after some time? Studies about grudges between people based on group membership and identity (say, long-standing animosity between Sales and Manufacturing) would be helpful in understanding how such grudges are passed along as part of socialization processes and maintained through inter-group relations.

Second, the two reigning forgiveness interventions models derive from interpersonal counseling contexts. The question becomes, thus: How well do either of these approaches apply to workplace conflicts, either between individuals or between people in groups? The dose-response function observed in therapeutic treatment programs (recommended for a minimum six hours) might be too excessive for workplace interventions, though. Can the prescriptive treatment duration of forgiveness programs be shortened for workplace conflicts? Are full interventions needed or should managers be skilled in doing this one-on-one?

Third, what should a workplace-based relationship repair intervention program be? Can the existing array of different approaches noted here, along with any other innovations, be integrated into a more uniform single approach? Of if not, if the approaches warrant their own distinctive approaches, how does one decide which approaches to use when? The dynamics of grudges and relationship repair as applied to intergroup conflict in the workplace seems to be scarcely examined and in need of further study. What is suggested would be a contingency approach to selecting and applying different kinds of relationship repair techniques. Such an approach has been hinted at by Dirks, Lweicki and Azheer (2008) and by Ren and Gray (2009).

Fourth, is it important to distinguish between repair and restoration? Dirks, Lewicki and Azheer (2008) argue that it is, and that a repaired relationship is probably more fragile and susceptible to future transgressions than a restored relationship. Along these lines, can any of these methods fully restore a relationship to its pre-transgression level? How critical is it to do so? Is time really the final healer of all wounds? To what extent can these methods shorten that cycle?

Summary

At times, things can happen in a relationship between two or more people that carries such hurt and injury that that relationship is transformed into one of anger, hatred and vendetta. The victim's heart is so offended and hardened that a grudge is formed and ill-will of the deepest kind is directed at the perpetrator. Obviously, the functioning of a relationship becomes dysfunctional and can even collapse. This condition can exist both interpersonally as well as between members of groups. Work organizations cannot long operate optimally to the extent that important relationships are so damaged and compromised. When this is the case, finding ways to repair relationships becomes a vital concern, yet it is very unlikely if not impossible that such repair will occur naturally.

A number of studies have examined and characterized the process of grudges and forgiveness, and the kinds of hurts and transgressions that can occur have been catalogued. Four different kinds of relationship repair interventions have been reviewed here: apology, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restorative justice. Several implications for practice have been drawn from this literature, but what remains is a set of important questions needing to be addressed by researchers in the future. Finding ways to repair and restore damaged working relationships is an important direction for conflict management studies and practices. The promise – concepts and techniques for dealing with the most emotionally embittered kinds of organizational conflict– should well justify the effort.

Endnotes

1. Reina and Reina (2004) presented their prescriptive seven-step model for healing betrayal; it seems to be a compressed version of the Enright model of forgiveness (discussed in a later section of this paper). Butler and Mullis (2001) noted how forgiveness can be a useful method for moderating workplace conflict: when “resentment or other negative feelings between coworkers must be laid to rest to maintain or improve job performance, forgiveness may be especially useful strategy to employ” (p 269). Kurzynski (1998) argued that forgiveness can be an “extremely efficacious” method for human resource management to handle conflict. Cloke (1993) positioned forgiveness as a possible ingredient to effective mediation. The most recent source that comes close to addressing forgiveness (although that term is not used) is by Tjosvold, Wong, and Chen (2014).
2. The literature on this domain in more mainline management sources traces back to the late 1990s when initial studies focused on aggression, revenge, and anger (Allred, 1999; Bies and Tripp, 1996; Fitness, 2000; Geddes and Callister, 2007). About the same time, a literature on justice policies and procedures, apologies and trust-building emerged (Goodstein and Aquino, 2010; Kramer, 1999; Lewicki, McAllister and Bies, 1998). Specific attention to the practice of forgiveness applied specifically to organizational context of work relationships have tended to be more recent (see Bies, Barclay, Tripp and Aquino, 2015, for a review).
3. In my first corporate job as Director of Training, while visiting the local phone company office to see if they had any phone training resources, they asked if my organization would consider a new phone service of some kind. Thinking I was being helpful, I referred them to the person who handled that. By the time I returned to my office, he was waiting for me, fuming at my intrusiveness. I don't think he ever forgot that.

References

- Alicke, MD. 2000. "Culpable control and the psychology of blame." *Psychological bulletin*, 126 (4): 556-574.
- Allred, KG. 1999. "Anger and retaliation: toward an understanding of impassioned conflict in organizations." In RJ Bies, RJ Lewicki, and BH Sheppard (eds.). *Research on negotiations in organizations* (vol 7). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Aquino, K, Grover, SL, Goldman, B, and Folger, R. 2003. "When push doesn't come to shove, interpersonal forgiveness in workplace relationships." *Journal of management inquiry*, 12 (3), 209-216.
- Aquino, K, Tripp, TM, and Bies, RJ. 2006. "Getting even, or moving on? Power, procedural justice, and types of the fence as predictors of revenge, forgiveness, reconciliation, and avoidance in organizations." *Journal of applied psychology*, 91 (three), 653-668.
- Ashforth, BE, and F. Mael. 1989. "Social identity theory and the organization." *Academy of management review* 14 (1): 20-39.
- Ayoko, OB. 2016. "Workplace conflict and willingness to cooperate: the importance of apology and forgiveness." *International journal of conflict management*, 27 (2), 172-198.
- Baumeister, RF, J.J. Exline, and K.Sommer. 1998. "The victim role, grudge theory, and two dimensions of forgiveness." In *Dimensions of forgiveness, Psychological research and theological perspectives*, edited by E.L. Worthington. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Bies, RJ, and TM Tripp. 1996. "Revenge in organizations: the good, the bad and the ugly." In *Dysfunctional behavior in organizations*, edited by RW Griffin, A O'Leary, and JM Collins Part B. Stamford, CT: JAI Press.
- Bies, RJ, Barclay, LJ, Tripp, TM, Aquino, K. 2015. "A systems perspective on forgiveness in organizations." *The academy of management annals*, 1-74.
- Bies, RJ, Tripp, TM, and Kramer, RM. 1997. "At the breaking point, cognitive and social dynamics of revenge in organizations." PPS. 18-36. In RA Giacalone and J Greenberg (eds). *Antisocial behavior in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Booth, J, and S. Mann. 2004. "The experience of workplace anger." *Leadership and organization development journal* 26 (4): 250-262.
- Bradfield, M, and K. Aquino. 1999. "The effects of blame attributions and offender likableness on forgiveness and revenge in the workplace." *Journal of management* 25 (5): 607-631.
- Brett, JM. 1984. "Managing organizational conflict." *Professional psychology: research and practice* 15 (5): 664-678.
- Brown, RP, MJA Wohl, and JJ Exline. 2008. "Taking up offenses: second-hard forgiveness and group identification." *Personality and social psychology bulletin* 34 (10): 1406-1419.
- Butler, DS, and F. Mullis. 2001. "Forgiveness: a conflict resolution strategy in the workplace." *Journal of individual psychology*, 57 (3): 259-272.
- Cloke, K. 1993. "Revenge, forgiveness and the magic of mediation." *Mediation quarterly* 11: 67-78.
- Davis, DE, EL Worthington, Jr, JN Hook, and PC Hill. 2013. "Research on religion/spirituality and forgiveness: a meta-analytic review." *Psychology of religion and spirituality* 5 (4): 233-241.
- DeCremer, D. 2006. "Unfair treatment and revenge taking: the roles of collective identification and feelings of disappointment." *Group dynamics: theory, research, and practice*, 10 (3), 220-232.
- DeDreu, CKW, and MJ Gelfand. (eds). 2008. *The psychology of conflict and conflict management in organizations*. NY: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dirks, KT, Lewicki, RJ, and Azheer, A. 2008. "Repairing relationships within and between organizations: building a conceptual foundation." *Academy of management review*, 34 (1), 68-84.
- Domagalski, TA and LA Steelman. 2005. "The impact of work events and disposition of the experience and expression of employee anger." *Organizational analysis* 13 (10): 31-52.
- Enright, RD and CT Coyle. 1998. "Researching the process model of forgiveness within psychological interventions." In *Dimensions of forgiveness, Psychological research and theological perspectives* edited by EL Worthington, Jr. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.

- Enright, RD, S. Freedman, S, and J. Rique. 1998. "The psychology of interpersonal forgiveness." In *Exploring forgiveness*, edited by RD Enright and J North. Madison, WI: University of Madison Press.
- Escher, D. 2013. "How does religion promote forgiveness? Linking beliefs, orientations, and practices." *Journal for the scientific study of religion* 52 (1): 100-119.
- Fehr, R, and MJ Gelfand. 2010. "When apologies work: how matching apology components to victims' self-construals facilitates forgiveness." *Organizational behavior and human decision processes* 113: 37-50.
- Fehr, R, Gelfand, MJ, and Nag, M. 2010. "The road to forgiveness: a meta-analytic synthesis of the situational and dispositional correlates." *Psychological bulletin*, 136 (5), 894-914.
- Fiske, ST. 2008. "Core social motivations, views from the couch, consciousness, classroom, computers, and collectives." In *Handbook of motivation science*, edited by JY Shah and WL Gardner. NY: Guilford Press.
- Fitness, J. 2000. "Anger in the workplace: an emotion script approach to anger episodes between workers and their superiors, coworkers and subordinates." *Journal of organizational behavior* 21: 147-162.
- Fitzgibbons, RP. 1986. "The cognitive and emotive uses of forgiveness in the treatment of anger." *Psychotherapy* 23 (4): 629-633.
- Freedman, S. 1998. "Forgiveness and reconciliation: the importance of understanding how they differ." *Counseling and values* 42 (3), 200-216.
- Geddes, D, and RR Callister. 2007. "Crossing the line(s): a dual threshold model of anger in organizations." *Academy of management review*, 32 (3), 721-746.
- Gibson, DE and RR Callister. 2010. "Anger in organizations: review and integration." *Journal of management* 36 (1): 66-93.
- Goodstein, J and K Aquino. 2010. "And restorative justice for all: redemption, forgiveness and reintegration in organizations." *Journal of organizational behavior*, 31, 624-628
- Horowitz, MJ. 1981. "Self-righteous rage and the attribution of blame." *Archives of general psychiatry* 38: 1233-1238.
- Hornsey, MJ and MJA Wohl. 2013. "We are sorry: intergroup apologies and their tenuous link with intergroup forgiveness." *European review of social psychology* 24 (1): 1-31.
- Jui, CH, Lau, FLY, Tsang, KLC, and Pak, ST. 2011. The impact of post-apology behavioral consistency on victim's forgiveness intention: a study of trust violation among co-workers. *Journal of applied social psychology*, 41 (5), 1214-1236.
- Kidder, DL. 2007. "Restorative justice: not 'rights', but the right way to heal relationships at work." *International Journal of conflict management*, 18 (1), 4-22.
- Kim, PH, Dirks, KT, and Cooper, CD. 2009. "The repair of trust: a bilateral perspective and multilevel conceptualization." *Academy of management review*, 34 (3), 401-422.
- Kramer, RM. 1999. "Trust and distrust in organizations: emerging perspectives, enduring questions." *Annual review of psychology*, 50, 569-598.
- Kurzynski, MJ. 1998. "The virtue of forgiveness as a human resource management strategy." *Journal of business ethics* 17: 77-85.
- Lazare, A. 2004. *On apology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leonard, DJ, WG Moons, DM Mackie, and ER Smith. 2011. "'We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore': anger self-stereotyping and collective action." *Group processes and intergroup relations* 14(1): 99-111.
- Lewicki, RJ, DM McAllister, and RJ Bies. 1998. "Trust and distrusts: new relationships and realities." *Academy of management review*, 23, 438-458.
- Lickel, B, Miller, N, Stenstrom, DM, Denson, TF, and Schmader, T. 2006. "Vicarious retribution: the role of collective blame in intergroup aggression." *Personality and social psychology review*, 10 (4), 372-390.
- Mackie, DM, T Devos, T, and ER Smith. 2000. "Intergroup emotions: explaining offensive action tendencies in and intergroup context." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 9 (4): 602-616.

- Maltby, J, and L. Day. 2004. "Forgiveness and defense style." *The journal of general psychology* 165 (1): 99-109.
- Martens, WHJ. 2013. Complex dynamics of forgiveness: psychological, interpersonal and psychotherapeutic implications. *International forum of psychoanalysis* 22 (2): 82-94.
- McCullough, ME, FD Fincham, and J-A Tsang. 2003. "Forgiveness, forbearance and time: the temporal unfolding of transgression-related interpersonal motivation." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 84 (3): 540-547.
- McCullough, ME, KC Rachal, SJ Sandae, SJ, EL Worthington, Jr, SW Brown, and TL Hight. 1998. "Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships: II. Theoretical elaboration and measurement." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 75 (6): 1586-1603.
- McCullough, ME, Root, LM and Cohen, AD. 2006. Writing about the benefits of an interpersonal transgression facilitates forgiveness. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 74(5), 887-897.
- Okimoto, TG and Wenzel, M. 2014. Bridging diverting perspectives and repairing damaged relationships in the aftermath of workplace transgressions. *Business ethics quarterly*, 24 (3), 443-473.
- Okimoto, TG, Wenzel, M, and Platow, MJ. 2010. Restorative justice: seeking a shared identity in dynamic intragroup contexts. *Research on managing groups and teams*, 13, 205-242.
- Reina, DS, and ML Reina. 2004. "Rebuilding employee trust during change." *Behavioral healthmanagement* 24 (2): 28-30.
- Reina, DS, and ML Reina. 2006. *Trust and betrayal in the workplace, building effective relationships in your organization*. San Francisco: Berrett Koehler. 2nd ed.
- Ren, H. and Gray, B. 2009. "Repairing relationship conflict: how violation types and culture influence the effectiveness of restoration rituals." *Academy of management review*, 34 (1), 105-126.
- Rotella, KN, Richeson, JA, and McAdams, DP. 2015. "Groups search for meaning: redemption on the path to intergroup reconciliation." *Group processes and intergroup relations*, 18 (5), 696-715.
- Scobie, ED and Scobie, GEW. 1998. "Damaging events: the perceived need for forgiveness." *Journal for the theory of social behavior*, 28 (4), 373-401.
- Sells, JN, and TD Hargrave. 1998. Forgiveness: a review of theoretical and empirical literature. *Journal of family therapy* 20: 21-36.
- Seu, IB, and Cameron, L. 2013. "Empathic mutual positioning in conflict transformation and reconciliation." *Peace and conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 19 (3), 266-280.
- Shaver, KG. 1985. *The attribution of blame: causality, responsibility, and blameworthiness*. NY: Springer-Verlag.
- Struthers, CW, Dupuis, R, and Eaton, J. 2005. "Promoting forgiveness among coworkers. Following a workplace transgression: the effects of social motivation training." *Canadian Journal of behavioral science*, 37 (4), 299-308.
- Takada, N, and K Ohbuchi. 2013. "True and hollow forgiveness, forgiveness motives and conflict resolution." *International journal of conflict management* 24 (2): 184-200.
- Tjosvold, D, ASH Wong, and NYF Chen. 2014. "Constructively managing conflicts in organizations." *Annual review of organizational psychology and organizational behavior* 1: 545-568.
- Tomlinson, ED, Dineen, BR, and Lewicki, RJ. 2004. "The road to reconciliation: antecedents, the victim, willingness to reconcile following a broken promise." *Journal of management*, 30 (2), 165-187.
- Thorensen, CE, F Luskin, and AHS Harris. 1998. "Science and forgiveness interventions: reflections and recommendations." In *Dimensions of forgiveness: psychological research and theological perspectives* edited by EL Worthington, Jr. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation.
- Tripp, TM, Bies, RJ, and Aquino, K. 2007. "A vigilante model of justice: revenge, reconciliation, forgiveness and avoidance." *Social justice research*, 20 (1), 10-34.
- Van Tongeren, DR, JL Burnette, E O'Boyle, EL Worthington, Jr, and DR Forsyth. 2013. "A meta-analysis of intergroup forgiveness." *The journal of positive psychology* 9 (1): 81-95.

- Wade, NG, WT Hoyt, JEM Kidwell, and EL Worthington, Jr. 2014. "Efficacy of psychotherapeutic interventions to promote forgiveness: a meta-analysis." *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology* 82 (1): 154-179.
- Wade, NG and EL Worthington, Jr. 2005. "In search of a common core: a content analysis of interventions to promote forgiveness." *Psychotherapy: theory, research, practice, training* 42 (2): 160-177.
- Wenzel, M, Okimoto, TG, Feather, NT, and Platow, MJ. 2008. "Retributive and restorative justice." *Law and human behavior*, 32, 375-389.
- Williams, I, MH Gonzales, S Fernandez, and A Williams. 2014. "Forgiveness aversion: developing a motivation state measure of perceived forgiveness risks." *Motivation and emotion* 38: 378-400.
- Williamson, I, MH Gonzales, S Fernandez, and A Williams. 2014. "Forgiveness aversion Developing a motivational state measure of perceived forgiveness risks." *Motivation and Emotion* 38: 378-400.
- Wohl, MJA, and McGrath, AL. 2007. The perception that time heals all wounds: temporal distance affects willingness to forgive following and interpersonal transgression. *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, 33 (7), 1023-1035.
- Worthington, Jr. EL. 1998. "The pyramid model of forgiveness: some interdisciplinary speculations about unforgiveness and the promotion of forgiveness". In *Dimensions of forgiveness, Psychological research and theological perspectives* edited by EL Worthington, Jr. Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Worthington, Jr, EL, SJ Sandage, and JW Berry. 2000. "Group interventions to promote forgiveness, what researchers and clinicians ought to know." In *Forgiveness, theory, research and Practice* edited by ME McCullough, KI Pargament, and CE Thoresen. NY: Guilford Press.
- Worthington, Jr, EL, and NG Wade. 1999. "The psychology of unforgiveness and forgiveness and implications for clinical practice." *Journal of social and clinical psychology* 18 (4): 385-41.