

Chapter 2

A Systemic Framework for Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Peace: Interconnecting Psychological and Social Processes

Robert F. Massey and Khawla Abu-Baker

Then I realized something. That last thought had brought no sting with it. Closing Sohrab's door, I wondered if that was how forgiveness budded, not with the fanfare of epiphany, but with pain gathering its things, packing up, and slipping away unannounced in the middle of the night.

Khaled Hosseini, *The kite runner* (p. 359).

Forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace pose possibilities for human relations. Only humans engage in malignant aggression (Fromm, 1941/1965; 1973) interpersonally and through socio-political violence (Chiot & Seligman, 2001). These dynamics affect personal well-being; balances and levels of satisfaction in relationships; multigenerational legacies in families, cultures, nations, and geographical regions. The tenacity of altruism and aggression and their intermixture in persons and situations throughout human history connotes that understanding these processes proves complex (Pargament, McCullough, & Thoresen, 2000).

Research on forgiveness is focused mainly on individual self-experiences (Enright, 2001; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Reconciliation refers to interpersonal, dyadic, dynamics (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; Worthington, 2005). Peace connotes accord between larger groups and nations (Christie, 2006). Each process requires preconditions to result in constructive rather than damaging consequences (Armour & Umbreit, 2005; Staub, 2005). Demarcation of these processes as discrete has been questioned (Hill, Exline, & Cohen, 2005; Pargament et al., 2000). Consideration of their interconnecting requires a more integrative, systemic perspective.

A Systems Approach

With systems thinking we can conceptualize the interconnecting of psychological and social processes intertwining self, relationships, groups, and social structures in cooperation, social harm, violations of justice, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace (Christie, 2006; Massey, 2002). A framework for understanding all of these processes, which occur in different dimensions of human development, needs to be

sufficiently comprehensive to encompass the establishment, violation, and restoration of justice on the personal, interpersonal, inter-group, and international levels (Hill, Exline, & Cohen, 2005; Mullet & Girard, 2000).

The systems we live in exert power over personal options and the allocation of resources beyond individual control, yet they arise, continue, and change as humans construct them (Massey, 1985/1986). Systems do not exist independently of human creativity, consent, and compliance. Social structures are not reducible to psychological dynamics, nor do they exist as sociological reifications separable from the persons who are influenced by and co-construct them (Merleau-Ponty, 1942/1963). Accurate analyses and effective interventions require appropriate attention to each dimension (Pargament et al., 2000).

Specifically human capacities make possible each of these dimensions, which are inextricably linked, reciprocally influence and circularly reinforce each other. In this chapter we delineate and inter-relate the processes which provide the scaffolding for a comprehensive systemic framework. When woven together the processes inter-lock in a systemically integrated tapestry clarifying the interconnecting personal and social dynamics of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. A family vignette will illustrate how universally human processes impact daily living in cultural contexts (Sandage & Williamson, 2005).

Illustration¹

Personal, Interpersonal, Familial, and Cultural Processes. Yasmeen, a 31-year-old Druze woman living in Israel, came to therapy 8 months pregnant and suffering from deep depression. She had discovered that her husband, Fadi, age 33, serving in the Israeli military forces, was having an affair with a 24-year-old Druze woman. Fadi had met his girlfriend, Mona, recently when he returned to college.

Yasmeen had close and warm relationships with Fadi's family of origin. She lived on the second floor of a house while his widowed mother lived on the first floor. In Arab villages, since land and money are scarce, males build floors on top of their parents' houses. Like others in the community they live modestly and simply. As an only son Fadi was responsible for taking care of his widowed mother and for visiting all four of his married sisters according to the traditions. Yasmeen had taught herself to pursue a lifestyle similar to a single mother; she did not rely on her husband as do traditional women in her village. Since Fadi was located in a far-away location, she believed that he would respect and love her more if she were able to become independent, playing an opposite role to his mother and sisters. She wanted to impress him with her abilities. For the short run, he was freed from his own household and child-raising responsibilities, but the result for the long run was that he became isolated from the daily life of his family unit. When he relocated closer and moved back to live permanently at home, he felt like an outsider, not as a father and husband.

¹This couple had been in therapy with the second author.

During the week, Yasmeen divided her time between her work as an assistant to a kindergarten teacher, her house, her children, and assisting her mother-in-law with cleaning, preparing food, taking her to the doctor, and including her when she had guests. On weekends, when Fadi arrived home, she tried to let him take care of his extended family matters and not burden him with her own problems, though she really wanted him more fully as a partner and lover. Yasmeen believed that this strategy would let Fadi appreciate her independence and her sensitivity toward protecting his limited time and energy and, as a result of her behavior, love her more.

The result boomeranged. Yasmeen was too fatigued and too lonely. Fadi never knew how skilled she was with conflict management, organizational skills, and rearing children. Fadi felt that Yasmeen did not rely on him while Mona, his mother, and his sisters were consulting with him. Fadi claimed that Yasmeen was mothering him while Mona was sharing ideas, emotions, problems, and friendship with him. Fadi continued in his denial of the extramarital affair to Yasmeen. Her brother, a student at the same college as Fadi, confirmed to Yasmeen that the affair was ongoing. Her brother insisted that he saw them together several times. Yasmeen was sure of this, but Fadi denied this each time she asked him.

Yasmeen asked her brothers for help. They advised her to file for divorce. The four brothers asked Fadi to stop cheating on their sister. He denied the relationship with Mona and claimed that the brother who said he saw them together had lied. The brothers beat up Fadi. Fadi demanded that Yasmeen make a choice between remaining in their marriage or returning to her family of origin. Yasmeen, with great sorrow, decided to cut off her relations with her family of origin. In individual sessions, Fadi agreed to abstain from contacting Mona until Yasmeen would give birth and recover from her depression.

After giving birth, Yasmeen found her cutoff from her family of origin unbearable. In reflecting on what was best for herself and her children, she was sure she loved Fadi deeply. She wanted to do whatever was necessary to reconnect him to herself and their home. She discovered her ability, willingness, and desire to regain intimacy with Fadi. In the months that Fadi stayed home longer, Yasmeen did not have pain from pregnancy, she was able to have sexual relations again, and she believed that intimacy might bring Fadi closer.

In therapy, Yasmeen recalled her childhood with her estranged parents who had not stopped quarrelling since the early days of their marriage. This caused their three married daughters to feel lonely and unprotected in their patriarchal society. Yasmeen came to the conclusion that her future would be worse had she filed for divorce. According to traditions, she would be uprooted from her cherished environment, would not be allowed to take custody of her children, and would be forced to return to her parents living in tension. If she were divorced, her opportunities for re-marriage would be almost nil whereas a divorced or widowed man might remarry a younger, more educated woman.

Yasmeen concluded that forgiveness and reconciliation with Fadi represented the best scenario for herself as a Druze woman and for her four children. Also she found that reconciliation between Fadi and her brothers would work best for her marriage. Yasmeen initiated a traditional ceremony. She took her new baby girl to the house

of her older brother and put the child in his hands, thus asking him metaphorically, “Are you taking care of your daughters?” This courageous act caused the four brothers to feel guilty for not taking their sister’s welfare into account while beating up her husband. They asked a traditional mediator to initiate a conciliation ceremony with their brother-in-law in his house. Her brothers came together with their wives and children and brought many gifts. This meant that they respected Fadi by coming to his home. If he did not welcome them, he would become the guilty one from then on. All parties agreed to open a new page in their relations. This process of reconciliation starting with Yasmeen and then with her siblings left Fadi with feelings of shame and guilt. He resumed individual therapy to crystallize his decision to disconnect his relationship with Mona.

Specifically Human Social-Psychological Capacities Potentiating Harm, Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Peace

Self-Processes

Development of Self and Social Attachments. Self develops in contexts through interpersonal exchanges and personal reflections. Individuals receive attributions, evaluations, and definitions of self (*me’s*) from others in responses and words (Mead, 1964). The *I* of each person actively coordinates the *me’s* into a self-image based on past and present experiences and future anticipations of self with others. Yasmeen sees herself as a wife, mother, and family member. Fadi’s departing from adherence to a perception of being primarily a husband, faithful to Yasmeen, harmed her.

Perceptions of Self and Other Develop Reciprocally. Humans pursue both autonomy/distinctiveness of identity and belonging/homonymy (Angyal, 1965). Individuals yearn for *acceptance* in the forms available. A person who is safe and respected gains awareness of *good me* and perceives others as good (Sullivan, 1953). When harshness, neglect, or abuse occurs, a sense of *I* and *me* can be damaged. *Bad me* emerges in conjunction with a perception of other as bad, unreliable, or hostile. In extreme circumstances, as in sexual abuse and torture, parts of self may be submerged, denied, or split off and remain latent as *not me*, as unacceptable or rejected. In interpersonal harm self is disconfirmed, colluded against through mystifying exchanges (Laing, 1965), or discounted (Schiff et al., 1975). Through cooperation self is affirmed and feels valued (Laing, 1961). In cooperating Yasmeen and Fadi experience validation of self. Cooperation generates trust, nurtures self and identity (Erikson, 1968), and builds social structures based on legacies of fairness and justice (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986; Christie, 2006). Interpersonal harm – Fadi’s infidelity and Yasmeen’s brothers pummeling Fadi – induces physical and psychological stress and social tensions. It undermines creative potentials and contributes to legacies of the misuse of power and of injustice. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace restore cooperation and trust (Makinen & Johnson, 2006). In these processes concepts and feelings about others depend on (1) whether protection against further

harm is enforced, (2) whether harm continues, (3) whether others prove reliable and honorable, and (4) whether offenders, aggressors, and perpetrators are held accountable or turn repentant (Armour & Umbreit, 2005; Staub, 2005).

Self-awareness begins with prototaxic feelings and images (Sullivan, 1953). *Symbolic thinking* and *language* facilitate processing of perceptions and attributions regarding I, me, and others (Mead, 1964). Language may be used parataxically – illogically or with private meanings. Generally people clearly comprehend consensually validated, syntactic communication, i.e., using words with commonly understood connotations and logic. Symbolic thinking and language enable persons (1) to be aware of engaging in interpersonal harm, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace; (2) to remember these experiences; (3) to reflect on choosing to initiate, continue, or cease these activities; and (4) to evaluate the consequences of their occurrence for self and others in contexts. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace are impeded by prototaxic or parataxic communication and facilitated by syntactic symbolic thinking and language.

From birth individuals are *socially motivated* and seek *contact, social recognition, and belonging* through attachments. Positive regard for self emerges from secure *attachments* (Ainsworth, 1982; Bowlby, 1988; Prescott, 1990). Injured self-concepts emerge with insecure anxious, avoidant, or disorganized/disoriented attachments (Davies, 2004; Main & Solomon, 1990). Forgiveness involves affirmation of self and restores good I and good me in supporting the needs for interpersonal security and collaboration (Sullivan, 1953). Reconciliation connotes affirmation of self and other as trustworthy, as available for secure attachment. Negative socialization can generate expectations of social mistreatment and complicate processes of validating self and claiming positive entitlement to interpersonal justice and fairness (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986).

Self-processes facilitate or impede psychological forgiveness. In forgiveness positive thinking and feelings supplant negative ones (Enright, 2001; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Forgiveness results from changing motivations from negative to conciliatory (McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003). In decisional forgiveness a person alters intentions about how to behave toward another, and in emotional forgiveness moves from unforgiving emotions to orienting them positively toward the offender (Worthington, 2005). Yasmeen and Fadi engaged in these processes in transforming cognitions, emotions, and motivations from negative to positive in forgiving.

Self-Objects. Cooperation and trust facilitate construction of comforting and supportive self-objects – internal, affectively laden images of others used to repair or restore a deficient or missing aspect of self (Kohut, 1987). Self-objects formed in contexts of protection and support bolster self-esteem in times of interpersonal harm. Lack of caring parenting hampers development of supportive self-objects. Yasmeen's self-objects stemming from experiencing distress in living with bickering parents exacerbated her feeling lonely and unprotected in her marriage. Yasmeen's deep depression beyond the expected sadness of grieving over the discovery of her husband's affair was compounded by his lack of attention and support as she readied to imminently give birth to a fourth child and by socio-cultural restrictions around

a wife's rights. No parent or relationship partner is perfect. Responses from parents and significant others need to be "good enough" (Winnicott, 1988, p. 114). Exoneration and reconciliation entail understanding the developmental contexts of those who caused harm (Madanes, 1990; McNeel, 1976). Forgiveness and peace imply not acting on *destructive entitlement* (feeling that one is justified in hurting someone in the present because of harm to self in the past) (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986).

Culture, Self, and Social Identity. Family, culture, and society affect self. Growing up in a communal atmosphere promotes a *sociocentric cultural self* oriented to contributing to group harmony (Comas-Díaz, 1996). In cultures emphasizing individualism, efforts toward self-identity and personal success are more expected and recognized, thus fostering an *egocentric cultural self*. Evolving identities emerge within specific contexts and are permeated by consciousness of social dimensions – socioeconomic status, ethnic and racial dynamics, peace, war, terror (Comas-Díaz, Lykes, & Alarcón, 1998). Cultural interpretations and processes modulate harming and healing of self (Sandage & Williamson, 2005). Consistent with their social-cultural contexts, Yasmeen and Fadi, as Arabs and members of the Druze culture and religion living in Israel, have developed more sociocentric selves.

Individuals develop *social* as well as personal *identities* (Turner & Oakes, 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Social identities may be barricaded or bounded (Jowitt, 2001). In *barricaded* or corporate identities a person is classified only in a fixed category (e.g., ethnicity), definitively distinguished from members of other groups. With a *bounded* identity, an individual identifies with a group which partially defines self and allows for complementary, non-exclusive self-descriptions based on belonging to other groups (e.g., family along with religion). In crises and inter-group conflicts, loyalty to a barricaded identity may override the flexibility of a bounded identity and spur rejection, harm, and violence against others even when positive connections occurred previously (e.g., Bosnia, Iraq, Rwanda) (Oberschall, 2001; Prunier, 2001). This compounds obstacles to forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace (Chirot, 2001). Bounded identities allow for affirmation of self, one's own group, and the members of other groups. In Switzerland, supported by national ideologies and leaders, persons with bounded identities around ethnicity, religion, and nationality have lived cooperatively. Prior to Belgian colonization, Hutus and Tutsis lived intertwined economically, politically, and through intermarriage. Only when colonial influences imposed barricaded identities did interethnic violence erupt (Prunier, 2001; Smith, 1998). Development of bounded identities helped overcome barriers in reconciliation processes after the establishment of peace (e.g., France and Germany, Japan and United States).

Lack of social contact may polarize images and emphasize group exclusiveness (Hewstone & Cairns, 2001). Yet inter-group contact may incite aggression. When persons from other groups are viewed (1) favorably, as somewhat typical; (2) as variable; (3) as describable in multiple classifications; and (4) not as members of essentialized categories (members are distinguished by immutable and inheritable characteristics) (McCauley, 2001), the opportunities for forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace are improved. Effective interventions necessitate attention to "an ongoing

dynamic of change, [for] cultural identities are not timeless, essentialized forms of consciousness, but they are in a continuous process of evolution, reformulation, quiescence, and arousal in response to the broader social and political environment in which individual and group transactions are embedded” (Tripp & Young, 2001, pp. 259–260). While personalization through meeting people from other groups may de-categorize individuals, the experiences may not generalize to groups as a whole. A combination of de-categorization (persons are not intrinsically defined by *a* category), re-categorization (perceiving persons as included within more superordinate classes including the groups with whom individuals are more or less familiar and comfortable), and cross-categorization (perceiving that persons from specific groups belong to multiple and varied classifications) blends processes underlying an evolution toward reconciliation and peace. Tanzania (incorporating African clans and lineages, the Chagga having 17 identity groups and the Maasai at least 10 plus Arabic, Indian, German, British, Islamic, and Christian influences), under the leadership of Julius Nyerere, exemplified these principles in a “politics of pluralism. . .[with] an impressive degree of communal comity” (p. 259).

Connecting Self and Other

Self-Transcending Consciousness, Symbolic Thinking, Language. The capacity for self-transcending consciousness (Allport, 1937/1961; Frankl, 1969; Fromm, 1955) enables humans to reflect on self, others, and relationships. Self-transcendence makes possible considering other viewpoints, empathy, conscience, love, and reaching toward spiritual realities. Symbolic thinking and language allow for memories of self-transcending consciousness and for communicating these in perpetrating harm, violence, and war and in seeking forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. Yasmeen and Fadi would not have experienced their dilemmas nor envisioned their resolutions without self-transcending consciousness.

Social Role-Taking, Empathy. Capacity for taking the role of the other emerges as a child experiences the feelings or attitudes of others through role play (Mead, 1964). Since taking the roles and perspectives of others leads to responding in expected ways, this process comprises a cognitive foundation for social living. Community, culture, and constructive inter-group and international relations require mutually shared expectations spawning cooperation. Social role-taking grows concomitantly with the evolution of *empathy* (Selman, 1976). Forgiveness involves positively taking the role of another and exercising empathy (McCullough et al., 2003; Wade & Worthington, 2005). Taking the role of the other without empathy – in seeking understanding of the other as a means to control and manipulate the other as a devalued or denigrated object or as an enemy – results in exploitation, abuse, dehumanization, and torture. Threats to security may impede taking the role of the other. Reconciliation and peace necessitate taking the role of the other with compassion to gain an empathetic understanding of the other’s experiences and to build a relationship based on mutual acknowledgment and reciprocity of good will, trust, and justice (Armour & Umbreit, 2005; Christie, 2006; Enright et al., 1998; Staub, 2005).

Yasmeen took the role of Fadi in devising the strategy of assuming many home responsibilities to free him to attend to the needs of his mother and sisters in the hope that he would rekindle his love for her. Fadi came to therapy because he felt guilty since Yasmeen was pregnant, in pain and deep depression, did not stop crying, and was becoming dysfunctional at home and in her job. Fadi's declared sensitivity to Yasmeen's psychological situation was not typical of Druze men. However, Fadi lacked full empathy and did not take the role of Yasmeen in initiating and continuing a special relationship with Mona. In the end Fadi displayed empathy toward Yasmeen and her brothers in implementing cultural beliefs by respecting customary connections.

Between Processes. Through specifically human capacities, persons interconnect over space and time. Though concepts and language abound for describing individual and interpersonal processes, we generally lack a conceptual framework and language for elucidating the interconnecting of persons in relationships and systems. Buber (1948/1957) highlighted the "realm that exists *between an 'I' and a 'Thou.'*" (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986, p. 33) Natanson (1970) called "what happens *between* selves. . .[in] the experience of self with other selves" (p. 47) sociality. In sociality "the *between* is shared" (p. 54) and encompasses the living, the dead, and the unborn. "The basis of sociality. . .[lies in] the 'subjective interpretation of meaning' . . .The starting point for the entire conception of sociality. . .[flows from the premise] that the response of one person to another presupposes that each partner interprets the other's action as meaningful" (p. 56). Self-transcending consciousness, empathy, and social role-taking make this possible. Throughout life in the dialectical dynamics *between* self and other, persons live in "a structural relational context" (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1965, p. 41) essential to being human. Because of this what happens in the *between* among humans endures if not explicitly in verbalized stories then in the dynamics of invisible loyalties over generations in the family and societal ledgers of justice and trustworthiness (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Psychological, social, and spiritual harm and healing occur in the *between*. Forgiveness and peace extend beyond the dynamics of the persons involved to the relationships they share and the social structures they live in.

Fadi and Yasmeen in conjunction with their families had constructed a social and intimate *between* in their marriage, living arrangement, and network of family responsibilities. Fadi violated the committed *between* of emotional and spiritual connection with Yasmeen by engaging in an affair with Mona. A conciliation ceremony common in their culture restored a constructive *between*. Their estrangement and reconciliation, their recommitment of loyalty to each other, family, and culture structured the relational context and ledger of justice for themselves and their progeny over generations.

Interaction, Interperception, Interexperience. Laing, Phillipson, and Lee (1966) provided language regarding *between* processes. Persons interconnect through interactions, thinking, and feeling. Before, during, and after interactions, perceptions of self and others form. Significant perceptions/attribution regarding self and other are interdependent. When I am interacting, I think of myself in a particular way. I think of the other person in a certain manner. I also think of how the other is viewing me.

The other person is also engaging in these processes: Having a viewpoint on him- or herself, looking at me in some way, and imagining that I am conceiving of her or him from some perspective. Though sounding complicated, these perceptual or cognitive processes – *interperceptions* – occur continuously. The agreement or incongruence between the different levels of interperceptions gives rise to understanding, feeling understood, and being understood or misunderstanding, feeling misunderstood, and being misunderstood. Through *interexperiences* individuals feel more emotionally connected, responsive, and attached with persons with whom they experience relationships than with strangers no matter what the geographical distance.

Yasmeen learned of inappropriate interactions by Fadi with Mona, experienced non-supportive interactions with her parents, and fulfilling interactions with her children and mother-in-law. Interperceptions needed sorting out. Yasmeen reflected on perceptions of self as daughter of estranged parents, committed wife, injured partner, beloved daughter-in-law and sister-in-law, capable woman. She considered perceptions of others as harming husband, sometimes-helpful brothers, emotionally neglectful parents, and appreciative mother-in-law. Yasmeen surmised that Fadi in his infatuation with Mona was perceiving her in ways in which misunderstandings were arising. She was feeling misunderstood and mistreated. The interperceptions, interactions, and interexperiences of Yasmeen's brothers and Fadi changed dramatically from being respectful brothers-in-law to antagonistic and aggressive bothers around the integrity of Yasmeen to reconciling with her perspective and with her husband.

Patterns of interactions, interperceptions, and interexperiences become traditions and standards in social groups. They are frequently *internalized* and *conformed* to with greater or lesser flexibility. When pressured in situations of abuse, racism, sexism, and homophobia, a member of a stigmatized group may internalize shame-based norms of negativity as personal beliefs shaping one's own identity (Harper & Hoopes, 1990). An individual may conform in behavior, but preserve the integrity of a distinct self by not internalizing a social message. Or a disparaged person may act based on a self-affirmation (Billingsley, 1968; Sue & Sue, 2003), bolstered by a social-support system for one's being and way of living. When interpersonal and inter-group cooperation is rooted in respect for traditions and standards compatible with the interperceptions of the participants, the interperceptions are mutually supportive of the integrity, dignity, and needs of those involved, and interexperiences are comfortable. When traditions and standards in interperceptions demean self or other, harm is caused, and interexperiences are distressing. Forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace flow not simply from personal dispositional motivations but also involve relational and situational dynamics based on reciprocity or mismatching of attributions, interperceptions, and interexperiences about forgivingness and forgivability (Hoyt, Fincham, McCullough, Maio, & Davila, 2005).

Belief Systems, Meaning. The cognitive processes of attributions, beliefs, expectations, and meaning in conjunction with emotional and motivational dynamics provide maps for how to evaluate and plan in relation to self, others, and social institutions. Personal belief systems result from perceptions and memory of how to advance personal well-being and satisfying social connections. Interpersonal and

social belief systems are built through shared interperceptions in mutual understandings arrived at through consensus and enforced through socialization and legal procedures. Core beliefs on the individual level parallel group-level world views that constrain or trigger conflicts. Eidelson and Eidelson (2003) identified five dangerous belief domains – superiority, injustice, vulnerability, distrust, and helplessness – which may spur conflict and harm.

Societal belief systems (*ideology*) shape social interactions and personal identities (Erikson, 1968). Leaders of countries following the Geneva Conventions, based on syntactic understandings, interdict inhumane treatment and torture of captured enemies. Renouncing these agreements, when ideologies are defined as oppositional, sanctions harm and violence to persons categorized as prisoners of war or as enemy combatants. Social beliefs stipulate the rules (*norms*) for living in a group (Fadi and Yasmeen are to honor family connections) and how individuals should act in specific situations or relationships (*roles*) (Yasmeen and Fadi as parents caring for their children). For Yasmeen, Fadi, and their families harming, forgiveness, and reconciliation rituals revolve around cultural beliefs, customs, norms, and roles. An individual may internalize norms and roles or not conform for personal or ethical reasons (Merton, 1949/1957). Ideology based on social distinctions and a focus on superiority/inferiority perpetuates interpersonal harm and violence (Staub, 2005). Ideology anchored in embracing inclusiveness fosters bounded rather than barricaded identities, moving beyond solely negative attributions toward members of other groups, the breaking of barriers to interaction, and healing histories of interpersonal harm and violence through forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. Intractable conflicts, as between the Israelis and Palestinians, are buttressed by a clash of narratives based on ideologies embodying perceptions of exclusive legitimacy, histories of victimization, and irreconcilability (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). In forgiveness and reconciliation varying belief systems must be acknowledged (Shriver, 1998). Disregard for German beliefs about social identity and shame after World War I bred a vortex of hostility. This was displaced in the Holocaust and erupted in World War II leaving consequences for forgiveness and reconciliation still needing attention. Denial of historical involvement in oppressive ideologies blocks progress. Children of perpetrators, as in Nazi Germany, shielded from knowledge of their parents' activities, grow up amidst silence about harm done, suffer secret shame and guilt, and feel unforgiven and unreconciled (Bar-On, 1991).

Group belief systems, symbolized by leaders' actions, stimulate reconciliation or harm. In 1865 US President Lincoln acknowledged loss and the need to grieve. He encouraged charity rather than malice as he promoted peace. In 1985 US President Reagan's inclination to visit the Bitburg cemetery, in which Nazi SS soldiers were buried, but not a concentration camp, caused a furor and represented an obstacle to leader-level reconciliation between Germany and the United States. The prevalent US ideology of dividing the world into good and evil, of denying defeat, of judging self-righteously that violence can produce good (in Central America in the 1980 s), and of avoiding grieving clashed with German and Jewish beliefs emanating from abhorrence about the perpetuation of harm as symbolized by Nazi SS soldiers buried in Bitburg (Shriver, 1998). The same belief system (dividing the world into good

and evil groups, not acknowledging loss, and the need to grieve) spawned US interventions in Iraq based on an ideology of suppressing the distress of remembering damage to persons, families, and both nations in Vietnam.

Meaning forms a cognitive and affective bridge interconnecting self, others, and group-level processes. Individuals experience, discover (Frankl, 1969), and construct (Gergen, 1997) meanings as core values. Meaning arises in creativity and by internalizing and conforming to social belief systems. For many, religion offers a prominent belief system for interpreting meaning (Silberman, 2005). Meanings emerge from and affect the interpretations of interpersonal harm, forgiveness (Enright et al., 1998), and peace (Christie, 2006). Meanings congruent with shared interperceptions form a basis for cooperative and satisfying interactions. Meanings identified as incompatible or antithetical lead to alienation or expressed antipathy. Social institutions (legal, educational, religious) serve as the guardians of meanings (Erikson, 1968). They promote either equitable structures fostering forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace or discriminatory and unjust structures underpinning harm and suffering, violence and war. Sharing meanings provides a foundational motivation for cooperation in a group. Imposing and silencing meanings cause harm, frequently in a context of authoritarian, oppressive power and inequitable social structures. Yasmeen and Fadi were imbued with the belief systems of their families and cultures. They discovered and constructed the meanings of their individual and social lives within the frameworks of their personalities and relationships within their contexts. They live in an international region in which meaning systems sometimes clash and lead to harm through aggression and violence (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998).

Reference Groups. Reference groups (families, cultures, religions) provide norms for evaluating the relevance of meanings to a person's self, personal and social identity, and social issues. Reference groups provide communication channels regarding expected standards (Shibutani, 1955). Participants in chosen reference groups experience congruent interperceptions. When interpersonal harm occurs, membership in a reference group may prolong victimization or perpetration or provide a buffer against injury and oppression. Members of reliable and trustworthy reference groups provide encouragement. When families and familiar social institutions are damaged or destroyed, social supports for survival are impaired and new structures are needed. Spiritual connections can bind persons. They either facilitate crossing barriers and chasms in forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace or solidify barricaded identities and histories of harm to justify violations of justice, interpersonal harm, aggression, and violence.

Families, culture, and religion serve as the primary reference groups for Yasmeen and Fadi. They turn to them for membership and for norms. Yasmeen knew, as did Fadi, and did not necessarily have to put into words, though words helped particularly in reconciliation processes and in re-establishing a more satisfying family life, the expectations for each as a member of the family and culture. As Druze people they are Arabs in culture and language and belong to a branch of Muslims developed in the 11th century from Shiite Islam. While respecting religion, which is a daily influence in their lives, they are not strictly religious.

Group-Level Processes

Triangles, Threesomes. Harm, forgiveness, and reconciliation frequently involve more than two people. Triangles exist when two persons remain overly close and another is excluded or withdraws (Kerr & Bowen, 1988). Triangles generate split loyalties (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Threesomes occur when three or more persons relate while respecting the identities and relationship possibilities of each (Guerin, Fogarty, Fay, & Kautto, 1996). Threesomes may be more culturally congruent in communally oriented cultures (Falicov, 1998). In triangling, clear thinking about the needs of each person and the authentic possibilities for comfortable and satisfying relating are lost through collusion and mystification occurring frequently in abuse (Laing, 1965). Forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace require detriangulation and relating appropriately in dyads and threesomes. While acknowledging the unacceptability of harm and abuse, each person ought to take responsibility for healing going forward (Madanes, Keim, & Smelser, 1995).

Fadi was torn between his needs for each woman. He loved Yasmeen for some reasons and Mona for others. Fadi was triangulating with the two women and experienced loyalties to each. This generated conflict interpersonally and in the community. Yasmeen's brothers triangulated with Fadi as one brother communicated with her about her husband's infidelity and as they beat him up. Forgiveness and reconciliation involved detriangulating to relate in respectful compatible twosomes and threesomes. The nations, in Yasmeen's and Fadi's region, are triangulated with split loyalties to other nations. This complicates achieving peace and the families of Yasmeen and Fadi.

Boundaries, Social Distance, In-Groups, Out-Groups. *Boundaries* demarcate accessibility between self and other (Minuchin, 1974). With *clear boundaries* age- and role-appropriate cooperative interactions transpire. *Rigid boundaries* denote exclusion. Intrusions on culturally sanctioned and personally desirable space and time indicate *diffuse boundaries*. As Yasmeen perceived a diffuse boundary between Fadi and Mona, she set up rigid boundaries with him. When Fadi insisted that Yasmeen choose between her marriage and her family, she established rigid boundaries with them. As they reconciled, Yasmeen and Fadi sought clear boundaries as spouses, with Mona excluded, and collaboration with her family. Cultural standards prescribe acceptable types of interpersonal contact – *social distances* (Hall, 1966). For Yasmeen, Fadi, and their families social distances ranged from engaged to estranged to reunited.

On the group level, norms about members' characteristics and values dictate social distance and acceptance or rejection of individuals as belonging to *in-groups* or *out-groups* (Allport, 1954). Belief systems supporting favorable perceptions of an individual or group facilitate clear boundaries, less social distance, in-group status, and greater ease in taking the role of the other (Cairns, Tam, Hewstone, & Niens, 2005; Christie, 2006). In these situations the integrity and dignity of each person with bounded identities are respected; groups are considered as separate because of mutually acceptable reasons. Belief systems about classifying another individual or group unfavorably enjoin rigid or diffuse boundaries and greater social distance,

relegation to an out-group, and increased difficulty in constructively taking the role of the other. With rigid boundaries members of out-groups avoid each other. In situations of aggression and exploitation diffuse boundaries are crossed. This may lead to rigid boundaries. When persons are divided into in-groups and out-groups with barricaded identities, harm and violence may be justified based on the inhumanity of others. This evades reflecting on and taking responsibility for the responses of self and one's own group in fomenting conflict situations and the consequences for all involved. Dehumanization and dichotomization of groups underlie prejudice, exclusion, and violence (Allport, 1954). When personal and social security are threatened, defending without demonizing the other(s) becomes a challenge. Violations of human interconnectedness through interpersonal harm, torture, and killing traumatize persons on both sides, possibly for generations, as they struggle, maybe out of awareness, with unacknowledged guilt and shame begging for voice and reconciliation (Berger & Berger, 2001; Chirot & Seligman, 2001; Krondorfer, 1995). Forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace involve discovering the humanity and dignity of others and inclusion within community.

In India the Untouchables (Dalit), believed to fall below the four castes, were forbidden contact and equal status. Belief systems encoded in law govern boundaries and social distance. In Latin America the humanity of African slaves was acknowledged. They were accorded rights to legal marriage and protections against masters molesting women, thus curtailing some interpersonal harm and violence (van den Berghe, 1967). In North America slaves were regarded as property not entitled to marry and were subject to physical and sexual abuse.

Social-Structural Processes

Specifically human processes enable persons to collectively establish social structures and institutions, to develop and use tools, and to exercise group-level power, all of which facilitate, impede, or constrain interpersonal harm, violence, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. Social harm and violence occur beyond individual control, though individuals participate. Their impacts exceed the scope and responsibility of individuals who are not in decision-making roles and positions. Personal forgiveness and interpersonal reconciliation, while valuable, do not suffice in addressing the social-structural issues in inter-group and international conflicts, violence, and peace processes.

Social Structures. Social structures develop, endure, and are preserved over time and space because of the specifically human capacities for self-transcending consciousness, symbolic thinking, and language. Social structures arise as communal agreements about how to organize to best provide for human needs (Mead, 1964). Structures which served human needs may not do so later. Structures persist beyond their usefulness through adherence to norms, particularly when leaders derive inequitable benefits from them and when technology is used to defend them. Social structures provide parameters for interpersonal harm, violence, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace (Christie, 2006).

Yasmeen's and Fadi's lives are embedded in social structures. Cultural and religious gender norms govern their roles, customs, and relationships. Violations of justice and their redress are circumscribed by social structures (Armour & Umbreit, 2005; Hill et al., 2005). Intrapsychic forgiveness by Yasmeen would not end Fadi's assignation with Mona, and the socio-cultural violation of marital and family integrity would persist. Were they to divorce, Yasmeen loses her rights to raise her children and to maintain contact with Fadi's mother and family who cherish her. Divorce in this context would generate further violations of parental justice in excluding Yasmeen from the care of her children and would preclude marital reconciliation.

The couple are employed in geographically indigenous social structures based on their educational levels. Each occupational social structure imposes some constraints. Fadi, as a Druze man, was required to serve in the Israeli army for 3 years after finishing high school or face imprisonment. He continued to serve for better pay. When stationed far away, he could not return home daily. This left Yasmeen under the custody of the elders, particularly her father-in-law until he passed away a year after her marriage. Serving in the Israeli army creates a chasm between Druze people and other Arabs. It also arouses dissonance for the Druze people who have tended toward isolation as a third cultural grouping in Israel. Men bring in elements of Israeli culture while women act as the keepers of Arab culture. From this cultural perspective, having a girlfriend is thought by some to be an accepted and understood Western behavior while being loyal in marriage and abstaining from infidelity is a religious, Islamic, and Druze norm. Fadi earned a BA last year, a rare accomplishment for a Druze man. Yasmeen's 2 years of training beyond high school for an education certificate is advanced for Druze women, 50% of whom do not finish high school. Yasmeen benefited from the Israeli policies of providing day care for children from 3 months after birth and free kindergarten at 3 years of age.

Fadi and Yasmeen reside in Israel as members of a cultural and religious minority within broader social structures. During the summer of 2006 they were at risk of being injured or killed by airborne armaments launched during the conflict between military forces in Israel and Lebanon.

Threats to attaining social-structural peace in the region overwhelm efforts for psychological forgiveness and interpersonal reconciliation, though these remain valid in their own dimensions. The cleavages fomenting conflict and causing harm in each situation – religion, ethnicity, class, race, region – differ in salience. The multifaceted causes and processes in ethnopolitical conflicts vary by context in the intermingling of psychological, interpersonal, economic, political, and social-structural dynamics (Mays, Bullock, Rosenzweig, & Wessells, 1998). "Structural violence and protracted state-sponsored violence and terrorism" (p. 740) implicate both societal and psychological issues. Resolution requires addressing multiple levels – "human needs such as identity, security, and recognition" in conjunction with "change. . . by the society at large. . . [involving] territory, power, and wealth" (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 767) in securing peace and clearing a path for effective reconciliation and forgiveness.

Tools and Technology. The extension of social structures over space and time requires tools and technology (La Barre, 1968; Massey, 2006). Abstract and symbolic thinking, represented in language, imagination, prehensile hands, and refashioning of material and conceptual resources, makes tools possible. Tools can be utilized for biophilous and necrophilous purposes (Fromm, 1964). Biophilous uses of tools and technology affirm selves, heal injuries, support respectful and caring relationships, empower groups to provide for members' needs, and promote constructive intergenerational and inter-group legacies. Necrophilous uses of tools and technology injure selves, disrupt relationships, damage and destroy the productions and legacies of individuals, families, and groups, small and large, as well as inter-group and international connections. Uses of tools, guided by constructively taking the roles of others and empathy, nurture community, forgiveness, and reconciliation and further peace. Using tools for necrophilous purposes without empathy leads to injury and annihilation, war, ethnic cleansing, and genocide (Chirot & Seligman, 2001). Individuals and leaders of groups who constructively take the roles of others and exercise empathy do not proliferate and use nuclear weapons, do not launch intercontinental ballistic missiles, do not engage in suicide bombings, do not place profits above health and environmental safety, do not intentionally fly planes into occupied buildings, do not sanction torture, and do not authorize preemptive warfare. The necrophilous uses of tools and technology severely challenge the possibilities for forgiveness and reconciliation and highlight the dominance of social structures in undermining peace.

The tools and technology in Yasmeen's and Fadi's occupations contrast. At Yasmeen's school the objective is to nurture children's talents, personalities, and social relations through biophilous tools and technology. This helps children learn, receive positive attributions confirming their selves, gain membership in the in-group and reference group of the better educated, and acquire beneficial resources. In the military, Fadi, his fellow soldiers, and commanders have access to and control over tools and technology which can be utilized necrophilously to heighten social conflicts and disrupt opportunities for reconciliation and peace.

Power. Uses of power bridge individual, group, and social-structural dynamics. Power can be exercised as power to, power with, and power over (Fromm, 1947, 1965). Power exists on a continuum – from power to be, affirmation, assertion, aggression, to violence (May, 1972). Negative forms of power do not emerge when constructive types prove effective. Individual power affects mostly personal development and immediate relationships. Group power moderates the range of options and the parameters of action available to individuals. Social-structural powers (legal, economic, educational institutions) significantly control distribution of and access to resources, including tools and technology, which advance or restrict individual and group levels of power. Social structures operating to enhance the powers to be, become, and affirm support a full range of human need fulfillment (Massey, 1987). Oppressive social structures constrict need satisfaction and keep people insecure and dependent on the dictates and whims of the more advantaged power holders. When persons are empowered and their groups respected, cooperation predominates. This

either minimizes needs for forgiveness or enables engaging in forgiveness and reconciliation when violations of justice from human vulnerabilities and fallibility arise. When persons and groups are disempowered by restrictive, authoritarian, and oppressive social structures, violations of justice and instances of harm and violence are more likely not acknowledged and redressed, so that forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace are blocked (Armour & Umbreit, 2005; Staub, 2005).

When Yasmeen did not experience the power of affirmation from Fadi, she utilized the power of assertion to organize herself more independently and to engage in metaphorical action. She enlisted her brothers in implementing the powers to affirm and to be in relation to her newborn and her developing family. The affair elicited the powers of aggression and violence by her brothers. Fadi also activated the power of assertion with some aggression by demanding that Yasmeen cut off relations with her family before he was willing to initiate the power of affirmation for her as his wife.

The families of Yasmeen and Fadi belong to a culture and religion spread beyond the geographical boundaries of their nation of citizenship to neighboring countries. They live in the midst of warring societies seeking to exert power to control resources essential for survival and the mobilization of tools and technology – water and oil (Parfit, 2005; Specter, 2006) – and to assert the legitimacy of belief systems and boundaries based on the values and social structures of cultures and religions (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). The concerns implicated in these struggles draw in nations from around the world in international debates, disagreements, conflicting policies, and aggressive actions. Achieving peace requires social-structural changes to construct a secured and lasting context for psychological forgiveness and interpersonal reconciliation.

Societal leaders in government, the military, the media, and in large and multinational corporations – whether elected, appointed, or imposed – wield power and technology in ways which inflict interpersonal and inter-group harm or further peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness. The impacts of social-level leadership are not easily overcome by individual or small-group efforts, and the consequences exceed the parameters of forgiveness and reconciliation. Historical and contemporary examples abound of leaders initiating aggression, violence, wars, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. These disrupt personal lives, relationships, families, communities, societies, and international relations. They diminish efforts for forgiveness and reconciliation in the wake of destruction and harm. In contrast, leaders can stimulate and structure peace. If peace is to prevail when violence occurs at the societal level – so that reconciliation and forgiveness become meaningfully and securely functional – leaders need to (a) interdict violence, (b) take responsibility and apologize for aggression, (c) provide for processes and structures of reconciliation, (d) foster re-establishing bonds of social attachments, (e) advocate and enforce laws prohibiting interpersonal, inter-group, societal, and international harm, (f) engage collaboratively in fulfilling superordinate goals benefiting formerly conflicting parties, and (g) allocate power, technology, and economic resources to equitably benefit all persons and groups involved in trustworthy ways (Chirot & Seligman, 2001; Sherif, 1958). Specific issues modulate these processes in varying countries. Discussions

include Argentina (Sluzki, 1990), Chile (Centeno, 2001), Iran (Kinzer, 2003), Iraq (Galbraith, 2006), Japan (Onishi, 2005), South Africa (Tutu; 1999). International persuasion based on shared standards of justice and consensus about protection of human rights becomes necessary in extreme situations. International pressures prodded progress toward diminishing harm and promoting reconciliation in Northern Ireland (Gallagher, 2001) and South Africa (Hamber, 2001). The meanings and processes of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace vary according to the harm committed by perpetrators and bystanders or experienced by victims/survivors in each situation of harm, whether in inter-group conflicts, documented exterminations (Chirot & Seligman, 2001), or in disappearances (Sluzki, 1990).

Conclusion

Definitions and approaches to forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace vary. The *perspective presented here* is focused on the *capacities enabling humans to engage in interpersonal harm, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace* which underlie varying viewpoints. Both *personal experiencing* and the *social contexts and structures* affect the likelihood and continuation of interpersonal harm and forgiveness, social conflicts and peace. A systems perspective embraces the specifically human interconnecting psychological and social processes required for conceptualizing, in an integrative perspective, the dynamics in interpersonal and inter-group harm, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. An integrative perspective encompasses explaining how self, relationships, groups, and social structures are interconnected in systems of care and violence (Cairns et al., 2005; Christie, 2006; Staub, 2005). In transforming social structures “conflict resolution must go beyond changes in perceptions, attitudes, and qualities to the creation of enduring structures that institutionalize equality, autonomy, and respect among different groups” (Fisher, 1994, p. 61 in Hewstone & Cairns, 2001, p. 335). While psychosocial projects can serve as effective interventions on the personal and interpersonal dimensions, the resolution of conflicts and the securing of peace as contexts for authentic and lasting forgiveness and reconciliation require social-structural changes and consistency (Christie, 2006).

When will they/we ever learn? Humans continue to roil in the cauldron of harm and violence, yet search for the haven of security, esteem, and peace. Seeking dominance turns to aggression. Prophets foresee that the lion will lie down with the lamb while the blind will see. Yet those with physical sight only sometimes recognize the common humanity of self and other – as both vulnerable and worthy – fearing harm and not fully trusting nor entirely believing in the wealth of the interconnecting made possible by the specifically human processes of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. Assessing and intervening in situations and systems of interpersonal and inter-group harm and violence in preparation for processes of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace involve (1) evaluating the extent to which self and other are respected or not; (2) whether those involved are constructively

taking the roles of the others and (3) practicing empathy or not; (4) whether their interactions, interperceptions, and interexperiences are supporting understanding or leading to misunderstanding; (5) whether their reference groups allow for mutual membership in in-groups with bounded identities or exclude the others in out-groups with barricaded identities; (6) whether their boundaries are appropriate; (7) whether their belief systems are founded on justice for all humans or on dichotomizing persons and groups as worthy or despicable; (8) whether all can join with consensual social distances or some are rejected; (9) whether tools and technology are used biophilously to benefit or necrophilously to harm; (10) whether leaders advance allocation of power, technology, and economic resources for constructive and peaceful purposes or utilize them with destructive and inequitable consequences; and (11) whether power in social structures and legacies of justice nurture the human needs of all or generate further harm and violence imperiling forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.

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