Chapter 15
Culture, Forgiveness, and Health

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Our current understanding of forgiveness has been largely decontextualized, meaning that it has been considered within a culture-free context for much of its short life. This is unfortunate given the undeniable role that culture plays in almost every aspect of human behavior and dynamics. The examination of culture can be considered from multiple perspectives, both national and international, the latter of which is the focus of this chapter. Despite the proliferation of forgiveness research over the past two decades, comparatively little is understood about forgiveness from non-US-based perspectives.

There are at least two means of considering the international forgiveness literature. First, there is research conducted solely in countries outside of the US, and this type comprises the majority of the literature. Several articles and chapters have been written about various forms of forgiveness in a few countries, primarily European and Asian countries. Second, we can consider the cross-cultural forgiveness literature, comparing forgiveness constructs in two or more countries. There are few multinational studies, including those comparing forgiveness in the US with other countries. For ease of reading, the term "international" will be used to include both types of research, unless specified. When discussing international research, the overlap between the country under investigation and the myriad of cultures within the country is concerning. Culture can be considered from multiple frames, (Carter & Qureshi, 1995) but for the sake of this chapter we will equate country with culture, noting strongly that the authors understand the perils of equating the two.

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The Necessity of Including Culture into Forgiveness Work

Forgiveness as a process is contextually-based, though it is often discussed from a decontextualized perspective. While some components of forgiveness show consistency when compared from an international perspective, further research is necessary to discern their universality. For example, McCullough and Witvliet (2002) found apology and intentionality as consistent predictors of forgiveness across cultures. Related, Takaku, Weiner, and Ohnuchi (2001) compared Japanese and US university students on apology acceptance and found similarities in both countries. Namely, when people increased their perspective-taking by considering their own past misdeeds, it increased the likelihood that they would forgive another person. Despite some consistencies, some differences have also been established across various countries. For example, the two Big Five personality traits, Neuroticism and Agreeableness, are often considered predictors of forgiveness in Western cultures (e.g., McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001), but these may not be valid in non-Western cultures. Fu, Watkins, and Hui (2004) found that personality constructs related to forgiveness, such as self-esteem and anxiety, often found in individualistic societies were not significantly related to forgiveness in China, whereas other factors like harmony and relationship orientation were considered more influential.

Since Sandage and Williamson's (2005) well-constructed introduction to the field, there has been a significant increase in the international forgiveness literature. In order to make the chapter manageable, it is delineated into sections consistent with the type of forgiveness often found in the international literature, namely lay conceptualizations of forgiveness, dispositional forgivingness, interpersonal forgiveness, and group forgiveness. International literature on self-forgiveness and other types of forgiveness could not be found. In order to offer theoretical context to this chapter we will begin with an overview of national values, followed by research in the four forgiveness areas.

National Values Overview

National values reflect what a country typically considers noble and attractive (Schwartz, 1997) and are reflected in shared norms, practices, and rituals (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007). By extension, theories developed from studies of national values have been used to predict international experiences and behaviors at the individual, group, and organizational levels (see Hofstede, 2001). The role of national values holds particular promise for international forgiveness research. Though beyond the scope of this chapter much work has been accomplished examining national cultural values such as (a) Individualism-Collectivism (a worldview addressing the relationship between the individual and the group or society), (b) Power Distance (relationships to authority and legitimate power), (c) Uncertainty avoidance, the

degree to a society tolerates risk and feels uncomfortable or comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty), (d) Masculinity/Femininity (related to traits such as determination, relationships, and flexibility), (e) Long-term versus Short-Term Orientation, (whether individuals are primarily focused on the past, present, or future), and (f) Indulgence versus restraint, (the degree to which people are allowed self-expression, life control, and pursuit of leisure). The relationship of national values to forgiveness has only recently received acknowledgement, though readers are encouraged to delve into the national values literature to better appreciate the foundations from which they are conceptualized and understood.

National Values and Forgiveness

The most frequent cultural value included in the international forgiveness literature is individualism-collectivism. While easy to conceptualize, forgiveness is actually a complex cultural dynamic. Countries and cultures stressing collectivistic worldviews conceptualize identity in a relational and interdependent manner. Accordingly, forgiveness is viewed as a social obligation in order to maintain social harmony, and is closely tied to, although conceptually distinct from, reconciliation. Reconciliation is tied to behaviors often associated with forgiveness, but the two can be distinct. Fundamental questions include how culture influences the two and what cultural components may influence the alignment of the two more closely than other cultures? Other community members may be involved with the process since personal boundaries are more fluid; thus in collectivistic cultures (e.g., Hmong; Sandage, Hill, & Vang, 2003), community rituals may be part of the forgiveness process.

Cross-cultural studies on forgiveness are relatively scarce and increasingly complex as we consider types of intrapersonal forgiveness (decisional vs. emotional), types of general forgiveness (e.g., group forgiveness), and cultural values (e.g., individualism and collectivism). The following sections will present a review of the current English language international forgiveness literature. National values, largely individualism-colllectivism, will be contextualized within conceptualizations of forgiveness, forgivingness, interpersonal forgiveness, and intergroup forgiveness.

Conceptualizations of Forgiveness

Conceptualizations of forgiveness refer to how forgiveness is defined and the processes involved, and a literature has developed assessing lay conceptualizations of forgiveness. There is inconsistency between lay individuals and professionals regarding conceptualizations of forgiveness, and these are influenced by culture. Among professionals in individualistic cultures forgiveness and reconciliation are

generally considered distinct categories with different processes. However, Friesen and Fletcher (2007) found that almost 70 % of US college students believed that reconciliation was a necessary component of forgiveness. It is likely that there are a range of processes that influence forgiveness in different cultures, so it is important to also gain an understanding of lay conceptualizations of forgiveness. However, while important to understand how lay individuals understand forgiveness it should not dramatically influence the scientific definition or process of forgiveness, as misconceptions abound about psychological processes.

International studies on lay conceptualizations of forgiveness are scarce, but the current evidence points to some key inconsistencies in the way people of different national origin and culture consider it. To illustrate, there is growing evidence that collectivistic cultures view forgiveness interpersonally, linking it with group harmony and reconciliation (e.g., Hook, Worthington, Utsey, Davis, & Burnett, 2012). Kadiangandu, Gauché, Vinsommeau, and Mullet (2007) compared French and Congolese samples, the latter considered collectivistic. The authors tested the hypothesis that individualistic and collectivistic cultures would differ in forgiveness conceptualizations because collective cultures would consider forgiveness as an interpersonal construct instead of an individualistic, intrapersonal construct. Differences occurred between the countries, including the Congolese view that forgiveness could be extended beyond the dyadic relationship to include unknown individuals, groups, and the deceased. The Congolese were also more positive about forgiveness and more willing to forgive in general than the French, leading the researchers to conclude that forgiveness may be more characteristic of collectivistic than individualistic cultures. They concluded that forgiveness opportunities may be more abundant in collectivistic cultures due to closer and broader relationships found in collectivistic cultures.

Similar results were found in a comparison of Latin American and French participants, (Bagnulo, Muňoz-Sastre, & Mullet, 2009). Finally, using a sample of US individualist and collectivist participants, Hook et al. (2012) demonstrated that an interpersonal perspective of forgiveness can reap benefits, especially if one continues the relationship with the transgressor. In sum, there is a small but growing literature examining the effects of beliefs about forgiveness on relationship and societal enhancement, as well as cross-cultural processes that offer multiple worldview perspectives on forgiveness. Overall, initial evidence indicates that conceptualizations of forgiveness are not consistent internationally and culture strongly influences views of the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation.

Forgivingness

Forgivingness (or willingness to forgive, or dispositional forgiveness), has been a topic of investigation for approximately a decade, and must be differentiated from forgiveness. Forgivingness is an overall disposition to forgive and can be manifested across different domains and life events (Suwartono, Prawasti, & Mullet,

2007) whereas forgiveness applies to specific circumstances, such as a specific transgression. A variety of US studies have investigated personality traits thought to be associated with forgivingness such as the Big Five personality factors of Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Agreeableness (e.g., Brose, Rye, Lutz-Zois, & Ross, 2005). Other personality variables such as anger, cynicism, and guilt have also been shown to be related to forgivingness (Walker & Gorsuch, 2002).

Few international or cross-cultural studies have been conducted examining forgivingness. In a recent study Idemudia and Mahri (2011) attempted to determine the role of gender, religion, age, and the three-factor personality model on willingness to forgive in a South African sample. Only Extraversion and an education variable were related. Thus, Extraversion appears to have some cross-cultural consistency. Fu, Watkins, and Hui (2004) conducted a personality-based study in China, using four emic group solidarity-based subscales (reflective of Chinese culture) of the Chinese Personality Assessment Inventory (CPAI-2), along with Western concepts of personality. As expected, individual personality constructs such as anxiety and self-esteem were not related to forgivingness whereas relationship orientation, personal harmony, and saving face were significantly correlated (see also Hui & Bond, 2009). In essence, a collectivistic worldview which includes social harmony and group solidarity influenced the way the Chinese view forgiveness more strongly than Western conceptions.

Finally, a dispositional forgiveness study comparing French, individualistic students and Indonesian, collectivistic students confirmed that Indonesian students were more sensitive to social circumstances, report lower resentment scores, and were more willing to forgive in order to maintain social harmony (Suwartono, Prawasti, & Mullet, 2007). Interestingly, the primary difference between the two countries was that Indonesian students showed lower levels of long-term resentment than the French students, perhaps reflecting the idea that individuals in collectivistic cultures may have to give up resentment faster to speed the process of reconciliation when compared with individualistic countries. Related, Kadiangandu, Mullet, and Vinsonneau (2001) found that Congolese participants were less willing to seek revenge than French participants, though in other studies dispositional forgiveness and lasting resentment did not differ among Chinese and French participants (Paz, Neto, & Mullet, 2008).

The role of religion a related to willingness to forgive has received limited but growing international interest, though it should be noted that these studies have not teased out the intersection of religion and other cultural variables. In South Africa, Idemudia and Mahri (2011) examined religious affiliation of Christians versus Muslims as predictors of willingness to forgive. Religious affiliation, defined dichotomously (Christian or Muslim) was not a significant predictor of willingness to forgive in their sample. While research in American samples generally indicated that religiousness, religious involvement, and religious belief predict broad forgivingness (e.g., McCullough & Worthington, 1999), this study painted a different picture. One way of interpreting these contradictions could be the distinction between religious affiliation and religiousness, religious involvement, and/or religious belief; the study in South Africa compared dichotomous groups

based on religious affiliation, whereas American studies have examined religion in a more fluid, continuous variable. Comparatively, the same study that examined the similar Buddhist and Christian conceptualizations of forgiveness in China (Paz, Neto, & Mullet, 2007) found a difference in willingness to forgive between Buddhist and Christian participants, with Buddhist participants significantly less forgiving and more resentful than Christian participants, in addition to other differences found. Finally, Hui, Watkins, Wong, & Sun (2006) compared forgivingness of Christian and non-religious individuals in China, finding that Christians were significantly more willing to forgive than non-Christians.

Each of these studies speaks to the limits of not directly assessing individualism-collectivism, not including other values that may offer a finer understanding of forgivingness, and not including religion as important components of forgivingness. Not directly assessing these within a country offers broad strokes and does not assess the nuances of the constructs.

Interpersonal Forgiveness

Empirical study of interpersonal forgiveness has undergone a substantial increase over the past two decades in the US. Internationally, comparatively little empirical research has been conducted examining forgiveness between individuals in close personal relationships. In perhaps the largest study of this type, Karremans et al. (2011) surveyed participants from three individualist, two collectivist, and one mixed (individualist and collectivist) country to determine the association between relationship closeness (previously found to facilitate forgiveness, see Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002) and interpersonal forgiveness, as well as assessing for trait forgiveness. Karremans et al. (2011) indicated that relationship closeness was related to interpersonal forgiveness across all countries, consistent with an evolutionary functional analysis perspective which states that forgiveness evolved in humans to maintain survival and our reproductive benefits (McCullough, 2008). In the collective countries, the relationship between closeness and forgiveness was weaker than individualist countries, perhaps giving credence to the idea that collective cultures are less likely to distinguish between close and non-close relationships and are more likely to forgive due to cultural norms of maintaining harmony.

Decisional and emotional forgiveness and its relationship to collectivism received support in a Nepalese sample. Watkins et al. (2011) found that collectivism was associated with decisional rather than emotional forgiveness, conciliatory behaviors, and avoidance of revenge motivations. Interestingly, collective individuals have also been shown to display more negative affect (e.g., Huang & Enright, 2000). Chi, Du, and Lam (2011) evaluated decisional and emotional forgiveness for Hong Kong individuals whose partners had extramarital affairs, finding that those with high decisional forgiveness and low emotional forgiveness reported higher life satisfaction, and those high on both types reported less rumination. Because only

these two studies have delineated decisional from emotional forgiveness, there appears to be promise for future researchers.

Interpersonal forgiveness has been examined in connection with religiousness in some international literature. Jose and Alfons (2007) examined the role of religiousness in forgiveness in a sample of Belgian adults. Religiousness significantly predicted broadly defined interpersonal forgiveness; interestingly, age, years in marriage, number of children, and being female were also positively correlated with religiousness, highlighting the intersectionality of multiple aspects of culture and demographics in forgiveness. These findings were consistent with an earlier forgiveness study conducted in a Western European sample of predominantly Catholic participants (Mullet, Barros, Frongia, Usai, & Shafighi, 2003). Together, these findings not only lend evidence to a connection between forgivingness and religiousness across cultures, but also highlight the effects of intersecting aspects of culture in understanding forgiveness across various demographics.

Intergroup Forgiveness

Intergroup conflict has been the topic of social psychological research for decades and there is a large literature examining related constructs such as intergroup hostility, prejudice, and ingroup-outgroup bias (e.g., Noor, Brown, Gonzalez, Manzi, & Lewis, 2008). These studies typically examine negative psychological processes, but there has been increased interest examining the processes that lead from negative to positive outcomes, and forgiveness research has become more prominent at the group level within the context of intergroup conflict, intergroup relations, and reconciliation (Myers, Hewstone, & Cairns, 2009). Much of this work has been accomplished in high conflict areas such as Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Chile, Bosnia and Herzegovenia, and Congo, as well as literature on specific issues such as group apologies and truth commissions (see a forthcoming meta-analysis by Van Tongeren, Burnette, O' Boyle, Worthington, & Forsyth, 2014),

Two fundamental questions are whether one group can forgive another group, and whether one individual can forgive a group. Thoughtful consideration of these questions leads to other questions such as to whom should forgiveness be directed? Is intergroup forgiveness reasonable when another group has or has not asked for forgiveness? Who speaks for the group? (Neto, da Conceição Pinto, & Mullet, 2004). Forgiveness has been traditionally considered to occur between two people directly connected with a transgression. Only recently has intergroup forgiveness been considered a reasonable area of study. Recent research indicates that when considering ethnopolitical conflicts it may be better served to consider forgiveness and reconciliation as closely related (Cairns & Hewstone, 2011).

Intergroup forgiveness differs qualitatively from interpersonal forgiveness in that the former must include a reduction in negative feelings toward a group rather than an individual, even though each member of the group has not harmed the individual (Myers et al., 2009). Early studies of forgiveness in sociopolitical

contexts failed to consider that offenses are committed against groups and not individuals. Genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovenia, for example, were not directed against specific individuals but against ethnic groups, though individuals were certainly perpetrators and victims of acts of violence. Thus, transgressions are collective and forgiveness is collective (for more information interested readers may want to consult Digeser, 2001) in addition to individuals' experiences. A number of national governments have apologized for previous atrocities to a subsection of their populations, such as those in Australia and South Africa, provoking questions of whether these apologies result in group attitudinal and behavioral differences.

A few studies from different geographic regions (e.g., Congo, Timor) have assessed whether individuals believe group forgiveness is possible, and the majority of individuals believe it is possible and societally beneficial (e.g., Kadiangandu & Mullet, 2007; Neto, da Conceição Pinto, & Mullet, 2004). The process of doing so, however, remains quite complex, as illustrated by the difficulties experienced by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa in practically promoting group forgiveness.

Truth and Reconciliation commissions (TRC) have occurred in North, Central, and South America, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Europe (often with different aims such as reconciliation or retributive or restorative justice), but the South Africa (SA) TRC has had perhaps the greatest amount of research associated with it. Chapman (2007) analyzed SA TRC transcripts and found that members of the TRC had difficulty conceptualizing intergroup forgiveness and reconciliation, and instead moved toward individual victim and transgressor relationships. Victims (and their families) were not proactive or receptive to forgiving their perpetrator, and the perpetrators were often reluctant to apologize or express regret. This is consistent with other literature finding that 80 % of sampled human rights victims in SA reported not forgiving their perpetrator, though over half said that they had begun the forgiving process (Allan, Allan, Kaminer, & Stein, 2006). Kaminer, Stein, Mbanga, and Zungu-Dirwayi (2001) found that participants in the SA TRC showed no significant difference in depression, PTSD, and anxiety rates among individuals who gave public, private, or no testimony. In other geographic regions Touze, Silove and Zwi (2005) found that while there were benefits for the majority of TRC participants in East Timor, a minority continued to experience significant distress related to anger, largely due to perceived immunity given to many perpetrators who fled to neighboring countries. In Sierre Leone forgiveness differences were noted based on age, gender, and trauma exposure (Doran, Kalayjian, Toussaint, & DeMucci, 2012).

Schaal, Weierstall, Dusingizemungu, and Elbert (2012) assessed both imprisoned perpetrators and community survivors of the Rwandan genocide. Survivors found positive reconciliation attitudes to act as a protective factor against further psychological issues whereas it was a risk factor for psychological issues for non-killing perpetrators (see also Cardozo, Kaiser, Gotway, & Agani, 1995). It should be noted that due to the exceptionally high number of deaths in Rwanda the TRC process comprised largely of village-based gacaca trials in which coercion and reprisals were common.

Perhaps the region with the largest amount of empirical research on intergroup forgiveness is Northern Ireland. Research has consistently shown higher rates of mental health problems in Northern Ireland than those in surrounding areas (e.g., Myers et al., 2009). Huyse (2005) argued that at the group level active reconciliation is necessary to alleviate mental health concerns rather than just the cessation of violence, and forgiveness is an essential component of reconciliation (Myers et al., 2009).

In one of the earlier studies, McLernon, Cairns, Hewstone, and Smith (2004) found that secondary school Catholic females in Ireland were reluctant to forgive for past perceived hurts. Their finding is consistent with other literature stating that younger individuals are less likely to forgive another group than older individuals, and that engagement in intergroup forgiveness may be more difficult than in interpersonal forgiveness.

Other studies assessing forgiveness in this region have tested the contact hypothesis, with mixed results. Contact was positively associated with interdenominational mixing, outgroup attitudes, empathic perspective-taking, and trust (Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006). However, other results indicated that contact was influential (i.e. reduced hostility) for individuals who did not identify strongly with their religious/cultural group, but increased hostility for those highly committed to their group (Cairns, Tam, Hewstone, & Niens, 2005). Moeschberger, Dixon, Niens, and Cairns (2005) found that intergroup forgiveness may be influenced by factors consistent with those involved with interpersonal forgiveness, namely empathy, other-community contact, rumination, and indirectly via religiousness and trait hope.

In one of the few studies specifically investigating intergroup forgiveness as it relates to mental health, Myers et al. (2009) found that collective guilt (which can motivate relationship repair and group-level forgiveness) mediated the relationship between ethnopolitical conflict and mental health at the group level. Their findings highlight the uniqueness of these group variables from interpersonal forgiveness and guilt. Readers interested in the inclusion of guilt in intergroup research can also consult other authors regarding Northern Ireland (e.g., Huyse, 2005) and Chile (Manzi & González, 2007). In sum, research on individual healing through forgiveness after national traumas is becoming more prominent in the forgiveness literature, and researchers would do well to include culturally-relevant variables that may help explain some unexpected results. Overall, truth commissions cannot substitute for therapeutic interventions for human rights abuse survivors, and forgiveness may be a predictor of reduced psychiatric risk.

Foundations for Future Research

As is evident when reviewing the present literature, much of the research on international forgiveness has relied on or implied Hofstede's individualism-collectivism dimensional construct, as it has become a foundation from which to compare various constructs in different countries. However, its current use in the forgiveness

literature gives rise to some important concerns. First, individualism-collectivism is not assessed directly or is misapplied as a binary, global concept; countries are described as individualistic or collectivistic though in actuality this is a rather arbitrary distinction, as countries lie on a cultural continuum. Perhaps more importantly, future research could focus on the level of an individual's idiocentrism-allocentrism, the degree to which a specific individual holds "individualistic-collectivistic" attitudes (Triandis, 1996). Moving beyond the larger distinction of individualism-collectivism on the national level toward assessing individual differences in values within countries holds great promise for further research and a more nuanced understanding of how national values and individual differences intersect in their relationship with various dimensions of forgiveness.

Including other national value variables could result in richer, more meaningful research results. For example, Triandis (1996) spoke of tight versus loose cultures, which refers to the strength of social norms and the degree to which deviant behavior is accepted (Gelfand, Nishii, & Raver, 2006). It is part of a complex, multilevel system that comprises issues such as distal historical and ecological threats (e.g., territorial conflict, resource scarcity) and psychological issues (e.g., need for structure). Related, Schwartz (1994) developed a hierarchical versus egalitarian dimension, assessing the degree to which social systems ascribe to assigned roles or believe in equal worth and deservingness within its citizenry. These are two ripe examples of national value constructs that have promise to enrich our understanding of forgiveness internationally. By assessing forgiveness based on a multilevel systems approach our insights into forgiveness experiences can become much more refined.

In addition to the examination of national values in forgiveness literature, other theories could help lay the foundation for further expansion of the international forgiveness literature. Ho and Fung (2011) presented an informative article that includes a variety of theories that could be tested internationally, and add a forgiveness process model of their own based on emotion regulation theory. Emotion regulation theory states that individuals regulate their emotional responses following a transgression, and this emotion modulation can cause stress. This process is often highly related to cultural factors, as some cultures are more likely than others to express and suppress their emotions (e.g., Mesquita & Albert, 2007). Ho and Fung (2011) also discussed the role of dialectical thinking culturally as well as causal attribution theory, socially (dis)engaged emotions, and approach and avoidance motivations. This application of well-formed psychological theory to forgiveness processes would be an excellent springboard for expanding this research into the international realm.

Additionally, Noor, Brown, and prentice (2008a) examined intergroup forgiveness within the context of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which states that an individual does not have one "self" but many selves, or social identities, and that these memberships provoke "ingroup" and "outgroup" thinking. Noor et al. (2008a) linked this concept to forgiveness processes by positing that differences in interpersonal and intergroup forgiveness are related to social identity such that the more one identifies with a group, the more the group influences the likelihood of forgiving a member(s) of an outgroup. Noor and colleagues included multiple

models to consider in this light (e.g., Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM); Gaertner et al., 2000; trust models, and competitive victimhood, (Noor et al., 2008a, 2008b). Across multiple cultures and countries they found evidence of the importance of these variables when investigating intergroup forgiveness.

Beyond the models presented here, additional theoretical factors have been presented in the literature and warrant further investigation in future research. For example, intergenerational trauma and collective memories have been put forward as a means to understand the additive continuing hurt found in some cultures, such as that in Northern Ireland and South Africa where generations of hurt and trauma must be considered when assessing forgivingness (Cairns & Roe, 2003). Relatedly, psychological factors such as embitterment and collective guilt may contribute to personal and national healing. This provides yet another lens through which future research can examine forgiveness with a focus on important cultural and historical factors.

International Forgiveness and Health Research Possibilities

Little research has been accomplished integrating international forgiveness research with health. Countries vary in current and historical conflict, and this has undoubtedly taken its toll on health and well-being. As researchers consider multiple ways to better understand forgiveness internationally does the possibility of encouraging forgiveness offer especially important benefits for health for those countries that have turbulent pasts or even present conflictual circumstances. Some research suggests that positive affect and health benefits are strongest for the poorest countries (Pressman, Gallagher, & Lopez, 2013), and questions arise as to whether this might also apply to forgiveness. Other questions include, (1) What is the role of emotion regulation on forgiveness for countries previously engaged in decades long conflict, and how does it relate to health? (2) Are their greater health benefits in regions in which forgiveness and reconciliation closely tied rather than in regions in which they are less connected? (3) Are their greater health benefits for types of forgiveness (e.g., decisional versus emotional) depending on culture and national values? (4) Do qualitative differences exist among cultures with a long history of atrocities versus those more recent? Overall, our knowledge of the relationship of health and forgiveness is in need of significant research when considered internationally, and readers are in a unique opportunity to develop their own research agendas that can hold great promise.

Summary

The forgiveness literature has exploded in the United States, but is clearly still in its infancy from an international perspective. This chapter has offered a glimpse of the international literature stemming from four research angles: conceptualizations

of forgiveness, forgivingness, interpersonal forgiveness, and intergroup forgiveness. Though this literature is growing, it is hindered by a lack of theoretical foundation. The authors recommend that national values be considered more specifically when considering cross-national, and even interpersonal, forgiveness. Other relevant theoretical foundations include emotional regulation, causal attribution, and ingroup identity theories, as well as psychological issues such as intergenerational trauma and collective guilt. Delineating decisional and emotional forgiveness in future research also holds great promise due to the theoretical association between the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness research on the international stage holds great promise and can benefit from an inter-professional perspective. Colleagues in sociology and political science, among others, can offer perspectives in order to gain a robust understanding of the antecedents and processes of forgiveness. Doing so will assist in concentrating important factors relevant to our understanding of forgiveness across culturally diverse individuals and groups.

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