



FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION AS AN
ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY
WITHIN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE INSTRUMENTS
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The socio-cultural and ethnic trauma experienced by victims of human rights violations impact not only post reconstruction activities but also stable governance initiatives as transitional leaders foster national reconciliation in a post conflict environment. Scholars note that demands upon transitional leaders range from macroeconomic stabilization and generation of employment to anti-corruption and sustainability of markets; at the same time, physical and territorial security call for accountability and justice for perpetrators under the rule of law in the aftermath of human rights violations committed during conflict (Oola, 2015; Sammi, 2010; Saunders, 2011). Yet, if forgiveness and reconciliation are not included as a key ingredient, long term peace and stability are uncertainties.

The argument is that an important component for practitioners facilitating transitional justice mechanisms should be forgiveness and reconciliation (Jirsa, 2004; Sammi, 2010;



Tutu, 2000). The reason is that forgiveness, if practiced in combination with mechanisms of transitional justice such as judicial accountability, truth telling, governance, and reparations, carries great potential for building peace (Oola, 2015). In addition, for any organizational leader the inclusion of forgiveness and reconciliation as a relational individual leadership competency is critical as a leadership competency in today's highly competitive environment (Abbasi, Rehman, & Bibi, 2010; Bass & Bass, 2008; Senge, 1990). According to Kymenlaasko (2012), forgiveness is an important leadership competency "because it is a way for individuals to repair damaged workplace relationships, and overcome debilitating thoughts and emotions resulting from interpersonal injury" (p. 432). In essence, forgiveness and reconciliation is a critical competence both for practitioners and organizational leaders executing transitional justice instruments.

The problem is that forgiveness and reconciliation is relatively new and uncharted as an individual leadership competency within the transitional justice and organizational leadership fields (Aquino, Bennett, Kim, Lim, & Shapiro, 2008; Palanski, 2012). The reason is that tenets of forgiveness and reconciliation are controversial and complex within a transitional justice and organizational context (Borris, 2003; Ferch, 2012; Jirsa, 2004; Kymenlaasko, 2012; Palanski, 2012). As a result, the leader's role regarding the long term impact of forgiveness and reconciliation on an organization is empirically untested (Kymenlaasko, 2012; Llewellyn & Philpot, 2014). That said, internal and external organizational conflict



adversely impacts working relationships and team cohesion as well as a constructive organizational climate. Given different leadership styles, organizational leaders with the acumen to model a leadership approach constructively resolves interpersonal discourse through restorative justice processes drives individual, organizational, and social change (Kidder, 2007). Therefore, the author postulates that servant leaders create an organizational climate for social change through forgiveness as well as pathway for reconciliation. In other words, the aim of this article is to provide an introduction of forgiveness and reconciliation as a key ingredient for leaders to resolve and sustain harmony to organizational and global challenges.

There are four significant contributions this paper will provide for the leadership and transitional justice disciplines. First is a definition and conceptual understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation within transitional justice and leadership disciplines. Second is the creation of a body of knowledge that introduces forgiveness and reconciliation as an organizational leadership competence for practitioners within a transitional justice context. Third is the initiation of a dialogue generating new knowledge of the critical themes that world religions play in facilitating forgiveness and reconciliation within peacebuilding activities. The final contribution is to lay a theoretical foundation upon which servant leaders develop the competencies necessary for forgiveness and reconciliation to occur within the peacebuilding organizations.



FORGIVENESS

Definition of Forgiveness

Review of literature revealed that definitions of forgiveness are similar among transitional justice and organizational leadership scholar-practitioners. Transitional justice scholars define forgiveness as a “willingness to abandon one’s right to resentment, negative judgment and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly hurt us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love towards him or her” (Saunders, 2011, p. 122).

Organizational leadership scholars define forgiveness as “a matter of a willed change of heart and the successful result of an active endeavor to replace bad thoughts such as bitterness and anger with compassion and affection” (Petersen, 2009, p. 62). In *Forgiveness: A Sampling of Research Results*, Bullock (2008) define forgiveness as “a process (or the result of a process) that involves a change in emotion and attitude regarding an offender. Most scholars view this as an intentional and voluntary process, driven by a deliberate decision to forgive” (p. 5). According to Yergler (2005), an operational definition of forgiveness “is the act of releasing another from the guilt, shame, or deserved retribution they have merited through their own intentional or unintentional actions directed at another which have resulted in hurt, anger, animosity and relational polarization” (para. 10). In essence, as a victim forgives and reconciles with a perpetrator that inflicted emotional hurt, physical harm, and socio-political injured, the



victim releases the emotional power the perpetrator over the victim.

Forgiveness is a difficult and long term process of deciding to repair not only the emotional tags associated within an abusive organizational climate but also to release the hold of past anger, hostility, and bitterness from workplace interpersonal emotional and psychological injury (Church, 2010). In short, scholars note that forgiveness is an organizational leadership competency for leaders in both private and public learning organizations (Bass & Bass, 2008; Jirsa, 2004; Palanski, 2012; Senge, 1990).

Conceptualization of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an internal process of individual courage that cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually transforms the meaning of the traumatic event as well as promotes the release of rooted transgression by the perpetrator to wipe the slate clean and restore a cooperative relationship (Church, 2010; Doorn, 2008; Hunter, 2007; Simon & Simon, 1990). However, victims are often unable or unwilling to forgive the perpetrator or release the person from the offense. In particular, Stone (2002) states that

learning to practice forgiveness begins with learning how to forgive ourselves—the person we are usually the hardest on; it is only through demonstrating forgiveness towards ourselves that we can teach it to others and begin to create a more forgiving culture. (p. 282)

In fact, Kymenlaasko (2012) argues that an individual



leader's ability to accept responsibility and forgive an individual for their personal failures as well as demonstrate forgiveness by making amends for inadvertent hurtful feelings toward others creates a positive organizational climate. At the same time, Kymenlaasko (2012) notes that an "organizational culture that does not promote forgiveness will engage in negative and destructive politics. Employees will be afraid to speak out, hiding their true feelings" (p. 435). Thus, as leaders display dishonesty, cursing, organizational power politics, and manipulative command and control measures, a toxic organizational climate is created that damages not only internal relationships but also incurs a spillover effect that adversely affects external relationships with stakeholders (Ferch, 2012; Kymenlaasko, 2012).

In a transitional justice context, the seminal work of the *Bone to Pick: Of Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Reparation, and Revenge* presented by Ellis Cose (2004) suggest that non-state actors and leaders of

rogue states are, by definition, beyond civilized constraints. And at times they must be met with something significantly more compelling than an understanding heart. The need for justice, the call for war, the hunger for revenge: all are as old as mankind, and no less enduring. (p. 3)

Needless to say, victims often find it hard to let go, forgive, and move on from experiences associated with a traumatic event. Therefore, scholars question the relevance and utility of forgiveness in the aftermath of gross human rights violations as



well as its role within the Rome Statute that governs the international criminal court (Ferch, 2012; Hazan, 2006; Mobekk, 2005; Tutu, 2000), particularly in the current landscape of global social justice where retributive justice to redress wrongs through the legal justice system is the norm (Ferch, 2012).

In the article, “Is There a Place for Forgiveness in the Justice System?” Worthington (2013) notes that the traditional justice system is cold with little maneuver room for individual and social healing. In addition, Inazu (2009) posits that amnesty is a legal forgiveness concept that exercises the state’s coercive power to pardon the perpetrator from punishment in a criminal act without consent from the victim. He continues the argument that “legal forgiveness satisfies legal justice. It does not and cannot erase the personal debt between the wrongdoer and the victim” (Inazu, 2009, p. 13). Indeed, Worthington (2013) points out that “forgiveness does not affect what the justice system does. Justice is social. Forgiveness is internal” (para. 2). He continues by postulating that practitioners believe there is a place for forgiveness in today’s jurisprudence through a restorative justice process. In other words, scholar-practitioners agree that forgiveness plays a significant role in transforming organizations, restoring relationships, and rebuilding trust between parties in an effort to strengthen organizational performance (Doorn, 2008; Ferch, 2012; Palanski, 2012).

Previously discussed, forgiveness is an anchor within a restorative justice process. The process of forgiveness is



recognizing that “we cannot change the event itself, but we can change the meaning we give to the event” (Borris, 2003, p. 9). Thus, the issue is that victims are often unable or unwilling to let go of the emotional tags associated with the hurt, resentment, bitterness, vengefulness, and hatred toward the perpetrator. Victims can decide to forgive and release the emotional tags. However, the fact is those victims find it very difficult to let go, forgive, and move on from experiences associated with personal grievances such as ethnic cleansing, rape, torture, and beheadings. The reason importance of developing leadership competencies for practitioners in transitional justice organizations is because these experts facilitate and lead victims through the emotional and intellectual process of forgiveness as a means of freeing both parties from the emotional tags connected with the pain, guilt, and bitterness (Armour & Umbreit, 2004; Borris, 2003; Brudholm & Rosoux, 2009; Cose, 2004; Llewellyn & Philpot, 2014; Tutu, 2000). In essence, developing a comprehensive leadership program that strengthens individual leadership attributes and competences such as empathy, emotional intelligence, accountability, humility, and compassion is critical for current and future transitional justice practitioners who intend to lead victims through the forgiveness process in today’s multi-cultural organizational environment.

Recent research showed that forgiveness can bring peace and stability to communities and foster economic development (Oola, 2015). In the context of transitional justice organizations, practitioners who are responsible for implementing individual



and collective forgiveness constructs play a key role in transitioning a society toward peace and security in the aftermath of conflict. For example, Oola (2015) in Uganda surveyed 640 respondents and 68% of those who suffered serious violence or injustice reported having forgiven their perpetrator. Similarly, 86% of all survey respondents agreed that “it is good for victims to practice forgiveness in the aftermath of violence” (Oola, 2015, p. 16). As a result, there is a movement to shift within the transitional justice discipline for retributive justice elements to include components of restorative justice that create opportunities to facilitate the psycho-social healing process through forgiveness and reconciliation (Cashman, 2014; Fehr & Gelfand, 2012; Petersen, 2009; Tutu, 2000).

Complexity of Forgiveness

As previously discussed, research by transitional justice and organizational leadership scholar-practitioners revealed that the complexity of forgiveness derives from a unilateral action by the victim to restore interpersonal relations (Doorn, 2008), but also most scholars believe forgiveness is a social matter governed by institutions (Jirsa, 2004; Saunders, 2011). Therefore, forgiveness supports the organizational culture development as transitional justice scholar-practitioners assist victims to psycho-socially heal from an emotional and physical event rather than to cling to resentment, bitterness, and revenge. On the other hand, scholars note that forgiveness-related constructs forms a bilateral relationship that requires the



victim's willingness to release the emotional attachment to the traumatic event as well as the offender's willingness to acknowledge the harm, sincerely apologize and ask forgiveness, and make restitution (Armour & Umbreit, 2004; Ferch, 2012; Worthington, 2013). The bilateral relationship creates an organizational culture where forgiveness requires individual courage to let go of seeking revenge and bitterness as well as to accept risk-taking in trusting perpetrators will not reengage past wrong doing.

In a highly political and stressful environment organizations experience interpersonal conflict and performance mistakes that impact organizational objectives (Senge, 1990). Thus, the paradox is that when personality conflicts arise between leaders and followers it creates not only disrespect, disloyalty, and organizational tension but also an organizational climate of bitterness, resentment, and anger by followers (Riggio, Chaleff, & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). Empirical evidence suggests that the *Workplace Bullying Institute* assessed abusive conduct within American workplaces and revealed 67% of employees within the United States experience emotional and psychological violence in the workplace (Namie, 2014). According to *Workplace Bullying Institute*, Opperman (2008) equated abusive conduct as bullying that

is usually seen as acts or verbal comments that could "mentally" hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Sometimes, bullying can involve negative physical contact as well. Bullying usually involves repeated



incidents or a pattern of behavior that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a particular person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression. (para. 12)

Thus, as leaders are organizationally abusive through dishonesty, cursing, organizational power politics, and manipulative command and control measures, a toxic organizational climate is created that damages team cohesiveness, collaboration, and innovation (Ferch, 2012; Kymenlaasko, 2012). In fact, Kymenlaasko (2012) posits an “organizational culture that does not promote forgiveness will engage in negative and destructive politics. Employees will be afraid to speak out, hiding their true feelings” (p. 435). As a result, victims are often unable or unwilling to forgive the perpetrator or release the person from the offense.

Scholars argue that forgiveness is attained through individualistic attitudinal decision making, spiritual influences, and cultural traditions in order to restore the relationship and forego the demand of retribution (Armour & Umbreit, 2004; Borris, 2003; Peterson, 2009; Simon & Simon, 1990; Worthington, 2013). For that reason, Borris (2003) argues forgiveness is “a voluntary act in which a person makes a decision, a choice about how he or she will deal with an event concerning the past” (p. 8). According to Peterson (2009), “forgiveness is a matter of a willed change of heart and the successful result of an active endeavor to replace bad thoughts of such bitterness and anger with compassion and affection” (p. 62). As noted, scholars argue that forgiveness is a slow and



difficult internal process of individual courage that cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually transforms the meaning of the traumatic event as well as emotionally relieves the perpetrator to wipe the slate clean and restore a cooperative relationship (Church, 2010; Doorn, 2008; Hunter, 2007; Simon & Simon, 1990).

From this point of view, there is an emotional and psychological component of painful thoughts, feeling, and beliefs toward the offender that are associated with the traumatic event (Borris, 2003). This psycho-social act of forgiveness not only emotionally frees both parties from the guilt and pain produced by the traumatic event but also collectively fosters local and national reconciliation beyond the institutionalized requirements of human rights law (Doorn, 2008; Ferch, 2012; Scott, 2010; Tutu, 2000). These arguments suggest that victims may cognitively and intellectually understand the decision to forgive but are often unable or unwilling to let go of the emotional tags associated with the hurt, resentment, bitterness, vengefulness, and hatred toward the perpetrator. As previously argued, forgiveness is the victim's practice of letting go of the emotional tags associated from traumatic experiences, but it does not mean excusing, overlooking, forgetting, condoning, or trivializing the harm committed by a perpetrator. Research by Borris (2003) reveals part of the forgiveness process is recognizing that "we cannot change the event itself, but we can change the meaning we give to the event" (p. 9).

The outcome of unforgiveness is an organizational culture that creates lower productivity, passive-aggressive behavior,



and low morale throughout the organization (Kymenlaasko, 2012). Conversely, an organizational culture of “forgiveness is an essential element of attaining a more nurturing and fulfilling work climate” (Kymenlaasko, 2012, p. 437). The literature addressed true forgiveness as a gift granted only by the victim to the offender and after the victim has come to terms with the past and emotionally eliminated the desire for revenge (Borris; 2003; Church, 2010; Cose, 2004; Inazu, 2009; Llewellyn & Philpot, 2014). Basically, forgiveness transforms a pathway for transitional justice practitioners to facilitate social and national healing through reconciliation (Brudholm & Rosoux, 2009; Kymenlaasko, 2012; Palanski, 2012). In other words, the preponderance of literature revealed that the complexity of forgiveness is a social interaction among individuals designed to resolve intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts toward organizational and national peaceful coexistence (Ferch, 2012; Hunter, 2007; Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Kymenlaasko, 2012; Palanski, 2012).

RECONCILIATION

Definition of Reconciliation

Comparative to organizational forgiveness there is less reconciliation research within the context of leadership and other fields (Palanski, 2012). The challenge is that, similar to forgiveness research, there is limited empirical research on reconciliation and it is problematic within any context (Palanski, 2012). The reason is that reconciliation is dependent on the willingness and emotional development of the victim.



According to Jirsa (2004), “concepts of resentment and forgiveness are individual and personal in a way that justice (i.e., legal guilt and responsibility) is not” (p. 12).

Nevertheless, analysis of the literature identified common themes in defining reconciliation within an organizational and transitional justice context. For instance, Tripp, Bies, and Aquino (2007) define organizational reconciliation as “an effort by the victim to extend acts of goodwill toward the offender in the hope of restoring the relationship” (p. 22). Similarly, Yarn and Jones (2009) suggest that “reconciliation refers to the establishment of cooperative relations between persons, either individuals or groups, who have been at variance without regard to whether they have had a prior cooperative relationship” (p. 65). According to the “Reconciliation and Transitional Justice: How to Deal with the Past and Build the Future” article by Souto (2009) the United Nations Peace Support Operations define reconciliation as “a social process within which people deal with the past, acknowledge past atrocities and suffering, and at the same time change destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace. It includes a whole society” (p. 3). Daly (2000) posits reconciliation as a means “to defer the right to retribution to the extent that retribution would obstruct peace” (p. 87). Lerche (2007) define reconciliation as a “process of developing a mutual conciliatory accommodation between antagonistic or formerly antagonistic persons or groups. It often refers to a relatively amicable relationship, typically established after a rupture in the relationship



involving one-sided or mutual infliction of extreme injury” (para. 3).

The issue is, as Doorn (2008) argues, that “forgiveness is possible without reconciliation. Reconciliation, however, is not possible without forgiveness” (p. 390). Hence, the trend toward restorative justice involves transitional justice practitioners who develop the relational intelligence to understand the interpersonal dynamics between victim and perpetrator as well as to cultivate an environment that fosters social change through forgiveness and reconciliation after a period of conflict (Cashman, 2014, Kidder, 2007). In essence, the process of forgiveness as a leadership competence is focused on individual healing; whereas, the process of reconciliation centers on restoring the relationship between victim and perpetrator which then makes it possible for social healing as well as governance stabilization and economic reconstruction (Doorn, 2008; Worthington, 2013). In other words, the literature revealed that reconciliation is an important element in fostering and promoting restoration of interpersonal relationships within a toxic organizational climate as well as socio-ethnic groups in a post conflict environment (Doorn, 2008; Souto, 2009).

Conceptualization of Reconciliation

Researchers note that forgiveness and reconciliation is an important relational element in not only leading today’s organizational workplace but also as a central tenet in the execution of transitional justice instruments (Doorn, 2008;



Ferch, 2012; Palanski, 2012). Reconciliation is important in a transitional justice context for organizational, communal, and societal healing from human rights abuses (Lerche, 2007; Souto, 2009; Yarn & Jones, 2009). However, scholars note that the complexity between forgiveness and reconciliation rests within its interdependent relationship (Brudholm & Rosoux, 2009; Doorn, 2008; Ferch, 2012; Llewellyn & Philpot, 2014). For example, the victim may conditionally forgive once the perpetrator is held accountable, acknowledges one's role of wrongdoing, reveals the truth surrounding the traumatic event, and expresses remorse (Hunter, 2007). Nevertheless, forgiveness is an individual heart issue as victims psycho-socially heal from emotional tags associated with and experienced from a human rights abuse event even when perpetrators fails to acknowledge what they have done, show remorse, or are held accountable (Hunter, 2007). Conversely, forgiveness sets the social condition for the process of reconciliation to restore and heal not only interpersonal relationships but also constructively rebalance the political, legal, and economic injustices toward preventing the prospect of renewed conflict (Doorn, 2008). For that reason, Doorn (2008) argues that "forgiveness is possible without reconciliation. Reconciliation, however, is not possible without forgiveness" (p. 390). In other words, the process of forgiveness is focused on individual healing; whereas, the process of reconciliation restores the victim-perpetrator relationship toward sustainable societal healing that makes it possible for governance stabilization and



economic reconstruction (Doorn, 2008; Worthington, 2013).

The decomposition of reconciliation reflected two levels of analysis. First, scholars argue that the conceptualization of reconciliation at the micro-level is not only an individual leadership competency but also an interpersonal endeavor between self and another individual (Doorn, 2008; Ferch, 2012; Jirsa, 2004; Scott, 2010; Simon & Simon, 1990). Specifically, effective leaders with an organizational learning mindset accept the possibility of failure and transform the organizational climate away from emotional resentment, bitterness, and anger to openness, transparency, and trust that overtime enables risks and innovation in organizational decision making and performance outcomes (Kymenlaasko, 2012; Maltby, Wood, Day, Kon, Colley, & Linley, 2008; Palanski, 2012; Peterson, 2009). For reconciliation to take hold, victims, emotionally, must believe that reoccurrence of future traumatic incidents will cease as trust is rebuilt between parties. In a transitional justice context, one could argue that the choices, actions, and decisions of transitional leaders have long term impact on sustainability of peace and security in a post conflict environment.

The macro-level analysis within the conceptualization of reconciliation rests at the organizational, intergroup, communal, national, and international levels with the aim of collectively redressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds committed by abusive leaders (Doorn, 2008; Ferch, 2012; Senge, 1990; Simon & Simon, 1990). Transitional justice scholar-practitioners conceptually posit that reconciliation



contributes to societal healing through restorative justice mechanisms and is more effective in sustaining confidence building than retributive justice models of justice.

Restorative justice models conceptually bring together perpetrators, victims, and communal leaders in order to promote healing and reconciliation in response to human rights violations (Sirleaf, 2013). That said, restorative justice through forgiveness and reconciliation is a form of justice that bridges the system of jurisprudence and restoration of social healing (Armour & Umbreit, 2004; Worthington, 2013). Thus, Llewellyn and Philpot (2014) argue that, “restorative justice and reconciliation are relational concepts of justice” (p. 16). Armour, and Umbreit (2004) state that

restorative justice seeks to elevate the crime victims and community members, hold offenders directly accountable to the people they have violated, and restore the emotional and material losses of victims by providing a range of opportunities for dialogue, negotiation, and problem solving that can lead to a greater sense of community safety, conflict resolution and healing for all involved. (p. 1)

According to Fehr and Gelfand (2012), “restorative justice values can provide a strong foundation for forgiveness climate by emphasizing the importance of bringing all parties into the conflict resolution process” (p. 670). Given the fact that restorative justice plays an integral role in facilitating forgiveness and societal reconciliation, it also creates a therapeutic impact that builds a common narrative toward



national reconciliation in a post conflict environment (Ferch, 2012; Hazan, 2006; Llewellyn & Philpot, 2014). Basically, drawing people, organizations, and nations toward healing requires bold leadership to integrate restorative justice models within the larger social order as political and civil society leaders apply pressure upon judicial actors to employ retributive justice models as a means to sustain peacebuilding frameworks (Ferch, 2012; Llewellyn & Philpot, 2014; Petersen, 2009; Sirleaf. 2013).

FORGIVENESS RELIGIOUS THEMES

There is a growing body of knowledge recognizing the influential role that monotheistic beliefs play in shaping social justice paradigms. Research revealed that forgiveness is thematically intertwined with not only many of the world's religions but also components of organizational leadership and transitional justice instruments (Hunter, 2007; Llewellyn & Philpott, 2014). Scholars postulate that forgiveness and reconciliation within "religions has maintained a central place in the struggle for social justice" (Ngunjiri, 2010, p.762). According to Siddiqi (2013), "justice, law and order are necessary for the maintenance of a social order, but there is also a need for forgiveness to heal the wounds and to restore good relations between the people" (para, 18). That said, forgiveness and reconciliation is a central pillar of restorative justice as victims psycho-socially heal from mass atrocities.

Retributive justice ignores the victims' emotional component in levying punishment against a perpetrator who



committed a human rights violation. However, restorative justice enables psycho-social healing by not only punishing the offender but also facilitating individual forgiveness and communal reconciliation in an effort to reintegrate the offender back into society (Worthington, 2013). According to Fehr and Gelfand (2012), “retributive justice focuses on keeping victims and offenders apart while carrying out punishment via third party; restorative justice focuses on bringing victims, offenders, and community together for the ultimate goal of healing” (p. 669). In other words, restorative justice measures expand retributive justice as a social justice mechanism as victims psycho-socially heal from mass atrocities and other human rights violations.

Forgiveness is a central tenet within restorative justice frameworks and resolution of organizational conflict (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012). Therefore, it is important to distinguish among the different theological connections as forgiveness is mostly articulated within Hindu, Islam, Judaism, and Christian traditions (See Table 1). For instance, atonement is a central tenet in the Hindu tradition and forgiveness is available through not only compassion for the hurt caused by the offender but also universally held as an essence of an individual’s personality (Hunter, 2007). The Islamic tradition believes forgiveness consists of human and God elements as human rights violations are an infliction against God and human relations (Siddiqi, 2013).

Forgiveness in the Judaism tradition requires an act of contrition by the perpetrator toward the victim and the victim



to accept the request for forgiveness followed by prayer and fasting. However, the offender asking for forgiveness and the victim refusing to forgive out of spite or seeks vengeance as a condition of forgiveness restricts spiritual development and relationship with God (Sipe & Fick, 2009). “Christianity developed a body of doctrine about forgiveness based on Jewish ideas, although there are diverse interpretive traditions” (Petersen, 2009, pp. 35-36). As a central component within the Christian tradition, forgiveness comprises a confession of sin, repentance of wrongdoing, and reflection of God’s unconditional and absolute love (Hunter, 2007; Mittelstadt & Sutton, 2010). According to Romans 4:7–8 (New International Version) states “Blessed are those whose inequities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin.” In this situation, the perpetrator acknowledges the act of murder as sin, confesses the sin, and asks for forgiveness not only from the victim but also God. In the Christian faith, Jesus is willing and able to forgive every sin and it is arrogant to think that any of our sins are too great for God to cover. Basically, though our faith is weak, our conscience is sensitive, and our memory haunts us. God’s word declares that sins confessed are sins forgiven. Table 1 illustrates forgiveness within various religious writings.

It is worth noting that Bishop (1968) postulates justice and retribution are centrally grounded within Islam and Judaism belief systems. According to Bishop (1968), “forgiveness was conditional—you are under obligation only if you have been or



know you will be forgiven too. You are under no obligation to forgive those who not forgive you” (p. 5). Yet, victims who demand vengeance and retribution of past wrongdoings are unable not only to emotionally recover from what happened but also to let go and release the emotional tag associated with the pain without a religious belief.

When forgiveness is requested and unilaterally and bilaterally granted, the perpetrators must recognize that they do not deserve it but also cannot demand it. Christian doctrine postulates that although perpetrators cannot demand forgiveness, perpetrators can be confident in receiving forgiveness, because God’s grace is loving and wanting to restore us to himself. Thus, the appeal to forgive a person who committed physical and emotional harms must be for God’s love and mercy, not for God’s justice. Further analysis reflected common themes among religions that to emotionally heal from the bitterness, anger, and resentment of past wrongs within an organization or from a human rights violation, individuals are incapable of psychosocial healing without a spiritual component (Mittelstadt & Sutton, 2010). Therefore, common religious themes show that moral virtues, benevolence, reliance on a leader’s spiritual relationship to address interpersonal and intrapersonal sins, and perpetrator accountability accompany forgiveness. “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay says the Lord ... do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19–21n).



Table 1

Religious Themes of Forgiveness

Religion	Reference	Religious Scriptures	Principles
Hindu	Mahabarata Udyoga Parva Section XXXIII	“There is only one defect in forgiving persons, and not another; that defect is that people take a forgiving person to be weak. That defect, however, should not be taken into consideration, for forgiveness is a great power. Forgiveness is a virtue of the weak, and an ornament of the strong. Forgiveness subdueth (all) in this world; what is there that forgiveness cannot achieve? What can a wicked person do unto him who carrieth the sabre of forgiveness in his hand? Fire falling on a grassless ground is extinguished of itself. And unforgiving individual defileth himself with many enormities. Righteousness is the one highest good; and forgiveness is the one supreme peace; knowledge is one	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Law of Karma holds the perpetrator accountable• Let it go or continue to suffer• Quality of believer• Moral Virtue• Psychologically based• Karma based• Spiritual well being (Hunter, 2007)



		supreme contentment; and benevolence, one sole happiness. Verily, those six qualities should never be forsaken by men, namely, truth, charity, diligence, benevolence, forgiveness and patience”.	
Islam/ Muslim	Sat An-Nur (The Light) 24:22	“Let not those among you who are endowed with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want and those who migrated in the path of God. Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that God should also forgive you. Indeed God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God’s choice to forgive and punish • High societal value • Human basis for relationships (Siddiqi, 2013)
Judaism	2 Chronicles 7: 14	“If my people who call my name and humble themselves, pray seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from haven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal relationship between God and man • Repentance • Genuinely seek forgiveness • Sin has consequences



	2 Samuel 12:14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selich – Offender acknowledge and apologize • Mechilah - restore the relationship • Kapparah - atonement accomplished at Yom Kippurim <p>“nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die”</p>	(Sipe & Fick, 2009)
Christianity	Matthew 6:14-15 Hebrew 10:17-18	<p>“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins”</p> <p>“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more. Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts with intrapersonal request and willingness • Link through Jesus Christ to God’s forgiveness • Granted by God unconditional (Sipe & Fick, 2009)

Organizational bullying, human rights violations, and political violence by leaders is an act of evil toward another person. That said, review of the literature concludes that



forgiveness is an integral ingredient of individual psycho-social healing, facilitates restoration of individual and community healing, and necessitates spiritual strength as societies heal from human rights atrocities in a post conflict environment.

LEADERSHIP

The leadership style of the person in charge of an organization influences not only the culture but also the relational climate of organizations as transitional justice practitioners assist victims to psycho-socially heal from mass atrocities in a post conflict environment. One of the significant challenges is that leaders fail to deal with organizational conflict in a constructive manner. Organizational leadership scholars note a leader

transforms conflict from a force that can be destructive and divisive into one that is healing and connecting. Since we human beings urgently need to make conflict work for us rather than against us, those who can lead through conflict hold the key. (Gerzon, 2006, p. 50)

It is noteworthy that managers and leaders tend to focus on productivity at the expense of the interpersonal dimension in achieving organizational goals and objectives (Bolman & Deal, 2008). On the interpersonal dimension, across the full spectrum of societal and organizational levels conflicts arise when leaders confuse perception with reality (Ferch, 2012; Gerzon, 2006; Tutu, 2000). Research shows organizational leaders view interpersonal conflict through the lens of personal perceptions, values, and beliefs, and conclude they must be true. The



challenge is that leaders interpret a particular situation based on an observation, biased opinion from others, and interpretation of the situation rather than facts and it is difficult to alter that perception (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, Maznevski, Stevens, & Stahl, 2013). Hence, an organizational leader who interprets a situation through one's own lens tends to create a reality based on a belief structure that not only frames the perception but also the response measures.

Another challenge is that one's belief and emotional tags in the interpretation of events seem real, leading to the mistake of concluding one's perceptions are real. Studies show that 92% of organizational conflict is derived from interpersonal misperceptions (Gerzon, 2006). Bass and Bass (2008) postulate that organizational dysfunction, organizational bullying, and societal conflict are created when leaders react to events based on perceptions. As a result, certain characteristic judgments and beliefs are assigned that influence the leader's mindset as well as decision making toward persons involved in an organizational conflict. Nevertheless, Bolman and Deal (2008) and Gerzon (2006) postulate that, in a multicultural environment, the effectiveness of leaders who mediate ethnic and socio-conflict within transitional justice organizations is determined by clarifying intentions and avoiding perceptions between parties.

Leadership scholars argue that misperceptions created from a lack of reflective dialogue, understanding, listening, and empathy between parties result in organizational conflict (Ferch, 2012; Gerzon, 2006). Therefore, a leader who creates an organizational climate that restores the balance of



relationships away from perception management toward forgiveness “can lead offenders to interpret conflict episodes as events that necessitate reconciliation and thus, motivate them to apologize to their victims” (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012, p. 669). In essence, a leader who invests the time, energy, and resources toward understanding the mental maps of individuals and listens to different interpretation of operational goals and beliefs constructively mediates organizational conflict free from misperceptions and emotional interference of rational thought.

In contrast, organizational leaders who resolve conflict through misperceptions and power politics produce a lack of forgiveness as well as low organizational performance. In the same way, organizational leaders of transitional justice who focus on accomplishing the operational end states of peacebuilding activities at the expense of investing the resources toward understanding the socio-cultural and political dimensions damage not only the post conflict transitional ecosystem but also the legitimacy of sustainable peacebuilding programs (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Ferch, 2012). For example, transitional justice practitioners claim there lacks a coordinated strategic peacebuilding framework among the 140 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to implement projects along the Horn of Africa (Tsadik, 2014). According to Tsadik (2014), “it’s not enough to add yet another well-meaning project, workshop, dialogue to the peacebuilding mix without a greater understanding of what is already ongoing, and how to relate one’s contribution to other initiatives and actors out there”



(para. 5). Tsadik (2014) notes there is a perception among constituents that internal politics within transitional justice organizations to garner donor resources play a greater role than the impact and effectiveness of service delivery in executing peacebuilding instruments across the Horn of Africa.

Scholars suggest that organizational forgiveness doesn't mean one is releasing the perpetrator for abusive actions. Rather, the victim steps down from the position of judgement, anger, and resentment toward one of entrusting the situation to emotional support systems. An organization culture of unforgiveness leads to intergroup conflict, bitterness, and resentment (Namie, 2014; Palanski, 2012). Bolman and Deal (2008) argue that

organizations depend on the environment for resources they need to survive, they are inevitably enmeshed with external constituents whose expectations or demands must be heeded . . . often speak with loud but conflicting voices, adding to the challenge of managerial work. (p. 235)

That said, individual and organizational communications must change and expose misperceptions and hidden agendas through restorative measures by generating an atmosphere of multiagency trust, collaboration, consensus building, and transparent dialogue. The reason is that integrating forgiveness within an organizational culture not only frees the victim as well as the perpetrator to see others more clearly but also sustains restorative measures toward reconciliation (Kidder, 2007). As a result, the ecosystem of transitional justice



organizations serves the interests of organizational and cultural healing and reconciliation rather than internal organizational self-interests of survival (Ferch, 2012; Gerzon, 2006). In the end, if the process of forgiveness and healing is to succeed, leader engagement that creates an organizational culture of interpersonal healing and forgiveness restores not only the emotional and relational hurts people experience within an organization but also increases retention, increases productivity, and shapes a more cohesive and effective organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Much of the literature suggests that while executing transitional justice instruments spans across multicultural boundaries, most leadership scholars believe organizations are cultures with distinctive beliefs, values, and customs (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Ferch, 2012). Research by Glynn and DeFordy (2010) states that “leaders are assumed to have a repertoire of leadership attributes and behavioral styles from which they can draw, adapting these as needed to the demands of the specific task situation or the particular followers they lead” (p. 123). Therefore, scholars postulate that at individual, team, and organizational levels there are relevant leadership competences that transitional justice practitioners can develop in creating a forgiveness and reconciliation culture within organizations executing transitional justice instruments. To illustrate, research within Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies by House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, and Gupta (2004) identified a universal set of global leadership competences such as win-win problem solver,



integrity, accountability, political savvy, team builder, encourager, communication, and visioning that shapes an organizational culture of forgiveness and reconciliation. In essence, the transitional justice leader who fails to lead an organizational culture of forgiveness and reconciliation hampers the relational effectiveness of individual, organizational, community, and global conflict resolution measures toward peace and stability.

In today's global environment, scholars argue that transitional justice practitioners serve the public in exercising conflict resolution measures as well as forgiveness and reconciliation activities toward peace and stability within a sphere of influence at the local, national, and global levels (Ferch, 2012). However, organizational leaders who govern activities of transitional justice instruments not only manage the process of forgiveness and reconciliation within restorative justice in the face of mass atrocities but also mediate workplace interpersonal, intrapersonal, and situational offenses (Ferch, 2012; Palanski, 2012; Sanchez & Rognvik, 2012). Scholars argue on a multilevel that servant leaders create a culture of forgiveness and reconciliation from internal as well as external workplace offenses (Barbuto & Millard, 2012; Barnabas & Clifford, 2012; Ferch, 2012). Yergler (2005) argues that a "servant leader must incorporate forgiveness as a leadership competency if the benefactors of that leadership are to experience true transformation" (para. 3). Basically, the quality of transitional justice organizations rests on a mixture of leadership attributes that transcend beyond an individual's



personal interests to the interests of an organization (Bass & Bass, 2008; Smith, 2005; Yergler, 2005).

Themes that emerged from the literature showed that servant leadership practices and values are culturally transparent and globally similar. Scholars note that servant leaders are not only concerned and sensitive toward others within a societal and organizational context but also support leaders' intercultural and religious values and beliefs (Winston & Ryan, 2008). Much of the literature suggests that Jewish values and beliefs within the Talmud support servant leadership through kindness, humility, integrity, forgiveness, and temperance (Winston & Ryan, 2008). Similarly, the Hindu tradition from the Bharavaad-Gita characterizes servant leadership through compassion, the exercise of authority with discretion, giving others the benefit of the doubt, and leading with generosity (Winston & Ryan, 2008). Winston and Ryan (2008) state that "servant leaders focus more on humility and less on self and focus more on the needs of others and the higher-order values of duty and social responsibility than on the needs of self" (p. 216). That said, a number of essential ingredients of servant leadership competences emerged from review of the literature as a requisite to fostering a climate of organizational forgiveness and reconciliation.

Table 2 compares leaders who display unforgiveness and forgiveness on an organizational level as well as addresses the servant leadership competences needed to foster an organizational culture of forgiveness and reconciliation from workplace offenses.



Table 2

Organizational Leader Impact of Forgiveness

Forgiveness Organizational Impact				
Organiz- ation Level	Lack of Forgiveness	Forgiveness Culture	Servant Leadership	Leadership Competence
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-doubt • Anger • Withdrawal • Poor Health • Guilt • Fear • Depression • Low self-esteem (Stone, 2002) • Revenge • Aggression • Avoidance • Passive/ Aggressive Behavior (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness • Presence • Personal responsibility • Peace of mind • Authenticity • Choice • Openness (Stone, 2002) • Benevolence • Compassion • Understanding • Restorative Justice (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassion • Individual Transformation • Selflessness • Powerful catalyst • Center of organizational forgiveness (Yergler, 2005) • Healing • Listening • Self- awareness • Empathy • Benevolence • Decisiveness (Smith, 2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness • Integrity • Encouragement • Confidence builder • Tolerance • Leading Oneself • Intercultural Intelligence • Emotional Intelligence (House et al., 2004) • Resilience • Technical competence • Resourcefulness (Mendenhall et al., 2013)



Dyad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict • Blame • Avoidance • Mistrust • Punishment • Frustration • Anger • Defensiveness (Stone, 2002) • Rejection • Revenge (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership • Collaboration • Trust • Open communication • Supportiveness • Information Sharing • Compassion • Respect (Stone, 2002) • Restorative Justice (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuasion • Credibility • Empowerment (Smith, 2005) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Leading Others • Negotiation • Accountability • Conflict Management (Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010) • Conflict Management • Emotional Intelligence • Relational Intelligence (Mendenhall et al., 2013)
Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Competition • Manipulation • Negative politics • Stress • Frustration • Distance • Fault finding (Stone, 2002) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutually Supportive • Interconnection • Direction • Sense of Belonging • Cooperation • Clarity of Roles (Stone, 2002) • Restorative Justice (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Altruism • Steward of resources • Relationship Builder • Power Sharing • Balance Interests • Influence (Bass & Bass, 2008) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict Resolution • Networking • Problem Solver (Diacoff, 2012) • Team Builder • Problem Solver • Negotiation (Mendenhall et al., 2013)



Organiza tion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secrecy • Mistrust • High turnover • Low allegiance • Political posturing • Confusion (Stone, 2002) • Uncoopera- tion • Avoidance • Dysfunction • Competition • Organiza- tional Sabotage (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open authentic culture • Empowerment • Pride in Organization • Meaningful Work • Values in Action (Stone, 2002) • Optimism • Trust • Integrity • Restorative Justice approach to conflict • Cultural values • Empathy • Emotional maturity • Altruism • Self-transcendent values (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to the growth of people • Building community • Strategic Foresight (Smith, 2005) • Building community • Listening • Empathy • Foresight • Persuasion • Stewardship • Healing • Power Sharing in Decision making • People over Production (Smith, 2005; Ferch, 2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Others • Lead the Organization • Think Strategically • Balance Conflict Demands • Initiate and Implement Change • Change Agent • Cross-Cultural Relational Skills • Systems Thinking/plan • Intercultural Intelligence • Organizational Strategic Foresight • Social Intelligence (Diacoff, 2012; Van Velsor et al., 2010)
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The analysis revealed that individual unforgiveness produces not only frustration leading to anger, mistrust, and revenge by victims but also organizational and societal mistrust, secrecy, and dysfunction. Yergler (2005) states that unforgiveness “gives rise to acts of injustice, retribution,



sabotage, indifference and isolationism” (para. 4). As a result, individual unforgiveness adversely impacts a leader’s social and relational ability to build horizontally, vertically, and across cooperative relationships, provide team building, and promote a culture of high organizational performance. That said, it is “egregious when a leader fails to offer forgiveness to those under his or her charge who wronged the leader” (para. 1). Conversely, individual forgiveness builds restorative organizational justice, trust, and provides space for leaders to influence a climate of respect, cooperation, and constructive organizational conflict resolution. By fostering a climate of organizational forgiveness and reconciliation leaders create a supportive environment where individual growth toward emotional, relational, and spiritual maturity strengthens not only the organizational human capital development but also increases organizational performance.

Servant Leadership

Transitional justice measures have a deterrent effect that potentially alters the behavior of key stakeholders. After an extensive literature review this researcher proposes that the most appropriate theoretical leadership framework facilitating individual and organizational forgiveness as well as reconciliation is servant leadership. Scholars postulate that an additive pillar within servant leadership constructs must incorporate organizational forgiveness as a component of leadership competence frameworks (Ferch, 2012; Doraiswamy, 2012; Spears, 2010). The reason is that transactional leadership



focuses on the social exchange of individual leadership, transformational leadership centers on developing followers into leaders, but servant leadership advocates leaders who transcend individual interests to serve in the best interest of the organization (Avolio, 2010; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Bass, 2008). Therefore, Doraiswamy (2012) and Spears (2010) argue servant leaders characteristically possess the sensemaking capacity that fosters an awareness of interpersonal growth development and organizational healing to those who are led. Contextually speaking, the transformative nature of servant leaders who experience the restorative and releasing power of forgiveness within an organizational and transitional justice environment makes these leaders better equipped to understand and facilitate social and relational conflict resolution. That said, servant leaders shape an organizational climate that creates a safe place not only for individuals to heal interpersonal relationships within an organizational context but also extends reconciliation to the larger societal community.

Much of the literature points out that while servant leaders subordinate personal interests to serve others, emerging scholars view forgiveness as an important component of relational power, persuasion, and trust (Doraiswamy, 2012; Ferch, 2012; Spears, 2010). Servant leaders of transitional justice organizations with forgiveness as an organizational culture possess the social and emotional intelligence to negotiate and mediate socio-ethnic, religious, and political ideological differences toward peace and reconciliation.



Faced with organizations where transitional justice practitioners who experience human rights violations may develop unresolved personal issues thereby producing organizational issues of anger toward the perpetrator, servant leaders play a critical role within the forgiveness process through displaying empathy and listening, employing a trust-base relationship, and exhibiting spiritual compassion (Doraiswamy, 2012; Ferch, 2012; Spears, 2010). As a result, the integration of forgiveness as an individual competence within the transitional justice discipline produces a learning environment that develops a high performing organization to sustain social change toward peace and stability (Mendenhall et al., 2013; Van Velsor et al., 2010).

Critics may argue that there is no role for forgiveness and reconciliation within organizational leadership and transitional justice discipline. However, history demonstrates that the backdrop of personal suffering played an integral role in not only developing leaders toward political non-violent engagement but also recovering societal injustices. For example, after twenty-seven years of prison Mandela provided leadership by coalescing differing political parties and ideologies, sharing leadership among socio-ethnic lines, bestowed values of resilience, and through forgiveness and reconciliation united a country for future generations (Tutu, 2000). In essence, Mandela demonstrated leadership characteristics of humility, resilience, accountability, and spirituality that enabled Mandela to lead South Africa in developing a national policy of forgiveness and reconciliation



as a means to heal societal injustice (Ferch, 2012; Tutu, 2000; Worthington, 2013).

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The author introduced forgiveness and reconciliation as an integral role within the evolving organizational leadership and transitional justice field. Noteworthy, the incorporation of forgiveness and reconciliation is a paradigm shift within the disciplines of organizational leadership and transitional justice. Hence, given the fact that transitional justice is a strategic enabler of statecraft in a post conflict environment, introducing the role of forgiveness as a competency development into the mix not only enables mechanisms for individual growth but also strengthens the capability of practitioners to shape and implement transitional justice mechanisms at multiple levels within an organization. Therefore, with limited understanding or application of forgiveness within organizational leadership concepts as well as the transitional justice formula, the author postulates that servant leadership is the most appropriate theoretical leadership construct. Nonetheless, introducing forgiveness as a pathway toward reconciliation for individual, organizational, and national healing initiates the conversation that transitional justice actors are critical players on the global stage for peace and stability. In doing so, the author believes this perspective advances several contributions for further transitional justice and leadership theory development and research.

First, the review suggests the need for research that



examines the relationship among transitional justice, organizational leadership concepts, and forgiveness with regard to peacebuilding activities. For example, researchers who empirically assess the impact and application of integrating religious edicts with forgiveness and organizational leadership within a transitional justice context contribute to not only the understanding and value of forgiveness in implementing transitional justice mechanisms but also how servant leaders influence organizational culture in a complex and politically uncertain environment. Second, it is possible that servant leaders creating a learning environment where forgiveness plays an operational role may increase operational performance and shape the context of transitional justice organizations. Third, future research is needed to empirically examine the validity and role of forgiveness as an organizational leadership competence within an organization executing transitional justice instruments. Finally, the author suggests that it would be beneficial to conduct research on whether and how forgiveness as an individual and collective competency shapes local, organizational, communal, national, and international reconciliation measures.

In sum, this article introduced the definition and conceptualization of forgiveness and reconciliation as an organizational leadership competence within the transitional justice discipline. Noteworthy is the fact that tenets of forgiveness and reconciliation are resident within the world's primary religions only practiced differently. Thus, with limited theoretical understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation and



its role within conflict resolution, the author offered servant leadership as a leadership competence within transitional justice and other organizations. Therefore, the author believes that there is a watershed opportunity for leadership scholar-practitioners to show that integrating forgiveness as a leadership competence has a significant role in the sustainment of organizational conflict resolution and global peacebuilding measures.

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