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Emerging Forms of Awareness about Forgiveness: An Analysis of What High Profile Leaders Think

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EMERGING FORMS OF AWARENESS ABOUT FORGIVENESS
AND LEADERSHIP:
AN ANALYSIS OF WHAT HIGH PROFILE LEADERS THINK

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program
of Antioch University
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of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled:

EMERGING FORMS OF AWARENESS ABOUT FORGIVENESS
AND LEADERSHIP: AN ANALYSIS OF WHAT HIGH PROFILE LEADERS THINK

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Abstract

Over the last several decades forgiveness research has exploded across a wide array of scholarly disciplines from psychology and sociology to political theory, medicine and the arts, but it has not yet captured the full attention of researchers concerned specifically with leadership. This situation is further complicated by the lack of an agreed-upon definition/understanding of forgiveness both within and across disciplines. This study explores what high profile leaders think about forgiveness and begins to fill the gap in leadership studies concerning the meanings and applications of forgiveness among leaders. Data was gathered through responsive interviewing of 13 high profile leaders on what they think about forgiveness. Their responses delineating congruencies, discrepancies, philosophical and/or theological frameworks, applications and experiences are reported with rich description. Areas for further research are recommended. The electronic version of this Dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd

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Chapter I: Introduction

In Chapter I, I briefly discuss contextual frames of reference for forgiveness research, establish my working definition of *forgiveness* and present the purpose of this study. I also describe my epistemological stance and provide an overview of the dissertation.

Synopsis of Contextual Frames of Reference for Forgiveness Research

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School in New York City held a series of public dialogues over several years on the topic of forgiveness that was eventually summarized in, *Considering Forgiveness* (2009), the first in a series of books dedicated to topics of political urgency. The volume's cover jacket advertises the content this way:

What do we mean when we say forgiveness? Are we able to think it, and with what goals and hopes in mind? Why forgiveness now, and why at all? As an aid to politics? As a means to face the unforgiveable, or to short-circuit the work of history and memory? As a diversion from different, maybe less forgiving, forms of action? Forgiveness emerges within these pages not as an agenda offering closure, but as a strategy and a form of awareness, a legal, sociological, psychological, anthropological, theological and ethical concept that demands engagement (Wagner & Kuoni, 2009).

That breathtaking scope spanning numerous academic disciplines indicates the far distance the concept of forgiveness has traveled in the last twenty-five years. Only in the mid 1980's did forgiveness emerge as a topic worthy of study at research institutions. Prior to this it remained off-limits for serious analysis, likely perceived as a softly religious, vaguely sentimental idea best left to religionists of various sorts and their congregations of care. It certainly could not (did not) capture the attention of self-respecting secular researchers (Enright, 2001).

Starting around 1985 this began to change as interest in forgiveness first emerged as a strategy within therapeutic settings. The pioneering work of Robert Enright (2001) at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, stimulated a fast-track interest that within ten years led to the founding of the International Forgiveness Institute. Yet this was only one of several such organizations that popped up across the nation as it seemed the timing was ripe for the unveiling of the undiscovered territory. As a great unfolding forgiveness studies began to appear across many seemingly unrelated disciplines, aided through postmodernism's deconstructing contagion. Since brittle norms surrounding intellectual silos began to crack in the latter half of the 20th century, forgiveness was released from a pious strait-jacket. Even post-modernist icon, Jacques Derrida (2001), weighed in on the agency of forgiveness toward the end of his life.

Social/political events spurred growing interest as well. Evolving diplomacies concerning Northern Ireland, the collapse of Apartheid with the emergent strategies of Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu and organizers of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the relentlessly heartrending problems between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as the catastrophic events of 9/11 and its aftermath all gave impetus to an increasing cross-disciplinary curiosity about the social, political, and organizational healing potentials that lay within forgiveness (Doblmeier, 2007; Philpott, 2006; Torrance, 2006).

Mentioning healing in this context leads to the role of forgiveness in medicine and other healing arts. Studies concerning its impact on the body and stressors related to blood pressure, heart attack, stroke and other physical and mental disorders have sprung up (Foubister, 2000). Research about forgiveness trends across cultures and religions, between women and men, young and old, intrapersonal and interpersonal, has accrued at

an increasing rate (McCullough, Pargament, & Thorsen, 2001). The conversation has been further catalyzed by the public apologies of prominent individuals and matters of organizational integrity (Olick, 2009).

Over the last 25 years forgiveness has become a focus of interest within sociology, psychology, anthropology, theology, philosophy, business, arts, political theory, ethics, and medicine—and many subsets and crossovers of these disciplines (Wagner & Kuoni, 2009). Wide varieties of research have evolved into a growing if somewhat chaotic body of knowledge that lacks centralizing coherence. In this way, it is not unlike the study of leadership that seems to have tentacles extending into every arena of human intellectual pursuit. Another interesting commonality—like leadership per se, forgiveness lacks an agreed-upon definition among researchers.

Trying to link these two unbridled subjects seems a daunting challenge, but observing the life, commitments and leadership of someone like Nelson Mandela points naturally to a consideration of the intersections between leadership and forgiveness. In *No Future Without Forgiveness* (1999) Nobel Peace Prize winner, Desmond Tutu, powerfully describes Mandela's magnanimous spirit of embodied forgiveness as an intrinsic aspect of his leadership. This lone example is enough to stimulate the imagination. Also stimulating the imagination as stated above are public apologies from leaders in business and politics, the arts and sports—the list seems nearly endless.

One example of the latter leaps off the pages of the newspaper, literally. Rupert and James Murdoch, principal owners and leaders of News Corp, became entangled in a dramatic imbroglio involving the transgressions of their journalists' purported criminal misbehaviors pertaining to phone hacking as well as payoffs to police and politicians

(Bernstein, 2011). In numerous venues they repeatedly apologized for any wrong doing that occurred while distancing themselves from the actual purported crimes. Rupert Murdoch visited and personally apologized to the parents of a young kidnapped girl, subsequently murdered, whose phone had been hacked by investigative journalists. As reported by Reuters (2011) Murdoch's UK papers ran a banner headline on July 17, 2011, that read "WE'RE SORRY" under which Murdoch wrote the following letter:

The News of the World was in the business of holding others to account. It failed when it came to itself.

We are sorry for the serious wrongdoing that occurred. We are deeply sorry for the hurt suffered by the individuals affected.

We regret not acting faster to sort things out. I realize that simply apologizing is not enough.

Our business was founded on the idea that a free and open press should be a positive force in society. We need to live up to this.

In the coming days, as we take further concrete steps to resolve these issues and make amends for the damage they have caused, you will hear more from us.

Sincerely, Rupert Murdoch (2011)

While apology and forgiveness are not identical constructs, they are nevertheless closely allied (Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Mullet & Girard, 2000;). Given my interest in forgiveness this event seems a telling serendipity, for it points to an instance of an implicit forgiveness request involving a high profile leader which in turn teases the student of leadership.

A number of themes emerge for consideration: Are the penitents believable? Is there empathy on either or both sides of the apology/absolution equation? While the Murdock's claim they are not perpetrators or hold actual responsibility for the supposed crimes and misdemeanors can they reasonably represent genuine contrition? What is the

relationship between apology and forgiveness? Can forgiveness or absolution be granted in a case like this? Who are the actual victims: the hacked? British society? In this latter case, can British society offer absolution? Is there a culture of apology or forgiveness within News Corp? If not, what sort of culture fostered the purported bad behavior and how can that be modified? Is it desirable for an organization like News Corp to foster internal values such as forgiveness?

And from these questions we move to a higher level of consideration. What are the ramifications for organizations whose leaders are formed in part by the value of forgiveness? Is it something that can be taught? Is it a “thing” to be learned, or a value to advance? Is it too religious in nature for generally secular environments? Is it a tool in the proverbial toolbox for managers? Or is it transcendent, not a tool at all, but a matter of moral development? What is the relationship between forgiveness and justice?

These and other questions naturally spill forward and it seems the timing is ripe for a richer, deeper consideration among leaders about the potentials and pitfalls of a firmer embrace of forgiveness. I immersed myself in conversation with high profile leaders on this topic to gain perspective about their current understandings of the linkages between forgiveness and leadership (or lack thereof).

An emergent awareness concerns the dearth of forgiveness research related to theology and religious practice which is of particular interest to me given that I am an ordained Christian Minister. I have discovered that although the word and concept is embedded within church culture (in its theological and philosophical reflections) and liturgy, rarely is forgiveness expressly taught with sophistication and depth nor is it regularly researched beyond hermeneutical expostulations of sacred texts and theological

discourse. Like many scholarly researchers, church-goers and church leaders alike evidently function from an assumptive premise that everyone knows what is meant when the word is invoked. However, as I state the problem above, throughout the literature across scholarly fields there is no agreed upon definition of forgiveness, and as I structured a seminar within my own congregation concerning forgiveness it became very clear that it was necessary to have this matter of definition constantly before us. What do we actually mean when we invoke the word? What does it mean to say, “I forgive you?” or “Please forgive me?” What are we wanting, desiring, hoping for? What is at stake? What is required? These questions constantly press in when pursuing the matter of forgiveness.

Definition of Forgiveness

Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Edlis-Matityahou, & Moore (2007) address the lingering issue of an unresolved definition:

Forgiveness is a concept with philosophical, theological and psychological implications. It is highly valued by all major religious worldviews and is a serious topic of philosophical discourse. As greater emphasis is placed on positive psychology, forgiveness has risen to major status as a concept with positive implications for psychological and physical well-being. However, in spite of such thought and effort, we have yet to develop a consensual definition of forgiveness. Psychologists, philosophers and theologians all differ in what they mean by forgiveness; presumably ordinary folk also differ and this confusion has considerable import. (p. 234)

My research necessarily includes an exploration of participants’ definitions.

Robert Enright (2001) identifies this lack of a shared definition for the sake of research as a very pressing matter. I will have more to say about this in future chapters.

For my purposes here I align myself with Enright’s working definition which he stipulates was inspired by the work of philosopher Joanna North (1987): “When unjustly

hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence and love” (Enright, 2001, p. 25).

I do not attempt to prove with my research that this definition either does or does not lie at the core of what others think or believe. I state it here for the sake of clarity and positioning within my research framework. As a matter of course my participants will offer their own perspectives, analyses, opinions and experiences pertaining to forgiveness and these will form a significant portion of the reported interview data.

Purpose of This Study

I sought to explore the meanings high profile leaders attach to forgiveness and its intersections with leadership. My research question—What do high profile leaders think about forgiveness?—emerges from the explosive interest in forgiveness across scholarly disciplines over the last twenty-five years (Lamb & Murphy, 2002; Lawler-Row et al., 2007; McCullough et al., 2000) with the exception of leadership studies per se, and my growing sensibility that forgiveness has great relevance for leaders in the twenty-first century (Tutu, 1999).

I did engage an internal debate about whether it really mattered if interview candidates were higher profile or not for research purposes. An inner voice said it does not matter —persons in widely diverse circumstances exert influence on their corners of the world and I could usefully ask them about forgiveness. As a telling aphorism states: big doors can swing on small hinges. Still, high profile leaders do exert more cultural and professional influence and taken as a group of meta-leaders adds a level of interest. Of course, no sample of this sort can ever represent the leadership universe, yet it might

provide clues, leads and stimulating content for furthering the conversation concerning forgiveness and leadership.

My meaning of “high profile” refers to persons who would be readily identified as visible leaders either by their specific formal roles or cultural place as thought leaders. These could include CEO’s, presidents, founders, managing partners, politicians/office-holders, diplomats, columnists or journalists, etc.

Epistemological Stance

The complex matter of forgiveness is inherently phenomenological in nature. Although many positivist studies have emerged attempting to measure its effects (Enright, 2000; McCullough, 2008), the lack of an agreed upon definition among researchers suggests its inherently subjective character which gives credence to the validity of phenomenological methods of discovery. In this way Black (2003) confirms constructivist methodologies are especially useful for learning about forgiveness believing that the word forgiveness has little meaning without linking it to lived experience (phenomena). The constructivist approach “both contrasts and complements the general and aggregate data of quantitative research as well as the structured schedule that elicits closed-ended responses” (Black, 2003, p. 5).

Constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. . . . [seeking] to understand how social actors recognize, produce, and reproduce social actions and how they come to share in an intersubjective understanding of specific life circumstances. (Schwandt, 2001, pp. 30-32).

Given the general lack of research linking forgiveness and leadership, conversations with leaders seems an appropriate methodology for initiating the course of

engagement in order to collect and analyze the subjective meanings, understandings, definitions and experiences of leaders pertaining to forgiveness.

Considering the highly nuanced nature of forgiveness and the multiplicity of meanings and definitions people attach to it, as well as the diversity of leadership styles and understandings/interpretations of same, responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) is a suitable methodology for gleaning new information about their relationship; it allows for a variety of interviewing styles yet incorporates standard formats. “Qualitative research is not simply learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 15). I am very interested in learning what may or may not be important to leaders concerning forgiveness, its functions, applications and character. In Chapter III I will elucidate in greater detail the specific nature of my methodology.

Owning My Personal Perspective

A constructivist approach requires what phenomenologists refer to as “bracketing,” setting aside one’s predeterminations and predispositions about that which is being investigated (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This is a crucial discipline for the constructivist investigator so as preparation for the research that follows I state a few themes that have emerged for me as I investigated forgiveness and its latent potential as an important component of effective leadership in the twenty-first century.

- This first leads me to repeat my meaning above: I believe forgiveness holds great positive potential as a leadership component for the twenty-first century. I have been persuaded by Tutu’s (1999) dramatic observation that there is *No Future Without Forgiveness*.

- Since my research was focused primarily on the issue of forgiveness by interviewing identified leaders I stipulate that I have a pre-disposition for thinking about leadership in the manner of Parker Palmer as he writes in *Let Your Life*

Speak (2000):

A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or as shadowy as hell. A good leader is intensely aware of the interplay of inner shadow and light, lest the act of leadership do more harm than good. (pp.78-79)

- As the above reference implies, my understanding of leadership is heavily freighted with a concern for values as they pertain to leaders, followers and social contexts. Leadership involves specific actions over time which constitutes a process. Both actions and process are shaped and catalyzed by values and character and, importantly, a practice of self-examination.
- Forgiveness has spiritual meaning for me and lies near the heart of my religious practice and understanding. Therefore it has high standing within my hierarchy of values.
- I think many (most) leaders largely function unconsciously, that is, in a manner that tends to avoid an “examined life.” I think the same is true for many (most) followers. This reality generates enormously complicated social and moral contexts. I share these seeming universal human tendencies.
- It is my perspective that most, if not all, mentally healthy people have either an explicit and/or implicit understanding of both forgiveness and leadership. These likely represent divergent definitions/meanings.

I came to this research with well-formed opinions about both forgiveness and leadership. I worked to bracket these opinions so as to listen carefully, receive respectfully the thoughts, opinions, meanings and experiences of the participants and reflect critically/artfully without bias.

Organization of This Dissertation

In this chapter, I have provided an introduction to the dissertation including a brief synopsis of the contextual frames of reference for forgiveness research, a discussion of the purpose of the study, my implicit working definition of forgiveness, my interest in the topic of forgiveness, the importance of the topic, and my epistemological stance.

In Chapter II I review relevant literature from the field of forgiveness studies, explaining how a project linking forgiveness with leaders will meaningfully add to accumulating research.

In Chapter III I introduce the methods I used to gather and analyze data, especially responsive interviewing and its correlatives. I explain my reasons for selecting these methods, describe the protocol for the study, and discuss potential ethical issues.

In Chapter IV I present the data from the interviews integrating literature relevant to emerging themes as needed.

In Chapter V I discuss the results of the data analysis, revisit as necessary the literature I reviewed in Chapter II, discuss limitations of the study, present recommendations for future study, and explain implications for leadership studies and practice.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Introduction

In this chapter I situate an analysis of forgiveness within literature that crosses genres and disciplines including philosophy, theology, sociology, psychology, leadership, and political theory occasionally coupled with time specific events in order to provide a richly textured framework for advancing a constructivist methodology that gathers subjectively nuanced data from high profile leaders on the meanings and potentials of forgiveness. I begin from a larger contextualizing frame of reference and move towards a more granular description of research culminating with work that specifically links forgiveness with leadership.

Relevance of Forgiveness for Leaders and Leadership Studies

On October 6, 2006, in Bart Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, a man walked into a one-room schoolhouse carrying a shotgun, a pistol, a rifle, a stun gun, two knives and a bag holding six-hundred rounds of ammunition. Inside were fifteen boys and eleven girls, all part of the Amish community (Kraybill, Nolt, & Weaver-Zercher, 2007).

Eventually the man who drove a milk truck—often delivering to Amish families—told the boys to leave, as well as two pre-school-aged children and their guardian who were visiting for the day. The twenty-year-old teacher and her mother managed to escape when the invader returned to his truck for various supplies; they ran to a nearby neighbor to raise the alarm. One nine-year-old girl slipped away with the boys. The gunman ordered the ten remaining girls aged six to thirteen to lie down with their

heads toward the blackboard and he tied their hands and legs together (Kraybill et al., 2007).

Before the invasion the milk delivery man had left notes at home for his family. The one to his wife said in part, “I am filled with so much hate, hate toward myself, hate toward God and unimaginable emptiness” (Ruth, 2007, p. 31). Eventually he turned that hate outward and opened fire on all ten girls killing five and injuring the rest before turning the gun on himself.

And then the world watched in wonder as the Amish community responded to this horrific tragedy with quiet forgiveness. John Ruth (2007) collected scraps of the story as it unfolded in the news. CNN reported a grandfather of one of the murdered girls said of the killer on the day of the attack: “We must not think evil of this man” (Ruth, 2007, p. 42). Another said, “I don’t think there’s anybody here that wants to do anything but forgive and not only reach out to those who have suffered a loss in that way but to reach out to the family of the man who committed these act (p. 43).” One Amish neighbor of the gunman’s family comforted them hours after the shooting and extended forgiveness to them. The fathers of the Amish girls who had been shot went to the killer’s parents and asked what they could do to help them. At one of the girl’s funerals the leader said “the deceased girls need not be worried about; they are safe in God’s keeping. In this case it was important to be reminded to forgive, and above all, to live in consciousness of the brevity of life” (p. 43). At the funeral of the gunman, over half the attendees came from the Amish community.

As Kraybill et al. (2007) report in their analysis, all this forgiveness did not obscure the Amish community’s terrible anguish at the horrific loss. They surely

grieved, yet the forgiveness seemed to ennoble everyone involved—including the victims, their parents and extended families, the gunman’s family, the wider community of concern, the police and rescue workers, and even the reporters assigned to the story who managed for the most part to maintain a respectful distance. One journalist (Fleming, 2006) recorded this astonished confession:

The modern media world descended en masse into this rural enclave, as if dropped back through time, poking and prodding the grief of the families and the community as a whole. And what they found and what we heard from that community was not revenge or anger, but a gentle, heart-stricken insistence on forgiveness; forgiveness, that is, of the shooter himself. The widow of the shooter was actually invited to one of the funerals, and it was said she would be welcome to stay in the community.

In a world gone mad with revenge killings and sectarian violence, chunks of the globe self-immolating with hatred, this was something to behold, this insistence on forgiveness. It was so strange, so elemental, so otherworldly.

This, the Amish said, showing us the tender face of religion at a time and in a world where we are so often seeing the rageful face. This was Jesus’ way, and they had Jesus in them, not for a day, an hour, not just in good times, but even in the very worst.

The freedom contained in Jesus’ teaching of forgiveness, wrote the German philosopher Hannah Arendt, is the freedom from vengeance, which includes both doer and sufferer in the relentless automatism of the action process, which by itself need never come to an end.

We have seldom seen this in action. So many tribes and sects in a froth of revenge, from Darfur to Baghdad. And, here in this country, so many victims and victims’ families crying out in our courthouses for revenge.

The Amish have offered a stunning example of the freedom that comes from forgiveness, a reminder that religion need not turn lethal or combative. I, for one, as this week ends, stand in awe of their almost unfathomable grace in grief. (Fleming, 2007, October 6)

Much of the world stood in awe as well; the story was as hot on Al Jazeera news service as it was on the BBC and it ricocheted around the globe; this forgiveness was a lead story everywhere (Kraybill et al, 2007; Ruth, 2007). Many expressed bewilderment that such a response was actually possible in our world. This was no sentimental expression. The forgiveness seemed real. No one was ostracized in Bart Township,

Lancaster County. No one was left from the common table. No one excluded as a result of the awful horror. Everyone was embraced, even—astoundingly—the damaged, hate-filled milk delivery man (Kraybill et al., 2007; Ruth, 2007).

There was not one hundred percent agreement on this forgiveness, however. In one hotly articulated response Jeff Jacoby (2006) said, “I would not want to be like them, reacting to terrible crimes with dispassion. How many of us would really want to live in a society in which no one gets angry when children are slaughtered?”

Philosopher Jeffrie Murphy cautions that forgiveness is appropriate only “if directed toward the properly deserving (e.g. repentant) and if it can be bestowed in such a way that victim self-respect and respect for the moral order can be maintained” (Lamb & Murphy, 2002, p. 58). Applying this approach to the case of domestic abuse against women, Sharon Lamb reasons “the idea of offering forgiveness toward unrepentant perpetrators...is dangerous and plays into deep stereotypes of women’s ‘essential’ nature” (Lamb & Murphy, 2002, p. 59).

This argument finds resonance with some who suggest that the Holocaust cannot be forgiven in a blanket action—only individual victims and their specific abusers can participate in such practice (Doblmeier, 2007). Kraybill et al., (2007) reference Simon Wiesenthal (1969) who recounts a request for forgiveness he received from a dying SS officer when Wiesenthal was a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp. “The officer, haunted by his involvement in atrocities against Jews, approached Wiesenthal in a final attempt to be forgiven for his crimes. ‘I have longed to talk about [my evil deeds] to a Jew and beg forgiveness from him,’ the officer said. ‘Without your answer I cannot die in peace.’”(p. 59). In stark detail Wiesenthal tells how he responded with silence.

Inviting the reader into his mind he wonders whether this was the right response.

Wiesenthal then reports the reasoned opinions of thirty-two prominent intellectuals and as Greg Jones (1995) recounts, the strongest objection to forgiveness comes from Cynthia Ozick. “She argues that forgiveness can ‘brutalize’ just as vengeance does. Indeed, she suggests that ‘forgiveness is pitiless. It forgets the victim. It negates the right of the victim to his own life. It blurs over suffering and death. It drowns the past. It cultivates sensitiveness toward the murderer at the price of insensitiveness toward the victim’ ” (Ozick as cited in Jones, 1995, p. 285).

In contrast to this strenuous objection, Fleming’s (2007) eloquent summary of the Amish response above captures one strain of the seminal energy in this dissertation: does forgiveness have purchase for leaders? As Fleming (2006) articulated the connection to traditional roots, in this case to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth who when hanging on the crucifixion bar during a state execution was reported to say, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34), the implications extend beyond an expression of religious piety. Indeed, not just Christians were mesmerized by the oddness of the Amish as they embodied forgiveness, that is, in contradistinction to majority Christian embodiments pertaining to anger, rage, retaliation, and reconciliation. As Kraybill et al. (2007) point out, forgiveness has touch points in every major religious tradition, if not always defined in precisely the same manner.

Thich Nhat Hanh (2007), a Buddhist monk of the Vietnamese meditation school, has spoken and written extensively on Buddhist traditions of mindfulness in relation to suffering and peace. He was an active participant in every step of the process that brought about the end of the Vietnam War. He writes,

In Buddhist psychology, we speak of consciousness in terms of seeds. We have the seed of anger in our consciousness. We have the seed of despair, of fear. But we also have the seed of understanding, wisdom, compassion and forgiveness. If we know how to water the seed of wisdom and compassion in us, that seed, these seeds will manifest themselves as powerful sorts of energy helping us to perform an act of forgiveness and compassion. It will be able to bring relief right away to our nation, to our world. That is my conviction. (Hanh, 2007, p. 81)

Hahn (2007) believes this sort of energy has the power to build peace in the world. Perhaps it is too much to hope that, as he admonishes, members of congress and parliament in every nation train themselves in the practice of deep listening and to discover the suffering of “the other.” If intentionally engaged, Hahn (2007) teaches that forgiveness provides a pathway to restoration, reconciliation and peace.

My interest in the relationship between forgiveness and leadership was aroused by delving into research about leaders who were committed to positive outcomes expressly on behalf of the common good. In their research conducted among these kinds of leaders, Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks (1996) derived six general categories of commonality among those that persevered. Among these six was something they referred to as “confession”, understood this way: “Two practices seem to be pivotal: an ability to acknowledge, reflect upon and give voice to all parts of one’s inner conversation, and a capacity to forgive.” (p. 190). They point out that

Forgiveness and generosity of spirit are terms not often heard in the literature of social science. More often such sympathies are grouped under something like “tolerance of ambiguity.” Yet it appears that much of the staying power of committed citizens resides in their capacity for “confession,” a willingness to acknowledge one’s limitations to oneself and others, to receive acceptance and forgiveness.” (p. 191)

I suspect that a principle reason forgiveness did not appear in the literature of social science prior to 1985 (Enright, 2001) relates to an academic allergy to associations with religious conviction and/or practice, in this case dispersed ubiquitously across

spiritual disciplines of astonishing variety. It was central to Mohandas Gandhi's (2008) formulations of universal love and non-violent revolution. Following Gandhi's lead Martin Luther King Jr. employed similar methods to advance the cause of equality for African Americans. As early as 1958 King addressed the central importance of love and forgiveness in black America's surge to complete freedom:

Since the white man's personality is greatly distorted by segregation, and his soul is greatly scarred, he needs the love of the Negro. The Negro must love the white man, because the white man needs his love to remove his tensions, insecurities and fears. Agape is not a weak, passive love. It is love in action. Agape is love seeking to preserve and create community. It is insistence on community even when one seeks to break it. Agape is a willingness to go to any length to restore community. It doesn't stop at the first mile, but it goes the second mile to restore community. It is a willingness to forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven to restore community....He who works against community is working against the whole of creation...If I respond to hate with a reciprocal hate I do nothing but intensify the cleavage in broken community. I can only close the gap in broken community by meeting hate with love. (King, 1958, p. 20)

Clearly the role of forgiveness was central to his understanding of how to build community resulting in the regenerative process of reconciliation. Forgiveness is not the same thing as reconciliation (Enright, 2001; Worthington, 2001) but without it reconciliation may be impossible and for King, forgiveness remained an essential component of enduring human community. A paraphrase of his intention as argued in *Strength to Love* (1981) states: "We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this we are less prone to hate our enemies" (King, 1981, p. 25).

Daloz et al. (1996) writing about leaders committed to the common good report that burnout is often caused by an inability to relinquish what is beyond their control. "Many of those we interviewed, however, seemed able to let go of old insults with a

flexibility born, perhaps, of readiness to interpret individuals and societies through forgiving rather than suspicious eyes” (p. 191).

They also found that these persons were dependent upon spiritual resources, variously described, including organized traditions as well as more esoteric and individualistic variations. They conclude, “Forgiveness is a public as well as a private act, an important consequence of systemic thought, and a feature of the practice of citizenship in the twenty-first century” (Daloz et al., 1996, p. 192).

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)—established in 1995 to provide a relatively peaceful transition to post-apartheid national life and government—relied in part upon the sometimes controversial notion of forgiveness. Desmond Tutu, chairman of the TRC reports in *No Future Without Forgiveness* (1999) that some criticized the TRC’s processes perceived to encourage impunity. “Could it ever be sufficient for a perpetrator, someone who had committed some of the most dastardly and gruesome atrocities, to be allowed to get off scot-free as it were with only a confession, a full disclosure?” he repeats from his critics (p. 49). Part of the commission’s goal was to restore dignity to victims affected by decades of legally sanctioned racial separation—not through revenge, but in a morally responsible way. And from there, the nation could move forward with an attitude of reconciliation. Tutu remained committed to the process that he saw evidenced in the first days of Nelson Mandela’s presidency.

A poignant moment on [inauguration day] when Nelson Mandela arrived and the various heads of the security forces, the police and the correctional services strode to his car, saluted him and then escorted him as the head of state. It was poignant because only a few years previously he had been their prisoner and would have been considered a terrorist to have been hunted down. What a metamorphosis, what an extraordinary turnaround. He invited his white jailer to attend his

inauguration as an honored guest, the first of many gestures he would make in his spectacular way, showing his breathtaking magnanimity and willingness to forgive. (Tutu, 1999, p. 10)

Though a fulsome analysis lies just beyond the range of this research, Mandela's capacity for forgiveness begs the question of how this facility has resonance with Burns' (1978) concept of transformational leadership, Greenleaf's (2002) servant leadership and Heifetz's (1994) adaptive leadership and any number of other leadership formulations. Future monographs could usefully focus on existing leadership constructs and their relationship with forgiveness.

Despite the historic academic allergy referenced above, forgiveness has been garnering the interest of an increasing number of scholars from sociology as well as psychology. Some (e.g., Enright, 2001; Enright, Gassin, Longinovic, & Loudon, 1994; Worthington, 2001; Worthington & Scherer, 2003) are devoting energy to defining and then measuring the effects of forgiveness. Robert D. Enright (2001) and Everett L. Worthington (2001) have come to believe that forgiveness has positive benefits for the person who offers it, both psychologically as well as physically.

Enright, a professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and founder of the International Forgiveness Institute, is regarded as a seminal pioneer in the scientific study of forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2000). His collaborative work (e.g., Enright et al., 1994) addresses development of issues of forgiveness in parallel to issues of justice. As presented in the introduction he takes philosopher Joanna North's (1987) definition of forgiveness for his work: "When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by trying to offer the

wrongdoer compassion, benevolence and love” (North as cited in Enright, 2001, p. 25). This highlights three essential aspects of forgiveness: the offense is taken seriously; the victim has moral right to anger; yet for forgiveness to take place, the victim must give up the right to anger and resentment. We can see these qualities evidenced in Tutu’s (1999) brief account of Mandela’s inauguration above.

Enright (Enright, Rique, & Coyle, 2000) makes the case that forgiveness does not depend on the remorse or repentance of the offender. Forgiveness is unconditional. “In spite of everything that the offender has done, [forgiveness means treating the offender] as a member of the human community” (p. 25). Yet forgiveness is not pardon, that is, it does not mean that what was done did not matter or that there should be no significant consequence as a result of the offending behavior. Forgiveness must also be distinguished from reconciliation which implies restored relationship. While reconciliation may be a valued goal, as in South Africa for instance, forgiveness, per se, does not automatically lead to it. Reconciliation requires the re-establishment of trust and sometimes that is not possible (p. 31).

The International Forgiveness Institute cited above—drawing from philosophical, and traditional (including Hebrew, Christian, Islamic, Confucian and Buddhist), psychological and developmental principles—describes forgiveness in the following manner:

What it is:

Moral—it is a response to an injustice. It is turning to the “good” in the face of this wrongdoing.

Goodwill—merciful restraint from pursuing resentment or revenge. Generosity or offering good things such as attention, time, remembrances on holidays. Moral love or contributing to the betterment of the other.

Paradoxical—it is the foregoing of resentment or revenge when the wrongdoer’s actions deserve it and giving the gifts of mercy, generosity and love

when the wrongdoer does not deserve it. As we give the gift of forgiveness we ourselves are healed.

Beyond duty—a freely chosen gift (rather than a grim obligation). The overcoming of wrongdoing with good.

What it is not:

Forgetting/Denial; Condoning; Excusing; Condemning; Seeking Justice or Compensation

Important Distinction:

Forgiveness is one person's moral response to another's injustice.
Reconciliation is two parties coming together in mutual respect.
(Enright et al., 2000)

Enright et al. (2000) have established a method for analyzing individual readiness for forgiveness called the Enright Forgiveness Inventory. The EFI is an objective measure of the degree to which one person forgives another who has hurt him or her deeply and unfairly. The EFI has 60 items and three subscales of 20 items each that assess the domains of affect, behavior, and cognition toward the offending other.

These and other methods are employed by Enright and other researchers in Ireland to help restore the breach that has existed for generations between Catholics and Protestants steeped in resentments and hostilities (Doblmeier, 2007). Dr. Frederic Luskin (2003) of the Stanford University Forgiveness Project has been co-director of the Stanford-Northern Ireland HOPE Project, which provides workshops and research that investigate the effectiveness of his forgiveness methods on the victims of political violence there. He posits nine steps to forgiveness:

1. Know exactly how you feel about what happened and be able to articulate what about the situation is not OK. Then, tell a trusted couple of people about your experience.
2. Make a commitment to yourself to do what you have to do to feel better.
Forgiveness is for you and not for anyone else.

3. Forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation with the person that hurt you, or condoning of their action,. What you are after is to find peace.

Forgiveness can be defined as the “peace and understanding that come from blaming that which has hurt you less, taking the life experience less personally and changing your grievance story.

4. Get the right perspective on what is happening. Recognize that your primary distress is coming from the hurt feelings thoughts and physical upset you are suffering now, not what offended you or hurt you two minutes or ten years ago. Forgiveness helps to heal those hurt feelings.
5. At the moment you feel upset practice a simple stress management technique to soothe your body’s flight or fight response.
6. Give up expecting things from other people, or your life, that they do not choose to give you. Recognize the “unenforceable rules” you have for your health or how you or other people must behave. Remind yourself that you can hope for health, love, peace and prosperity and work hard to get them.
7. Put your energy into looking for another way to get your positive goals met than through the experience that has hurt you. Instead of mentally replaying your hurt seek out new ways to get what you want.
8. Remember that a life well lived is your best revenge. Instead of focusing on your wounded feelings, and thereby giving the person who caused you pain power over you, learn to look for the love, beauty and kindness around you. Forgiveness is about personal power.

9. Amend your grievance story to remind you of the heroic choice to forgive.

(Luskin, 2003, Retrieved December 20, 2007)

At first reading I wondered if these steps adequately addressed the experience of bloody, violent conflict. Still, Hewstone et al. (2004) have worked with these same populations and report,

After so many years of suffering, deaths and injuries in Northern Ireland, there is clearly a great deal of potential, in principle, to forgive. Forgiveness may be used in dealing with members of a group one has been taught to dislike, and can diminish anger which has been passed from one generation to the next (Fitzgibbons, 1986). For groups who are engaged in, or emerging from, a period of ethno-political conflict, the use of forgiveness to aid in the process of healing and reconciliation may therefore be particularly important. (p. 10)

They point out that although research on forgiveness has grown rapidly in recent years, focus on intergroup conflict and injury is just beginning; a shift occurs from personal to social identity with the self becoming stereotyped as an ingroup member which in turn alters the ways forgiveness may function.

Stepping into a somewhat larger theoretical framework, Gibson (2006) reflects on the situation in South Africa and considers whether the success of the Truth and Reconciliation process was due to its endogenous nature within South African culture, and by implication, the preparation forgiveness provides for the outcome of reconciliation. “With complex relationships, one can simply never be certain whether the results from a single country can be generalized to other contexts.” Yet, “[any] democratic culture grounded in reconciliation is likely to be more stable than one that is not.” (p. 430). He concludes,

If societal change is to take place, some exogenous force must convince ordinary people to rethink their views about the contentious past. Perhaps pathways other than truth and reconciliation are possible. But those formerly at war with each other must be convinced to fight their struggle at the ballot box, not on the

battlefield. Strategies for creating political tolerance are necessary in all transitional systems. (p. 431)

Though Gibson does not address forgiveness per se, considering Tutu's (2004) conviction that "True reconciliation is based on forgiveness, and forgiveness is based on true confession, and confession is based on penitence" (p. 53), a question arises concerning the importance of the endogenous character of forgiveness within *any* system, from dyad to corporate to national, even international cultures. Does the system have a predisposition for forgiveness and reconciliation, and if so, to what degree, and if not, can it be successfully introduced?

Martin Luther King Jr. (1963) observed that "through the Negro church, the dimension of nonviolence entered our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, I am convinced that by now many streets of the South would be flowing with the floods of blood" (p. 297). I take this to mean among other things that the message of nonviolent protest born from forgiveness and a rigorous commitment to a universal love ethic was endogenous within the black church for which King provided embodied leadership. It did not come from outside the black experience of the day, but from within. And then, this exogenously transformed the wider culture that ultimately accepted the message and resulting reconciliation. Or perhaps even within the wider culture the notions of universal love existed endogenously—if more deeply submerged in relation to black America—that were stimulated into life by the profundity of massive non-violent protest. The same set of questions could pertain to Gandhi's (2002) triumph in India vis-à-vis both Indian and British culture.

Doblmeier (2007) presents another attempt at planting and growing—literally—the promise held in active forgiveness within a culture ravaged by decades, even

centuries of resentment and hostility. In war-ravaged Beirut, Lebanon, a project called The Garden of Forgiveness was created in the heart of a massive redevelopment effort in the center of the city. In the shadow of churches, mosques and a synagogue the Garden provides an opportunity to move people to a different consciousness, releasing them from the prison of inter-generational cycles of pain and violence present in individuals, families, tribes and nations (Doblmeier, 2007).

As a witness of the pain of the civil war in Lebanon the Garden's founder, Alexandra Asseily, decided to explore her own responsibility for peace and became a psychotherapist (Doblmeier, 2007). She believes forgiveness allows people to let go of the pain in the memory, and if that happens, they can retain the memory without it controlling the present. When the memory controls, persons remain in thrall of the past.

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (2003), a member of the Human Rights Violations Committee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, emerged as another powerful spokesperson concerning the processes and limits of forgiveness. In the style of an analytical ethnography, she recounts an extraordinary conversation with Eugene de Kock, the commanding officer of state-sanctioned death squads under apartheid (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003). Gobodo-Madikizela, nurtured in a black South African township, met with de Kock in Pretoria's maximum-security prison, where he serves a 212-year sentence for crimes against humanity. She conveys her struggle with contradictory internal impulses to hold him accountable and to forgive. As she witnesses de Kock's awakening of conscience, she illuminates the ways in which the encounter compelled her to redefine the value of remorse and the limits of forgiveness. Embedded within her deep

reflection she also reveals how forgiveness can powerfully promote transformational human community.

Gobodo-Madikizela's (2003) descriptions of the personal reactions of a number of victims to the processes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provide nuance to the definition and meaning of forgiveness within the horrific context of the violence perpetrated under apartheid. She writes:

Do emotions associated with the trauma become part of the identity of the one who has suffered loss? Traumatic experience ruptures a part of the victim's identity. It violates the boundaries that protect the definition of self, leaving the individual stripped of many of the things that bestow respect, dignity, and self-worth...The emotions stand in the place of what was lost...Letting go of these emotions, if there is nothing new in the victim's life to strengthen her or him, makes the victim feel exposed and vulnerable again. When forgiveness is granted, however, it is a choice the victim makes to let go of the bitterness...Forgiveness is not meant to relieve victimizers of their guilt, to make things easy for them. Such an interpretation makes forgiveness a further burden for victims. (pp. 96-97)

Yet, forgiveness provides the opportunity to bring to an end a life of hatred, a life that remains inextricably tied to the perpetrator. "One simply has to guard against prescribing forgiveness, for to do so cheapens the process. That first step taken, even to consider meeting a person responsible for terrible wrongs, is the victim's to take" (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003, p. 97). While acknowledging differences in scale between forgiving daily upsets among partners, family members and the like, and real atrocities, a genuine apology is still possible. "Genuine apology focuses on the feelings of the other rather than on how the one who is apologizing is going to benefit in the end. It seeks full responsibility for an act" (p. 98).

An important component of sincere apology and forgiveness concerns the power relationships between victim and perpetrator, and the understandings assigned to the

potential for forgiveness (Taylor, 2009). For instance, it could be that a perpetrator will regain a sense of his/her former control over a victim if forgiveness has been granted, thus bestowing power back to the perpetrator rather than empowering the victim. But concluding a conversation about the granting of forgiveness from a position of relative weakness Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) writes, “Ironically, some of the feelings associated with powerlessness, such as humility, are more likely to foster an attitude of forgiveness than are attitudes that equate forgiveness with a loss of power” (p. 103).

Among the individual accounts Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) reports concerns the story of Peter and Linda Biehl whose daughter, Amy, a Stanford University student, was stabbed to death in a Cape Town township. They traveled to South Africa to work with their daughter’s killers, two young men who had been members of the military wing of the Pan-African Congress at the time. They applied for amnesty in the reconciliation process and the Biehls did not oppose their application. They started the Amy Biehl Foundation in Cape Town and the perpetrators ultimately trained in one of its projects to become mechanics.

I interviewed the Biehls about their relationship with [the perpetrators]. “I have no hatred in my heart,” said Linda Biehl. “All I am concerned about is how these young men can reenter their community and rebuild their lives.” Perpetrators who receive the gift of forgiveness are given a chance to change. Whether a perpetrator rises to the call or not may depend on a range of circumstances....The Biehls offered their daughter’s killers a second chance, and they rose to the challenge. (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003, p. 170)

But again, implicit in this tale of transformed lives is a reallocation of power dynamics. Contributing to an interdisciplinary project at The New School for Social Research entitled, *Considering Forgiveness* (2009), South African scholar, Jane Taylor, observes that

Forgiveness necessarily exceeds the obligation that has been incurred. Thus the recipient remains indebted. In this sense forgiveness is an instrument of social cohesion, but only insofar as the penitent recognizes their ongoing debts. Despite the therapeutic benefits of forgetfulness, the situational relationship between two reconciling parties, it seems, cannot be allowed to defuse itself into a symmetrical relationship of parity. Through an act of forgiveness the victimized redeems herself through an act of magnanimity... [I]n Derrida's (1997) terms, "what makes the 'I forgive you' sometimes unbearable or odious, even obscene, is the affirmation of sovereignty" (p. 58). Somehow, implicitly, an inversion must take place through which there is a transfer of power. (p. 136)

The interplay within the power relationship of victim and perpetrator is complex, and has both private/internal and public/external aspects. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission focused on social restitution/transformation—a highly public outcome. Yet authentic forgiveness, which Tutu (1999, 2004) believes must precede genuine reconciliation, cannot be coerced. As Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) reasons it must come initially as a private, internal decision/response of the victim. The Biehls internal processes leading to forgiveness resulted in a transforming opportunity for the perpetrators while also realigning power relationships. Taylor (2009) believes this sort of process begins to resemble a method for "conversion," a slippery concept fraught with intricate power dimensionalities. Can a call for forgiveness to bring about a "conversion" in the mind, heart and actions of a perpetrator of atrocity actually be the product of genuine forgiveness? Another way to ask this: Can forgiveness be forgiveness if the actionable impulse is to confront, change or convert the other? And how does one measure sincerity in either the forgiver or respondent?

Despite these complexities Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) observes that "While there may be value in recognizing and posting the limits of forgiveness, if such exist, some societies are finding it more constructive to focus on discovering and nurturing the conditions that make forgiveness first conceivable, then ultimately possible" (p. 124).

Rwanda is another nation that has undergone horrific agony and a process of managed reconciliation (Gourevitch, 2009; Musekura, 2010). In the course of a hundred days beginning on April 6, 1994, nearly a million people from the Tutsi minority had been massacred in the name of an ideology known as Hutu Power, but by the fifteenth anniversary of the genocide Rwanda had become one of the safest and the most orderly countries in Africa.

Since 1994, per-capita gross domestic product has nearly tripled, even as the population has increased by nearly twenty-five per cent... There is national health insurance, and a steadily improving education system. Tourism is a boom industry... In Kigali, the capital, whisk-broom-wielding women in frocks and gloves sweep the streets at dawn. Plastic bags are outlawed... Broadband Internet service is widespread in the cities... Cell phones work nearly everywhere. Traffic police enforce speed limits... It is the only government on earth where the majority of parliamentarians are women. Soldiers are almost nowhere to be seen... Most of the prisoners accused or convicted of genocide have been released. The death penalty has been abolished. And Rwanda is the only nation where hundreds of thousands of people who took part in mass murder live intermingled at every level of society with the families of their victims. (Gourevitch, 2009, pp. 37-38)

Gourevitch (2009) and Musekura (2010) report other advances that seem to defy the logical outcome for a society that had been so profoundly traumatized. They account for this transformation in part through the leadership of a rather remarkable president, Paul Kagame, a Tutsi by birth but, by his own identification, a president for all Rwandans. Another aspect of the transformation involves a system of outdoor community courts convened for genocide cases called *gacaca* (Musekura, 2010). These were designed to reward confessions, “because the objective was not only to render rudimentary justice and mete out punishment but also to allow some emotional catharsis by establishing a collective accounting of the truth of the crimes in each place where they were committed” (p. 39). According to Gourevitch (2009) it is largely agreed among

Rwandans that these courts have not meted out perfect justice, but on balance, the gacaca have provided a way forward for persons who lived in very close proximity, many of whom were victims of horrific violence by former friends and neighbors. Forgiveness in such intimate settings can assume an ambivalent posture as in this description of one man's experience:

Evariste had attended Girumuhatse's gacaca trial. "He really said everything, everything," Evariste said. When Girumuhatse had come to him and asked for forgiveness, Evariste told him that he forgave him. But he said to me, "All this reconciliation and the confessions—that's the program of the state. And when a killer comes and asks your pardon you can't do anything else. You pardon him, but you don't really know if it comes from your heart, because you don't really know about the killer—if he is asking forgiveness from his heart". (p. 41)

Again, the issue of sincerity arises as well as the question of whether forgiveness can be granted if there is no authentic apology. Enright (2001) believes that forgiveness does not depend on the remorse or repentance of the offender. Forgiveness is unconditional. "In spite of everything that the offender has done, [forgiveness means treating the offender] as a member of the human community" (Enright, 2001, p. 25). Enright (2001) also argues that forgiveness must be distinguished from reconciliation which implies restored relationship. While reconciliation may be a valued goal, forgiveness may not lead to it (p. 31). In the case of the Amish of Lancaster County whose children were slaughtered by a man who took his own life described above, forgiveness was offered in the absence of apology (Ruth, 2007). Perhaps it matters if a perpetrator is deemed "out of his mind" at the time of the violence. In the case of the Rwandan massacre it may be relevant to ask a similar question in the context of violent mass hysteria. Another Rwandan victim to the same Girumuhatse mentioned above has this to say about the gacaca:

I can't understand a person who kills ten people and asks for pardon. It's always a problem to live with them, and if I could afford to live somewhere else I would leave this country... All this is theater," she said. "It doesn't mean anything. A killer is a killer, and you have to abandon them. I just can't support it... If ever the occasion arose, if there was an opportunity, they would kill again. They only asked pardon because of gacaca. Why didn't they ask forgiveness before gacaca? It's because of the President that they don't kill. Forgiveness came from a Presidential order. He's the one who pardoned them." (Gourevitch, 2009, p. 41)

The role of leadership in public acts of forgiveness remains somewhat opaque. A competent political leader wants to create public order and safety for a traumatized nation, as President Kagame desired and evidently advanced. The system he set up by Presidential authority created a means for the violence within neighborly communities to be acknowledged.

Still, it seems authentic forgiveness can only emerge as individual response/choice. As Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) suggests, perhaps the best that can be hoped for from the perspective of national policy is the establishment of structures and processes that can promote the occasion for authentic forgiveness, which might, in turn, lead to thorough-going reconciliation. Or maybe not. Or perhaps delayed for gestation.

I never did meet a survivor who spoke well of gacaca... But none of the survivors...thought there was any better solution. Never mind reconciliation, Tutsis and Hutus had to coexist. Sagahutu expressed the sentiment most succinctly: "It's our obligation, and it's our only way to survive, and I do it every day, and I still can't comprehend it." When I repeated Sagahutu's formulation to other survivors and to members of Kagame's Cabinet, it was always met with recognition: Yes, that's it. So what was required politically was emotionally incomprehensible, and the President's idea of the common good hung in the balance. (Gourevitch, 2009, p. 42)

In the materials I have been advancing to this point, note the significance of reported understandings and purposes people express about forgiveness. This subjectively experienced human dynamic has profound depth of meaning embedded

within rich contextual circumstance. Persons drew important conclusions about its power, relevance and limitations.

This material has been gathered from a broad range of representative literature concerning forgiveness as a rationale for considering why asking leaders about forgiveness seems a natural advance on the accumulating evidence that forgiveness has significant potential to generate positive outcomes for both individual good and the common good. This exploration has cut across philosophical, theological, psychological, sociological, political, and leadership areas of interest, reflection and research. I will now turn my attention to a more granular discussion of studies that provide further nuance and direction for forgiveness research, ultimately suggesting the ripe timing for engaging leaders directly about its meaning and potential efficacy.

Useful Categories of Forgiveness Research for Advancing a Conversation With Leaders About Forgiveness

Before considering research that specifically links forgiveness and leadership, among the vast trove of accumulating forgiveness scholarship five rough categories emerge that have contextual relevance for this dissertation: definition and/or meaning of forgiveness; diplomacy and/or reconciliation; impact of religious/spiritual frameworks on forgiveness; forgiveness intervention; & comparative religions. Below are several representative studies of these various frameworks. Many have purchase in several categories simultaneously.

Definition and/or meaning. Definition and meaning is an appropriate place to begin since studies like these address the problem that a shared definition of forgiveness across disciplines, even within disciplines, does not currently exist. Over the past two

decades some researchers (e.g., Enright et al., 2000; Worthington, 2001) have attempted to delineate a clear meaning or definition, and certain components do seem to have broad acceptance, yet Lawler-Row et al. (2007) starkly point out the lingering problem in their grounded theory study:

Forgiveness is a concept with philosophical, theological and psychological implications. It is highly valued by all major religious worldviews and is a serious topic of philosophical discourse. As greater emphasis is placed on positive psychology, forgiveness has risen to major status as a concept with positive implications for psychological and physical well-being. However, in spite of such thought and effort, we have yet to develop a consensual definition of forgiveness. Psychologists, philosophers and theologians all differ in what they mean by forgiveness; presumably ordinary folk also differ and this confusion has considerable import. (p. 234)

The problem of clarity exists throughout the research across the disciplines, but is often ignored as a matter of focus as such. In other words, either a standing definition is assumed, as in the frameworks of established tests and scales, or simply not addressed, evidently due to an assumption that “everyone knows what it means”—at least that can often seem the residual implication. Here we have a group of studies that address this matter of meaning from a variety of viewpoints.

A number of scholars (Ahn, 2010; Losel, 2009; Murphy, 2012) utilize a variety of phenomenological, particularly hermeneutical, methods to plumb the depths of meaning embedded within forgiveness. Murphy’s hermeneutical study, “The Case of Dostoevsky’s General: Some Ruminations on the Forgiving the Unforgivable” is an exemplar of this type (Murphy, 2012).

In contrast to these, the study above by Lawler-Row et al. (2007) explored the definition of forgiveness in a group of 270 young adults, and the underlying dimensions of their definitions compared with those of philosophers, theologians and psychological

researchers. Through the coding of structured interviews, one of the principle goals of the study was the development of a definition. If a clear, concise concept was anticipated, that was not the result:

Two primary dimensions were identified: Orientation, to self or other, and Direction of change, from letting go of negative to enhancement of positive responses. While definitions proposed by researchers, such as those at the beginning of this paper, often endorse one end of these poles as defining forgiveness, it is clear from the definitions written by participants that both poles of both dimensions are part of the everyday understanding of forgiveness. Thus, forgiveness has at least two dimensions, with two levels: it is both intrapersonal, focused on self, and interpersonal, focused on the other, and individuals can employ either level, or both, in their thinking about forgiveness. Similarly, forgiveness involves both the withdrawal or reduction of negative responses as well as the enhancement of positive ones, and individuals can employ either direction, or both. (Lawler-Row et al., 2007, p. 245)

Thus, their definition wound up a rather intricate affair, with many nuanced words and paragraphs extending well beyond the one quoted above—not really a definition at all, but more akin to a collection of attributes or qualities.

In an autoethnographic study by Yale University theologian Miroslav Volf (2007), “God’s Forgiveness and Ours: Memory of Interrogations, Interrogation of Memory,” the author recounts his experience of protracted interrogations by the secret service in the former Yugoslavia and discusses the problem of “remembering rightly” with emphasis on the implications for forgiveness.

Frise and McMinn (2010) address the definition or meaning of forgiveness by comparing “the assessed opinions” of academic psychologists and theologians. They state that both quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed that psychologists are more inclined to distinguish between forgiveness and reconciliation than theologians. This focus is one of the major distinguishing disagreements in the literature across the disciplines for the past 25 years—whether or not reconciliation must be included in a

robust definition of forgiveness (Enright 2001; Tutu, 1999; Worthington, 2001). Can forgiveness occur without restored, or resolved interpersonal relationship? Here the differences between scholars of religion and psychology reveal a marked difference. For theologians, reconciliation seems the point of forgiveness, for psychologists the chief aim is therapeutic relief.

Many diverse studies begin by indicating the growing interest in forgiveness research across broad fields and therefore its special applicability for a stipulated arena under consideration. For instance, Mullet and Azar (2009) begin their report in this manner:

Forgiveness is increasingly attracting the attention of political scientists...and the United Nations has recently organized a conference on this topic (Partnering With the Enemy) directed at NGOs' representatives and diplomats everywhere in the world. Thus, it is important to explore the possibly diverse meaning forgiveness may have among different populations sharing different cultures and different religious traditions... The present study was aimed at exploring the possible differences in forgivingness—dispositional forgiveness—between Lebanese Muslim, Lebanese Christian, and French Christian participants. (pp. 275-276)

Clear, concise, transparent. Importantly, early in this study Mullet and Azar (2009) report a working definition of forgiveness as developed by Enright and The Human Development Study Group (1991): “forswearing of negative affect and judgment by viewing the wrongdoer with compassion and love, in the face of a wrongdoer’s considerable injustice” (p. 123). With a crisp economy of language they provide excellent background information on the Forgivingness Questionnaire which assesses dispositional forgiveness on three subscales: Lasting Resentment, Sensitivity to Circumstances, and Unconditional Forgiveness. In addition they efficiently discuss forgiveness within Christianity, Judaism and Islam describing differences within theological frameworks that might predict differences in respondents’ answers. Utilizing

similar comparative frameworks Paz, Neto, & Mullet (2007, 2008) and Akl and Mullet (2010) present a variety of constellations of populations.

Diplomacy and/or reconciliation. As Mullet and Azar (2009) reported above, “Forgiveness is increasingly attracting the attention of political scientists” (p. 274) and increasingly researchers are interested in its applicability for diplomatic purposes and post-conflict reconciliation. One significant catalyst for this attention emerged from the well-documented experiences of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which attempted to resolve large-scale cultural hostilities in post-apartheid South Africa (Tutu, 1999, 2004). Less well-known, the Rwandan *gacaca* courts have been studied as important elements of social reconstruction after the mass rampaging slaughter among Hutus and Tutsis (Gourevitch, 2009; Musekura, 2010), another stimulus to the potentials of forgiveness for large-scale reconciliation.

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela is an important participant/observer/researcher of these efforts and in the case study, “Trauma, Forgiveness and the Witnessing Dance: Making Public Spaces Intimate” (2008) she concludes that “forgiveness in politics is the only action that holds promise for the repair of brokenness in post-conflict societies, particularly if, as in South Africa, victims have to live together with perpetrators and beneficiaries in the same country” (p. 169). Initially this study employs a hermeneutic methodological process to define the boundaries and contours of her case, especially in reference to the philosophical reflection of Hannah Arendt (1998) who, in considering Nazi horrors post-holocaust, resolved that certain crimes fell beyond the range of forgiveness. Consulting the work of Derrida (2001), Gobodo-Madikizela (2008) offers a

countering argument while presenting a case from the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission's process. She describes the essence of her case:

My argument in this paper is that when the conditions for the emergence of forgiveness are created, they serve to re-animate the empathic sensibilities damaged by violence both between individuals and within communities. The process of restoring the human capacity for empathy and the intrinsic sense of human possibilities that are destroyed by violence requires a working through of trauma, which in essence is the reparation of the brokenness brought about by traumatic experience in the lives of victims, (p. 173)

The particular case Gobodo-Madikizela (2008) reports involves a group of seven mothers whose sons were killed by the apartheid government's police in an incident that came to be known as the Gugulethu Seven. She recounts in detail their journey toward forgiveness which must be understood within the transcendent idea of ubuntu, an African concept of universal humanity with a constellation of aspirational ethical ideals. "What animates forgiveness lies in that intersubjective realm where we encounter the other's humanity in its 'purest sense' (p. 178).

This is among the very best of the studies included within this review. Thorough, gripping, well-documented and well-written, Gobodo-Madikizela (2008) writes a compelling argument for forgiveness as an integral, if highly nuanced and complicated, aspect of societal reconciliation post violent trauma and hostility. Her hermeneutic case study methodology provided a powerful platform/context for her analysis.

Northern Ireland has also proved fertile ground for considering the role of forgiveness in post conflict reconciliation between communities. Tam et al. (2008) constructed a statistical study to investigate predictors of intergroup forgiveness in terms of intergroup emotions, empathy and intergroup contact. Trust and bias were also explored.

Religious/spiritual frameworks. Not all group conflicts occur between factions of people vying for place and power within or across national political boundaries. In a grounded theory project Sara Savage (2008) researched the theological orientations concerning moral disputes embedded within perceived and actual transgressions among conservatives and liberals. “Unforgiveness is dissonant ... and leads to a motive to find a way to forgive and to find a working agreement concerning the issues at stake” (p. 321).

Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose (2008) begin their study by stating,

Forgiveness is a concept that is closely tied to religiousness and spirituality and is a central aspect of many world religions including: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. At its core, forgiveness is an interpersonal variable that is often, though not always, an expression of religious and spiritual beliefs. Research has demonstrated salutogenic associations between religiousness/spirituality and health. Hence, it should come as no surprise that forgiveness also shows positive relationships with depression and mental health. (pp. 485-486)

Forgiveness intervention. Situated within the niches are studies that address forgiveness as an intervention within specific relational dilemmas. DiBlassio & Benda (2008) research forgiveness interventions with married couples. Stratton, Dean, Nonnemen, Bode, & Worthington (2008) evaluate the effectiveness of three forgiveness intervention strategies relative to a retested control, a psychoeducational workshop training, essay writing or combination of the two. Thomas, White, & Sutton (2008) examine forgiveness as a means for clergy restoration following abuse.

Given the repetitive importance placed on religious and spiritual matters within forgiveness research (McCullough et al., 2001), specifically describing their impact on forgiveness has captured the attention of some researchers. Janet Ramsey (2008)

illustrates how an intersection between spirituality and the well-being of older adults is found when interpersonal rifts meet forgiveness and healing. She describes a well-circumscribed case in which older siblings have not been in communication for years when one of them develops terminal cancer. She addresses the situation from the point of view of an end-of-life counselor, or gerontologist, who seeks to help them move towards forgiveness and reconciliation. She highlights the importance of addressing the situation from the spiritual perspectives of the persons seeking restoration.

A grounded theory approach (McMinn et al., 2008) addressed prayer's impact on forgiveness. Bassett et al. (2008) explored some of the dynamics of seeking forgiveness. College students were asked to imagine scenarios where one person transgressed against another. The first study manipulated the presence or absence of seeking forgiveness from the victim, seeking forgiveness from God, and self-forgiveness within a 2x2x2 factorial design. After imagining each scenario, participants then evaluated the offender, the situation, and the relationship between the offender and the victim. The second study used similar procedures to focus on the role of moral emotions, on the part of the transgressor, in seeking forgiveness from the victim.

Comparative religions. Many of the studies already cited have spiritual connotations and could be reviewed through the analytic lens of comparative religions or religious experience. The content of a sample descriptive study by Toussaint and Williams (2008) is expressed by its title: "National Survey Results for Protestant, Catholic, and Nonreligious Experiences of Seeking Forgiveness and of Forgiveness of Self, of Others, and by God." Protestant and Catholic groups showed higher levels of forgiveness of others, feeling forgiven by God and seeking forgiveness as compared to

the nonreligious group. No differences were observed on forgiveness of self. They conclude that forgiveness differs based on religious affiliation, and personal religiousness and spirituality explain some of these differences. I noted that although the authors state, “The concept of forgiveness is central to most world religions [while] the tie between forgiveness and religious factors has been difficult to pinpoint” (Toussaint & Williams, p. 120), they stipulate no definition, which as I have stated elsewhere, seems an important oversight. In this way, they allow respondents to internally self-define (without direct report) and the question remains whether or not the measures are evaluating the same thing among participants.

Moving beyond this contextualizing research I will now advance on the slim library that combines forgiveness with leadership.

Linking Forgiveness With Leadership

While the last couple of decades have seen an explosive interdisciplinary growth in forgiveness research and analysis as well as explosive growth in leadership studies, there is little that actually links the two specifically. In a larger constellation of issues pertaining to values more broadly conceived connected with leadership, interdisciplinary research and thinking is emerging; for instance, something like trust or trustworthiness (Spears, Lawrence, & Bennis, 2004; Van der Zee & Perugini, 2006), which has implications for forgiveness, even as evidenced in the questions surrounding Rupert Murdoch’s (2011) apology cited in the first chapter.

One complicating factor in culling research on forgiveness and leadership concerns the ubiquity of the word forgive and its derivatives without explanation or definition in many papers and books. As I have already indicated much of the empirical

forgiveness research does not define the meaning of forgiveness and seems to rely upon implicit understandings. Forgiveness pioneer, Robert Enright (2001), considers this one of the most pernicious issues for the evolving field of forgiveness research. For instance, in an analysis of prosocial behavior Van der Zee and Perugini (2006) describe a growing consensus on the taxonomy of the “Big Five” basic personality factors which include: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and intellect/autonomy and they cite specific characteristics of each. The second listed factor of the Big Five, agreeableness, is said to include such qualities as altruism, sympathy, warmth, trustfulness, helpfulness, forgiveness, sincerity, and willingness to help others which imply facets of trust, compliance, modesty, tender-mindedness, sympathy, and empathy (p. 79). Without defining these terms, and taking the case of forgiveness in particular, I would argue that arranging it in conjunction with these other words predisposes an implicit interpretive quality that is somewhat misleading from more robust understandings of persons, times and circumstances where forgiveness has actually been attempted. For instance I am thinking of Nelson Mandela and the work of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa which catalyzed Tutu’s (1999) *No Future Without Forgiveness*. Granted, the aforementioned psychological description was not substantively devoted to explaining terms and conditions, but their use of the word forgiveness is typical within the literature despite the discovery that forgiveness is a richly textured and highly nuanced human emotional/moral construct. Indeed, among the nest of words in the description of “agreeableness” above forgiveness may be the most complex and least fully explored and understood.

What is odd about this situation is that forgiveness was a non-subject within the research academy prior to 1985 when it exploded into view first within research and clinical psychology (Enright, 2001) then quickly finding root in many other disciplines. That so much of this research lacks a rigorous descriptive, definitive quality concerning the word/concept of forgiveness is a curious aspect of the increasing interest in the subject. This seems especially true in the limited literature that combines both forgiveness and leadership. Still there is an impressive emergence of deeply researched and argued work on forgiveness—I am simply reporting the still ubiquitous use of the word without definition.

A search of in-depth literature linking the words forgive(ness) and leader(ship) yields a relatively small cache of useful analyses. Following the lead of the research on South Africa's political and cultural evolution Daniel Philpott (2010) includes a brief section on forgiveness in *Strategies for Peace* as he discusses six practices leading toward reconciliation: building just institutions, acknowledgment, reparations, punishment, apology, and forgiveness. Note that here apology and forgiveness (as well as reconciliation itself) are all separate concepts. (I agree with these distinctions. Often these three are used interchangeably, or held very close in meaning.) Philpott writes:

The practice of forgiveness in political settings has become more common in the past generation, though its recorded instances are far rarer than the other practices. South African President Nelson Mandela is perhaps the only head of state to have practiced it. Other presidents and prime ministers—President Patricio Aylwin of Chile, for instance—have commended forgiveness to their citizens. Civil society leaders, especially religious leaders, have encouraged citizens to practice forgiveness far more often. It is difficult to say just how often victims themselves have practiced forgiveness. (2010, p. 111)

Notice Philpott (2010) does not tell us here what victims are actually doing when they forgive. Later he will appropriately ask, “What exactly is forgiveness” (p. 113)? He

responds with a few paragraphs that succinctly describe a defining point of view. He explains how forgiveness “complements the other practices of reconciliation. It begets apology if apology has not already occurred, just as apology invites forgiveness in the case that apology occurs first” (p. 113). He concludes his discussion of forgiveness by addressing the matter of a head of state as forgiver and asks, “If heads of state can *apologize* on behalf of groups, why can they not *forgive* on behalf of groups?” (p. 113).

I provide Philpott’s (2010) sample as an exemplar of the kind of discussion found in the literature when linking forgive(ness) and leader(ship). Perhaps initially inspired by the high profile leadership of Nelson Mandela it seems these linkages have found more purchase in political thought than elsewhere, albeit still nascent.

Still, other fruitful literature specifically linking leadership with forgiveness can be found in servant-leadership ruminations and research as originally set forth by Robert K. Greenleaf (2002). For instance *Practicing Servant-Leadership: Succeeding Through Trust, Bravery, and Forgiveness*, Spears and Lawrence (2004) provides

an anthology of writings by practitioners from diverse fields of endeavor [that] reflects the range of organizations where servant-leadership...has been embraced. The collection includes articles by academics, educators, CEOs from the business and social sectors. Chapters deal with why servant-leadership matters, the unique double servant-leader role of the board chairperson, servant leadership and philanthropic institutions, nonprofit leadership organizations...forgiveness and social justice and how relationships give the power to lead. (Hamilton, 2005, p. 875)

In distinction to my earlier observation that much of the literature found in lengthier volumes linking leadership and forgiveness is freighted by geo-political matters, this servant-leadership material is more organizationally based from a largely domestic American perspective.

One other group of relevant materials assembled in book format includes the writings and ruminations of actual social-change leaders such as I have discussed above, i.e. Martin Luther King Jr. (1958, 1981), Mahatma Gandhi (2008), Bishop Desmond Tutu (1999), and the Dalai Lama (1999). Why these and other leaders do not emerge in a search correlating forgiveness and leadership is due to the lack of specific linkages between the words forgive(ness) and leader(ship) per se in their writings. On the other hand, I have already discussed how Nelson Mandela has been analyzed as a leader specifically related to forgiveness (Philpott, 2010; Tutu 1999). Interestingly, I am unaware of any significantly analytical study about these other leaders from within this context of forgiveness and leadership. But notice that I am making a presumption that such an analysis would be appropriate given both their embodied leadership as well as the content of their writings.

More granular research and commentary linking the concepts of forgive(ness) and leader(ship) produces a sampling of studies that can be clustered into five loose categories: geo-political, organizational, character trait, psychological, and other.

From the geo-political sub-group studies cover a range of consideration. (Although given the seeming important dimensionality of this category the number of studies is surprisingly small. Again, this is likely due to the specific alliance of the words forgiveness and leadership.) Akhtar (1999) is concerned with the psychodynamic dimension of terrorism; Edwards (2005) focused on a Japanese Prime Minister's apology; Finnegan (2010) analyzed collective efforts of forgiveness amidst war in Northern Uganda; Kampf (2008) researched apologies in the Israeli political arena under the heading, "The Pragmatics of Forgiveness;" Staub (2000) considers the prevention,

healing and reconciliation after genocide and mass killing; and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina is the focus of a study by Weine (1999). In each of these special consideration is given to forgiveness and leadership, although not necessarily as the main focal point.

One abstract (Kampf, 2008) provides a flavor of the sort of empirical qualitative study employed for this constellation of issues:

Although the theme of forgiveness has been studied extensively in various fields of humanities and social science, it has thus far been neglected by discourse scholars. Drawing on data from the Israeli political discourse...this article analyzes the ways in which apologies are interpreted and judged by political actors as members of a distinctive interpretive community. The findings show that although realized infelicitously, most of the apologies made by Israeli political figures were accepted by the offended parties or their representatives. One explanation for this finding is that the traditional felicity conditions are replaced in the political arena by the 'embarrassment condition', that is, the extent to which the gesture is perceived by the forgiver as threatening the apologizer's political image. Other reasons to forgive are less dependent on the judgment of the linguistic performance than on the various interests on the part of the forgiver. (p. 577)

Once again this report is indicative of the inherent problem of definition and conflation of apology and forgiveness. Granted, this is only the abstract, but as the summary statement the abstract already demonstrates a predilection for flattening the very concepts it attempts to explicate.

The formative forgiveness research begun in the mid 1980s was initiated within research psychology and a burgeoning number of studies are being produced from this discipline. Add the derivatives of the word leadership and the number of articles quickly dwindles to a handful. Surely a number of other studies are relevant to my topic, but the explicit "leader" factor is minimal within psychological forgiveness research. However, emerging from a predisposition for therapeutic relief psychologists are now venturing

into the world of diplomacy from the standpoint of helping persons who have experienced trauma explore how forgiveness can lead to healing and this includes pioneering psychologist Robert Enright (2001) who has done work in trauma-ravaged environments such as Ireland and Israel/Palestine. Through personal correspondence I learned he was in the midst of developing a program that included Israelis and Palestinians and the prospects and promise of forgiveness education.

Often the derivatives of leadership in this research have an oblique relationship to forgiveness. For instance Frise and McMinn (2010) analyze “Forgiveness and reconciliation: The differing perspectives of psychologists and Christian theologians:”

Among psychologists, forgiveness and reconciliation are typically viewed as separate constructs. This distinction is often adaptive, making it possible for a person to forgive a deceased offender or to forgive without entering back into a dangerous relationship. But to what extent does this privatized and secularized view of forgiveness conflict with the religious construct of forgiveness that many clients and their *religious leaders* [italics added] may hold? (p. 83)

Generally, leading (expert) psychologists are more apt to distinguish between forgiveness and reconciliation than leading (expert) theologians. Religionists (i.e., King, 1958; Tutu, 1999) seem to have a predisposition for the idea that reconciliation is really the final point of forgiveness and until that measure has been met it lacks fulfillment.

In the study above Frise and McMinn (2010) suggest that what leaders think matters in how others may define and interpret the work of forgiveness. I suppose that should be obvious, but when considering the variety of venues in which explicit (and implicit) leadership is exerted, it seems what leaders think on this subject is largely unknown, unshared, perhaps even absent from a leader’s construct of leadership. This reality shapes the direction of the research this dissertation advances.

Under the “organization” umbrella leader(ship) and forgive(ness) are handled more explicitly. Caldwell and Dixon (2010) write:

In a world that has become increasingly dependent upon employee ownership, commitment and initiative, organizations need leaders who can inspire their employees and motivate them individually. Love, forgiveness and trust are critical values of today’s organization leaders who are committed to maximizing value for organizations while helping organization members to become their best. We explain the importance of love, forgiveness and trust in the modern organization and identify 10 commonalities of these virtues. (p. 91)

Reading this brings the image of Rupert Murdoch to mind. I wonder how he might

respond to such an analysis. Is it much too sentimental? Lacking forceful rigor?

Detrimental to hard-hitting outcomes? For that matter, how would any organizational leader respond?

There is an inherent tension in advancing a philosophical/ethical/moral/theological leadership methodology “for its own sake”—because it is “the right thing to do,” or simply because it is “good”—versus its effectiveness as agency for the bottom line. Of course it matters how narrowly the bottom line is defined. But Cameron and Caza (2002) believe that

The investigation of virtues in organizational life has been neglected. Systematic studies of the development and demonstration of virtue have been all but absent in the organizational sciences. This article highlights the potential impact of virtues in organizations, particularly the power of forgiveness to affect individual and collective outcomes. ...Leaders have an especially important role to play in demonstrating virtuous behaviors. ...We highlight the role of one particularly misunderstood virtue—organizational forgiveness—and its role in the leadership of effective organizations. (p. 33)

I highlight in particular how the authors stress both individual and collective outcomes; according to their analysis both are benefitted by forgiveness processes.

In the character trait studies (closely associated with organizational matters) Joan Marques (2010) culled the wisdom of eleven leadership thinkers and practitioners, a

literature review and workplace observations to advance a construct of “the Awakened Leader.” Through a qualitative study she developed an emergent definition of awakened leadership and found “an interesting combination of qualities...varying from morals and values, ethics, integrity, honesty and trust, to kindness, forgiveness, courage, love and deep listening” (p 307).

Though “Awakened Leadership” has the sound of a marketing slogan, the study nevertheless advances an emerging point of view on the validity of forgiveness as an aspect of leadership that is virtuous and simultaneously effective. Effective includes relational health and vitality within the organization as well as a positive orientation to the bottom line.

In a 2010 study Grahek, Thompson, and Toliver develop a “Character to Lead” construct encompassing three general arenas of focus: 1) personal integrity and ethics; 2) organizational integrity and courage; and 3) humility, gratitude and forgiveness. A particularly interesting and useful empirical study, it measures among other things “the degree to which managers, peers and direct reports perceived factors of character as being important to leaders’ roles and to the likelihood of future success and/or failure,” as well as how character ratings “related to employees’ perceptions of selected job-related outcomes” (p. 270).

Ahmed (2009) explored the presence of character strength among American Muslim youth. Among the findings, “highly religious American Muslim youth were associated with the following character strengths: kindness, equity, leadership, self-regulation, prudence, gratitude, hope/optimism, spirituality, and forgiveness” (p. 104). I find the sorts of things that are listed as character strengths within character/trait studies

often divergent. Here I note that leadership is included as a character trait—it is not a stand-alone quality, condition or function. (This begs a question of competent and timely followership—is it less virtuous?)

Among miscellaneous studies Katz (1963), writing in *Psychoanalysis & the Psychoanalytic Review*, hermeneutically unpacks the biblical story of Joseph through dream analysis and related mythology demonstrating the “evolution of the benevolent leader.” By “taming and channeling...ambition, pride, distrust and hateful vengeance, Joseph and his brothers could eventually forgive one another and live together in peace” (p. 92).

Another hermeneutic-phenomenological study of thirteen bereaved parents of fallen soldiers or victims of terrorism by Ronel, Lebel, and Lloyd (2006) describes their grief, anger and forgiveness in relation to their struggle with personal loss. Interestingly, the target of the most anger was never the one who actually killed their son, but a political leader. As for forgiveness, it was scarcely relevant to the participants. The researchers conclude with recommendations on how parents may reach forgiveness and reconciliation with their defined enemy.

Conclusion

I conclude this section with a description of McCullough’s (2008) *Beyond Revenge*, a scholarly yet highly readable volume from one of the more prominent proponents of positive psychology. McCullough recounts evolving, highly nuanced understandings of human nature drawn from contemporary experience that have relevance for the leadership/forgiveness dance. In one poignant section he describes how the United States Government stipulates pre-determined payments for accidental death in

combat; the case at hand involved civilian Afghans. After an intensive investigation of one particular incident the military compiled a list of people who needed to receive “solatia” payments. A certain Colonel Nicholson presented the customary \$2000 per death and “he followed up with an elaborate apology and request for forgiveness”

(McCullough, 2008, p. 159):

I stand before you today, deeply, deeply ashamed and terribly sorry that Americans have killed and wounded innocent Afghan people. We are filled with grief and sadness at the death of any Afghan, but the death and wounding of innocent Afghans at the hand of Americans is a stain on our honor and on the memory of the many Americans who have died defending Afghanistan and the Afghan people. This was a terrible, terrible mistake, and my nation grieves with you for your loss and suffering. We humbly and respectfully ask for your forgiveness. (p. 159)

After describing the unsentimental but ultimately positive response of the Afghans to whom the offer of compensation was made, McCullough (2008) suggests

The truism has been repeated until we don’t hear what it means anymore: ‘If you want to win a war on terror, you have to win the hearts and minds of civilians.’ But if you want to win their hearts and minds, you’d better be prepared to win their forgiveness, too. (p. 160)

Drawing upon increasingly sophisticated anthropological/behavioral research McCullough (2008) is accumulating evidence that virtue constructs like forgiveness have biological, evolutionary roots that confer advantage on those who incorporate them into their behavioral repertoire.

Forgiveness takes place inside individual human minds. The kind of mind that can forgive is a mind that has come to perceive an offender as someone who is careworthy, valuable, and safe. A mind that has had its vengeful impulses satisfied (at least a little) by knowing that an offender has been punished or otherwise made to suffer may also be ready to forgive. People who want to be forgiven try to create these psychological conditions by apologizing, engaging in self-abasing displays, and trying to compensate their victims. These principles for sating the desire for revenge and for activating the forgiveness instinct, which are so effective at the individual level, are scalable. We can use them not only to help individual victims forgive their transgressors but also to change the world.

Groups can be helped to forgive other groups, communities can be helped to forgive other communities... The leaders or legitimate representatives of groups, communities, factions and nations can offer apologies on behalf of their people... They can also offer gestures that express remorse and empathy for the suffering of another group. (pp. 181-182)

I quote McCullough (2008) at some length here to provide a sample of the directionality a conversation concerning leadership and forgiveness might travel. From the early days of discovering the individual therapeutic results of forgiveness the research is taking a vastly more expansive route with implications clearly extending into deep waters of leadership and organizational behavior (largely conceived).

As a kind of cheeky epilogue McCullough (2008) suggests our species moniker, *Homo sapiens*, man the wise, could be changed to *Homo ignoscens*, man the forgiver. He wants to underline the point that while revenge and forgiveness are both deeply situated aspects of human nature, “the future of humanity may very well rest on our ability to control revenge and promote forgiveness. As the bad people of the world get angrier, more organized and better funded, we really do have to worry about what the desire for revenge might be capable of doing to our world as this century unfolds” (p. 225). If a bit overwrought (or maybe not) the pointers to matters of leadership are compelling.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

In describing the nature of mixed methods research Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) ask their readers to consider the award-winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* featuring former United States Vice President and Nobel Prize winner Al Gore. They explain how this film explores an emergent concern for global climate change in which Gore presents extensive statistical analysis embedded within a narrative of his personal journey regarding an awakening appreciation of the attendant issues and dilemmas of the global warming trend. They state, “This documentary brings together both quantitative and qualitative data to tell the story” (p. 1). Creswell and Plano Clark’s pithy observation concerning a ubiquitous piece of cultural fare—ostensibly advancing a user-friendly scientific analysis for popular consumption—provides a succinct introduction to the two principal foci of empirical research generally employed today.

Most observers of the film would not necessarily “peer under the covers” of the research methodologies that were used to present a case about global warming. But for those of us who desire to advance understanding in specific areas of social scientific interest, clear knowledge of the principal means of generally accepted research is of paramount importance for our work to be received as credible and enduring.

But also by way of introduction, I should mention that “generally accepted research” is in a constant state of flux given the undulating currents of postmodernism. The challenges postmodernism poses seem endless. Mats Alvesson (2002) references P.M. Rosenau (1992) as starkly establishing the outer boundary of the “new” problem. “[Postmodernism] rejects epistemological assumptions, refutes methodological

conventions, resists knowledge claims, obscures all versions of truths and dismisses policy recommendations” (p. 1). Under the glare of postmodernism the very standing of reliable empirical research—of any sort whatsoever—can be held suspect. Yet Alvesson (2002) remarks that at the other end of the philosophical spectrum are social researchers who have little patience with those who seem to offer no alternative suggestion for how truth claims may be asserted and researched. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) believe this learning environment is “uniquely confusing and disorienting [and] one that we all face as researchers” (p. 4). For this reason, diligent researchers regularly ponder their relation to the postmodern context in order to produce coherent, reflective work; Bentz and Shapiro (1998) refer to this as *mindful inquiry*.

As ensuing epistemological debates evolve research still continues within the bipolar framework and generally accepted, if evolving, norms of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Each has its champions, while some researchers see the benefit in both approaches like the users of mixed methods stated above. But the postmodern context has had the effect of circumscribing all research with a kind of humility and openness. In response Alvesson (2002) advances the idea of *reflexive pragmatism*.

It navigates beyond empirical ambitions and methodological rigour on the one hand and the kind of hypersceptical understandings of empirical inquiry encouraged by postmodernists on the other. (p. 15)

Positioning one’s epistemological frame of reference within the continually emergent realms of quantitative and qualitative methodologies is an especially crucial discipline/requirement. Quantitative has the older claim having been the child of The Enlightenment. Various referred to as “the scientific method,” or positivist or more

recently, postpositivist framework, this methodology is rooted in the belief that direct observation and emergent logical inferences can derive all knowledge (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Postpositivism reflects a deterministic philosophy, and the problems studied by postpositivists typically examine causes that influence or affect outcomes. Thinking within this paradigm is reductionistic. The belief is that there are laws or theories that govern the world, and that these can be tested and verified. Thus research typically begins with a theory and a set of hypotheses, and the intent is to test ideas. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 8)

Postpositivists rely on careful observation and measurement to either support or refute one or more theories. They attempt to maintain a scrupulous objective distance from that which is being observed and are especially concerned with measures that reliably produce valid outcomes.

Qualitative research, or social constructivism, starts from a different philosophical premise when addressing a research question. Constructivists generally eschew the notion that reality can be understood by dismantling component parts while maintaining objectivity. Since the researcher is never free from socially constructed contexts, research must take account of the researcher's context-specific location. For the constructivist all empirical inquiry is laden with the values of the researcher as well as the context being scrutinized.

The central assumption of this paradigm is that reality is socially constructed, that individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives way to multiple meanings. Therefore, it is the researcher's role to understand the multiple realities from the perspectives of participants. The only way to achieve this understanding is for the researcher to become involved in the reality of the participants and to interact with them in meaningful ways. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 9)

Constructivists will often richly describe the research process and the manner of engagement with those under study, and they will be careful to position themselves

culturally and philosophically, to make note of their own contextual framework. Case Study, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative inquiry and hermeneutics as well as various other phenomenological structures are all in play as descriptive methodologies under the banner of qualitative, or constructivist, inquiry, which is the epistemological framework and method of this dissertation .

Constructivist Inquiry Methodology

A brief summary of this researcher's methodological discernment could be described in the following flow equation:

- Emergent interest in “Leadership for the Common Good;” leading to
- Discovery of the role of forgiveness in the quiver of strengths evidenced in resilient leaders devoted to accomplishing effective outcomes for the common good; leading to
- Exploration of forgiveness research that revealed explosive growth across academic and professional disciplines beginning twenty-five years ago from a formerly empty universe; leading to
- Recognition that little cross-fertilizing between forgiveness and leaders or leadership had yet been accomplished; leading to
- Desire to promote this conversation believing linkages could prove useful, even important, for developing effective leaders in the 21st century; leading to
- Constructivist methodology for discerning current level of engagement, understanding, interest and experience of forgiveness in a sample of “high profile leaders.”

The last point pertaining to methodology reflects several situational considerations:

1) I have a natural inclination towards a phenomenological epistemology that prompts qualitative research methodologies and substantial experience with interviewing, counseling, and otherwise eliciting information about lived experience from a wide variety of people;

2) I have a pre-disposition for reflective analysis and writing;

3) Given the dearth of scholarship on the intersections of forgiveness and leaders or leadership it seems useful to interview leaders in a manner that might establish a way to think about a current “base line” of understanding;

4) I have access to “high profile” leaders and it seems useful to take advantage of the opportunity. High profile leaders exert more general cultural and professional influence and taken as a group of meta-leaders adds a level of interest. Of course, no sample of this sort can ever represent the leadership universe, yet it might provide clues, leads and interesting content for furthering the conversation.

A phenomenological approach is an apt means for understanding the experience and processes of forgiveness (Black, 2003). As has been recounted in Chapter II, no standard definition of forgiveness among researchers and philosophers currently exists, and the literature reveals a broad range of viewpoints on the nature of forgiveness born from varieties of lived experience from divergent cultural, national, ethnic, and theological contexts (McCullough et al., 2001). Hearing the stories of forgiveness that include implicit and explicit interpretations of its meaning provides a rich contextual framework for receiving and digesting eventual quantitative results.

Phenomenological researchers must be especially conversant and competent with empathy—it is an essential tool of effective personal engagement and interviewing

(Bentz & Shapiro, 1998):

One gains understanding of an experience through empathy, coming to understand as the other with the aid of various tools that bring to consciousness the related elements of an idea, feeling or situation. Understanding can be gained by a study that includes empathic immersion. (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 99)

Seasoned phenomenologists are able to sensitively delineate their own empathic impulses with those with whom they are speaking/observing, indeed, this became a very useful part of reporting data. Of course,

To the greatest degree possible, the observer must act to prevent the data from being prematurely structured into existing categories of things [because] phenomenology attempts to rid us of ideas, which we sometimes take for granted, that we have about things in order to grasp them in their most essential nature. (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 99 and 97)

In arriving at a more focused understanding of methodology I was aided by Rubin and Rubin (2005):

Qualitative interviews are conversations in which a researcher gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion. The researcher elicits depth and detail about the research topic by following up on answers given by the interviewee during the discussion. Unlike survey research, in which exactly the same questions are asked to each individual, in qualitative interviews each conversation is unique, as researchers match their questions to what each interviewee knows and is willing to share. (p. 4)

Given the highly nuanced nature of forgiveness and the multiplicity of meanings and definitions people attach to it, as well as the diversity of leadership styles and understandings/interpretations of same, responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) was an appropriate methodology for gleaning new information about their relationship; it allows for a variety of interviewing styles yet incorporates what is standard in the field. Again, as Rubin and Rubin (2005) point out: “Qualitative research is not simply learning

about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied” (p. 15). That was an especially important element in what high profile leaders think about forgiveness given the diverse understandings of its meaning and its “usefulness” as part of the leader’s character and/or toolkit.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) address the length of time necessary for an effective interview. They express the opinion that “current research interviews are often too long and filled with idle chatter. If one knows what to ask for, why one is asking, and how to ask, one can conduct short interviews that are rich in meaning” (p.162). This provided some comfort given that Conkright (1997) found a number of problems with logistical matters when attempting to interview eleven “significant” CEOs:

Executives who had agreed in advance to 90-minute interviews would develop very busy schedules. By the time she arrived for the interview, some could or would only give her a shorter amount of time. ...Despite these complexities, she sustained her research and learned a great deal about both her subject and the methodology as applied to interviewing elites. Although I see in-depth interviewing as most appropriate for getting at the details of everyday experience of those in less power-laden and status-oriented positions, still the attempt to gain the inner perspective of elites is worthwhile and important. (Seidman, 2006, p. 106)

Interestingly, Irving Seidman (2006) describing Conkright’s (1997) research above believes that interviewing that is most useful and most valid occurs over a period of days/weeks in three 90-minute sessions. Of course, that sort of depth interviewing will provide the greatest opportunity for eliciting a much more detailed and nuanced picture (narrative) of individual experience than a 1-hour (or less) session could likely ever achieve. He describes with excellent facility the nature and processes of in-depth phenomenological interviewing. This researcher believes Seidman is largely correct in his opinion about the modulated beauty and information derived from such privileged

access. But that level of engagement is often not possible. With only a few exceptions I had less than an hour with the persons I collected in my interviewing process. But as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest, 40-50 minutes (and less, if necessary in certain circumstances) was sufficient to elicit useful content. My facility at focusing the conversation towards desired ends evolved over the course of data collection—I discovered emergent efficiencies.

Scholars (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Seidman, 2006) address power differentials in the interviewing process. Generally these are related to the interviewer having more perceived power than the interviewee. In the case of this study, as Seidman (2006) eludes above, the situation was more complicated. Conkright (1997) discusses how several of her participants tried to take charge of the interviews since they were accustomed to being in charge of situations in which they found themselves:

As she tried to direct the interview she noted that her participants became uncomfortable. In some instances the signals were nonverbal in nature and in other instances the participants verbally expressed that they would direct the interview. (Seidman, 2006, p. 106)

This outcome did not happen in this research. Interviewees were respectful, engaged and collegial in their demeanor.

In their manual, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, Rubin and Rubin (2005, p. 5) provide a succinct table using two dimensions—breadth of focus (narrow to broad) and subject of focus (meaning or description). The interviewing method I conducted fell out into two of their categories: “theory elaboration” and “oral histories/organizational culture” (p. 5).

Interviewers engaged in theory-elaboration research pick a specific problem that is examined and from that study pull out themes that have some broader significance. ...Oral-history interviews explore past events ranging from broad topics such as describing the war in Iraq or the administration of President Ronald Reagan to narrow concerns such as the events surrounding the shutdown of a chicken processing plant in Maine. ...Some oral-history interviews focus on elites, such as those who were in the cabinet of a particular president. (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 7)

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe something similar to theory elaboration as “conceptual interviews:”

The purpose of an interview can be conceptual clarification. ...The questions in conceptual interviews explore the meaning and the conceptual dimensions of central terms, as well as their positions and links within a conceptual network. (p. 151)

A special consideration in the interviews I conducted pertained to participant identification, matters of privacy and personal/public dichotomies. As I advanced in my interviewing preparation I devoted thoughtful consideration to the kinds of information I desired as well as implicit and explicit boundaries in the interviewing relationship. There was also the matter of how I identified myself. The fact that I am a “senior ordained minister” did not prove to be a complicating factor in both landing the interview as well as influencing the expectations of the participants, at least among those I was able to interview.

As further preparation I brooded on the phrase that described the question I wished to address: What do high profile leaders think about forgiveness? I developed a number of leading questions. In personal correspondence with forgiveness pioneer Robert Enright (2001) we derived the following questions for leaders:

- What is your definition of forgiveness?
- Where in your value system is it located?

- How did it get there?
- Do you ever implement forgiveness?
- What has been the process as you think about it?
- How influential do you think you are in your leadership role?
- Does forgiveness have purchase there? If not, why not?
- If so, what processes have you experienced? What outcomes?
- How would you describe your leadership style?
- Can you think of another person or circumstance as exemplar of the relationship between leadership and forgiveness?

The process of engaging participants was iterative. I maintained several leading questions at hand to advance the conversation into emergent threads wherever they usefully led. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) affirm, I remained alert to opportunities as they emerged.

I explored through interview and observation the meanings and experiences thirteen high profile leaders attached to forgiveness; I invited them to situate their life and professional context and the narrative of their process. My goal was to describe as accurately as possible the phenomena, refraining from pre-given constructs and remaining true to the observable/discernible information/data. I was interested in providing rich description while tracking themes and reporting clearly words, phrases, descriptions, observations, native context, ruminations, expressed philosophical/theological threads, etc.

I sought my participants by both direct and indirect contact, exploiting personal and professional relationships. To the extent possible I sought diverse persons by way of

profession, gender, race, etc., although the one overarching required characteristic was “high profile leader.” I was opportunistic based on availability/willingness factors of this group of persons. I also employed the snowball process with interviewees given their likely access to others who could be identified as “high profile leaders.”

In order to ensure appropriate care for the participants and essential ethical boundaries I provided an informed consent agreement that included the following:

- They are participating in research
- The purpose of the research is to probe the meanings, understandings and experiences they attach to forgiveness, especially in relation to how they exert or otherwise understand their leadership.
- The procedures of the research.
- The risk/benefit of the research: Minimal risk from the standpoint of power differentials. Benefits included: 1) adding to scholarly research concerning forgiveness and leadership; and 2) self-discovery of the “examined life” variety.
- The voluntary nature of participation.
- The procedures used to protect confidentiality, but also a stipulation for their permission to be “on record.”
- The participant’s right to see the transcript of the interview and to follow up with the researcher as desired. (Groenewald, 2004)

Since the phenomenologist is interested in letting data emerge, these conversations proceeded in an open-ended fashion for an average of 45 – 50 minutes. “Doing phenomenology” requires the capture of “rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998 p. 104). Unstructured in-depth conversation emerged

focused on the participants' experiences, feelings, beliefs, convictions, and understandings about the phenomena.

In addition to recording the interviews I took notes to capture any pertinent matters that I wanted to retain for further reflection including description, reflection, hunches, impressions, and feelings. These field notes informed the data that I analyzed and redacted.

After each interview I listened to the recording several times, making further notes, looking for themes and developing a coherent understanding of the individual's experience and context. This sort of interviewing "requires patience to make detailed recordings and validate both them and any interpretations with the source" (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 102). I received the narratives as unique containers of lived experience, but also compared them looking for larger themes, movements, impressions, similarities, and disparities among the leaders. While this transcending interpretive process began during the interview, I retained the phenomenologist's commitment to not allow premature constructs to interfere with data collection. The focus of the results included an accurate capturing of the individual narratives/points of view, validating each with the individual source. The richly descriptive capturing and analyses provided the content of Chapters IV and V.

In a clear, efficient, descriptive, and thorough presentation Black (2003) provides a kind of model in her study, "What Forgiveness Teaches Us about Research Methods." Her question: "What are an individual's definitions, analyses and theories about forgiveness derived from lived experience" (p.4)? She employs a constructivist variation called ethnographic interviewing of elders on the meanings they assign to forgiveness.

This was not completely correlative to my case, but close enough to provide a reasonable prediction of useful data.

Black (2003) describes in some detail how her interviewing methodology was an important means for discovering the manner in which elders attach meaning to forgiveness. The elder is acknowledged as the expert on his or her life, “as well as the pre-eminent narrator of her life’s story” (p. 4). She confirms that this methodology is especially useful for learning about forgiveness. Importantly, no pre-set definition of forgiveness was offered. Rather, forgiveness was to be defined by the elders interviewed for the study; in other words, making their own stipulations about its meaning, experience, etc. Indeed this was an important dimension of her reporting. “A premise of the research was that the word forgiveness has little meaning without linking it to an experience in which the elder forgave someone, withheld forgiveness, or was herself forgiven” (p. 4). The point of the interview was to capture the complexity of the participant’s perspective as well as their orienting frameworks. The interviewer sought to penetrate the meaning that the participant made.

Summary

In this chapter I have described the two principle philosophical schools of thought behind social-scientific research today, post-positivist and constructivist, and situated my epistemological stance with the latter believing that it was well suited to capture and report the subjective meanings, interpretations and definitions that people attach to forgiveness. Given the lack of an agreed-upon definition within and across scholarly disciplines, allowing interviewees to self-disclose their understandings was imperative for gathering useful data concerning what leaders think.

From the phenomenological matrix I delineated a methodology, responsive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), as appropriate for the group I interviewed, a close correlative of conceptual interviewing as described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009).

I have described the research process, the nature of the class of individuals I interviewed, potential ethical considerations, the kinds of questions that stimulated data gathering, and the nature of the rich reporting that accurately captured the range of response thematically and descriptively. I wanted to know what high profile leaders think about forgiveness without a pre-determined bias or theory concerning their engaged reflection and in the chapters ahead I report what I found as clearly and accurately as possible.

Lastly, I have presented a study (Black, 2003) that while not identical in form to my methodology, nevertheless provides a model that helps this researcher to formulate a method that will produce useful data.

Chapter IV:

The Interviews, Participants, Definitions, Content, and Analysis

Introduction

This research explores the meanings high profile leaders attach to forgiveness and its potential intersections with leadership. My animating question, “What do high profile leaders think about forgiveness?” has its genesis in the explosive interest forgiveness has generated across scholarly disciplines over the last twenty-five years with the exception of leadership studies per se, and my perspective that forgiveness has great relevance for leaders in the twenty-first century.

As stated earlier, I did consider the relative importance of interviewing only higher profile persons since my understanding of “leader” includes anyone who “has the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there” (Palmer, 2000). Nevertheless, higher profile leaders do exert a greater level of cultural and professional influence and taken as a group of meta-leaders adds a level of interest. I made no attempt to identify particular sets of individuals representative of specific professions or personal experiences. My sample was derived opportunistically: while seeking as diverse a group of leaders as possible within the constraints of time and geography, to whom could I gain access and a favorable reception? “High profile” refers to persons who are readily identified as visible leaders either by their specific formal roles or cultural place as thought leaders. Precisely because of their standing within their professional and cultural environments, gaining access to discuss the mere possibility of their availability for an interview about a

seeming esoteric topic like forgiveness and then arranging an actual meeting, was the most challenging aspect of this research.

Not everyone to whom I reached out agreed to be interviewed, including several potential younger leaders. One could postulate from my data that interest in forgiveness coupled with the self-reflection required to sustain an in-depth conversation about same was more likely found in a leader with more years of accumulated experience, although, this is only deduced as a result of listening to the stories of thirteen people reflecting over numbers of decades of their lives. I will say a bit more about this in Chapter V.

The sample of thirteen leaders I was able to collect includes men and women over the age of 55 representing a broad spectrum of professional roles and life experience. A few of these were well-known to me, several others I had encountered briefly and seven came to my attention as a result of snowballing. Their willingness to have this conversation might be framed as the root common denominator within my research group. In other words, to be explicitly obvious, I did not ultimately engage anyone who was not interested in the topic, nor have I accumulated any data as to why those who declined did not wish to have this conversation. In this sense, though I did actively pursue the leaders in my final group, they were self-selecting; they agreed to have this conversation and expressed interest in the topic. No doubt another study could usefully explore the opinions and reflections of a less agreeable group. So I state a limitation of my research here: I only learned what high profile leaders think about forgiveness from a group who found the conversation interesting, perhaps quite useful and even important.

One other note: there seemed to be no difference among the participants in their emotional and intellectual “presence” during the interviews. Whether well-known to me

or newly met, each was fully engaged in the conversation and accessed personal, professional and intellectual sources of meaning-making.

In all thirteen cases I was able to conduct the interview in person. Eight were encountered in New York City, two at a resort hotel in the lower Catskill region, one in Washington D.C, one in Charleston, South Carolina, and another in Omaha, Nebraska. In order to interview these latter five I traveled to their specific locations. All were aware that these conversations were “on the record,” and each was asked to sign a consent document (appendix A) that included this phrase: “I understand that my name will be used in the reporting, but that I have the ability to declare certain content confidential and unavailable for public presentation.” To that end, each respondent was provided with a copy of the transcript of our conversation. On a few occasions, a leader in the course of the interview indicated that something just said probably should not be repeated, in which case it was edited from the transcript. I also took care to edit sensitive comments pertaining to third-party individuals whose permission I did not have nor was I interested in retrieving, most generally in relation to extant family members. A few interviewees provided slight edits after receiving the transcript, one asked that a majority of the sharing be generalized—he had not realized how open his comments had been.

Prior to interviewing, I provided each participant with a one page “forgiveness teaser” (Appendix B) that helped introduce the topic and contextualize our conversation, in a few cases as a hard copy, but most as electronic transmission. While I stipulated my interest in what leaders think about forgiveness without front-loading a set of expectations, the teaser had an explicit point of view that forgiveness is an important matter for leaders to consider. I did not sense that this teaser overly influenced the

specific content and flow of our conversations, however. A number told me they found it very intriguing prior to the interview while several mentioned they found the topic somewhat confounding, if interesting, even after considering the brief introduction.

Each interview session began with an unrecorded exchange involving personal introductions, clarification of the purpose of the interview and confirmation that I was most interested in learning what they thought about forgiveness through the process of an open-ended conversation. A few participants did not wish to sign the release until after the interview, and one requested more time. After several days the signed consent was returned to me. After confirming these protocols, two digital recorders were turned on and the interview began. Each participant was highly motivated and professionally accomplished, clearly manifested leadership roles and seriously and energetically engaged the conversation. From the researcher's perspective, these were very satisfying conversations that ranged over a very broad expanse of human experience. The recordings were transcribed by an assistant to the researcher and stored electronically in a secure environment. After reading and editing the transcripts the researcher sent them to participants for their consideration and review. Most gave no comment. A few mentioned they were surprised by how much they had "opened up."

Participants

- *Brady Anderson*

J. Brady Anderson currently serves as Vice Chair of The Institute for Global Engagement (IGF) Board of Directors which promotes sustainable environments for religious freedom worldwide. He is also a consultant in international affairs and serves as Vice Chairman of the Board of World Vision (Seattle, WA). From 1999-2001 he was the

Administrator (CEO) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Prior to that post, he served as the US Ambassador to Tanzania. For six years he was with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an international organization that facilitates literacy and translation of mother-tongue materials worldwide. Ambassador Anderson worked in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. Based in Arusha, he traveled in the northern half of Tanzania doing socio-linguistic surveys. He speaks fluent Swahili. In addition to his linguistic experience Brady Anderson holds a Juris Doctorate, and before leaving the United States to work in eastern Africa, he pursued a career as an attorney in Arkansas prior to his selection as an Assistant Attorney General in the office of Arkansas Attorney General Bill Clinton. He also served as Special Assistant to Governor Clinton. The interview took place in the study of Ambassador Anderson's home in Charleston, South Carolina where the researcher was received with warm hospitality. I was introduced to him by a mutual friend.

- *Pamela Carlton*

Pamela Carlton is President and co-founder of Springboard—Partners in Cross Cultural Leadership LLC. Prior to this she had a long career that culminated as Managing Director, U.S. Equity Research at J.P Morgan Chase. Earlier she practiced law and was a member of the Bar Association of New York City. While at J.P. Morgan Chase she played significant roles in defining their corporate diversity policies. Pamela Carlton has had extensive experience beyond the worlds of business as trustee/board member of: Williams College; Yale Law School; Yale School of Management; Studio Museum in Harlem; Graduate School of the City University of New York; Ameriprise;

and New York Presbyterian Hospital. The conversation took place in my office at Christ Church, New York City. I encountered Ms. Carlton as a visitor to Christ Church.

- *Ann Curry*

Ann Curry is an American television personality, news journalist and photojournalist. From 2007 to 2011 she anchored Dateline NBC and subsequently became co-host of the Today show. In June 2012, she became the National and International Correspondent/Anchor for NBC News and the Anchor at Large for the Today show. Our conversation took place in her office at the NBC studios following a morning broadcast of the Today show. I was introduced to her by a mutual acquaintance. Though this interview was the shortest at only thirty-five minutes, she was highly engaged, very focused, and emotionally present and complete privacy was maintained despite the bustling nature of the busy television studio. Interestingly, the conversation occurred just days before the announcement that she would be replaced as a regular co-host of the Today show.

- *Donald Herrema*

Donald Herrema is currently the Executive Vice Chairman of Kennedy Wilson International; Director of Lepercq, de Neuflyze and Co.; Director at TD Asset Management USA, Inc; and a Senior Advisor at Stone Point Capital. Prior to this he has been CEO of the following companies: Loring Ward International; Atlantic Trust; and Bessemer Trust. In addition he is a Board Member of USC Marshall School of Business, Chairman of the Board of Whittier College and a Trustee of Christ Church (NYC). The interview took place in the living room of my apartment in New York City. Mr. Herrema is an active member of Christ Church.

- *Bob Kerrey*

Bob Kerrey (Joseph Robert “Bob” Kerrey) was Governor of Nebraska from 1983 to 1987 and a United States Senator from Nebraska from 1989 to 2001. Before entering politics, he served in the Vietnam War and was awarded the Medal of Honor as a Team Leader of a Navy SEAL unit after losing part of one leg. In 2001 a news story broke concerning the killing of Vietnamese civilians during a raid in 1969 for which he had command responsibility. From 2001 to 2010 he served as President of the New School, a university in New York City. In 2012 he is again running for a vacant senate seat from the state of Nebraska. I had an engaged conversation at Mr. Kerrey’s campaign office in Omaha, Nebraska that remained surprisingly quiet for most of the interview; privacy was maintained. Several further exchanges took place post-interview. Mr. Kerrey was introduced to me through a mutual acquaintance.

- *Richard Ketchum*

Currently Richard Ketchum is Chairman and CEO of FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority). Prior to this he had served as the first chief regulatory officer of the New York Stock Exchange; General Counsel of the Corporate and Investment Bank of Citigroup Inc; President of both NASD and The Nasdaq Stock Market, Inc. In 2010 Mr. Ketchum was appointed by President Obama to serve on the President’s Advisory Council on Financial Capability which is tasked with promoting financial literacy among Americans. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the non-profit network of public justice centers called Appleseed. The interview took place in my office at Christ Church of which Mr. Ketchum is a member.

- *Samuel Pizar*

According to a profile in the Harvard Law Bulletin (Perkins, 2005) Samuel Pizar is one of the youngest survivors of the Holocaust. After his parents and sister were killed by the Nazis, he was sent to the Majdanek concentration camp and later Auschwitz and Dachau when he managed to escape at the age of sixteen after four horrific years, all recounted in a 1979 autobiography, *Of Blood and Hope*. Eventually earning doctorates from both Harvard and the Sorbonne, he became an international lawyer first serving on President Kennedy's Task Force on Foreign Economic Policy. "His 1970 best-seller, *Coexistence and Commerce*, became a blueprint for Nixon and Kissinger's policies toward Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China. In 1961, Pizar was made a U.S. citizen by a special act of Congress. In 1974, he was short-listed for the Nobel Peace Prize" (Perkins, 2005). Samuel Pizar is the founder and President of Yad Vashem, Europe, located in Paris, France, a trustee of the Brookings Institution in Washington D.C. and the collaborating librettist of Leonard Bernstein's Third Symphony, *Kaddish*, which Dr. Pizar wrote in the aftermath of 9/11. As Dr. Pizar said to the researcher, this libretto is entitled, "A Dialogue with God;" he has now narrated it twenty-six times with the world's finest orchestras. A confidant of both French and American Presidents, and holding ambassadorial status he is a Commander of the French Legion of Honour, a Commander of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland, and an Honorary Officer of the Order of Australia. The interview was accomplished in the living room of Dr. Pizar's Fifth Avenue apartment in New York City where I was received with gracious hospitality. I was introduced to Dr. Pizar by a mutual acquaintance.

- *Steven Poskanzer*

Steven Poskanzer currently serves as President of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. Prior to this he served in a variety of leadership capacities in education administration culminating with twelve years as the President of the State University of New York, New Paltz. As a leadership researcher I appreciated the mild serendipity of having the opportunity of interviewing a president of Carleton given the extensive coverage Robert Greenleaf gave to a former Carleton president in his seminal *Servant Leadership* (1977/2002). Mr. Poskanzer and I both serve on the same board of directors of a for-profit business. The interview took place in a quiet and secluded corner of a large lounge in a resort hotel. There were no interruptions and the space was private.

- *Jonathan Tisch*

Jonathan Tisch is Chairman of Loews Hotels, as well as being Co-Chairman of the Board and Member of the Office of the President of Loews Corporation, its parent company. He serves on the boards of Tufts University and Tribeca Film Institute and is a member of the Board of Directors, Treasurer, and a co-owner of the New York Giants Football Team. He has authored several leadership books, among them, *The Power of We: Succeeding Through Partnerships* (2005) and *Citizen You: Doing Your Part to Change the World* (2010). The interview took place in the conference room of the Loews Corporation in New York City. We were not disturbed for one hour. Mr. Tisch is a parent at the school where my wife is an administrator and who arranged the introduction.

- *Alfred Tuatoko*

Alfred Tuatoko was a Colonel and Chief Operating Officer of the Fiji military. He served both in Fiji and in international peace-keeping organizations sponsored by the United Nations as an officer including stints in the Sinai, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Lebanon. In 2006 he refused to go along with the wishes of Fiji's commanding military officer to take over the government. Because of this refusal to participate in the coup he lost his position. "Coups leader Frank Bainmaramas' senior officers advised against a coup saying, 'We feel that the interests of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces and the nation have been overridden by your personal wishes' ...so he fired them" (Hunter & Lai, 2012). The interview took place in my office at Christ Church. Mr. Tuatoko is the father of a member who works for the United Nations.

- *Elisse Walter*

Elisse Walter was appointed by President George W. Bush to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission as one of its five commissioners in 2008. Under designation by President Barack Obama, she served as Acting Chairman in 2009. Prior to this her career tracked through leadership roles in several regulatory organizations. Elisse Walter is a member of the Academy of Women Achievers of the YWCA of the City of New York and the inaugural class of the ABA's DirectWomen Institute. She also has received, among other honors, the Presidential Rank Award (Distinguished), the SEC Chairman's Award for Excellence, the SEC's Distinguished Service Award, and the Federal Bar Association's Philip Loomis and Manuel F. Cohen Younger Lawyer Awards. The

interview took place in her suite of offices at the SEC in Washington D.C. where we were the only persons present. I was introduced to Ms. Walter through a mutual acquaintance.

- *Wallace Weitz*

Touted by Forbes Magazine (2001) as “Omaha’s Other Sage,” Wallace Weitz is the president and founder of Wallace R. Weitz & Company, a family of funds based on value investing. Frequently consulted in print and television media, he is on the Board of Trustees for Carleton College and serves on the Executive Committee of Building Bright Futures in Omaha. I first met Mr. Weitz in 1990 when we were welcomed onto the board of directors of an international education foundation. The interview took place in Mr. Weitz’s hotel room in upstate New York.

- *John Whitehead*

John Whitehead was Senior Partner (CEO) of Goldman Sachs when asked to become Deputy Secretary of State by President Ronald Reagan. He has chaired The Federal Reserve Bank of New York, the Harvard Board of Overseers, the International Rescue Committee, the United Nations Association, Haverford College, The Asia Society, the Hungarian-American Enterprise Fund, and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation, the organization responsible for the rebuilding and revitalization of Lower Manhattan following the terrorist attack on 9/11. The interview took place in Mr. Whitehead’s office on Fifth Avenue in New York City. I was introduced to Mr. Whitehead by a mutual acquaintance.

Interview Content

First things. I begin the presentation of the interviews with several general observations:

Though I am an ordained Christian minister serving a church in midtown Manhattan, I presented myself primarily as a PhD student interested in learning what leaders think about forgiveness. While several referenced this religious association in passing, only one directly assumed that would be my principle frame of reference. Whenever this matter arose, I gently responded that I was not looking for anything in particular from participants, only what they thought or wished to speak about in reference to forgiveness. I did not sense that my profession interfered or otherwise overly influenced how participants engaged the conversation, although, this was not possible to verify.

- All the participants reported that forgiveness was an interesting and potentially important matter to be discussing.
- All the participants, with the possible exception of Samuel Pizar, had never engaged an extended, specific, one-on-one conversation about forgiveness, even though it was clearly a part of their emotional, intellectual and spiritual topography. Most reported their interview was the longest conversation they had ever sustained about forgiveness. One said that recently he had been part of a men's group that discussed this topic.
- All the participants were fully engaged. No one was resistant. All interviewees were in location at the agreed upon hour. Each worked hard at understanding their own perspective as well as communicating and clarifying meanings. There was little lapsed or empty time. No one was bored or preoccupied; the topic clearly captured their attention and focus. Most said they were glad to have had the interview and some reported at a later date that the conversation continued to stir mind and heart.

- With the exception of Bob Kerrey, participants had a notably easier time addressing the forgiving of others as opposed to seeking forgiveness for self—it seemed more instinctively natural. Though Mr. Kerrey thought the construct of seeking forgiveness for oneself was faulty, he spoke to it directly as a matter of importance to him.
- The interviews touched a broad range of human experience: personal, organizational, and societal.

This last observation suggests a framework for reflecting on the highly nuanced and largely unstructured conversations. I set out to have open-ended encounters, that is, allowing respondents to address the topic without a heavily predetermined focus beyond garnering what they thought. I did, however, start each interview with the same question: How did the participant define forgiveness? What was it? Out of this catalyst energetic and thoughtful conversations quickly ensued that traced the broad human experience described above.

In the manner of the interviews, then, content presentation flows as follows:

- initiating definitions of forgiveness;
- forgiveness in personal relationships;
- forgiveness in organizations;
- forgiveness in culture and society.

In the next chapter, following a general discussion I will touch on a few individual themes such as, the “God” thing and religion; forgiveness and justice; forgiveness and vengeance; forgiveness and trust; and the role of memory, etc. I will reserve a

conversation concerning the connotations for leadership per se for a penultimate section in my final chapter.

The analysis emerges from the voices of the participants themselves. In this way a larger perspective can be gleaned linking methodology and content as the participants disclose what they believe is important to share about their experience and considered opinion concerning forgiveness.

Defining forgiveness. A difficulty in presenting participant definitions concerns the flow of the conversations. While most respondents provided the semblance of a coherent definition at the beginning, they spent the remainder of the interview unpacking, tweaking, or otherwise modifying and deepening their initial response. I believe this was principally due to the fact that never before had they experienced a sustained conversation on this subject. In effect they were thinking out loud with me, often forming their opinions as the interview evolved. However, the initial definitions do provide a reasonably reliable and, for the group as a whole, largely congruent set of ideas presented below with notations.

Stephen Bauman:
What is forgiveness?

Brady Anderson (Ambassador to Tanzania; CEO USAID):
Well, at first I'd say I don't know...maybe it's a...probably a lot things...but it's an effort to, in a relationship, to reach some accommodation so that two people or two groups can move on from perceived hurts.

Pamela Carlton (Founder of Springboard; Managing director JP Morgan Chase): I believe forgiveness is letting go. I believe forgiveness is acceptance of what is, and a hope of what can be together. Together, me and you going forward in some shared enterprise.

Both Mr. Anderson and Ms. Carlton elide connotations of forgiveness and reconciliation here. This dance occurs repeatedly throughout the interviews with some

participants stipulating that these can be pulled apart and others speaking as though they belong together. In Ms. Carlton's case it was not long before she said, "I think at the end of the day, forgiveness does more for me than it does for you. Me the forgiver." She mentioned a specific moment when she "was released from my incessant torment about a particular issue. And I had to let it go." She prayed to be released from the preoccupation but ultimately had no idea what it did for the other person. "I've never asked." Notice that there was no perceived reconciliation even though she had engaged what she identified as a process of forgiveness. Mr. Anderson maintained a focus on mutual engagement between aggrieved parties across fields of personal, organizational and cultural/societal contexts.

Ann Curry (Television Journalist):

I think it's having a sort of bigness within you so you are able to move on, by opening yourself up to the idea that others are no longer blamed for the things that made you suffer.

This idea of 'bigness' permeated the interview with Ms. Curry. Forgiveness fell within a framework of striving to be the best self one could be which, among a number of other things, included a capacity for forgiving oneself for not measuring up as well as forgiving others for the same. This sort of forgiveness does not relieve the pressure to still strive for something more. Again, the theme of letting go and moving on is intrinsic to growing into a better version of oneself.

Don Herrema (CEO and Board Member of a number of organizations):

I think for me, it would be where I have come to accept and acknowledge whatever the facts of the situation were, but have been able to move beyond the emotions of wanting or needing retribution because of it. On the one hand, let it go, but not necessarily disregard it.

Mr. Herrema touches several recurring themes expressed and explored in the interviews: acceptance and acknowledgement of the facts of a given situation; a

willingness to let go of the need for retribution or vengeance; a desire to move forward; and inferring a different relationship with the memory, i.e. “not necessarily disregard[ing] it.”

Bob Kerrey (Governor, Senator and University President):

I would say it is loving someone you used to hate, because I don't think it's an intellectual exercise. You're not able to replace one really bad feeling with one really good feeling. It's not complete. It'll erupt again on you. The hatred which I presume is what forgiveness attempts to cure is a consumptive parasite on the human being.

Mr. Kerrey, along with Mr. Pizar, and to a somewhat lesser degree, Ms. Curry, were expressive of the most intensive emotional contextualizing. This discussion of love and hate attached to the phrase, “consumptive parasite on the human being,” set the stage for a visceral engagement with the concept of forgiveness. What ensued was in part an unpacking of the meaning of love, it's relatedness to forgiveness, their antecedents, outcomes, and limits.

Richard Ketchum (FINRA CEO):

I guess I would define forgiveness as the ability to become aware of something that was done that was harmful to you and the ability to move on beyond it and to communicate the willingness to move beyond it to the person or persons who are responsible for the act.

There are several repeating concepts here from across the interviews: awareness and acceptance of the nature of the harmful act; the implicit desire and ability to move on; and the elision with a variation of potential reconciliation, i.e., communicating with the responsible person or persons.

Samuel Pizar (International Lawyer; Ambassador; Presidential Counselor) desired that I provide a working definition because,

Well, of course it depends entirely on what it is that is being forgiven. That's where the difficulty is. SB: So you're saying forgiveness is different in different circumstances? SP: Yes, do you doubt it for a moment?"

From this point Mr. Pizar chose to focus attention on his experience of the Holocaust and its aftermath as a specific case and he never provided a succinct definition. But something I observed while interviewing each participant was that most everything that was spoken about evolved from the topic. Perhaps that seems quite obvious, but my meaning is that whether or not a participant was directly addressing forgiveness per se, whatever they addressed arose as a result of thinking about forgiveness. In the case of Mr. Pizar, while he never defined forgiveness, everything he spoke about formed a dense penumbra of meanings and exploration with forgiveness at the center. I would find it difficult to summarize in a few words or a sentence or two the definition Mr. Pizar could agree encapsulated his opinion, but as I will discuss later, his own poetic writing might serve best.

Steven Poskanzer (Carleton College President):

I guess I would define forgiveness as the act of letting go or moving past a wrong that you feel someone else has done to you or your family or someone dear to you. And, by that act, this typically involves...some sort of conversation or acknowledgement directly with the person who you believe who has wronged you or the other, that you are trying to recognize what has happened, not forgetting what has happened, but you're trying to move forward, not standing still...I don't think it has to be bilateral.

Note the recurring themes and phrases: letting go; moving on; acknowledging the wrongdoing; engaging the other; not forgetting; moving forward. And at the end, a modification of the implied necessity for potential reconciliation: "I don't think it has to be bilateral."

Jonathan Tisch (Chairman of Loews Corporation):

Understanding what has led up to a certain situation or sensibility, and then thinking how you need to react going forward, and that sometimes the facts that you were focused on have changed...and it's probably not healthy to dwell on something that is behind you; it is more important to look to the future and make relationships more beneficial.

Shades of meaning beyond what has been reported thus far: a bit more emphasis on getting the analysis right concerning the grievance and the importance of focusing on the future as a function of creating a healthier environment/outcome, at least for oneself, but also generating more beneficial relationships.

Alfred Tuatoko (Colonel and COO of Fiji Military):

I really think forgiveness is about forgiving and forgetting. I strongly believe you cannot forgive a person without forgetting whatever happened. If, because you're constantly bringing back those memories, it will affect you in a very negative way, and it will always come between your relationship at one time or another. So my firm belief is that if you're going to forgive a person, you need to forget what happened.

Mr. Tuatoko's insistence on the importance of forgetting is anomalous in this set of conversations. In the course of the interview he referred to it at several points. When asked if he thought it was possible to completely forget something he replied that it was very difficult, that it was a process, and that as time goes on the wrong fades away; it cannot happen instantly. I did note, however, that when I asked about an example of forgiveness from his own life, he recounted in ready detail, although without rancor, a difficult familial relationship from his childhood and early adulthood. Quite clearly the account was not lost to him in the misty past; he naturally identified emotional and contextual elements. At the end of the story Mr. Tuatoko found himself helping this man financially then said to me, "So, I forgave the guy." Evidently his reference to forgetting the wrong is subtler than it first sounds. It seems akin to what other participants said about actually not forgetting, but establishing a different relationship with the memory.

Elisse Walter (SEC Commissioner):

It is a situation in which you continue to feel wronged, or that someone has done a wrong, but you decide to move beyond it and not have it affect your relationship with that person.

Here I will underline the obvious: these definitions are anchored in personal relationship. They do not first arise as a matter of intellectual consideration but from lived experience shared in concert with others. This is important because given the lack of a prior sustained conversation or deliberation about forgiveness, all the participants nevertheless could speak to its relevance in their lives as a powerfully implicit component of human relationship. They did not talk about it in their quotidian lives, but that did not mean it was not always floating in the ether enveloping all of their relationships as something to be acknowledged or not, and either employed or denied.

Wallace Weitz (Founder, Wallace R. Weitz & Co.):

I would say...it would be trying to understand what really happened, why it happened, and deciding that the bigger picture in relation to the other person is more important than the negative thing. Not to forget it, but to put it in a context that means not holding a grudge, or not writing off the person.

Reconciliation seems to be the byword here for Mr. Weitz as the natural outcome of the forgiveness process. A word about the concept of “process”: several persons iterated that forgiveness was very much a process. Mr. Weitz does not say that explicitly, but one could not accomplish the end of “not holding a grudge, or not writing off the person,” without going through stages of consideration. Indeed, he says as much by stipulating the necessity of “trying to understand what really happened, why it happened, and deciding that the bigger picture in relation to the other person is more important.” That describes a process for certain. Also, the preparation and execution of forgiveness takes place over a period of time. Mr. Herrema reports that in forgiving there is a time element:

“So, time, some recognition that the other person or party was coming from a different angle or direction to what occurred, than I was...that takes some time...it is evolutionary, sometimes that stuff happens faster than others; it tends to be faster the less severe the thing seems to be..”

Again, the word process was never mentioned here, but described. “Forgiveness is a process” was ubiquitous in the interviews and though sometimes stated, the implicit evidence was apparent everywhere.

John Whitehead (Goldman Sachs CEO & Under Secretary of State):
I guess I’ve never really thought of that before, but I guess it means you don’t allow anger at somebody you think has done something wrong or don’t agree with or believe in, you don’t let that affect your relationship with that person, and you do honestly forgive him for what he did to you.

“I guess I never really thought of that before...” Exactly. Neither had most everyone else. Mr. Whitehead’s definition is nevertheless rooted in the idea of reconciliation. He began the interview by reporting that he had been part of a men’s group for over thirty years that gathers monthly; several months before the interview, their meeting’s focus was forgiveness. He related that 1) everyone had an example of a bad thing for them to forgive; 2) they were in agreement that they should be in favor of forgiveness; but 3) there might be an occasional exception if the offense had been bad enough. Later in our conversation I learned that he had an example of this latter type situation from his own life experience. Evidently the group had an assumptive understanding of the nature of forgiveness and its definition, since, as Mr. Whitehead said, he had never thought about that before. Also, while they all spoke about something that had happened to them that required forgiveness, according to Mr. Whitehead’s recounting, no one offered anything they themselves had done that required forgiveness from another. This predisposition for identifying hurts *to* self rather than hurts inflicted *by* self was a standard frame of reference for the participants.

These initial definitions and the subsequent conversations describe a constellation of factors involved in forgiveness:

- acknowledgement that something bad and unjust occurred;
- acceptance of what happened;
- stock-taking of one's contextual situation in relation to the bad action(s);
- a desire to let go of one's attachment to the event(s);
- a desire to move into the future unencumbered by the past;
- a decision to relinquish one's need for retribution;
- a willingness to see others in a renewed light.

If direct reconciliation is desired forgiveness includes a process of releasing the other from bondage to the past so that a renewal of the relationship can be possible going forward. In these cases apology is generally required accompanied by a mutual acceptance and understanding of the event(s). Compassionate regard is extended. All of these factors are consistent with the findings of Enright (2001), Luskin (2003), Worthington (2001), and Worthington and Scherer (2003), several seminal forgiveness pioneers.

In all cases these factors describe a path into a better future. They are future oriented. Indeed, forgiveness seems driven by the movement from “what has been” to “what can be.” It is the means of traveling from here to there. It is not about healing the past, for that is not possible. What has been done cannot be undone. Forgiveness enables the creation of a renewed future.

Although I was not focused on proving or disproving my working definition of forgiveness as stipulated by Enright (2001, p. 25), these derivative concepts or factors are not discordant: “When unjustly hurt by another, we forgive when we overcome the resentment toward the offender, not by denying our right to the resentment, but instead by

trying to offer the wrongdoer compassion, benevolence and love.” This definition captures many of the factors described above, although, I believe that participants in this research would likely quibble over word selection and implied emphases. The word choices and emphases arising out of the participants’ own experiences are relevant to capture in this research as a necessary component of their meaning-making about forgiveness. For this reason the ensuing analysis will from time to time rely on the participants’ voices. In this way, the reader “overhears” their internal processes and enters the conversation.

Forgiveness in personal relationships. The categories of personal, organizational and cultural/societal forgiveness are rather arbitrary and somewhat inaccurate as stand-alone concepts. They bleed into one another in a fashion that is quite difficult to separate. For instance, from the standpoint of a person’s lived experience forgiveness is always personal and given it most often involves more than one person it is also organizational within larger cultural and social contexts. Perhaps it is best to think about an investigation of forgiveness as analogous to the consideration of the components of white light refracted through a prism—a coherent ray revealed as a variety of different colors and wavelengths. There are other colors in the forgiveness spectrum beyond the three described above, but within the limitations of this research these provide a useful way to present the broad bandwidth in human experience forgiveness covers.

Every participant addressed forgiveness from a personal perspective. Indeed, as the above initiating definitions suggest, the meaning ascribed to forgiveness is deeply embedded within individual experience. They knew it, experienced it, and learned about it as a seeming instinctual matter when negotiating the human world of multilayered and

multi-textured relationships. With the exception of Samuel Pizar, this is all the more remarkable given their general lack of focused analysis and conversation, deep sharing and intellectual engagement around this topic over the course of their lives.

Reflexive interviewing provided participants an opportunity to think deeply and openly with me. Indeed, I was surprised at the depth of their engagement and their willingness to speak candidly about personal thoughts, feelings and experiences. For this reason it is important to let them have their own voice and their own words as this analysis proceeds; this helps express, underscore and illuminate how forgiveness unfolds and interweaves in their lives which, in turn, becomes instructive about how to engage people in this conversation.

I asked Bob Kerrey how he learned about forgiveness, how he learned the word and what it was.

BK: Well, I learned it when I did it once.

SB: Right. Prior to that had you never done it?

BK: No, I'd say prior to that I was around it. Prior to that I had heard about it. Prior to that I'd read about it, but never experienced it.

The majority of participants reported learning about and/or experiencing forgiveness within a family context. Brady Anderson, Pamela Carlton, Ann Curry, Donald Herrema, Richard Ketchum, Steven Poskanzer, Jonathan Tisch, Alfred Tuatoko, Elisse Walter, Wallace Weitz, and John Whitehead all spoke about forgiveness within family settings over the course of our conversations. Some referenced learning about forgiveness as children within the family incubator. Ann Curry's reflection of how she learned about forgiveness expresses the interviewee's emergent self-awareness on this topic as she spoke with me:

I came from a military family, so values such as loyalty and honesty and respect and kindness and service are part of my upbringing from a very young age. My father's message to us was, do something of service because then and only then you'll know at the end of your life that it mattered that you were born... I think that forgiveness is not on that list, is it? But I think that it is part of that list, quietly. I think that...to have an idea of being a great human being...can only come if you have a practice that allows you to forgive. Because without forgiveness, you're stuck. And you're unable to reach out and be open to the things that are hard, like being loyal when it's hard, being kind when it's hard, all those things. You can only do those things with forgiveness.

This logic track flows from childhood incubation into notions of self, purpose and meaning. And for Ann Curry, the best outcomes are not possible without the salve of forgiveness which she believes has antecedents in how she was raised, especially what was modeled for her as opposed to what was explicitly said and taught about forgiveness.

Some participants described the necessity of forgiveness within familial relationships they themselves nurtured in their adult years. Several either said or implied that a forgiveness dynamic was a requirement for a successful marriage.

Brady Anderson:

I think forgiveness is important, as I've said before, so it's got to be an active part of my life...you know I'm married, so it seems to me that in a close relationship like that, I don't know how you can do it without forgiveness...it's just what I think. So yeah, there's forgiveness, mutual forgiveness, but it's really sort of a normal, day-to-day thing. I don't think about it.

This seeming unconscious, implicit, "I don't think about it," yet simultaneously affirming appreciation of forgiveness is quite expressive of how participants spoke of their experience on a personal level especially within their more intimate relationships.

Pamela Carlton: "I have to be honest, I don't think about it that much...I'm assuming I'm not terribly different than other people—we're not thinking about it." They were not thinking about it in particular moments, but now in reflecting on the content of their lived experience they realized it was present ubiquitously as an important component for

sustaining long-term relationships and healthy self regard. A number wondered about this lack of self-reflection, lack of a full-throttled engagement with forgiveness given what they were now coming to realize about its permeating presence. Indeed, that question looms behind this research.

Intermittently participants bumped against seeming limitations of forgiveness. Jonathan Tisch referenced an action that “hurts you at your core,” perhaps something to do with an intimate family member, a spouse or child for instance, and imagines that there may be no way to get over it. Even if you would like to set it aside, you are simply unable, there is “something in your being that will not allow you” to let it go, and implicitly then, to forgive.

Embedded within the dynamic of finding a willingness to let something go was an implicit desire to step into a future that was unencumbered by past trauma. But if there was something in one’s being that holds one back, the personal attachment to the hurt had great power. What seems at risk in this process for the participants was a diminishment of the significance of the terrible deed which had now become a marker in their personal identity. To forgive in this sort of circumstance would strip the experience of its all-encompassing importance in the life of the aggrieved.

This is different than simply a matter of seeking justice, or even of vengeance, about which I will have more to say. At this point, I want to emphasize the deeply sensitive personal nature of the forgiveness process, how it can absorb the emotional, mental and spiritual life of people who find that forgiving an awful offense may diminish their personhood and sense of self. The hurt is part of “who they are.” To give it up is giving up a piece of themselves. “I am my pain.” This is part of the emotional refinement

that takes place in the forgiveness process. It surely happens most generally unconsciously, but when a personal grievance is forgiven, the forgiver is choosing a new identity in the future, an identity that no longer has an attachment to the pain of the past. Given the experience of the participants, the memory is not lost, but the pain of it is released as well as the necessity to continually have that pain contribute to the description of one's identity.

Bob Kerrey identified a case beyond the family environment that provides nuance to this personal release. At the beginning of the interview he identified forgiveness as at the top of his value system.

It's the capacity to love. It's where it comes from. It's not, "Gee you did something bad to me and I forgive you." And then the door closes and you say, "Fuck him, I never have liked him." It's got to come from the heart. It's gotta be transmitted almost as a force, otherwise, it's not a cure. SB: How did you learn it? BK: Well I experienced it the first time in 1987...I was out at the University of Southern California, Santa Barbara teaching a class... I hated Richard Nixon because I thought he was going to end the Vietnam War and he didn't and I had come back and you know I didn't really recognize the hatred but it was there. I didn't recognize the hatred until I forgave him on a beach in Santa Barbara... [Having been governor of Nebraska] I had acquired a sympathy for him that I was being able to genuinely and authentically forgive him. And I know how it felt, the departure of that hatred, because it departed me.

There are several things worth noting here. First, this is clearly a personal matter for Mr. Kerrey even though he did not know Richard Nixon in-the-flesh. He still harbored tremendous feelings about Nixon and this was evidently a great personal burden. No doubt there were many catalyzing elements to this projected hatred—it was overly determined—but he experienced it as a matter of an enveloping personal hatred that in part gave identity to his being. In a sense it could be said he was his hatred in this matter. After learning the history of the war and after serving in an executive political

position he became aware of a larger frame of reference for understanding his past experience and feelings.

I asked if he knew what he was going to do when he went out to the beach that night. He said, “Yeah. I knew exactly what I was going to do. And [the hatred] was gone. Still is gone. It was like a demon in some ways.”

Another aspect of this episode was the conscious nature of his forgiveness. He went to the beach one evening with the express purpose of forgiving Richard Nixon. That sounds determinative in the moment, which it clearly was. However, he had engaged a process beforehand that led him to the beach. He had been co-teaching a course on the meaning of the Vietnam War. He had accomplished intellectual and emotional homework. He came to identify a hatred that “was like a demon in some ways,” and he chose to release it, to release the pain of it, to fashion a new identity for a new day, the very next day as a matter of fact.

The third thing worth observing in this vignette is that Mr. Kerrey did the work of forgiveness for his own benefit.

“The hatred was having no impact on [Nixon]. The hatred was having an impact on me. I was going to be the beneficiary of forgiveness, not him. I presume he was unaffected. I doubt that when he was asleep, snoring in New York City he jumped awake and said, “What was that?”

There was no reconciliation here between parties. None was required. But forgiveness happened to the benefit of Mr. Kerrey, nevertheless. This is important to mark when considering an operative definition of forgiveness. If it requires reconciliation with another, then what happened to Mr. Kerrey fell a bit short. Of course, it is also possible to add a metaphorical dimension to reconciliation when lacking an engaged dynamic with the focus of one’s animosity. I imagine this happens when a person is able to forgive the

actions of a now deceased individual. The reconciliation seems reflexive; one is reconciled at least to oneself. Actually, that equation seems operative in every act of forgiveness I heard about.

Samuel Pizar provided a vivid example of how one literally becomes their pain and hatred as an operational alternative to forgiveness. He spoke of an officer in the Polish Army who had been in Auschwitz with him. He lost his wife and six children.

After the war

“he couldn’t forgive. And not only could he not forgive, he couldn’t have breakfast in the morning as a free man without going and trying to find an SS man. Not normal Germans, not even soldiers, but SS. And they were easy to recognize because under their arm they had special tattoos. And he killed a number of them. And I tried to restrain him, but he couldn’t forgive this...it was visceral.

It was Mr. Pizar who began his interview by stipulating that forgiveness was different things in different settings. By that I inferred that he meant the severity of the wrongful action determined the nature of the potential forgiveness.

It depends entirely on what it is that is being forgiven...it’s very subjective. I have found myself in my childhood, in adolescence, in an unprecedented situation as the victim of what is no doubt the greatest catastrophe ever perpetrated by man against man. I’m speaking of the Holocaust...And it is terribly unforgivable. So in my case, the very status of my life, from the primitive to the summits of the human condition, I have looked at this and tried to handle it within me. And when I say handle, there was every reason not to forgive. In fact, I’ve often asked myself if I’ve had a right to forgive, because I lost my entire family at that time...At first the issue was how not to forgive, then the issue was how to live with it, and then the issue was whether to forgive, how to forgive.

At the most elemental level the Holocaust was intensely and supremely personal for Mr. Pizar. Elsewhere he referenced other kinds of slights and traumas, such as forgiving a close intimate like a spouse. This can be difficult, but it is on another plane. Still, when I

then asked what forgiveness meant in that sense, what is the forgiver actually doing? He said,

“The person is amputating himself in some way to forgive. But he or she, they are fighting with themselves, they are asking themselves whether it is really decent in their circumstances not to forgive...Is it the end of the world? Shouldn't one be generous? It's the introspection that is playing out within you when you say, let's let bygones be bygones...

While those matters are on a lesser scale than something like the Holocaust, I still note the requirement for an “amputation”—strong language for lesser things which seemingly sets an even higher bar for more difficult things. What lies beyond amputating a part of oneself? I do not know if he meant this, but forgiveness in this sense could become a self-inflicted wound. To forgive might then be adding a new personal burden? We did not have the opportunity to pursue this, but as the literature reveals some have wondered about the problem of re-victimization in the forgiveness equation. And then, if one understands oneself as a victim of man's worst actions against man what does the letting go in the process of forgiveness mean? How does one unravel the identity equation of that pain?

Mr. Pizar found an unusual outlet for processing these questions and it came later in life, catalyzed by a request made many years earlier by Leonard Bernstein that Mr. Pizar create a libretto for his Third Symphony entitled *Kaddish*. The Kaddish is a Jewish prayer for the dead but contains no mention of death. It is instead a prayer glorifying God and an invocation of peace. It could be said that mourners say Kaddish to demonstrate that despite the loss of life, they still praise God for the magnificence of all that is. It holds an honored place in Jewish worship. Mr. Bernstein originally wrote his symphony as a response to the death of President John F. Kennedy. Mr. Pizar had

declined the request but following 9/11 he determined to take on the challenge. Mr. Pizar related that Bernstein knew his own words

were too weak for the music, and he tried to cure it, but he couldn't. And he activated some very major literati in the United States, including Robert Lowell and others. But whatever they produced, he rejected. And then he said to me one day, "You must write a libretto." And I told him, never, because I could not write poetry that would match his music, because he also wanted me to narrate it, and I told him I couldn't narrate in public—what happened to my people, my family, myself... And most of all, I told him I didn't want to recommence my quarrel with the Almighty, because He was either indifferent at the time or not present; in any event, He was silent. And I say that with all due respect, you know; I'm not an atheist, nor am I a fanatic believer. So I told him no, but ten years later, after 9/11, I figured the world was becoming discombobulated again, and I felt more comfortable with it, so I tried my hand at it, and it took a long time. And in the process, I had to understand myself much better, and my relationship with upstairs and everybody else. Because what was I going to write about? Obviously, given that he had chosen the word, "Kaddish" and we were in the 20th century and six million Jews were exterminated, in that context there was nothing else that could have done justice to his music, and to the title. So I didn't really know what I was letting myself in for, but I went and took all of this and I integrated it into the score... SB: Speak to the connection with forgiveness for you. SP: You see, it was central to my theme. You fell upon me by coincidence, but it is central to this... It's a dialogue with God, not that He's participating much, in which I'm called into account... It's sometimes at the edge of blasphemy, but the audience understands... you see it's a Kaddish, an ode to life, because the Kaddish, even though it is the Hebrew's ancient prayer for the dead, it doesn't mention the dead—nothing. It is about life, peace, and the glory of God.

At this point in the interview Mr. Pizar began to recite part of his libretto that recounts a searing shaking-of-the-fist in a Godward direction revealing the deeply personal nature of his process of finding a way into and through forgiveness without losing himself.

There are other matters to be observed in this portion of the interview that will be discussed ahead pertaining to forgiveness in culture and society. For the moment the focus remains on the personal and the inner work one must engage to move into the future without the demons referenced by Mr. Kerrey. Notice the necessity of time in this process. Mr. Pizar could not consider writing the Kaddish in the early 1990s, but he

could ten years later, following another horror. This forgiveness evolution was an extended process over time.

After his recitation Mr. Pizar mentioned the matter of “whether or not I can forgive my murderers...those who perpetrated it... Did I have a right to forgive?” He then related how he wanted to forgive, how he struggled with that, how his client base evolved to include many Germans. “When I had to go to Germany I was asked to decide that with this gentleman, who seems to be more than seventy years old, whether I can shake his hand because I might already have had the honor in the past. You understand?”

I would do something to avoid shaking such hands, but without it being visible. Because with them I cannot forgive, just in case, and most of them were Nazis—and then there was the question of the new generations of Germans. Do I forgive or not? Can I hold the posture of guilt by association? They were kids, they may not even have existed yet. Can I forgive them, for what their fathers and grandfathers had wrought? I reconciled myself with it, and found that I could.

Notice the reconciliation to oneself. When I asked him what it meant that he forgave them he replied that he had to fight with himself not to be angry, “let alone violent.” He then spoke of several instances where he worked hard in the moment to demonstrate that he was capable of forgiveness. One involved a public speech in Stuttgart whose mayor at the time was the son of Marshal Rommel, the famous commander of the German forces in World War II in North Africa. Mr. Pizar recounted that in response to a question about his encountering dead Germans while still at Auschwitz he said, “So all I can say to you, Miss, is that if I ever had a thought of these things at the time, it could have only been, your dead looked so much like ours.”

Rommel stood up in the silence and said, “We have just heard one of the most important things that could have been said: Our dead and theirs look so much alike.” Why did I tell you this story? You know, you understand. When I was entreated to make this speech, I had forgiven the young students, the university students, people old and young, and I’m speaking to them not as an enemy, but as

a friend. And it took tremendous effort to do that. And I had to deal with myself and with the ghosts, who might have felt that because they didn't even have graves, that I could have done without going there. But being a gentleman...very few of us would forgive. It was Harvard, the Sorbonne, it was Melbourne, where they civilized me.

Forgiveness is revealed as a deeply personal process of internal peace-making in relation to bad actions allowing one to set aside the need for vengeance and then severing the addictive nature of identity attachments to the pain. The memory remains, but the future is open, not closed and pre-determined by the past. This theme repeats over and over in these interviews, from the recitation of small slights to the victimization of the Holocaust.

Something else is hinted at the end of the above vignette. After Mr. Pizar says that "very few of us would forgive," he states that he had been civilized at Harvard, the Sorbonne and Melbourne. He had emerged from the Holocaust at the age of sixteen as a very street smart, canny, feral, young man, ravaged by his experience; he could have grown up into a very different sort of person. I hear in his reflection that he had been mentored in the ways of forgiveness by others, or if not forgiveness per se, at least provided with a contextual framing that would allow for its emergence. Others played a significant role in the formation of his value structures post Holocaust.

From his and others' stories it seems forgiveness can be learned. It can be observed, mentored by others and one can evidently accept or reject it as an avenue for oneself.

I reflected briefly above on Ann Curry's experience with this in her childhood. Late in the interview, however, she told the story of a young African woman she encountered while on a journalism assignment and who clearly became a forgiveness

exemplar for her. The young woman's story is an exemplar for Ann Curry and for my purposes in reporting these interviews with rich description, an instance for discovering how forgiveness may be taught, or caught, or shared, or mentored. The young woman becomes our teacher.

S—was seventeen when she says she was kidnapped by the men who had just killed her parents. They took her and they chained her to a tree, and they kept her there. Then she became their sex slave, and finally, when they had no more use for her because her legs wouldn't work anymore, they left her for dead because she was not worth anything. Eventually she was discovered chained to the tree; some men came from the village and they rescued her and carried her to a hospital. When I met her, she was about to undergo surgery because she had been so broken by everything that had been put into her that she could no longer go to the bathroom normally. She was now 18, beautiful, shivering under a blanket, when she saw me, invited me to see her, and mute, both of us—I saw her shivering and I grabbed her hand. It was all I could do because it was time for the surgery to begin. When I came back the next day, she told me what had happened to her and I said, “Do you want revenge against those men who did this to you?” And she said, no, all I want is to rise from this bed, thank the people who rescued me, perhaps feel a mother's love again, and work for God... Forgiveness does not mean that you easily come to forgiving everything that happens to you or to others. It's a path and it is unforgiveable until she forgave. It was unforgiveable what happened to her, and yet she forgave. That's the lesson I think... that is the beauty and the glory of what's possible in our kind.

Forgiveness is a profoundly personal activity, touching the deepest aspects of human experience and our relatedness to others. It may even have an honored place in defining what it means to be human. I deduce that this, in part, explains the difficulty people have in becoming deeply reflective about what forgiveness is and how it is situated in their lived experience. To look at it full-on is to look into a mirror of one's soul or essential nature. In this sense, it can be an act of bravery. It is initially an act of laying-down-one's-arms, of disarmament; whether fully consciously or not, a choice is made about one's relationship to the future, and who one wishes to become. This is not done in resignation or out of weakness, but instead as an explicit attempt at creating

something different than what has been. In many cases it requires courageous strength cloaked in seeming vulnerability. This perceived vulnerability or weakness—in some eyes—will have a role in the discussion of forgiveness in organizations.

Forgiveness in organizations. I begin reflecting on forgiveness in organizations as represented by the thirteen participants by repeating my assertion that forgiveness is deeply personal. This means that when it occurs in organizations it does not lose this personal aspect. As I listened to the participant leaders I began to suspect that one of the challenges of linking forgiveness to organizations is precisely the personal vulnerability that seems to accompany forgiveness. The perceived disarmament can be seen as a weakness in competitive environments, especially certain business environments.

While assembling early data points in preparation for the interviews, I had a conversation with a leading corporate consultant on the faculty of a highly regarded business school. The consultant spent much of his time with the heads of business organizations. When I asked the consultant where forgiveness fit in with a business culture or within the leadership function, after an extended silence he replied that it did not fit anywhere. It had nothing to do with business leaders. I pressed different frames of reference and eventually the consultant identified interpersonal qualities, behaviors and attitudes among which forgiveness might situate, but he had never had a conversation with anyone about this. I became aware that he had sequestered forgiveness into religious/spiritual categories where it evidently held some meaning for him. But behind those thick walls it had no real role to play in his day-to-day work with CEO's. This sounded a resonance to the situation prior to 1985 when forgiveness was held to be primarily a concern for religious consideration before bursting into consciousness as a

matter of some importance across fields of interest. I should add this was not the case with two other consultants with whom I conferred. They both could see connectors between forgiveness and organizational leadership but until the present moment they had not pursued them.

Within the first two minutes of Donald Herrema's interview he mentioned that the topic of forgiveness could be threatening to some.

SB: Do *you* find it threatening? DH: I find it awkward. I find it to be a topic that I would think for many, including myself, is very complex...I think it can play a huge part positively or negatively in how one is motivated to do or not do certain things in sports, in business. There are times in business when you want to crush somebody who's done you wrong, and the ultimate benefit of that may not be commercially significant, but you're going to crush them anyway. SB: Because? DH: Because you were wronged or because you want revenge, or because you want to annihilate them and so they never exist again. Not literally, but maybe commercially...

That was an interesting place to begin. From there the conversation became quite nuanced and introspective ranging over family of origin, to current family, to leadership and organizational environments. Eventually he reported that he thought forgiveness was useful in his leadership. "I think people are more willing to trust me as a leader if they've acknowledged and seen forgiveness—whether they give it that word or not." But then, this exchange:

SB: So you feel that it has a systemic impact? DH: Yes. On the other hand I feel it can have a negative systemic impact if [co-workers] are aware that something's happened out there and our mission now is to crush those sons-of-bitches no matter what. What does that say if maybe you're now on the outside at some point? I think you're going to be wary... Let's say you work for me or you're a committee member on a committee I chair. I think you're going to be a bit more careful and guarded, a bit less willing to engage fully and openly if you think, "Oooh..."

This led to a deeper conversation about trust and Mr. Herrema's conviction that trust was an especially important value for leaders and organizations. "I think if [a leader] has

been forgiving versus unforgiving it would add to my trust level with that leader.” This led me to ask if he felt that leaders who value things like trust and forgiveness are ultimately more effective delivering product, whatever that product may be.

I suspect that most secular leaders don't spend a lot of time thinking about that one, which makes answering the question a little bit difficult...I don't think they are thinking about integrating those...into their leadership... I would say that virtually every leader will tell you that they do. I'm not sure that is how they act out or perform, however. I think they will tell you because they would believe that's a component that's *supposed* to be important in leadership...

Mr. Herrema then stipulated that matters of character were very important to his own leadership constructs and execution. He ruminated on whether or not forgiveness belonged within a roster of good character traits along with things like honesty, integrity and loyalty. (As a matter of course, a number of participants were uncertain just how to categorize forgiveness. Was it a value? A character trait? A virtue? Steven Poskanzer settled on “precept,” until the end of his interview when he modulated his opinion and stated that forgiveness was an aspirational matter of character.) The problematic is the balance point, or perhaps the relationship between what seem to be conflicting concerns: the desire for competitive advantage in a hotly contested business environment and a practice like forgiveness. The implicit question then is this: Can a leader have forgiveness as a high priority/value and simultaneously embody an aggressive achiever in an environment where one's opponents may need to be “crushed?”

I recall that a favorite cheer at college football games included the chanted refrain, “Kill them; kill them; kill them,” or on the occasion when a particular opponent was having an especially good game, the modified, “Kill *him*; kill *him*; kill *him*.” What the metaphor lacks in subtlety is made up in arousing passionate fans. In this setting winning is the point, but still, within a bounded field of geography and agreed-upon “fairness.”

Crushing one's opponent in sports has easy translation into business. This would seem to have even greater relevance in the military theater from which the language likely has been derived. Ahead I will reference the experience of Alfred Tuatoko as an officer with United Nations peacekeepers.

My conversation with Mr. Herrema did not cover the role of forgiveness within a business cultural matrix. However, Pamela Carlton moved in that direction as she compared the forgiveness potential with the quality of humility. "The humble leader is all the rage... And I think forgiveness traffics in the same area as humility, and humility is a prerequisite for forgiveness, I think."

SB: Do you see humility as a strength? PC: I do, yes. It's selfless, it's being a servant...And there it is, probably, the rough cut diamonds lying on the ground—forgiveness. But no one has identified it.

Thinking aloud she considered how leaders successfully manage to stay in the same business for twenty or thirty years. They will run into a lot of situations and people they have to continue to work with that will require emotional deck-clearing from time to time in order to continue in a shared enterprise. "You can't kill off everybody you have disagreements with along the way... You can kill off some, but eventually if you kill off too many, you'll be next." But,

Part of the culture of a great organization is where there's a lot of give and take, a lot of collaboration, a lot of partnering. And that requires some breaking apart and coming together. I think forgiveness is laying in there somewhere, but we just don't identify it in those words. And now, it would be really great, not to plump you up, for you to come and say this is what you've been doing. Some of what you provide is new ideas, new tools and skills and values to have people try on. But a lot of what you're doing is identifying something that's already there and giving voice and definition to it.

Notice here Ms. Carlton's sense of the implicit character of forgiveness, a kind of hidden, unsung component of effective human relationship within organizational settings. This

has congruence with the discussion above concerning the deeply personal nature of forgiveness and its reported implicit ubiquitous presence.

Ms. Carlton's interview followed closely on Mr. Herrema's so I had in mind Mr. Herrema's opening remark about the potential threatening nature of forgiveness. I asked Ms. Carlton about this.

SB: Could you understand why someone would think of forgiveness as being threatening? PC: Yes. SB: What is your thought about that? PC: Well, you know it's just not in the A-type, white—sorry—male lexicon personality, what is successful in New York, America, on Wall Street, if the person is in finance. So that's probably throwing out a lot of unfortunate stereotypes.... The nature of the threat is that it's soft—it is viewed as not consistent with the hard-charging motivated leader.

There was an echo of this in my exchange with Jonathan Tisch. When asked if he ever used the phrase, "Please forgive me," or "I forgive you," Mr. Tisch indicated that it would happen more likely in a personal situation rather than in a business context.

"In your personal life you need to use those words to try to help somebody get through a situation where you may have hurt them. In business, maybe because we're all so aware of our words and image, that maybe we're too "macho" to use the word forgiveness. It could be perceived as weakness...it's just not part of the lexicon.

On the other hand, Mr. Tisch remarked that he absolutely believed that "you can't really run an organization of scale, or any organization, without forgiveness...you would be just frozen." He pointed out that in the hotel business the entire focus is on the customer experience and that sometimes bad stuff happens. Therefore the hotel culture should be characterized by apology, forgiveness, and moving forward in a constructive way to affect the most positive outcome for the client/guest. But forgiveness is also necessary to keep an effective organization moving in positive directions. One cannot be hung up on what happened in the past. This infers that forgiveness is a very important implicit

component of a successful business, but it must not be spoken of or addressed explicitly for that could seem weak, vulnerable, perhaps opening a gate to a fresh attack from someone who might want to “crush” or “kill” you.

Richard Ketchum sang this same refrain: forgiveness is an uncomfortable word in organizations...you tend not to use it; other words are employed, like “let’s move on,” that are symbols that one has in fact forgiven and re-established trust in a person, but one just does not use the word forgiveness. Pressed a bit further on this point Mr. Ketchum said that forgiveness can seem to sound one-sided, that expectations can seem to evaporate in its wake. Does forgiving someone let them off the hook? Forms the subtext of this concern. How can forgiveness and accountability be held in tandem? This conundrum recurred in the interviews. Mr. Ketchum stated that it was definitely possible to fire an employee and subsequently forgive her without re-hiring her—going through the process of letting go and moving on perhaps even to the point of reconciliation. John Whitehead gave an example of a similar experience—needing to fire a highly placed individual and eventually accomplishing a complete reconciliation in the relationship.

Ms. Carlton is a specialist in cross-cultural leadership and played a key role in developing corporate diversity policies at J.P. Morgan Chase. Her comment above about white male executives emerges from this knowledge and experience base. In addition to these observations she also addressed how forgiveness might play out for women. She identified herself as an adept at helping women leaders get to senior levels of their organizations. Ms. Carlton believes that for a woman to offer forgiveness would require a commitment for an end to the bad behavior. “It seems to me that a prerequisite for forgiveness in any situation is that the wrong stops.” Eventually this led to a

conversation about persons who are not empowered:” minorities, immigrants, women.

Whatever, whomever. “

There’s such a duality of holding a grudge, holding the anger—does it sap you of your force or create your force? So let’s say women of [a financial services company] who perceive that there’s been this ceiling on their advancement, and they actively state that they’re forgiving the organization for keeping a lid on their progress. So I’m trying to figure out, piece through, whether forgiveness—the concept, not the act—even makes sense in that particular situation... I’m working through this out loud... And maybe I created a construct where no one really is at fault, and so forgiveness in that situation doesn’t make sense. Defining carefully, or defining specifically what is the wrong in the leadership situation is really important to identify and identify correctly because if you don’t you’re involved in these amorphous, undefined situations where forgiveness and apology—that’s the other side of forgiveness—doesn’t make sense.

There are several themes in play here but I want to highlight how involved Ms. Carlton was in trying to work out her thinking about forgiveness in this particular context where women have been stymied in their organizational advancement. She struggles with assigning responsibility—is there someone to forgive? Is there an actual person and if not, is forgiveness an appropriate way to engage the wrong? If the culture of the organization is such that the place of women has an implicitness concerning the glass ceiling, how shall the wrong be identified, addressed and challenged? This reflexes back onto her earlier comment concerning how anger or a grudge may generate a force for change for the disenfranchised.

Martin Luther King, Jr. seemed to hold both values in tension (1958, 1963, 1981). Sometimes the anger emerged but never at the expense of his larger commitment of reconciliation among the races and his insistence on maintaining a loving posture. For King, forgiveness was a necessary container for holding the force of anger and resentment lest the anger and resentment overwhelm the ultimate good ends.

Ann Curry's notion of "bigness" of character may be useful here in resolving the seeming paradoxes involved with disempowered people—their justifiable anger at bad behavior engendering a force for change while maintaining a relentless rejection of the status quo, and simultaneously refusing to see perpetrators as "other," less than, or two-dimensional figures who do not deserve some form of compassionate regard (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003, 2008). On the face of it, this posture seems searingly difficult and fraught with potential imbalances that could threaten re-victimization. Still, the perspective of the individual is crucial here. Forgiveness is a personal decision/event, as it was for the young woman Ann Curry remembered. It cannot be coerced or forced. Environments can be created to allow for it, but forgiveness finally must be chosen or rejected by individuals involved.

This suggests several potential implications for organizational culture and whether or not leaders wish to create environments that are friendly to the component factors that engender forgiveness, i.e., honest appraisal of what is; acceptance of what is; a desire to move into the future unencumbered by the past; a desire to create an atmosphere of compassionate regard; etc. These components have implications for forgiveness in society as well as organizational culture and the choices leaders make. Can leaders be strongly and aggressively effective in environments in which forgiveness is highly valued? Can a hard-charging competitor value forgiveness as a function of aspirational character? And even if this is possible, is it desirable?

When asked if she could see the value of forgiveness in her organization Elisse Walter responded, "Practically every day." She described an environment at the SEC that has been shaped derivatively by Washington politics since the commissioners are

political appointees. “Congress has become more and more polarized over the last couple of decades, and that is reflected in the nominees that are put forth... We have a wide variety of views on the Commission, and we also have a wide variety of views about what it means to be a commissioner.” In addition there are three thousand other employees that need direction from these diverse commissioners. Ms. Walter described the necessity of needing to move forward with people who do not meet expectations, up, down and across the ladder. Implicit throughout was a deep commitment to relating to other people with compassionate regard.

If you’re going to have relationships, I don’t understand having an on-going relationship with someone without forgiveness, unless you’re somebody with very low standards... I take people with their warts and decide, are there things about them that I value? And maybe that’s different than other people, but I think forgiveness is inherent in any relationship with a human being...

This comment captures a quality of how Elisse Walter thinks about her leadership. Even though she spoke quite directly about the problem of working with people who think very differently than she does and who execute their roles very differently, there was never a whisper about crushing and killing. (I observed what was said as well as what was not said. I am not able to comment on actual behavior since this study was limited to what leaders think.) The SEC has a very different organizational container than those within other businesses. Perhaps it is not possible to generalize about the demands of leadership in each specific organizational environment, however all thirteen participants representing diverse organizational fields reported that forgiveness had an important organizational role.

Among the participants Steven Poskanzer emphasized the significance of forgiveness throughout the entire organization of a successful college. Early in the interview he established a broad frame of reference for his consideration of forgiveness.

We live in a world where there are inevitable bumps and bruises, from the person who forgets to bring you the appetizer you ordered, to the person who calls you out but doesn't know what they are talking about, to the person who has been your fierce opponent on an issue, but you have to work with, say in Congress, or whatever, to the soldier who fights for his country while your child or you are fighting for yours. You can't go through life just accumulating anger and grudges and not having the kind of compassion that leads you to understand that other people are sometimes put in circumstances or are only human and make mistakes too.

This passage highlights the range of relational engagement Mr. Poskanzer believes has implications for forgiveness—from the smallest incident to war, and all things in between. I will have more to say about his reference to compassion ahead. This personal assessment of forgiveness' broad domain provides backdrop to his analysis of the ramifications for the college environment as a whole.

There are people that I work with, and young people that I work with, who do things that are wrong, that are hurtful, that tear at the core values of our community; and I'll start with the students and I'll work toward the faculty and staff... My college right now is residential, and one of the reasons I work there is that I believe in smart, young people having the experience of going off and being in a community with people who are different from them... An intense closely-knit community changes your life and leads to better educational values and makes you a better person. The very construct of that model almost demands, almost perversely seeks conflict, or disagreement, or at least an exploration of things that is going to lead...to behaviors that are hurtful or wrong, or because their brains are still developing, they're just stupid knuckleheads sometimes, and they do things that hurt each other and you have to make your discipline process be about education more than about punitive things. That's something the outside world doesn't understand.... Unlike the criminal justice system...this is principally designed to educate, and forgiveness is very important in that, because you can hope that you can educate so that people can still be part of the community and live and work and learn from one another. And forgiveness is an essential step. SB: It sounds like that without forgiveness your goal could not be achieved. SP: I believe that is correct in many cases.

Mr. Poskanzer elaborated by describing how forgiveness applied to faculty and staff as well. He noted that it was less educative in these arenas but a necessary component for deepening a bond of community. If people rehearse old wounds over and over they will not do right by students. “I can’t lead an institution if I can’t let go of the fact that five years ago the guy from the math department was a pain in the ass on one issue, but has got to be my ally on another issue to make something good. You have let go of things.” The theme recurs: letting go of the past in order to move into the future.

I suggested to him that the way he was speaking of forgiveness sounded rather utilitarian. He agreed by saying that the metaphor that came to him while speaking was “axle grease,” but then added that it certainly was more than that as well “because there is a cleansing, a self-edifying, self-lifting moment for yourself when you let go of something or you truly forgive something in the past—that goes beyond utilitarian.” Forgiveness benefits the self for certain, but also lubricates the larger organizational environment, even becoming an aspect of the education itself. This was the clearest depiction of forgiveness within an organizational setting among the interviews.

But there can be issues with and limits to forgiveness. For instance, as Mr. Ketchum mentioned above, Mr. Poskanzer feels that forgiveness can seem to be foisted on a victim with an evaporation of accountability. As example he discussed the problem with date rape on a college campus and the very difficult process of identifying fault in circumstances that had likely been greased by alcohol. Outcomes can seem unsatisfactory to victims where they have to continue to share the campus for the next three years with alleged perpetrators. “That’s not an easy thing for a young woman who’s still coming to grips with her own sexuality, who’s probably been emotionally

scarred by this whole experience... That demands a lot of strength and a lot of forgiveness.” Or not, I suppose, is the unspoken addendum. But if not forgiveness, then what? Additionally, this has ramifications for the entire college community. How can the whole college organism move forward without at least some form of an implicit forgiveness?

Mr. Poskanzer then discussed the matter of behavior that hits the wall of acceptability and requires automatic expulsion from the campus. Even in these cases, however, where explicit punishment is meted out, forgiveness can have a role. People change and grow up he affirmed, and can be granted a second chance.

At the end of the interview Mr. Poskanzer said that he found the conversation liberating because he had never really examined the subject before and he discovered that it

is constant in my own values, or aspirations, of the type of leader that I want to be, the type of person I want to be, and it’s not something that presidents talk about, and that’s not a good thing. SB: Why don’t they talk about it? SP: Because it makes them vulnerable. SB: So to talk about forgiveness is being vulnerable... SP: Sure, because if you’re talking about forgiving people, it’s an acknowledgment that there are times when you are disappointed and hurt by a careless thing and you are letting go of the desire for vengeance.

The refrain that forgiveness can be perceived as a weakness is sung with a full-throated timbre in the organizational cantata. On the one hand most leaders discovered in their reflection that forgiveness was a very important lubricant for organizations and the leadership of same, and on the other hand, it rarely surfaced as a matter of explicit concern. No one said it had been named as an organizational value, tool, strategy or aspiration; even Mr. Poskanzer, for whom forgiveness seemed such an essential component for maintaining a thoroughly effective organization, had not exposed it

professionally. Forgiveness is a vital aspect of maintaining a healthy organization that is well-situated to advance into a dynamic future, yet it remains behind the curtains lest misunderstanding expose leaders to the charge of being soft, or weak, or vulnerable.

Not skipping a beat in logic flow here, Fehr and Gelfand (2012) advance a promising line of thought and research concerning the “forgiving organization.” They observe that, “Twenty-first century trends toward globalization and increasingly team-based organizing ... suggest that the frequency and intensity of interpersonal conflict at work will only continue to increase” (p. 664). Building on the ever-expanding interest in forgiveness, they posit that it provides a useful lens through which employees can respond to conflict after it occurs. Are aggression and derogation the predominate expressive responses within a given organization, or apology and compassion? Until the present moment forgiveness analyses in the workplace focused on individual processes, but forgiveness can exist at higher levels of analysis, and they introduce a “new construct of *forgiveness climate*—the shared perception that empathic, benevolent responses to conflict from victims and offenders are rewarded, supported, and expected in the organization” (p. 665).

Fehr and Gelfand (2012) explore how forgiveness “is not simply a sporadic response to everyday conflict but a fundamental, emergent characteristic of the organization itself.” (p. 665). While acknowledging that the concept of a forgiving organization is counter-intuitive, even antithetical to business culture in the western world (which conforms to much of what was reported by the interviewees), forgiveness can nevertheless find purchase within an organization. This nascent line of research is very promising and flows forward in a congruent pattern with my data.

Forgiveness in culture and society. When shifting the focus from organizational life to a larger contextualizing frame of reference in culture and society several nuances emerge in the language and perspective of leaders, especially in the realm of diplomacy. I will address this shortly. First I want to describe what I mean when I speak of forgiveness in culture and society. From one vantage point, as I indicated earlier, all individual forgiveness events potentially have an impact within wider frames of reference. An obvious case in point concerns the personal work Samuel Pisar undertook to find a way into forgiveness. As described above his experience of the Holocaust was profoundly personal and the forgiveness he found led him into a future that was not dictated by the past as an individual man making his way in life. But obviously this personal work eventually had much larger ramifications, not least of which was his focus on international affairs, his contribution to pragmatic diplomatic outcomes and modeling how a person might engage their victimization in a way that opens a doorway into a dynamic future. Now holding ambassadorial status he was recently in Istanbul.

You remember the Anzacs [Australian New Zealand Army Corps], the Battle of Gallipoli—the Australians and the new Zealanders and the Turks fighting [in one of the worst battles of World War I in 1915]—I have spent some time in Australia after the Holocaust, and they asked me, it's going to be one hundred years... The Turks don't feel any animosity towards the Anzacs anymore. Do they feel it against us? And I have spoken to the Australian authorities about it, and they asked me to perform my symphony on the Bosphorus. They want to build a platform, five thousand people will sit on the edge, but they want it to be between Europe and Asia, on the Bosphorus. This is a huge project... This just came to mind – they actually told me on both sides that they want to bury the hatchet over that. And you see, at that point, the animosity becomes brotherhood. It's not just neutral.

Mr. Pisar's work with forgiveness has had large cultural and societal ramifications. The mere fact of performing *Kaddish* twenty-six times, with more on the horizon, is a global intervention on behalf of mature, unsentimental forgiveness. His autobiography and the

ultimate triumph of his effective life teach profound truths about how something new is possible in the future without forgetting the past, but relinquishing its fatal grip on endless waves of vengeance and retribution. Though not exhaustively, but very suggestively, these interviews confirm that all authentic forgiveness is personal, benefitting the individual forgiver, but then seeps up through layers of human relationship impacting friendships, marriages, families, colleagues, organizations, nations and finally global culture.

Brady Anderson discussed a diplomatic intervention between the Tutsis and Hutus in Burundi following the Rwandan massacre. The U.S. was fearful that another massacre could erupt in Burundi just like the one that occurred in Rwanda given the nation had the exact same tribal composition. “Julius Nyerere, the founder of modern Tanzania, was appointed by the international community to mediate peace talks within Burundi, so I worked with him.”

In those talks, he often would meet with them individually. So one group comes in, four, five, six people, and they come up with a long litany of abuse that the other guys have heaped on their group. Then the other guys come in and they—we’re talking oral history, these are people who live with oral history and they go back many generations—with all the horrible things the other group has done. So Nyerere reached a point where every time we came together he’d say, “We understand the history, I don’t want to hear the history anymore, you are the ones who are here now. What’s happened in the past is past, you’re the ones who are here now, you have children, and your children are the future... you’re imprisoned by your past. You keep bringing it up and so you’re removing an opportunity for a peaceful and prosperous life for your children...”and somewhere in there in the broad term of the definition of forgiveness—forgiveness has to be there somewhere between these groups of people.

Mr. Anderson explained that these groups thought in terms of actual extermination of the other. But reality dictated that extermination was a fantasy, an impossibility, and the diplomatic task involved helping the parties to accept that, to “accept what is.” An

underlying and recurrent issue was the problem of short term thinking in such settings. Moving towards forgiveness required a longer time horizon. There needed to be leaders who “are willing to give up something they have now, because if they think in the long-term, they’ll see we all will benefit from this.” Eventually Presidents Mandela and Clinton got involved and they pressed for an understanding that all parties were in this situation together and there would be no other way to make it work if they did not find a way to forgive each other.

Forgive means we may not hold each other accountable for what’s happened, like in the Truth and Reconciliation thing in South Africa. Nobody’s asking you guys to say it’s OK to slaughter each other’s kids, and we’ll just forget about it. Nobody’s saying to do that. But we are asking you to say, “OK, I’ve had some faultiness and you have too, they may not have been equal, we can’t get into that argument, so both sides have got to agree: yeah, me and my ancestors have done some negative things and you and your ancestors have done some negative things, but here we are today and we’ve got to stop it for our children. So the forgiveness means revenge has to go away. I’m not going to try to make my life better at your expense. I’ve tried that before and it didn’t work and you’ve tried it before and it didn’t work.”

Forgiveness in this context is very pragmatic. Actually, all the described diplomacies have a pragmatic, utilitarian methodology. Still, in order for forgiveness to take hold it must be chosen by the parties involved. It cannot be coerced. Coercion and forgiveness are antithetical. It can be argued, and persuaded, but never coerced since that inevitably leads to another kind of victimization.

Our conversation turned to whether or not forgiveness has different meanings between westerners and Africans. Mr. Anderson said:

One thing that strikes me: I think it’s accurate to observe that we are hyper-individualist and they are communitarian, so the integrity of the group is more important than one single individual. That’s a value they have that we don’t have. So anything that threatens the group, either internal or external, has got to be eliminated. ...Traditionally when groups have a problem the leaders will come

together and to preserve the group they agree to move away from each other. That's the forgiveness.

As the frames of consideration move cross-culturally issues of definitions and meanings sharpen when employing a word like forgiveness that is subject to assumptive understandings. A portion of the research that I referenced in earlier chapters has this as a direct focus. An emerging consensus seems to be forming around the universal character of forgiveness concepts, but also a realization that there are shades of meanings in differing cultural contexts such as the one Mr. Anderson observed above comparing western individualism and African communitarianism. Perhaps a focus on the specific factors that contribute to our understanding of forgiveness might help advance desired outcomes in specific circumstances. For instance, as implied above, focusing on factors such as accepting what is, and a desire to move into a future unencumbered by the past, etc. might produce creative movement without necessarily always employing the word forgiveness narrowly conceived. Indeed that seems the manner in which forgiveness was situated in these reported narratives.

Within the frameworks of larger cultural and societal realms the leaders I spoke with seemed less concerned with forgiveness actually being discussed “in the open” and were also less concerned with the labels, “soft” or “weak” or “vulnerable”. John Whitehead had a very significant career in finance prior to accepting the role of Under Secretary of State. When the conversation turned to that part of his career he very freely offered that

There were hard-nosed diplomats and soft-nosed diplomats (if that's the contrary), and I was the latter. And I thought if you had a harsh message to deliver you should find a soft way of delivering it and it would more likely be successful. ...There are many examples where the soft-nosed style produced results and kept the peace in the era of the Cold War—we had the threat of

Russia, the Soviet Union, having international nuclear weapons pointed at the United States, which if they pressed a button, they'd hit New York with a nuclear bomb in twenty minutes. It was a terribly dangerous thing...we had them pointed back at Moscow too. And in all my diplomatic meetings I would take a friendly and soft attitude toward the enemy, if there was an enemy. SB: Is forgiveness a soft matter? JW: Well, I don't know—it was a strategy... SB: Could forgiveness be a strategy? JW: Yes, I think it could be and often is. You're better off not to let some bad thing, like an enemy has done...last forever and make an enemy of that nation because something was done, by our standards, wrong.

Did we stray from a clear focus on forgiveness here? As I mentioned above, most everything the interviewees addressed flowed from our conversation about forgiveness. In this sense, most everything they then talked about had at least tangential relevance to the topic. If Mr. Whitehead believes that “soft-nosed diplomacy” flows out of my interest in forgiveness and his interpretation of same, I pay attention. It does seem to be contextually relevant and stands in contrast to what organizational leaders said about forgiveness in their respective environments.

I asked Mr. Tuatoko about his time serving as an officer in United Nations peacekeeping missions and whether he thought forgiveness could be a strategy for diplomatic outcomes.

Yes... In the peacekeeping organization, especially in Lebanon and Afghanistan, the people you would meet every day and talk with would come back and shoot at you the next day, and then they'd come back again and you'd start negotiating. There must be an element of forgiveness there; you must be able to forgive these people in order to continue to try to negotiate a peaceful solution. If you look at the guy who was shooting at you, I mean it's very difficult, to know that this guy sitting in front of you was the guy shooting at you last night, and he's here now talking to me about, “maybe we can fix this pipeline,” or something like that, I mean it's very difficult, but forgiveness needs to be there, you need to have that strategy to be able to continue the process of negotiation and finding a peaceful solution. SB: What about the issue of holding someone accountable for the bad actions... You mentioned earlier that sometimes you might have to discipline someone, but you could still forgive them. How about in this arena, where you have to hold someone accountable for the bad action but you've got to move forward? AT: I've experienced that quite a bit in peacekeeping life. When people who have killed some of our soldiers have turned around and come back to

us, and said they want to start negotiating a peaceful solution. And I believe it's not right for you to...hold someone accountable for something that happened, if there is a possibility for a peaceful solution here and he is a part of it. I think you've got to embrace that and forget about it. 'Cause if you don't, then this peaceful process you're working at, it may work but you'll come away from it feeling very bad, you won't have peace with yourself.

Honestly, I find this a bit disorienting and challenging to my own structures of forgiveness, justice and peacemaking. The mutual acceptance of "what is" seems to be missing. From the point of view of the individual peacekeeper it is understandable that one has to forgive oneself for the limitations of circumstance. Still, this has the feel of a "less than" outcome, even if a relative stasis is achieved. I asked, "And forgiveness is the right word for you, to describe the process of coming into that place?"

Yes, you've got to be able to forgive and forget what has happened in order to have this, otherwise you're sitting at the negotiating table with a lot of inhibitions. If you sit there with an open heart, the accountability we've been talking about, you must get it out of your mind.

This seems an excruciating challenge for the peacemaker in an ambiguous moral situation. Clearly a hierarchy of values is in play, in this case, peacemaking in lieu of an express justice that could seem appropriate in the moment; an occasion when leaders must give up a short term goal for a long term benefit. Not for the faint of heart. And the role of forgiveness lies embedded within, and to my mind, needful of extrication and examination. This was not possible to advance in these interviews, but certainly an obvious and important focus of consideration for leaders.

Another social arena in which forgiveness was discussed concerns political culture. Having worked within the political frameworks in Washington D.C., I asked Elisse Walter if forgiveness is or could be a value in that culture. She responded immediately, "It has to be..."and then discussed the reality of vicious political campaigns

after which opponents will still need to get along to accomplish any useful ends. In addition, there may be levels of forgiveness since a lot of politics is theatre. Still, even the theatre can create great hurt. Therefore, forgiveness seems to be a necessary component of moving on. “I mean, if you look at our sets of ex-presidents, and how they get along, even when one succeeded the other and said vicious things about that person... Yes, I think forgiveness has to be there.”

Indeed, the way ex-presidents do get along serves as effective public modeling of what seem to be elements of a forgiveness process, i.e., accepting what is; not allowing the past to dictate the future; no retribution; and a willingness to see others in a renewed light. Given that a semblance of reconciliation is often demonstrated the parties evidently release the others from bondage to the past so that a renewal of relationship is possible going forward. Expanding the frame of reference gives visibility to the larger American democratic processes that evidently create space for the factors of forgiveness to potentially flourish. Still, creating the space is one thing, choosing to step into it another. That happens by way of personal decision-making. A political culture, and politicians specifically, can always backslide.

Bob Kerrey moved the conversation into the realm of policy. This followed an exchange concerning the leadership of Nelson Mandela who Mr. Kerrey said serves as an example of what forgiveness can do. He then addressed the situation in the United States post 9/11 when in the aftermath of the catastrophe

the country had an eerie sense of purpose—unity of purpose. I think it disappeared because we got motivated by vengeance. We hated them. We’re going to go get the bastards. I’m not saying they shouldn’t have been brought to justice. Quite the contrary. But to be motivated by, collectively, by vengeance—it’s one thing if you’re Mali, quite another thing if you’re the United States of America... Vengeance is terrible foreign policy. Terrible foreign policy.

Vengeance is something that should be discouraged. And it's hard...you find yourself talking to a mother who just had both of her children killed by somebody coming into her house, whatever, and she wants to murder, to execute him. And closure is the description. We brought closure. But I don't think it closes anything. I don't think it brings closure. SB: What does bring closure? BK: Forgiveness.

He described a situation from his earlier days in Nebraskan politics that concerned the murder of a three-year-old child. The family was devastated, distraught and wild with rage over what seemed to them to be a light sentence for the murderer who was eventually released from prison after achieving, among other things, a college degree. At a parole hearing he said, "The hate in that room just gave you chills." Some years later he ran into the mother of the slain child at the Indian Reservation in which the perpetrator had grown up.

So I said, "Denise, what are you doing?" "Oh," She said, "I'm volunteering up here. I work in the schools up here because I think it's possible that maybe I can prevent something like this from happening in the future." Well, that's forgiveness. And you know she wasn't pinched...it was all gone...the hatred had left her.

Mr. Kerrey used this story to illustrate the inter-relationship between vengeance, policy, closure and forgiveness. I then suggested a thought experiment. I asked him to imagine he had been president post 9/11; did he see another option to what actually happened? He responded to this with alacrity as though it was not the first time he had considered it. (He served as President of the New School in downtown New York City from 2001 to 2010.) Mr. Kerrey described a very different kind of intervention in which the Middle Eastern and Muslim world was invited to participate in developing a brand new understanding of east/west relations given the unprecedented nature of what had occurred, challenging them to engage with us in finding a new way forward. Bring participants together at Ground Zero, ask for help in discovering the route from out of

mutual hatreds, “Because if we don’t stop it, it’s going to devour us. And it’s going to devour you more than us.”

I asked why vengeance was the chosen route for United States policy and he answered, “It’s easy. Vengeance is easy. It’s motivating...you get behind it, it’s an action, it’s clear, its’ black and white.” A discussion then ensued concerning the fact that forgiveness is far less motivating initially. Additionally, there may be reasons for physical, violent intervention. “At some point we have to kill Osama bin Laden. We shouldn’t want to, but we may have to.” From here he delved into a more nuanced conversation concerning tactics that could ultimately lead to a forgiveness outcome. He allowed that he had never tried to actually articulate this perspective inclusive of forgiveness with a group, or written about it, or spoken about it,

though I’m doing it at the moment...but that’s where it led, that’s where the conversation led...I suspect if provoked most people would feel something similar from their own experience of, “How’s that vengeance thing working out for you?” Not so good. You know the hatred still burns. You know, how do you stop it? You forgive.

Before I leave this conversation concerning forgiveness in larger cultural and social contexts I want to emphasize the importance of public modeling. When operating in larger spheres leaders have the potential to model and address values, virtues, or aspirations, in this case, forgiveness, with far-reaching impact. I was struck by how each of the above participants spoke of matters that had a potential to touch thousands and thousands of people, yet the explicit conversation about forgiveness among these leaders largely remained unexplored, or undiscovered.

Though we did not discuss this directly, I observe that a person such as Ann Curry has the potential to exert an enormous amount of indirect influence in matters such as

forgiveness by journalistic choices, how those stories are covered and how individual journalists present and invest themselves. I did not ask if the narrative about the young African woman was ever translated into television programming, but I could imagine that a thoughtful presentation surrounded by a discussion of the ambiguities of forgiveness and its ultimate selection would make a powerful contribution to a topic that still remains largely hidden from view, assuming great care was taken to not exploit—re-victimize—the young woman. Her autonomy would always trump the desires of others, even if those desires were for good ends.

In this way it is important to acknowledge how many of the participants found Nelson Mandela an astonishing exemplar of forgiveness in leadership. Perhaps Bob Kerrey said it most dramatically when he referred to him as

A freak of nature...in the best sense of the word. It's what we all aspire to be. It's a demonstration that perfection is possible...I don't know how he did it...but it's stunning when he came out of prison that he forgave everybody. And it was in his heart...and the power of it was global. Anyone who paid attention to Mandela saw, that man just forgave.

In all the participant interviews I heard an aspirational quality of striving for the better way. That is not to say they affirmed for me that they were going to try to be better forgivers as a result of our conversation, nor did I ever ask that. Nevertheless, I note that these were all accomplished leaders who evinced a strong desire for making a difference in the world and for embodying values, qualities and characteristics of excellence, balance, and maturity-of-personhood; they were situated in relationships, families, communities, organizations and society where by their own reckoning, what they did mattered and contributed to the common good. These, then, were all intrigued by the meanings, manifestations and potentials of forgiveness.

Chapter V:

Discussion, Limitations, and Implications

General Discussion

When I began this project I was not certain that leaders would be interested in discussing forgiveness. Given the historical predisposition that forgiveness was deemed softly religious and potentially sentimental, I felt there was significant possibility that leaders would not want to consider it in conjunction with their own leadership. Additionally, I had engaged several informal conversations with leaders and consultants that indicated a sustained conversation concerning forgiveness might stretch beyond the interest/capacity of many, especially within business organizations. I did suspect, however, that this would be personality dependent and as described above, there was a sense in which the leaders I was able to interview were self-selecting—they found the topic intriguing.

Informally discussing my interest with Richard Ketchum (FINRA CEO) over a cup of coffee one morning as I was formulating the focus of my research—at my suggestion we were meeting to become better acquainted for other purposes—he volunteered to be interviewed. Honestly, I was a bit startled to hear this from one of the most highly placed financial regulators in the nation, which, in retrospect, highlights an evident bias I was bringing to the potential research. This initial positive response from a high profile leader affirmed that I could find a cache of leaders who, if not fully similarly disposed, would find this an interesting, even useful endeavor. I was well-rewarded with positive responses from approximately two-thirds of the persons I approached. I did seek as diverse a company as possible within limited time constraints. With another twelve

months I feel confident I could have assembled a large, diverse roster of high profile leaders interested enough to engage the conversation, although, for the purposes of a study of this sort, thirteen responses representing a variety of leadership contexts and life experience/background provides an appropriate sample. More reflexive interviews would have swamped the parameters of a qualitative dissertation of this sort and less would have diminished the richness and depth of captured experience.

Therefore, a first thing to observe is that across leadership contexts the participants found forgiveness an invaluable component of their ability to competently make their way through their personal and professional worlds. To my mind, this is not a small outcome since until I did this research I had never heard or read leaders in sustained conversation concerning this topic: a growing avalanche of researchers, yes; leaders, no. An addendum: while specific definitions differed, their concepts of forgiveness had great congruence. A principle exception pertains to whether or not reconciliation is deemed the true goal versus only personal advancement/health/renewal. This dichotomy is consistent with the one found in the literature between, say, research psychologists in one arena and religionists or diplomats in another. (I consider someone like Desmond Tutu combining leadership categories. In his *No Future Without Forgiveness* (1999), forgiveness is clearly the engine to embodied reconciliation as advanced in post-apartheid South Africa.) Also consistent with prior research, however, authentic reconciliation comes as a result of authentic forgiveness whether or not it constitutes an actual component of the specific definition.

Though beyond the results of my interview content, I postulate that a shadow form of reconciliation—or perhaps a precursor to it—forms the goal of much of secular

conflict resolution and/or interim peacemaking. This often generates a tenuous middle-condition that could flow forward into something approaching forgiveness/reconciliation or backwards into cycles of punishment/retribution. Again, the concept of “process” becomes salient in analyzing participant perspective. Forgiveness never landed fully formed in direct response to bad action for these leaders. It always followed a sequential progression of deep, sometimes searing, reflection, emotional processing, and conscious (or semi-conscious) volition. We see this clearly in Bob Kerrey’s decision to ultimately forgive Richard Nixon and Samuel Pizar’s lifelong journey into deeper realms of forgiveness.

In addition to this the participants also reveal that a predisposition for forgiveness can inform their character and leadership constructs. I return to Ann Curry’s (Television Journalist) reference to forgiveness as “bigness” in one’s life framework. This sounds as though it has become a constituting component of character for her as it does in the lives and writings of people like Martin Luther King, Jr. (1958, 1963, 1981), Mahatma Gandhi (2008), Desmond Tutu (1999, 2004), Thich Nhat Hahn (2001) and Nelson Mandela (Tutu, 1999) as well as in the entire communal life of the Amish in Lancaster County (Doblmeier, 2007; Kraybill et al., 2007; Ruth, 2007) and numerous others described above. Elisse Walter (Commissioner, SEC) gave evidence to this quality in how she described her leadership, and by inference, most, perhaps all, of the other participants.

One recurrent pressure point with this concerns the perception of weakness. If one is known to be a forgiver, can one also be known as a hard-driving, take-no-prisoners, get-the-thing-done, high-achieving competent striver? Or does a forgiveness component to one’s over-arching character then suggest a different kind of leadership

formulation? Given the diverse leadership roles of the participants I postulate that forgiveness constructs are not antithetical to muscular or aggressive forms of leadership regardless of context.

As forgiveness formulations bubble up through personal, organizational, and cultural/societal realms it clearly moves from solely experiential modes into conceptual modes. Forgiveness is not only a way to negotiate one's emotional health and personal relationships; eventually it informs management and strategic precepts and methods. When Bob Kerrey (Governor, Senator, University President) reasoned that vengeance makes terrible foreign policy he has begun to consider options that arise from constructs emerging from, or at least consistent with, component factors of forgiveness processes. I will repeat again, however, that this has not been part of leaders' conversations even as Bob Kerrey and others confessed as they thought aloud about forgiveness in their lives and within their various organizational contexts.

This leads me to say a word concerning the age of the participants. As indicated above, every member of my sample was at least fifty-five-years-of-age. I did attempt to reach out to a few younger leaders but was unable to secure their participation. I have no way of knowing the reasons for this, just as I have no way of knowing the reasons several older candidates chose not to make themselves available. But I observe that factors in participant responses suggest that age has a role to play in how leaders think about forgiveness and that these factors revolve around the concept, duration and experience of time.

Forgiveness, as indicated by those interviewed, is a process that occurs over time. Time allows for the accumulation of both experience and reflective self-awareness even

as time provides a container for the inner emotional and spiritual work of specific forgiveness events. However, to the extent that forgiveness is an instinctual component of effective human relationship, even children will have access to its potential. If, as McCullough (2008) argues, forgiveness is written into our DNA, its potentials are latent in all humans. This helps explain how someone like the young African woman known to Ann Curry was able to forgive savage and brutal assault at the age of eighteen and, as a result, become a mentor to her elders. Yet, as an element of mature leadership I logically surmise more time generates greater involvement with forgiveness for the self-reflective leader. Samuel Pizar (International Lawyer, Ambassador, Presidential Counselor), for instance, has six or seven decades to consider how forgiveness factors into leadership and the broader human community. In this way one's entire life is a container for developing an understanding and practice of mature forgiveness.

Future engagement with leaders of all ages will reveal the nuances between accumulated life experience and intrinsic (perhaps genetic) forgiveness processes. In addition, this line of reasoning also suggests a role for engaged mentoring and cross-fertilizing among different age cohorts. The fresh perspective of experienced younger leaders in conversation with the durable and steeped wisdom of self-reflective older leaders could prove invaluable in developing a much more robust conversation about and appreciation of the factors and dynamics of forgiveness in leadership constructs. As indicated by the participants, forgiveness is susceptible to learning and mentoring environments.

My experience of this research reveals that open-ended reflexive interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) was well-suited to the project. Given that these leaders, with the

possible exception of Samuel Pizar, had never engaged a sustained conversation about forgiveness, nor had they ever attempted to define it, reflexive interviewing provided an avenue into uncovering their assumptive understandings and predilections. This form of conversation revealed that each of them believed forgiveness was an important component for sustaining and advancing competent personal and professional lives. In addition, while language and word choices differed a bit, there was great congruence in the elements that comprised forgiveness processes. Their descriptions of rich experience accompanied by first-person story-telling provided compelling equivalences across their different life and professional trajectories.

The experience of forgiveness processes is inherently phenomenological in nature and as stated above, Black (2003) argued that constructivist methodologies were especially useful for learning about forgiveness since the word forgiveness has little meaning without linking to it lived experience. My research confirms this point of view, although I am quick to add that this kind of exploration complements positivist research that examines component factors of forgiveness and its outcomes as a means of accumulating specific, objectified data for leadership constructs. My sense was that given the dearth of reported engagement with leaders and leadership studies per se, a conversation of this sort could stimulate further incursions on the topic of forgiveness among leaders and within leadership studies.

Let me state plainly that based on the responses of these thirteen diverse leaders, forgiveness appears to be a subject of great importance that has yet to be publicly named, uncovered, fully explored, understood, and robustly deployed by leaders. To the growing list of academic and research disciplines fully engaged in the study of

forgiveness, leadership studies should surely be added. Constructivist, positivist and mixed methods are all well-suited to helping advance our understanding of forgiveness as well as opening its closet door in the minds and hearts of leaders.

Summary of General Discussion

In summary to this point, the following general findings are gleaned from the thirteen participant interviews:

1. Leaders are interested in the topic of forgiveness.
2. Leaders find forgiveness an invaluable element of their personal and professional lives.
3. While specific definitions differ, there is general congruence on the component factors of forgiveness.
4. A basic definition of forgiveness may or may not include the concept of reconciliation as ultimate destination, but authentic forgiveness is necessary for authentic reconciliation.
5. A predisposition for forgiveness shapes character and leadership constructs.
6. Forgiveness is often perceived as a weakness or vulnerability in organizational settings. Rarely does it rise to a level of conscious, public or professional engagement.
7. As forgiveness bubbles up through personal, organizational and cultural/societal realms it evolves from experiential modes to conceptual/strategic modes.
8. Forgiveness has not been part of leaders' conversations, considerations, analyses and more formalized learning.

9. Forgiveness is a process in time which has ramifications for individual forgiveness events as well as in the accumulation of experience and wisdom.
10. Forgiveness is susceptible to learning and mentoring environments.
11. Open-ended reflexive interviewing is well-suited to uncovering leaders' assumptions, experiences and predilections about forgiveness and leadership.
12. Forgiveness processes are inherently phenomenological in nature arising within leaders' subjective experience. They describe it as an implicit component of their human nature and an important dynamic in sustaining healthy relationships.
13. Forgiveness is a subject of great importance to leaders that has yet to be publicly named, uncovered, fully explored, understood and robustly deployed.

Thirteen general gleanings for thirteen respondents. Again, these findings refer to only the thirteen participants within this study. While it is tempting to generalize beyond this cohort given the coherence and power of their experience of forgiveness, the best I can advance is that considering the bounded diversity of the interviewees the outcomes are suggestive for leaders more generally.

Emergent Themes

In addition to the summary findings above, several disparate themes emerge from the interviews. While intriguing and suggestive in themselves, I offer them primarily as matters leaders would find useful to consider and/or researchers may wish to study further in the context of leadership. Most of these already fall within the range of researchers. Leaders, however, are missing both as subject and object.

- Forgiveness and God

As I reported above, while I did not hide or otherwise attempt to obscure my profession, I presented myself to the participants primarily as a PhD candidate writing a dissertation on forgiveness, and especially what high profile leaders think about it. I told each of them that I wanted their own thoughts, feelings and impressions and that our conversation would largely flow from their own meaning-making. I was aware that I could not dissociate from my profession nor could I know how that might influence their own reflection on a topic that is often considered essentially religious or spiritual in nature. I was surprised that there was not more engaged conversation about this, but it rarely rose to a level of sustained interest or focus. When religion or God was mentioned it more often came up as a passing frame of reference. There were several exceptions: Samuel Pizar and his *Kaddish*; Elisse Walter told an extended story concerning forgiveness that involved religious identity vis-a-vis her parents' expectations of her; and Wallace Weitz (Founder, Weitz Funds) searching throughout the interview for a landing strip for his point of view, finally realized he was struggling with making sense of a transcendent sort of forgiveness, something that was pure and untainted by human desire or need. Mr. Weitz was attempting to understand whether anything less than this pure version was in fact forgiveness, or something else. This was not born from religious piety per se; it was more a struggle of positioning his frame of reference: God's or ours, and then, what of forgiveness?

All participants made at least a brief passing reference to religious/spiritual contexts, words or phrases. I do not know if this was ever offered for my express benefit, although it never seemed so; it never seemed gratuitous and always seemed appropriate

and expressive of something that was important to the participant. Nor did I generally pursue a line of religious questioning unless something that was said suggested it, but that was rare.

I mention this religious theme for two reasons: 1) the historical subjective predisposition for relegating forgiveness to religious/spiritual habitats; but 2) my experience of the interviewees—they expressed a non-compartmentalized, organic, and instinctive relationship with forgiveness that emerged out of their lived experience. In other words, they did not present the subject as primarily driven by religious conviction, but more as a matter of near necessity, as part of what it means to be a human being in relationship with other human beings. By inference I still realized that many also held to substantial religious points of view that had relevance for their understanding of the roots and imperatives of forgiveness. This is certainly true for me as well. But whether Christian, Jewish, agnostic, or even potentially atheist, all of them had deep experiential wisdom about forgiveness.

- Forgiveness and Compassionate Regard

As presented in Chapter II, Pumla Gobodo-Madikazela (2003, 2008) beautifully reveals that in acts of forgiveness, forgivers undergo a process of discovery that the focus of their hatred is a fellow human being. They lose their two-dimensionality. A counter-intuitive empathy for the perpetrator leads to the forgiver's ability to let the past no longer dictate the future.

The phrase that came to me as I was listening to the participants in this study was “compassionate regard.” In all cases where forgiveness was described and extended perpetrators were deemed worthy of consideration as human beings, flawed, but part of

the human family. Talk of revenge and retribution was always directed to those who were deemed “less than” and “other.” There is something quite mysterious in how someone moves from one side of this equation to the other, but the fact remains that when forgiveness is offered it is accompanied by compassionate regard. This does not mean that a victim “likes” the perpetrator, or comes to believe there should be no punishment as a result of justice processes. Indeed, as the literature suggests, it seems that often such justice outcomes or boundary-settings are crucial for establishing a sense of safety for the victim, opening a space where forgiveness can happen.

I believe this contributes to the conclusion that forgiveness may be considered soft, or weak. To some degree the shift that occurs in the forgiveness process can look like a disempowerment. If I now see the other with compassionate regard, I am also disarming my quiver of the retribution arrow. Others may perceive this as weakening one’s relative position of personal advantage.

- Forgiveness and Memory

Haunting the conversations about forgiveness are the memories of the hurt. They undergo a transformation within the experience of forgivers. The memory no longer holds the same power of identity-making. It is as though forgivers, in the actual process of forgiving, turn their attention 180 degrees in relation to the event; still standing in the same place, they shift their gaze from the past to the future. The event remains, but the forgiver’s relationship to it now seems to occupy a different emotional/spiritual/psychological geography. Indeed, it strikes me that this change in focus lies at the heart of the forgiveness process, however long it takes to turn one’s gaze from here to there.

It is important to notice that contrary to some common ideas about forgiveness, this is not at all a sentimental process, or a process that diminishes the actual bad behavior in its essence at the time the victimization occurred. The forgiver simply (or, not so simply) decides to be released from the memory's power to re-victimize over and over again in a relentless cascade. The victim seems to arise and say, "No more," and chooses to walk into the future refreshed and less-encumbered.

This relationship between forgiveness and memory was brought into high relief in the life story of Samuel Pizar and the Holocaust. He has invested considerable resources in establishing Yad Vashem Europe in Paris, France, as a perpetual reminder of the horror. Mr. Pizar believes that holding the memory is extremely important as a teaching tool for future generations. At the same time, he has found a way forward in which the memory no longer constricts his options, but instead now serves a much larger purpose nurturing the common good.

- Forgiveness and Justice

The interviewees did not generally address justice per se as a stand-alone topic, but nevertheless it lurked everywhere in the backdrop as in implicit consideration. Whatever to do with perpetrators? And how does forgiveness inform, deny or respond to matters of justice? As I thought about the participants' experiences, context was very relevant in determining whether or not specific justice could, should or would be meted out. As heard in the literature above, the critique leveled at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa is relevant to repeat here. Bishop Desmond Tutu paraphrased the critics: "Could it ever be sufficient for a perpetrator, someone who had committed some of the most dastardly and gruesome atrocities, to be allowed to get off

scot-free as it were with only a confession, a full disclosure” (1999, p. 49)? Again, part of the commission’s goal was to restore dignity to victims affected by decades of legally sanctioned racial separation—not through revenge, but in a morally responsible way.

Could the public confessions be construed as a kind of justice?

Related to this is Pamela Carlton’s (Founder, Springboard & Managing Director, JP Morgan Chase) insistence that in order for forgiveness to happen, the wrong needs to end. I may quibble with this as a universal assignment for all circumstances, but within defined environments it likely stands as necessary. (I do not wish to contest her point of view, but merely highlight it as something of interest and importance for leaders to consider.) As counterpoint, and as discussed above, the efforts of both Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. took place in unrelenting unjust environments and yet forgiveness was an overarching posture for aggressively pursuing justice ends in social transformation.

Justice has relevance in organizational issues as inferred by Richard Ketchum (FINRA CEO) and Steven Poskanzer (President, Carleton College). Forgiveness can seem to imply non-accountability for bad actions which in turn could have repercussions within the organization, perhaps even leading to a sense of re-victimization. But Mr. Poskanzer reasons, “A true and perfect justice from both parties should involve a measure of ‘what you’ve done is wrong, this is the consequence. Now let’s move on with more a measure of forgiveness.’”

Of course, as Bob Kerrey declared, maybe Osama-bin Laden needs to be killed. Period. In that formulation forgiveness is eschewed in favor of retributive justice. A robust on-going conversation about and analysis of forgiveness necessarily will prompt

leaders to consider the thorny yet crucial issue of justice as it flows through personal, organizational and societal contexts.

Discussing forgiveness specifically within organizations Fehr and Gelfand (2012) address how a “forgiveness climate” can emerge from three cultural values including restorative justice. Relying on the work of Goodstein and Butterfield (2010) and Okimoto, Wentzel, & Feather (2009) they “define restorative justice as a shared belief in the importance of resolving conflict multilaterally through the inclusion of victims, offenders, and all other relevant stakeholders” (p. 669). They further stipulate that restorative justice can be best understood in contradistinction to retributive justice, the most common model of justice found in western culture. The retributive model emphasizes punishment that restores balance by degrading the place and position of an offending perpetrator. Retributive justice keeps victims and offenders apart “while meting out punishment via a third party;” restorative justice emphasizes bringing the relevant stakeholders together for the purpose of healing where victims are included in the resolution process (p. 669).

I will note that this formulation conflates forgiveness with reconciliation, where reconciliation seems to be the end goal of forgiveness. That said, specifically considering organizational culture, a constituting component of restorative justice that involves the inclusion of victims in resolution/healing would provide a supportive context for every kind of forgiveness process, whether or not it led to robust reconciliation.

- Forgiveness and Trust

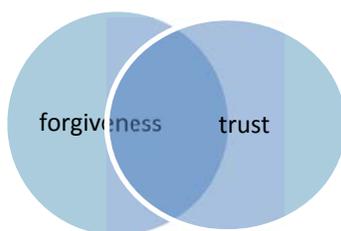
I specifically mention the matter of trust here, but this heading could as likely have been described as “forgiveness and the virtues,” or “forgiveness and character.” I

chose trust because it was discussed on several occasions among the participants as having relevance for leaders as they consider forgiveness. As described earlier, the interviewees had some difficulty deciding where to locate forgiveness in their values structures. Was it a function of character? Or specifically a value? What was it? One participant reported he thought it was not a value per se: “Forgiveness is not a value, but I value forgiveness.” Nevertheless, it was clearly an aspiration for everyone— something worth developing and deploying.

Since authentic forgiveness requires a frank assessment and acceptance of “what is,” integrity seems essential. Integrity is a correlative value to trust. Donald Herrema (CEO/Board Member of a number of organizations) reported that a person who witnesses a leader’s genuine forgiveness will likely find this trust-inducing.

Steven Poskanzer said that the relationship between trust and forgiveness could be described as a simple Venn diagram.

I like Venn diagrams a lot. Remember the ones you did in like fifth grade? So I think forgiveness and trust are like overlapping circles, but they don’t completely overlap. You can have forgiveness without trust; I think you can have trust without forgiveness. But I think there is an overlap.



A very simple construct, but his spontaneous response hints at ways forgiveness may enter and contribute to learning channels for leadership. I can imagine other matters related to forgiveness such as justice, or integrity being added to this. In response to a question pertaining to justice Mr. Poskanzer suggested that “you can have justice without

forgiveness. There are crimes that are committed and justice demands something be done, but doesn't allow, or there isn't room in the justice for forgiveness." (Osama bin Laden?) "But a more perfect justice would...include forgiveness."



Again, a very simple display, but perhaps it points to a method for leaders to visualize and consider various associations between forgiveness and other related topics.

- Forgiveness and Apology

While the function of apology was not mentioned by everyone, there often was an implicit sense that apology had a not-small place in forgiveness processes. Pamela

Carlton:

I get mixed up between forgiveness and apology. They're related, but they're not the same thing. So, I've had to say, "I'm sorry," a lot, and in those situations, they're contractual, and in those situations the other person either forgave me or not. In most cases, there was some indication of that: "OK, I understand, I forgive you, let's go on..." and in the particular situation I'm thinking of, it did release me from self-imposed guilt, guilt imposed by the other person. SB: What is the difference between apology and forgiveness? PC: I think forgiveness is much more difficult. And it requires me, the forgiver, to be satisfied with nothing in return. In fact, that's kind of part of the process. You can't expect anything. ...I think about the apology to the Aborigines in Australia, by the government, by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd... I guess in that sense there was no expectation of forgiveness of the other side of the apology, but perhaps there was.

Interestingly she tracks from personal to societal in this single exchange, which underscores once again the enormous scope forgiveness has within human dynamics and

how forgiveness always retains a personal element regardless of framework.

Forgiveness, and by deduction, apology, are always personal at minimum.

Bob Kerrey told me that he would never ask for forgiveness for himself. In lieu of that he said the best he can offer is a deeply expressed version of “I’m sorry,” because forgiveness must be voluntarily delivered and “that it cannot come as a consequence of a request.”

SB: Suppose you’ve hurt someone badly and you’d like to restore the relationship. You don’t say, “Will you forgive me,” but just, “I’m sorry?” BK: I’m very sorry. I admit I’ve made a terrible mistake, that I’ve done something terrible to you and that I apologize. I wish I hadn’t done it. Three possibilities: [First] the other person...says don’t worry about it. Didn’t bother me. I knew you were angry...I’m glad you apologize and I accept your apology. Second possibility is, “Fuck you, I don’t accept it.” And the third possibility is that they say, “God, you know I’ve been mad at you all these years and I can see there’s real contrition and I forgive you.”

Mr. Kerrey eventually discussed things he had done in the Vietnam War and how forgiveness processes “can never wipe the slate clean, which is what you hope, that forgiveness does. That’s why I began to think, well, it’s the other way around...it’s an act of extending love to somebody you’ve previously hated. It’s not receiving it, it’s giving it.” As for self-forgiveness he said that there was a process of contrition, a process of embracing the pain of that recognition, “but there’s no process that leads to ‘Whew! Got that over with...’ No. It’s not like the removal of an abscess tooth. It’s permanent...the feeling of the wrong.” This conversation evolved out of his reasoning concerning apology. Apology, the process of saying, “I’m sorry,” cannot justifiably impose any conditioned response from the other. It simply stands as is and others will respond as they will.

Richard Ketchum stated that apology was a first step in a forgiveness process, then linking with another emergent topic above, he added that “it’s the first step in gaining trust, because if you’re not willing to ask for forgiveness, then why should I trust you again?” (Options for interlocking Venn diagrams come to mind.) This led to a discussion of the apology Rupert Murdoch issued on behalf of NewsCorp described earlier and his observation that, “Everything about that felt contrived, and not real. I think one of the key things for a corporate ethic is to be willing to say it [apology] early and say it where you’re not saying it for political reasons or because a gun is to your head. And I think that it’s a great corporate challenge to be able to do that.” From this point he described in some detail the organizational ramifications of acknowledgment of bad actions and a capacity to offer apology.

Again, my interest here is not to focus directly on apology per se—there are many studies within leadership research examining apology—but as Pamela Carlton indicated, my interest concerns its relationship to the more difficult matter of forgiveness, the unexplored continent within leadership studies. Still, considering the forgiving organization, Fehr and Gelfand (2012) suggest that,

To break the conflict cycle, offenders must engage in conciliatory behaviors that signal their desire for reconciliation—most notably apology. Through apologies, offenders express both responsibility and regret for an offense... Forgiveness climates should directly enhance the accessibility of apologies through social learning and enhanced prosocial capabilities as enabled by aligned organizational practices. (p. 679)

The question of authenticity remains when considering apology, yet apology does set the stage for potential forgiveness processes.

- Forgiveness and Vengeance

Vengeance did not emerge as a sustained focus of the participants. Always an implied subtext, forgiveness stood as a polar opposite response to bad action. Perhaps the most graphic depiction of the contrast was Samuel Pizar's recounting of the concentration camp survivor who needed to find and kill a former member of the SS "before breakfast" each morning. As McCullough (2008) reveals, vengeance is a powerful instinctual response designed to preserve physical existence, but now threatens human survival in endless cycles of retribution. It often masquerades as justice, yet as Bob Kerrey said it makes terrible foreign policy. By obvious deduction I amplify this to say it also makes terrible family policy and business policy. It becomes a self-breeding menace. The intervention of forgiveness processes are likely responsible for the relatively non-retributive response in South Africa post-apartheid. Indeed, a principle interest in forgiveness today stems from its potential to lead to a future that is not controlled or dictated by past events. It is worth repeating: forgiveness concerns the creation of a renewed future.

Summary of Emergent Themes

The themes presented above do not exhaust all potential avenues for forgiveness research among leaders. Nevertheless, at least these seven arenas emerged in the interviews:

- Forgiveness and God
- Forgiveness and Compassionate Regard
- Forgiveness and Memory
- Forgiveness and Justice

- Forgiveness and Trust
- Forgiveness and Apology
- Forgiveness and Vengeance

Each arena could be usefully explored in further research among leaders. I want to emphasize again the importance of involving leaders in this conversation/exploration ultimately generating a dense nimbus of interest within leadership studies. Leaders find forgiveness an invaluable component in their leading, but it remains hidden from public view. The time has come for a full airing.

As though serendipitously—if tragically—underscoring these matters while writing these very words, a news bulletin came to my attention on television. The United States Ambassador to Libya was murdered by a mob of Islamic hardliners in Benghazi. Evidently they were incensed by an amateur American video posted on YouTube that made a mockery of the Prophet Mohammed and Islam. A mob also stormed the embassy in Cairo. Ironically, and again tragically, the US Ambassador to Libya had been an active supporter of the rebels who eventually succeeded in their overthrow of former strongman, Muammar Khadafy. The US Embassy in Egypt released a statement condemning the video which Mitt Romney, the Republican presidential nominee, blasted by saying, “It’s disgraceful that the Obama administration’s first response was...to sympathize with those who waged the attacks” (Reported by Fox News 9/12 /12).

The time is ripe for a hardier conversation about leadership and forgiveness among leaders and their relationship to retribution, power, integrity, trust, apology, God, justice, memory, vengeance and compassionate regard.

Limitations of This Research

This study was modest in scale and focus. I sought to discover what high profile leaders think about forgiveness. Constraints of time and geography necessitated a bounded, manageable sample of leaders. An obvious limitation of a constructivist project of this sort is the small cache of participants. It cannot be generalized to all high profile leaders.

This study was only phenomenological in nature and therefore does not share in explicit conversation with positivist results as would be the case in a mixed methods study. In addition, my sample was largely derivative of persons I knew or with whom I had at least peripheral contact and leaders they knew. They were assembled opportunistically by proximal considerations with me personally.

While the leaders represented diverse occupations and backgrounds, all participants but one were United States citizens. Three women and ten men could provide a certain skew in the results, although I was not aware of an especially divergent set of outcomes between genders considering the broad range of my focus. Of course, as the literature suggests, researchers have an interest in discerning differences and similarities between women and men (and other demographic constellations) vis a vis forgiveness. I have curiosity about how high-profile leaders may differ in response to a more general population. In other words, is it possible that higher level leadership roles might trump other demographics when considering forgiveness?

As indicated above all participants were at least fifty-five-years-of-age. Age was a limiting factor. While a few interviews extended beyond an hour, most fell within a forty-fifty minute time-frame, with the shortest one at thirty-five minutes. Available time

was a limiting factor. I did not account for other demographic matters beyond what participants offered in their interviews such as how they self-identified racially, although three indicated they were non-Caucasian, two of those being women; marital status; whether or not they had children; religious affiliation; and other personal identifiers. Within the constraints and focus of this research these matters fell beyond my scope of interest. Of course, other research may find these kinds of identifiers among leaders extremely relevant, even the explicit focal point.

Interviewing only “high-profile” leaders was built into the design. I chose to speak only with persons holding roles of significant leadership within their various professions. This choosing was clearly subjective.

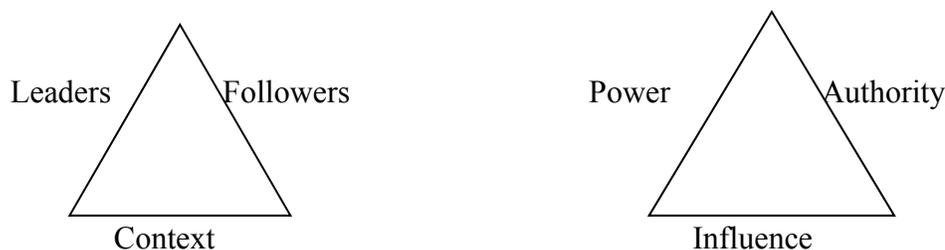
Implications of This Research

Barbara Kellerman, the James MacGregor Burns Lecturer in Public Leadership at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and co-founder of the International Leadership Association (ILA), released a book this year entitled, *The End of Leadership* (2012). With a great flourish of historical perspective she accomplishes a broad analysis of how leadership has evolved over centuries with a special emphasis on the last few decades and the concomitant explosion of leadership studies, institutes and training programs; she refers to this as “the leadership industry” and she is not enamored with the results of all this effort given the scope of evident failures of leadership.

Kellerman filters her examination through a couple of prismatic triangles:

- leaders, followers and context for one; and
- power, authority and influence for another.

(Following are simple diagrams of my own devising.)



In addition she remains unencumbered with definitions of leadership which she reports now number in the vicinity of 1500. She keeps it simple: “I assume that leadership development implies developing good leaders, and that good leaders are both ethical and effective” (p. xxi). One of her goals clearly pertains to naming the elephant in the room: Why are leadership programs not turning out more effective leaders?

Kellerman’s (2012) two prismatic lenses above seem very relevant for the consideration of forgiveness among leaders (I heard resonances with these throughout my conversations) and while I am not suggesting that forgiveness is a newly discovered Holy Grail for leadership, given the paradox of its evident importance for leaders in constituting sustainable, effective relationships and its simultaneous “hiddenness,” the time seems ripe for advancing its consideration among leaders. For the participants in this study forgiveness was an essential component of living and working successfully; it was an intrinsic factor in human relationships from the most intimate to the most contextually distant. Indeed, this relative importance is a principal stand-out discovery that then prompts this question: If forgiveness is so elemental in human relationships, why has it remained out of range of leaders’ attention and the attention of leadership studies scholars? Of course, since this study only involves thirteen participants a first order of business involves increasing the research spectrum concerning forgiveness

among leaders. A number of avenues of research have been suggested above. Again, what seems most important is advancing the conversation and research among leaders.

With this imperative in mind I perceive there may be a number of inhibiting factors going forward. The following “problems” surely do not exhaust the list of potential obstacles and they reflect the emphasis of my own biases and frames of reference. Nevertheless, these strike me as relevant constrictors to consider when advancing this conversation.

1. The problem of definition.

As I have indicated throughout this dissertation, defining forgiveness remains a fundamental issue. As this research was conceived I stipulated my own working definition as an orienting factor, but I was very interested in learning how leaders conceived and executed forgiveness meaning-making and how this fit into their lived experience. Given how infrequently leaders evidently discuss forgiveness, I perceived that seeking their perspectives allowed them to explore the emotional, mental and spiritual domains in which forgiveness resides. This created the context for the constructivist methodology of this study. As Black (2003) resolved, forgiveness has little meaning without linking it to lived experience (phenomena).

This issue of definition should be addressed in every sort of forgiveness research—positivist, constructivist and mixed methods. Researchers should clearly stipulate their point of view in this regard since too much of the research advances assumptive notions without explanation. Again, while I did not set out to prove or disprove Enright’s (2001) definition, I find that with an economy of language it manages to capture the progressive flow of past to future through the volition of the forgiver. Still,

as I write I am reflecting on Kellerman's (2012) lack of interest in a definition for leadership. Leadership studies have been active for decades and perhaps time has created space for letting go of a definition per se, especially when the universe includes 1500 options (although I note she still situates her point of view on "good leaders"). Forgiveness studies, especially among leaders, are nascent—the luxury of letting go of a definition is extremely premature. Understandings about its meaning(s), place, movement, components and deployment need to coalesce and a definitional musculature needs to develop.

2. The problem of self-awareness/consciousness.

In the section above entitled, "Owning My Personal Perspective," I state that I think many (most) leaders largely function unconsciously, that is, in a manner that tends to avoid an "examined life." I think the same is true for many (most) followers. This reality generates enormously complicated social and moral contexts. Given the intrinsic, deeply embedded nature of forgiveness in human experience, research about same requires leaders who are willing to "know themselves." As I have indicated elsewhere the leaders I spoke with were accommodating to this requirement, and in this sense they self-selected. I imagine other leaders will be less amenable to traveling the paths forgiveness opens before them due to the seeming personal work that likely will be required.

I note here that within certain strains of leadership studies there is an interest in the issue of leader self-awareness. I think particularly about "authentic leadership" as described by William George (2003) who makes a very compelling case for a leader's relentless commitment to self-examination that begins with understanding one's

emergent life story. When considering forgiveness, the old adage, “physician, know/heal thyself,” seems a congruent leadership aphorism. According to George, leaders with the greatest impact over time are those who prioritize this personal work as a matter of creating professional as well as personal competencies. A leader grows character while integrating a maturing self-awareness. This leadership formulation seems especially compatible with a leader’s emergent understanding and implementation of forgiveness processes.

All of the participants in this research accessed historical material from their lives, both personal and professional, in order to make meaning of forgiveness. Indeed, I was impressed by their commitment to think aloud with me, to elicit their own nuanced reflection. As they revealed emergent forgiveness understandings over the decades of their lives, they described a process of evolving personal growth and character. I could envision that helping leaders to grow their forgiveness muscles would involve interviews/conversations that induced deep reflection upon their life stories from a forgiveness perspective, not dissimilar from those I conducted.

3. The problem of intimacy.

Intimacy is not a perfect word to describe my intention, but the issue concerns the deeply personal nature of forgiveness. Though it has value in conversations at arm’s length from leaders, forgiveness clearly touches profoundly sensitive areas of human experience. Even within the limitations of our conversations, I was surprised at how willingly the participants shared deeply personal feelings and stories. Never presumptive of their goodwill, I nevertheless walked with them wherever they led in the conversation. We often developed an intimate space of personal regard since forgiveness turns out to be

so important in human relationships. This may prove a stumbling block for many. Forgiveness conversation holds the potential of opening areas of powerful unresolved issues, but this also points to one of its glories—the hope for a renewed future unencumbered by the past.

Again, authentic leadership (George, 2003) could provide a useful context for understanding the work involved in growing leaders who are willing to go the distance in developing a healthy emotional perspective that in turn allows for a deepening appreciation for authentic forgiveness. It is probably no accident that forgiveness studies were birthed in research psychology.

4. The problem of seeming weakness.

As I discovered in the interviews, perceived weakness greatly inhibits leaders' willingness and ability to lift up forgiveness for public and organizational consideration. I suspect this also has ramifications in personal matters, although participants did not name that. While it is tempting to over-generalize from my findings on this point, I simply suggest here that this perception of weakness will impact future research and conversations involving leaders and forgiveness and should likely become a focus of research.

5. The problem of time.

This problem has several facets. First, forgiveness is a process in time. This process has dimensionality and nuance. There are a variety of components. I am reminded of the process of grief that is popularly known to include such things as denial, anger, acceptance, etc. Eventually these came to be understood as non-linear, but nevertheless often present as component factors of an individual's ability to move from

the shock of loss to a future imbued with hope. Forgiveness has resonance with this kind of process. Second, this suggests that forgiveness is not a short-term intervention. Instead, it is a long-term intervention (if intervention is the right word). Quick fix leaders will never find forgiveness in their toolkits. Third, forgiveness, while likely an intrinsic biological instinct, also matures over time. It can become a potential within human wisdom. Wisdom is not on all leaders' to-do lists. Nelson Mandela is an exemplar for all three facets.

Here it may be useful to remember the work of Heifetz (1994) and his formulation of adaptive leadership.

Leaders must adapt to circumstance as it evolves but at the same time leadership must not only meet the needs of followers, but also must elevate them... Hitler wielded power, but he did not lead. He played to people's basest needs and fears... [He avoided] tough realities. By providing illusions of grandeur, internal scapegoats, and external enemies, Hitler misdiagnosed Germany's ills and brought his nation to disaster. (p. 24)

Effective adaptation takes place over time in all of the ways mentioned above. Considering Mandela as an exemplar for adaptive leadership we witness his personal evolution over time, his growth in wisdom and character, and his ability to elevate followers. He accomplished the opposite of what Heifetz (1994) describes as Hitler's so-called leadership, and to my purposes here, developed a profound methodology of statecraft embedded with forgiveness processes.

Forgiveness, as with adaptive leadership, requires a relentless commitment to what is, to the actual facts, to embrace and understand them, and then formulate a way forward over time that in the process elevates those involved. Every description of forgiveness discussed in this research fits this general profile, or points in this direction.

Heifetz (1994) describes five strategic principles for adaptive leadership that clearly define a process in time: 1) Identifying the adaptive challenge; 2) Keeping the level of distress within a tolerable range for doing adaptive work; 3) Focusing attention on ripening issues and not on stress-reducing distractions; 4) Giving the work back to people, at a rate they can stand; and 5) Protecting voices of leadership without authority (p. 128). Each of these components could be reworded with forgiveness in mind as the operative methodology for adaptation. In this way forgiveness can be seen not as a brand-spanking new way of conceiving of the leadership project, but a further refining and deepening of work that anticipates a next level awareness.

6. The problem of addiction to the past.

As the interviews confirmed, the process of forgiveness is oriented towards the future. The lack of forgiveness invariably involves an attachment to the past. The results strongly suggest that attachments to the past are related with how a person understands and forms his/her identity. The perceived disempowerment/loss that could come with letting go of this attachment is a crucial inhibitor. Could the attachment to the pain of the past with the chronic denial of one's renewed future be understood and treated as an addiction, in fact? Was Nelson Mandela disempowered by adopting a posture of forgiveness? These questions underscore the important dimension of how the past serves future hope and the volition that is necessary in selecting for it.

Adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 1994) provides a potential corrective in its insistence to adequately name and understand what is and then focus on an appropriate adaptation for moving forward while elevating those involved. Any leadership environment can be compromised by an unwillingness to either see circumstance

correctly or move adaptively into the future. When considering forgiveness processes, the past can attract and sustain an unholy allegiance that cripples forward movement.

7. The problem of personal and organizational accountability.

Forgiveness involves an honest acceptance of what is. On either side of the forgiveness equation authentic forgiveness requires

- acceptance of what happened;
- stock-taking of one's contextual situation in relation to the bad action(s);
- a desire to let go of one's attachment to the event(s);
- a desire to move into the future unencumbered by the past;
- a decision to relinquish one's need for retribution;
- a willingness to see others in a renewed light.

All of these factors are derived from a willingness to be held accountable for one's actions and the health and vitality of one's context. Accountability is a slippery concept among leaders, often in play as a matter of strategic advantage. I noted that participants in this study were more apt to apologize or ask for forgiveness in personal settings. As the context moved into organizational settings the "weakness factor" came into play and I suspect that accountability is entwined with vulnerability in a negative relationship.

These forgiveness factors, however, prompt consideration of another leadership construct that seems to have stood the test of time: servant leadership. As first conceived by Robert Greenleaf (1977/2002) this kind of leadership is characterized by this thesis: "caring for persons, the more able and the less able serving each other, is the rock upon which a good society is built" (p. 62). And note this: "A qualification for leadership is that one can tolerate a sustained wide span of awareness so that one better 'sees it as it is'

(p. 41). Rooted in humility and principled leadership Greenleaf's formulation predates Heifetz's (1994) adaptive leadership meant to elevate leader and led alike. Describing the difference between leader-first and servant-first type leaders, Greenleaf (2002) observes: "The best test, and difficult to administer, is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants" (p. 27)? Despite the problem of personal and organizational accountability, these qualities of servant leadership find congruence with my description of authentic forgiveness above. Implicit within the servant leadership model lies this proposition: servant leaders are accountable to themselves, their families and communities of concern, co-workers, and society at large.

As Fehr and Gelfand (2012) point out, servant leaders have a focus on employees and their needs. It is employee-centric which in turn builds trust. This is a crucial component for leaders in developing a forgiveness climate within an organization leading Fehr and Gelfand to offer this proposition: "Through servant leadership, leaders build organizations' compassion values and align them with organizational practices" (p. 676). They stipulate this is one of three primary leader attributes relevant to forgiveness climates. I suggest servant leadership, along with adaptive and authentic formulations, is another useful leadership typology for contextualizing forgiveness processes in personal, organizational and societal arenas.

8. The problem of laziness.

Forgiveness is a form of work. It requires time, energy, commitment, perseverance and resilience. Leaders, even hard-working, hard-driving strivers, must constantly determine how they will focus their personal and professional resources.

Since forgiveness is such an intrinsic aspect of human nature its work moves across fields of human experience including emotional, mental, spiritual, professional, personal, organizational and societal frames. In this sense forgiveness is a demanding discipline/practice/aspiration. On the other hand, non-forgiveness surely usurps leaders' efficiencies, capacities and effectiveness. Short-term versus long-term considerations come into play, but at a very basic and practical level leaders must determine whether forgiveness is worth the effort and if they are willing to go the distance into a renewed future.

9. The problem of leader access and engagement.

The sample I was able to assemble was an especially mature, well-seasoned, highly confident group of self-reflective leaders who were willing to have a conversation with someone of similar age and professional standing (within the bounds of respective professions). They understood they were "on record," and while I took care to protect third parties and their personal prerogatives, they displayed little fear of exposure. For the most part our conversations advanced with ease. This construct will not be universally replicable and access to high profile leaders remains problematic. Of course, other constellations of leaders, across a broad spectrum of differing environments, would be as useful as this group of participants. I merely suggest that a study of this sort may be hard to replicate. But every study of leaders on the topic of forgiveness will have to overcome barriers to access, availability and relative willingness to deeply engage a potentially sensitive conversation.

Conclusion

In this study, “Emerging Forms of Awareness about Forgiveness and Leadership: An Analysis of What High Profile Leaders Think,” thirteen participant leaders revealed that they have a deeply nuanced appreciation of and respect for the process of forgiveness in their lives. Forgiveness flows through every human relational arena for these leaders—personal, organizational and societal. It is inextricably entwined within human experience, and an elemental aspect of sustaining healthy self-regard and healthy, resilient relationships. It has significant ramifications for organizations and wider cultural arenas.

Despite this seeming importance, forgiveness has remained off-the-grid of these leaders’ attention and focus. Always present in the background, it has not yet emerged as a worthy subject and practice for sustained consideration and focus. Leaders are not talking about forgiveness even though it has captured the attention of a great variety of researchers across disparate fields of interest over the last several decades.

I advanced this research due to the seeming gap in leadership studies, programs and learning environments concerning forgiveness. There was little evidence that leaders were attentive and engaged about its potential. Indeed, there was little evidence that leaders were thinking about it at all and I was uncertain I could sustain vital conversations with a reliable sample of high profile leaders on this subject. Although my participant group suffers the limitations described above, these high profile leaders—representing a variety of life experiences and professional engagements—willingly and energetically engaged this project. Their vital and highly nuanced perspectives are deeply suggestive that the learning gate on the field of forgiveness and leadership has

been flung wide open, and a number of existing leadership models and paradigms can provide a contextualizing framework for advancing this good and important work.

Appendix

Appendix A

Interview Consent Form

What Do High Profile Leaders Think about Forgiveness and Leadership

The following information has been explained to me:

- 1. I am volunteering to participate in an interview about leadership and forgiveness.**
- 2. The benefits I may expect from this study are:** a) an opportunity to reflect on my values surrounding leadership and forgiveness; b) an opportunity to clarify my understanding of the motivation behind my values and activities.
- 3. The procedure will be as follows:** I will complete an approximately 45 minute interview with the investigator. The investigator will record our conversation (audio only) in order to later make a transcription of our conversation. Following the interview, the investigator may contact me and ask me additional questions. The investigator will invite me to review his written report of our conversation to confirm his descriptions.
- 4. Participation is voluntary.** I have the right to chose not to participate in this study, or to terminate my participation at any time.
- 5. Confidentiality.** The transcript of my interview will be seen only by the investigator and transcriber. I understand that my name will be used in the reporting, but that I have the ability to declare certain content confidential and unavailable for public presentation. In addition, I understand that the report may be the basis for journal or book publication in accordance with above stipulations.

Contact information for researcher:

Stephen Bauman
444 East 57th Street
11F
New York, NY 10022

sbauman@phd.antioch.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, call or email:

Carolyn Kenny, Ph.D.

Chair, Institutional Review Board

Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change

805 565 7535

ckenny@phd.antioch.edu

Consent Statement:

I have read and understand the information above and on the previous page. The investigator has answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and has provided me with a copy of both pages of this form. I consent to take part in the project: "What Do High Profile Leaders Think about Leadership and Forgiveness?"

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Forgiveness Teaser Made Available to Participants

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School in New York City held a series of public dialogues on the topic of forgiveness that generated, *Considering Forgiveness* (2009), the first in a series of books dedicated to topics of political urgency. The volume's cover jacket advertises the content this way:

What do we mean when we say forgiveness? Are we able to think it, and with what goals and hopes in mind? Why forgiveness now, and why at all? As an aid to politics? As a means to face the unforgiveable, or to short-circuit the work of history and memory? As a diversion from different, maybe less forgiving, forms of action? Forgiveness emerges within these pages not as an agenda offering closure, but as a strategy and a form of awareness, a legal, sociological, psychological, anthropological, theological and ethical concept that demands engagement.

That breathtaking scope spanning numerous academic disciplines indicates the far distance the concept of forgiveness has traveled in the last twenty-five years. Only in the mid 1980's did forgiveness emerge as a topic worthy of study at research institutions. Prior to this it remained off-limits for serious analysis, likely perceived as a softly religious, vaguely sentimental idea best left to religionists.

Starting around 1985 this began to change as interest in forgiveness first emerged as a strategy within therapeutic settings. Then as a great unfolding forgiveness studies

began to appear across many seemingly unrelated disciplines, aided through postmodernism's deconstructing contagion. Since brittle norms surrounding intellectual silos began to crack in the latter half of the 20th century, forgiveness was released from a pious strait-jacket.

Social/political events spurred growing interest as well. Evolving diplomacies concerning Northern Ireland, the collapse of Apartheid, the recurrent enmity between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as the catastrophic events of 9/11 all gave impetus to an increasing cross-disciplinary curiosity about the social/political/organizational potentials that lay within forgiveness.

Studies concerning the impact of forgiveness on the body and stressors related to blood pressure, heart attack, stroke and other physical and mental

disorders have sprung up, as has research about forgiveness trends across cultures and religions, between women and men, and the young and old.

An evolving, somewhat chaotic body of knowledge about forgiveness lacks centralizing coherence. In this way, it is not unlike the study of leadership that has tentacles extending into every arena of human intellectual pursuit. Another interesting commonality—like leadership per se, forgiveness lacks an agreed-upon definition among researchers.

Linking these two unwieldy subjects seems a daunting challenge, but observing the life, commitments and leadership of someone like Nelson Mandela points naturally to a consideration of their intersections. In his powerful reflection, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Desmond Tutu recounts Mandela's magnanimous spirit of embodied

forgiveness, an intrinsic aspect of his leadership. This lone example is enough to stimulate the imagination. But also stimulating the imagination are public apologies (with forgiveness implications) from leaders in business and politics, the arts and sports—the list seems nearly endless—and associated issues concerning organizational integrity.

What are the ramifications for organizations whose leaders are formed in part by the value of forgiveness? Is it something that can be taught? Is it a “thing” to be learned, or a value to advance? Is it too religious in nature for generally secular environments? Is it a tool in the proverbial toolbox for managers? Or is it transcendent, not a tool at all, but a matter of moral development?

These and other questions naturally spill forward and it seems the timing is ripe for a richer, deeper conversation among leaders about the potentials and pitfalls of a firmer embrace of forgiveness.

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