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The War of the Roses: An Interdependence Analysis of Betrayal and Forgiveness

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Barbara and Oliver Rose – I think you should hear their story . . . I won't start the clock yet. My fee is \$450 an hour. When a man who makes \$450 an hour wants to tell you something for free, you should listen.

– Gavin D'Amata, *The War of the Roses*

Gavin D'Amata is a divorce lawyer. With the preceding words to a prospective client, Gavin begins to recount *The War of the Roses*, a (sometimes hilarious) marital cautionary tale. The unfolding narrative reveals the troubled marriage of Barbara and Oliver Rose: Oliver belittles Barbara's career; Barbara neglects Oliver during a frightening health crisis; each humiliates the other, delivering impossible-to-forget attacks on the other's tastes and habits. During their marital Armageddon, Barbara and Oliver become entangled in a chandelier suspended above a hallway. The mechanism supporting the chandelier gives way, and – embraced in the arms of the chandelier – the two crash to the unyielding terazzo floor 30 feet below. With his dying breath, Oliver reaches out to touch Barbara's shoulder, offering amends and seeking forgiveness. Barbara's hand slowly rises to meet Oliver's . . . (perhaps, one imagines, to reciprocate Oliver's act) . . . and with her dying breath, Barbara flings Oliver's hand away from her.

Why is the Rose marriage interesting, from a scientific point of view? The Roses are interesting because their marital woes do not stem from the sorts of faulty communication patterns traditionally emphasized in marital research – patterns involving negative reciprocity,

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demand-withdraw, or coercive interaction (cf. Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998). And the Roses are interesting because their marital woes do not originate in the sorts of interdependence dilemmas traditionally emphasized in marital research – dilemmas involving incompatible preferences, external sources of stress, or extrarelationship temptation (cf. Rusbult, Olsen, Davis, & Hannon, 2001). Granted, the Roses do not communicate well, and their marital problems are exacerbated by everyday sorts of marital dilemmas. However, the Roses are interesting primarily because their marital woes rest on repeated betrayal, and a rather thoroughgoing inability to forgive. We suggest that, to date, these phenomena have received insufficient theoretical and empirical attention.

Until quite recently, the concepts of betrayal and forgiveness were addressed primarily in the fields of philosophy and theology (for example, Dorff, 1992; Marty, 1998; North, 1987). It is only during the past decade that social scientists have begun to explore the process by which individuals achieve forgiveness of betrayal (for a review, see McCullough, Sandage, & Worthington, 1997). Recent empirical studies have examined the manner in which individuals perceive and explain betrayal incidents (for example, Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Gonzales, Haugen, & Manning, 1994), the emotional reactions that accompany betrayal incidents (for example, Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996), and the role of interaction processes in promoting the resolution of betrayal incidents (for example, McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). Also, some empirical work has examined the efficacy of clinical interventions designed to encourage forgiveness of betrayal (for example, Freedman & Enright, 1996; McCullough & Worthington, 1995).

Thus, recent empirical work begins to shed light on the forgiveness process by examining the cognitive, affective, and interactional concomitants of this phenomenon. Unfortunately, there have been few attempts to analyze forgiveness and related phenomena using well-established, comprehensive theories of interpersonal processes. Also, very few empirical studies have sought to examine the motivational underpinnings of this phenomenon, seeking to explain why forgiveness may be difficult, and identifying what makes individuals want to forgive others. In short, thus far we have learned somewhat more about *how* individuals forgive than *why* they forgive.

The present work uses the principles of interdependence theory to analyze betrayal and forgiveness (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). We begin by characterizing betrayal in terms of norm violations, describing characteristic profiles of response to betrayal, and discussing the concepts of victim forgiveness and perpetrator atonement. Then we turn to the concept of reconciliation, discussing renegotiation processes and reviewing distinctions among renegotiation, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Next we address transformation of motivation, advocating a motivational analysis of forgiveness and outlining the character of the transformation process. Finally, we consider the roles of several personal dispositions and relationship-specific variables in the forgiveness process, with particular attention to the concepts of commitment and trust.

BETRAYAL AND FORGIVENESS

Over the past several decades we have studied a variety of *relationship maintenance acts*, studying behaviors that are costly to the individual, yet beneficial to relationships. For example, we have examined: accommodation, or the tendency to react to a partner's rude or inconsiderate behavior by inhibiting destructive impulses and instead reacting in a constructive manner (for example, Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991); willingness to sacrifice, or the tendency to forego otherwise desirable behaviors (or enact otherwise undesirable behaviors) when partners' interests conflict (for example, Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, Witcher, & Cox, 1997); and derogation of alternatives, or the inclination to cognitively disparage attractive alternative partners (for example, Johnson & Rusbult, 1989). All of these acts (a) arise in response to interdependence situations involving the potential for harm, (b) entail some effort or cost on the part of the individual, and (c) typically are beneficial to relationships. What differentiates forgiveness from the sorts of phenomena we have examined in previous work?

Norms and Norm Violations

Unlike other sorts of maintenance acts, betrayal incidents involve norm violations. Indeed, betrayal typically is defined as "being unfaithful or disloyal," "revealing something meant to be hidden," or "seducing and

deserting." In the context of close relationships, we define *betrayal* as the perceived violation of an implicit or explicit relationship-relevant norm. Betrayal may be said to have occurred when the victim believes that the perpetrator has knowingly departed from the rules that govern their relationship, thereby causing harm to the victim. Betrayal may involve minor or major normative infractions. Toward the mild end of the betrayal continuum, Oliver might embarrass Barbara during a dinner party, telling a story that makes her appear ignorant. Toward the more serious end of the continuum, Barbara might attempt to seduce Oliver's best friend.

Norms are rule-based inclinations to respond to particular interdependence situations in a specified manner – that is, partners implicitly or explicitly agree that some courses of action are forbidden, whereas other courses of action are mandated. As such, norms specify the rules by which a relationship will be governed (cf. Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). For example, Barbara and Oliver may agree that some interaction sequences are not to be initiated (or must be initiated; for example, never humiliate the partner), that some interaction contingencies are not to transpire (or must transpire; for example, always support the partner the night before important work-related events), and that some interaction sequences are not to take place (or must take place) with particular sorts of partners (for example, never become sexually intimate with an extrarerelationship partner).

Interdependence theory identifies several important properties of norms (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959): (a) norms regulate interaction behavior, making interaction orderly and predictable; (b) in situations where such regularity is interrupted, the victim frequently attempts to regain control by appealing to the norm; and (c) the norm breaker frequently feels guilty about violating the norm. Norms may initially be established as a matter of convenience – as a means of coordinating potentially complex interdependence situations. For example, to regulate their finances during the early years of marriage, Barbara and Oliver may agree to discuss all purchases exceeding \$50. However, over time such rules frequently "take on the characteristics of a moral obligation" (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959, p. 128). Thus, although the Roses later become quite wealthy, and although the "\$50 rule" was established in circumstances quite different from those they now confront, when Barbara fails to discuss a purchase with Oliver, Oliver experiences moral outrage and Barbara feels guilty.

The Experience of Betrayal

Consistent with this normative account, the empirical literature reveals characteristic constellations of reactions to betrayal on the part of both victim and perpetrator. Following betrayal, the victim may find it difficult to depart from the negative affect associated with the incident – Oliver may experience persistent and debilitating sadness or anger (for example, Ohbuchi et al., 1989; Rosenzweig-Smith, 1988). The victim may also develop negative patterns of cognition – Oliver may feel confused by the event and its implications, may obsessively review events surrounding the betrayal, or may reinterpret prebetrayal behavior, questioning whether earlier construals of Barbara's behavior were correct (for example, Baumeister et al., 1990; Boon & Sulsky, 1997). And the victim may adopt negative behavioral tendencies in interactions with the perpetrator – Oliver may persistently seek vengeance or demand retribution and atonement (for example, Fagenson & Cooper, 1987; Kremer & Stephens, 1983).

The perpetrator, too, may exhibit persistent negative affect – Barbara may experience sadness, shame, or guilt (for example, Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1995; Tangney et al., 1996). Further, the victim's negative cognitive tendencies may be mirrored by the perpetrator – Oliver's negative attributions may be met with defensive cognition on the part of Barbara, who may feel the need to absolve herself of blame, justifying the betrayal to herself and to others (for example, Gonzales, Manning, & Haugen, 1992; Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997). And the victim's negative behavioral tendencies may yield negative perpetrator behavior – Oliver's desire for revenge and demands for atonement may be met with matching negativity on the part of Barbara, in that few perpetrators will suffer endless blame and offer bottomless amends (for example, Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996; Ohbuchi et al., 1989).

Why do norm violations rather automatically yield such negativity? Over the course of extended involvement, interaction partners develop characteristic patterns of response to recognizable interdependence situations, including habitual emotional, cognitive, and behavioral impulses (cf. Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). Humans count on adherence to rules, so adaptation to betrayal incidents is likely to include the impulse to punish transgressors – an impulse embodied in reactions such as righteous indignation and hostile behavioral tendencies. Because betrayal incidents cause the victim harm, violate moral obligations, and

challenge the "proper order of things," such incidents instigate a signature constellation of victim and perpetrator cognition, affect, and behavior. Thus, the victim's impulse toward vengeance and other forms of "debt reduction" can be seen to be functionally adaptive—at least in the short run—in that the inclination to punish transgressors is a mechanism for enforcing relationship-relevant norms.

In parallel manner, the perpetrator's impulse toward guilt and behavioral "debt reduction" can be seen to be functionally adaptive, in that such inclinations provide reassurance that betrayal incidents will not recur. Indeed, it has been argued that reactions such as victim vengeance and perpetrator guilt may have an evolutionary basis, resting on the functional value to social animals of mutual cooperation and rule-adherence (cf. Ridley, 1996).

Victim Forgiveness of Betrayal

How can victim and perpetrator move beyond this constellation of negativity? Proceeding in a positive manner rests on victim forgiveness. Forgiveness is typically defined in terms of "granting pardon" or "cancelling a debt." Previous research has adopted related definitions, including: "a willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, condemnation, and subtle revenge toward an offender who acts unjustly, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him/her" (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1996, p. 108); and "the set of motivational changes whereby one becomes decreasingly motivated to retaliate against an offending partner, decreasingly motivated to maintain estrangement from the offender, and increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender, despite the offender's hurtful actions" (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997, pp. 321–322). Distinguishing between intrapsychic and interpersonal events, forgiveness has also been defined in terms of: "(a) the inner, intrapsychic dimension involving the victim's emotional state (and the cognitive and behavioral accompaniments), and (b) the interpersonal dimension involving the ongoing relationship within which forgiveness takes place or fails to do so" (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998, p. 80).

The above-noted definitions differ in the degree to which they characterize forgiveness as *intrapersonal* versus *interpersonal*. Indeed, lay construals of this construct would seem to be rather multifaceted, including both internal qualities (for example, mentally "forgiving"

another's transgression) and interpersonal qualities (for example, "forgiving" another by resuming prebetrayal patterns of behavior). We suggest that, from a purely logical point of view, an *interpersonal* definition of forgiveness is compelling. Consider (a) *intrapersonal* forgiveness in the absence of *interpersonal* forgiveness, along with its converse, (b) *interpersonal* forgiveness in the absence of *intrapersonal* forgiveness. For example, imagine that a victim develops compassion for a transgressor who has committed a heinous act, yet condemns the transgressor to death; or imagine that Barbara understands why Oliver betrayed her, yet insists on divorcing him. *Intrapersonal* "forgiveness" in the absence of *interpersonal* "forgiveness" seems a bit hollow (the perpetrator's likely reaction might be "thank you very much for 'forgiving' me; now why won't you forgive me?"). In contrast, imagine that a victim feels nothing but contempt for a transgressor who has committed a heinous act, yet does not condemn the transgressor to death; or imagine that Barbara believes that Oliver is fully responsible for his hurtful act and feels terribly unhappy about his behavior, yet is willing to resume normal behavior in their marriage. This line of reasoning suggests that *interpersonal* "forgiveness" in the absence of *intrapersonal* "forgiveness" is considerably more meaningful than its converse.

Our work concerns forgiveness in ongoing close relationships. In light of logical arguments favoring an *interpersonal* definition of the forgiveness construct, we emphasize the *interpersonal* character of this phenomenon, and define *forgiveness* as the victim's resumption of prebetrayal behavioral tendencies—that is, as the tendency to forego vengeance and other destructive patterns of interaction, instead behaving toward the perpetrator in a positive and constructive manner. Indeed, we suggest that *interpersonal* forgiveness captures the essence of forgiveness, in that the victim effectively cancels the debt created by the perpetrator's act of betrayal.

Perpetrator Behavior and Forgiveness

Of course, forgiveness is not necessarily an immediate, unilateral response on the part of victims. In the aftermath of betrayal, perpetrators, too, may play a role in bringing about victim forgiveness. Interdependence theory uses transition list representations to characterize temporally extended interactions (Kelley, 1984). The transition list representation is predicated on the assumption that, in addition to selecting specific behaviors, interacting individuals also select, consciously or

unconsciously, future interaction possibilities. That is, in a given interaction, each partner's choice of one course of action rather than another not only yields immediate outcomes for the two individuals, but also creates new interaction opportunities for the dyad (and eliminates other opportunities).

An example best illustrates the concept of the transition list: As their marriage begins to deteriorate, Oliver accidentally runs over Barbara's cat with his car. In revenge, Barbara locks him in his sauna to die of heat prostration, but later repents and suggests that they talk things over. To create a congenial environment for their "peace talk," Oliver brings a good bottle of wine and Barbara brings a delicious paté. During their "peace talk" Oliver risks rejection by saying that he still loves Barbara and wants to reconcile. Barbara silently considers whether to respond with conciliation (telling Oliver that she loves him), but instead chooses retaliation (telling Oliver that her paté is made from his dog). Barbara's choice of response not only degrades the outcomes for both partners in the immediate interaction, but also enhances the negativity of the future interactions available to the pair: Her response not only makes it difficult for Oliver to apologize for killing her cat, but also takes the spouses down a fork in the "interaction road" on which mutual forgiveness is not a viable possibility. Had Barbara instead chosen a conciliatory response, she would have made available a domain of interactions in which Oliver might apologize and offer atonement – a domain in which mutual forgiveness continued to be a viable possibility.

Given that betrayal creates an interpersonal debt, the perpetrator's postbetrayal behavior presumably exerts some impact on the victim's decision to forgive (for example, has the perpetrator "paid off the debt?"; Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Gonzales et al., 1994). Forgiveness on the part of Barbara becomes unlikely to the extent that Oliver denies responsibility for his actions or offers an insincere apology. In contrast, victim forgiveness is promoted by perpetrator behaviors that communicate acceptance of responsibility, such as confession, apology, or postbetrayal cooperation (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Komorita, Hilty, & Parks, 1991; Weiner et al., 1991).

By engaging in acts of atonement, Oliver "humbles himself," acknowledging the existence of a debt and working to reduce it. Moreover, by accepting personal responsibility, Oliver provides reassurance that the transgression will not recur. As noted earlier, in the aftermath of betrayal the victim may question whether the rules that were seen to govern a relationship can be trusted, and may question whether the

perpetrator values the self or relationship. Concerns such as these are likely to be exacerbated to the extent that a perpetrator denies responsibility for his or her actions, minimizes the severity of a betrayal incident, or engages in self-justification (Darby & Schlenker, 1982). In contrast, feelings of victim insecurity and concerns about possible recurrence of betrayal should be assuaged by perpetrators who provide clear assurance to the victim that trust can be restored. Indeed, recent work regarding betrayal in ongoing relationships has revealed that the probability of victim forgiveness and couple reconciliation is enhanced by perpetrator acts of atonement (Hannon, 2001).

Unfortunately, although perpetrator behaviors such as apology or confession are likely to increase the probability of victim forgiveness, perpetrators may not reliably enact such behaviors. To begin with, victims and perpetrators have differing perspectives on the issue at hand. Barbara may believe that relationship-relevant rules are clear to both parties, and may be convinced that it is Oliver's responsibility to make amends for the betrayal. In contrast, Oliver may not recognize that he has violated the rules, particularly when such rules are implicit rather than explicit. In a related vein, victims and perpetrators may perceive postbetrayal events somewhat differently: Narrative accounts of betrayal incidents reveal that whereas perpetrators frequently believe that they have fully atoned for their sins and have received forgiveness (or at the very least, "earned" forgiveness), victims frequently believe that additional atonement is "owed" (Couch, Jones, & Moore, 1999).

Even when perpetrators know that they have violated the rules, they may find it difficult to accept responsibility for their actions. Admitting guilt may imply that the perpetrator is obligated to make extensive reparations, or may imply that the perpetrator's future actions will be restricted (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Given that acts of betrayal that are seen to be intentional and blameworthy are less readily forgiven (Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Gonzales et al., 1994), to the extent that admitting guilt enhances perceptions of perpetrator intent and blame, perpetrators may be less likely to confess, offer atonement, or otherwise accept responsibility for betrayal. Instead, they may seek to convince the victim that the betrayal was unintentional, or that there were extenuating circumstances.

Indeed, defensive accounts of betrayal may constitute more than an impression management strategy intended to maximize the probability of forgiveness. Given that acts of betrayal violate moral obligations, Oliver may feel the need to justify his actions not only to Barbara, but

also to himself (Gonzales et al., 1992). Narrative accounts of betrayal incidents reveal relatively clear evidence of self-serving bias (Baumeister et al., 1990; Couch et al., 1999). Whereas perpetrators are likely to perceive that their acts of atonement led to improvements in the relationship, victims are somewhat more likely to perceive a net decrease in relationship functioning. Even when presented with hypothetical betrayal descriptions, individuals who are randomly assigned to victim versus perpetrator roles recall such descriptions differently, with those in the perpetrator role exhibiting greater denial of responsibility for the betrayal (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997).

The victim's own postbetrayal behavior may also influence whether a perpetrator is willing to offer amends. Although both Barbara and Oliver may perceive that a given act constituted betrayal, they may differ in their beliefs about the amount of reparation that is sufficient to constitute amends (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Victims often induce guilt in an effort to enhance the amount or duration of perpetrator amends (Baumeister et al., 1995), but too much guilt induction may yield the opposite effect. For example, if Oliver believes that he has repaid the debt and therefore perceives that punishment by Barbara is excessive, the motivation to make amends may decline; as noted earlier, few perpetrators will endure endless payback and offer bottomless amends (for example, Hodgins et al., 1996; Ohbuchi et al., 1989). Thus, although victims may induce guilt to promote perpetrator amends, the opposite course of action may sometimes be more effective. Specifically, abandoning guilt induction may sometimes yield superior outcomes, in that such behavior communicates that (a) the perpetrator's reparative actions are not unrecognized, and (b) trust may eventually be recovered.

RENEGOTIATION AND RECONCILIATION

Renegotiation of Norms

As is true for other sorts of interpersonal dilemmas, dealing with betrayal can be construed in terms of conflict resolution. Forgiveness is not only difficult, but frequently may be antithetical to the victim's interests, in that forgiveness may leave the victim vulnerable to future betrayal. For example, imagine that Oliver humiliates Barbara at a dinner party by telling a story that embarrasses her, and that Barbara readily forgives Oliver's actions, perhaps without calling attention to the fact

that she feels betrayed. Oliver may continue to engage in parallel humiliating acts, not recognizing that such acts are experienced as betrayal. To avoid future problems, the partners must resolve their conflicting views of what constitutes betrayal, as well as how such incidents should be resolved.

Renegotiation may entail redefining the norms that govern a relationship ("don't tell stories that diminish me in others' eyes"), explicitly outlining the terms of forgiveness ("at our next dinner party you must tell stories that make me look good"), or specifying the consequences of future, parallel acts of betrayal ("I'll forgive you this time, but if it ever happens again..."). Peterson (1983) suggests that differences of opinion can be resolved via: (a) separation (for example, Barbara may state that she wants a divorce); (b) domination, whereby one partner specifies the operative norm and the other agrees to that norm (for example, Barbara may insist that Oliver adhere to her preferred norm); (c) compromise, whereby the partners state their opinions and then "split the difference," adjusting their preferred positions until a mutually acceptable norm is identified (for example, stories can be told if they are embarrassing but not humiliating); and (d) developing an integrative agreement, or a solution that satisfies both partners' original goals and aspirations (for example, Oliver may tell funny stories that involve both partners, so that he is allowed to be funny but she is protected from humiliation).

Especially in cases involving severe betrayal – for which forgiveness may be quite difficult – renegotiation may be an integral component of the forgiveness process. Indeed, victims may find it possible to cancel the debt incurred by betrayal, only by clarifying the new terms of their relationship. Once working rules are reestablished, the victim may more readily forego vengeance and other relationship-threatening behaviors (for example, scrupulous monitoring of the perpetrator's actions).

Thus, renegotiation may reintroduce the sense of predictability that was shattered by betrayal, enhancing the victim's sense of control and capacity to forgive. Indeed, renegotiation may promote benevolent betrayal-relevant cognition and emotion. For example, Barbara may shift attribution of responsibility away from Oliver by acknowledging his ignorance of the norm (for example, "I guess he didn't know such actions were humiliating"). Specifying the consequences of future parallel betrayals may also lessen negative affect in that the new rules can serve as guidelines for judging behavior, rendering future transgressions simpler to detect (Holmes & Murray, 1996). If an act of betrayal does not

recur, the victim can cease monitoring and quit reminding the perpetrator of the consequences of such actions.

Moreover, when couples do not see eye-to-eye regarding the norms that govern their relationship, renegotiation may yield rules that protect *both* partners' interests. Indeed, renegotiation may be reassuring to perpetrators, who might otherwise believe that vengeful victims are making too many demands and restrictions on their freedom, seeking to dominate the rules governing their relationship (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). If the renegotiation process yields either compromise or an integrative agreement, the perpetrator may believe that at least some aspects of his or her interests have been protected, thereby making it easier for perpetrators to offer amends. Interestingly, the very process of renegotiation may itself reassure the victim, providing evidence that the perpetrator accepts responsibility for the betrayal and offers amends.

It should be clear that, although renegotiation arguably facilitates forgiveness, renegotiation is not essential for forgiveness to transpire. Barbara may perceive that the operative norm (and the consequences of norm violation) are clearly evident, and may simply decide that the debt incurred by the betrayal has been adequately cancelled by Oliver's acts of amends. We suspect that renegotiation may be more critical to the forgiveness process for more severe betrayal incidents (for which forgiveness arguably is more difficult), for highly idiosyncratic acts of betrayal (for which victim and perpetrator may not agree about the operative norm), and for betrayals that come about due to changing life circumstances (the birth of a child, changes in professional status).

Reconciliation

How do acts of betrayal influence the partners' broader relationship? Earlier, we defined interpersonal forgiveness as the victim's resumption of prebetrayal behavioral tendencies. Does forgiveness automatically restore a relationship to its prebetrayal state? Are forgiveness and reconciliation one and the same? In short, not necessarily.

Reconciliation is typically defined as "settling a quarrel or dispute" or "causing to become friendly again." Previous researchers have offered related definitions, describing reconciliation as "the restoration of violated trust," and arguing that this process "requires the good will of both partners" (Fincham, 2000, p. 7). We define reconciliation as the

resumption by *both* partners of prebetrayal relationship status. Thus, forgiveness and reconciliation can be seen to differ in important ways. Whereas interpersonal forgiveness is rather specific to the betrayal in question, reconciliation involves the broader relationship. Although the forgiveness process is influenced by the behavior of both victim *and* perpetrator, in the final analysis, forgiveness is a unilateral act that ultimately is rendered by the victim. Accordingly, interpersonal forgiveness is not synonymous with reconciliation. Forgiveness provides the opportunity for reconciliation, but does not guarantee this outcome.

It is important to highlight the fact that reconciliation involves *both* partners and their *broader* relationship – for example, both victim and perpetrator recover their prebetrayal levels and trajectories of commitment and trust. Complete reconciliation entails fully restoring a relationship to its prebetrayal state: Oliver trusts Barbara as much as he did prior to the incident, Barbara is as willing to become dependent and committed as she was prior to the incident, and neither partner is any more inclined to scrupulously monitor the other's actions than he or she was prior to the betrayal. In short, Oliver and Barbara relate to one another fully on the basis of current (and future) interdependence opportunities, such that their relationship is virtually uncolored by the betrayal. In the case of complete reconciliation, it is as though the betrayal incident never transpired.

In order for reconciliation to come about, both victim *and* perpetrator must revert to their prebetrayal states. The fact that a victim is willing to forgive does not guarantee that the *perpetrator* can resume prebetrayal interaction tendencies (for example, guilt may interfere with normal interaction). For example, if Oliver has enjoyed an extramarital sexual involvement, he may feel compelled to telephone Barbara 10 times a day to inform her of his whereabouts. Such behavior may serve as a constant reminder of his debt, interfering with Barbara's attempts to leave the betrayal behind, and producing a somewhat artificial pretense that life is back to normal. In extreme instances, the victim may be entirely willing to forgive, yet the perpetrator may decide to terminate the relationship, denying the victim the opportunity to resume prebetrayal patterns of interaction.

Also, if interpersonal forgiveness comes about in the absence of intrapersonal forgiveness – without an accompanying shift in cognition and emotion – the victim's ongoing negative mental state may shape the broader relationship, despite the occurrence of forgiveness.

For example, Oliver may exhibit interpersonal forgiveness, cancelling Barbara's debt and resuming prebetrayal patterns of interaction, yet may have formed attributions about Barbara that cannot be "undone" (for example, "she's capable of more fundamentally self-centered behavior than I imagined"), or may have experienced erosions of trust that cannot be repaired (for example, "she's not as concerned with my well-being as I previously thought"). Such cognitive and affective shifts may continue to shape the broader relationship, irrespective of the occurrence of interpersonal forgiveness.

Moreover, when betrayal inspires renegotiation of relationship-relevant rules, the relationship may be modified despite the fact that a specific betrayal has been forgiven: The renegotiation process may yield such specific contingencies that the partners' postbetrayal behavior is necessarily altered. For example, the postbetrayal relationship may be characterized by higher levels of monitoring—Barbara may too frequently remind Oliver not to tell humiliating stories at dinner parties, and Oliver may too frequently remind Barbara that she has agreed to stand by him during health crises. Also, the introduction of new rules may result in more frequent detection of rule violations, or may yield excessively harsh consequences for such violations (cf. Holmes & Murray, 1996).

Finally, to the extent that key properties of relationships (for example, commitment, trust) are governed by both conscious *and* preconscious events (for example, events that accumulate via automatic associations; cf. Smith & DeCoster, 2000), the relationship may be modified by betrayal despite the occurrence of forgiveness. Presumably, under normal circumstances, relationships are governed by relatively automatic and preconscious processes. However, following an act of betrayal, partners may find it necessary to engage in effortful conscious attempts to ensure debt repayment, renegotiate relationship-relevant rules, and bring about victim forgiveness. Thus, even if both partners are willing to work toward restoring their relationship to its prebetrayal state, the very act of exerting such effort suggests that complete reconciliation has yet to take place. Of course, this is not to say that reconciliation can never come about. Assuming that forgiveness and reconciliation are not all-or-nothing propositions – and assuming that each phenomenon may be attained over the course of extended interaction – moving *toward* prebetrayal states is a key to attaining some degree of success on both fronts. Therefore, we need to ask how movement toward forgiveness comes about.

PRORELATIONSHIP TRANSFORMATION AND FORGIVENESS

Over the course of an ongoing relationship, partners inevitably encounter situations involving conflict of interest—situations in which the course of action yielding good outcomes for one person yields poor outcomes for the other. In such situations, one or both partners may be tempted to behave in ways that cause harm to the partner and the relationship. The empirical evidence rather consistently reveals that when an individual engages in behavior that is potentially harmful to the partner (for example, betrays the partner), couple functioning is enhanced to the extent that the partner responds constructively, rather than reciprocating (for example, Gottman, 1998; Gottman et al., 1998). Responding constructively to a partner's destructive act requires effort and may entail negative outcomes.

At the same time, such conciliatory behavior allows both partners to avoid the costs of prolonged conflict, enhances the long-term viability of the relationship, and communicates to the partner that the individual is trustworthy and motivated to continue the relationship. For example, when Barbara betrays Oliver, Oliver may feel tempted to seek vengeance. However, knowing that such behavior will prolong the conflict, Oliver may choose to swallow his pride and forgive Barbara instead of "settling the debt" by reciprocating her destructive behavior. Oliver's consideration of the future consequences of his behavior indicates his benevolent feelings for Barbara and his constructive goals for their relationship.

Given Preferences, Effective Preferences, and the Transformation Process

Following betrayal, why might some individuals (on some occasions) depart from their direct, gut-level impulses and exert considerable effort to ensure the continued viability of their relationship? Interdependence theory provides a compelling answer to this question in its distinction between "given preferences" and "effective preferences." Given preferences describe each partner's self-centered preferences – preferences that follow from a concern with maximizing immediate self-interest, or pursuing one's direct, gut-level inclinations. During the course of betrayal incidents, the victim's immediate, self-oriented impulse is generally self-protective, and favors retribution and the expectation of atonement. Under these circumstances, Oliver may find that

reacting constructively seems more humiliating and less satisfying than some form of retaliation (Baumeister et al., 1998; McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, & Hight, 1998). Of course, the degree to which Oliver feels tempted to retaliate will vary across interactions, and may be qualified by the severity of the betrayal, the centrality or importance of the domain in which the betrayal occurs, and the emotions and cognitions that accompany a specific act of betrayal (that is, some betrayals inspire greater grudge than others; for example, Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; McCullough et al., 1998). But given the pervasiveness of reciprocity and the contingent nature of inclinations to behave in a positive and cooperative manner (cf. Gouldner, 1960; Kelley & Stahelski, 1970) – and given that betrayals violate relationship-relevant norms and arouse intense negative affect and cognition – we suggest that betrayal on the part of one person frequently engenders impulses toward retaliation on the part of the partner.

According to interdependence theory, however, impulsive “given preferences” do not necessarily guide behavior. In deciding how to react in a specific situation, Oliver may explicitly or implicitly take account of broader considerations such as long-term goals for the relationship, social norms, or knowledge of and concern for Barbara’s well-being. This process of “taking broader considerations into account” is termed *transformation of motivation*. The preferences that result from the transformation process are referred to as effective preferences, in that these preferences directly guide behavior. Transformation of motivation may lead Oliver to depart from his direct self-interest (as defined by the *given* pattern of interdependence), and instead act on the basis of broader interaction goals (as defined by the *effective* pattern of interdependence) – for example, by taking into account the future implications of his behavior for the marriage. In ongoing relationships, the broader considerations that guide transformation frequently favor reacting constructively to a partner’s destructive behavior. For example, taking “time out” to contemplate his long-term goals for their marriage may lessen Oliver’s immediate inclination to retaliate.

Prorelationship Motives: Habit versus Meaning Analysis

Over the course of an extended relationship, some conflicts of interest may be encountered regularly. Through adaptation to repeatedly experienced situations, stable transformation tendencies may emerge that are tailored to these recurrent situations (or classes of situation;

Kelley, 1983). Once established, these habitual transformations may occur rapidly, with little or no conscious thought. For example, despite the fact that both Barbara’s and Oliver’s immediate self-interest is best served by leaving household chores to the other, over time the partners may develop the habit of dividing chores. However, in many situations, transformation of motivation is an effortful, time-consuming process, in that it involves reviewing possible joint behaviors and their consequences, taking account of broader considerations governing the relationship, and deciding which of several possible actions would yield the most desirable outcomes (as defined by these broader considerations).

Two recent findings are consistent with the assumption that in betrayal incidents, transformation of motivation rests on effortful processing (Rusbult, Davis, Finkel, Hannon, & Olsen, 2001). In an initial set of experiments, individuals from dating relationships and marital relationships recounted a recent act of partner betrayal, reporting on their reactions to the incident at two points in time, describing (a) the responses they considered enacting (that is, “what went through your mind?”) as well as (b) the responses they actually enacted (that is, “what did you actually do?”). Consistent with expectations, the responses participants actually enacted were considerably more constructive and forgiving than the responses they considered enacting. Presumably, the destructive immediate impulses reflect given preferences, whereas the more constructive delayed responses reflect effective preferences. Thus, individuals’ gut-level given reactions to betrayal appear to be relatively destructive and vengeful; their transformed, effective reactions are more constructive and forgiving.

In a second set of experiments, individuals from dating relationships and marital relationships listened to an audio recording of hypothetical partner behaviors, half of which were nonbetrayal incidents (for example, “your partner proudly tells friends about one of your accomplishments”) and half of which were betrayal incidents (for example, “your partner flirts with a coworker”). Participants worked through the audio recording, and selected, using response booklets, one of two possible ways of reacting to each incident: a constructive or a destructive reaction. They were given either plentiful or limited reaction time to select a response (14 versus 7 seconds).

Consistent with expectations, for betrayal incidents, participants were more likely to select constructive reactions given plentiful reaction time than limited reaction time; the effect of reaction time was nonsignificant for nonbetrayal incidents. The fact that the reaction time

effect was significant only for betrayal incidents supports the claim that, in negative interactions, prorelationship behavior rests on transformation of motivation (such behavior is controlled and effortful), whereas in positive interactions, prorelationship behavior requires no transformation of motivation (such behavior is automatic and "easy").

Together, the results of these experiments suggest that reactions to novel conflicts of interest may be guided by two distinct processes: Impulsive actions dictated by given preferences may reflect the operation of automatic, or associative processes; delayed actions dictated by effective preferences may reflect the operation of controlled, or rule-based processes (cf. Smith & DeCoster, 2000).

Mediation by Mental Events

Precisely how does the transformation process come about? We have argued that whereas this process is sometimes automatic and habit driven, it is sometimes controlled and systematic. When transformation of motivation involves controlled processes, this phenomenon arguably rests on the emergence of relatively less blameful, more benevolent emotional reactions or cognitive interpretations (cf. Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). For example, when Oliver takes broader considerations into account – including his long-term goals and his concern for Barbara's well-being – he may come to experience reduced anger with respect to Barbara's act of betrayal, and may develop more benevolent cognitive interpretations of Barbara's actions (for example, he may identify extenuating circumstances and discount the role of internal causes).

Interestingly, there is controversy regarding the role of mental events in the forgiveness process, with some authors arguing that forgiveness does not involve mediation by mental events. Why so? First, the philosophical literature tends to characterize both intrapersonal and interpersonal events as dichotomous, all-or-nothing propositions – Barbara either absolves Oliver of blame or does not, she either forgives him or does not (cf. North, 1987). Second, the Christian theological literature tends to regard interpersonal change in the absence of intrapersonal change as the prototype of forgiveness (cf. Marty, 1998). Authors in this tradition place a high value on "saintly" forgiveness, whereby the victim recognizes the full extent of a perpetrator's sin and in *no* way absolves the perpetrator of blame, yet nevertheless forgives.

As a result of these traditions, there is a tendency to assume that forgiveness will not – or even *should* not – be accompanied by changes in

betrayal-relevant mental events. The logic runs as follows: If Barbara achieves forgiveness because she comes to understand Oliver's act of betrayal – for example, if she identifies extenuating circumstances – such forgiveness does not "count." She has nullified the betrayal or reinterpreted the incident in nonbetrayal terms; given that no real transgression is perceived to have transpired, there is nothing to forgive.

We suggest that neither of the aforementioned assumptions is entirely valid. First, neither mental construal nor interpersonal forgiveness is an all-or-nothing proposition. Barbara may come to partially understand the circumstances surrounding Oliver's act of betrayal; indeed, given that there may be some disparity between victim and perpetrator construals (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997), increased understanding may simply entail achieving a relatively "balanced" interpretation of the event. Also, Barbara may partially forgive Oliver – a possibility that becomes particularly plausible when one recognizes that forgiveness may unfold over the course of extended interaction (for example, a bit of forgiveness now, more later).

Second, we acknowledge that victims may sometimes exhibit saintly behavior, achieving interpersonal forgiveness without modifying their mental construals (for example, "I cannot find my way to anything short of full and complete blame, yet I forgive you"). At the same time, we suspect that among mere mortals – and in the absence of divine intervention – *some degree* of mental understanding may well facilitate *some degree* of interpersonal forgiveness. Accordingly, we have argued that coming to mentally understand a betrayal incident – as evidenced by reduced negative affect and cognition – *partially* mediates interpersonal forgiveness.

We conducted two studies to examine the role of emotion and cognition in mediating the association between commitment and interpersonal forgiveness (Rusbult, Finkel, Hannon, Kumashiro, & Childs, in press). One study was a cross-sectional survey study in which participants recounted previous betrayal incidents in their dating relationships, describing their emotions, cognitions, and behaviors in response to the incident. A second study was an interaction record study in which participants provided "in the moment" reports of everyday betrayals in their dating relationships over a two-week period, describing their emotions, cognitions, and behaviors in response to each incident.

Both studies revealed that the association of commitment with "forgiving" behavioral tendencies is mediated by positive cognitive interpretations – by discounting internal causes, identifying extenuating

circumstances, and forming more positive, external explanations for partner betrayal (situational variables, rather than disposition or intent). In contrast, we obtained inconsistent evidence for mediation by emotion. Thus, individuals *are* capable of forgiving their partners despite persistent negative affect, but are not so "saintly" that achieving some degree of "understanding" is irrelevant to the forgiveness process. Commitment promotes forgiveness because strong commitment promotes benevolent (or less malevolent) betrayal-relevant cognition. For example, Oliver may exhibit systematic processing, carefully attending to the circumstances surrounding Barbara's betrayal, giving her the benefit of the doubt, or accepting some personal responsibility for the betrayal. In turn, the benevolent "understanding" he develops helps him find his way to forgiving Barbara.

Following betrayal, the transformation process may not be immediate. Given that this process may require effortful and systematic processing, and given that it may sometimes be difficult for victims to develop less blameful, more benevolent understandings of the reasons for betrayal, it becomes clear that individuals may rather persistently act on the basis of self-interested, vengeful preferences (cf. Enright et al., 1996; Gordon & Baucom, 1998). Therefore, it becomes important to ask: What inspires positive mental events, prorelationship motives, and interpersonal forgiveness?

PREDICTING PRORELATIONSHIP TRANSFORMATION AND FORGIVENESS

Most empirical work regarding forgiveness has examined the cognitive, affective, and interactional concomitants of this phenomenon. Fewer studies have sought to examine the motivational underpinnings of forgiveness, seeking to explain not only *how* individuals forgive, but also *why* they forgive. The interdependence theoretic concept of transformation of motivation highlights the need for research regarding the motivation to forgive. In conceptualizing the predictors of prorelationship transformation and forgiveness, it is useful to distinguish between relationship-specific and dispositional predictors. *Relationship-specific predictors* are variables that are specific to a given relationship – these variables presumably do not reflect either victim's or perpetrator's tendencies across partners and relationships. In contrast, *dispositional predictors* are argued to predict behavior in general, across partners and relationships. The following (highly selective and nonexhaustive)

discussion provides a review of results from our own and others' research regarding both relationship-specific and dispositional predictors of forgiveness.

Relationship-Specific Predictors

Commitment

A good deal of empirical evidence suggests that commitment promotes prorelationship motivation and behavior (for example, Rusbult et al., 1991; Van Lange et al., 1997; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster, & Agnew, 1999). *Commitment level* describes the degree to which an individual experiences long-term orientation toward a relationship, including intent to persist and feelings of psychological attachment (Rusbult, Drigotas, & Verette, 1994). Following interdependence theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), Rusbult's (1983) investment model suggests that commitment emerges out of the specific circumstances of interdependence characterizing a relationship. Specifically, commitment develops as a consequence of increasing dependence – Barbara becomes increasingly committed as a result of (a) increasing satisfaction with her relationship (that is, the marriage gratifies important needs, such as her needs for intimacy or sexuality); (b) declining quality of alternatives to the relationship (that is, specific alternative partners, the general field of eligibles, and noninvolvement, are seen as undesirable); and (c) increasing investments in the relationship (that is, resources such as personal identity, effort, or material possessions become linked to the relationship).

Commitment has been shown to promote a variety of prorelationship acts other than forgiveness. For example, commitment promotes persistence in close relationships, such that the relationships of highly committed individuals are more likely to "stand the test of time" than are those of less-committed individuals (for example, Bui, Peplau, & Hill, 1996; Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992; Rusbult, 1983). In addition, strong commitment yields a variety of relationship-maintenance acts that tend to enhance couple well-being. Specifically, commitment promotes (a) derogation of alternatives, or the tendency to drive away or disparage tempting alternative partners (for example, Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Miller, 1997), (b) willingness to sacrifice, or the tendency to forego desired activities for the good of the relationship (for example, Van Lange et al., 1997), (c) positive illusion, or the tendency toward excessively favorable evaluations of one's partner and relationship (for example, Rusbult, Van Lange, Wildschut, Yovetich, & Verette, 2000), and (d)

accommodative behavior, or the tendency to accommodate rather than retaliate when a partner behaves poorly (for example, Rusbult et al., 1991).

Recent evidence suggests that commitment is also a critical predictor of forgiveness, in both dating relationships and marital relationships (Rusbult et al., in press; Rusbult, Finkel, Kumashiro, Davis, Hannon, Clarke, & Kirchner, 2001). In this work, we have employed a variety of methods, using both experimental and nonexperimental procedures (for example, priming techniques, examination of real betrayal incidents in ongoing relationships), and examining both self-report and behavioral measures of forgiveness (for example, structured measures and open-ended descriptions, coding of videotaped betrayal-relevant conversations). This work reveals consistent evidence that tendencies toward interpersonal forgiveness are greater in more highly committed relationships than in less-committed relationships.

Why does commitment promote forgiveness? Prior research has highlighted four features of commitment that may explain why this variable is an important predictor of prorelationship motivation and behavior (cf. Wieselquist et al., 1999). First, highly committed individuals *need* their relationships. The more Oliver stands to lose should his marriage dissolve, the more effort he is likely to exert to keep his marriage alive and well (cf. Holmes, 1981). Second, commitment involves long-term orientation, which enhances the likelihood that individuals will consider the future consequences of their actions. In such a context, Oliver's maintenance acts are especially likely to promote reciprocal acts by Barbara, thereby maximizing the long-term viability of their marriage (cf. Axelrod, 1984). Third, commitment involves psychological attachment. To the degree that such attachment causes Oliver to feel "linked" to Barbara, behavior that departs from his self-interest, yet benefits Barbara, may not be experienced as personally costly (cf. Aron & Aron, 1997). And fourth, commitment may induce communal orientation, characterized by tendencies to respond to a partner's needs in a relatively unconditional manner (cf. Clark & Mills, 1979). In a committed, communally oriented marriage, Oliver may endure costs without calculating what he receives in return.

Trust

What role does trust play in the forgiveness process? We examine trust as an emergent property of ongoing relationships, not as a stable

personal disposition. As such, trust includes three facets: (a) predictability – belief that the partner's behavior is consistent over time; (b) dependability – belief that one can count on the partner to be honest, reliable, and benevolent; and (c) faith – conviction that the partner is intrinsically motivated to be responsive and caring (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Trust evolves over the course of extended involvement to the degree that a partner exhibits prorelationship motives, behaving in a selfless manner when his or her self-interest and the partner's interests conflict.

Why should trust promote forgiveness? First, to the degree that Barbara experiences all three facets of trust, she should be especially likely to interpret Oliver's hurtful behavior as unintentional or situationally caused. If she believes that Oliver is predictable, dependable, and worthy of faith, his acts of betrayal take on a less painful character and yield more benevolent emotion and cognition. Oliver's betrayal is less likely to be interpreted as representing disrespect or lack of consideration because – based on a history of prorelationship behavior and benevolence on the part of Oliver – Barbara more readily recognizes (or is inclined to believe) that he did not intend her any harm.

Second, trust and commitment exert mutual causal effects on one another. In characterizing these phenomena, we have advanced a model of "mutual cyclical growth," suggesting that trust in a partner is essentially the mirror-image of the partner's commitment (Wieselquist et al., 1999). How so? As Oliver becomes increasingly dependent he develops strong commitment, which in turn yields increased tendencies toward prorelationship acts such as accommodation and sacrifice. When Barbara perceives such acts she develops enhanced trust, which leads her to become increasingly dependent – more satisfied, inclined to drive away or derogate alternatives, and willing to invest in her marriage in material and nonmaterial ways. This brings us full circle, in that Barbara's enhanced dependence yields increased commitment, along with increased prorelationship motivation and behavior. We have obtained support for such a model in longitudinal studies of both dating relationships and marital relationships (Wieselquist et al., 1999).

In recent work we have also found that trust is associated with forgiveness, in both dating relationships and marital relationships (Kumashiro, Finkel, & Rusbult, 2001; Rusbult et al., 2001). In our early work regarding marital relations, we have found that (a) the individual's self-reported trust in the partner is positively associated with

perceptions of the partner's forgiveness, as well as with the *partner's* self-reported commitment level and tendencies toward forgiveness, and (b) the individual's self-reported forgiveness is positively associated with the *partner's* perception of the individual's forgiveness, as well as with trust level and perceived dyadic adjustment. Thus, relationships are internally regulated: Via adaptation to evolving interdependence, changes in each person's actions and motives trigger complementary changes in the partner. Accordingly, it becomes evident that forgiveness may be both a cause and a consequence of strong trust: Trust may cause forgiveness, in that strong trust may yield benevolent, schema-congruent interpretations of a partner's betrayal. Moreover, forgiveness may cause trust, in that earlier acts of benevolence – such as forgiveness of betrayal – may yield increased trust, along with enhanced commitment and increased inclinations toward prorelationship motives and behaviors.

Personal Dispositions

In adopting an interdependence theoretic analysis, we do not wish to imply that forgiveness can be characterized solely in terms of relationship-specific variables. In addition to variables such as commitment and trust, several personal dispositions appear to affect the forgiveness process. Indeed, many researchers have followed in the footsteps of philosophers and theologians in suggesting that individuals differ in their generalized disposition to forgive. In his summary of research regarding personality and forgiveness, Emmons suggested that “a forgiving person has a chronic concern to be in benevolent, harmonious relationships with others, the ability to take the viewpoint of sufferers and to detach [the self] from the personal experience of having been harmed” (Emmons, 2000, p. 159).

Dispositional Forgiveness

To date, the most systematic attempt to measure trait-based forgiveness has resulted in a self-report instrument designed to assess dispositional forgiveness (Mauger, Perry, Freeman, Grove, McBride, & McKinney, 1992). (Although this scale was designed to measure dispositional forgiveness, an examination of its face validity suggests that it might also be characterized in terms of disinclination toward vengeance.) Preliminary evidence from our laboratory suggests that there may be variability across individuals in generalized tendencies to forgive, and

that these generalized tendencies are useful in predicting whether an individual will forgive a specific betrayal incident with a specific partner (Hannon, 2001). Thus, to the extent that Barbara is a generally forgiving person, it becomes more likely that she will forgive specific acts of betrayal on the part of Oliver. If Barbara believes that vengeance is a suitable – perhaps even an obligatory – means of responding to betrayal incidents, she is less likely to forgive Oliver's acts of betrayal.

Empathy and Perspective Taking

Several other traits are likely to be associated with inclinations toward forgiveness, some of which are implicit in Emmons's (2000) description of the dispositionally forgiving individual. For example, empathy has been shown to promote the forgiveness process (McCullough, Sandage, & Worthington, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998); our own work suggests that perspective taking yields parallel effects. We suspect that the empathy-forgiveness association may rest on the fact that empathetic victims are more likely to understand the circumstances surrounding a perpetrator's norm violation (for example, empathy may promote recognition of extenuating circumstances).

Rumination

In addition, rumination has been shown to predict the degree to which individuals experience vengeful motivation in response to betrayal (McCullough et al., 1997). For example, to the extent that Barbara is inclined to ruminate about interpersonal events – to the degree that she obsessively reviews betrayal incidents, considering the many possible implications of Oliver's behavior – she is likely to find it difficult to find her way to forgiveness. Presumably, because she cannot stop thinking about Oliver's act of betrayal, she becomes especially prone to hold grudges and desire retaliation.

Narcissism

Finally, we believe that narcissism may play a role in the forgiveness process. It may be useful to construe narcissism as the “ultimate self-orientation.” Narcissistic individuals have been characterized as self-admiring and inclined toward grandiose thinking, and have been shown to exhibit a sense of entitlement and a general lack of empathy toward others (Emmons, 2000; Millon, 1998). To the degree that Oliver is narcissistic, he may be especially unlikely to forgive Barbara's betrayal because he finds it difficult to “cancel the debt,” and because he finds it

difficult to empathize with her, and acknowledge situational contributors to betrayal.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

At present, we are extending our forgiveness research program in several respects. First, we are examining forgiving behavioral tendencies on the part of both partners in ongoing marital relationships, exploring whether commitment promotes each person's inclinations toward forgiveness, and exploring whether forgiveness modifies each person's feelings of trust in the partner. Second, we are videotaping married partners' betrayal-relevant interactions, obtaining "on-line" reports of (a) each person's emotional reactions, cognitive interpretations, and behavioral tendencies, along with (b) each person's perception of the partner's emotions, cognitions, and behavior. These data will allow us to further examine whether mental events – including mutual understanding – indeed mediate perpetrator amends and victim forgiveness. And third, we are examining a variety of specific issues regarding the predictors and consequences of forgiveness. For example, can we characterize relationships in terms of "optimal distinctiveness," such that ideally, both partners exhibit a balance of concern between self-interest and marital-interests? And can forgiveness tendencies be characterized in terms of adaptation, such that over time, partners increasingly exhibit a workable balance of norm enforcement in relation to forgiveness? We are eager to uncover the answers to these and other important questions regarding the nature of interpersonal forgiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

Earlier, we noted that social scientists have only recently turned their attention to the phenomena of betrayal and forgiveness, noting that most work to date has examined *how* individuals forgive, largely ignoring the question of *why* individuals forgive. In this chapter, we outlined a model of betrayal and forgiveness using a relatively comprehensive theory of interpersonal processes. Our interdependence theoretic account helps explain why betrayal incidents are problematic for couples, and why perpetrator amends and victim forgiveness accordingly are not easy. We also introduced the possibility of renegotiation following betrayal, reviewing important distinctions among the concepts of renegotiation, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Finally, we discussed transformation of

motivation, considering the role of mental events in mediating the forgiveness process, and identifying several personal dispositions and relationship-specific variables that play a role in motivating interpersonal forgiveness. We hope that this review may highlight the utility of interdependence theory in understanding complex interpersonal phenomena – not only betrayal and forgiveness, but also other important processes in ongoing marital relationships.

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