Motivations for promotion and prevention and the role of trust and commitment in interpersonal forgiveness

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ABSTRACT

Granting forgiveness demands self-regulation. Distinct modes of self-regulation might therefore produce distinct routes to forgiveness. Self-regulation focused on advancement (or *promotion*) could motivate forgiveness through the perceived benefits to be attained by repairing a relationship, i.e., one's *trust* that a partner will provide such benefits rather than further betrayal. In contrast, self-regulation focused on security (or *prevention*) could motivate forgiveness through the perceived costs of further relationship deterioration, i.e., one's *commitment* to maintain a relationship upon which one depends and protect against the loss of this relationship. These hypotheses were supported across two studies that: (a) measured and manipulated promotion-focused versus prevention-focused self-regulation, (b) included real and imagined offenses in casual and close relationships, and (c) assessed forgiveness immediately following an offense and after a two-week delay. Trust in a relationship partner more strongly predicted forgiveness among promotion-focused individuals, whereas commitment to this partner more strongly predicted forgiveness among prevention-focused individuals.

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"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."   Mahatma Gandhi

"To err is human, to forgive, divine."   Alexander Pope

Introduction

Betrayal can be enormously painful. When feeling wronged by another, people's thoughts brim with hostility, vengeance, and reprisal. Thus, as Gandhi suggested, overcoming vengeful impulses and forgiving those who have betrayed us often demands great strength of will—perhaps even, as Pope proposes, "divine" strength.

Accordingly, psychological approaches to forgiveness place a strong emphasis on the role of willpower and self-regulation (see Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). Even for minor offenses, the basic process of forgiveness is typically defined as a "motivational transformation" in which desires for retaliation are suppressed and replaced with desires for reconciliation (Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2005; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; see McCullough, 2008; Worthington, 2005). Furthermore, research on the antecedents and predictors of forgiveness generally reveals that circumstances that help or hinder these motivational transformations (e.g., personality traits such as agreeableness versus negative emotionality; social circumstances such as strong feelings

of empathy, closeness, and commitment versus an absence of genuine remorse) also help or hinder forgiveness (Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998). Finally, both brief experimental manipulations and long-term interventions that directly target people's capacity for self-regulation have demonstrated that increasing this capacity (i.e., teaching and encouraging specific strategies for self-regulation) enhances forgiveness whereas decreasing this capacity (i.e., limiting opportunities for self-regulation by forcing quick responses to betrayals) inhibits it (Finkel & Campbell, 2001; Wade, Worthington, & Meyer, 2005).

In light of the central role self-regulation plays in forgiveness, variations in the motives that guide self-regulation could produce important variations in when and why forgiveness is granted (see Fincham et al., 2005; Huang & Enright, 2000; Worthington, Berry, Parrott, & II, 2001). The present research explores this possibility by examining how broad differences in people's self-regulatory priorities for attaining growth (i.e., *promotion*) versus maintaining security (i.e., *prevention*) affect their willingness to forgive their acquaintances, friends, and romantic partners. In addition, the present research also examines how such motivational differences alter what particular facets of people's relationships are most crucial for determining forgiveness. Specifically, we test the extent to which motivations for promotion may increase the influence on forgiveness of people's trust in the potential for attaining further benefits within a relationship, whereas motivations for prevention

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may increase the influence on forgiveness of people's commitment to maintaining their current investment in relationship. By investigating distinct motivational processes that can contribute to forgiveness, the current studies aim to provide additional insight concerning when and how it occurs.

Motivations for promotion and prevention

Two social motives that have long been distinguished in their influence on relationship processes, and which could therefore alter how forgiveness unfolds between relationship partners, are motives for advancement (i.e., nourishment, growth, and development), and for security (i.e., shelter, safety, and protection; see Bowlby, 1969; Maslow, 1955; Rogers, 1961). More recently, Higgins (1997) has proposed that, beyond originating from different social motives, concerns with advancement (i.e., *promotion*) and security (i.e., *prevention*) foster different modes of self-regulation (see also Molden, Lee, & Higgins, 2008). That is, when focused on promotion, people represent, experience, and pursue their goals in a profoundly different way than they do when focused on prevention.

Promotion-focused goal pursuit centers around concerns with *attainment*; it is represented as striving to achieve hopes, rewards, or *ideals* that ensure advancement. Fulfilling these ideals is therefore experienced as achieving positive outcomes (i.e., feelings of gain), whereas failing to fulfill them is experienced as a missed opportunities for positive outcomes (i.e., feelings of non-gain; Higgins, 1987; Higgins, 1997). In addition, the particular strategies used to pursue ideals primarily involve eagerly seeking gains and advancement, even at the risk of committing errors and accepting losses (Higgins & Molden, 2003; Molden & Higgins, 2005; Molden et al., 2008).

In contrast, prevention-focused goal pursuit centers around *maintenance*; it is represented as striving to uphold responsibilities, obligations, or *oughts* that are necessary to ensure security. Fulfilling these oughts is therefore experienced as protecting against negative outcomes (i.e., feelings of non-loss), whereas failing to fulfill them is experienced as incurring negative outcomes (i.e., feelings of loss; Higgins, 1987; Higgins, 1997). In addition, the particular strategies used to pursue oughts primarily involve vigilantly ensuring security and the absence of losses, even at the risk of forgoing alternative courses of action that could lead to gains (Higgins & Molden, 2003; Molden & Higgins, 2005; Molden et al., 2008).

Many studies – in which motivations for promotion or prevention have both been measured as chronic individual differences and temporarily evoked through experimental manipulations – have repeatedly demonstrated a heightened concern with attainment and gains by those with a promotion focus and a heightened concern with maintenance and security from losses by those with a prevention focus (for recent reviews see Molden & Miele, 2008; Molden et al., 2008). Promotion-focused individuals have been found to: (a) favor working toward attaining new achievements over maintaining (or re-attaining) current achievements, (b) place greater value on goals viewed in terms of attainment or outcomes perceived as gains, (c) show increased persistence and performance on tasks where success brings actual or symbolic rewards, and (d) display greater sensitivity to and recall for events that result in either gains or non-gains. In contrast, prevention-focused individuals have been found to: (a) favor working toward maintaining (or re-attaining) current achievements over attaining new achievements, (b) place greater value on goals viewed in terms of maintenance or on outcomes perceived as protecting against losses, (c) show increased persistence and performance on tasks where success protects against actual or symbolic penalties, and

(d) display greater sensitivity to and recall for events that result in either non-losses or losses (Amodio, Shah, Sigelman, Brazy, & Harmon-Jones, 2004; Brodscholl, Kober, & Higgins, 2007; Förster, Higgins, & Idson, 1998; Higgins, Idson, Freitas, Spiegel, & Molden, 2003; Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992; Lee & Aaker, 2004; Liberman, Idson, Camacho, & Higgins, 1999; Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998). In addition, those with a promotion focus have demonstrated preferences for *risky* approaches to decision making: they select gambles, choose products, and form impressions that maximize the potential for attaining gains, even at the possible cost of incurring significant losses. Those with a prevention focus have instead demonstrated preferences for *conservative* approaches to decision making, selecting gambles, products, and impressions that best promise to maintain security from losses, even at the possible cost of forgoing significant gains (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins et al., 2001; Liberman, Molden, Idson, & Higgins, 2001; Molden & Higgins, 2004; Molden & Higgins, 2008).

How, then, might the different motivations inherent in a promotion or prevention focus affect people's forgiveness decisions? Forgiving a relationship partner provides an opportunity for attaining future gains within a relationship and for the relationship itself to advance; it also helps to restore the security one derives within a relationship and protects the relationship itself from serious deterioration (cf. Fincham et al., 2005; McCullough, 2008). Thus, forgiveness allows both interpersonal gains and protection from interpersonal losses and, on average, might not be expected to differ between promotion-focused and prevention-focused individuals (but see Brebels, De Cremer, & Sedikides, 2008). However, the wealth of research described above suggests that, to use the terminology of interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Kelley et al., 2003), promotion and prevention motivations may alter the *affordance* (i.e., the logical relevance) of certain types of feelings toward a relationship partner when contemplating forgiveness. That is, promotion-focused individuals may find greater relevance in their feelings concerning the opportunities for continued advancement and for attaining further gains in the relationship that forgiveness would bring. In contrast, prevention-focused individuals may find greater relevance in their feelings concerning the value of securing the investments they have already made to the relationship and the protection from loss that forgiveness would bring. People's motivations for promotion or prevention could thus have an important influence on the interpersonal processes through which forgiveness is reached.

Interpersonal dynamics of forgiveness

Forgiveness between individuals within an established relationship depends as much on interpersonal processes as it does on the attributes of either the victim or perpetrator (Kelley et al., 2003; Rusbult, Hannon, Stocker, & Finkel, 2005). Of the many aspects of relationships that could contribute to forgiveness dynamics, two qualities that have been widely researched are the *trust* that relationship partners place in one another, and their *commitment* to maintaining the relationship (e.g., Finkel et al., 2002; McCullough et al., 1998; Rempel, Ross, & Holmes, 2001; see also Wieselquist, Rusbult, Agnew, & Foster, 1999).

Both trust in and commitment to one's relationship partner enhance forgiveness. For example, following an offense by a relationship partner, those who trust their partner typically form more benevolent interpretations of the offense (Rempel et al., 2001) and retain more positive evaluations of the offender (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). These judgments create an environment in which amends are more likely to be sought and forgiveness more likely to be granted (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Hannon, 2001).

Similarly, when offenses occur within relationships in which partners are committed to one another, victims of the offense desire less revenge (McCullough et al., 1998) and engage in more conciliatory behaviors toward the offender (Finkel et al., 2002).

Although feelings of trust or commitment both enhance forgiveness, a variety of different motivational mechanisms for these effects have been proposed. Trust is a complex and multifaceted construct that has been conceptualized in many different ways (see Simpson, 2007). However, one core feature of trust that repeatedly emerges across a wide array of definitions is that it fundamentally involves expecting others to act in benevolent or beneficial ways. For example, from the perspective of interdependence theory, feelings of trust reflect the beliefs that others will suppress personal motivations and work toward either the joint benefits of the relationship or, altruistically, for one's own benefits alone (Bacharach & Gambetta, 2001; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; McClintock, 1976). Echoing these sentiments, in the specific analysis of trust within close relationships offered by Holmes and Rempel (1989) trust represents "…confident expectations of positive outcomes from an intimate partner [and] abstract positive expectations that [people] can count on partners to care for them and be responsive to their needs, now and in the future" (p. 188). Similarly, in summarizing these and other diverse perspectives on trust across many disciplines, Rousseau and colleagues noted that trust essentially entails "accept[ance of] vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the actions or intentions of another" (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p. 395). From this perspective, trust could thus potentially motivate forgiveness in one of two ways: it could increase perceptions of safety from the possibility of future offenses (i.e., reduce the perceived likelihood of further loss, making it easier to accept vulnerability), or it could increase perceptions of opportunities for future benefits from a relationship (i.e., increase the perceived likelihood that one might still have something to gain in the relationship, enhancing positive expectations; cf. Weber, Malhotra, & Murnighan, 2005).

Like trust, commitment is also a multifaceted construct and has multiple antecedents and manifestations. One widely researched perspective on commitment (see Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996) identifies three separate components that typically determine such feelings within a relationship: (a) the degree to which one is emotionally dependent upon the relationship (i.e., one's *attachment* to the partner), (b) the strength of one's intrinsic desires to maintain the relationship (i.e., one's *intent to persist*), and (c) the extent to which one envisions the relationship as continuing into the foreseeable future (i.e., one's *long-term orientation*). Although each of these separate components of commitment can have unique implications for thought and behavior, on the whole, their combination represents how dependent people feel upon a relationship partner to fulfill their important goals and needs and how psychologically invested they are in the relationship (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998; Rusbult & Martz, 1995). From this perspective, commitment could also motivate forgiveness in one of two ways: it could increase perceptions of the unique value of what is gained by maintaining the relationship (i.e., increase perceptions of the opportunities that are available with this relationship partner as compared to others), or it could increase perceptions of the investments that would be lost should the relationship deteriorate (i.e., increase perceptions of the security that would be forfeited if forgiveness is withheld).

Motivations for promotion and prevention and the role of trust and commitment in forgiveness

Given the various ways in which feelings of trust or commitment could potentially motivate interpersonal forgiveness, an integration of the self-regulatory affordances associated with motivations for promotion or prevention with these motivational dynamics produces several alternate hypotheses. Regarding trust, following an interpersonal transgression, feelings of trust could be primarily related to people's perceptions of safety and vulnerability in the relationship going forward and whether they might experience further losses in the future. That is, as McCullough (2008, p. 153) suggests, when thinking about forgiving the transgression, people may ask themselves whether they, "…expect more pain from [their] transgressor in the future or can [they] trust that his or her intentions toward [them] are basically benign?". Thus, if trust does indeed primarily involve thoughts about security and the potential for loss when making forgiveness decisions, then prevention-focused individuals should give greater weight to these types of thoughts, enhancing the role of trust in these individuals' choices of whom to forgive.

Although this hypothesis concerning the role of trust in forgiveness is reasonable and intuitive, the above analysis of the motivational dynamics of trust also suggests a second possibility. Instead of perceptions of safety, feelings of trust following an interpersonal transgression could be more related to positive expectations about the future of the relationship. That is, because the overall security of the relationship has been directly questioned by a partner's transgression, when deciding whether or not to forgive this transgression, people's thoughts about how much they trust their partner may become less focused on simply whether they believe this person might betray them again and instead largely concern whether there is anything to gain in accepting the risk of further betrayal (cf. Weber et al., 2005). Thus, if trust instead primarily involves such thoughts about the possible gains of risking betrayal when making forgiveness decisions, promotion-focused individuals should give greater weight to these types of thoughts, enhancing the role of feelings of trust in these individuals' choices of whom to forgive.

Regarding commitment, following an interpersonal transgression, feelings of commitment could be primarily related to people's perception that the relationship still has positive value and that opportunities for benefits and gains still exist. That is, as McCullough (2008, pp. 151–152) also suggests, when thinking about forgiving the transgression, people may "…continue to assign [their] relationship a high value if it was really valuable to [them] up until now… [and thus] people with high levels of commitment [should be] much more forgiving…". Thus, if commitment does indeed primarily involve thoughts about opportunities for future gain when making forgiveness decisions, promotion-focused individuals should give greater weight to these types of thoughts, enhancing the role of commitment in these individuals' choices of whom to forgive.

Although this hypothesis concerning the role of commitment in forgiveness is also reasonable and intuitive, the above analysis of the motivational dynamics of commitment again suggests a second possibility. Instead of the remaining opportunities for gain, feelings of commitment following an interpersonal transgression could be more related to just how *necessary* the relationship is perceived to be for sustaining well-being. That is, because the future of the relationship is inherently called into question by a partner's transgression, when deciding whether or not to forgive this transgression, people's thoughts about how committed they are to their partner may become less focused on what they think about the continued value of the relationship and instead largely concern all that they have invested, and all they have to lose, if they do not sustain the relationship. Thus, if commitment instead primarily involves thoughts about all that might be lost when making forgiveness decisions, prevention-focused individuals should give greater weight to these thoughts, enhancing the role of feelings of commitment in these individuals' choices of whom to forgive.

Preliminary evidence concerning perceptions of trust and commitment during forgiveness decisions

In light of these competing trust and commitment hypotheses, before describing our larger investigation of the influence of motivations for promotion or prevention on interpersonal forgiveness, we first present some preliminary data we collected to examine how feelings of trust and commitment are in fact related to thoughts about gain-focused or loss-focused reasons for forgiveness. One hundred and forty one Northwestern students brought to mind a specific same-sex individual whom they generally liked and knew fairly well. On questionnaires adapted from well-validated measures of trust (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985) and commitment (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998), they then rated both the extent to which they trusted this person ("Overall, how much do you trust your [relationship partner]?", "How confident are you that your [relationship partner] will always be ready and willing to offer you strength and support?", "How dependable is your [relationship partner], especially when it comes to things that are important to you?", and "How certain are you that you can rely on your [relationship partner] to keep the promises he/she makes?"; α = .93), and how committed they were to this person ("Overall, how committed are you to your relationship with your [relationship partner]?", "How upset would you be if your relationship with your [relationship partner] ended in the near future?", "To what extent do you want your relationship with your [relationship partner] to last forever?", and "How strong is your attachment to your [relationship partner] – how strongly linked do you fell to him or her?"; α = .92). Next, participants described a time that this person had perpetrated some kind of interpersonal offense against them and rated: (a) how "upsetting" this offense was, (b) how much they had "now forgiven" this offense, (c) how much this forgiveness was due to thoughts about possible gains from maintaining the relationship ("...to what extent was this forgiveness based upon your feelings about how much you might still have to gain from this relationship?", and "... to what extent was this forgiveness based upon your feelings about the opportunities for positive experiences you might be giving up if you chose not to forgive your partner?"; α = .70), and (d) how much this forgiveness was due to thoughts about possible losses from not maintaining the relationship ("...to what extent was this forgiveness based upon your feelings about the security this relationship might still provide?", and "...to what extent was this forgiveness based upon your feelings about the sense of loss you might feel if you chose not to forgive your partner?"; α = .71). All ratings were made on 1 (*Not at All*) to 7 (*Very*) scales.

Interestingly, a one-way within-participants ANOVA comparing how much participants rated their forgiveness of an interpersonal offense as stemming from a focus on possible gains versus a focus on possible losses revealed that, on the whole, gain-focused reasons were judged to be more relevant than loss-focused reasons, $F(1, 139)$ = 30.58, p < .001, d = 0.30. This suggests that following a transgression, people's thoughts may indeed generally shift to what benefits the relationship might still offer that would justify the risk of further betrayal in the future. Furthermore, additional regression analyses in which ratings of gain-focused and loss-focused reasons for forgiveness were separately predicted by ratings of trust and commitment, along with how upsetting the offense was and the overall level of forgiveness reported as controls, showed that the extent to which participants rated their forgiveness as due to gain-focused reasons was significantly predicted by their trust in the person responsible for the offense, β = .22, $t(136)$ = 1.93, p = .05, but not their commitment to this person (p > .11). In contrast, the extent to which participants rated their forgiveness as due to loss-focused reasons was significantly predicted by their commitment to the person responsible for the offense, β = .34, $t(136)$ = 3.04, p = .003, but not their trust in this person (p > .12).

Overview of the present research

These preliminary data thus provide at least some tentative support for one set of the hypotheses articulated above concerning the motivational dynamics of trust and commitment in the context of interpersonal forgiveness decisions. Feelings of trust appear to be somewhat more strongly related to a focus on the opportunities for gain a relationship might still bring, whereas feelings of commitment appear to be somewhat more strongly related to a focus on the security from loss the relationship might still provide. Thus, although these data are far from definitive, they do provide a basis for specific predictions concerning how motivations for promotion or prevention should interact with feelings of trust and commitment in forgiveness decisions. Given: (a) the suggested connection between trust and the salience of potential gains, and (b) the general affordances provided by promotion motivations, our primary *trust hypothesis* is that for those with a promotion focus, forgiveness will be more strongly related to the presence or absence of trust in a relationship partner than it will for those with a prevention focus. In contrast, given: (a) the suggested connection between commitment and the salience of potential losses, and (b) the general affordances provided by prevention motivations, our primary *commitment hypothesis* is that for those with a prevention focus forgiveness will be more strongly related to the presence or absence of commitment to a relationship partner than it will for those with a promotion focus.

We conducted two studies to test these trust and commitment hypotheses. In Study 1, we induced general motivations for promotion or prevention and assessed the effects of this induction on how participants' trust in and commitment to a friend or acquaintance predicted their anticipated forgiveness of hypothetical offenses. In Study 2, we measured fluctuations in participants' naturally occurring motivations for promotion or prevention every 2 weeks for 6 months and assessed how these motivations predicted the impact of their current trust in and commitment to a romantic partner on their immediate and delayed forgiveness of their partner's actual offenses.

Before presenting these studies, it is important to note at the outset that in interpreting the preliminary data presented above and advancing our primary hypotheses, we are not suggesting that trust never has any relevance for general perceptions of safety in a relationship or that commitment never has any relevance for perceptions of the potential for relationship growth. Indeed, when generally evaluating satisfaction with a particular partner or overall happiness within the relationship, the security provided by feelings of trust might also be especially important for prevention-focused individuals and the opportunities and desires for developing greater intimacy that feelings of commitment highlight might also be especially important for promotion-focused individuals (see the General discussion below). However, what we are proposing is that experiencing a transgression at the hands of a relationship partner brings specific aspects of people's multifaceted feelings of trust and commitment to the fore. That is, in the particular psychological context created by an interpersonal transgression, we propose (and our preliminary evidence supports) that the most salient aspects of people's feelings of trust may be what might still be attained within the relationship whereas the most salient aspects of people's feelings of commitment may be what must be maintained within the relationship. If this proposal is true, such concerns with attainment versus maintenance should then resonate more strongly in people's decisions to forgive the transgression when they are predominantly motivated by promotion or by prevention, respectively.

Study 1

The primary objective of Study 1 was to provide an initial test of our trust and commitment hypotheses in a controlled laboratory

setting. Participants began by completing a task designed to induce a temporary focus on either promotion or prevention motivations. Everyone was then asked to bring to mind someone with whom they were personally acquainted and to imagine this person perpetrating several different interpersonal offenses against them. Finally, participants reported the extent to which they would forgive these offenses. In line with our primary trust and commitment hypotheses we predicted that those with an induced promotion focus would show a stronger association between their trust in the perpetrator and their forgiveness of this person, whereas those with an induced prevention focus would show a stronger association between their commitment to the perpetrator and their forgiveness.

Method

Participants

Participants were 104 Northwestern University students who received course credit for volunteering. Due to a procedural glitch, gender information for these participants was not recorded. Several pilot studies that we conducted involving identical manipulations of promotion or prevention motivations and identical measures of forgiveness did not show any gender effects.

Procedure

All questionnaires were presented within a larger testing packet containing a number of unrelated measures. Participants first completed the promotion or prevention induction materials, followed by measures of forgiveness, trust, and commitment.

Inducing promotion or prevention motivations

Previous research has shown that people represent the personal goals they hope and aspire to achieve (i.e., their ideals) in terms of gains and advancement (see Higgins, 1987). Therefore, priming people's ideals, even in an earlier and seemingly irrelevant context, can temporarily induce a general promotion orientation toward subsequent tasks and judgments (see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008). Accordingly, participants in the *promotion prime* condition completed a questionnaire in which they listed five traits representing the person they "…ideally would like to be, that is the traits that [they] hope, wish, or aspire to possess". They then rated the extent to which they would ideally like to possess, as well as the extent to which they actually possessed, each trait.

Previous research has also shown that, in contrast to their ideals, people represent the personal goals they feel are their duty and obligation to achieve (i.e., their oughts) in terms of security and loss-prevention (Higgins, 1987). Therefore, priming people's oughts can temporarily induce a general prevention orientation toward subsequent tasks and judgments (Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008). Accordingly, participants in the *prevention prime* condition completed a questionnaire in which they listed five traits representing the person they "…feel [they] ought to be, that is the traits that [they] feel is it [their] duty, obligation, or responsibility to possess". As in the promotion prime condition, they then rated the extent to which they felt they ought to possess, as well as the extent to which they actually possessed, each trait.[1] Identical manipulations have been used to successfully prime motivations for promotion or prevention many times in the past (e.g., Förster et al.,

1998; Higgins et al., 1994; Liberman et al., 1999; Liberman et al., 2001; Molden & Higgins, 2004; Molden & Higgins, 2008).

Measuring forgiveness, trust, and commitment

Participants completed a questionnaire entitled "Reaction to Hypothetical Incidents" in which they were first asked to bring to mind a specific relationship partner and, to ensure they formed a vivid representation, to briefly describe their relationship with this individual. Participants then envisioned seven different incidents that might occur while interacting with this person, each of which involved a mild to moderate offense that represented a distinct violation of an interpersonal norm (see Finkel et al., 2002). These incidents are listed in Appendix A. Following each incident, participants rated how likely they would be to forgive the person who had performed the behavior on a 0 (*Extremely Unlikely*) to 8 (*Extremely Likely*) scale. These forgiveness ratings were averaged across all seven incidents (α = .93) and served as our primary measure of forgiveness. After participants had considered all seven incidents, they also rated on separate 0 (*not at all*) to 8 (*extremely*) scales: (a) "How much do you trust this person?" and (b) "How committed are you to your relationship with this person?".

Furthermore, to ensure that we obtained a sufficient range and variance in participants' responses to the forgiveness, trust, and commitment measures to test our hypotheses, an additional manipulation was embedded within the questionnaire such that half of the participants were asked to think of a "same-sex acquaintance (i.e., not a close friend, but somebody you like)" as the person with whom they were interacting in the hypothetical incidents and half of the participants were asked to think of their "closest same-sex friend". Thus, although everyone envisioned incidents involving a same-sex individual toward whom they felt generally positive, those thinking about their closest friend were expected to display levels of forgiveness, trust, and commitment toward the upper end of the rating scale whereas those thinking about an acquaintance were expected to display more moderate levels of forgiveness, trust, and commitment. Beyond these simple effects, however, relationship status itself was not expected to have any additional influence on participants' responses.

Results

Preliminary analyses of trust and commitment

Preliminary 2 (prime: promotion versus prevention) × 2 (relationship status: acquaintance versus friend) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) showed that, unsurprisingly, participants who imagined interacting with a friend during the hypothetical incidents displayed significantly greater trust in ($M = 7.1$, $SD = 1.22$), commitment to ($M = 6.7$, $SD = 1.47$), and forgiveness of ($M = 6.5$, $SD = 1.57$) this person than did those interacting with an acquaintance [trust, $M = 5.1$, $SD = 1.77$, $F(1,100) = 43.6$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.29$; commitment, $M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.94$, $F(1,100) = 61.5$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.54$; forgiveness, $M = 5.9$, $SD = 1.47$, $F(1,100) = 4.7$, $p = .03$, $d = .43$]. More importantly, the manipulation of participants' promotion or prevention motivations did not have any simple or interactive effects on their reported trust in, commitment to, or forgiveness of the person with whom they imagined interacting, $Fs < 1.3$, $ps > .26$. Thus, inducing motivations for promotion or prevention did not appear to influence participants' feelings about the persons with whom they imagined interacting in terms of any of the critical variables that were the primary focus on this study.

Primary forgiveness analyses

In order to test the extent to which participants' motivations for promotion or prevention influenced the effects of trust and commitment on their imagined forgiveness, main effects of the

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[1] Participants' ratings of the discrepancy between their ideal or ought traits and how much they actually possessed these traits were included to increase the consideration people gave to their ideals or oughts and to strengthen the priming manipulation. We did not expect, nor did we find, these discrepancy ratings themselves to have any simple or interactive effects on any of the dependent measures described below, $ts < 1.6$, $ps > .12$.
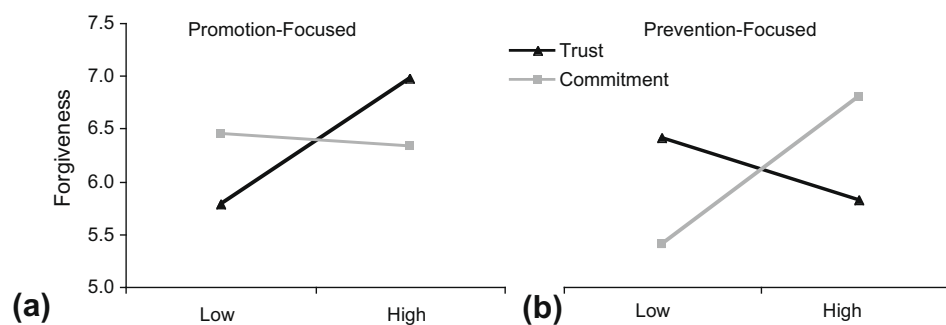
Fig. 1. Ratings of forgiveness for a series of hypothetical offenses as simultaneously predicted by participants' high (+1 SD) or low (−1 SD) trust in and high (+1 SD) or low (−1 SD) commitment to the perpetrator of such offenses following an experimentally induced focus on: (a) promotion motivations, or (b) prevention motivations.

motivational induction (coded −1 for the prevention focus condition and 1 for the promotion focus condition) and standardized ratings of trust and commitment were entered in the first step of a regression predicting such forgiveness. Terms representing the motivation × trust and motivation × commitment interactions were then added in a second step. Because, as might be expected (see Wieselquist et al., 1999), participants' rating of trust and commitment were highly correlated ($r = .71$, $p < .001$), the simple effects and interactions involving these variables were always entered into the regression simultaneously to control for this overlap. The priming manipulation did not influence this relationship between trust and commitment, $\beta = .13$, $t(100) = 0.96$, $p = .34$.

Results showed a marginal main effect such that the more committed participants were to their partner, the more forgiving they were of the offenses they experienced, $\beta = .24$, $t(100) = 1.76$, $p = .08$ (see Finkel et al., 2002); as predicted, this effect was also accompanied by significant (or marginally significant) motivation × trust, $\beta = .58$, $t(98) = 2.14$, $p = .03$, and motivation × commitment interactions, $\beta = −.48$, $t(98) = −1.79$, $p = .08$. As displayed in Fig. 1a, tests of simple slopes (see Aiken & West, 1991) for those in the promotion focus condition revealed a significant positive association of trust with forgiveness, $\beta = .39$, $t(51) = 2.35$, $p = .02$, but no significant association of commitment with forgiveness, $\beta = −.03$, $t(51) = −0.20$, $p = .80$. In contrast, as displayed in Fig. 1b, tests of simple slopes for those in the prevention focus condition revealed a significant positive association of commitment with forgiveness, $\beta = .45$, $t(47) = 2.15$, $p = .04$, but no significant association of trust with forgiveness, $\beta = −.19$, $t(47) = −0.90$, $p = .37$.[2] Additional analyses were performed including a variable representing the rela-

tionship status of the person who performed the hypothetical offenses and did not reveal any additional simple or interactive effects, $ts < 1.5$, $ps > .14$. That is, the unique effects of trust on forgiveness for those with a promotion focus and the unique effects of commitment on forgiveness for those with a prevention focus were not further influenced by whether this forgiveness was granted to a friend or an acquaintance.[3]

Discussion

Overall, Study 1 provided initial support for our primary trust and commitment hypotheses. When envisioning a number of different offenses performed by a specific friend or acquaintance, an induced focus on promotion motivations increased the association between people's feeling of trust in (but not their commitment to) this person and their likelihood of forgiving the offenses. In contrast, an induced focus on prevention motivations increased the association between people's feeling of commitment to (but not their trust in) the person they imagined performing the offenses and their likelihood of forgiveness. Such a pattern of results is consistent with our proposition that, in the specific context of a partner's transgression, the most salient aspects of people's feelings of trust will be what might still be attained within the relationship, whereas the most salient aspects of people's feelings of commitment will be what must be maintained within the relationship. That is, the potential for gain presumably signaled by trust appeared to have a greater relevance for forgiveness decisions when this potential was made more salient by motivations for promotion, whereas the potential for loss presumably signaled by commitment appeared to have greater relevance for forgiveness decisions when this potential was made more salient by motivations for prevention.

Although Study 1 provides clear support for our hypotheses, it has several limitations. One concern is that, although participants were encouraged to vividly imagine offenses committed by specific individuals whom they knew personally, these offenses were still merely hypothetical. One may therefore question whether the forgiveness reported in these circumstances truly reflects the forgiveness that would occur if participants actually experienced these

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[2] Simultaneous regression analyses control for shared variance between feelings of trust and commitment due to their mutual relationship to variables such as overall satisfaction with or general perceptions of closeness to one's relationship partner. Because we are predicting that motivations for promotion or prevention are related to specific representations of possible gain or loss that are uniquely associated with trust and commitment, we believe that simultaneous regressions, which remove variance due to general satisfaction or closeness that could obscure these types of specific relationships, are the most appropriate approach. However, simultaneous regressions could also possibly remove some shared variance that is meaningful for representations of possible gain or loss. Therefore in this study, and in Study 2 below, we repeated the primary analyses using separate regressions to examine trust effects and commitment effects. Across these two studies, of the six critical promotion × trust and prevention × commitment interactions tested, four were still significant or marginally significant in the separate regressions. Furthermore, for the two remaining interactions, a comparison between the 95% confidence intervals for the regression coefficients in the simultaneous versus the separate analyses showed that these intervals overlapped; thus although these two coefficients in the separate analyses no longer reached conventional levels of significance, they were not significantly different from the coefficients in the simultaneous analyses. Finally, a weighted meta-analysis of the critical interaction coefficients in the separate analyses revealed that both the promotion × trust, $z = 2.56$, $p = .01$, and prevention × commitment, $z = 2.91$, $p < .01$, terms were significant overall. Thus, analyzing our primary trust and commitment hypotheses using separate versus simultaneous regressions does not substantively change the conclusions that can be drawn from these analyses.

[3] The induction of promotion or prevention motivations involved asking participants to list personally important traits. This could have given some participants an opportunity to affirm their generally forgiving qualities (e.g., *patience, understanding, compassion, self-control*) before considering the hypothetical offenses, which, in turn, could have influenced their responses to these offenses. A content analysis of the ideal and ought traits listed revealed, however, that this type of affirmation: (a) was generally infrequent (across experimental conditions only 32% of participants listed some forgiving quality), and (b) was not significantly more frequent in either the ideal or ought priming conditions. Furthermore, including whether or not participants displayed this affirmation as an additional variable in all analyses did not change the significance of any of the results reported, nor did it have any simple or higher-order effects itself. Therefore, any previous affirmation of one's forgiving qualities did not appear to have influenced the present findings.

events (but see McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). A second concern is that only a limited set of offenses committed by friends or acquaintances were examined. One might therefore also question whether the present results extend to other types of offenses or to more intimate relationships. A final concern is that these hypothetical scenarios only allowed us to assess participants' initial forgiveness immediately following the imagined offense. However, forgiveness is often not limited to one's initial reactions and is instead a dynamic processes that can evolve over time (McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003). To address these concerns, Study 2 examined the forgiveness of a wide variety of actual offenses committed by a romantic partner in an ongoing relationship. Moreover, in addition to assessing people's initial forgiveness of these offenses, the extent to which this forgiveness had changed at a later time-point was measured as well.

Study 2

The primary objective of Study 2 was to extend Study 1 by providing additional tests of our trust and commitment hypotheses in a more naturalistic setting. We conducted a six-month longitudinal study of college students in romantic relationships in which people's: (a) promotion and prevention motivations, and (b) trust in and commitment to their romantic partners were assessed every 2 weeks. At each assessment period, participants also noted whether their partner had done anything to upset them over the previous 2 weeks and rated their forgiveness of this offense. If applicable, participants were further reminded of an offense they had reported in the preceding assessment period and provided a second, delayed rating of forgiveness as well. These procedures thus allowed us to test our hypotheses by: (a) examining real offenses occurring within ongoing close relationships, and (b) using both cross-sectional and longitudinal assessments of forgiveness.

Method

Participants

Participants were 69 Northwestern University freshmen (34 men and 35 women) who responded to advertisements for a six-month longitudinal study of dating practices. Eligibility criteria required each participant to be: (a) a first-year undergraduate at Northwestern University, (b) involved in a dating relationship of at least 2 months in duration, (c) between 17 and 19 years old, (d) a native English speaker, and (e) the only member of a given couple to participate in the study. Participants who completed all aspects of the study were paid $100; those who missed some of the assessment sessions were paid a prorated amount. Participant retention was excellent: All 69 participants completed the study and 67 of them completed at least 12 of the 14 assessment sessions.

At the start of data collection, participants had been involved with their dating partners for an average of 13.05 (SD = 9.76) months. The 26 participants who broke up with their romantic partner during the six-month study were included in the analyses below until the time of their breakup. Data from 11 participants were dropped from all analyses because these participants did not mention any partner offenses during the course of the study and were therefore unable to report on forgiveness processes; this left a final sample of 58 participants. There were no consistent simple or higher-order effects of gender across the measures described below. This variable was therefore dropped from all analyses.[4]

[4] Controlling for gender reduced some results for longitudinal measures of forgiveness to marginal significance, but did not alter the overall pattern of these findings reported below.

Procedures

The present study was part of a larger investigation of dating practices that included an initial session in which a variety of individual difference measures were administered, followed by a shorter questionnaire administered over the internet every other week for 6 months (14 times in total). All questionnaire items were assessed on scales ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*). Given limited space in the bi-weekly internet questionnaires, all constructs of interest were assessed with simple one- to two-item measures.

Measuring promotion motivations, prevention motivations, trust, and commitment

Instead of priming promotion or prevention motivations, as in Study 2, this study measured participants' naturally occurring fluctuations in each of these motivations across multiple time points. Within each of the 14 biweekly questionnaires, participants completed one item assessing their current promotion focus ("My primary focus in life is to fulfill my hopes and aspirations") and one item assessing their current prevention focus ("My primary focus in life is to fulfill my duties and responsibilities"). These items were directly adapted from validated measures of promotion or prevention motivations that have been used in many previous studies (Förster et al., 1998; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997; Higgins et al., 1994; Higgins et al., 2003; Liberman et al., 1999; Liberman et al., 2001; Molden & Higgins, 2004; Molden & Higgins, 2008; Shah et al., 1998). Next, participants responded to one item that measured their current level of trust ("I trust my partner") and two items that measured their current level of commitment ("I am committed to maintaining this relationship in the long run" and "I think my partner is my 'soulmate'"). This commitment index was highly reliable (across all 14 waves, average α = .78, ranging from .70 to .88), and the second item was included to ensure that participants' feelings of psychological dependence and investment in the relationship were adequately captured (see Agnew et al., 1998).

Measuring partner offenses and forgiveness

An additional series of items on the biweekly questionnaires assessed whether or not participants felt their partner had perpetrated some type of interpersonal offense toward them over the previous 2 weeks, as well as the extent to which they had forgiven this offense. After responding to the promotion, prevention, trust, and commitment items, they were first asked to answer "yes" or "no" to the following question: "Has your partner done anything over the past 2 weeks that was upsetting to you?". This relatively mild phrasing was used to ensure that participants would feel free to report a wide range of perceived offenses. If participants answered no to this question, they moved to an unrelated set of questions; if they answered yes, they provided a brief description of what their partner had done to upset them and then made several ratings concerning this offense. The first rating was their overall distress in response to the offense ("This behavior was highly upsetting to me"). On average, participants reported 3.38 (SD = 2.65) offenses during the course of the study and these incidents were moderately to seriously upsetting (M = 5.23, SD = 1.49). The second rating was the extent of their *initial forgiveness* of their partner ("I have forgiven my partner for this behavior").

At each biweekly session, participants who had reported a partner offense during the previous session (2 weeks earlier) were also presented with a verbatim transcript of their description of this offense and again rated the extent to which they had forgiven their partner on the same measure as before (i.e., "I have forgiven my partner for this behavior"). Employing this identical measure at two different time points (one at the initial report of the offense and one 2 weeks following the initial report) allowed a longitudinal assessment of *delayed forgiveness*, which represented any changes beyond the forgiveness that was initially reported. Finally, in order to control

for additional individual differences in how generally happy, secure, self-confident, and forgiving participants were in general, at the initial lab session everyone completed: (a) a widely used 5-item measure of overall satisfaction with life (e.g., "So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life"; Pavot & Diener, 1993), (b) a widely used 36-item measure of attachment style (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) with separate scales for *anxious* (e.g., "I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner") and *avoidant* attachment ("I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners"), (c) the standard 10-item Rosenberg (1965) self-esteem measure (e.g., "I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others"), and (d) a previously validated 4-item measure of *disposition for forgiveness* (e.g., "I tend to get over it quickly when someone hurts my feelings"; Brown, 2003).

Analysis strategy

The primary goal of this study was to examine the extent to which participants forgave their partners' transgressions across a variety of naturally occurring incidents. However, because each participant could potentially contribute reports of multiple transgressions, standard data analytic techniques requiring all observations to be independent could not be used. Therefore, results were analyzed using multilevel statistical models specifically designed for non-independent data (cf. Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) and adapted for situations in which participants repeatedly answer the same series of questions (e.g., Nezlek, 2001). This technique allowed estimates of within-person associations between the measures in each of the online questionnaires (at Level 1) to be modeled as between-person random effects (at Level 2). Following the advice of Kenny and colleagues for the use of multilevel statistical models that include: (a) multiple associations at Level 1 (i.e., the simultaneous prediction of forgiveness by promotion, prevention, trust, and commitment), and (b) small group sizes at Level 2 (i.e., the relatively few instances of forgiveness reported by each individual participant), all analyses allowed intercept terms, but not slope terms to vary randomly (Kenny, Mannetti, Pierro, Livi, & Kashy, 2002). For all analyses, continuous variables were standardized and centered around the sample means.

Results

Preliminary analyses of partner offenses

To ensure that any effects of participants' motivations for promotion or prevention on their forgiveness of their partner's offenses were not merely due to differences in the frequency, type, or severity of the offenses they reported, preliminary analyses were conducted on each of these variables. A multilevel logistic regression of participants' motivations for promotion and prevention on whether or not participants reported a partner offense in any given biweekly session first showed that stronger prevention motivations (controlling for promotion motivations) were significantly related to a greater likelihood of reporting an offense, $\exp(B) = 1.44$, $t(68) = 2.16$, $p = .03$. Stronger promotion motivations (controlling for prevention motivations) were non-significantly related to a greater likelihood of reporting an offense, $\exp(B) = 1.24$, $t(68) = 1.43$, $p = .16$. However, more importantly, controlling for the number of transgressions reported by each participant in all of the primary analyses reported below neither altered the significance of nor moderated any of the results detailed below.

Separate content analyses of the type of offenses that participants reported were initially conducted by both authors. These analyses resulted in the identification of 11 distinct categories. Following the establishment of these categories, two independent coders blind to participants' motivations for promotion or prevention and all hypotheses assigned each offense to one of the 11 categories. These coders agreed on their assignments 68% of the time and disagree-

ments were resolved by discussion. The different categories of offenses, along with representative examples, are reported in Appendix B. Separate regression analyses that examined whether the type of offense participants' reported was associated with their promotion motivations (controlling for their prevention motivations) or their prevention motivations (controlling for their promotion motivations) did not reveal any significant effects, $ts < 1.1$.

Finally, multilevel regression analyses of the perceived severity of a partner's offenses, regardless of what type of offense this was, showed that, in the biweekly sessions, participants' current promotion and prevention motivations were not related to their reports of how upset they were by these offenses, $ts < 1$. Furthermore, including both simple and higher-order effects of offense severity in the primary analyses described below again neither altered the significance of nor moderated any of the results detailed below.

Primary forgiveness analyses

Having established that the offenses participants were considering were generally equivalent between those with stronger promotion or prevention motivations, we then examined our primary hypotheses concerning the associations of these motivations with participants' forgiveness of such offenses. As in Study 1 we predicted that the stronger their current promotion motivations, the greater the association between participants' current trust in their partner and their willingness to forgive his or her offenses would be, whereas the stronger their current prevention motivations, the greater the association between participants' current commitment to their partner and their willingness to forgive him or her would be.

To test these predictions, a first set of analyses was performed on participants' initial forgiveness immediately following their report of a partner's offense. Participants' promotion motivations, prevention motivations, trust, and commitment were entered in the first step of a multilevel regression predicting initial forgiveness. Terms representing promotion × trust, promotion × commitment, prevention × trust, and prevention × commitment interactions were then added in a second step. Because, as in Study 1, participants' feelings of trust and commitment were significantly correlated (across all waves, $r = .36$, $p < .001$), the simple effects and interactions involving these variables were always entered into the regression simultaneously to control for this overlap. Participants' motivations for promotion or prevention did not influence this relationship between trust and commitment, $\beta s < .08$, $ts < 1.15$, $ps > .25$.

Results showed significant main effects of both trust, $\beta = .26$, $t(113) = 4.15$, $p < .001$, and commitment, $\beta = .23$, $t(113) = 2.8$, $p < .01$ (see Finkel et al., 2002; Hannon, 2001; Rempel et al., 2001), and no main effects of either promotion or prevention motivations, $ts < 1$. In addition, supporting our primary hypotheses, both the promotion × trust, $\beta = .09$, $t(109) = 1.79$, $p = .08$, and prevention × commitment, $\beta = .17$, $t(109) = 2.24$, $p < .05$, interactions were also significant (or marginally significant). As shown in Fig. 2a, tests of simple slopes estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean of the promotion measure (see Aiken & West, 1991) revealed a large positive association of trust with initial forgiveness when participants' promotion motivations were strong, $\beta = .42$, $t(124) = 4.10$, $p < .001$, but a smaller positive association when these motivations were weak, $\beta = .22$, $t(124) = 2.93$, $p < .01$. As shown in Fig. 2d, similar simple slope tests estimated at 1 SD above and below the mean of the prevention measure also revealed a significant positive association of commitment with initial forgiveness when participants' prevention motivations were strong, $\beta = .30$, $t(124) = 2.47$, $p < .01$, but a non-significant association when these motivations were weak, $\beta = .12$, $t(124) = 1.30$, $p = .20$.

Neither the promotion × commitment nor the prevention × trust interactions approached significance, $ts < 1$. As shown in Fig. 2b and c, simple slope tests of these interactions revealed that strong or weak promotion motivations did not influence the
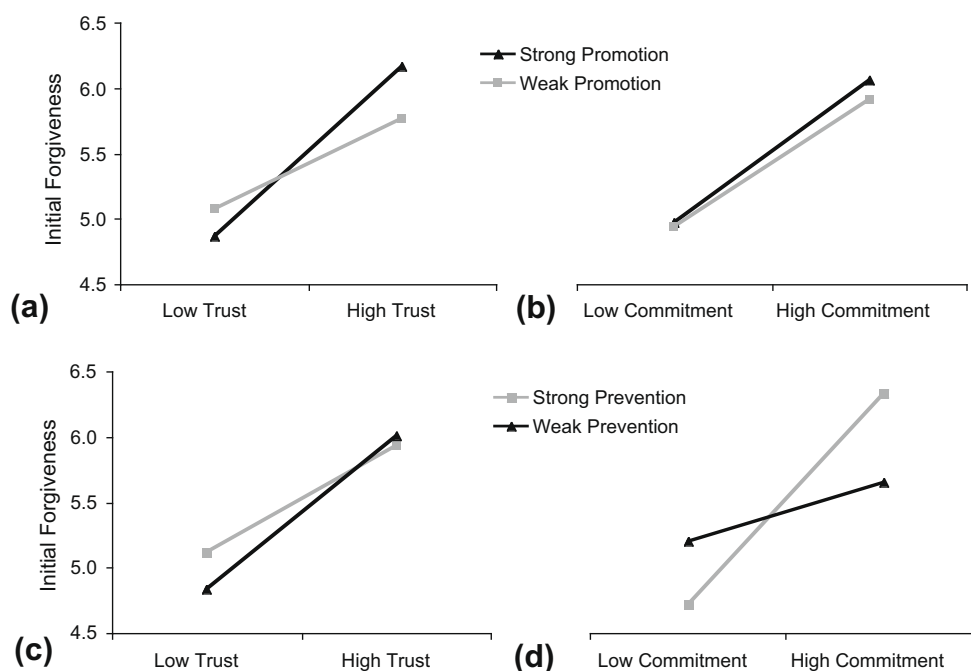
Fig. 2. Ratings of initial forgiveness immediately after reporting an offense by a romantic partner as predicted by interactions between participants': (a) promotion motivations and trust in their partner, (b) promotion motivations and commitment to their partner, (c) prevention motivations and trust in their partner, and (d) prevention motivations and commitment to their partner. Predicted values were calculated at 1 SD above and below the mean for each variable.

large main effect of commitment on initial forgiveness, nor did strong or weak prevention motivations influence the large main effect of trust on initial forgiveness. This too is generally consistent with our primary hypotheses and the results of the pilot data reported earlier: Promotion motivations were not expected to create special affordance for feelings of commitment, nor were prevention motivations expected to create special affordance for feelings of trust, in judgments of forgiveness.

To further test the association between participants' motivations for promotion or prevention and the role of trust and commitment in how their forgiveness evolves over time, a second, identical set of multilevel regression analyses was conducted predicting delayed forgiveness with the additional inclusion of participants' initial forgiveness as a covariate. These analyses thus examined the extent to which participants' forgiveness of their partners' offenses had changed in the 2 weeks after they had initially reported the offense. Overall, forgiveness showed substantial stability between the initial and delayed assessments, $\beta = .34$, $t(98) = 4.65$, $p < .001$. However, above and beyond this effect, participants' commitment to, $\beta = .19$, $t(98) = 2.31$, $p < .05$, and trust in, $\beta = .17$, $t(94) = 2.10$ $p < .05$, their partner continued to generally predict increases in forgiveness from one assessment point to the next, whereas, in general, their prevention and promotion motivations did not, ts < 1. Furthermore, the hypothesized promotion $\times$ trust, $\beta = .17$, $t(94) = 2.31$, $p < .05$, and prevention $\times$ commitment, $\beta = .16$, $t(94) = 1.77$, $p = .08$, interactions were also observed. As shown in Fig. 3a, tests of simple slopes (which were estimated using the same methods described above) revealed that participants' trust in their partner predicted additional increases in forgiveness over time when their motivations for promotion were strong, $\beta = .35$, $t(102) = 3.01$, $p < .01$, but not when these motivations were weak, $\beta = .06$, $t(102) = 0.61$, $p = .54$. As shown in Fig. 3d, tests of simple slopes also revealed that participants' commitment to their partner predicted additional increases in forgiveness over time when their motivations for prevention were strong, $\beta = .46$, $t(102) = 3.40$, $p < .001$, but not when these motivations were weak, $\beta = .13$, $t(102) = 1.31$, $p = .19$.

In contrast to the results for initial forgiveness, analyses of delayed forgiveness also revealed significant promotion $\times$ commitment, $\beta = -.24$, $t(94) = -2.59$, $p < .01$, and prevention $\times$ trust interactions, $\beta = -.27$, $t(94) = -2.61$, $p < .01$. The patterns of simple slopes shown in Fig. 3b and c reveal that these effects are complementary to those displayed in Fig. 3a and d. Commitment significantly predicted additional increases in forgiveness over time when participants' motivations for promotion were *weak*, $\beta = .46$, $t(102) = 4.13$, $p < .001$, but not when these motivations were strong, $\beta = .12$, $t(102) = 0.95$, $p = .34$. Similarly, trust significantly predicted additional increases in forgiveness over time when participants' motivations for prevention were *weak*, $\beta = .38$, $t(102) = 2.97$, $p < .01$, but not when these motivations were strong, $\beta = .03$, $t(102) = 0.26$, $p = .80$.

This pattern of results demonstrates that not only were stronger promotion motivations associated with a more positive relationship between participants' trust in their partner and their increased forgiveness of this partner's offenses over time, such motivations were also associated with the *absence* of a relationship between participants' commitment to their partner and increased forgiveness over time. Conversely, not only were strong prevention motivations associated with a more positive relationship between commitment and increased forgiveness over time, these motivations were associated with the *absence* of a relationship between trust and increased forgiveness over time. These results suggest that, as time progressed following a transgression, promotion motivations predicted both an increased affordance of the potential for continuing to attain benefits from a relationship signaled by feelings of trust *and* a decreased affordance of the perceived need to maintain a relationship upon which one depends signaled by feelings of commitment, whereas prevention motivations predicted exactly the opposite.

Tests of the influence of dispositional forgiveness, self-esteem, attachment, and satisfaction with life

Following tests of our primary hypotheses, several additional analyses were performed to ensure that the results reported previously did not depend on participants' dispositional tendencies
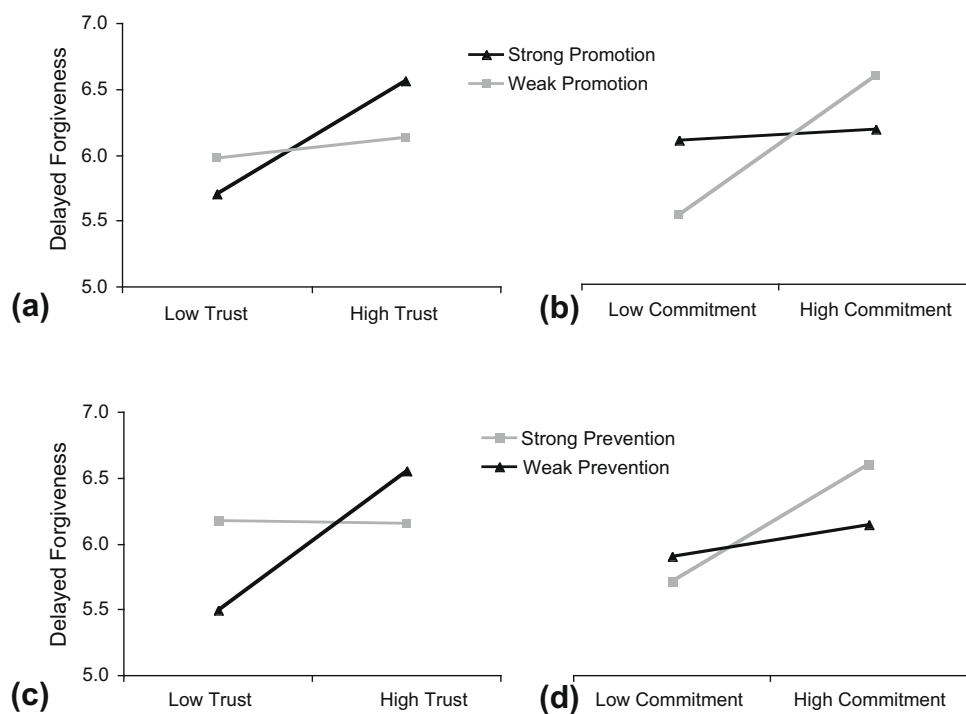
Fig. 3. Ratings of delayed forgiveness above and beyond the initial forgiveness of an offense by a romantic partner reported 2 weeks earlier as predicted by interactions between participants': (a) promotion motivations and trust in their partner, (b) promotion motivations and commitment to their partner, (c) prevention motivations and trust in their partner, and (d) prevention motivations and commitment to their partner. Predicted values were calculated at 1 SD above and below the mean for each variable.

toward forgiveness, or their generally confident, secure, or satisfied outlooks on life. The above regression analyses were all repeated with these additional variables as covariates. Results showed that, overall, more anxiously attached individuals showed less initial forgiveness of one's partner, $\beta = -.19$, $t(113) = -2.04$, $p = .04$, but did not differ in their delayed forgiveness above and beyond initial forgiveness, $t < 1$. Furthermore, more avoidantly attached individuals did not differ in their initial forgiveness, $t < 1$, but showed marginally more delayed forgiveness above and beyond this initial forgiveness, $\beta = .18$, $t(97) = 1.84$, $p = .07$. Neither dispositional forgiveness, satisfaction with life, nor self-esteem had any other significant association with forgiveness, $ts < 1.6$. Most importantly, including dispositional forgiveness, attachment style, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life in the primary analyses described above: (a) did not reduce the significance of any of the effects on initial or delayed forgiveness described previously and (b) did not reveal any further moderation by these variables of the promotion × trust and prevention × commitment effects that constituted our primary trust and commitment hypotheses.[5]

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[5] Two previous articles have also employed the present data set to investigate forgiveness processes. One examined the relationship between narcissistic entitlement and forgiveness (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004), and the other examined the interactive effects of romantic destiny beliefs and partner-specific attachment anxiety on forgiveness (Finkel, Burnette, & Scissors, 2007). To ensure that the findings presented in the present report are independent of those reported previously, we repeated the two-step, multilevel analyses for both initial forgiveness and delayed forgiveness with additional measures of narcissistic entitlement (cf. Raskin & Terry, 1988), destiny beliefs (Knee, Patrick, & Lonsbary, 2003), partner-specific attachment anxiety (cf. Hazan & Shaver, 1987), and a destiny beliefs × attachment anxiety interaction term. In almost all cases, these results led to conclusions identical to those reported above. All four commitment and trust main effects remained significant (or near significant), as did five of the six significant interaction effects. (The trust × promotion focus interaction effect fell to non-significance only in the cross-sectional analysis, but the pattern of means for this effect was still descriptively in the expected direction). In short, these conservative analyses indicate that the results reported here are empirically as well as theoretically independent of those reported in other research employing this data set.

Discussion

Overall, Study 2 provides further support for our primary trust and commitment hypotheses. For actual offenses committed by romantic partners, strong promotion motivations predicted a more positive association between people's feelings of trust in their partner and their willingness to forgive these offenses. In contrast, strong prevention motivations simultaneously predicted a more positive association between people's feelings of commitment to their partner and their forgiveness. Furthermore, these effects were found not only for people's initial forgiveness reported immediately after their description of an offense, but also for a delayed measure of their additional changes in forgiveness above and beyond their initial reactions. These results thus closely replicate the findings of Study 1 concerning people's imagined forgiveness of hypothetical transgressions by friends and acquaintances and extend them to the domain of real transgressions perpetrated by romantic partners.

In this study, we also found that the association between participants' promotion and prevention motivations and the role of trust and commitment in their decisions to forgive were more pronounced for their delayed than their immediate forgiveness. Although we did not anticipate these differences between immediate and delayed forgiveness, such results tentatively suggest that the distinct effects of people's motivations for promotion and prevention on forgiveness processes may become more pronounced as time passes than they are immediately following this transgression. This could be an important direction for future research.

General discussion

The roots of forgiveness are often thought to lay in a deep motivational transformation away from retaliation and toward reconciliation (see McCullough, 2008; Worthington, 2005). In this article, we have examined different ways of achieving such a motivational transformation, as well as the specific processes different

transformations might involve. Across two studies, people's motivations for promotion or prevention were both measured and manipulated and their forgiveness of a wide variety of both real and imagined interpersonal offenses by acquaintances, friends, and lovers were examined. The results of these studies were clear and consistent: For those focused on promotion, feelings of trust were stronger determinants of forgiveness as compared to feelings of commitment, whereas, for those focused on prevention, feelings of commitment were stronger determinants of forgiveness as compared to feelings of trust. Moreover, although there are a variety of other motivational variables that could possibly influence people's feelings of trust or commitment and their forgiveness decisions, such as self-esteem (Murray, Holmes, & Collins, 2006) or attachment style (Brennan et al., 1998), the effects of promotion and prevention motivations remained constant both when: (a) controlling for any independent effects of these other motivations, and (b) randomly assigning people to receive temporary inductions of a promotion-focused or prevention-focused mindsets. Thus, the present results cannot be explained by the fact that promotion-focused individuals happen to be generally more happy, self-confident, forgiving, or secure in their relationships than are prevention-focused individuals.

Because promotion motivations generally create concerns with attaining gains, even at the risk of incurring losses (see Higgins & Molden, 2003; Molden et al., 2008), the findings of our two primary studies further support the suggestion of the preliminary data presented at the outset that, in the wake of an interpersonal transgression, feelings of trust motivate forgiveness by highlighting considerations of whether the benefits that might still be attained in a relationship merit accepting the risk of further betrayal (Rousseau et al., 1998; Simpson, 2007). Furthermore, because prevention motivations generally create concerns with maintenance and protecting against losses, even at the risk of forgoing gains (see Higgins & Molden, 2003; Molden et al., 2008), the findings of our two primary studies also further support the suggestion of our preliminary data that, in the wake of an interpersonal transgression, feelings of commitment motivate forgiveness by highlighting the need to protect against the losses that would be realized if one's investment in a relationship upon which one depends is not maintained (Agnew et al., 1998; Finkel et al., 2002; Rusbult & Martz, 1995; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). Thus, just as many previous studies using a wide variety of cognitive (e.g., Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992), behavioral (e.g., Lee & Aaker, 2004; Shah et al., 1998), and even neuropsychological (Amodio et al., 2004) measures have found that promotion motivations afford sensitivities for potential gains and prevention motivations afford sensitivities for potential losses (for reviews see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008), the present studies suggest that these motivations afford similar sensitivities in the domain of interpersonal forgiveness.

Feelings of trust and commitment in the context of forgiveness

Some important qualifications to the present findings should be noted, however. First, trust and commitment were measured in simple, face-valid ways and could have failed to capture the full psychological scope of these concepts. That is, participants' own representations of their feelings of trust and commitment, which is what was emphasized in our studies, may not encompass the full complexity of how researchers have sometimes defined and examined these constructs (see Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996; Simpson, 2007). Because people's idiosyncratic perceptions of trust and commitment are likely to play a central role in their forgiveness decisions, we believe that this qualification does not reduce the importance of our findings. It does, however, suggest that future

studies could explore whether different components of trust and commitment motivate forgiveness in different ways.

Another qualification to the present findings is that although the effects of promotion and prevention motivations on the role of trust and commitment in forgiveness were consistent across a diverse set of circumstances, it is possible (and perhaps likely) that there are also certain conditions in which these effects might be different. First, it is quite possible that the affordance of promotion motivations for feelings of trust and the affordance of prevention motivations for feelings of commitment could be somewhat unique to the context of forgiveness decisions. That is, when contemplating forgiveness in the direct aftermath of an interpersonal transgression, the future security people trust their relationship partners to provide may be overshadowed by thoughts about what benefits justify gambling on such security, and commitments to further growth within the relationship may be overshadowed by thoughts about whether the potential costs of withdrawing from the relationship justifies maintaining these social connections. Instances in which people are contemplating their general satisfaction or happiness within a relationship may not as strongly prime these particularly gain-focused aspects of trust and loss-focused aspects of commitment, and thus may not provide the same promotion-focused or prevention-focused affordances. This too is an important topic of future study.

In addition to differences that might exist in people's evaluations of relationship partners that do not involve forgiveness, it is possible that the connections between promotion or prevention motivations and the effects of trust or commitment may, at times, differ even for forgiveness judgments as well. Holmes and Rempel (1989) noted that the meaning inherent in feelings of trust can vary greatly depending upon the status of one's relationship. Whereas for relationships that are still in the formative stage "...the initial focus is on the rewarding qualities that make the relationship feel worthwhile... [and] trust is often little more than a naïve expression of hope..." (pp. 192), as the relationship deepens people "...come to rely on the many benefits that the partner can provide..." and trust comes to function more as a reassurance "that their investments will [not] be lost and the experience will [not] prove to be an empty promise..." (pp. 193). From this perspective, as dependence upon a relationship partner increases, the meaning and experience of trust may shift somewhat from highlighting the potential for gains to highlighting the potential for losses.

The present studies did examine a variety of different types of relationship, including friends, acquaintances, and romantic partners, and found similar results across each of these circumstances. However, all of these relationships were relatively low in dependence – even the romantic relationships examined were those of students who had just arrived at college weeks earlier – which could explain why feelings of trust appeared to reflect perceptions of gain and were particularly relevant when people were promotion-focused. In more stable and established relationships (e.g., married couples), feelings of trust may become increasingly reflective of feelings of security and thus increasingly relevant to prevention-focused individuals.[6] Similarly, it is possible that the meaning inherent in feelings of commitment (e.g., whether these feelings stem primarily from perceived investments versus perceived satisfaction and the availability of alternatives) and the way in which these feelings are experienced may also vary depending upon the

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[6] Some preliminary evidence of this can be found in a study by Molden and colleagues in which trust between dating partners was predicted by perceived support for each other's promotion, but not prevention, concerns, whereas trust between married partners was independently predicted by perceived support for each other's promotion *and* prevention concerns (Molden, Lucas, Finkel, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2009).

status of one's relationship (Rusbult & Martz, 1995; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996).

A final qualification of the present research is that the analysis of forgiveness decisions we have outlined here has largely considered the independent influences of people's feelings of trust and commitment, whereas the effects of these feelings could be interrelated. Some evidence has suggested that trust is a prerequisite for commitment (see Wieselquist et al., 1999); thus, it could be hypothesized that when people make decisions about forgiveness, trust and commitment could have interactive effects (i.e., commitment might only predict forgiveness given sufficient levels of trust) or that feelings of commitment could mediate the effects of feelings of trust. However, whereas the independent affordance effects we hypothesized consistently emerged across the anticipated forgiveness measures in Study 1 and both the immediate and delayed forgiveness measures in Study 2, additional analyses of the present data did not provide consistent support for either an interactive or mediational account. However, additional alternate hypotheses concerning a more elaborate interplay between feelings of trust and commitment, both in the context of forgiveness decisions and other relationship processes, could be more directly explored in future research.

In summary, we thus believe it is likely that a full accounting of the associations between the broad and multifaceted constructs of trust and commitment and people's motivations for promotion or prevention will be complex and require the consideration of a variety of other factors, such as the meaning of the specific evaluation or decision being made or the context of relationship in which this evaluation occurs. The present studies offer a preliminary, but important, illustration of some of these associations, and of their potential impact on basic interpersonal interactions. However, future research is needed to further define when and how motivations for promotion and prevention and feelings of trust and commitment interact within the context of interpersonal relationships.

Motivating forgiveness

The present studies are not the first to consider the influence of different motivations on the forgiveness process (see, e.g., Fincham et al., 2005; Huang & Enright, 2000; Worthington et al., 2001), but they do offers several theoretical extensions to previous work on these types of motivations. Whereas past studies have focused on distinct types of specific forgiveness motives (e.g., a religious obligation, desires for revenge or avoidance; see Fincham et al., 2005; Huang & Enright, 2000), we explored how forgiveness was affected by broad differences in basic self-regulatory concerns with advancement (i.e., promotion) or security (i.e., prevention). Furthermore, beyond merely demonstrating how stronger or weaker levels of different forgiveness motives results in more or less forgiveness, we examined how people's motivations can also affect the affordance of different pieces of information when people are making forgiveness decisions and thereby illustrated a particular set of interpersonal process (i.e., trust and commitment) through which such broad self-regulatory concerns can influence forgiveness. Taken as a whole, the findings presented here therefore help provide a more nuanced view of the motivational dynamics that drive forgiveness and a greater understanding not only of whether forgiveness will be granted but also why and to whom.

Promotion, prevention and other relationship motivations

Beyond the influence of different motivations on forgiveness, much research has also examined the separate motivational processes more generally involved with forming and maintaining relationships. For example, Gable and colleagues (e.g., Gable, 2006) have investigated how *appetitive* motivations to approach desired

relationship outcomes (e.g., affiliation) versus *aversive* motivations to avoid undesired relationship outcomes (e.g., rejection) affect a variety of different relationship processes. In addition, Murray, Holmes, and colleagues (see Murray et al., 2006) have examined the dynamic processes through which people balance desires to seek greater attachment to (and dependence on) relationship partners but still protect themselves from the increased vulnerability that stronger dependence creates. How do our findings concerning the effects of promotion and prevention motivations on decisions to repair (or not repair) relationships through forgiveness intersect with this other work on relationship motivations?

Approach and avoidance relationship goals

The work of Gable and colleagues has consistently demonstrated that a focus on attempting to avoid undesired outcomes within a relationship leads to more negative affect, greater sensitivity for negative events, less relationship satisfaction, and more partner conflict than a focus on attempting to approach desired outcomes (e.g., Gable, 2006; Impett, Gable, & Peplau, 2005). However, because a promotion focus on attainment and a prevention focus on maintenance both involve approaching positive outcomes (i.e., relationship growth and relationship security are both desired end-states that people work toward; see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008), neither would therefore be expected to produce more negativity or conflict than the other. This pattern of results is indeed what was found in the present studies; those with stronger promotion or prevention motivations did not show any overall differences in the experienced negativity of a relationship partner's offense, nor in the general tendency to forgive these offenses.

Yet, because concerns with relationship growth and relationship security represent distinct *types* of appetitive motivations (see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008), even when these motivations lead to similar relationship outcomes overall they might be expected to do so through distinct interpersonal processes. This too is consistent with the present studies; both promotion and prevention motivations enhanced forgiveness, but promotion motivations did so primarily through feelings of trust, and prevention motivations did so primarily through feelings of commitment. Overall, this analysis therefore suggests that future research on relationship motivations might profit from more thoroughly examining the simultaneous costs and benefits of both appetitive versus aversive motivations and a general focus on promotion versus prevention (as has been done in other research domains, see Carver, Lawrence, & Scheier, 1999; Förster et al., 1998; Higgins et al., 1994).

Dependence regulation

In a separate line of research, Murray, Holmes, and colleagues (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000; Murray et al., 2006) have shown that people actively regulate their interdependence with a relationship partner based on their perceptions of being accepted, valued, and regarded as worthy. The higher this *perceived regard*, the less risk people see in pursuing further interdependence in the relationship, but the lower this perceived regard, the more people feel the need to shield themselves from rejection by reducing their dependence upon their partner. Because greater interdependence can offer opportunities both for further interpersonal gains and for security from feeling alone, this process of *dependence regulation* should also be equally important for those with promotion or prevention motivations. Yet, such motivations might again alter the interpersonal pathways through which dependence regulation occurs. Some indication of such effects can been found in the current results as well. When promotion-focused, it was the presence or absence of the trust people felt for their relationship partners that primarily guided their decisions to pursue further interdependence with or to withdraw from this partner (i.e., by choosing to forgive or not to forgive a partner's offenses), whereas when pre-

vention-focused, such decisions were primarily guided by the presence or absence of people's commitment to their relationship partners.

The implications of these findings for the larger role of trust and commitment in processes of dependence regulation must be interpreted carefully, however. First, the present studies only focused on one specific type of relationship outcome (i.e., forgiveness) for which, as we have noted, trust and commitment could possibly have unique effects. Furthermore, there was no direct assessment of perceived regard (i.e., how much people thought they were loved, accepted, or viewed positively by their partners; see Murray et al., 2006) to which our current measures of trust and commitment could be compared. Nevertheless, what our results do clearly indicate is that, whether separate from or linked to perceived regard, people's reports of their "trust" and "commitment" toward their partner can have distinct motivational implications for their decisions concerning some aspects of interdependence following partner offenses. That is, similar to perceived regard, stronger feelings of trust or commitment may both support continued interdependence, but, as our findings suggest, by respectively highlighting either the further growth this interdependence might allow or the security this interdependence currently provides.

Conclusions

Although forgiveness is typically made possible by acts of self-regulation, in this article we suggest that there are multiple forms such acts might take. Distinct modes of self-regulation concerned with promotion and advancement versus prevention and security influenced forgiveness by increasing the relevance of distinct feelings (i.e., trust versus commitment) toward relationship partners in decisions to grant such forgiveness. This research thus helps to provide a more nuanced view of forgiveness motivations that could bring further insight to when, how, and whom we forgive.

Acknowledgments

Appendix A

Hypothetical partner offenses rated in Study 1:

1. Your [friend/acquaintance] cancels plans s/he has made with you in order to spend time with other [friends/acquaintances].
2. Your [friend/acquaintance] belittles you at a social event in front of your mutual [friends/acquaintances].
3. Your [friend/acquaintance] shows up two hours late for plans that the two of you had made together.
4. Your [friend/acquaintance] says something that hurts you.
5. Your [friend/acquaintance] lies to you about something important.
6. Your [friend/acquaintance] invites you to a party and s/he ignores you all night.
7. Your [friend/acquaintance] says something bad about you behind your back.

Appendix B

Categories of actual partner offenses reported in Study 2 with representative examples (and frequency of occurrence):

1. *Emotional distance* – "[My partner] did not initiate phone calls and ignored an email – in general did not talk with me very much." (15%)
2. *General nastiness* – "[My partner] basically called me ignorant while debating a heated subject." (14%)
3. *Poor communication* – "Sometimes my partner jumps to conclusions about what I'm thinking and feeling without asking me if, in fact, that is what I'm feeling." (13%)
4. *Insensitivity* – "[My partner] kept me waiting for hours, didn't call me, and woke me up when he finally got here and acted like it was nothing." (9%)
5. *Defied my wishes* – "[My partner] smoked pot when he told me he wouldn't and when I asked him not to." (8%)
6. *Acted unfaithfully* – "[My partner] attempted to cheat on me with someone else while intoxicated." (7%)
7. *Initiated breakup* – "I went to see my partner in New York last weekend and when I left she told me that she needed to not talk to me for a week to reevaluate her feelings about our relationship." (7%)
8. *Neediness* – "[My partner] made me feel bad for having other commitments outside of the relationship." (7%)
9. *Jealously* – "[My partner] couldn't get ahold of me one night when I went out with some friends from work and got extremely angry about it. I felt as if he was trying to 'keep track' of me." (6%)
10. *Prioritized others* – "[My partner] picked going out with her friends rather than to come and see me while I was having a bad week." (4%)
11. *Other/unclassifiable* – "[My partner] got mad at me because I was too perfect." (10%)

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