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The Effects of Betrayal Characteristics on Laypeople's Ratings of Betrayal Severity and Conceptualization of Forgiveness

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Lee J. Dixon entitled "The Effects of Betrayal Characteristics on Laypeople's Ratings of Betrayal Severity and Conceptualization of Forgiveness." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

Kristina C. Gordon, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Deborah Welsh, Warren Jones, Gilya Schmidt

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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The Effects of Betrayal Characteristics on Laypeople's Ratings of Betrayal
Severity and
Conceptualization of Forgiveness

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Lee J. Dixon
August 2009

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Abstract

The two studies included in this project were aimed at understanding the effect that relational closeness has on perceived ease of forgiveness and betrayal severity and, in turn, how betrayal severity and relational closeness influence people's conceptualization of forgiveness. Study 1 addressed the fact that although past studies have shown that relational closeness predicts one's willingness to forgive and researchers have posited that betrayals that are committed by those closest are the most severe, it is still unclear whether these trends are due to the characteristics of close relationships or to the characteristics of the types of betrayals that are committed within close relationships. Two randomized groups of college undergraduates imagined the same betrayal narratives being committed by either someone relationally close or someone relationally distant. As was expected, imagining someone close led to participants viewing the betrayals as easier to forgive. However, contrary to what was expected, participants who imagined the betrayals being committed by someone close viewed the betrayals as less severe. Together, these findings suggest that it is not the characteristics of the betrayals being committed in close relationships, but the qualities of the relationship that affect the perceived severity of betrayals as well as how easy they are to forgive. Study 2 addressed the notion that people's conceptualization of forgiveness may vary as a function of the closeness of the betrayer and the severity of the offense. College undergraduates read one of six betrayal narratives taken from the first study that varied in both severity and the relational closeness of the imagined betrayer. Results indicated that participants expected a more positive outcome from the forgiveness of less severe betrayals as well as betrayals

that were committed by someone relationally close. The interaction of these two constructs demonstrated that relational closeness has less influence on one's conceptualization of forgiveness of less severe betrayals. The results of this second study suggest that forgiveness is not a completely static construct and that its conceptualization is dependent upon both who committed the betrayal as well as the severity of the betrayal in question. Implications, limitations, and future directions are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

It seems safe to assume that in people's lives there will inevitably come a time when they will be hurt or let down by someone else. These hurts can become problematic when they cause a disruption in relationships, particularly if these relationships are important in a person's life. One way to keep an interpersonal hurt from being so detrimental to one's relationships is through forgiving one's offenders (Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). Furthermore, not only has forgiveness been found to serve a protective function within relationships (e.g., Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004), it also has been associated with improvements in one's own mental and physical well-being (e.g., Bono & McCullough, 2006; Coyle & Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996). Given that forgiveness can play such an important role in a person's life, it is no wonder that it has had a special significance in many of the world's most influential religions for millennia (Rye, 2005). What is surprising is that forgiveness has only recently begun to attract the attention of psychologists.

However, the scientific literature about forgiveness has grown during the past few decades and it has illustrated that the forgiveness of interpersonal offenses is, in fact, beneficial. For example, those who forgive are more likely to be physically healthy (Seybold, Hill, Neumann, & Chi, 2001; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001) and to have more healthy relationships with others, including with those that committed the interpersonal offense (Friesen, Fletcher, & Overall, 2005; Gordon & Baucom, 2003; Gordon, Hughes, Tomcik, Dixon, & Litzinger, in press). On the other hand, the absence of forgiveness has been shown to have detrimental effects on one's life, such as more

negative emotions and greater physiological stress (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001). Although, there has been a surge in the literature on this topic, there is much that has not been explored regarding forgiveness. For instance, researchers have yet to come to a consensus on how the construct of forgiveness should be defined.

Defining Forgiveness

Forgiveness has been described as a phenomenon that combines both art and science (Worthington, 2005). Although it would be unwise to ignore the artistic side of forgiveness, for both researchers and clinicians it is even more egregious to ignore the scientific aspect of this concept. One of the most important components of scientific investigation into any phenomenon is the conceptualization of said phenomenon; conceptualization answers the question “what is it we are studying?” Unfortunately, forgiveness is not an easy phenomenon to conceptualize clearly, a problem that is evidenced by the myriad definitions in the literature that have been used to describe it, as well as the multitude of articles that point to the need for better conceptualization of the topic (e.g., Williamson & Gonzales, 2007; Kearns & Fincham, 2004).

In defining forgiveness, some researchers have focused on the behavioral aspects of the phenomenon (Pingleton, 1997), some have focused on the cognitive aspects (Al Babuk, Dedrick, & Vanderah, 1998), others have focused more on the emotional aspects (Ferch, 1998), and still others have focused more on the motivational aspects (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). There also have been researchers that have defined forgiveness by using a combination of the four aspects listed above (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991). Although there are differences in how researchers define the concept of forgiveness, a recent review of thirteen researchers’

definitions found that there are many points on which they agree regarding this complex concept (Wade & Worthington, 2005). For example, most agree that forgiveness is a positive coping mechanism when dealing with an interpersonal hurt and that it is primarily beneficial for the victim of an offense. However, there are some areas where researchers do not agree about how this concept should be defined.

One area where researchers are not in agreement regarding the conceptualization of forgiveness is in regard to the need for reconciliation following an offense. Wade and Worthington's (2005) review of definitions of forgiveness found that many researchers do not consider reconciliation a requirement of forgiveness; they write that "[i]t is important to state that forgiveness is not necessarily reconciliation; one can simultaneously forgive and decide to end a relationship" (p. 160). Fincham (2000) states that following an offense "reunion may be facilitated by processes that appear similar to forgiveness" but he also suggests that "reconciliation entails forgiveness, but forgiveness does not necessarily entail reconciliation" (p. 7). Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1991) also state that forgiveness and reconciliation should be viewed separately. Furthermore, some researchers have stated that there are times when reconciliation may be undesirable, even when forgiveness has taken place, such as situations in which it places the victim in the position of being hurt repeatedly (e.g., Fow, 1996; Freedman, 1998).

On the other hand, there are many researchers who have posited that reconciliation is an important characteristic of forgiveness. For example, Hargrave and Sells (1997) state that forgiveness involves both the victim and victimizer involving themselves in interactions that restore love and trust in the relationship, and ultimately

leads to the re-establishment of the relationship. Along these lines, Paleari, Regalia and Fincham (2003) suggest that forgiveness involves the reduction of motivation to withdraw from the offender. Similarly, McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal's (1997) definition of forgiveness, which has been widely cited, states that forgiveness includes the victim becoming "decreasingly motivated to maintain estrangement from the offender and increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender" (p. 322). Moreover, Worthington and his colleagues (2000), in their intervention to promote forgiveness, state that the process of forgiveness includes feeling goodwill towards one's offender and restoring the relationship with that person. Highlighting the discrepancy between the definitions or descriptions of forgiveness among researchers, two of the authors mentioned in the preceding two paragraphs, Worthington and Fincham, seem to vacillate on the importance they place on reconciliation within the phenomenon of forgiveness.

There are also other aspects of the definition of forgiveness on which researchers do not agree. Denton and Martin (1998) focused on addressing this issue by asking a sample of experienced clinicians to give their perceptions of the definition of forgiveness that had been proposed by Enright and Zell (1989). This study found that although these clinicians for the most part agreed with four of the six aspects of Enright and Zell's (1989) definition, they were not as strongly in agreement with two of the aspects. Most participants agreed that (a) forgiving involves an inner process of releasing anger and fear, (b) forgiving produces a reduction in the desire to retaliate, (c) that forgiveness takes time, and (d) forgiveness does not necessarily mean that one has to forget. However, nearly half of the clinicians were either neutral or disagreed with the notion that

forgiveness must take place between two people and more than half either disagreed or were neutral with regard to the notion that forgiveness must follow a long-lasting psychological, emotional, or moral hurt.

Although understanding the way that professionals in the fields of psychology, counseling, and pastoral counseling view forgiveness is undoubtedly important, it is also essential that these professionals understand the way that laypeople view forgiveness in order to best assist them in the process of forgiving. As Kearns and Fincham (2004) have pointed out, the view that laypeople have of forgiveness can influence their decisions regarding whether they will or will not enter into the process of forgiving and interpersonal betrayal. For example, if one believes that in order to forgive someone he or she must restore their relationship to the way it once was, one may decide that this would be too difficult and choose to not forgive, especially if this means having to tolerate additional hurtful actions.

Another important reason for understanding laypeople's conception of forgiveness is that there are many studies that measure forgiveness by simply asking one question, such as "Have you forgiven?" (e.g., Connor, Davidson, & Lee, 2003; Kearns & Fincham, 2005; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). In these studies it is important to know whether this question is measuring forgiveness in the way that the author defines it. For example, whereas many researchers do not believe that reconciliation is necessary for forgiveness to occur, one study that examined the way laypeople conceptualize forgiveness found that many do believe reconciliation to be an important factor in forgiving (Kanz, 2000). Similarly, another study looking at the views of laypeople regarding forgiveness as well as reasons for forgiveness found that one in

four young adults and one in six older adults view reconciliation as a dimension of forgiveness (Younger, Piferi, Jobe, & Lawler, 2004). Furthermore, a prototype analysis of laypeople's views of forgiveness by Kearns and Fincham (2004) also found that many of their participants (21%) believed that reconciling or bringing the offending person back into the victim's life was an integral part of forgiveness. This study also discovered that, unlike most forgiveness researchers, a substantial portion of these participants believed that condoning or excusing is an attribute of forgiveness and that forgetting about the interpersonal offense is also an important characteristic of forgiveness. Moreover, not wanting or seeking revenge was not nearly as central to laypeople's conceptualization of this phenomenon as many of the other characteristics that they endorsed, whereas these do seem to be important attributes in many researchers' and professionals' definitions of forgiveness, as stated earlier.

Another study that focused on laypeople's definition of forgiveness was conducted by Wade (1989). In this study twenty professionals from the field were asked to discuss the nature of forgiveness in interviews. These interviews generated 600 items regarding the topic of forgiveness. These items then were reduced to a smaller set of items which were administered to a sample of college students. Half of the students were asked to think about a past interpersonal offense committed by someone they had forgiven for the offense, and half were asked to think about an offense that had been committed by someone that they had not forgiven. They then were asked to identify the items that best corresponded to the offense they were thinking about. The study found that there were 83 items that were able to distinguish those students who had forgiven from those who had not. Cognitively, forgiveness was associated with the lack of

obsession or focus on the offense, positive and understanding thoughts about the offender, lack of accusation and desire for revenge, as well as a lack of feeling like a victim. Forgiveness also was associated with positive feelings toward the offender, such as compassion and acceptance, and the lack of negative feelings such as hatred and anger. There were also certain behaviors that were associated with having forgiven, such as an attempt at conciliation and reaching out to the offender, along with a lack of avoidance of the offender and holding a grudge.

Younger and his colleagues (2004) also have examined how laypeople conceptualize forgiveness, specifically by assessing the dimensions of forgiveness. When college students were asked to give their definitions of forgiveness, 42% of the sample responded that it involves something akin to acceptance, dealing with it, getting over it, coming to terms, and moving on. The sample also wrote that forgiveness involves (in order from most to least reported) letting go of negative feelings, continuing the relationship, and forgetting about the incident that needed forgiving. On the other hand, a small portion of the sample stated that forgiveness does not mean forgetting. These students also were asked to relate an incident in which they had forgiven and one in which they had not, along with reasons as to why they chose to forgive or not forgive. Reasons for the former included (in order) the importance of the relationship, for the sake of health and happiness, because of having hurt others themselves thus requiring forgiveness of their own transgressions, and because the offender felt sorry or apologized. Reasons for not forgiving included restatement of the offense, lack of remorse or apology, because the offender was not deserving of forgiveness, the incident was ongoing, and the incident was unforgivable. This study also included a second sample of

adults who averaged 42 years of age. This sample's definition of forgiveness was very similar to the younger sample's; however only 8% of the adult sample cited the importance of the relationship as a reason for having forgiven, whereas 30% of the students had cited this as a reason. None of the adults stated that they had forgiven an offender because he or she had apologized or felt sorry, while nearly one in five of the students had stated this reason. Additionally, 11% of these adults cited striving for peace as a reason to forgive, whereas none of the college students had cited this reason.

Although it is clear that researchers and laypeople do not entirely agree on what forgiveness is, for the most part they do. In fact, the articles that are mentioned above looking at laypeople's definitions of forgiveness find that there is a large overlap with the definitions given by most researchers. It seems that for both researchers and laypeople moving on following the event is an important part of forgiveness, as is the reduction of negative affect and behaviors toward the offender. However, as was mentioned earlier, many researchers do not feel that reconciliation is necessary for forgiveness to take place, whereas it is important for a substantial portion of the general population, particularly younger people. Having said this, among laypeople there are also many inconsistencies in what they feel are the most important characteristics of this phenomenon; for example, some mention that forgetting an offense is an important attribute of forgiveness, whereas many never mention this.

One reason that forgiveness may be so difficult for researchers and laypeople to define clearly is that there are myriad aspects and features of forgiveness (Kearns & Fincham, 2004), some of which are more central while others are more peripheral. Moreover, it is possible that the nature of the interpersonal betrayal that has taken place

may influence one's conceptualization of the forgiveness process. For example, a betrayal that is more severe may require the victim to act, think, and feel in ways that are different from when the betrayal is not as intense or hurtful. Past research has attempted to assess the role that the characteristics of betrayals play in one's engaging in the process of forgiveness.

The Nature of Betrayal and its Impact on Forgiveness

Given that forgiveness is a response to an interpersonal hurt or betrayal, it is paramount that the nature and characteristics of betrayals be understood in order to better understand forgiveness. We will all suffer some sort of betrayal in our lives, sometimes minor and sometimes severe, and unfortunately most of us will at some point also betray others (Jones & Burdette, 1994). In fact, it has been suggested that any time we enter into any sort of relationship with others we run the risk of being betrayed at any point during the development of this relationship (Jones & Burdette, 1994), and in a sense we have to make the decision whether or not the relationship is worth taking that risk, given that betrayal can cause such pain.

Betrayal has been conceptualized as "any violation of trust and allegiance as well as other forms of intrigue, treachery, and harm-doing in the context of established and ongoing relationships" (Jones, Couch, & Scott, 1997). This conceptualization is not dissimilar to one of the definitions of the verb "to betray" from the Oxford English Dictionary: "To be or prove false to (a trust or him who trusts one); to be disloyal to; to disappoint the hopes or expectations of." Inherent in this definition is the notion that in order for one to be betrayed there must be prior hopes or expectations of the relationship in which the betrayal takes place. Indeed, Fitness (2001) states that the key to betrayal

lies in one's expectations, beliefs, and theories regarding relationships in general, as well as particular relationships. Betrayal occurs when one feels that there has been a violation of the trust that one has placed in another that he or she will respect these hopes and expectations. Although Fitness (2001) has suggested that betrayal can occur in any relationship, Jones and Burdette (1994) have posited that betrayal only happens in established relationships, whereas the hurt that occurs in newer relationships is one of feeling rejected. They argued that although rejection is painful, it is betrayal that is the most hurtful because it disrupts an ongoing meaningful relationship in which each partner has invested of themselves. However, although rejection and betrayal differ, in this manuscript all interpersonal hurts will be termed betrayals; it is difficult to assess the exact point in a relationship when being hurt moves from being a rejection to being betrayed.

It has been suggested that perhaps the most important aspect of any relationship is expectations (Bar-Tal, Bar-Tal, Geva, & Yarkin-Levin, 1991), and that before entering into any relationship a person typically has an already formed ideal of how said relationship should function (e.g., how one should be treated, how the relationship will end; Jones & Burdette, 1994). The formation of expectations regarding relationships is inevitable; throughout people's lifetimes they are constantly learning from others in their lives, such as parents and one's culture in general, that there is a certain way relationships work (Baldwin, 1992; Fletcher & Thomas, 1996; Knee, 1998). These expectations, or theories, have been found to have a strong influence on the way that people perceive, judge, and remember both relationships in general as well as their own particular relationships (e.g., Fletcher & Fitness, 1996).

The violation of these relational expectations can be very hurtful. In fact, the initial discovery of a betrayal goes beyond the mere cognitive understanding that an interpersonal violation has occurred – the feeling of violation is often felt at a much deeper level (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Research has shown that pain and hurt are among the first and strongest emotional responses to the awareness that one has been betrayed (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998). However, feeling hurt is not the only type of emotion that is experienced following the discovery of a betrayal. Fehr and Baldwin (1996) discovered that their participants rated the betrayal of trust as the most anger-provoking type of interpersonal transgression. Another feeling that can arise following a betrayal is jealousy, particularly within relationships where there is either sexual or emotional infidelity (Sharpsteen, 1991). Although mild jealousy may be seen as beneficial by some partners, the effects of intense jealousy have been found by researchers to be quite hurtful, including withdrawal, hostility, resentment, and in the worst cases, murder (e.g., Daly & Wilson, 1988; van Sommers, 1988).

The pain and hurt that are caused by betrayal, especially within close relationships, can be better understood when looked at as a form of interpersonal trauma. In fact, many researchers and clinicians have come to find it useful to conceptualize betrayals within romantic relationships, be they emotional or sexual, as a form of trauma (e.g., Abrahm Spring, 1996; Brown, 2001; Glass, 2003; Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004). For example, Gordon and Baucom (2003) states that a betrayal that requires forgiveness “may be seen as an interpersonal trauma that disrupts the person’s previous assumptions and expectations of his/her partner and relationship in general” (p. 181).

They continue to explain how these violated assumptions can leave the betrayed partner feeling out of control and that the future can no longer be predicted within the relationship with the betraying partner.

Trauma theory posits that the reason that trauma can have such devastating effects, such as mental confusion, feelings of vulnerability, rage, and sadness, is because experiencing a trauma violates our assumptions about the way the world should function (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; McCann, Sakheim, & Abrahamson, 1988). Janoff-Bulman suggests that as modern-day American citizens we view the world as a place where we are safe, even invulnerable, and that people are just and fair and get what they deserve, along with the view that we deserve for good things to happen to us. Understandably, an interpersonal betrayal can and often does violate all of these assumptions, and may do so to the greatest extreme when betrayal occurs in a relationship in which we have come to trust another person to look out for our best interest, such as in a romantic relationship (e.g., Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004).

Perhaps we feel betrayed most often by those we are closest to because the assumptions that we have about close relationships are among the strongest that we form. Not only may these assumptions be the strongest, they are most likely the most important to us. People simply might have higher expectations of those with whom they are in close relationship. Clark and her colleagues have identified our closest relationships as communal relationships in which we expect to garner help and support without the other expecting an immediate reward (e.g., Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark & Waddell, 1985). Given this finding, it is not surprising that when asked to describe an event that has transpired that required forgiveness, research participants almost always give an account

of when they have been hurt by someone who is closest to them, such as parents, spouses, and close friends (Jones, Couch, & Scott, 1997). In fact, Younger and his colleagues (2004) found that only 4% of their college student sample cited someone other than a friend, romantic partner, sibling, or parent when asked to describe an occasion in which they had forgiven. Similarly, Williamson & Gonzales (2007) found that only 9% of their sample cited an offense by someone other than a close friend, romantic partner, best friend, parent, or family member.

Although our expectations regarding those closest to us may be the most important in our lives and cause the greatest pain when they are violated, there exists the possibility that we can feel betrayed in any kind of relationship in which we feel another person has violated important relational expectations (Fitness, 2001). For example, Jones and Burdette (1994) found that almost 19% of the men in their sample reported having felt betrayed by a coworker. Furthermore, employees also can feel betrayed by their employers when they perceive they are being treated unfairly or deceitfully (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

Even though people feel betrayed more often by those whom they are closest to, fortunately it seems they find it easiest to forgive those whom they are closest to as well (e.g., McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, & Hight, 1998). McCullough and his colleagues (1998) found that the closer one is to the offender, the more likely it is that the offender will offer an apology, leading to greater empathy with the offender, and less motivation to avoid the offender and seek revenge. However, it should be noted that in this study the vast majority of participants reported a betrayal that had been committed by someone with whom they were initially close (i.e., significant others, friends, etc.) and

had known for a considerable length of time. Moreover, this study does not clarify what effect the type of betrayal had on the relationship between empathy, apology, relational closeness, and forgiveness. For example, perhaps the betrayals committed by the closest offenders were simply less severe, making it easier for the offender to apologize, and for the forgiver to empathize with the offender. Regardless, this finding supports Batson's (1991) suggestion that relational closeness is itself a unique determinant of empathy. Furthermore, he suggests that empathy is developed as a function of attachment, which helps explain why people are less likely to feel empathy for and forgive those with whom they have more distant relationships. Given this notion, it is not surprising that when research participants are asked to give an account of betrayals that occurred in which forgiveness did not take place they will be much more likely to cite an acquaintance or stranger than someone who is close to them (e.g., Younger et al., 2004; Williamson & Gonzales, 2007).

Indeed, people are simply more likely to forgive a less severe offense. This finding is one of the most robust in the study of forgiveness (e.g., Boon & Sulsky, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998). In fact, both subjective and ratings by others of the severity of an offense are predictive of one's willingness to forgive (Fincham, Jackson, & Beach, 2005). As robust as this finding is, there is still much that is not understood regarding the relationship between the severity of an offense and forgiveness. Is it possible that the severity of a betrayal, along with who committed the betrayal, affect one's willingness to forgive because these characteristics of the betrayal influence the way one views or conceptualizes forgiveness?

The Current Studies

Research has shown that relational closeness is a predictor of willingness to forgive. Paradoxically, we also know that it is those who are the closest to us who are the most likely to hurt us and require us to forgive. However, one could argue that this likelihood is not due so much to our assumptions and expectations regarding our close relationships, but that it is simply because those who we are in close relationship with have the opportunity or option to engage in the types of betrayals that are most hurtful (e.g., sexual and emotional infidelity, deception, betrayal of trust, etc.; Fitness & Matthews, 1998; Jones & Burdette, 1994). If this is the case, it is possible the same betrayal, executed by either someone close to us or someone distant to us, would be seen as equally severe and perhaps our willingness to forgive them would be equal as well. Examining this possibility is the goal of the first study.

Hypothesis 1

Given past findings and theories outlined above that suggest that betrayals are the most hurtful when they are committed by someone close to us, it is predicted that an imagined betrayal committed by someone close will be perceived as more severe than if the same imagined betrayal is committed by someone relationally distant.

Hypothesis 2

However, given that people are more likely to forgive those with whom they are in close relationship, as outlined above, it is predicted that people will be more willing to forgive an imagined betrayal committed by someone close than they

will be to forgive the same imagined betrayal committed by someone they are not close to.

As was mentioned earlier, coming to a clear and concise conceptualization of forgiveness is not an easy task, neither for researchers and professionals in the field, nor laypeople. Perhaps this task is such a difficult one because of the fact that forgiveness is not a static construct, not only because of differences in people's viewpoints but also because of differences in the situations that require forgiveness. Given that not all betrayals are created equal, it is also possible that not all forms of forgiveness are created equal. It may be that differing levels of severity of betrayals as well as the closeness of the betrayer affect the ways that people view and conceptualize forgiveness. Thus, the aim of the second study is to assess the ways in which laypeople's conceptualizations of forgiveness differ as a function of differences in level of severity of betrayals as well as the relational closeness of their betrayers.

Hypothesis 3

It is predicted that level of betrayal severity will influence people's conceptualization of forgiveness. Specifically, it is predicted that the concept of forgiveness of imagined betrayals that are more severe will be narrower, incorporating less attributes of forgiveness. For example, reconciliation and forgetting that the betrayal took place may not be viewed as important in the forgiveness of a severe imagined betrayal when compared to the forgiveness of a less severe imagined betrayal, even though these are attributes of forgiveness that have been suggested by both laypeople and professionals.

Hypothesis 4

Given that research has shown we are most likely to forgive those closest to us, it is also predicted that the relational closeness of the person who committed an imagined betrayal will influence people's conceptualization of forgiveness.

Specifically, the closer the relationship with the betrayer, the more important the attributes of forgiveness will become in people's conceptualization of forgiveness, in order to protect or preserve the relationship.

Chapter 2

Method and Results

Study 1

The aim of this study was to assess how relational closeness affects laypeople's ratings of the severity of an imagined betrayal as well as their willingness to forgive said betrayal (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Additionally, participants' ratings of the severity of betrayal narratives in this study were used to select betrayal narratives for Study 2.

Participants

This sample was comprised of 130 undergraduate college students between the ages of 18 and 25 who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a large southeastern university. These participants received extra credit for their participation that was commensurate with the amount of time it takes to complete the questionnaire packet. Recruitment consisted primarily of posting the availability of this study on a central website that is used by the university as a way to communicate research opportunities to introductory psychology students. Of the 130 participants, 62 were female, 66 were males; two participants did not report their gender. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 25 years old, $M = 19.45$, $SD = 1.48$. This sample was primarily white, with 107 participants reporting being Caucasian, 11 reporting being African-American, 3 reporting being Asian, 4 reporting being Hispanic, 4 reporting other; one participant did not report his or her race.

Measures

Relational Closeness. Relational closeness was measured with Aron, Aron, and Smollan's (1992) Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale. This single item question makes use of seven different Venn diagrams made up of two circles; one labeled "self" and the other labeled "other". The seven diagrams vary in how much the circles overlap, with more overlap indicating more relational closeness. Participants were asked to circle the diagram that best represents the relationship in question. This scale has been shown to have high test-retest reliability, as well as high correlations with other measures of relational closeness (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Half of the sample was asked to report relational closeness regarding someone close to them; the other half reported closeness regarding someone relationally distant. Please see Appendices B and C to view examples of the measures that were given to participants who imagined either someone who is close or distant to them, respectively.

Betrayal Narratives. Participants read fifteen narratives that illustrate situations in which a person has been betrayed or hurt by someone else. Twelve of these narratives were chosen from those used in three different forgivingness measures; the Forgiveness Likelihood Scale (Rye et al., 2001), the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness (Berry et al., 2001) and the Forgiveness Attitudes Questionnaire (Kanz, 2000). These narratives were adapted somewhat so as to be relevant to the age group of the participants. The additional three narratives were created specifically for this study with the help of research assistants in the same age range as the participants.

Before reading these narratives, half of the participants were asked to imagine that each of these betrayals had occurred to them and that the betrayal had been committed by

someone with whom they had a close relationship. They were instructed that as they read these betrayals they should imagine that it is the same person who is close to them committing each of the betrayals. The other half of the participants were asked to do the same, except they were asked to imagine that the person who had committed these betrayals is an acquaintance with whom they did not have a close relationship (please see Appendix D).

After having read each of these narratives, participants answered three Likert-type questions regarding the severity of the betrayal: (a) “How severe do you think this betrayal is?”, (b) “How hurt would you be by this betrayal?”, and (c) “How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person?” They also answered three questions regarding their imagined ease of forgiving this betrayal: (a) “How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this?”, (b) “How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this?”, and (c) “How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal?” Participants answered these questions by selecting a number between one and seven (please see Appendix D), with the last question requiring reverse coding prior to calculating the scale total. To calculate the total of these two measures we summed the scores for each of the measures’ respective questions. These two totals were then divided by fifteen, giving us the mean total for the set of questions following each of the fifteen betrayals. This procedure yielded two scores for each participant; one for the severity of the betrayal, with higher scores indicating higher severity, and one for the imagined difficulty of forgiving the betrayal, with higher scores indicating greater imagined difficulty. The descriptive results and internal reliability for each of these measures are reported below in the results section.

Procedure

Participation in completing the surveys used in this study was completely voluntary; informed consent (see Appendix E) was obtained from each participant and this study was approved by the appropriate Institutional Review Board. Participants were given one hour to complete the surveys and were instructed that they could discontinue completing the surveys at any time. Each participant was instructed to leave at least one seat open between him or her and the other participants, in order to maintain confidentiality.

Results

All analyses were preceded by an analysis of missing values. All variables had less than four percent of their values missing, with the majority of variables missing less than one percent of their values. The assumption that data were missing completely at random (MCAR) was evaluated with Little's MCAR Test (Little, 1988) in SPSS Release 15 (Chicago, IL), and was found to be a reasonable assumption. Missing values were replaced with each participant's mean response to the other items of each respective scale, but only when at least eighty percent of that scale's items had been responded to. This method of replacing missing values has been found to be statistically "reasonably well behaved" (Schafer & Graham, 2002, p. 158).

Descriptive Statistics. The response range for the IOS scale was between 1 and 7 for the group that was asked to report relational closeness regarding someone close to them as well as the group who imagined someone relationally distant (see Table 1 for a frequency table of descriptors of the relationships that were reported). Independent t-tests revealed that the scores on the IOS for the relationally close group ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.68$)

Table 1. Frequencies of Descriptors of Relationships Reported on IOS scale

	Study 1				Study 2			
	Close Relationship Group		Distant Relationship Group		Close Relationship Group		Distant Relationship Group	
	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Best friend	26	40.0	3	4.6	33	34.0	1	1.0
Close friend	7	10.8	7	10.8	18	18.6	6	5.8
Significant other	20	30.8	0	0	25	25.8	3	2.9
Brother or sister	8	12.3	1	1.5	12	12.4	1	1.0
Family member	0	0	1	1.5	3	3.1	2	1.9
Acquaintance	0	0	17	26.2	1	1.0	26	25.0
Classmate	0	0	15	23.1	0	0	28	26.9
Coworker	0	0	10	15.4	0	0	20	19.2
Employer	0	0	1	1.5	0	0	0	0
Other	3	4.6	10	15.4	5	5.2	17	16.3
Total	65	100.0	65	100	97	100.0	104	100.0

were significantly higher than those of the relationally distant group ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.11$), $t(125) = 10.15$, $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). The same pattern was seen with the means of relationship length (in months) for the relationally close group ($M = 87.19$, $SD = 79.40$) and the relationally distant group ($M = 27.49$, $SD = 38.84$), $t(127) = 5.44$, $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). Additionally, the mean of the responses on the importance of the relationship in question was higher for the relationally close group ($M = 6.28$, $SD = 0.93$) than the relationally distant group ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(127) = 13.19$, $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). These results indicate that the relationships that were reported by the relationally close group had, in fact, existed longer and were perceived as much more inclusive and important than were those reported by the relationally distant group.

The scores on the measure that assesses the total severity of the fifteen betrayal narratives ranged between 9.73 and 19.27; the willingness to forgive measure ranged between 4.53 and 20.2. The coefficient alpha for the former measure was .88 and .85 for the latter.

Hypothesis 1. In order to assess whether participants' ratings of the severity of the fifteen betrayal narratives differed as a function of relational closeness of the betrayer it was necessary to compare participants' answers to the questions regarding betrayal severity. The two sets of severity measure means were compared using an independent samples t-test to assess whether they differed significantly. The results of this test did not support Hypothesis 1; the scores on the betrayal severity measure for the relationally close group ($M = 15.56$, $SD = 1.93$) were significantly lower than those of the relationally distant group ($M = 16.43$, $SD = 1.50$), $t(125) = -2.83$, $p = 0.005$ (two-tailed). These results suggest that relational closeness does in fact influence the way the participants

rate the level of severity of an imagined betrayal. However, the opposite of what was expected was found; those participants who imagined being betrayed by someone close to them rated the betrayals as less severe than those who imagined being betrayed by someone relationally distant.

Hypothesis 2. In order to assess whether participants' imagined difficulty of forgiving the betrayals differed as a function of relational closeness we used the same statistical procedure that was used to test Hypothesis 1. The results of this test supported Hypothesis 2; the scores on the ease of forgiveness measure for the relationally close group ($M = 12.76, SD = 2.63$) were significantly lower than those of the relationally distant group ($M = 14.78, SD = 2.15$), $t(118) = -4.59, p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). These results suggest that relational closeness does in fact influence participants' ease of forgiving an imagined betrayal; those participants who imagined being betrayed by someone close to them felt it would be easier to forgive the betrayals than did those who imagined being betrayed by someone relationally distant.

Betrayal Severity. Additionally, prior to conducting Study 2 it was necessary to assure that these betrayals did in fact vary in degree of severity in order to assess how betrayal severity relates to one's conceptualizations of forgiveness. We examined the means of participants' responses to the single question regarding betrayal severity (question *a*, see Appendix D) and chose three groups of two betrayal narratives: a low severity group (narratives 4 and 12), a midlevel severity group (narratives 2 and 10), and a high severity group (narratives 11 and 13). We then used one-way within-subjects

ANOVA's to statistically verify that the severity of each betrayal differed from the severity of the betrayals in the other two groups, which they did ($p < .001$ for all comparisons). Following this analysis we used Tukey's Honestly Significant Differences Test to determine whether these comparisons remained significant after controlling for multiple comparisons, which they did. We used these six narratives in Study 2.

Discussion

Not only was Hypothesis 1 disconfirmed, the opposite of what was predicted took place – it seems that being relationally close to someone actually causes the severity of a betrayal to be seen as less severe. This finding does not support the notion that people report betrayals committed by those close to them (e.g., Younger, et al., 2004; Williamson & Gonzales, 2007) because the betrayals committed by those closest are the most severe. In contrast, the confirmation of Hypothesis 2 does support past findings that have indicated that people are most willing to forgive betrayals that have been committed by those who are closest to them (e.g., McCullough, et al., 1998).

Study 2

The aim of this study was to assess how betrayal severity and relational closeness of the betrayer affect laypeople's conceptualizations of the forgiveness of imagined betrayals (Hypotheses 3 and 4). The findings from Study 1 also assured that the narratives that were presented in this study do in fact differ in level of severity, as rated by the peers of the participants in this study.

Participants

This sample was comprised of 201 undergraduate college students who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a large southeastern university. These

participants received extra credit for their participation that was commensurate with the amount of time it takes to complete the questionnaire packet. Recruitment consisted primarily of posting the availability of this study on a central website that is used by the university as a way to communicate research opportunities to introductory psychology students. Of the 201 participants, 107 were female and 94 were male. Participants' ages ranged between 18 and 25 years old, $M = 19.89$, $SD = 1.58$. This sample was primarily white, with 170 participants reporting being Caucasian, 17 reporting being African-American, 3 reporting being Asian, 5 reporting being Hispanic, one reported being Native American, and 5 reporting other.

Measures

Relational Closeness. Relational closeness was measured with Aron, Aron, and Smollan's (1992) Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) Scale. As in study one, some participants were asked to think of someone who is close to them and others were asked to think of someone who is not close to them. Please see above for a description of this scale as well as Appendices B and C to view examples of this scale that were given to participants who are imagining either someone close or distant to them, respectively.

Betrayal Narratives. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of three sets of narratives. Each of these three sets of narratives illustrated betrayals of differing severity; one group of participants read two narratives about low severity betrayals, another group read two narratives about mid-level severity betrayals, and the third read two narratives about high severity betrayals. These narratives were taken from Study 1 and, as was mentioned above, each group's severity differed to a statistically significant degree. Participants were instructed that while reading the narratives they were to

imagine that the person they were asked to think of while answering the relational closeness scale was the person who was committing each of the betrayals.

Because there were three sets of narratives, and some participants were asked to think of someone close to them and some were asked to think of someone who is not close to them, there were a total of six groups roughly equal in size. To summarize, group one read high severity betrayals while imagining they were committed by someone close to them, group two read mid-level severity betrayals while imagining that they were committed by someone who is close to them, group three read low severity betrayals while imagining they were committed by someone close to them, and groups four, five, and six did the same, except imagining the three sets of narratives were committed by someone who is not close to them. For an example of this measure, see Appendix G.

Conceptualization of Forgiveness. After reading each of the two narratives, participants were asked to rate how important they think each of a list of features were to the concept of forgiveness of each particular betrayal. This list of features of forgiveness consisted of 39 features taken from Kearns and Fincham's (2004) prototype analysis of laypeople's conceptions of forgiveness (e.g., understanding, moving on, reconciling, perpetrator feels sorry/regretful, etc.). Added to this was an item regarding the importance of forgetting about the betrayal, given that college students have described it as an attribute of forgiveness in other studies (Younger, et al., 2004). Participants were asked to rate on a scale from one to eight how important they feel each of these features were in the forgiveness of this particular betrayal, with one being labeled "extremely *unimportant* feature of forgiveness of this betrayal" and eight being labeled "extremely *important* feature of forgiveness of this betrayal." The sum of these forty ratings indicates

the overall importance assigned to these features of forgiveness for the imagined forgiveness of each of the betrayals. For example, higher scores on this scale indicates that participants view the overall concept of forgiveness of a particular betrayal as broader, generally placing more importance on each of the forty features of forgiveness. This measure can be seen in Appendix G: the descriptive results and internal reliability for this measure are reported below in the results section.

Procedure

This study followed the same procedures as those outlined above for Study 1. Please see Appendix F for example of the informed consent statement used with this study.

Results

As with Study 1, all analyses were preceded by an analysis of missing values. All variables had less than two percent of their values missing, with the majority of variables missing less than one half of one percent of their values. The assumption that data were missing completely at random (MCAR) was evaluated with Little's MCAR Test (Little, 1988) in SPSS Release 15 (Chicago, IL), and was found to be a reasonable assumption. Missing values were replaced as in Study 1 (see above).

Descriptive Statistics. The response range for the IOS scale was between 1 and 7 for the group that was asked to report relational closeness regarding someone close to them as well as the group who imagined someone relationally distant (see Table 1 for a frequency table of descriptors of the relationships that were reported). Independent t-tests revealed, as in Study 1, that the scores on the IOS for the relationally close group ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.60$) were significantly higher than those of the relationally distant group (M

= 2.34, $SD = 1.19$), $t(195) = 13.34$, $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). The same pattern was seen with the means of relationship length (in months) for the relationally close group ($M = 97.39$, $SD = 80.40$) and the relationally distant group ($M = 28.40$, $SD = 47.98$), $t(199) = 7.45$, $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). Additionally, the mean of the responses on the importance of the relationship in question was higher for the relationally close group ($M = 6.47$, $SD = 0.99$) than the relationally distant group ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.47$), $t(199) = 17.80$, $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed). These results indicate that the relationships that were reported by the relationally close group had, in fact, existed longer and were perceived as much more inclusive and important than were those reported by the relationally distant group.

To calculate participants' Conceptualization of Forgiveness scores we summed the total of the forty questions for each of the two measures that were completed and then computed the mean of these two measures to yield one score for each participant. The coefficient alpha for this measure was .96, indicating strong internal reliability.

Descriptive statistics for this measure are found below.

Hypotheses 3 and 4. Examining Hypotheses 3 and 4 required assessing how the severity of a betrayal and relational closeness of the betrayer affected the way that participants conceptualized forgiveness, specifically whether these betrayal characteristics affected how narrow their conceptualizations of forgiveness were for each of the imagined betrayals. To statistically assess this question we used a two (closeness of betrayer) by three (level of betrayal severity) factorial independent samples ANOVA to compare the means (see Table 2) of each of the six groups of participants' scores on the Conceptualization of Forgiveness measure. The two-factor analysis of variance showed a significant main effect for relational closeness, $F(1,195) = 15.05$, $p < .001$, confirming

Hypothesis 3. This result indicates that participants who imagined betrayals being committed by someone close to them held the conceptualization of the forgiveness of said betrayals to a higher standard than those participants who imagined the same betrayals being committed by someone not close to them (see Table 2). Hypothesis 4 was also confirmed, as evidenced by a significant main effect for betrayal severity, $F(1,195) = 10.66, p < .001$. Post hoc analyses of the three betrayal severity groups' scores on the Conceptualization of Forgiveness measure, using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference method, revealed that the low severity group had significantly higher scores than the high severity group, as did the mid-level severity group. However there was no significant difference between the low severity and the mid-level severity group. In other words, participants who read the low- and mid-level severity betrayals were, in general, more likely than the high severity group to give higher importance ratings to more of the specific features of forgiveness of the betrayals they read.

The interaction between relational closeness and betrayal severity was only trending toward significance when all three levels of betrayal severity were used to predict participants' scores on the Conceptualization of Forgiveness measure, $F(1,195) = 2.82, p = .062$. However, post hoc analyses including only the low and high severity groups revealed that the two main effects remained significant as well as the interaction, $F(1,130) = 4.28, p = .041$ (please see the graph of this interaction in Figure 1, as well as Table 3 to see comparisons of individual items from the Conceptualization of Forgiveness measure). Figure 1 illustrates how the relational closeness of the imagined betrayer had little if any effect on participants' scores on the Conceptualization of

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of each Group's Scores on the Conceptualization of Forgiveness Measure

Group	N	M (SD)
Close Group, Across Levels of Severity	97	226.06 (37.60)
Close Group, Low Severity	34	226.57 (39.15)
Close Group, Mid Severity	31	238.27 (27.97)
Close Group, High Severity	32	213.71 (41.04)
Not Close Group, Across Levels of Severity	104	205.60 (43.25)
Not Close Group, Low Severity	35	223.51 (36.59)
Not Close Group, Mid Severity	36	209.92 (39.45)
Not Close Group, High Severity	33	181.88 (44.11)
Low Severity, Across Groups	69	225.02 (37.62)
Mid Severity, Across Groups	67	223.03 (37.20)
High Severity, Across Groups	65	197.55 (45.23)
Across Groups and Levels	201	215.47 (41.80)

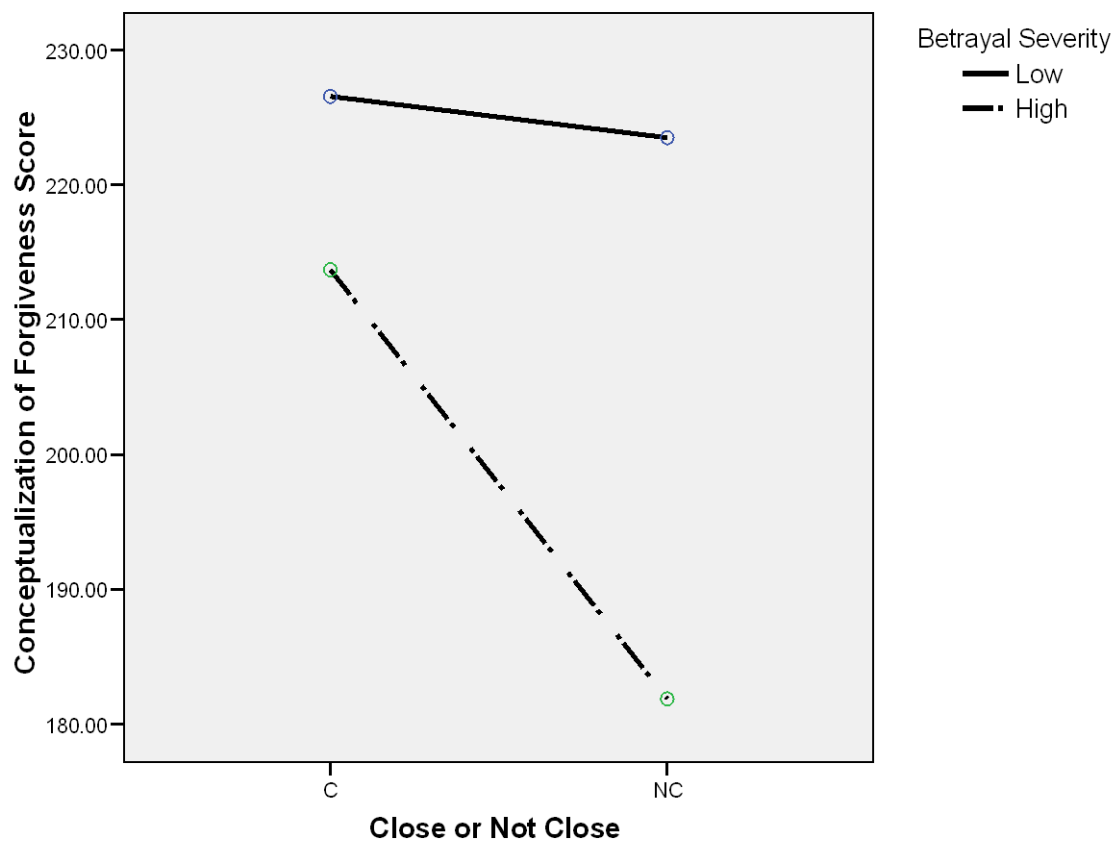


Figure 1. The Effects of the Interaction between Betrayal Severity and Relational Closeness on the Conceptualization of Forgiveness Score

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Comparisons of Conceptualization of Forgiveness

	N	Betrayal Severity		<i>t</i>	Relational Closeness		<i>t</i>
		Low <i>M (SD)</i>	High <i>M (SD)</i>		Close <i>M (SD)</i>	Not Close <i>M (SD)</i>	
Understanding	133	6.01 (1.53)	4.59 (1.67)	5.09*	5.54 (1.50)	5.10 (1.94)	1.44
Relief	133	3.75 (1.58)	3.14 (1.53)	2.27	3.70 (1.38)	3.22 (1.74)	1.74
An act of love	134	4.08 (1.97)	3.48 (2.10)	1.69	4.53 (2.08)	3.07 (1.76)	4.38*
Moving on	131	5.62 (1.58)	4.94 (1.78)	2.34	5.53 (1.62)	5.07 (1.78)	1.54
Feeling happy/joyful	132	4.63 (1.77)	3.40 (1.89)	3.87*	4.77 (1.97)	3.62 (1.79)	2.62
Reconciling/fixing the relationship	133	5.56 (1.86)	4.87 (1.94)	2.10	5.88 (1.80)	4.60 (1.84)	4.06*
Empathy	134	4.40 (1.53)	4.52 (1.57)	-.44	4.65 (1.38)	4.26 (1.68)	1.45
Acceptance	133	5.54 (1.47)	4.58 (1.80)	3.35*	5.47 (1.52)	4.68 (1.79)	2.74
Perpetrator feels sorry/regretful	134	6.41 (1.38)	6.51 (1.72)	-.35	6.46 (1.56)	6.46 (1.55)	.02
Talking things out	133	5.93 (1.63)	5.17 (1.93)	2.47	6.10 (1.68)	5.04 (1.81)	3.49*
An act of kindness	133	4.95 (1.62)	3.63 (1.88)	4.35*	4.70 (1.89)	3.95 (1.77)	2.37
Not holding a grudge	134	6.50 (1.30)	5.37 (1.84)	4.24*	6.21 (1.47)	5.70 (1.76)	1.83
Having a peace of mind	134	5.56 (1.70)	5.59 (1.60)	-.12	5.67 (1.78)	5.49 (1.52)	.64
Understanding everyone makes mistakes	133	6.60 (1.53)	4.94 (1.87)	5.62*	6.05 (1.72)	5.55 (2.03)	1.53
Caring	131	5.69 (1.56)	4.50 (1.76)	4.08*	5.44 (1.76)	4.78 (1.72)	2.17
Finding a solution to a problem	134	5.79 (1.83)	4.75 (1.38)	3.69*	5.45 (1.80)	5.13 (1.60)	1.07
Not wanting or seeking revenge	134	5.75 (2.07)	5.65 (2.08)	.28	5.73 (2.21)	5.68 (1.93)	.12
Giving someone a second chance	134	6.11 (1.68)	5.35 (1.89)	2.45	6.02 (1.81)	5.47 (1.79)	1.77
Open-minded	133	5.96 (1.45)	4.54 (1.57)	5.43*	5.48 (1.62)	5.07 (1.71)	1.42
Perpetrator admits they're wrong	133	6.49 (1.43)	6.75 (1.60)	-1.00	6.49 (1.53)	6.75 (1.49)	-.97
Accepting someone's apology	132	6.82 (1.13)	6.16 (1.53)	2.84	6.62 (1.18)	6.39 (1.54)	.98
Makes you feel good afterward	133	5.09 (1.70)	3.81 (1.69)	4.35*	4.49 (1.80)	4.46 (1.83)	.09
Learning from mistakes	133	6.17 (1.48)	6.17 (1.73)	.00	6.22 (1.44)	6.13 (1.75)	.33
Maturity	134	6.47 (1.37)	5.92 (1.71)	2.05	6.08 (1.48)	6.33 (1.64)	-.94
Nice	133	5.13 (1.77)	3.81 (1.88)	4.18*	4.67 (1.82)	4.31 (2.04)	1.07

Table 3 Continued.

	N	Betrayal Severity		<i>t</i>	Relational Closeness		<i>t</i>
		Low <i>M (SD)</i>	High <i>M (SD)</i>		Close <i>M (SD)</i>	Not Close <i>M (SD)</i>	
Making amends	132	5.95 (1.48)	5.15 (1.80)	2.79	5.84 (1.54)	5.28 (1.79)	1.94
Thinking about the situation	133	5.24 (1.79)	5.18 (1.92)	.19	5.31 (1.86)	5.11 (1.84)	.62
A positive characteristic to have	133	5.27 (1.66)	4.30 (1.88)	3.14	5.11 (1.72)	4.51 (1.88)	1.94
Truthful	134	6.48 (1.53)	6.15 (1.69)	1.20	6.19 (1.60)	6.44 (1.62)	-.91
Sincerity	134	6.48 (1.29)	5.95 (1.80)	1.95	6.46 (1.37)	5.99 (1.73)	1.74
Makes you feel good about yourself	134	4.72 (1.71)	3.54 (1.73)	3.99*	4.36 (1.97)	3.95 (1.64)	1.30
Generosity/not being selfish	133	5.62 (1.51)	4.41 (1.82)	4.16*	5.27 (1.68)	4.80 (1.83)	1.53
Focusing on the good instead of the bad	133	5.68 (1.53)	4.81 (1.91)	2.90	5.39 (1.71)	5.12 (1.84)	.87
Compassion	132	5.32 (1.62)	5.43 (1.74)	-.36	5.72 (1.70)	5.04 (1.59)	2.34
Think about the future	133	4.70 (1.96)	5.23 (1.82)	-1.61	5.29 (1.88)	4.63 (1.89)	2.04
Doing the right thing	133	5.92 (1.61)	5.84 (1.84)	.28	5.93 (1.54)	5.83 (1.88)	.33
End of fighting	132	5.31 (2.06)	5.05 (1.88)	.74	5.36 (1.92)	5.01 (2.01)	1.01
Respect	133	6.30 (1.44)	5.42 (1.81)	3.13	6.10 (1.68)	5.65 (1.67)	1.56
Compromising	133	5.33 (1.73)	4.16 (1.80)	3.82*	4.90 (1.86)	4.64 (1.85)	.81
Forgetting about the betrayal	134	5.79 (1.58)	4.67 (2.13)	3.47*	5.52 (1.78)	4.98 (2.07)	1.63

* Significant after Bonferroni correction ($p < .00125$).

Forgiveness measure if the imagined betrayal was of low severity. However, if the imagined betrayal was of high severity, imagining it was being conducted by someone relationally close caused participants to have higher scores on the Conceptualization of Forgiveness measure, indicating a broader conceptualization, generally placing more importance on each of the features of forgiveness of said betrayal.

Discussion

The confirmation of Hypothesis 3 suggests that the way people conceptualize forgiveness may vary as a function of the severity of the betrayal that is being forgiven. When the betrayal was less severe, the specific characteristics of forgiveness, in general, were perceived as more important, and vice versa. In other words, when the betrayal is less severe, people demand more of themselves to say they have forgiven, i.e., they should be able to forget, they should be able to be close with the person afterwards. However, these results also suggest that people might be less stringent about forgiveness in the case of more severe betrayals; they are less likely to believe that one has to forget or to reconcile.

The confirmation of Hypothesis 4 also reveals that people conceptualize the forgiveness of a betrayal differently based the closeness of the relationship they have with the person that committed the betrayal. Additionally, the interaction between relational closeness and betrayal severity that can be seen in Figure 1 demonstrates how people's conceptualization of forgiveness varies when taking both betrayal severity and relational closeness into account.

Chapter 3

General Discussion and Implications

In past studies, when participants have been asked to report having been betrayed, they typically report on betrayals that have been committed by people whom they are close to (e.g., Younger, et al., 2004; Williamson & Gonzales, 2007). It has been posited that one reason for why this may be the case is because these are the types of betrayals that are the most hurtful, and therefore the most salient. Surprisingly, the results from this study suggest that people may report betrayals that have been committed by someone close not because they are viewed as the most severe but for other reasons. Nevertheless, this seems somewhat implausible given the notion that people assume that those who are closest to us are those who are most likely to look out for our well-being, which would suggest that being betrayed by them would be the most unexpected and traumatic (e.g., Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark & Waddell, 1985).

One possible explanation for this contrary finding is that betrayals conducted by someone close are likely to lead to more benign attributions than are those that are conducted by someone relationally distant. Indeed, Fincham and his colleagues (2002) found that married individuals who had higher levels of marital quality were more likely to make benign responsibility attributions, which consequently promoted forgiveness. Perhaps participants in this study who imagined betrayals being conducted by someone close to them were more likely to make benign attributions as well, and thus perceive the betrayals as less severe. However, it is also possible that the betrayals that were presented were not representative of the types of betrayals that normally occur in close

relationships, causing the participants to perceive them as comparatively less severe than those betrayals they have experienced in the past. Along these lines, it is possible that people report relationally close betrayals most often because they are more salient, not because they are experienced as more severe, but because the betrayals they report possess a greater potential to damage the relationship than do the betrayal narratives they read in this study. Another more parsimonious reason for the fact that people most often report close relationship betrayals is because they may simply occur more often; we tend to spend more time with people who are close to us, allowing for more opportunities to be hurt or let down. Regardless, the results do provide strong evidence supporting the notion that it is not only what was done that affects the perceived severity of a betrayal, but also who it was that committed said betrayal.

The confirmation of Hypothesis 2 builds upon prior research that has found that prior relational closeness predicts forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1998). Furthermore, the current study provides evidence that our being more willing to forgive someone who is close has more to do with the type of relationship we have with that person than with the type of betrayals that are committed by that person. As the results from McCullough and his colleagues' study confirm (1998), one explanation for these findings is that being relationally close to someone promotes empathy for the person one is in relationship with, which has been shown to be related to forgiveness (Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2005). Another explanation is that forgiveness is a way to maintain a relationship with someone who has committed a betrayal (Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). Given that most people value their closer relationships more than distant ones, it stands to reason they would be more invested in maintaining them. Because of this, it is not

surprising that they would be more motivated, and thus find it easier, to forgive the same offense committed by someone that is close. As with Hypothesis 1, these results provide support for the notion that it is not necessarily the betrayal itself that influences one's decision to forgive, but also who committed the betrayal.

The confirmation of Hypothesis 3 suggests that people tend to hold the forgiveness of a less severe betrayal to a higher standard than they do the forgiveness of a severe betrayal. Looking at Table 3 reveals that there are many of the specific characteristics of forgiveness that differ as a function of whether or not participants were imagining the forgiveness of a low severity betrayal or a high severity betrayal, such as “understanding,” “acceptance,” “an act of kindness,” “caring,” being “open-minded,” and being “nice.” Moreover, these differences seem to illustrate that people may actually expect different outcomes from the forgiveness of a betrayal, such as “feeling good afterward” and “forgetting about the betrayal.” Perhaps people understand that forgiving someone for a severe betrayal is simply more difficult and they do not expect the end result of said forgiveness to provide the same positive, conciliatory outcome as the forgiveness of a less severe betrayal.

The confirmation of Hypothesis 4 demonstrates the effect that relational closeness of the betrayer has on the way people conceptualize forgiveness. Again, people seem to hold the forgiveness of a betrayal committed by someone close to them to a higher standard than the forgiveness of a betrayal committed by someone relationally distant. For example, people who imagined the forgiveness of a close betrayer were more likely to give higher ratings of importance to the act of forgiveness being “an act of love.” They were also more likely to view “reconciling/fixing the relationship,” and “talking things

out” as more important than were those participants who imagined the betrayals being committed by someone relationally distant. These findings are not surprising, given the fact that people are more likely to have the type relationship with someone close to them that would cause them to see forgiveness as an act of love and allow for the possibility of talking things out. Likewise, participants may not have deemed it as important to reconcile a relationship that is distant and therefore not as valuable to them.

Taken together, the confirmation of Hypotheses 3 and 4 provide empirical evidence that supports the notion that forgiveness may be a dynamic construct. People’s conceptualization of forgiveness is something that can vary based on what happened and who participated in what happened. Having said this, it should be noted that although there are differences, there are many characteristics of forgiveness that do not vary based on betrayal characteristics, and even those that do vary only to a degree.

As mentioned earlier, the interaction between relational closeness and betrayal severity demonstrates how people’s conceptualization of forgiveness varies when taking both betrayal severity and relational closeness into account. It seems that the relational closeness of the betrayer has very little effect on the importance of the characteristics of forgiveness when the betrayal is not viewed as severe. However, the opposite is true when the betrayal is severe; relational closeness has a strong effect on how people conceptualize the forgiveness of these types of betrayals. It seems we expect the same of the forgiveness of a less severe betrayal independent of who it was that participated in the betrayal. On the other hand, we tend to hold the forgiveness of a severe betrayal to a much higher standard when the betrayal was committed by someone who is close to us. Perhaps we expect more of forgiveness in these types of situation in order to ensure that

the relationship is not damaged and thus can be maintained. This notion is supported by Kelley and Thibaut's (1978) interdependence theory, which suggests that people in close relationships are more willing to act in ways that preserve the relationship because they are motivated by the fact that they have invested resources in this type of relationship and they also rely on these relationships for their own well-being and to provide them with a variety of resources. Given this assumption, it is no surprise that people would hope for a more positive outcome following the forgiveness of someone close - doing so helps safe-guard against losing something of great value. In fact, it would be interesting to assess the moderating effect that the value of one's relationship has on the association between relational closeness and one's conceptualization of forgiveness. It seems plausible that not all close relationships are equally valuable and that greater interdependence would predict higher standards of forgiveness for betrayals that occur within these relationships.

Implications

As has been previously pointed out, it is important to understand the conceptualization of any phenomenon because it helps answer the question "what is it that we are studying?" Because conceptualizing forgiveness has proven to be difficult, it is imperative that studies such as this one be done in order to reach a clearer understanding of how best to assess this construct. For example, if researchers' definitions of forgiveness do not line up with the way their participants view the same construct it can lead to erroneous interpretations of the results. The discrepancy between researchers' and participants' conceptualizations could be particularly problematic when participants are simply asked whether or not they have forgiven a specific betrayal. Given

the confirmation of Hypotheses 3 and 4 of this study, one could imagine that participants' responses to this single question could vary as a function of both the severity of the betrayal as well as who committed the betrayal. Whereas the researcher may interpret the response "I have forgiven" to mean a participant has reconciled with the offender, the participant may feel he or she has forgiven the offense without having reconciled the relationship.

Furthermore, these studies also speak to the need for the field to distinguish between the forgiveness of different types of betrayals. For example, the empirical discovery that forgiving someone for forgetting to pick up the dry-cleaning leads to one forgetting about the betrayal does not mean that the same end result should be expected for the forgiveness of an extramarital affair. Researchers should be cautious in generalizing their findings. What is more, we should also be cognizant of the fact that forgiveness measures do not take into account the severity of the betrayal being forgiven or who it was that committed the betrayal. These current studies insinuate that two people could have very different scores on a forgiveness measure and at the same time both could feel that they had completely forgiven their betrayers.

The results of this study are not only relevant to researchers; they are also germane to clinicians who are helping clients move past the hurt experienced from interpersonal betrayals. Given that these findings point to the fact that people's views of forgiveness can vary as a function of certain betrayal characteristics, it stands to reason that it could be counter-therapeutic to ask of a client that he or she adhere to a certain standard of forgiveness that does not match his or her own conceptualization of forgiveness of a certain betrayal. It seems this could be particularly problematic when the

therapist has expectations that there be reconciliation following a betrayal that is severe and/or has been committed by someone who is not close to the client. In these situations the client may not view the outcome of forgiveness to be as positive as had the betrayal been less severe or had it been committed by someone relationally close. At the same time, it may also be counter therapeutic for a client to hold strongly to the belief that forgiving someone for something extremely hurtful should have the same outcome as forgiving a betrayal that is less consequential. Perhaps in these cases it would aid therapists to have an open dialogue with clients that explores their beliefs about forgiveness and at the same time challenges the thought that the processes involved in forgiveness must always be the same.

Limitations and Future Directions

The results of this study are limited by the fact that all of the measures used were self-report, and because of this problem may not completely reflect the ways in which participants view betrayals and conceptualize the forgiveness of said betrayals. For example, although participants' conceptualizations of forgiveness varied as a result of the severity of the betrayals they read, only the addition of behavioral measures would clarify whether betrayal severity actually alters the way in which they forgive. Also, these results can only be generalized to a young-adult, college student population. Furthermore, although the betrayals that were read by the participants were chosen with the expectation that they would be applicable to the participants' lives, it is unclear how easily participants could imagine being betrayed in these ways. Moreover, the imagined betrayals in this study are probably not as severe as the types of betrayals that can only happen in close relationships, such as marital infidelity and parental abandonment.

Future studies that examine the role that betrayal characteristics have on conceptualizations of forgiveness could possibly avoid these limitations by asking participants to relate actual betrayals that have taken place; a separate group of participants could rate the severity of said betrayals. Conducting such a study could include both spousal and parental betrayals; previous studies have shown that these types of betrayals are among the most often described when participants are asked to describe an interpersonal betrayal that they have had to forgive (e.g., Jones, Couch, & Scott, 1997).

In the future, it would be beneficial to conduct similar studies with other age groups to assess how life experience may impact the way betrayal characteristics affect people's conceptualization of forgiveness. In fact, it is quite possible that an older cohort's conceptualizations of forgiveness would not be as affected by betrayal characteristics. Indeed, the older participants in Younger et al.'s (2004) study were more likely to report forgiving for the sake of their own well being, and were less likely report forgiving for external reasons.

Additionally, as was mentioned above, future research in this area could benefit greatly from assessing the role that people's conceptualizations of forgiveness play in the actual forgiveness of betrayals. One way to address this question would be to conduct a longitudinal study that first assesses the way in which one conceptualizes the forgiveness of different types of betrayals and then measuring the degree to which the forgiveness of future betrayals adheres to the preconceived conceptualizations. It also would be interesting to then determine the degree to which adhering to one's conceptualizations of

forgiveness predicts one's perceived level of forgiveness as well as their satisfaction with degree to which he or she had forgiven.

The results from Hypothesis 1, which were contrary to what was expected, also raise questions for future research in this area. Perhaps betrayals are seen as less severe in close relationships because the attributions that are made regarding why the betrayal was committed are more benign. Although higher marital quality has been shown to promote forgiveness in couples because of more benign attributions, it would be interesting to see if the same pattern holds true for close relationships in general.

Another interesting avenue of research, along the same vein, would be to investigate the effects that betrayal characteristics have on the betrayer's conceptualization of forgiveness. Would betrayers also understand that the forgiveness that is granted them would vary as a function of their relationship to whom they have betrayed as well as how severe the betrayal was that they committed?

Clearly, as the limitations outlined above suggest, there is much more work that needs to be done to have a better understanding of how forgiveness is conceptualized and how the context of a betrayal effects one's conceptualization or expectations of the outcome of forgiveness. Having said this, hopefully the results of these studies will act as an impetus for future research in this area.

Conclusions

The results of the current studies shed some light on why conceptualizing the construct of forgiveness is not an easy task, and why there are many variations in the definitions that have been given by professionals and laypeople alike. It seems that forgiveness is not a completely static construct and that its conceptualization is dependent

upon both who committed the betrayal as well as how severe the betrayal in question is.

It is possible that the definitions of forgiveness that have been presented in the forgiveness literature are all accurate, but not for all types of betrayals. For example, for many people the forgiveness of a less severe betrayal may need to include having forgotten about the betrayal and moved on with their relationship with the offender.

However, reconciliation may not be required, or viewed as important, in betrayals that are more severe, or were committed by someone who is not close to the forgiver. Because the conceptualization of forgiveness that laypeople have is a dynamic one, perhaps the definitions and measures that are created by researchers should reflect this, as should the therapy that is delivered by those helping clients deal with interpersonal betrayals.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A**Biographical Data**

Before you begin the questionnaires, please tell us a little about yourself. This information, and all information that you give us, will be kept strictly confidential.

(Please circle the appropriate answer or fill in the blank.)

What is your age? _____

How many years of education have you had? _____

What is your gender? 1. Female 2. Male

What is your racial group?

1. Asian
2. African-American
3. Hispanic
4. Native American
5. Caucasian (White)
6. Other _____

How many children do you have? _____

Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship? 1. Yes 2. No

Are you employed outside the home?

1. Full Time
2. Part Time
3. Other _____

What is your occupation? _____

What was your household's yearly income while you were living at home with your parents?

1. Less than \$10,000 2. \$10,000 - \$24,999 3. \$25,000 - \$49,999
4. \$50,000 - \$74,999 5. \$75,000 - \$99,999 6. \$100,000 - \$249,999
7. Over \$250,000

What is your religious denomination?

1. Baptist
2. Catholic
3. Episcopalian
4. Fundamentalist
5. Jewish
6. Lutheran
7. Methodist
8. Presbyterian
9. Other Protestant _____
10. Other religion _____
11. None

How often do you participate in religious services?

1. Frequently
2. Occasionally
3. Seldom
4. Never

How much do you consider yourself to be a religious or spiritual person?

1. Not at all
2. A little
3. Moderately so
4. Very much so

Are your biological parents (circle):

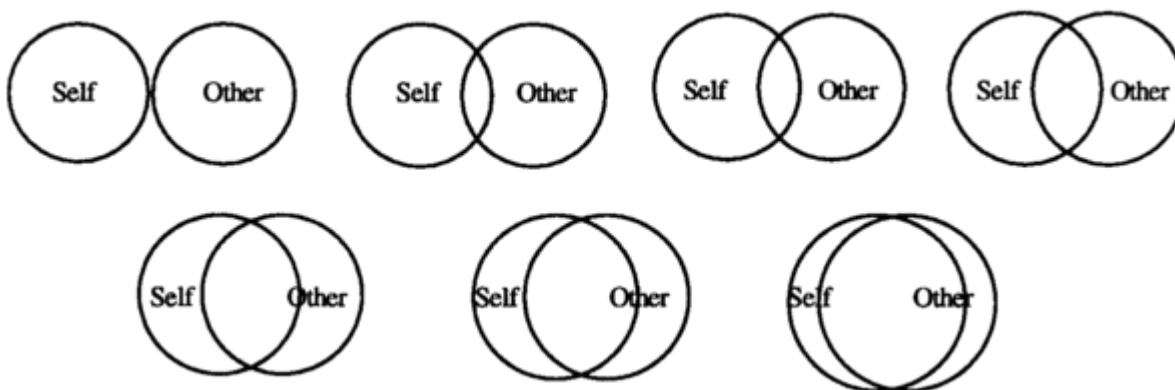
1. Still Married
2. Never married and apart
3. Never married and living together
4. Separated
5. Divorced

APPENDIX B

We would like you to think of one person in your life that is close to the same age you are and that you have a close relationship with (best friend, friend, brother or sister, boyfriend or girlfriend, classmate, co-worker, etc.)

What is the first name of this person? _____

1. Please circle the picture below that best describes your relationship with this person:



2. Which of the following best describes your relationship with this person (place an X next to the best option):

- a. Best Friend
- b. Close Friend
- c. Brother or Sister
- d. Family member (other than sibling)
- e. Acquaintance
- f. Classmate
- g. Co-worker
- h. Employer
- i. other - please describe this relationship _____

3. How long have you known this person?

_____ years and _____ months

4. How important to you is your relationship with this person (circle one)?

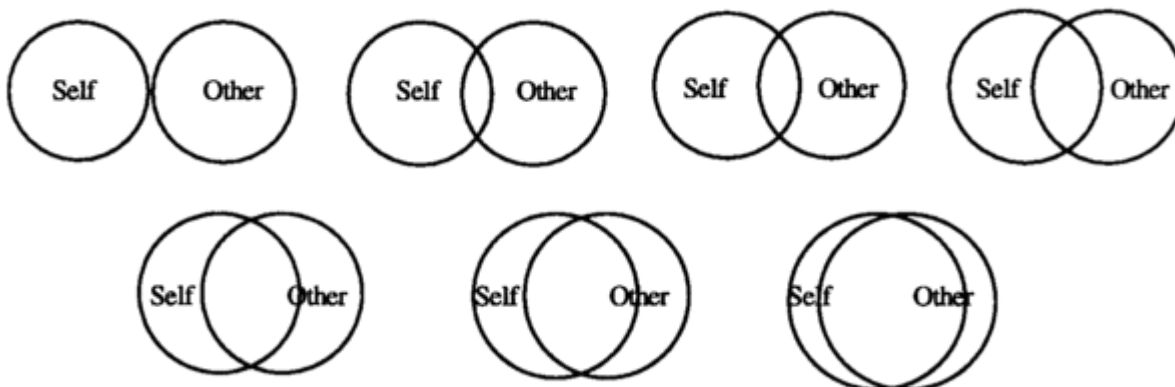
Not at all						Very
Important						Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX C

We would like you to think of one person in your life that is close to the same age you are and that you **do not** have a close relationship with (an acquaintance, classmate, co-worker, etc.)

What is the first name of this person? _____

1. Please circle the picture below that best describes your relationship with this person:



2. Which of the following best describes your relationship with this person (place an X next to the best option):

- a. Best Friend
- b. Close Friend
- c. Brother or Sister
- d. Family member (other than sibling)
- e. Acquaintance
- f. Classmate
- g. Co-worker
- h. Employer
- i. other - please describe this relationship _____

3. How long have you known this person?

_____ years and _____ months

4. How important to you is your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not at all							Very
Important							Important
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

APPENDIX D

Situation Narratives

Now we would like you read each of the following situations and imagine **the person you described above has participated in each of them**. In each blank space **write in the first name of the person you described above**. Although it may be difficult to imagine the person you described above participating in each of these situations, please do your best to imagine that it is the same person participating in all of the following situations. After reading each situation, please answer the following questions.

1. Imagine you and _____ are in a class together and you both have a paper due at the end of the week. You have already completed the paper for the class and _____ says he or she is under a lot of time pressure and asks you to lend him or her your paper for some ideas. You agree, and _____ simply retypes the paper and hands it in. The professor recognizes the paper, calls both of you to her office, scolds you, and says you are lucky she doesn't put you both on academic probation.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Severe						Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Hurt						Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Difficult						Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely
At all						Damaging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely
At all						Long Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Likely						Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Imagine you tell _____ about a job that you hope to be hired for. Without telling you, _____ applies and gets the job for him/herself.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Severe						Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Hurt							Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Difficult							Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging							Extremely
At all							Damaging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long							An Extremely
At all							Long Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Likely							Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

3. Imagine _____ offers to drop off an assignment that you have completed at a professor's office. _____ understands that this assignment has a very strict deadline. However, he or she does not drop off the assignment because he or she decided to stand in line for UT football tickets instead. Because of this, you ended up getting a much lower grade in the class than you had expected.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Severe							Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Hurt							Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Difficult							Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging							Extremely
At all							Damaging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely
At all						Long Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Likely						Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. Imagine that you have an important interview coming up for a job that you would really like to have. You asked _____ to stop by the dry cleaner's to pick up the outfit that you are planning on wearing to the interview. He/she forgets to do this favor for you and you now have to wear something to the interview that is not nearly as nice.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Severe						Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Hurt						Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Difficult						Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely
At all						Damaging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely
At all						Long Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Likely						Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Imagine you have shared a very private secret with _____ and that he or she has promised to keep in confidence. Within a week, you discover that _____ has told several people about the secret. When confronted, _____ indicates that he/she was not aware that it was a secret.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Severe						Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Hurt							Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Difficult							Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging							Extremely
At all							Damaging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long							An Extremely
At all							Long Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Likely							Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

6. Imagine that you and _____ work together at the same job. You have been working a great deal of hours on this project for your boss. When the project is finally completed, _____ claims that he/she was primarily responsible for the completion of this project. The boss gives _____ a promotion instead of you.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Severe							Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Hurt							Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all							Extremely
Difficult							Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging							Extremely
At all							Damaging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long							An Extremely
At all							Long Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

- f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
| Likely | | | | | | | Likely |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
7. Imagine _____ starts a nasty rumor about you that is not true at all. As a result, people begin treating you worse than they had in the past.
- a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
| Severe | | | | | | | Severe |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
- b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
| Hurt | | | | | | | Hurt |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
- c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
| Difficult | | | | | | | Difficult |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
- d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not damaging | | | | | | | Extremely |
| At all | | | | | | | Damaging |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
- e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------------|
| Not long | | | | | | | An Extremely |
| At all | | | | | | | Long Time |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
- f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
| Likely | | | | | | | Likely |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
8. Imagine _____ has been talking about you behind your back. When you confront _____, he/she denies it, even though you know that he/she is lying.
- a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
| Severe | | | | | | | Severe |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
- b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
| Hurt | | | | | | | Hurt |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
- c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?
- | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------|
| Not at all | | | | | | | Extremely |
| Difficult | | | | | | | Difficult |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely Damaging
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely Long Time
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Likely						Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9. Imagine _____ asks to borrow your most valued possession, and promises that he/she will take care not to damage it. _____ then does damage to your possession and refuses to replace it.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all Severe						Extremely Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Hurt						Extremely Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all Difficult						Extremely Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely Damaging
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely Long Time
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Likely						Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

10. Imagine _____ tells you that he or she needs some extra money for an upcoming holiday. You know a married couple who needs a babysitter for their 3-year-old for a couple of nights and you recommend this person. _____ is grateful and takes the job. On the first night, the child gets out of bed and drinks cleaning fluid from beneath the kitchen sink, while _____ has stepped outside to talk on the phone with his/her friend. The child is taken by an ambulance to the hospital and stays there for 2 days for observation and treatment. The married couple will not speak to you.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Severe						Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Hurt						Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Difficult						Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely
At all						Damaging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely
At all						Long Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Likely						Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Imagine you have been saving money for a long time in order to buy something special that you have had your eye on for a very long time. _____ knows where you have been safeguarding this money. This person then steals this money from you.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Severe						Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Hurt						Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Difficult						Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely Damaging
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely Long Time
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Likely						Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

12. Imagine that you have asked _____ to pick you up from a party that you are going to. He/she does not show up to pick you up and you have to ask someone else to give you a ride home instead.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all Severe						Extremely Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Hurt						Extremely Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all Difficult						Extremely Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely Damaging
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely Long Time
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Likely						Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

13. Imagine _____ has elected to be the designated driver for you and some of your friends following an upcoming party. Once at the party, _____ drinks alcohol without anyone being aware of this and does not tell you or your friends before getting in the car to drive you home. On the way home _____'s intoxication causes there to be a car crash in which one of your closest friends is killed.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Severe						Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Hurt						Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Difficult						Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely
At all						Damaging
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely
At all						Long Time
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Likely						Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

14. Imagine that _____ is driving you and some of your friends to the mall.

_____ begins to text-message while driving, causing him/her to not be able to pay attention to the road. You and some of your friends ask _____ to please stop text-messaging, which _____ ignores, telling you that he/she does it all the time. _____'s lack of paying attention to the road causes an accident in which one of your friends dies.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Severe						Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Hurt						Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all						Extremely
Difficult						Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely Damaging
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely Long Time
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Likely						Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15. Imagine it is late in the evening and that _____ is at his or her house studying with one of your closest female friends. Once they finished studying, your close friend asks _____ to drive her home because she does not feel it would be safe to walk home alone. _____ tells your friend that his/her favorite television show is coming on and that he/she is sure your friend will be safe. While walking home, your close female friend is brutally raped, causing her to become severely depressed and drop out of school.

a. How severe do you think this betrayal is (circle one)?

Not at all Severe						Extremely Severe
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b. How hurt would you be by this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Hurt						Extremely Hurt
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

c. How difficult would it be to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not at all Difficult						Extremely Difficult
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

d. How damaging do you think this betrayal would be to your relationship with this person (circle one)?

Not damaging						Extremely Damaging
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

e. How long do you think it would take to forgive this person for this (circle one)?

Not long						An Extremely Long Time
At all						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

f. How likely would you be to forgive this person for this betrayal (circle one)?

Not at all Likely						Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX E**Informed Consent Statement
Participation in a Study about Relationships
And Betrayal**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Kristina Coop Gordon, Ph.D. and Lee Dixon, M.A. from the Department of Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your current enrollment as an undergraduate at the University of Tennessee.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to assess relationships and betrayals in an undergraduate population.

Procedures

You will receive with this form a packet of questions asking you about yourself, and certain characteristics about yourself. You will also be asked to think about a person in your life and answer some questions about your relationship with that person and how you would feel if that person did certain things.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

The risks to your participation are expected to be very small, but it is possible that you may feel somewhat uncomfortable as a result of imagining someone in your life acting in an unpleasant way and how these actions would affect your relationship. However, as you are being asked to only imagine these things happening, we expect that this discomfort will not be long-lasting, if at all. You may stop participating at any time, and if the emotional discomfort persists, we ask that you contact one of the investigators who can assist you with the uneasiness and refer you to resources to help you deal with this discomfort. However, if you are referred, you will be responsible for the costs of the treatment or evaluation you receive.

Potential Benefits to Subjects and/or to Society

What we learn from you will assist us in improving our understanding of how undergraduates view their relationships, and how these relationships affect their perceptions of an interpersonal betrayal. This will be greatly beneficial to the field of psychology and, specifically, research in the field of interpersonal forgiveness. Furthermore, you will receive an hour's worth of credit for your undergraduate psychology course for completing today's initial survey.

Confidentiality

All information about your participation in this research study will be kept confidential. All records that may link you to this study will be stored securely in locked filing cabinets, which will be kept in a locked research laboratory. All of the data that we will collect from you will be identified by your university identification number,

rather than by name, and the master list containing the names and this signed consent form will also be kept in a secured, locked filing cabinet. This master list and all consent forms will be destroyed 3 years after the study has ended. Access to this information will only be allowed to those persons directly involved in conducting this study. Those persons involved in this study have all signed forms pledging to keep all of the information we receive from you confidential.

Right of Research Participants

Your participation is completely voluntary. You will not be penalized if you refuse to participate at any time during the study. In addition, you do not have to complete any portions of the surveys that you would prefer not to complete.

Identification of Investigators

If at any time you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Kristina Coop Gordon (the Principal Investigator) at (865) 974-3347 or at kgordon1@utk.edu. Or you may contact the graduate student investigator, Lee Dixon, at leedixon@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the UT Compliance Section at (865) 974-3466.

Signature of Research Participant
--

I have read and understood the above explanation about the study, have received a copy of this form, certify that I am at least 18 years of age, and agree to participate.

Printed Name of Participant

Email Address

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX F

Informed Consent Statement

Participation in a Study about Interpersonal Forgiveness

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Kristina Coop Gordon, Ph.D. and Lee Dixon, M.A. from the Department of Psychology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your current enrollment as an undergraduate at the University of Tennessee.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to assess characteristics of relationships and forgiveness in an undergraduate population.

Procedures

You will receive with this form a packet of questions asking you about yourself, and certain characteristics about yourself. You will also be asked to think about a person in your life and answer some questions about how you think about certain aspects of forgiveness if that person did certain things.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

The risks to your participation are expected to be very small, but it is possible that you may feel somewhat uncomfortable as a result of imagining someone in your life acting in an unpleasant way and how these actions would affect your relationship. However, as you are being asked to only imagine these things happening, we expect that this discomfort will not be long-lasting, if at all. You may stop participating at any time, and if the emotional discomfort persists, we ask that you contact one of the investigators who can assist you with the uneasiness and refer you to resources to help you deal with this discomfort. However, if you are referred, you will be responsible for the costs of the treatment or evaluation you receive.

Potential Benefits to Subjects and/or to Society

What we learn from you will assist us in improving our understanding of how undergraduates view their relationships, and how these relationships affect their perceptions of an interpersonal betrayal. This will be greatly beneficial to the field of psychology and, specifically, research in the field of interpersonal forgiveness. Furthermore, you will receive an hour's worth of credit for your undergraduate psychology course for completing today's initial survey.

Confidentiality

All information about your participation in this research study will be kept confidential. All records that may link you to this study will be stored securely in locked filing cabinets, which will be kept in a locked research laboratory. All of the data that we will collect from you will be identified by your university identification number, rather than by name, and the master list containing the names and this signed consent

form will also be kept in a secured, locked filing cabinet. This master list and all consent forms will be destroyed 3 years after the study has ended. Access to this information will only be allowed to those persons directly involved in conducting this study. Those persons involved in this study have all signed forms pledging to keep all of the information we receive from you confidential.

Right of Research Participants

Your participation is completely voluntary. You will not be penalized if you refuse to participate at any time during the study. In addition, you do not have to complete any portions of the surveys that you would prefer not to complete.

Identification of Investigators

If at any time you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Dr. Kristina Coop Gordon (the Principal Investigator) at (865) 974-3347 or at kgordon1@utk.edu. Or you may contact the graduate student investigator, Lee Dixon, at leedixon@utk.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the UT Compliance Section at (865) 974-3466.

Signature of Research Participant
--

I have read and understood the above explanation about the study, have received a copy of this form, certify that I am at least 18 years of age, and agree to participate.

Printed Name of Participant

Email Address

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX G

Now we would like you read each of the following situations and imagine **the person you described above has participated in each of them**. Although it may be difficult to imagine the person you described above participating in each of these situations, please do your best to imagine that it is the same person participating in each of the following situations.

1. Imagine this person you are thinking of tells you that he or she needs some extra money for an upcoming holiday. You know a married couple who needs a babysitter for their 3-year-old for a couple of nights and you recommend this person. This person is grateful and takes the job. On the first night, the child gets out of bed and, while this person has fallen asleep watching television, drinks cleaning fluid from beneath the kitchen sink. The child is taken by an ambulance to the hospital and stays there for 2 days for observation and treatment. The married couple will not speak to you.

*Below are possible characteristics or descriptions of forgiveness. You may feel that some of these characteristics are more important in forgiving certain betrayals and not as important in forgiving others. Please read each of the characteristics and rate how central or important you think each of the characteristics are to the **concept of forgiveness of the situation that you just read**. Remember who you imagined having committed this betrayal as you rate these characteristics. To rate each characteristic, please circle the appropriate corresponding number. When rating the characteristics of forgiveness below, please use the following scale:*

1 = extremely unimportant feature of forgiveness of the situation I just read

2

3

4

5

6

7

8 = extremely important feature of forgiveness of the situation I just read

1. Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. Relief	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. An act of love	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. Moving on	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. Feeling happy/joyful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6. Reconciling/fixing the relationship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7. Empathy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
8. Acceptance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9. Perpetrator feels sorry/regretful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10. Talking things out	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11. An act of kindness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12. Not holding a grudge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
13. Having a peace of mind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

14. Understanding that everyone makes mistakes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15. Caring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
16. Finding a solution to a problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
17. Not wanting or seeking revenge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
18. Giving someone a second chance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
19. Open-minded	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
20. Perpetrator admits they're wrong	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
21. Accepting someone's apology	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
22. Makes you feel good afterward	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
23. Learning from mistakes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
24. Maturity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
25. Nice	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
26. Making amends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
27. Thinking about the situation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
28. A positive characteristic to have	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
29. Truthful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
30. Sincerity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
31. Makes you feel good about yourself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
32. Generosity/not being selfish	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
33. Focusing on the good instead of the bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
34. Compassion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
35. Think about the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
36. Doing the right thing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
37. End of fighting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
38. Respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
39. Compromising	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
40. Forgetting about the betrayal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

2. Imagine that you and this person you are thinking of work together at the same job. You have been working a great deal of hours on this project for your boss. When the project is finally completed, this person claims that he/she was primarily responsible for the completion of this project. The boss gives that person the promotion instead of you.

*Below are possible characteristics or descriptions of forgiveness. You may feel that some of these characteristics are more important in forgiving certain betrayals and not as important in forgiving others. Please read each of the characteristics and rate how central or important you think each of the characteristics are to the **concept of forgiveness of the situation that you just read**. Remember who you imagined having committed this betrayal as you rate these characteristics. To rate each characteristic, please circle the appropriate corresponding number. When rating the characteristics of forgiveness below, please use the following scale:*

1 = extremely unimportant feature of forgiveness of the situation I just read

2

3

4

5

6

7

8 = extremely important feature of forgiveness of the situation I just read

1. Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. Relief	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. An act of love	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. Moving on	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. Feeling happy/joyful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6. Reconciling/fixing the relationship	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7. Empathy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
8. Acceptance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9. Perpetrator feels sorry/regretful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10. Talking things out	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11. An act of kindness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12. Not holding a grudge	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
13. Having a peace of mind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14. Understanding that everyone makes mistakes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15. Caring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
16. Finding a solution to a problem	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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38. Respect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
39. Compromising	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
40. Forgetting about the betrayal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Vitae

Lee Jonathan Dixon was born in Dayton, OH on June 21st, 1976. He was raised in Ohio, Mexico, Spain, and Kentucky. He attended Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, KY where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Spanish in 2000, as well as a Master of Arts in Applied Experimental Psychology in 2002.

Lee Dixon is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Tennessee and is completing his pre-doctoral psychology internship at the Cincinnati Veterans Affairs Medical Center.