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The Transgressor's Response to a Rejected Request for Forgiveness

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science at  
Virginia Commonwealth University

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## Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	ii
List of Tables.....	vii
List of Figures.....	viii
Abstract.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
Review of the Literature.....	3
Method of Review.....	6
Hurtful Events Elicit Hurtful Feelings.....	6
Differences Between Victim-Perpetrator Accounts.....	9
Sex and Response to Transgressions.....	13
Personality and Response to Transgressions.....	18
Seeking Forgiveness.....	22
Discussion.....	26
Research Agenda.....	30
General Statement of the Problem.....	32
Theoretical Considerations.....	33
Purposes of the Present Studies.....	37
Study 1: The Effects of Sex on Response to Requested Forgiveness.....	39
Method.....	39
Participants.....	39
Design.....	39

Measures.....	42
Procedure.....	46
Hypotheses and Planned Analyses.....	48
Hypothesis #1.....	49
Statement.....	49
Rationale.....	49
Analysis.....	50
Hypothesis #2.....	50
Statement.....	50
Rationale.....	50
Analysis.....	51
Results.....	55
Discussion.....	64
Study 2: The Effects of Personality on Response to Requested Forgiveness .....	69
Method.....	69
Participants.....	69
Design.....	69
Measures.....	70
Procedure.....	71
Hypotheses and Planned Analyses.....	72
Hypothesis #1.....	72
Statement.....	72
Rationale.....	72

Analysis.....	73
Hypothesis #2.....	73
Statement.....	73
Rationale.....	74
Analysis.....	74
Hypothesis #3.....	74
Statement.....	74
Rationale.....	75
Analysis.....	75
Hypothesis #4.....	76
Statement.....	76
Rationale.....	76
Analysis.....	77
Results.....	80
Discussion.....	94
General Discussion of Studies 1 and 2.....	97
Implications for Researchers.....	99
Implications for Practitioners.....	100
Summary.....	101
List of References.....	103
Appendix A: Measures Used in Study 1.....	113
Appendix B: Online Script of Transgression Scenario.....	125

Appendix C: Additional Measures Used in Study 2.....126

Vita.....130

### List of Tables

Table	Page
1. Studies of Hurtful Events/Rejection and Hurt Feelings.....	7
2. Studies of Victim and Perpetrator Accounts of Interpersonal Conflict.....	10
3. Studies of Sex Differences and Forgiveness.....	14
4. Studies of Personality and Forgiveness.....	19
5. Studies of Seeking Forgiveness.....	23
6. Descriptive Statistics for Study 1 Variables.....	56
7. Correlation Matrix of Study 1 Variables.....	57
8. Main Effects and Interaction Effects for Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Covariance in Study 1.....	60
9. Univariate <i>F</i> -tests for Dependent Variables as a Function of Sex and Condition.....	62
10. Means, Standard Deviations, and <i>n</i> for Negative Responses by Condition.....	63
11. Means, Standard Deviations, and <i>n</i> for Positive Responses by Condition.....	65
12. Descriptive Statistics for Study 2 Variables.....	81
13. Correlation Matrix of Study 2 Variables.....	82
14. Main Effects for Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Covariance in Study 2...	84
15. Univariate <i>F</i> -tests for Dependent Variables as a Function of Condition.....	85
16. Means, Standard Deviations, and <i>n</i> for Negative Responses by Condition.....	87
17. Means, Standard Deviations, and <i>n</i> for Positive Responses by Condition.....	88
18. Summary of Dependent Variables for Findings in Each Condition.....	98



**List of Figures**

Figure	Page
1. Hypothesized Theoretical Model Relating Sex and Personality to the Transgressor's Response to a Rejected Request for Forgiveness.....	29
2. Projected Findings for Unforgiving Responses.....	52
3. Projected Findings for Precursors to Forgiveness.....	53
4. Projected Findings for Forgiveness.....	54
5. Projected Findings for Neuroticism.....	78
6. Projected Findings for Agreeableness.....	79
7. Graph of Simple Slopes Analysis of Condition and Neuroticism on Revenge in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition.....	92
8. Graph of Simple Slopes Analysis of Condition and Neuroticism on Revenge in the No Forgiveness Condition.....	93

## **Abstract**

### THE TRANSGRESSOR'S RESPONSE TO A REJECTED REQUEST FOR FORGIVENESS

By David J. Jennings II, M.A.

A thesis proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of  
Science at Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010

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Although the scientific study of forgiveness has flourished in recent years, little is known about transgressors when seeking forgiveness, particularly regarding how they respond when their request for forgiveness is denied. The present thesis reviews the literature related to how transgressors might react to a denied request for forgiveness and factors that likely influence their response. In two studies, interactions between sex and responses to requested forgiveness, and interactions between two personality variables (agreeableness and neuroticism) and responses to requested forgiveness were examined. Generally, when people refuse or even partially refuse a bid for forgiveness, it is considered by the requestor to be a wrong perpetrated by the original victim. Even after considering the hurtfulness and severity of that wrong, there were differences in the degree to which original offenders held unforgiveness, experienced positive emotions, and forgave the original victim, depending on how starkly the original victim denied the request.

## The Transgressor's Response to a Rejected Request for Forgiveness

Forgiveness has emerged in the past 20 years as one of the most studied constructs in the realm of positive psychology. Much has been learned about the relationship between forgiveness and religion and spirituality, the psychology of forgiveness, measuring forgiveness, forgiveness and interpersonal relationships, forgiveness and health, and interventions to promote forgiveness (see Worthington, 2005, for a collection of reviews). Definitions of forgiveness abound, but most researchers agree it involves both intrapersonal changes within the offended individual and interpersonal changes in motivations toward the offending party. The agents, causes, and focus when studying these changes is debated, but together the different approaches to studying forgiveness has given us a broader understanding of this multifaceted construct.

Research in forgiveness is often focused on the victim of an offense in one aspect or another (i.e., what facilitates forgiveness in the victim, benefits of forgiveness for the victim, etc.), but little research has been conducted on the transgressor in these scenarios. Some studies have looked at the transgressor's affective state or perspective when recalling an offense, but we do not know much of what is taking place intrapersonally for a transgressor when he or she is seeking forgiveness from an offended party. Given that forgiveness can be a powerful tool for reconciling and healing broken relationships, it is just as important for us to understand what is transpiring for the transgressor in these attempts to repair as it is to understand the victim's experience.

In this thesis, I address this lack in the forgiveness literature by studying the transgressor's experiences after seeking forgiveness given varied responses. In Chapter 2, I review the literature and provide a rationale for the studies proposed. I present a basic theory

behind potential transgressor responses based on Schönbach's (1990) outline of *account episodes*, a stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness, and studies that have shown differences between victim and perpetrator perspectives when recalling an offense.

In Chapter 3, I present a general statement of the problem and formulate the hypotheses to be tested. Chapters 4 and 5 include two programmatic, empirical studies, respectively, to test my hypotheses on how transgressors' will respond when a request for forgiveness is either denied or the victim's response of forgiveness is highly qualified. Finally, in Chapter 6, I will present a general discussion of the findings and implications of both studies.

### **Review of the Literature**

Forgiveness has been the subject of much research now for over 20 years. A review of the literature will produce upwards of nearly 1,000 published articles and chapters on some area involving the study of forgiveness. Most of the research conducted has been on measuring forgiveness, interpersonal relationships, health and forgiveness, and forgiveness interventions (see Worthington, 2005, for a collection of reviews), and it has focused primarily on the experiences of the victim of an offense. Far less attention has been paid to the transgressor's experience in seeking or receiving forgiveness (Sandage, Worthington, Hight, & Berry, 2000; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Bauer, 2002). Even when transgressors have been studied, typically researchers sought to measure their affective state and perspective while recalling the offense (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Feeney & Hill, 2006; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002).

Schönbach (1990) outlines a process of social interactions that take place when an offense has transpired between two parties, be they individuals, groups, societies or even

countries, which eventually leads to either the successful repair of the relationship or the relationship's foundering. He called this process of interaction *account episodes*, which involves four phases: (a) a failure event, (b) a reproach, (c) an account, and (d) an evaluation phase. A *failure event* occurs when one party violates some type of normative standard within the relationship, which is often followed by some type of reproach on the part of the offended party. A *reproach* is a request or demand for the offender to explain the reasons for his or her failure behavior. After a reproach has taken place, and in some cases before, the offender usually gives an *account* for his or her actions which can assume a variety of forms: (a) making excuses for the behavior, (b) justifying the behavior, (c) refusing responsibility for or denying the behavior, and (d) concessions or confessions which is some form of acknowledgement of wrongdoing. The basic pattern of account episodes can vary greatly and misalignments or misunderstanding can occur between the parties at any phase, especially where interpersonal relationships are concerned.

Given Schönbach's description, we see that the successful outcome of a failure event is subject to an intricate maze of interactions, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, between the two parties at each phase of the account episode. A critical component of this process is how the account is given by the offender and how the offended party responds. Poor accounts can lead to further reproaches by the victim, giving rise to further accounts, followed by more reproach, etc., which can quickly deteriorate into a vicious cycle of excuses, justifications, and subsequent attacks in response. Placing this theory within a forgiveness context of interpersonal relationships, a failure event would simply be a transgression of some sort committed against another person, and an account episode would

either be the transgressor's attempt to repair the relationship through confession of wrongdoing, or an attempt to deny, justify or offer excuse for his or her actions.

Rusbult, Hannon, Stocker, and Finkel (2005) observe that within the context of an ongoing relationship, adopting an interpersonal conceptualization of forgiveness in which both victim and perpetrator contribute to the process is preferable to an intrapersonal view. They assert the transgressor *and* victim play a vital role in the promotion of forgiveness and potential reconciliation depending on the emotional reactions, patterns of cognition, behavioral responses, and personal dispositions of both. Thus, a purely victim-centered approach when studying forgiveness outcomes in the context of ongoing relationships yields only a partial picture of what promotes or inhibits relational repair.

In regard to the victim of an interpersonal transgression, numerous studies have established that better outcomes occur when offenses are followed by confession of wrongdoing. There are several elements of a good confession. Worthington (2006) identified seven using the acrostic, CONFESS: C = Confess without excuse; O = Offer an apology; N = Note the partner's pain (i.e., empathy); F = Forever value the partner (i.e. assurance that the offender values the partner, relationship, and its continuation; E = Equalize (i.e. offer restitution); S = Say never again; S = Seek forgiveness.

Research has also found better outcomes when reproaches are followed by a sincere apology (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). Furthermore, studies have shown that even greater yields in forgiveness occur when apologies include sincere remorse (Gold & Weiner, 2000) or some type of restitution (Witvliet, Worthington, Wade, & Berry, 2002). In light of these findings, it seems that a good confession will most likely produce a successful outcome when it

includes a sincere apology, a clear expression of remorse for the offense, and some offer of potential restitution.

While we know these actions increase the likelihood of a forgiving response from the victims, we know relatively little about what takes place for transgressors during the forgiveness process, particularly if a sincere confession is met with an unforgiving or highly qualified response. A review of the literature produced only two studies that specifically measured transgressors' emotions while imagining themselves receiving an unforgiving response after confessing a transgression (Meek, Albright, & McMinn, 1995; Witvliet et al., 2002). Not surprisingly, both studies found that more positive emotions for the offender were associated with receiving a forgiving response, and more negative emotions were associated with receiving an unforgiving response. The question that remains is, how are transgressors likely to respond to the victim after a request for forgiveness has been denied?

### **Method of Review**

Because very little empirical research has been conducted directly on transgressors seeking forgiveness and their responses, I have reviewed several theoretically relevant areas that I hypothesize to have an impact on their responses to forgiveness denied. The review of the literature will be divided into five sections. First, I will look at the social psychology literature on how hurtful events elicit both hurtful feelings and negative responses when individuals feel devalued. Second, I will examine the differences between victim and transgressor perspectives surrounding an interpersonal conflict. Third, I will review the extant literature on sex differences between forgiveness tendencies. Fourth, I will examine the personality variables that have been most strongly associated with forgiveness responses. Finally, I will review all empirical articles that are associated with transgressors seeking

forgiveness. Given the scope of this review, I limited all my searches to peer-reviewed scholarly journals only, and I excluded articles that did not directly relate to the purpose of the proposed studies.

**Hurtful events elicit hurtful feelings.** I reviewed all journal articles examining the effects of hurtful events on victim responses. On May 6, 2009, I searched *PsychINFO* (Psychological Abstracts) pairing the key words hurtful events or rejection, and hurt feelings from 1985 to April 2009. There were initially 14 articles. Six articles were not theoretically related to this study, one was better categorized in the next section, and one was only an abstract supplement. In all, six articles were considered for the present review (Table 1).

Social psychology studies have found that hurtful events elicit negative emotions, especially when associated with rejection or relational devaluation (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a, 2006b; Buckley, Winkel, & Leary, 2003; Feeney, 2004, 2005; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). These emotions are even more salient when the rejection occurs in the context of romantic relationships (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006; Leary et al., 1998). Within these studies, people who perceived an event to be hurtful reported less relational quality and had more destructive communication patterns (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b), they experienced stronger negative emotions and increased antisocial inclinations (Buckley et al., 2004), and hurt was elicited by events that implied relational devaluation or rejection (Feeney, 2004; Leary et al., 1998).

Additionally, Leary et al. (2006) describe what they call a rejection-aggression effect in which people who feel rejected, rather than act in ways conducive to repairing relationships, tend to act in ways that drive people further away. They reviewed 22 experimental studies. Although it may be counter-productive to reestablishing relational ties,



Table 1

*Studies of Hurtful Events/Rejection and Hurt Feelings*

Study	Participants	Measurements of Interest	General Findings
Bachman & Guerrero (2006a)	263 individuals who had been hurt by something a dating partner said or did	10 category classification system of hurtful events; 2 single items to measure degree of forgiveness; 2 single items to measure degree of apology	The perception that one received a sincere apology was positively related to forgiveness
Bachman & Guerrero (2006b)	272 individuals who had recently experienced a hurtful event in their dating relationship	Likert-type items measuring perceived hurtfulness, negative valence, relational quality & communicative responses	People who perceived the hurtful event as a highly negative violation of expectations reported less relational quality, less constructive communication, & more destructive communication
Buckley, Winkel & Leary (2004)	Study 1: 188 undergraduates Study 2: 83 undergraduates	Study 1: measure of agreeableness; questionnaire assessing emotions, feelings of rejection, & behavioral inclinations Study 2: Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire; questionnaire assessing emotions, ratings of evaluator and behavioral inclinations	Study 1: Rejection was associated with stronger negative emotions, rating rejecting evaluators more negatively, & stronger antisocial urges Study 2: overall, rejection led to more negative emotions & increased antisocial inclinations
Feeney (2004)	224 undergraduates recalling an event in which a romantic partner had hurt their feelings	Questionnaire package assessing background variables and perceptions of an event in which a romantic partner had hurt their feelings	Hurtful events elicit a range of negative emotions, with emotional varying by type of event
Feeney (2005)	Study 1: 224 undergraduate students who had experienced being hurt by a romantic partner Study 2: 82 undergraduate students	Study 1: Questionnaire package assessing background variables & perceptions of the hurtful event; single item measurement of degree of hurt experienced; PANAS Study 2: 57 emotion terms sorted by participants into 5 groups	Hurt is elicited by relational transgressions that generally imply relational devaluation
Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans (1998)	168 undergraduate students who either wrote of an event where they experienced a hurtful event or perpetrated a hurtful event	PANAS; ratings of attributions, victim response, and consequences of the hurtful episode	Hurt feelings were significantly higher in episodes involving romantic partners; damage to the relationship was predicted by the degree to which victims felt rejected by the

			perpetrator; compared to victims, perpetrators saw events as less intentional & more accidental; victims were more hostile as a result of the episode than perpetrators thought they were
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time and again in their review they found that people became angry, punitive and aggressive when they felt rejected, thereby maintaining a vicious cycle of rejection, aggression, and further rejection. Given that a rejected request for forgiveness within the context of a romantic relationship could be perceived by the original transgressor as a personal rejection or devaluation by the original victim, it is possible that an individual whose request for forgiveness is denied, might respond in relationally destructive ways rather than continuing a course toward reconciliation, particularly if he or she views the denial as retaliatory or unjustified.

**Differences between victim-perpetrator accounts of interpersonal conflict.** I reviewed all journal articles examining differences between victim and perpetrator perspectives when giving an account of an interpersonal conflict. On May 6, 2009, I searched *PsychINFO* (Psychological Abstracts) pairing the key words victim vs perpetrator, or victim vs offender, and interpersonal conflict from 1985 to April 2009. There were initially 25 articles. Twenty articles were not theoretically related to this study, so five articles were considered for the present review (Table 2).

Baumeister et al. (1990), in a within-subjects study, found stark differences between victim and perpetrator perspectives when giving accounts of transgressions in autobiographical narratives. Participants ( $N = 63$ ) in this seminal study recalled two events – one in which they had hurt someone else and one in which they had been hurt by someone else. The same participant exhibited significant changes in perspective depending on the role assumed. In general, when writing from the perspective of the perpetrator, participants saw their behavior as less enduring, less severe, more temporal, cut-off from the present, and more justified than the same participant would see the actions of the perpetrator when he or she wrote from a

Table 2

*Victim and Perpetrator Accounts of Interpersonal Conflict*

Study	Participants	Measurements of Interest	General Findings
Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman (1990)	63 Undergraduate Students who alternately wrote two stories: one in which they were a victim and one in which they were a perpetrator of an angry incident	Qualitative analysis of victim and perpetrator accounts	Victim accounts referred to lasting negative consequences, continuing anger, & long-term relationship damage, whereas perpetrator accounts viewed the incident as isolated & without lasting consequences; victims viewed perpetrator motives as unjustified & deliberately harmful, whereas perpetrators tended to attribute behavior to external causes; perpetrators saw victim reactions as excessively angry, whereas victims did not see response as excessive; perpetrators thought victims partially provoked the event, whereas victims did not; Conclusion: There was a distinct role bias in which the same people see things differently depending on whether they participate as victims or perpetrators
Feeney & Hill (2006)	107 Heterosexual couples either married ( $n = 62$ ) or dating for at least 6 months ( $n = 45$ )	Relationship satisfaction, relationship commitment, & negative event questionnaire	Victims attributed more malice & less remorse to perpetrators than they attributed to themselves; victim accounts were more negative in emotional tone; perpetrators judged effects on victims to be more severe than did victims; role-related effects were restricted to unforgiven events, which victims evaluated particularly negatively; perpetrators were more likely to discount hurtful events than victims; women reported more hurtful events as victims than did men; male perpetrators perceived the most negative effects on the relationship & male victims were particularly negative in ratings of perpetrator malice & remorse
Mikula, Athenstaedt, Heschgl, &	Study 1: 51 married couples Study 2: 44 pairs of	In all studies participants responded to a questionnaire containing various 9-point	Victims regarded incidents as more unjust and attributed more responsibility and blame

Heimgartner (1998)	female close friends Study 3: 40 heterosexual student couples Study 4: 116 cohabitating & married couples	rating scales evaluating perceptions of hurtful incidents that had transpired in their relationship in which they had alternately been the victim and the perpetrator	to perpetrators than perpetrators did themselves; in two of the three relevant studies, female victims regarded the incidents as more unjust and undeserved and attributed more responsibility and less justification to the perpetrators than men did in the same position; as perpetrators, women regarded the incidents as less unjust & undeserved, and attributed less control and more justification to themselves than male actors did
Stillwell & Baumeister (1997)	Study 1: 50 undergraduate students Study 2: 30 undergraduate students Study 3: 87 undergraduate students	Study 1: Participants rewrote the same story assuming the role of either the victim or perpetrator in the story & responses were coded for accuracies & distortions Study 2: same measures & procedures as Study 1, but participants returned & wrote the story again from memory after a 3-5 day interval Study 3: same measures & procedures as Study 1 & 2 only one group was given instruction to recall as accurately as possible to test for possible demand characteristics in the first two studies	Study 1: Perpetrators & victims made significantly more errors than control; As perpetrators, participants highlighted details that may have mitigated or justified their behavior and were more likely to disregard the negative outcome that the victims experienced; the opposite was true for participants who assumed the role of the victim Study 2: Replicated findings in Study 1 showing differing perspectives were robust to the passage of time Study 3: Role biases remained even in the group with the accuracy instruction
Zechmeister & Romero (2002)	Friends, family members, & coworkers of students in a advance psychology research course ( <i>N</i> = 122) who wrote one or two usable narratives about interpersonal offenses for a total of 215 narratives	Coding of narratives and a series of chi-square analyses Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)	Replicated findings of Baumeister et al. (1990); narratives of forgiveness had the appearance of closure whereas unforgiven offenses remained open with negative consequences and affect lingering to influence narrators' present circumstances; similar to Baumeister et al. (1990), offenders tried to usurp the victim status by portraying their offense as relatively minor & not deserving of the victim's angry reaction; victims who forgave were more likely to demonstrate perspective taking & empathy for the offender than victims who did not forgive

a victim's role.

Subsequent studies in this area found similar results: victims attributed more malice and less remorse to perpetrators than they attributed to themselves, and perpetrators were more likely to discount negative events than were victims (Feeney & Hill, 2006); victims regarded incidents as more unjust and attributed more responsibility and blame to perpetrators than they did to themselves (Mikula, Athenstaedt, Heschgl, & Heimgartner, 1998); perpetrators tend to highlight mitigating details or justifications more so than victims, and they are more likely to disregard the negative outcome that the victims experienced (Stillwell & Baumeister (1997); and perpetrators may try to usurp the victim status by portraying their offense as relatively minor and not deserving of the victim's angry reaction (Zechmeister & Romero, 2002).

Given the disparity between these perspectives, it seems likely that perpetrators, when preparing to make a confession, are much more expectant to receive forgiveness for their actions than the victim may be prepared to offer. Whereas under rational analysis, the transgressor might admit that the confession was "owed" in payment for the inflicted transgression, the experience of the confession by the transgressor is more immediate and emotional, while the memory of the transgression is typically past and emotionally distant. But from the victim's perspective, the experience of the transgression is more immediate and the consequences more salient than the transgressor's perspective. Furthermore, perpetrators tend to view the victim's response as an overreaction, and thus may even see themselves as a victim of unjustified anger (Baumeister et al., 1990; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). Baumeister et al. postulated that due to the underlying moral

superiority of the victim role, perpetrators might envy this position so much that they want to assume the victim role for themselves. Therefore, it is also likely that an offender's expectation for forgiveness might engender a feeling of victimization if that expectation is not met, irrational as it may seem given that he or she committed the original offense. Violation of this expectation can be perceived as a retaliatory offense by the victim, which might trigger anger, offense, and unforgiveness in the contrite offender.

**Sex and response to transgressions.** I reviewed all journal articles examining differences between sex and responses to transgressions. On May 6, 2009, I did two searches in *PsychINFO* (Psychological Abstracts) pairing the key words gender differences and forgiv\* and sex differences and forgiv\* from 1985 to April 2009. There were initially 41 articles. After excluding articles that were not theoretically relevant, and accounting for those that overlapped the two searches, nine articles were considered for the present review (Table 3).

Schönbach (1990) in his studies of account episodes found that after a concession significantly more women than men expressed understanding of the offender's behavior during the failure event. He also found men offenders were more reluctant than women to assume responsibility for the failure event and less likely to offer concession. Thus, women seem more inclined to show empathy toward a transgressor when they have been wronged, and they are more willing to admit wrongdoing when they have committed an offense. Additionally, there is an established link in the research literature between empathy and forgiveness (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; McCullough, 2000; Worthington, 1998; Zechmeister and Romero, 2002), and women tend to have higher levels of empathy than men

Table 3

*Sex Differences and Forgiveness*

Study	Participants	Measurements of Interest	General Findings
Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet (2008)	Study 4: 118 undergraduates Study 5: 205 undergraduates Study 6: 101 undergraduates Study 7: 155 Undergraduates	Study 4: Participants rated forgivability of a hypothetical offense Study 5: Participants rated forgivability of multiple hypothetical offenses Study 6: Participants recalled an actual offense committed against them & filled out the TRIM-18 Study 7: Same as Study 6	Study 4: Men & women did not differ in forgivability ratings in the control condition, but men gave higher forgivability ratings if primed to consider a similar offense of their own Study 5: Women gave marginally higher forgiveness ratings in the control condition & men gave gentler judgments in the priming condition Studies 6-7: In both studies, men showed higher revenge motivations than women when not primed to consider a similar offense of their own
Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon (2002)	Study 1: 89 undergraduates Study 2: 155 undergraduates Study 3: 78 undergraduates	Study 1: Participants rated how they would react to each of several hypothetical acts of betrayal in a romantic relationship Study 2: Participants completed a questionnaire assessing immediate & delayed reactions to a real betrayal incident Study 3: Measured reactions to betrayals using daily interaction records	Study 1: Men were less forgiving than women Study 2: Men exhibited more forgiving feelings, thoughts, & behavioral tendencies than women; overall, immediate reactions were more negative than delayed reactions to betrayal Study 3: No sex differences were found
Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz (1996)	96 Undergraduates	Participants read 4 scenarios in which they were the perpetrator causing a negative consequence. They were subsequently asked to give an account for the behavior and accounts were coded for analysis	In offering accounts, women attended more to others' face concerns than their own more so than men; there was also evidence to suggest that the greater facework performed by women is at least partially motivated by the desire to preserve relationships
Macaskill, Maltby, & Day (2002)	324 British Undergraduates	Measures of forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and emotional empathy	Women scored higher overall than did men on empathy, but there were no gender differences on either of the forgiveness scores
Miller, Worthington, & McDaniel (2008)	Meta-analytic review of 70 studies	Various measurement modalities were used for each study	On average females were more forgiving than males with a small to moderate effect size independent of measurement modality
Orathinkal, Vansteenwegen, & Burggraeve	787 Married heterosexual individuals from	Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI)	Overall women had significantly higher scores of forgiveness of others than did



(2008)	living in Belgium		men
Ryan & Kumar (2005)	100 outpatients being treated for affective and anxiety disorders	Willingness to Forgive Scale (WFS)	No gender differences found on willingness to forgive
Toussaint & Webb (2005)	Convenience sample of 127 individuals recruited from public beaches and community parks in California	Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES)	Women had higher levels of empathy than men, but forgiveness did not differ by gender
Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose (2008)	1,423 randomly selected adults in a telephone survey	Four dimensions of forgiveness were assessed: 1) forgiveness of self; 2) feeling forgiven by God; 3) forgiveness of others; and 4) seeking forgiveness	Women scored significantly higher than men on all indices with the exception of forgiveness of self indicating higher levels of forgiveness than men

(Batson, Sympson, Hindman, & Decruz, 1996; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987; Macaskill, Maltby, & Day, 2002; Toussaint & Webb, 2005).

Despite the findings women tend to have higher levels of empathy than men and its association with forgiveness, sex differences in willingness to forgive have been inconsistent or non-significant in many studies. Of the articles reviewed, seven studies found women to have higher levels of forgiveness than men (for a meta-analysis, see Miller, Worthington, & Daniel, 2008; Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet, 2008; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Orathinkal, Vansteenwegen, & Burggraefe, 2008; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose, 2008), one study found men exhibited more forgiving feelings, thoughts and behavioral tendencies than did women (Finkel et al., 2002), and five studies found no sex differences (Exline et al., 2008; Finkel et al., 2002; Macaskill et al., 2002; Ryan & Kumar, 2002; Toussaint & Webb, 2005).

However, in their meta-analytic review of 70 studies, Miller, Worthington, and McDaniel (2008) found that overall females have more forgiving tendencies than do males. Additionally, men have consistently shown they tend to repair their own faces more and attend to others less than women do when they have broken some form of social convention or expectation (Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996). In their study on facework in social predicaments, Hodgins et al. found that men were more defensive than women when giving accounts of a norm violation, providing shorter accounts, more complex aggravating elements, and less complex mitigating elements in their account. Women, however, attended to others' face concerns more than did men, and there was some evidence to support these tendencies were at least partly motivated by a greater desire to preserve relationships. While it doesn't always hold true for forgiveness of specific offenses, it seems safe to say that

women generally have a greater capacity for showing empathy and forgiveness than do men, and this may be motivated by their desire to sustain relationships. This general capacity is likely to effect situations in which women experience denied forgiveness similarly to when an offense is committed against them.

***Decisional and emotional forgiveness.*** One additional element must be considered when looking at sex differences and forgiveness response. Within recent years, a clearer distinction in the literature between decisional versus emotional forgiveness is emerging. *Decisional forgiveness* is defined as a decision to behaviorally respond in a forgiving manner toward the offender, and *emotional forgiveness* is defined as the actual replacement of negative emotions with more positive emotions for the offender (Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007). Studies have shown that despite egalitarian approaches to marriage in work roles, women continue to bear the load of emotional responsibility to maintain the relationship (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993a, 1995; Wilcox & Nock, 2006). Gender differences continue to exist in emotional recognition and expression, with females generally being the ones more concerned about the emotional state of the relationship than their male counterparts in heterosexual relationships.

Duncombe and Marsden (1993a) discuss the disparity between men's and women's willingness make the emotional effort necessary to sustain heterosexual relationships by thinking and talking in terms of love and intimacy. Whether the disparity is due to sex role theory (Ballswick & Peek, 1976) or psychoanalytic models of men's fear of intimacy and their need to distance themselves from a powerful mother (and subsequently their wives) to become truly masculine (Chodorow, 1978), the gender division of emotion and emotion work in heterosexual relationships persists. While no sex differences have been studied between

emotional and decisional forgiveness, I hypothesize these two kinds of forgiveness are experienced differently by men and women. Women, who are possibly more attuned to the emotional state of the relationship and express a greater desire for emotional intimacy than men, will require full emotional forgiveness as well as decisional forgiveness before reductions in state anger and revenge/avoidance motivations are detected, whereas a grant of decisional forgiveness will be enough to see significant reductions in these variables for men.

**Personality and response to transgressions.** Another variable that may affect the response of the transgressor if forgiveness is denied is the transgressor's personality type. Within the five-factor model, the two personality traits Neuroticism and Agreeableness have consistently been shown to have a robust relationship with forgiveness (Bellah, Bellah, & Johnson, 2003; Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Conner & Wade, 2001; Brose, Rye, Lutz-Zois, & Ross, 2005; Koutsos, Wertheim, & Kornblum, 2008; Maltby et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick & Johnson, 2001; Neto, 2007; Ross, Kendall, Matters, Wrobel, & Rye, 2004; Strelan, 2007; Symington, Walker & Gorsuch, 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002; Wang, 2008; Watkins & Regmi, 2004).

On May 7, 2009, I did two searches in *PsychINFO* (Psychological Abstracts) pairing the key words Agreeableness and forgiv\* and Neuroticism and forgiv\* from 1985 to April 2009. In *PsychINFO*, I initially found 41 articles. After excluding articles that were not theoretically relevant, and accounting for those that overlapped the two searches, fourteen articles were considered for the present review (Table 4).

Agreeableness is often associated with how people conduct interpersonal relationships and is an indicator of interpersonal qualities such as kindness, trust, empathy,

Table 4

*Personality and Forgiveness*

Study	Participants	Measurements of Interest	General Findings
Bellah, Bellah, & Johnson (2003)	Study 1: 86 undergraduates Study 2: 99 undergraduates	Study 1: Vengefulness Scale adapted from the Forgiveness of Others Scale; Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R) Study 2: Vengefulness Scale; NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO-PI-R)	Study 1: Vengefulness was positively related to Neuroticism Study 2: Vengefulness was positively related to Neuroticism and negatively related to Agreeableness
Berry, Worthington, O'Conner, Parrott, & Wade (2005)	Study 1: 179 undergraduates	Study 1: The Big Five Personality Inventory, V44 (BFI-44); Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS)	Study 1: Trait forgivingness was negatively associated with Neuroticism and positively associated with Agreeableness
Brose, Rye, Lutz-Zois, & Ross (2005)	275 undergraduates	NEO-PI-R; Rye Forgiveness Scale (RFS); Forgiveness Likelihood Scale (FLS)	All forgiveness measures were negatively correlated with Neuroticism and positively correlated with Agreeableness
Koutsos, Wertheim, & Kornblum (2008)	128 respondents recruited from Australia & New Zealand for convenience reasons	BFI Neuroticism & Agreeableness Subscales; Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18)	Disposition to forgive was negatively associated with Neuroticism and positively associated with Agreeableness; Agreeableness was positively associated with benevolence and negatively associated with revenge and avoidance motivations
Maltby et al. (2008)	438 undergraduates	NEO-PI-R; TRIM-12 (Revenge & Avoidance Motivations)	Neuroticism predicted revenge and avoidance motivations two and a half years after a transgression; no relationship between Agreeableness and forgiveness was found
McCullough & Hoyt (2002)	Study 1: 137 undergraduates Study 2: 95 undergraduates	Study 1 & 2: BFI; TRIM-18	Study 1 & 2: Neuroticism was positively associated with Avoidance & negatively associated with Benevolence; Agreeableness was positively associated with Benevolence & negatively associated with Revenge and Avoidance
McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson (2001)	Study 2: 192 undergraduates	Study 2: BFI; Vengefulness Scale	Vengefulness was positively associated Neuroticism & negatively associated with Agreeableness
Neto (2007)	152 Portuguese college students	NEO-FFI; An 18-sentence questionnaire expressing willingness to forgive under various circumstances	Overall tendency to forgive was negatively correlated with Neuroticism & positively correlated with Agreeableness
Ross, Kendall, Matters, Wrobel,	147 undergraduates	NEO-PI-R; Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS);	Other-forgiveness was not significantly correlated with the

& Rye (2004)		Mauger Forgiveness Scale; FLS; RFS; and the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgiveness (TNTF)	Neuroticism domain, but was positively correlated with Agreeableness
Strelan (2007)	176 Australian undergraduates	NEO-FFI Agreeableness Subscale; HFS	Agreeableness was positively related to forgiveness of others
Symington, Walker, & Gorsuch (2002)	180 college students	165-item measure of personality developed by Goldberg; The Walker and Gorsuch measure of forgiveness and reconciliation	Neuroticism was negatively correlated with forgiveness of others while Agreeableness was positively correlated with emotional forgiveness
Walker & Gorsuch (2002)	180 college students	Goldberg's measure of personality; TRIM	Forgiveness of others was negatively correlated with Neuroticism; No relation was found between forgiveness of others and Agreeableness
Wang (2008)	155 Taiwanese undergraduates	BFI-44; RFS & FLS	Forgiveness was negatively correlated with Neuroticism & positively correlated with Agreeableness
Watkins & Regmi (2004)	218 graduate students from Nepal	NEO-FFI; a 28 item questionnaire measuring revenge versus forgiveness	No significant correlations were found between forgiveness and the five NEO-FFI scales

and the capacity for intimacy (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Ashton, Paunonen, Helmes, & Jackson, 1998; Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996). In the studies under review, agreeableness was positively associated with the disposition to forgive (Berry et al., 2005; Brose et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; Neto, 2007; Ross et al., 2004; Strelan, 2007; Symington et al., 2002; Wang, 2008) and negatively associated with vengeance and avoidance motivations (Bellah et al., 2003; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001). Only three of the studies did not find a relationship between agreeableness and a measure of forgiveness (Maltby et al., 2008; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002; Watkins & Regmi, 2004). Nevertheless, the weight of empirical evidence supports that individuals high in agreeableness tend to be more forgiving of an offense and more pro-relational in their responses than individuals low in agreeableness.

Neuroticism is viewed as a disposition to experience negative affects, and individuals high in this trait attend more to negative stimuli and report more negative life events (Derryberry & Reed, 1994; John, 1990; Magnus, Diener, Fujita, & Pavot, 1993). Within the present studies, neuroticism was positively associated with vengeance and avoidance (Bellah et al., 2003; Maltby et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001) and negatively associated with forgiveness (Berry et al., 2005; Brose et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; Neto, 2007; Symington et al., 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002; Wang, 2008). Only two studies found no relation between neuroticism and forgiveness (Ross et al., 2004; Watkins & Regmi, 2004). Again, the overwhelming evidence supports neuroticism to be a reliable predictor of responses to an offense.

**Seeking forgiveness.** On May 7, 2009, I searched *PsychINFO* (Psychological Abstracts) using the key words seeking forgiveness from 1985 to April 2009. There were initially 15 articles. After excluding articles that were not theoretically relevant or overlapped with previous searches, five articles were retained for the present review, and one additional article was found from these studies (Table 5).

*Seeking forgiveness* has been defined as the acceptance of moral responsibility and to thus attempt reparation of a damaged relationship in which one person has offended another (Sandage et al., 2000). With only six articles having been written in this area, there is much to learn about the causes, process and consequences of seeking forgiveness in interpersonal relationships. Three of the articles in the present review were concerned with predictors of an individual seeking forgiveness for an offense committed. Seeking forgiveness was positively associated with behavioral sorrow, agreeableness, and willingness to forgive, while it was negatively associated with hardness of heart, anger, cynicism, paranoid tendencies, narcissism, and self-monitoring (Bassett, Bassett, Lloyd, & Johnson, 2006; Chiamello, Muñoz Sastre, & Mullet, 2008; Sandage et al., 2000). Another article simply measured participants' evaluations of offense scenarios based on the presence or absence of the offender seeking forgiveness and found that seeking forgiveness produced a large effect on positive evaluation of outcomes (Bassett et al., 2008).

Only two articles experimentally manipulated the granting or denial of forgiveness sought and measured participant responses. Meek et al. (1995) conducted an experiment in which participants ( $N = 108$ ) read a scenario where they had lied to their boss in order to get out of work, and after a coworker sees them out on a date, the offender decides to call the boss and confess to lying the next day. Half of the participants were assigned to a “grace”



Table 5

*Seeking Forgiveness*

Study	Participants	Measurements of Interest	General Findings
Bassett, Bassett, Lloyd, & Johnson (2006)	Phase 1: 104 undergraduates	Phase 1: Participants wrote about a time when they offended another person and answered a series of questions about the situation	Phase 1: Behavioral sorrow was positively related to seeking forgiveness, and hardness of heart was negatively related to seeking forgiveness
Bassett et al. (2008)	Study 1: 53 undergraduates Study 2: 43 undergraduates	Study 1: Participants read scenarios in which one person harmed another & then evaluated several elements about the people & the scenario based on the presence or absence of the offender seeking forgiveness Study 2: Participants used the same questionnaire as in Study 1 but evaluated the situations based on the presence or absence of transgressor shame, guilt/behavioral sorrow, or spiritual focus	Study 1: seeking forgiveness produced a large effect on positive evaluation of outcomes Study 2: The presence of offender guilt/sorrow, shame, and spiritual focus all produced a positive evaluation of outcomes
Chiaramello, Munoz Sastre, & Mullet (2008)	Study 1: 288 French participants Study 2: 317 French participants	Study 1: Seeking Forgiveness Questionnaire; Selected items from the Religious Involvement Questionnaire, Trait-Anger Questionnaire, Trait-Anxiety Questionnaire, the Cynicism Questionnaire & the Paranoid Tendencies Questionnaire Study 2: 15 item version of the Seeking Forgiveness Questionnaire; International Pool of Personality; Temporal Orientation Questionnaire; Guilt subscale; Self-Punishment Tendencies Questionnaire	Study 1: Anger, cynicism and paranoid tendencies were associated with an inability to seek forgiveness Study 2: Agreeableness was negatively associated with inability to seek forgiveness and positively associated with unconditional seeking of forgiveness; Unconditionally seeking forgiveness was positively associated with Willingness to forgive
Meek, Albright, & McMinn (1995)	108 college students	Participants rated their emotions and predicted behavior on several questions using a Likert scale after reading a scenario in which they sought forgiveness for wrongdoing and were either granted or denied forgiveness	Participants who received forgiveness reported they were more likely to feel better about confessing than those who were denied forgiveness.
Sandage, Worthington, Hight, & Berry	232 undergraduates	Seeking Forgiveness Scale; Narcissistic Personality Inventory; Self-Monitoring	Participants high in narcissism and self-monitoring were less likely to seek forgiveness from

(2000)		Scale	someone they had offended
Witvliet, Ludwig, & Bauer (2002)	40 undergraduates	Physiological measurements of heart rate, and facial EMG and SCL data; self-reported ratings of feelings following imagery conditions	Imagining seeking forgiveness versus ruminating about one's transgression led to reduced levels of sadness, anger, shame & guilt; transgressors' subjective emotions paralleled the emotions of victims during unforgiving & forgiving imagery – specifically, transgressors experienced more positive emotion, greater perceived control, and less negative emotion during imagery of forgiveness granted compared to forgiveness refused

condition in which after hypothetically confessing, apologizing, and offering some form of compensation, the boss is readily understanding and forgiving. The other half of the participants were assigned to a “no-grace” condition in which after imagining the same scenario above, the boss is angered and responds harshly and with a denial of forgiveness. The experimenters found that participants who received a forgiving response reported they were more likely to feel better about confessing than those who were denied forgiveness. However, this study was not concerned with the participants’ responses to denied forgiveness, but was primarily looking at the differences between religious orientation, guilt-proneness, and confession. Only a few questions addressed how the participants felt as a result of their confession and whether or not they received forgiveness.

The second article that manipulated forgiveness denied or granted (Witvliet et al., 2002) was specifically concerned with measuring the transgressor’s subjective emotions and physiological responses to the victim’s possible responses. The experimenters in this study had participants recall a real-life incident in which they were to blame for hurting another person’s feelings. Participants ( $N = 40$ ) completed a questionnaire about the nature of the offense, the victim’s responses, and their own responses. They then completed imagery trials in which they followed an imagery script designed to prompt one of five conditions of imagery related to the interpersonal offense: (a) participants ruminated about the offense; (b) participants imagined seeking forgiveness from the victim; (c) participants imagined the victim responding by denying forgiveness and holding a grudge; (d) participants imagined the victim granting forgiveness; and (e) participants imagined reconciling with the individual in a way appropriate for the nature of their relationship. On-line physiological monitoring measured the immediate psychophysiological effects of participants’ responses as they

occurred, and participants rated their feelings following each block of imagery trials using self-report measures. The most important finding was that transgressors' emotions paralleled the emotions of victims in previous studies during unforgiving and forgiving imagery. Specifically, transgressors experienced more positive emotion, greater perceived control, and less negative emotion during imagery of receiving forgiveness for their offense compared to imagery of forgiveness being denied.

## **Discussion**

Because little research has been conducted on transgressors seeking forgiveness, and only two studies have examined their emotional response to forgiveness denied, no conclusions can be made with confidence about how transgressors are likely to receive and react to various victim responses during an account episode for a failure event. In the context of an ongoing relationship in which both victim and transgressor contribute to the account episode, understanding the transgressor's experience to various responses of forgiveness and/or unforgiveness is tantamount to understanding the victim's experience when trying to determine the factors that influence successful versus unsuccessful outcomes. Given the wealth of information that has accumulated on the victim's experience related to interpersonal forgiveness, the paucity of information on the transgressor's experience is a glaring lack in the research literature. In the few studies that have looked at the transgressor's experience, researchers have only measured factors that likely contribute to the seeking of forgiveness or the transgressor's subjective emotions while imagining forgiveness being denied or granted. To date, there have been no studies that directly measure how the transgressor would actually respond to the victim if their request for forgiveness were

initially denied or qualified. Based on the related studies in this review, I will discuss several possibilities.

According to studies reviewed on hurt feelings and negative emotions, when individuals perceive rejection or relational devaluation, they tend to respond negatively and even at times with aggression (Buckley et al., 2004; Leary et al., 2006). Negative responses are even more likely within the context of romantic relationships in which rejection or devaluation is particularly hurtful (Leary et al., 1998). It is therefore likely that a contrite transgressor, seeking to make amends and repair the damage to his or her relationship by confessing wrongdoing to the partner, would interpret a denial of forgiveness as hurtful or devaluing. In turn, this perceived rejection could lead the transgressor to respond in a negative, relationally destructive way instead of continuing on a course of relational repair.

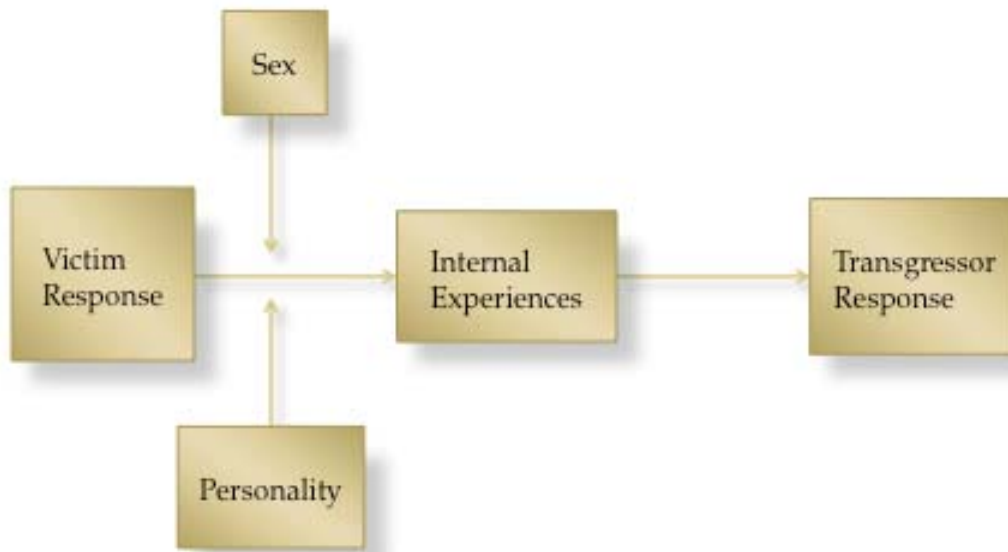
Transgressors responding negatively to denied forgiveness is even more likely when one considers the research on victim and transgressor perspectives. In the transgressors' mind, the consequences and extent of damage caused by their actions is often minimized and or overlooked. Irrationally, this sometimes leads to the transgressor taking offense to what he or she perceives to be the victim's overreaction, thereby attempting to usurp the victim status (Baumeister et al., 1990; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). I hypothesize that some transgressors will flip roles once forgiveness is denied, becoming hurt, angry, and defensive, and that gender and personality variables will affect these responses.

Research suggests men are less likely to admit wrongdoing and offer concessions for an offense than are women (Schönbach, 1990). It follows that for men to assume culpability and make a contrite confession may cause them to feel more vulnerable than it might for women who are already thus inclined. Having "humbled themselves" to offer a sincere

apology and ask for forgiveness, it is plausible that men will feel more incensed and angry than women if the victim does not communicate immediate forgiveness. Additionally, women tend to be more empathic, more forgiving, and more understanding of an offender's behavior than men (Batson et al., 1996; Miller et al., 2008; Schönbach, 1990). However, women also tend to the emotional health of the relationship more so than men (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993a, 1995; Wilcox & Nock, 2006). Given the tendencies noted in this review, sex differences in response to forgiveness denied are likely to exist.

My review suggests that personality differences in response to forgiveness denied are also likely. The traits of Agreeableness and Neuroticism have been robust predictors of forgiveness when studying victim responses to transgressions (Berry et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough et al., 2001). Given these traits represent more static than situational ways of responding to failure events, individuals high in Agreeableness or high in Neuroticism should respond similarly to forgiveness denied as they might when they are the victim of an offense.

To summarize, transgressors can respond in either a positive or negative way when they have received a denial to their request for forgiveness from the victim. Figure 1 shows a hypothesized theoretical model relating sex and personality to the transgressor's response to a rejected request for forgiveness from the victim. Initially, transgressors will appraise the situation based upon their inner experience. For some, the denial may be seen as rejecting and hurtful, while others may be understanding and empathic of the victim's decision. Additionally, part of the internal experience of the transgressor is his or her perspective on the nature of the offense, its degree of hurtfulness to the victim, and whether he or she feels the victim's response is justified. I hypothesize the internal experiences of the transgressor,



*Figure 1.* Hypothesized Theoretical Model Relating Sex and Personality to the Transgressor's Response to a Rejected Request for Forgiveness

and his or her subsequent response, will be largely determined by the transgressor's sex and personality traits.

### **Research Agenda**

The review of literature suggests plausible ways that individuals might respond to forgiveness being denied. It also suggests some individual factors that might influence these responses. People experience rejected forgiveness negatively (Meek et al., 1995; Witvliet et al., 2002), but there is no empirical work on how they actually respond to this denial in an ongoing relationship. Based on the importance of understanding the transgressor's experience when it comes to relational repair (Rusbult et al., 2005; Schönbach, 1990), I suggest the following research agenda and questions that need answering.

1. Systematic research must be conducted examining transgressor responses to denied or qualified forgiveness. Forgiveness is an intrapersonal process, but it often takes place within the context of an ongoing, interpersonal relationship. In order to understand what facilitates relational repair or relational demise, it is vital to understand the transgressors' experience and be able to predict ways in which they might respond.

2. Will transgressors' perceive a rejected request for forgiveness as rejection or devaluation? If so, will they respond in relationally constructive or relationally destructive ways?

3. Does the level of response of the victim to requested forgiveness determine the transgressors' response? Specifically, will denied or qualified forgiveness lead to anger, resentment, hurt, or possible retaliation on the part of transgressors even though they committed the original offense?



4. Will inequities between victim and transgressor perspectives concerning the offense lead to poor responses on the part of the transgressor to denied forgiveness?
5. Do sex differences exist in ways people respond to rejected forgiveness? Will women be more understanding and empathic in this situation than men?
6. No studies have examined potential sex differences between decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness. Will there be a distinction between the two based on a person's sex? Is emotional forgiveness more important for women than for men?
7. Many studies have examined the influence of personality on tendencies to forgive, but what are the effects of personality on responses to denied forgiveness? Will they be similar? Different?
8. Will Agreeableness and Neuroticism similarly predict transgressor responses to denied forgiveness as they have predicted victim responses to transgressions? Are there other personality variables influencing outcome?
9. Does self-forgiveness play a role in the transgressor's response. Do people who more readily forgive themselves for wrongdoing respond more graciously to rejected forgiveness than do those who have difficulty forgiving themselves?
10. What are the effects of rejected forgiveness on a transgressor's mental health? Is it more damaging for some than for others?
11. Can interventions be developed to aid transgressor and victim in the account process to facilitate relational repair when it is desired?

These are important questions that need answering particularly when the forgiveness process is initiated within ongoing relationships. The following chapters propose two studies

that might provide some answers. In Chapter 3, I provide a general statement of the problem. In Chapters 4 and 5, I present two experimental studies that will measure transgressor responses to denied or qualified forgiveness. In Chapter 6, I discuss the studies in light of the present review and statement of the problem.

### **General Statement of the Problem**

Despite the wealth of information that has accumulated on forgiveness since 1985 (see Worthington, 2005, for a collection of reviews), little is known about the experience of transgressors when seeking forgiveness for an offense they have committed. This is particularly true when their request for forgiveness is either denied or the victim's forgiveness response is highly qualified. To date, only two studies have examined transgressors' emotions while imagining themselves receiving an unforgiving response after confessing a transgression (Meek et al., 1995; Witvliet et al., 2002). This lack in the forgiveness literature is vital for understanding relational repair when a relational rupture has occurred due to an offense that one party committed against the other.

Based on the extant literature, a number of variables may be at work influencing the transgressor's response. First, we know that victims and transgressors have disparate perspectives when viewing an offense depending on the role they assume (Baumeister et al., 1990; Feeney & Hill, 2006; Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002), and that feelings of rejection are associated with a variety of negative emotions and responses, especially in the context of romantic relationships (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a, 2006b; Buckley et al., 2004; Feeney, 2004, 2005; Leary et al., 1998). Second, we know that men and women respond to transgressions in different ways and have different levels of empathy and forgiveness (Batson et al., 1996; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987; Macaskill et al.,

2002; Miller et al., 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Different levels of empathy may affect transgressors as well as victims in their responses to transgressions and hurt feelings.

Finally, we know that responses to transgressions also vary depending on an individual's personality style (Berry et al., 2001; Brown, 2004; Exline et al., 2004; Koutsos et al., 2008; Maltby et al., 2008; McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; Symington et al., 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). Whereas most research has examined the personalities of victims, it is reasonable to hypothesize that personality might also affect transgressors.

Despite drawing logical conclusions from research not precisely related to transgressors, we have no empirical research addressing factors that might predict transgressors' reactions as victim and transgressor communicate about transgressions. Specifically, we don't know whether these factors will influence transgressor responses similarly when forgiveness is denied. The proposed studies seek to answer this question.

### **Theoretical Considerations**

When a person (i.e., a transgressor) hurts, betrays, or offends another (i.e., a victim), the accounts literature stemming from Goffman (1955) through Schönbach (1990) has specified a transactional sequence that is likely to occur. The victim makes a reproach, or request for an explanation for the cause of the transgression. The offender offers an account for his or her actions, and some resolution might happen afterwards. Usually, that is where the account theorizing ends.

But the actual transactions continue and incorporate internal experiences. In some cases, the victim might experience forgiveness internally and might or might not offer forgiveness explicitly (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Exline, 1998). Although no one has written about it thus far, the transgressor might not patiently await an offer of forgiveness. Instead,

through impatience or due to wanting to press the victim to forgive or from anxiety, the transgressor might make a bid for the victim to express forgiveness. The bid might be motivated variously. Perhaps the transgressor experiences guilt and desires the victim to relieve that guilt. Perhaps the transgressor believes that once the victim makes a public offer of forgiveness, the issue will be closed. Perhaps the transgressor is experiencing high levels of self-condemnation, and he or she believes that, if the victim can forgive, that somehow will permit self-forgiveness to occur or might lessen the self-condemnation through the victim lessening the demands for justice. Perhaps the transgressor is either narcissistic or believes himself or herself to have done enough to deserve to be forgiven. Thus, forgiveness is seen, in either case, as a “right.” Powerful emotions of regret, contrition, sorrow, guilt, and shame—arising from a sense of moral wrongdoing, a sense of wounded narcissistic pride, or a sense that justice has already been met—can mean that a lot rides on the victim’s response to a transgressor’s bid for forgiveness.

The consequences of a positive response—a communication from the victim that he or she forgives—are often predictable. Usually, I hypothesize, the transgressor will feel release, relief, freedom from guilt and shame, and a general emotional unburdening of negative emotions. I hypothesize further, though, that for an occasional transgressor, an offer of forgiveness from the victim might increase the guilt or shame of the transgressor, who simply cannot accept the victim’s beneficence.

What if the victim refuses to grant forgiveness? This refusal of a bid to forgive might have serious emotional consequences for the transgressor, which might also in turn accrue to the relationship. The transgressor might feel increased shame, guilt, remorse, sorrow, and regret. However, the transgressor—who has sacrificed his or her pride by requesting

forgiveness (and in the process admitted to wrongdoing and to a need for the victim's communication of mercy)—might in turn feel hurt or might feel angry (or both).

From psychodynamic theory, we might see this as a challenge to the Self (Mann, 1996), which will likely provoke angst and consequent defensiveness. Depending on the transgressor's likely defense repertoire and history of development, defenses including projection, denial, and attack could occur as could defenses including internalizing more guilt or increased efforts at undoing.

Communication theories could also predict potential responses to the refusal of a victim to offer forgiveness when the transgressor has requested it. This might be seen within a pragmatics view of communication (Watzlawick & Beavin, 1967), which would view the transactional sequence as moves in a negotiation of relational power. The transgressor asserted power over the victim by harming the victim. The victim might have responded with one-down strategies (e.g., crying, expressing hurt) that simultaneously reproached the transgressor and made the transgressor feel one-down in the power maneuvering. The victim might just as easily have responded by a one-up power strategy of demanding that the transgressor repent and admit to wrongdoing and request forgiveness. Refusal of the request, or refusal to offer forgiveness even if no request was made suggests that the victim has a resource that the transgressor needs and has enough power to be able to control that resource. Thus, explicitly refusing to forgive a transgressor will almost certainly provoke some response in the transgressor to reassert power. This might be claiming to be hurt or offended him or herself (thus placing the two on equal moral footing), or it might involve some extreme power maneuver like unilaterally cutting the relationship off.

From stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness (Worthington, 2006), the transgressor might feel hurt or offended himself or herself due to the victim's refusal to offer forgiveness after what was perceived to be a costly self-sacrificial request for forgiveness. Thus, the previous transgressor might begin to see himself or herself as a victim, and experience hurt, anger, and fear of further hurt or rejection. Attempts to cope might be forthcoming or other ways might be employed to reduce the perceived injustice. Those could include retaliation or revenge, seeking justice (i.e., by enlisting the support of a third party), forbearing a negative response, accepting and moving on with life, or justifying or excusing the victim's refusal to forgive. In the present research, I will treat these studies as being informed by stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness (Worthington, 2006). Namely, refusal of a bid for expressed forgiveness is often interpreted as an offense (perhaps motivated by psychodynamics or by pragmatic communication theory motivations), and thus I will seek to investigate how the transgressor-become-self-perceived-victim might respond to the rejection. In the process of doing so, I will examine the effects of sex differences and of personality differences in affecting the transgressor's responses.

Theorizing about sex and gender can also inform this understanding. There are clear sex differences in capacity for empathy (Batson et al., 1996; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987; Macaskill et al., 2002; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Forgiveness by a victim has been frequently related to empathy (Enright et al., 1998; McCullough, 2000; Worthington, 1998; Zechmeister and Romero, 2002), and it is reasonable to expect that the degree to which an transgressor understands the internal felt experiences of (i.e., empathizes with) the victim, the more tolerant the transgressor is likely to be toward a victim who responds to a bid to express forgiveness by saying not now (more time), not ever, or partial forgiveness (decisional

forgiveness) has been granted but emotional peace has not yet been experienced. Thus, to the extent that sex differences in empathy exist, more tolerance will exist to a rejected bid for expressed forgiveness.

Additionally, personality differences might account for various differential responses by the transgressor. Since personality traits signify ingrained patterns of thinking and behaving, previous research on victim responses to an offense and forgiveness tendencies can inform predictions on how transgressors are likely to respond to denied forgiveness.

Agreeableness and Neuroticism particularly stand out in the forgiveness literature as having reliable associations with forgiveness. High Agreeableness has been positively associated with the disposition to forgive (Berry et al., 2005; Brose et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; Neto, 2007; Ross et al., 2004; Strelan, 2007; Symington et al., 2002; Wang, 2008) and negatively associated with vengefulness and avoidance motivations (Bellah et al., 2003; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001), whereas high Neuroticism has been positively associated with vengefulness and avoidance (Bellah et al., 2003; Maltby et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001) and negatively associated with forgiveness (Berry et al., 2005; Brose et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; Neto, 2007; Symington et al., 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002; Wang, 2008). Thus, to the extent people high in Agreeableness are more forgiving, this pattern should extend to situations in which forgiveness is denied. Likewise, to the extent people high in Neuroticism are more vengeful and unforgiving, this pattern should also extend to situations of forgiveness denied.

### **Purpose of the Present Studies**

The purpose of the present studies is to examine differences between male and female participant responses and personality factors to a rejected request for forgiveness involving a transgression within a romantic relationship. The treatment outcomes of interest are the transgressors' (and requestors' of forgiveness) degrees of anger, empathy, forgiveness, and avoidance, benevolence, and revenge motivations toward the significant other after their request for forgiveness has been rejected. I hypothesize that how the victim responds to a request for forgiveness will affect the transgressor's experience and subsequent response dependent upon the transgressor's sex and personality. I will conduct two studies to test my hypotheses.

In Study 1, I use a between-subjects experimental design to test whether males and females in the role of a transgressor who requests forgiveness will have different experiences if a person in the role of a victim responds one of four ways to the requested forgiveness: (1) no forgiveness (NoF); (2) maybe, but not yet (NotYet); (3) a grant of decisional forgiveness, but not emotional forgiveness (DF-NoEF); and (4) unequivocal forgiveness (Forgive). In Study 2, I use a mixed experimental design to test for differences between transgressors' personalities and their response to the forgiveness conditions as well as their willingness to act vengefully when forgiveness is denied.

The two studies proposed here will test four general hypotheses. (1) Overall, females will respond less negatively to rejection of a forgiveness request (NoF Condition) and a maybe, but not yet response (NotYet Condition) than will males in these conditions. (2) There will be an interaction between transgressor sex and request for forgiveness condition. Specifically, in the DF-NoEF Condition, males will have less state anger and unforgiveness and more empathy, benevolence, and forgiveness than will females in the DF-NoEF



condition, but females and males will not differ on any measures for the other three conditions. (3) Overall, participants are hypothesized to have significantly higher negative reactions in the NoF Condition than they will in the other three conditions. (4) There will be an interaction between Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition and the personality variables. Specifically, participants high in agreeableness will show small differences between conditions on each dependent variable, while people high in neuroticism will show large differences between conditions on each dependent variable.

### **Study 1: The Effects of Sex on Response to Requested Forgiveness**

#### **Method**

**Participants.** Participants for the present study ( $N = 300$ ) consisted of undergraduate students from a large Mid-Atlantic urban university. Participants were recruited from undergraduate classes and participated as part of a course requirement or in exchange for a small amount of course credit.

**Design.** This study is a manipulated experiment with the quasi-experimental investigation of participant sex. The study uses a 2 (sex: male versus female) x 4 (Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition: NoF, NotYet, DF-NoEF, Forgive) between-subjects multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and a 2 (sex: male versus female) x 3 (Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition: NoF, NotYet, DF-NoEF) between-subjects analysis of covariance design. The first independent variable was participant's sex. The second independent variable involved the experimental manipulation of four levels of response to requested forgiveness: (1) NoF Condition ("No, I will never forgive you"); (2) NotYet Condition ("I might be able to forgive you in the future, but not yet; I need more time"); (3) DF-NoEF ("Yes, I've decided to forgive you, but emotionally I am not over the

offense, and it may take time”); and (4) Forgive (“Yes, I am willing to forgive you completely and put this behind us.”). The dependent variables were measures of anger, empathy, forgiveness, and avoidance, benevolence, and revenge motivations for the participant whose hypothetical request for forgiveness had been spurned. Dependent variables that were conceptually related were grouped together for multivariate analysis as follows: (1) unforgiving responses (i.e., anger, avoidance motivations, and revenge motivations); and (2) precursors to forgiveness (i.e., benevolence motivations and empathy). The dependent variable for the single analysis of covariance was forgiveness. Participant ratings of the degree of severity and hurtfulness of the response they received were analyzed as well as relationship measures of commitment, satisfaction, and trust and a measure of self-compassion. Variables determined to have significant effects on the dependent variables were controlled for by using them as covariates in analyses.

***Manipulated Variable.*** The manipulated variable is the victim’s response to the participant’s request for forgiveness. The participant role-played being a transgressor who wronged the victim and subsequently realized the error of his or her ways. In a hypothetical scenario, the transgressor approaches the victim and makes an elaborate confession requesting forgiveness from the victim (confession script is provided under procedure). The participants then read one of the following four scripts depending upon the condition to which they were randomly assigned that represented the victim’s response to the requested forgiveness. (The bold portion is the portion that differs across conditions.)

*NoF Condition.* “Your actions have deeply hurt me, **and I don’t think I can ever trust you again.** I’m glad you have taken responsibility for your behavior, **but**

**saying you are sorry doesn't make up for it. I will never forgive you for what you've done."**

*NotYet Condition.* "Your actions have deeply hurt me, **and I'm not sure when I might be able to trust you again.** I'm glad you have taken responsibility for your behavior. **I might be able to forgive you in the future, but I'm not ready right now. I need more time to think it over."**

*DF-NoEF Condition.* "Your actions have deeply hurt me, **and it's going to take time for me to trust you again.** I'm glad you have taken responsibility for your behavior. **I forgive you for what you've done, but it will take more time for me to get over this emotionally."**

*Forgive Condition.* "Your actions have deeply hurt me, **and I have struggled with this decision.** I'm glad you have taken responsibility for your behavior. **I forgive you for your actions. I feel at peace, and I won't hold it against you in the future."**

A manipulation check, as the last question within the measures, asked the participants the following: "Circle the letter of the statement below that is closest to the way your request for forgiveness was responded to by your partner."

- a. I was flatly rejected, and no prospect of forgiveness was held out in the future.
- b. I was told that I was not forgiven now but perhaps could be in the future.
- c. I was told that I was definitely forgiven, but my partner had not experienced a change in feelings to date.
- d. I was told that I was completely forgiven and that my partner was emotionally at peace.

These correspond to the NoF, NotYet, DF-NoEF, and Forgive Conditions respectively.

### **Measures**

***Demographic Questionnaire (DQ)***. Participants report their age, sex, marital status, ethnicity, and religion (see Appendix A).

***Relationship Commitment Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998)***. The Relationship Commitment scale (see Appendix A) consists of 7 items that measure the level of commitment individuals feel toward their relationships with their partners. Participants respond to each item (i.e., “I want our relationship to last forever” and “I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner”) using an 8-point rating scale from *1 = do not agree at all* to *8 = agree completely*, with higher scores indicating greater commitment. Internal reliability was demonstrated with alphas ranging from .91 to .95 (Rusbult et al., 1998). The alpha coefficient in the present study was .93.

***Relationship Satisfaction Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998)***. The Relationship Satisfaction scale (see Appendix A) consists of 5 items that measure the level of satisfaction individuals feel about their relationships with their partners. Participants respond to each item (i.e., “I feel satisfied with our relationship” and “My relationship is close to ideal”) using an 8-point rating scale from *1 = do not agree at all* to *8 = agree completely*, with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction. Internal reliability was demonstrated for the scale with alphas ranging from .92 to .95 (Rusbult et al., 1998). The alpha coefficient in the present study was .94.

***Trust Scale (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985)***. The Trust Scale (see Appendix A) consists of 12 items that tap three aspects of trust in relationship. The Predictability subscale assesses the consistency and stability of a partner’s behavior based on past experience (e.g.,

“My partner behaves in a consistent manner”). The Dependability subscale assesses dispositional qualities of the partner that would warrant confidence in the face of risk and potential hurt (e.g., “I can rely on my partner to keep the promises he/she makes to me”). Finally, the Faith subscale assesses feelings of confidence in the relationship and in the partner’s responsiveness even in the face of an uncertain future (e.g., “Though times may change and the future is uncertain, I know my partner will always be ready and willing to offer me strength and support”). Participants rate their level of agreement with each statement using a 5-point rating scale from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*. Responses are averaged to yield a total trust score, with higher values indicating greater trust in the partner. The alpha coefficient for the current sample was .87.

***Self-Compassion Scale (SCS; Neff, 2003)***. This scale consists of 24 items that assess six different aspects of self-compassion (see Appendix A). Participants rate their agreement with each item (e.g., “I’m kind to myself when experiencing suffering” and “I’m tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies”) on a 5-point rating scale from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *almost always*. The test has demonstrated evidence of concurrent, convergent, and discriminant validity and test-retest reliability (Neff, 2003; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Alpha for the current study was .91.

***Batson’s Empathy Adjectives (BEA; Batson, Bolen, Cross, & Neuringer-Benefiel, 1986; Batson, O’Quin, Fultz, Vanderplas, & Isen, 1983)***. The affective empathy measure used by Batson and colleagues (see Appendix A) consists of eight affect adjectives (e.g. sympathetic, compassionate). Participants reported the degree to which they felt each affect toward the original victim of the offense who either granted or denied forgiveness on some level. Each item was rated on a 6-point rating scale from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*. The

empathy measure had Cronbach's alphas ranging from .79-.95 (Batson et al., 1983; Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Toi & Batson, 1982). The scores have shown evidence of construct validity, and the scale was found to be correlated with measures of dispositional empathy, perspective taking, and helping behavior (Batson et al., 1986; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). In the present study, alpha was .86.

***Rye Forgiveness Scale (RFS; Rye et al., 2001).*** The Rye Forgiveness Scale (see Appendix A) consists of 15 items that measure forgiveness toward a particular offender on two subscales, absence of negative and presence of positive. An example of the absence of negative is, "I feel hatred whenever I think of the person who wronged me." An example of presence of positive is, "I wish for good things to happen to this person." Participants are instructed to think about how they have responded to the person who wronged or mistreated them (in this case they are directed to imagine how they would feel toward the original victim who denied forgiveness to them as they role played a contrite transgressor). They were directed to indicate their agreement with each item on a 5-point rating scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate more forgiveness. Factor analytic investigation by Rye et al. (2001) found that the items loaded on two factors, the absence of negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward the offender, and the presence of positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward the wrongdoer. The RFS had Cronbach's alpha of .87 for the entire scale, .86 for the absence of negative subscale, and .85 for the presence of positive subscale (Rye et al., 2001). The estimated two-week temporal stability was .80 for the entire scale and .76 for both the absence of negative and presence of positive subscales (Rye et al., 2001). The scale shows evidence of construct validity. It was found to be positively correlated with other measures of forgiveness, religiousness, hope, and

spiritual well-being, and negatively correlated with anger (Rye et al., 2001). In the present study, the alpha for the full scale was .85.

***State Anger Scale (SAS; Spielberger, Jacobs, Russell, & Crane, 1983).*** The SAS (see Appendix A) consists of 10 items that measure the current level of anger a participant is experiencing (e.g. “I feel angry” or “I feel like swearing”). Participants indicate their current feelings toward the rejecter of their forgiveness request on a 4-point rating scale from 1 = *not at all* to 4 = *very much so*. Higher scores indicate higher levels of anger. The SAS had Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .88 to .95 (Spielberger et al., 1983). The scale shows evidence of construct validity, and has positive correlations with state anxiety, neuroticism, and psychoticism (Spielberger et al., 1983). In the present sample, the alpha was .95.

***Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory – 18 Item Form (TRIM; McCullough et al, 1998).*** The TRIM (see Appendix A) consists of 18 items that measure post-transgression motivations toward a particular offender. Participants write a short summary of how they imagine they would feel about the response they received to their request for forgiveness and rate its level of hurtfulness. Participants then report their motivations toward the person who wounded them (in this case the original victim who denied forgiveness to the participant role playing a contrite transgressor) by indicating their agreement with each item on a 5-point rating scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The TRIM consists of three subscales; one measures avoidance motivations (TRIM-A), one measures revenge motivations (TRIM-R), and one measures benevolence motivations (TRIM-B). The 7-item Avoidance subscale measures motivation to avoid a transgressor (e.g., “I live as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around”). The 5-item Revenge subscale measures motivation to seek revenge (e.g., “I’ll make him/her pay”). Higher scores

on both represent more unforgiving motives. The six-item benevolence subscale measures benevolence motivations (e.g., “Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her). The TRIM had Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .84 to .93 for the avoidance and revenge subscales (McCullough et al., 1998) and .86 to .96 for the benevolence subscale (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). Estimated three-week temporal stability in a sample of people who had difficulty forgiving ranged from .79-.86 for the avoidance and revenge subscales (McCullough et al., 1998). Estimated eight-week temporal stability in a sample of recent victims ranged from .44-.53 for the avoidance and revenge subscales (McCullough et al., 1998). The scale shows evidence of construct validity, and it was found to be positively correlated with other measures of forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, and commitment to a relationship (McCullough et al., 1998). In the present sample, the alpha for TRIM-A was .94; for TRIM-R was .89; and for TRIM-B was .93.

**Procedure.** Participants were recruited for an online study from undergraduate psychology classes at a Mid-Atlantic urban university. The study specifically solicited participants who were currently in a romantic relationship of at least two weeks duration. After signing consent agreeing to participate in the study, participants completed a demographic questionnaire, the Self-Compassion Scale, and measures of relationship trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Participants then began reading a script (see Appendix B). An online script instructed participants to imagine they were at a gathering of friends with their romantic partner. To their partner’s surprise, they tell the group of friends about one of their partner’s strong and personal fears, and they proceed to make fun of their partner for having this fear. The partner is very hurt by this behavior, so participants are instructed to imagine themselves feeling extremely remorseful for the episode because they realize they



truly care about the person they are romantically involved with, and they don't want to lose the relationship. The participants write an open-ended response to the directive: "In the space below, write how you might feel and what you might be thinking as you feel remorseful. Please try to write at least three sentences describing your likely thoughts and feelings." The participants then imagine that they decide to go to the partner and confess their wrongdoing, hoping to salvage the relationship.

Participants were told that a good confession involves five components: (a) a sincere apology, (b) an expression of remorse, (c) taking responsibility for their actions without excusing or justifying their behavior, (d) promising to never do such a thing again, and (e) asking for their partner's forgiveness. In the space provided, participants were directed to write a sentence in their own words for each component. To standardize the confession, however, the screen that followed stated, "Here are some of the things you might have said when you were confessing. Please read this and imagine you are saying it to your partner." The script of their confession is as follows:

(Partner's name), I am truly sorry for my behavior at the party last night. I revealed something very personal about you and made fun of you in front of our friends. I know it was wrong, and I am truly, very sorry for what I did. I'm not making any excuses for my actions. I really do care about you, and I don't want this to ruin our relationship. I promise it will never happen again. It was a mistake, and I truly regret it. Will you please forgive me?

The participants then imagined themselves receiving the response condition to which they were randomly assigned. Responses were constructed so that the language was not too

inflammatory or harsh and condemning (see verbatim responses in the section entitled “Manipulated Variable”).

Next, participants were asked to briefly write an open-ended response to how they felt given the particular response they received from their partner. Then, they rated the response’s degree of hurtfulness and severity on single-item, rating scales from 0 = *not at all hurt* to 4 = *extremely hurt* and 0 = *not at all severe* to 4 = *extremely severe*. Next, participants filled out the BEA, RFS, SAS, and TRIM-18 measures reporting on their own experiences (as a contrite offender who had offered a good confession) while pondering their partner’s (manipulated) response. Some wording of the RFS and TRIM-18 that speaks of the respondent’s behavior in the past tense was changed to the present or future tense (see Appendix A).

### **Study 1-Hypotheses and Planned Analyses**

**Planned analysis.** Two 2 x 4 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness: NoF, NotYet, DF-NoEF, Forgive) multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) and a single 2 x 3 analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) will be performed. Dependent variables that are conceptually related will be grouped together for multivariate analysis as follows: (1) unforgiving responses (i.e., anger, avoidance motivations, and revenge motivations); and (2) precursors to forgiveness (i.e., benevolence motivations and empathy). The dependent variable for the single analysis of covariance will be the forgiveness measure. Participant ratings of the degree of severity and hurtfulness of the response they received will be analyzed as well as relationship measures of commitment, satisfaction, and trust and a measure of self-compassion. Variables determined to have significant effects on the dependent variables will be controlled for by placing them as covariates in the main analyses.

Significant multivariate effects will be followed up by univariate ANOVAs to determine the locus of the effects. If significant univariate Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness interactions are found, the locus of the effects will be investigated by simple main effects analyses in which comparisons will be made of men versus women's scores at each of the four levels of Response to Requested Forgiveness.

### **Hypothesis #1**

*Statement.* I hypothesize a significant Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness interaction will be found. For men, the NoF Condition will produce more anger, avoidance and revenge, and less benevolence, empathy, and forgiveness than will the NotYet Condition, which will be, in turn, different (in the same pattern) for the DF-NoEF Condition, which will also differ the same pattern from the Forgive Condition. For women, the three conditions are hypothesized not to differ significantly on anger, avoidance, revenge, benevolence, empathy, and forgiveness.

*Rationale.* Based on studies that have shown females to be generally higher in empathy and forgiveness responses than males (Batson et al., 1996; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987; Macaskill et al., 2002; Miller et al., 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005), these tendencies should extend to situations when their request for forgiveness is denied or is somewhat qualified. Additionally, Schönbach (1990) found that men were less likely to take responsibility and make concession for a failure event; therefore, it is likely that having done so, men will react more incensed and respond accordingly if their contrite confession is rejected. However, as the hope of future forgiveness or qualified forgiveness is granted, the more negative responses (i.e. anger, avoidance, revenge) will significantly decrease, and

more positive responses (i.e. benevolence, empathy, forgiveness) will increase for males, whereas females will remain relatively unchanged.

**Analysis.** I will conduct two 2 x 4 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness) multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) and a 2 x 3 analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to test for the interaction. If a significant interaction is found, I will examine univariate ANOVAs and simple main effects analyses to determine the locus of the effects.

### **Hypothesis #2**

**Statement.** There will be a significant main effect for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition. Specifically, participants in the Forgive Condition will show higher positive responses as measured by the dependent variables and lower negative responses than will participants in the NotYet, DF-NoEF, and NoF Conditions. There will be no main effect for sex.

**Rationale.** Previous studies on transgressor reactions to rejected forgiveness found more positive emotions for the offender were associated with receiving a forgiving response, and more negative emotions were associated with receiving an unforgiving response (Meek et al., 1995; Witvliet et al., 2002). I expect these findings will be replicated in the present study and overall differences will be found between conditions. However, although studies have suggested women to be higher in forgiveness and empathy than men (Batson et al., 1996; Lennon & Eisenberg, 1987; Macaskill et al., 2002; Miller et al., 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005), sex differences in forgiveness have varied a great deal in independent studies. Therefore, while I expect some differences between sex in some of the conditions, there will not be a significant overall main effect for sex.

*Analysis.* I will conduct two 2 x 4 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness) multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) and a 2 x 3 analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to test for significant main effects. If a significant main effect for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition is found, I will examine univariate ANOVAs and simple main effects analyses to determine the locus of the effects.

*Projected Findings*

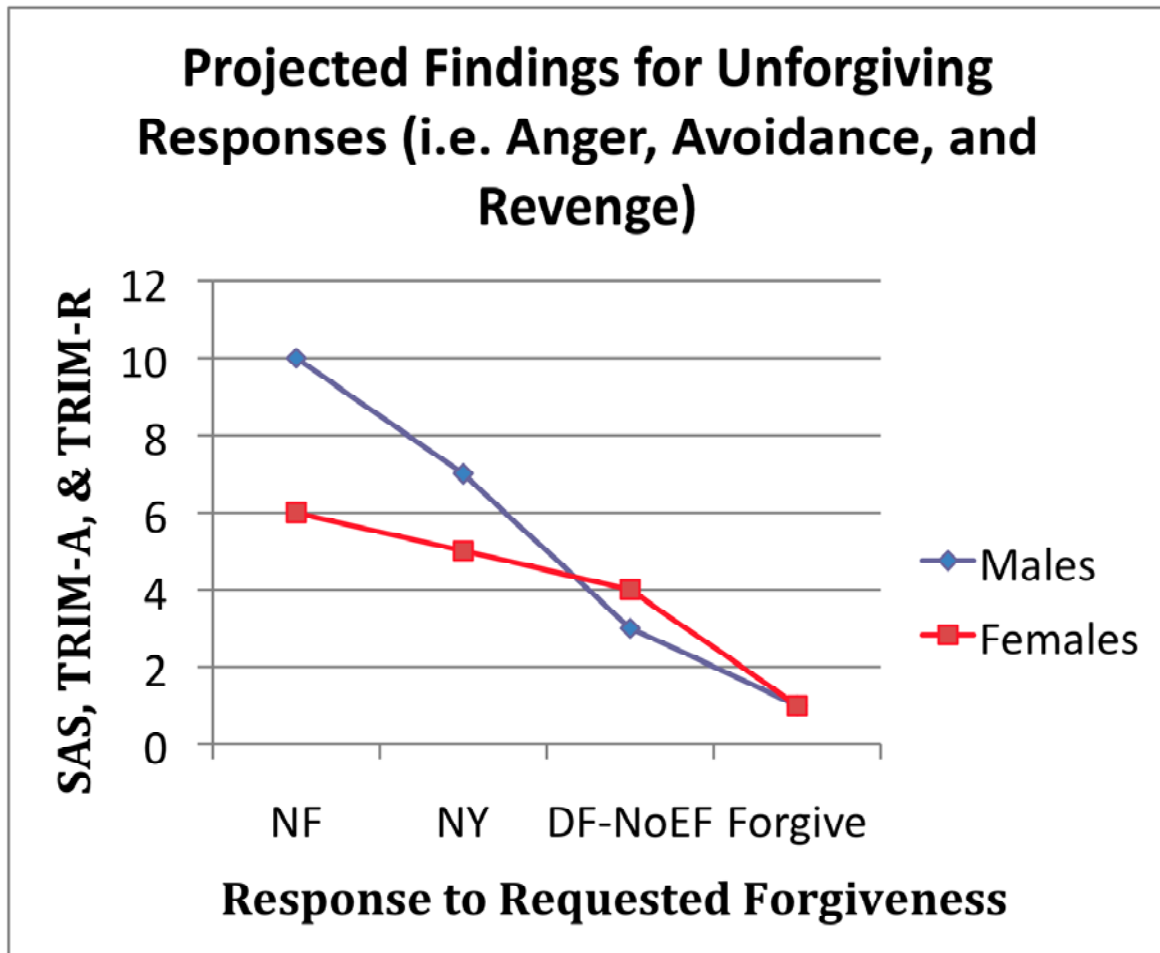


Figure 2. Projected Findings for Unforgiving Responses

For Study 1, Figure 2 shows that males will have higher scores on the SAS, TRIM-A and TRIM-R for both the NoF Condition and the NotYet Condition, indicating higher levels of anger and unforgiveness than females in response to denied forgiveness. For the DF-NoEF Condition, male scores will decrease below that of female scores, and female scores will show less variation. At the Forgive Condition, male and female scores will not differ.

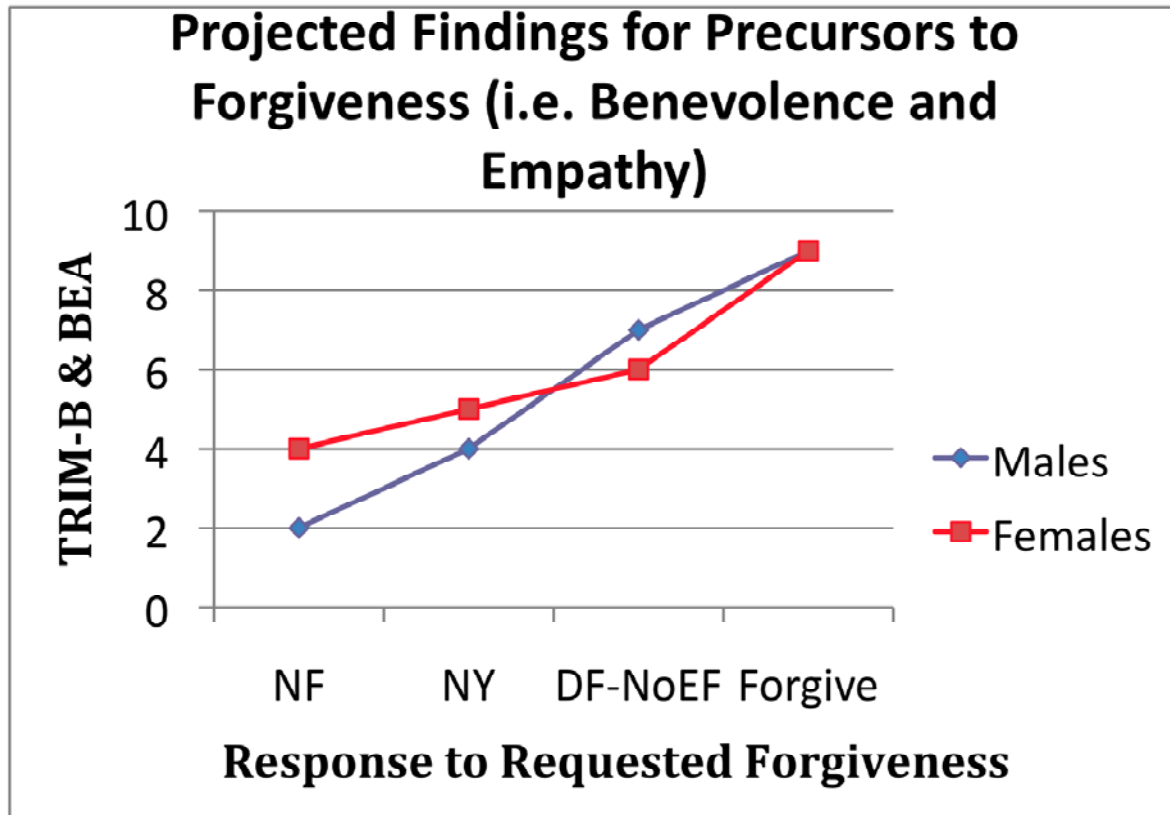


Figure 3. Projected Findings for Precursors to Forgiveness

For Study 1, Figure 3 shows that females will have higher scores on the TRIM-B and BEA for both the NoF Condition and the NotYet Condition, indicating higher levels of benevolence and empathy than males in response to denied forgiveness. For the DF-NoEF Condition, female scores will decrease below that of male scores, and female scores will show less variation. At the Forgive Condition, male and female scores will not differ.

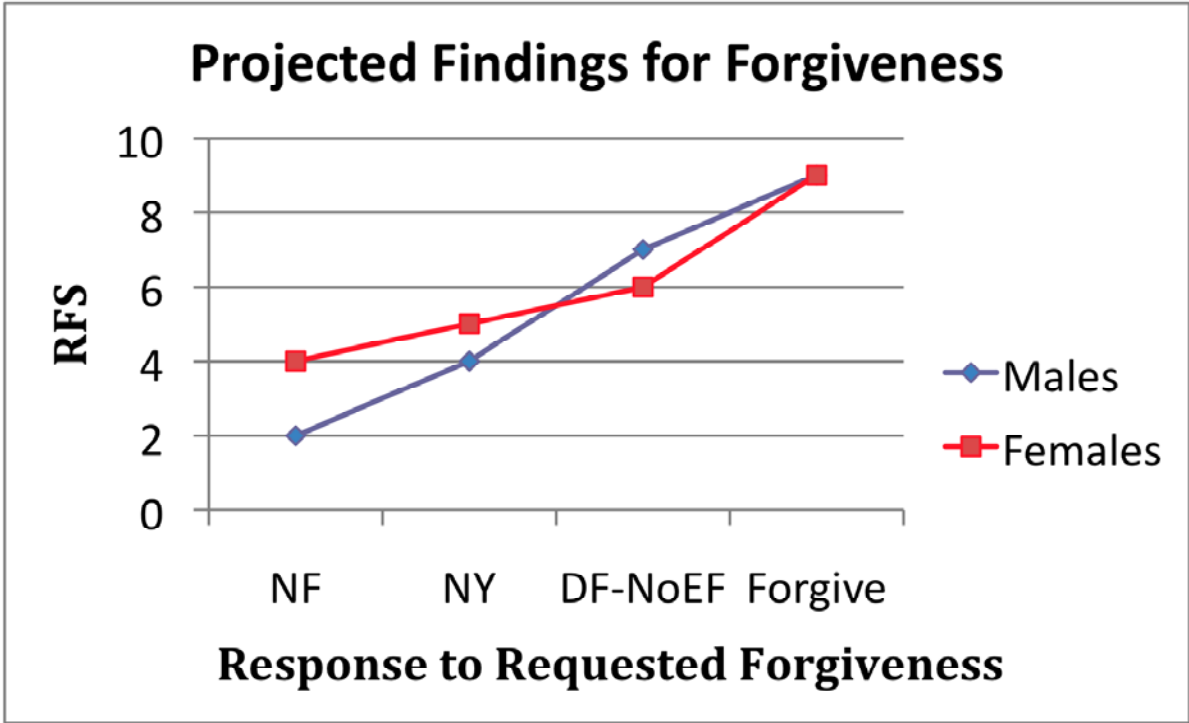


Figure 4. Projected Findings for Forgiveness

For Study 1, Figure 4 shows that females will have higher scores on the RFS for both the NoF Condition and the NotYet Condition, indicating higher levels of benevolence and empathy than males in response to denied forgiveness. For the DF-NoEF Condition, female scores will decrease below that of male scores, and female scores will show less variation. At the Forgive Condition, male and female scores will not differ.



## Results

### Preliminary Analysis

Means, standard deviations, and alphas are reported in Table 6. Correlations are reported in Table 7. Prior to conducting the primary statistical analyses, the data were assessed for missing data, normality, and the presence of outliers. Cases with 10% or less missing data per variable were treated using mean substitution. The remainder of missing data were addressed using pairwise deletion. Revenge was slightly kurtotic and was transformed with a LG10 transformation. The transformed variable was used in all subsequent analyses. All outliers on the scales fell within the ranges of expected values and thus are thought to represent true responses, so they were retained.

### Determining Covariates

To determine potential covariates, I ran a series of analyses on several variables that could potentially affect the dependent variables. First, I ran a 2 x 4 MANOVA (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition) on three relationship variables - commitment, satisfaction, and trust. The interaction term was not significant, and there was no main effect for condition; however, there was a main effect for sex, Pillai's Trace = .05, multivariate  $F(3, 262) = 4.19, p = .01$ . Univariate ANOVAs were examined. Only relationship satisfaction differed significantly between males and females,  $F(1, 264) = 4.03, p = .046$ . I concluded the relationship variables did not significantly influence the dependent variables, so these were excluded as covariates in the analyses.

Next, I ran a 2 x 4 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition) on the participants' ratings of the degree of hurtfulness and severity of the response they received to their request. There was a significant interaction effect, Pillai's Trace = .05,

Table 6

*Descriptive Statistics for Study 1 Variables*

Variable	<i>a</i>	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skew	Kurt
BEA (empathy)	.86	285	7	42	27.74	7.51	-.26	-.16
RFS (forgiveness)	.85	286	24	75	56.40	9.69	-.21	-.55
TRIM-B (benevolence)	.93	285	7	35	28.62	6.09	-.92	.42
SAS (state anger)	.95	286	10	40	15.55	7.31	1.41	1.23
TRIM-A (avoidance)	.94	285	7	35	56.40	9.69	-.55	.29
TRIM-R (revenge)	.89	285	5	25	7.45	3.93	1.73	2.50
Hurtfulness	-	287	0	4	2.06	1.24	-.09	-1.00
Severity	-	286	0	4	1.64	1.17	.15	-.89
Relationship Commitment	.93	280	0	56	44.34	13.16	-1.12	.44
Relationship Satisfaction	.94	286	0	40	30.36	9.48	-1.02	.54
Relationship Trust	.87	281	23	96	67.85	16.10	-.40	-.59
Self-Compassion	.91	254	38	118	78.95	15.53	-.03	-.14
TRIM-R (transformed)*	-	285	1.4	.83	.83	.18	1.16	.03

*Note.* *a* = alpha; \* = LG10 transformation; BEA = Batson's Empathy Adjectives; RFS = Rye Forgiveness Scale; TRIM-B = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Benevolence; SAS = State Anger Scale; TRIM-A = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Avoidance; TRIM-R = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Revenge

Table 7

*Correlation Matrix of Study 1 Variables*

	BEA	RFS	TRIM-B	SAS	TRIM-A	TRIM-R	Hurt	Severe	Commit	Satis	Trust	SCS
BEA (empathy)	1	.27**	.37**	-.20**	-.23**	-.12	-.08	-.10	.33**	.35**	.33**	.10
RFS (forgiveness)	–	1	.50**	-.56	-.51**	-.50**	-.29**	-.28**	.31**	.24**	.38**	.16**
TRIM-B (benevolence)	–	–	1	-.39**	-.58**	-.48**	-.03	-.08	.43**	.42**	.45**	.07
SAS (state anger)	–	–	–	1	.56**	.53**	.32**	.34**	-.11	-.10	-.27**	-.13
TRIM-A (avoidance)	–	–	–	–	1	.61**	.27**	.27**	-.28**	-.24**	-.30**	-.07
TRIM-R (revenge)	–	–	–	–	–	1	.03	.06	-.25**	-.20**	-.35**	.06
Hurtfulness	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	.66**	.09	.08	.01	.01
Severity	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	.06	.08	-.04	-.01
Relationship Commitment	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	.73**	.55**	-.10
Relationship Satisfaction	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	.69**	.09
Relationship Trust	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	.10
SCS (self-compassion)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1

\*\* Bonferonni-corrected  $p < .001$ ; BEA = Batson's Empathy Adjectives; RFS = Rye Forgiveness Scale; TRIM-B = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Benevolence; SAS = State Anger Scale; TRIM-A = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Avoidance; TRIM-R = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Revenge; SCS = Self-Compassion Scale

multivariate  $F(6, 554) = 2.42, p = .03$ . There was also a significant main effect for condition, Pillai's Trace = .34, multivariate  $F(6, 554) = 18.88, p < .001$ , but no main effect for sex. Univariate ANOVAs were examined. Both hurtfulness,  $F(3, 277) = 47.14, p < .001$ , and severity,  $F(3, 277) = 17.57, p < .001$  differed significantly between conditions. Additionally, there was a sex x condition interaction on severity,  $F(3, 277) = 2.72, p = .05$ . I concluded that participant ratings of hurtfulness and severity significantly influenced the dependent variables, so these variables were retained as covariates in subsequent analyses.

Finally, I ran a 2 x 4 ANOVA (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition) on a measure of self-compassion. The interaction effect between sex and condition was not significant, nor was there a significant main effect for condition; however there was a main effect for sex,  $F(1, 246) = 17.09, p < .001$ . I concluded self-compassion did not significantly influence the dependent variables, so it was excluded as a covariate in the analyses. Incidentally, analyses were run using self-compassion and relationship variables as covariates, and the results did not differ from those when using hurtfulness and severity as covariates alone.

### **Test for Interaction Effect**

In Hypothesis 1, I hypothesized there would be a significant Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness interaction. To test this hypothesis, I conducted two parallel analyses. In the first analysis, a 2 x 4 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition) MANCOVA was conducted on unforgiving responses (i.e. anger, avoidance and revenge scores) while adjusting for hurtfulness and severity. The interaction term was not significant. In the second analysis, a 2 x 4 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition) MANCOVA was conducted on precursors to forgiveness (i.e. benevolence and empathy

scores). Again, the interaction term was not significant, so no further analyses were conducted.

A final analysis was conducted directly on the forgiveness scores alone as measured by the Rye Forgiveness Scale. For this analysis, the Forgive condition was removed because no hurt was experienced by the offenders who were fully forgiven; therefore, the analysis was a 2 x 3 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness) ANCOVA with the same covariates as in the previous two analyses. Results for the three analyses are reported in Table 8. After adjusting for ratings of hurtfulness and severity, there was a significant interaction effect,  $F(2, 177) = 3.45, p = .034$ . Numerical differences between males and females at each condition eliminated main effects for sex and condition. Although there were numerical differences, there were no statistical differences between males and females in post hoc analyses. Judging by numerical differences, males ( $M = 54.31, SD = 7.71$ ) showed higher forgiveness responses than females ( $M = 51.31, SD = 10.42$ ) in the No Forgiveness Condition and slightly higher responses in the Not Yet Condition. However, males ( $M = 53.38, SD = 9.67$ ) scores on forgiveness dropped below females' scores ( $M = 59.26, SD = 9.98$ ) in the Decisional Forgiveness, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition. This finding was contrary to my initial hypothesis. Given the results of these analyses, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

### **Test for Main Effect**

In Hypothesis 2, I hypothesized there would be a significant main effect for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition. Specifically, I hypothesized there would be higher positive responses and lower negative responses in the Forgive Condition than the other three conditions. The same analyses were used to test this hypothesis as in Hypothesis 1.

Table 8

*Main Effects and Interaction Effects for Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Covariance in Study 1*

Source	MANCOVA #1 (SAS, TRIM-A, TRIM-R)				MANCOVA #2 (TRIM-B, BEA)				ANCOVA (RFS)			
	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Covariates</i>												
Hurtfulness	1.43	3	272	.23	1.33	2	271	.27	.44	1	177	.51
Severity	3.43	3	272	.02*	1.05	2	271	.35	3.09	1	177	.08
<i>Main Effects</i>												
Sex	.31	3	272	.82	.52	2	271	.60	.35	1	177	.56
Condition	2.71	9	822	.004**	2.98	6	542	.007**	.69	2	177	.50
<i>Interactions</i>												
Sex x Condition	.97	9	822	.46	1.24	6	542	.28	3.45	2	177	.03*

*Note.* \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed); \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed); SAS = State Anger Scale; TRIM-A = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Avoidance; TRIM-R = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Revenge; TRIM-B = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Benevolence; BEA = Batson's Empathy Adjectives; RFS = Rye Forgiveness Scale

For the first MANCOVA, Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was significant; therefore, the more robust Pillai's Trace statistic was read for significance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Even after adjusting for response hurtfulness and severity, the overall main effect for Condition on anger, avoidance, and revenge scores was significant, Pillai's Trace = .09, multivariate  $F(9, 822) = 2.71, p = .004$ , indicating significant differences exist between groups on the linear composite of the dependent variables. Univariate ANCOVAs were examined. Because Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was significant for anger and avoidance, I used a more conservative alpha level (.025) for determining significance for these variables in the univariate  $F$ -tests (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Results for univariate  $F$  tests are reported in Table 9. When results for the dependent variables were considered separately, conditions differed on state anger,  $F(3, 274) = 3.33, p = .02$ , and avoidance motivations,  $F(3, 274) = 6.82, p < .001$ . Pairwise comparisons revealed participants in the No Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 19.37, SD = 8.33$ ) had significantly higher state anger than did participants in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 14.65, SD = 5.77$ ) and the Forgive Condition ( $M = 13.22, SD = 5.81$ ), but they did not significantly differ from those in the Not Yet Condition ( $M = 16.20, SD = 8.16$ ). For avoidance, participants in the Forgive Condition ( $M = 10.56, SD = 5.01$ ) had significantly lower avoidance motivations than did participants in the No Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 16.77, SD = 7.40$ ) and the Not Yet Condition ( $M = 14.97, SD = 7.46$ ), but they did not significantly differ from those in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 12.48, SD = 6.38$ ). Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 10. Thus, the hypothesis that participants in the Forgive Condition would have lower negative responses than participants in the other three conditions was partially supported.

Table 9

*Univariate F-tests for Dependent Variables as a Function of Sex and Condition (Study 1).*

Source	Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Condition	Anger	3	274	3.33	.02*
	Avoidance	3	274	6.82	.001***
	Revenge	3	274	1.42	.24
	Benevolence	3	272	1.14	.33
	Empathy	3	272	5.17	.002**
	Forgiveness	2	177	.69	.50
Sex	Anger	1	274	.71	.40
	Avoidance	1	274	.51	.47
	Revenge	1	274	.69	.41
	Benevolence	1	272	.49	.49
	Empathy	1	272	.88	.35
	Forgiveness	1	177	.35	.56
Sex x Condition	Anger	3	274	.81	.49
	Avoidance	3	274	1.09	.35
	Revenge	3	274	.42	.74
	Benevolence	3	272	1.99	.12
	Empathy	3	272	.47	.71
	Forgiveness	2	177	3.45	.03*

\*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed); \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)



Table 10

*Means, Standard Deviations, and n for Negative Responses by Condition (Study 1).*

Group	<i>n</i>	Anger		Avoidance		Revenge	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
No Forgiveness	60	19.37 <sup>a</sup>	6.93	16.77 <sup>a</sup>	7.40	8.39 <sup>a</sup>	4.72
Not Yet	59	16.20 <sup>a,b</sup>	8.16	14.97 <sup>a,b</sup>	7.46	7.44 <sup>a</sup>	3.88
Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness	65	14.65 <sup>b</sup>	5.77	12.48 <sup>b</sup>	6.38	7.14 <sup>a</sup>	3.60
Forgive	100	13.22 <sup>b</sup>	5.81	10.56 <sup>b</sup>	5.01	7.11 <sup>a</sup>	3.58

*Note.* For each variable, conditions with the same superscript did not differ at  $p < .05$  from each other; revenge scores were transformed with a LG10 transformation

In the second analysis, the overall main effect for the MANCOVA on benevolence and empathy was significant after adjusting for hurtfulness and severity, Wilk's Lambda = .94, multivariate  $F(6, 542) = 2.98, p = .007$ . Univariate ANCOVAs were examined. When results for the dependent variables were considered separately, only empathy was significantly different between conditions,  $F(3, 272) = 5.17, p = .002$ . Pairwise comparisons revealed participants in the Forgive Condition ( $M = 29.92, SD = 7.20$ ) had significantly higher empathy than did participants in the No Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 25.57, SD = 7.85$ ) and the Not Yet Condition ( $M = 26.39, SD = 6.85$ ), but they did not significantly differ from those in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 27.86, SD = 7.21$ ). Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 11. Thus, the hypothesis that participants in the Forgive Condition would have higher positive responses than participants in the other three conditions was partially supported.

The final analysis was conducted directly on the forgiveness scores alone as measured by the Rye Forgiveness Scale. For this analysis, the Forgive condition was removed because no hurt was experienced by the offenders who were fully forgiven; therefore, the analysis was a 2 x 3 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness) ANCOVA with the same covariates as in the previous two analyses. After adjusting for ratings of hurtfulness and severity, there was not a significant main effect for Condition.

### **Study 1-Discussion**

In the present study, I investigated how transgressors would respond to victims when a bid for forgiveness is either denied or qualified. Although previous studies have examined transgressors' affective state after imagining a denied bid for forgiveness, there have been no studies that examine how transgressors might respond to the victim in such a scenario.

Table 11

*Means, Standard Deviations, and n for Positive Responses by Condition (Study 1).*

Group	<i>n</i>	Benevolence		Empathy		Forgiveness		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
No Forgiveness	60	28.30 <sup>a</sup>	6.26	25.57 <sup>a</sup>	7.85	61	52.89 <sup>a</sup>	9.15
Not Yet	59	27.69 <sup>a</sup>	6.59	26.39 <sup>a,b</sup>	6.85	59	55.85 <sup>a</sup>	8.08
Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness	63	29.41 <sup>a</sup>	5.85	27.86 <sup>b</sup>	7.21	65	56.18 <sup>a</sup>	10.18
Forgive	100	28.94 <sup>a</sup>	5.70	29.92 <sup>b</sup>	7.20	--	--	--

*Note.* For each variable, conditions with the same superscript did not differ at  $p < .05$  from each other.

Knowledge of the transgressors response when forgiveness is not fully granted has important implications in the context of ongoing relationships for how reconciliation and relational repair might or might not happen when an offense has taken place. In general, I found that when people refuse or even partially refuse a bid for forgiveness, it is considered by the requestor (i.e., the original offender) to be a wrong perpetrated by the original victim. Even after considering the hurtfulness and severity of that wrong, there were differences in the degree to which original offenders held unforgiveness, experienced positive emotions and motivations, and forgave the original victim, depending on how starkly the original victim denied the request.

Initially, I found that when forgiveness is unconditionally granted, people view the response as less hurtful and less severe than if forgiveness is denied or qualified in any way. This finding is consistent with studies on hurt feelings and negative emotions that found when individuals perceive rejection or relational devaluation, they tend to respond negatively and even at times with aggression (Buckley et al., 2004; Leary et al., 2006). Negative responses are even more likely within the context of romantic relationships in which rejection or devaluation is particularly hurtful (Leary et al., 1998). Thus, when people's request for forgiveness is flatly rejected or even when qualified forgiveness is communicated in a romantic relationship, the original offender usually experiences the response as hurtful and severe, which is likely to affect their response to the original victim. As a result of this finding, hurtfulness and severity ratings were statistically controlled in the primary analyses.

### **Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness Interaction**

My analyses did not show the expected interaction on unforgiveness variables (i.e. anger, avoidance, and revenge) or precursors to forgiveness (i.e. benevolence and empathy),

but there was a Sex x Condition (i.e., Responses to Requested Forgiveness) interaction effect on forgiveness. However, there was not a main effect for either Sex or Condition on forgiveness. Though the statistical differences among conditions were not significant, female levels of forgiveness (numerically, though not statistically) steadily increased from the No Forgiveness, to the Not Yet, and to the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Conditions. Male scores, on the other hand, increased (numerically, though not statistically) from the No Forgiveness to the Not Yet Condition, but decreased below that of females in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition. This finding was contrary to my hypothesis that males would show higher positive responses than would females in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition. Based on studies showing women continue to bear the load of emotional responsibility to maintain relationships with men (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993a, 1995; Wilcox & Nock, 2006), it was expected men would experience the communication that the original victim had experienced decisional forgiveness without emotional forgiveness as sufficient enough to increase their positive responses. This was not the case. Because no studies have previously examined how men and women might respond differently to this nuanced view of forgiveness, it is hard to speculate what is happening. Perhaps men readily accepted denied forgiveness, and were hopeful when receiving a “not yet” response, but they were incensed by the lack of closure with a decisional grant of forgiveness without the emotional component. Based on a pragmatics view of communication (Watzlawick & Beavin, 1967), which would view the transactional sequence as moves in a negotiation of relational power, a grant of decisional forgiveness alone would mean the victim still has a resource that the transgressor needs. A man may view this power differential more negatively than in the other responses because they might fear further reprisal from the

woman. More research is needed to understand how men and women experience emotional and decisional forgiveness differently.

### **Main Effect of Condition**

As hypothesized, people tend to respond with higher positive reactions when forgiveness is granted and respond with higher negative reactions when forgiveness is denied. These results are consistent with previous studies on transgressor reactions to rejected forgiveness that found more positive emotions for the offender were associated with receiving a forgiving response, and more negative emotions were associated with receiving an unforgiving response (Meek et al., 1995; Witvliet et al., 2002). These results expand on previous studies by showing the internal experience of the transgressor having received or been denied forgiveness is likely to influence how the transgressor responds to the victim. Even after controlling for hurtfulness and severity, when a bid for forgiveness is flatly rejected, the transgressor experiences greater avoidance motivations than when they receive any other type of response. Thus, the transgressor is more likely to be motivated to avoid the victim when his or her request has been denied than when given a “not yet” response, a partial grant of forgiveness, or a complete grant of forgiveness. Transgressors also experience greater state anger and lower empathy for the victim when forgiveness is flatly rejected than when they receive a communication of partial or full forgiveness. However, transgressors do not differentiate among a full grant of forgiveness or a decisional grant of forgiveness differently in the degree of self-reported anger, avoidance motivations, and empathy. Based on these data, it appears that at least for these variables, a decisional grant of forgiveness is received just as well as complete forgiveness when dealing with a relational transgression.

## **Limitations and Future Research Areas**

There were several limitations to the present study. First, data were collected on undergraduate students who reported to have been in a romantic relationship for at least two weeks. Given undergraduates' lack of life and relationship experience relative to older adults, these results may not be generalizable to longer, more mature relationships. Future research might explore whether similar results are found in married couples who have been in a stable relationship for a longer period of time. Second, this study did not take into account other personal characteristics such as personality that might influence transgressor responses to denied or qualified forgiveness. Third, whether an individual has experienced a similar transgression to the one described in the study might also influence how he or she responds. In Study 2, I address the latter two concerns.

### **Study 2: The Effects of Personality on Response to Requested Forgiveness**

#### **Method**

**Participants.** Participants for the present study consisted of ( $N = 181$ ) undergraduate students from a large Mid-Atlantic urban university. Participants were recruited from undergraduate classes and participated as part of a course requirement or in exchange for a small amount of course credit.

**Design.** This study is a manipulated experiment with quasi-experimental investigation of personal characteristics. The study uses two independent variables: Personality Trait (continuous) x Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition (NoF, Not Yet, DF-NoEF, Forgive). The dependent variables are measures of anger, empathy, forgiveness, and avoidance, benevolence, and revenge motivations. The first independent variable is participant's personality style on a continuous scale. The second independent

variable consists of discrete categories of four levels of response to requested forgiveness: (1) NoF Condition (“No, I will never forgive you”); (2) Not Yet Condition (“I might be able to forgive you in the future, but not yet; I need more time”); (3) DF-NoEF (“Yes, I’ve decided to forgive you, but emotionally I am not over the offense, and it may take time”); and (4) Forgive (“Yes, I am willing to forgive you completely and put this behind us.”). The manipulated variable and manipulation check is the same as in Study 1 (refer to Study 1 Design).

**Measures.** The following constructs were described in Study 1 and are merely listed here: Demographic Questionnaire (DQ), Batson’s Empathy Adjectives (BEA), Rye Forgiveness Scale (RFS), State Anger Scale (SAS), and the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18). Two additional measures used in the present study are described below.

**Big Five Inventory (BFI; John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991).** The BFI (see Appendix B) is a 44-item measure of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience based on the five-factor personality hypothesis (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Goldberg, 1992). Each subscale consists of 8 to 10 items with short phrases to which participants rate from 1 = *disagree strongly* to 5 = *agree strongly* according to how descriptive the phrases are of the respondent (e.g., “I see myself as someone who is talkative,” or “I see myself as someone who can be cold and aloof”). John et al. (1991) estimated internal consistencies for the subscales ranging from .75 to .88 for self and peer reports. Subsequent studies have supported its construct validity and estimated reliability (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; John & Srivastava, 1999). In the present study, alpha was .75 for Agreeableness and .81 for Neuroticism.



**Actor Rating.** This rating, created for the present study (see Appendix C), consists of 10 items that purport to rate an actor who was observed via videotape delivering the response to requested forgiveness. Each item (e.g. acting ability, genuineness) is rated on a scale from *very poor* to *very good*. Cronbach's alpha for the current sample was .93.

**Procedure.** Participants were recruited from undergraduate psychology classes using the SONA system as part of a course requirement or in exchange for a small amount of course credit. When they arrived to the lab, participants were briefed and the study's procedures were explained. After signing consent agreeing to participate in the study, participants completed a demographic questionnaire, the Self-Compassion Scale, and the BFI. Participants then read the script with the same scenario as described in Study 1 in which they imagine that they have committed a transgression against a romantic partner by disclosing a personal fear and making fun of the partner at a party. However, in this study, a picture of an actor was provided to female participants, and a picture of an actress was provided to the male participants. Participants were asked to imagine the pictured individual was the romantic partner whom they betrayed. Once again, they were instructed to imagine themselves feeling very remorseful and desirous of repairing their relationship. The participants wrote a response to the directive: "In the space below, write how you might feel and what you might be thinking as you feel remorseful. Please try to write at least three sentences describing your likely thoughts and feelings." The same procedures and script for making a confession to their partner were followed from Study 1 (refer to Procedure).

Participants then received one of the four conditions to which they were assigned. They viewed a recording of the actor or actress imagined to be their partner delivering the scripted response to their "confession." Again, participants briefly wrote how they felt given

the particular response they received from the actor or actress in the recording. They rated the response's degree of hurtfulness and severity on single-item, rating scales from 0 = *not at all hurt* to 4 = *extremely hurt* and 0 = *not at all severe* to 4 = *extremely severe*. Next, participants completed the BEA, RFS, SAS, and TRIM-18 measures while thinking of the victim's response they received. After completing all questionnaires, participants were asked two additional questions: (1) Has a romantic partner ever betrayed your trust this way, and (2) Have you ever betrayed your partner's trust in this way? Both questions are responded to Yes or No. Data were checked to see whether people who reported yes to either of these questions responded differently than those who reported no.

To test whether participants might harbor vengeful motives that are manifested in their actions to a denied request for forgiveness, at the study's conclusion they were asked (as a favor) to rate the actress or actor's effectiveness of delivering the response. Participants were told we employed three individuals for the study and that we had to let two of them go to cut costs. Participants rated how effective they felt the actor or actress was on several factors and were told that these ratings would help us decide which individuals would be dismissed.

## **Study 2-Hypotheses and Planned Analyses**

### **Hypothesis #1**

**Statement.** Overall, neuroticism will be positively related to negative reactions and negatively related to positive reactions across conditions. Agreeableness will be positively related to positive reactions and negatively related to negative reactions across conditions.

**Rationale.** The research on the relationship between the two personality variables and the dependent variables is robust (Berry et al., 2001; Koutsos et al., 2008; Maltby et al.,

2008; McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; Symington et al., 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). People high in neuroticism tend to react emotionally more negative to negative life events than people low in Neuroticism (Gunthert, Cohen, & Armeli, 1999), and they attend to more negative stimuli (Derryberry & Reed, 1994). Additionally, in numerous studies, neuroticism has been positively correlated with avoidance and vengefulness, and it was negatively correlated with benevolence and forgiveness (Berry et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001; Symington et al., 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002).

Agreeableness has been a strong predictor of forgiveness in numerous studies, being positively correlated with benevolence, empathy, and forgiveness and negatively correlated with revenge and avoidance (Berry et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001; Symington et al., 2002). Agreeable people also tend to have higher levels of empathy (Ashton, Paunonen, Helmes, & Jackson, 1998; Symington et al., 2002). Because neuroticism and agreeableness involve more ingrained patterns of thinking and behaving, persons high in these traits are expected to respond in similar ways when they are the transgressors whose forgiveness has been denied or qualified as they have when forgiving others for a transgression committed against them.

***Analysis.*** I will examine the Pearson product moment correlations between agreeableness and each dependent variable and between neuroticism and each dependent variable.

### **Hypothesis #2**

***Statement.*** There will be a main effect for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition. Overall, participants in the NoF Condition will show higher negative reactions

and lower positive reactions than will participants in the NotYet, DF-NoEF, and Forgive conditions. Participants in the Forgive Condition will show higher positive responses and lower negative responses than will participants in the NoF, NotYet, and DF-NoEF conditions.

***Rationale.*** Previous studies on transgressor reactions to rejected forgiveness found more positive emotions for the offender were associated with receiving a forgiving response, and more negative emotions were associated with receiving an unforgiving response (Meek et al., 1995; Witvliet et al., 2002). I expect these findings will be replicated in the present study and overall differences will be found between conditions.

***Analysis.*** I will conduct two one-way multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVA) and a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to test for significant main effects on the dependent variables (anger, avoidance, benevolence, empathy, forgiveness, and revenge). If a significant main effect for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition is found, I will examine univariate ANOVAs and simple main effects analyses to determine the locus of the effects.

### **Hypothesis #3**

***Statement.*** There will be an interaction between Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition and the personality variables. Specifically, participants high in agreeableness will show small differences between conditions on each dependent variable, while those low in agreeableness will show large differences between conditions on each dependent variable. For neuroticism, participants who are low in neuroticism will show small differences between conditions, while those high in neuroticism will show large differences between conditions on each dependent variable.

**Rationale.** The rationale for the interaction between personality traits and the Response to Requested Forgiveness Conditions is based on the cited studies above (See Rationale for Hypothesis #1). Since personality traits involve more static reactions to negative life events, those high in neuroticism will have stronger emotional reactions to the different conditions, while those high in agreeableness will not react as strongly to the different conditions.

**Analysis.** This hypothesis will be tested using a series of hierarchical regression analyses with the six criterion variables. One predictor variable will be the Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition, and the other will be personality. For each criterion variable, two hierarchical regressions will be run – the first with agreeableness as moderator variable, and the second with neuroticism as moderator variable. I am subjecting the test of the moderation of the criterion variables and condition to a stringent statistical test. In the first step of the hierarchical multiple regression, I will enter the condition (dummy coded) and personality variables along with hurtfulness and severity ratings as covariates. Once the variance of those have been removed, then I will test the interaction to determine whether moderation occurs. This may be displayed as follows:

$$[\text{Criterion}] = [\text{Response to Request} + \text{Personality}] + [\text{Response to Request} * \text{Personality}]$$

- Criteria for six analyses with each Personality variable include Anger, avoidance, benevolence, empathy, forgiveness, and revenge.

The two personality variables include agreeableness and neuroticism. Continuous moderator variables will be centered to reduce multicollinearity. In Step 1, the dummy coded predictor variables, centered moderators, and hurtfulness and severity ratings will be entered. In Step

2, the product terms of the dummy coded predictor variable and centered moderator variable will be entered. For each significant interaction, I will graph the results and perform simple main effects testing to determine the nature of the interaction.

#### **Hypothesis #4**

*Statement.* When people who have been subjected to one of the experimental manipulations rate the actor, personality and condition (Response to Request for Forgiveness) will interact. Namely, for neuroticism (see Figure 3), people high in neuroticism will rate the actor low in liking for NoF, NotYet, and DF-NoEF, but higher in the condition in which forgiveness was granted. However, people low in neuroticism will respond lowest in liking in the NoF condition, somewhat higher in the NotYet condition, somewhat higher still in the DF-NoEF condition, and highest in the Forgive condition. For agreeableness (see Figure 4), people high in agreeableness will rate the actor high on all conditions. People low on agreeableness, however, will rate the person high only when the person grants forgiveness.

*Rationale.* For neuroticism, the emotional reactivity associated with people high in Neuroticism will predispose those high in neuroticism to respond critically in all conditions in which the person receives a non-preferred outcome. People low in neuroticism will likely respond to each condition more on its own merits; namely, forgiveness will provoke high ratings of liking for the actor, granting decisional forgiveness less (though still more liking than other conditions). Not yet, will produce a bit less liking and no forgiveness will produce less. For high agreeableness, the pattern will show virtually similar high ratings of liking regardless of condition. However, when people score low in agreeableness, only the forgiveness condition will produce substantial liking.

*Analysis.* I will conduct two hierarchical regressions with Actor Rating as the criterion variable and the personality variables as moderators. The two personality variables include agreeableness and neuroticism. Continuous moderator variables will be centered to reduce multicollinearity. In Step 1, the dummy coded predictor variables, centered moderators, and hurtfulness and severity ratings will be entered. In Step 2, the product terms of the dummy coded predictor variable and centered moderator variable will be entered. For each significant interaction, I will graph the results and perform simple main effects testing to determine the nature of the interaction.

## Projected Findings

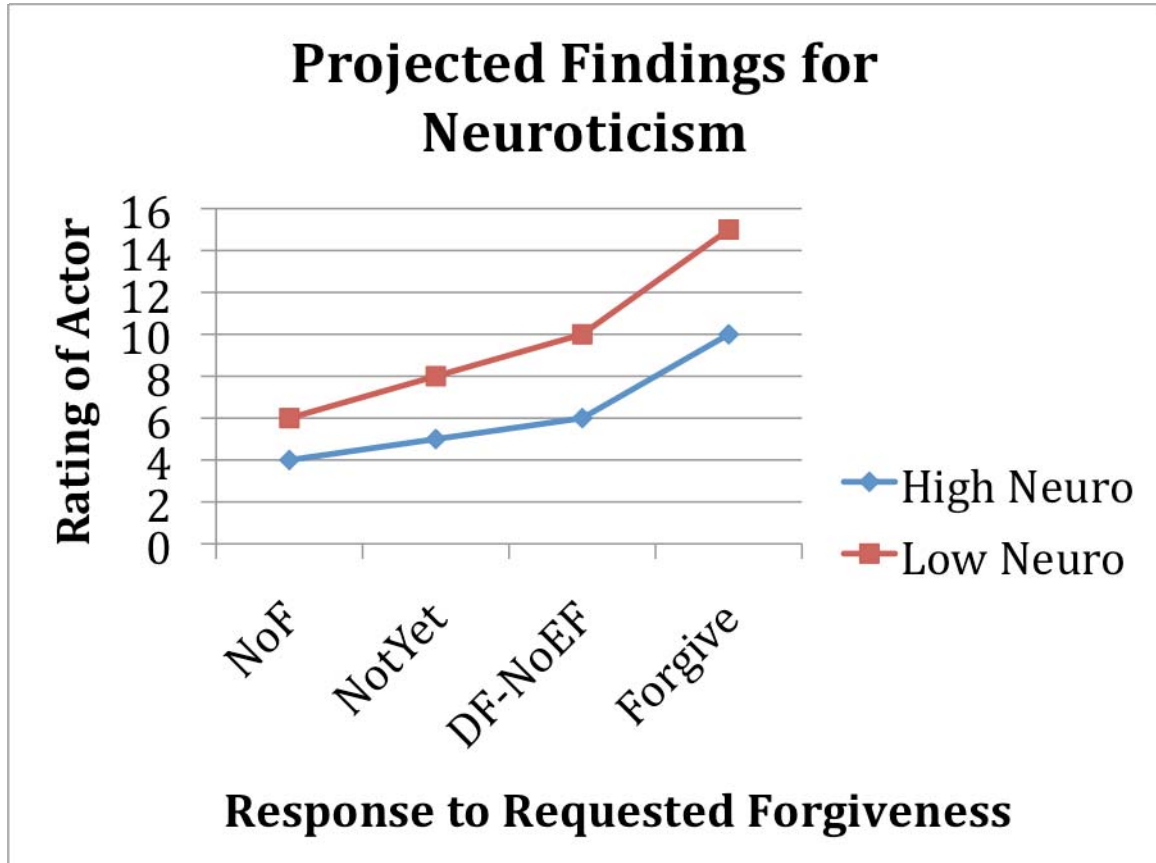


Figure 5. Projected Findings for Neuroticism

For Study 2, Figure 5 shows the pattern for those high in neuroticism, who will rate liking of the actor considerably lower than those who are low in neuroticism across all conditions. Those high in neuroticism will consistently rate the actor low across the first three conditions, and in only the Forgive Condition will their ratings be considerably higher. People low in neuroticism will gradually increase their ratings of the actor across conditions with NoF being the lowest and Forgive being the highest.



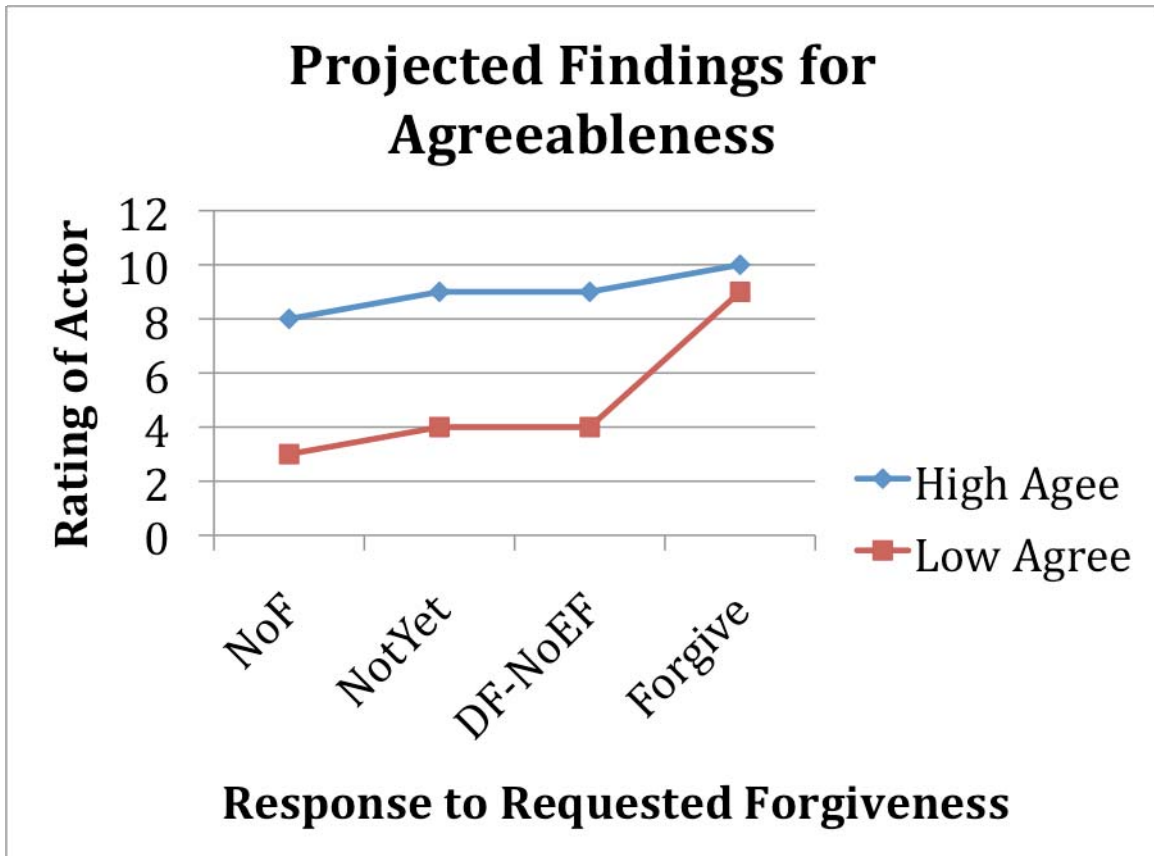


Figure 6. Projected Findings for Agreeableness

For Study 2, Figure 6 shows the pattern for those high in agreeableness, who will rate the actor high across all conditions, while those low in agreeableness will only rate the actor high in the Forgive Condition.

## **Results**

### **Preliminary Analysis**

Means, standard deviations, and alphas are reported in Table 12. Correlations of all variables are reported in Table 13. Prior to conducting the primary statistical analyses, the data were assessed for missing data, normality, and the presence of outliers. Cases with 10% or less missing data per variable were treated using mean substitution. The remainder of missing data were addressed using pairwise deletion. Revenge and anger were slightly kurtotic. Revenge was transformed with a square root transformation and anger with a LG10 transformation. The transformed variables were used in all subsequent analyses. All outliers on the scales fell within the ranges of expected values and thus are thought to represent true responses, so they were retained.

### **Determining Covariates**

Based on results from Study 1, ratings of hurtfulness and severity were checked to determine whether these variables should be covariates. I ran two one-way ANOVAs to test for differences between conditions on both variables. Results for hurtfulness,  $F(3, 177) = 27.12, p < .001$ , and severity,  $F(3, 177) = 25.73, p < .001$ , were both significant, so these variables were used as covariates in subsequent analyses.

### **Relationship of Personality to Dependent Variables**

In Hypothesis 1, I predicted neuroticism would be positively related to negative reactions and negatively related to positive reactions, while agreeableness would be positively related to positive reactions and negatively related to negative reactions across conditions. These relationships were investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (refer to Table 13). Agreeableness was positively related to forgiveness,

Table 12

*Descriptive Statistics for Study 2 Variables*

Variable	<i>a</i>	<i>N</i>	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skew	Kurt
BEA (empathy)	.89	181	1	40	21.04	8.83	-.24	-.65
RFS (forgiveness)	.79	179	34	75	57.70	7.80	-.01	-.29
TRIM-B (benevolence)	.89	181	11	35	27.81	6.21	-.75	-.33
SAS (state anger)	.91	181	10	37	13.71	5.22	1.94	3.73
TRIM-A (avoidance)	.94	181	7	35	56.40	9.69	-.55	.29
TRIM-R (revenge)	.63	181	5	21	6.65	2.37	2.20	7.82
Hurtfulness	-	181	0	4	2.12	1.25	-.48	-.82
Severity	-	181	0	4	1.89	1.18	-.03	-.79
BFI - Agreeableness	.75	181	20	45	34.50	5.26	-.26	-.25
BFI - Neuroticism	.81	181	8	39	23.33	5.95	.15	-.27
Self Compassion	.90	181	36	117	78.25	15.60	-.14	-.21
Actor Rating	.93	175	10	50	32.30	7.48	.15	.15
TRIM-R (transformed)*	-	181	2.24	4.58	2.55	.41	1.53	3.06
SAS (transformed)**	-	181	1	1.57	1.11	.14	1.28	.85

*Note.* *a* = alpha; \* = square root transformation; \*\* = LG10 transformation; BEA = Batson's Empathy Adjectives; RFS = Rye Forgiveness Scale; TRIM-B = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Benevolence; SAS = State Anger Scale; TRIM-A = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Avoidance; TRIM-R = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Revenge; BFI = Big Five Inventory

Table 13

*Correlation Matrix of Study 2 Variables*

	BEA	RFS	TRIM-B	SAS	TRIM-A	TRIM-R	Hurt	Severe	BFI-Agree	BFI-Neuro	Actor Rating	SCS
BEA (empathy)	1	.43**	.45**	-.35**	-.48**	-.20	-.11	-.23	.16	.06	.16	-.01
RFS (forgiveness)	–	1	.43**	-.64**	-.61**	-.29**	-.49**	-.48**	.16	-.10	.16	.12
TRIM-B (benevolence)	–	–	1	-.64**	-.61**	-.29	-.49	-.48**	.16	-.10	.16	.12
SAS (state anger)	–	–	–	1	.61**	.42**	.37**	.45**	-.08	.13	-.05	-.14
TRIM-A (avoidance)	–	–	–	–	1	.43**	.35**	.51**	-.12	.11	-.09	-.12
TRIM-R (revenge)	–	–	–	–	–	1	.11	.15	-.20**	.27**	-.04	-.24
Hurtfulness	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	.67**	.05	-.05	.10	.09
Severity	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	.03	-.10	.01	.08
BFI Agreeableness	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	-.33**	.07	.26**
BFI Neuroticism	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	-.07	-.60**
Actor Rating	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1	-.06
SCS (self-compassion)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	1

\*\* Bonferonni-corrected:  $p < .001$ ; BEA = Batson's Empathy Adjectives; RFS = Rye Forgiveness Scale; TRIM-B = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Benevolence; SAS = State Anger Scale; TRIM-A = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Avoidance; TRIM-R = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Revenge; BFI = Big Five Inventory; SCS = Self-Compassion Scale

benevolence, and empathy, and it was negatively related to avoidance, revenge and anger. However, according to Cohen (1988), the relationships were small, and the only one to reach statistical significance was between agreeableness and revenge. Neuroticism was positively related to avoidance, revenge, and anger, and negatively related to forgiveness and benevolence. These relationships were also small, and the only one to reach statistical significance was between neuroticism and revenge. Contrary to my hypothesis, neuroticism was positively related to empathy, but the relationship was small and did not reach significance. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

### **Test for Main Effect of Condition**

In Hypothesis 2, I predicted a main effect for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition with higher negative reactions being displayed in the No Forgiveness Condition and higher positive responses being displayed in the Forgive Condition than in the other three conditions. I conducted two parallel MANCOVAs and one ANCOVA to test the hypothesis (see Table 14). In the first analysis, a one-way MANCOVA was conducted on revenge, anger and avoidance, while adjusting for participant ratings of response hurtfulness and severity as covariates. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was significant, so the more robust Pillai's Trace statistic was examined (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The main effect for condition on the linear composite of the dependent variables was significant after adjusting for hurtfulness and severity, Pillai's Trace = .22, multivariate  $F(9, 525) = 4.52, p < .001$ . Univariate ANCOVAs were examined (see Table 15). Because Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was significant for all three dependent variables, I used a more conservative alpha level (.025)

Table 14

*Main Effects for Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Covariance in Study 2*

Source	MANCOVA #1 (SAS, TRIM-A, TRIM-R)				MANCOVA #2 (TRIM-B, BEA)				ANCOVA (RFS)			
	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Covariates</i>												
Hurtfulness	.79	3	173	.50	1.72	2	174	.18	.03	1	129	.87
Severity	6.56	3	173	.001***	2.14	2	174	.12	3.99	1	129	.05*
<i>Main Effects</i>												
Condition	4.52	9	525	.001***	4.05	6	348	.001***	7.25	2	129	.001***
<i>Interactions</i>												
Sex x Condition	1.03	9	409	.42	.75	6	338	.61	1.38	2	125	.26

Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed); \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

SAS = State Anger Scale; TRIM-A = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Avoidance; TRIM-R = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Revenge; TRIM-B = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Benevolence; BEA = Batson's Empathy Adjectives; RFS = Rye Forgiveness Scale

Table 15

*Univariate F-tests for Dependent Variables as a function of Condition (Study 2).*

Source	Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Condition	Anger	3	175	7.82	.001 <sup>a***</sup>
	Avoidance	3	175	8.85	.001 <sup>a***</sup>
	Revenge	3	175	1.98	.12 <sup>a</sup>
	Benevolence	3	175	3.62	.014 <sup>b*</sup>
	Empathy	3	175	6.60	.001 <sup>a***</sup>
	Forgiveness	2	129	7.25	.001 <sup>b***</sup>

*Note.* \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed); \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed);  
<sup>a</sup> similar findings to Study 1; <sup>b</sup> not similar to findings in Study 1

for determining significance for these variables in the univariate F-tests (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). When results for the dependent variables were considered separately, anger,  $F(3, 175) = 7.82, p < .001$ , and avoidance motivations,  $F(3, 175) = 8.85, p < .001$ , were significantly different between conditions. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 16. Pairwise comparisons revealed participants in the Forgive Condition ( $M = 1.02, SD = .06$ ) had significantly less state anger than did participants in the No Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 1.21, SD = .16$ ) and the Not Yet Condition ( $M = 1.15, SD = .14$ ), but they did not significantly differ from those in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 1.07, SD = .09$ ).

For avoidance, participants in the Forgive Condition ( $M = 8.91, SD = 4.45$ ) had significantly less avoidance motivations than did participants in the No Forgiveness Condition, ( $M = 19.54, SD = 7.03$ ), the Not Yet Condition ( $M = 13.88, SD = 6.49$ ), and the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 12.53, SD = 6.36$ ). Thus, the hypothesis that participants in the Forgive Condition would have lower negative responses than participants in the other three conditions was partially supported.

A second one-way MANCOVA was conducted on benevolence motivations and empathy. After adjusting for response hurtfulness and severity, there was a significant main effect for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition, Wilk's Lambda = .13, multivariate  $F(6, 348) = 4.05, p = .001$ . Univariate ANOVAs were examined. When results for the dependent variables were considered separately, benevolence motivations,  $F(3, 175) = 3.62, p = .01$ , and empathy,  $F(3, 175) = 6.60, p < .001$ , were significantly different between conditions. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 17. Pairwise comparisons revealed participants in the No Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 24.39, SD = 6.49$ ) had



Table 16

*Means, Standard Deviations, and n for Negative Responses by Condition (Study 2).*

Group	<i>n</i>	Anger		Avoidance		Revenge	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
No Forgiveness	46	17.37 <sup>a</sup>	6.66	19.54 <sup>a</sup>	7.03	7.46 <sup>a</sup>	3.26
Not Yet	42	14.78 <sup>a</sup>	5.47	13.88 <sup>b</sup>	6.49	6.17 <sup>a</sup>	2.04
Decisional, No	47	12.13 <sup>b</sup>	2.76	12.53 <sup>b</sup>	6.36	6.74 <sup>a</sup>	1.98
Emotional Forgiveness							
Forgive	46	10.67 <sup>b</sup>	1.69	8.91 <sup>c</sup>	4.45	6.20 <sup>a</sup>	1.67

*Note.* For each variable, conditions with the same superscript did not differ at  $p < .05$  from each other; anger scores were transformed with a LG10 transformation; revenge scores were transformed with a square root transformation

Table 17

*Means, Standard Deviations, and n for Positive Responses by Condition*

Group	<i>n</i>	<u>Benevolence</u>		<u>Empathy</u>		<u>Forgiveness</u>		
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
No Forgiveness	46	24.39 <sup>a</sup>	6.49	15.98 <sup>a</sup>	9.13	45	52.02 <sup>a</sup>	7.20
Not Yet	42	28.40 <sup>b</sup>	5.18	20.69 <sup>b</sup>	7.44	42	56.26 <sup>b</sup>	5.92
Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness	47	29.51 <sup>b</sup>	5.62	23.00 <sup>b,c</sup>	8.74	47	59.55 <sup>b</sup>	6.59
Forgive	46	28.93 <sup>b</sup>	6.22	24.41 <sup>c</sup>	7.63	--	--	--

*Note.* For each variable, conditions with the same superscript did not differ at  $p < .05$  from each other.

significantly less benevolence motivations than did participants in the Not Yet Condition ( $M = 28.40$ ,  $SD = 5.18$ ), the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 29.51$ ,  $SD = 5.62$ ) and Forgive Condition ( $M = 28.93$ ,  $SD = 6.22$ ). For empathy, participants in the No Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 15.98$ ,  $SD = 9.13$ ) had significantly lower empathy than did participants in the Not Yet Condition ( $M = 20.69$ ,  $SD = 7.44$ ), the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 23.00$ ,  $SD = 8.74$ ), and the Forgive Condition ( $M = 24.41$ ,  $SD = 7.63$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 that participants in the No Forgiveness Condition would have lower positive reactions than those in the other conditions was further supported.

A final analysis was conducted on the forgiveness scores alone as measured by the Rye Forgiveness Scale. For this analysis, the Forgive condition was removed because no hurt was experienced by the offenders who were fully forgiven; therefore, the analysis was a one-way ANCOVA with the same covariates as in the previous two analyses. After adjusting for ratings of response hurtfulness and severity, there was a significant main effect for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition,  $F(2, 129) = 7.25$ ,  $p = .001$ . Pairwise comparisons revealed participants in the No Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 52.02$ ,  $SD = 7.20$ ) had significantly lower forgiveness than did participants in the Not Yet Condition ( $M = 56.26$ ,  $SD = 5.92$ ), and the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition ( $M = 59.55$ ,  $SD = 6.59$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was further supported.

### **Test for Interactions between Sex and Condition**

Though not part of my hypotheses for Study 2, I ran statistical analyses to test for interactions between sex and condition on the dependent variables the same as in Study 1. I was particularly interested to see if the interaction between sex and condition on forgiveness scores would replicate. A 2 x 3 (Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness) ANCOVA was

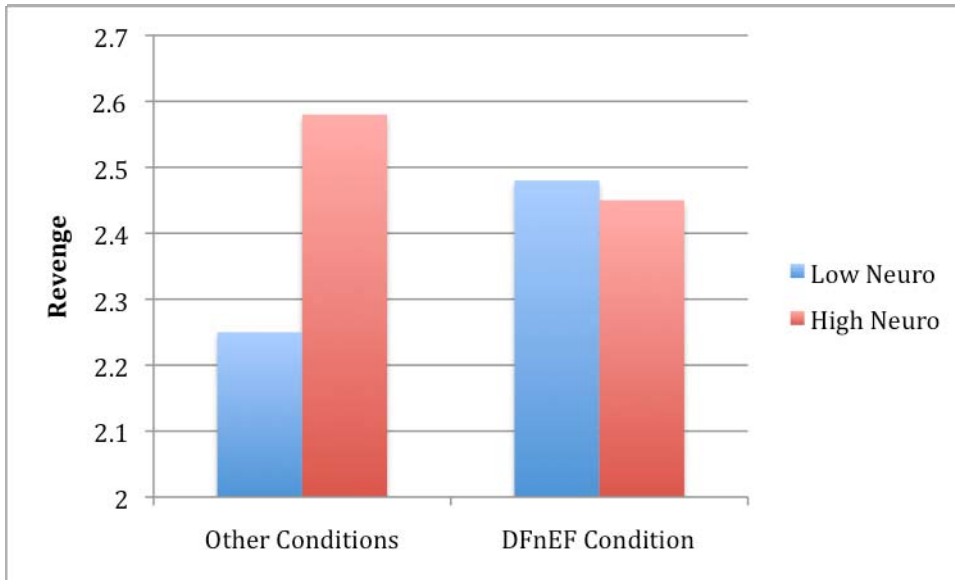
conducted with the hurtfulness and severity as covariates. After adjusting for ratings of hurtfulness and severity, there was not a significant interaction effect,  $F(2, 125) = 1.38, p = .26$ .

### **Test for Interactions between Personality and Condition**

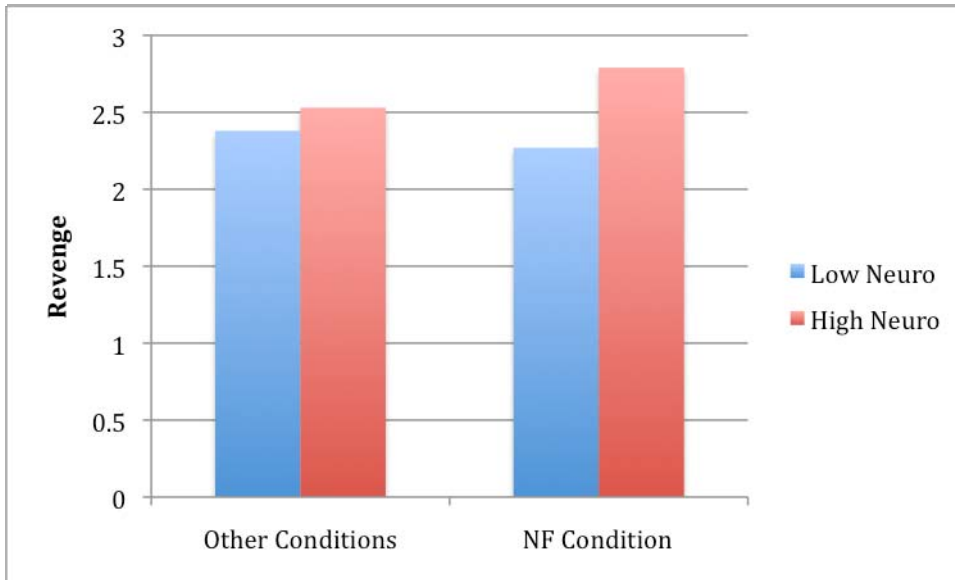
In Hypotheses 3 and 4, I predicted there would be an interaction between Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition and the personality variables agreeableness and neuroticism on all dependent variables. To test this hypothesis I first ran a series of one-way ANCOVAs with Condition as the categorical variable and the continuous personality variables, agreeableness and neuroticism, separately entered as covariates on each of my dependent variables. The dependent variables were anger, avoidance, benevolence, empathy, forgiveness, revenge, and actor rating. The interaction term of Condition x continuous personality variable on each dependent variable was examined for significance. No significant interactions were found between Condition and agreeableness on any of the criterion variables, so no further analyses were conducted.

For neuroticism, significant interactions between Condition and personality were found for forgiveness and revenge. I then ran hierarchical regression analyses with the two criterion variables forgiveness and revenge. The predictor variables were Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition and neuroticism. For each regression analysis, I dummy-coded the conditions and centered the moderator variable neuroticism. These were entered in Step 1 of the hierarchical regression along with participant ratings of response hurtfulness and severity as covariates. In Step 2, I entered the product term of the dummy coded condition and the centered moderator variable. No significant interactions were found between Condition and neuroticism on forgiveness after adjusting for hurtfulness and

severity. However, on revenge motivations, significant interactions emerged for neuroticism and No Forgiveness Condition,  $\beta = .17$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $t = 2.07$ ,  $p = .04$ , and for neuroticism and Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition,  $\beta = -.22$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $t = -2.74$ ,  $p = .007$ , even after adjusting for hurtfulness and severity. An examination of simple slopes revealed there was no significant relationship between neuroticism and revenge motivations in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition,  $\beta = -.003$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $t = -2.74$ ,  $p = .78$  (Figure 6). However, in the No Forgiveness Condition, lower neuroticism was associated with significantly less revenge,  $\beta = .036$ ,  $SE = .01$ ,  $t = 3.74$ ,  $p < .001$  (Figure 7). Based on the results of the hierarchical regressions analyses, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported, and Hypothesis 4 was not supported.



*Figure 7.* Graph of Simple Slopes Analysis of Condition and Neuroticism on Revenge in the Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness Condition.



*Figure 8.* Graph of Simple Slopes Analysis of Condition and Neuroticism on Revenge in the No Forgiveness Condition.

### **Post-hoc analysis**

In the second study, I tested to see whether a person's previous experience would effect their responses. Participants had been asked two questions after reading the hypothetical scenario of having their trust betrayed: (1) Has a romantic partner ever betrayed your trust this way, and (2) Have you ever betrayed your partner's trust in this way? I ran a series of 2 x 2 (Betrayed x Betrayer) ANOVAs on each dependent variable to see if there were significant differences between participants who had either been betrayed or had betrayed someone similarly. The dependent variables were avoidance, benevolence, empathy, forgiveness, state anger, and revenge. No significant results were found for any of these variables.

### **Discussion**

The aims of Study 2 were to (1) replicate the main effect finding in Study 1 for Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition; (2) determine how two individual personality differences (i.e. Agreeableness and Neuroticism) might influence transgressors' responses; and (3) to test whether transgressors might act vengefully when forgiveness is denied. As in Study 1, transgressors found any response other than complete forgiveness to be hurtful and severe, so (as in Study 1) these variables were statistically controlled in the primary analyses.

Consistent with previous research, agreeableness was positively related to forgiveness and empathy, and it was negatively related to revenge (see Table 13; Berry et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001; Symington et al., 2002). Similarly, Neuroticism showed relationships consistent with other research that found it to be positively correlated with avoidance and vengefulness and negatively correlated with



benevolence and forgiveness (Berry et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001; Symington et al., 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002).

In Study 2, I replicated the main effect finding of Study 1 on Response to Requested Forgiveness Condition, and I found additional results that bolstered my hypothesis. Again, people who received a flat rejection to their bid for forgiveness had greater avoidance motivations than those who received any other response, and they had greater state anger than did those who received a communication of a grant of decisional forgiveness or complete forgiveness. A grant of decisional forgiveness or complete forgiveness again did not make a difference in levels of state anger. Unlike Study 1, a significant difference between communication of complete forgiveness and communication of decisional but not emotional forgiveness were found for avoidance. In this present study, any response other than complete forgiveness resulted in higher avoidance motivations for the transgressor. Likewise, benevolence, empathy, and forgiveness were less when forgiveness was denied than when receiving any other response, and empathy and benevolence did not significantly differ between decisional forgiveness and complete forgiveness. The additional findings on benevolence motivations and forgiveness in Study 2 provide further evidence that transgressors have higher positive responses toward victims when forgiveness is at least partially granted than when it is denied.

In Study 2, I did not replicate the Sex x Response to Requested Forgiveness interaction on forgiveness found in Study 1. This finding is actually consistent with the mixed results researchers have found on forgiveness when studying differences between males and females (for a review, see Miller et al., 2008; Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet, 2008; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Orathinkal, Vansteenwegen,

& Burggraeve, 2008; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson-Rose, 2008, Finkel et al., 2002, Exline et al., 2008; Finkel et al., 2002; Macaskill et al., 2002; Ryan & Kumar, 2002; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Finding consistent sex differences between men and women on forgiveness continues to be a challenge.

The two personality variables, agreeableness and neuroticism, did not interact with the conditions as much as hypothesized. Although previous studies have shown a clear relationship between agreeableness and some of the criterion variables studied (Berry et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001; Symington et al., 2002), no interactions were found for agreeableness in the current sample. Neuroticism significantly interacted with some conditions initially on forgiveness, but significance was lost after controlling for hurtfulness and severity. Neuroticism did, however, continue to show an interaction effect with condition on revenge motivations for the No Forgiveness and Decisional, No Emotional Forgiveness conditions even after controlling for hurtfulness and severity. Data from the current sample showed that people high in neuroticism have significantly higher revenge motivations in the No Forgiveness Condition than did those low in neuroticism. This is consistent with previous research showing high neuroticism to be positively associated with vengefulness (McCullough et al., 2001). However, individuals high in neuroticism did not act in a vengeful manner by rating the actor/actress lower than others did when they were denied forgiveness. It could be the manipulation was not strong enough to have elicited such a response. Perhaps since the situation was hypothetical, but a poor rating would result in real consequences (i.e., the actor or actress losing gainful employment), those high in neuroticism were not willing to take out their vengeful motivations on an innocent person.

## General Discussion of Studies 1 and 2

In Chapter 3, I described a general statement of the problem in the current literature regarding relational transgressions, namely, the transgressor's response to a rejected or qualified request for forgiveness has been scarcely studied. In two studies, I examined differences between males and females when receiving different responses to their forgiveness request, and I examined how personality variables might interact with these responses on the transgressor's reaction to the original victim. In the present chapter, I discuss the general findings and the implications of these findings for researchers and practitioners.

Based on a stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness (Worthington, 2006), I hypothesized that a request for forgiveness is perceived as a costly, self-sacrificial gift. Given the sacrifice being made by the self when requesting forgiveness, a person might feel hurt or offended by the victim's refusal to grant the request. Consequently, the original transgressor may in fact then see himself or herself as a victim (Baumeister et al., 1990; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002) and employ various coping strategies to deal with the perceived injustice. These might include (1) unforgiving responses toward the original victim such as anger, avoidance, or revenge, (2) understanding responses that are precursors to forgiveness such as benevolence and empathy, or (3) a forgiving response. My model hypothesized the sex and personality of the original transgressors would influence their interpretation of and subsequent reaction to the victims' response to their request for forgiveness.

To facilitate discussion of the differences among the four conditions, I summarized results in Table 18. Results of the two studies showed that people respond with higher

Table 18

*Summary by Dependent Variables for Findings in Each Condition*

	<b>Unforgiveness (Multivariate)</b>	<b>SAS</b>	<b>TRIM-A</b>	<b>TRIM-R</b>	<b>Precursors to Forgiving (Multivariate)</b>	<b>TRIM-B</b>	<b>BEA</b>	<b>RFS (Forgiveness)</b>
Study 1	2.71**	3.33* F&D<N	6.82*** F<Y&N D<N	1.42	2.98**	1.14	5.17** F>Y&N D>N	0.69
Study 2	4.52***	7.82*** F&D<Y&N	8.85*** F<D,Y&N D&Y<N	1.98	4.05***	3.62** F,D&Y>N	6.60*** F>Y&N D&Y>N	7.25*** D&Y>N

*Note.* \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (2-tailed); \*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed); \*  $p < .05$  (2-tailed)

SAS = State Anger Scale; TRIM-A = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Avoidance; TRIM-R = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Revenge; TRIM-B = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-Benevolence; BEA = Batson's Empathy Adjectives; RFS = Rye Forgiveness Scale; F=Forgive; D=Decisional but not Emotional; Y=Not Yet; N=No forgiveness

negative reactions (i.e., anger and avoidance) in light of an unforgiving response and respond with higher positive reactions (i.e., benevolence, empathy, and forgiveness) in light of a forgiving response from the victim. In most cases, transgressors did not make a significant distinction between complete forgiveness and decisional forgiveness without an emotional forgiveness component. However, in the second study, anything other than complete forgiveness elicited higher motivations to avoid the original victim. The only sex difference found was an interaction with condition on forgiveness itself in the first study, which was not replicated in Study 2. Sex differences have shown inconsistent results in the forgiveness literature in single studies (see Miller et al., 2008, for a meta-analysis), and this trend continued in the current samples. When examining personality variables, participants high in neuroticism had higher vengeful motivations than did those low in neuroticism when their request for forgiveness was flatly rejected. This was consistent with previous research showing high neuroticism to be positively associated with vengefulness (McCullough et al., 2001; see Mullet, Neto, & Riviera, 2005, for a review). However, high or low agreeableness did not influence the transgressors' responses in the current study. This finding was inconsistent with previous research showing agreeableness to be related to avoidance, benevolence, empathy, forgiveness, and revenge (Berry et al., 2005; Koutsos et al., 2008; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2001; Symington et al., 2002).

### **Implications for Researchers**

In light of the present findings and previous studies, there are several implications for researchers. First, the present model of research was conceptualized under a stress-and-coping theory of forgiveness (Worthington, 2006). Under this broad theory and other related theories (i.e., pragmatic communication theory motivations), more hypotheses can be

generated and explored regarding how transgressors will cope and respond to victims when their request for forgiveness is denied or qualified.

Second, the manipulation in the current studies was based on a hypothetical scenario, which may have limited the effects. Researchers may want to find ways to examine how transgressors respond to real situations in real time. Additionally, time itself may play a role in their reactions (McCullough et al., 2003). Responses in the immediate moment after a rejection of forgiveness has been received might differ from those measured days or weeks later. Will a transgressor who responds empathically toward the victim after initially having their request for forgiveness denied be less empathic as time goes on during the context of an ongoing relationship? How much time are transgressors willing to give to their partners when their initial request for forgiveness is denied or qualified before they might become angry or resentful? Answers to questions like these would have important implications for relational repair and reconciliation.

Finally, researchers could work to extend account theorizing to include the impact of the victim's response on the transgressor and how this ongoing transaction influences the successful outcome or ultimate foundering of the relationship. Interventions could be tested to determine the best ways to respond to a transgressor's request for forgiveness even when the victim is not ready to immediately grant it. Additionally, interventions can be tested to help transgressors be more empathic and patient with the victim when forgiveness is not immediately forthcoming.

### **Implications for Practitioners**

There are several implications for practitioners based on the current findings. First, while the seeking of forgiveness for a transgression is generally encouraged, admitting wrong

and requesting forgiveness may not have a positive outcome for couples when the victim is not ready to offer the transgressor at least a partial grant of forgiveness. Based on the present studies, transgressors are likely to feel hurt and may respond negatively by becoming angry or avoiding the victim. When working with couples, it may be important to assess how ready the victim is to forgive a transgression before forgiveness interventions are implemented.

Second, practitioners can inform victims of the potential consequences of an unforgiving response and the damage it might further cause to the relationship. Practitioners should familiarize victims with the negative responses the transgressor might display if their request for forgiveness is denied or qualified. This would enable the victims to reflect on the impact of their response and consider the desired outcome before formulating their response to the request.

Finally, practitioners can prepare transgressors for the possibility of an unforgiving or qualified response to their request for forgiveness. Just as empathizing with the transgressor has been shown to increase a victim's ability to forgive (study citation), perhaps if the transgressor is encouraged to empathize with the victim this might mitigate negative reactions on the part of the transgressor if forgiveness is initially denied.

## **Summary**

Although forgiveness research has proliferated in recent years, the study of the transgressor's experience when seeking forgiveness and it being granted or denied is woefully inadequate. The present set of studies explored how transgressors involved in a romantic relationship respond to a denied or qualified request for forgiveness from a romantic partner. More research is needed to identify the personal and situational factors that

might influence the transgressor's response to the victim in such instances to increase our understanding of forgiveness in interpersonal relationships and inform clinical practice.



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## **Appendix A**

### Measures Used in Study 1

## Demographics

1. Your Gender: \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_
  3. What is your current marital status? (circle one) Single Married Separated  
Divorced Widowed
  4. Are you currently involved in a committed relationship? (circle one) Yes No
  5. What is your Ethnicity/Race? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. What is your religious affiliation? (for example, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim,  
Agnostic, None . . .)
-



## Batson Empathy Adjectives

DIRECTIONS: As you think about this situation as it has developed to this minute, please answer the following questions about your attitude toward your partner. We do not want your ratings of your past attitudes, but your rating of attitudes right now as you think about this event. After each item, please CIRCLE the word that best describes your current feeling. Please do not skip any item.

Not = Not at all    Lit = Little    Som = Somewhat    Mod = Moderately    Qui = Quite a lot  
Ext = Extremely

For example, if you were rating the word “proud,” and you felt somewhat proud of the person, you would circle the word “Som” following the word “proud.” Complete the next items in the same way.

---

### Current Degree of Feeling

1.	sympathetic:	Not	Lit	Som	Mod	Qui	Ext
2.	empathic:	Not	Lit	Som	Mod	Qui	Ext
3.	concerned:	Not	Lit	Som	Mod	Qui	Ext
4.	moved:	Not	Lit	Som	Mod	Qui	Ext
5.	compassionate:	Not	Lit	Som	Mod	Qui	Ext
6.	softhearted:	Not	Lit	Som	Mod	Qui	Ext
7.	warm:	Not	Lit	Som	Mod	Qui	Ext
8.	tender:	Not	Lit	Som	Mod	Qui	Ext

### **Rye Forgiveness Scale (RFS)**

**DIRECTIONS:** Think of how you are feeling right now in regard to your partner's response. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Strong Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Neutral (N)	Disagree (D)	Strong Disagree (SD)
1. I can't stop thinking about how I was wronged by this person's response.	SA	A	N	D	SD
2. I wish for good things to happen to this person.	SA	A	N	D	SD
3. I will spend time thinking about ways to get back at this person for his/her response.	SA	A	N	D	SD
4. I feel resentful toward this person for his/her response.	SA	A	N	D	SD
5. I will avoid certain people and/or places because they remind me of this person.	SA	A	N	D	SD
6. I will pray for this person.	SA	A	N	D	SD
7. If I encountered this person I would feel at peace.	SA	A	N	D	SD
8. This person's response will keep me from enjoying life.	SA	A	N	D	SD
9. I will be able to let go of my anger toward this person.	SA	A	N	D	SD
10. I become depressed when I think of how I was mistreated by this person.	SA	A	N	D	SD
11. I think the emotional wounds related to this person's response will heal.	SA	A	N	D	SD
12. I feel hatred whenever I think about this person's response.	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. I have compassion for this person.	SA	A	N	D	SD
14. I think my life is ruined because of this person's response.	SA	A	N	D	SD
15. I hope this person is treated fairly by others in the future.	SA	A	N	D	SD

## State Anger Scale (SAS)

DIRECTIONS: As you think about the person who responded to your request for forgiveness, please answer the following questions about the intensity of your feelings toward that person. We do not want your ratings of your past feelings, but your rating of feelings right now as you think about this event. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Somewhat
- 3 = Moderately so
- 4 = Very much so

1. \_\_\_\_ I am mad.
2. \_\_\_\_ I feel angry.
3. \_\_\_\_ I am burned up.
4. \_\_\_\_ I feel like I'm about to explode.
5. \_\_\_\_ I feel like banging on the table.
6. \_\_\_\_ I feel like yelling at somebody.
7. \_\_\_\_ I feel like swearing.
8. \_\_\_\_ I am furious.
9. \_\_\_\_ I feel like hitting someone.
10. \_\_\_\_ I feel like breaking things.



## **TRIM (Transgression Related Inventory of Motivations)-Avoidance and Revenge (TRIM-A, TRIM-R)**

**DIRECTIONS:** For the following questions, please indicate your **current thoughts and feelings** about the person who responded to your request for forgiveness. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = mildly disagree
- 3 = agree and disagree equally
- 4 = mildly agree
- 5 = strongly agree

1. \_\_\_ I'll make him or her pay.
2. \_\_\_ I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.
3. \_\_\_ I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.
4. \_\_\_ I'm going to get even.
5. \_\_\_ I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.
6. \_\_\_ I will keep as much distance between us as possible.
7. \_\_\_ I will live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.
8. \_\_\_ I don't trust him/her.
9. \_\_\_ I will find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.
10. \_\_\_ I will avoid him/her.
11. \_\_\_ I will cut off the relationship with him/her.
12. \_\_\_ I will withdraw from him/her.

## **TRIM (Transgression Related Inventory of Motivations)-Benevolence (TRIM-B)**

**DIRECTIONS:** For the following questions, please indicate your **current thoughts and feelings** about the person who responded to your request for forgiveness. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = mildly disagree
- 3 = agree and disagree equally
- 4 = mildly agree
- 5 = strongly agree

1. \_\_\_ Even though his/her actions hurt me, I still have goodwill for him/her.
2. \_\_\_ I want us to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship.
3. \_\_\_ Despite what he/she did, I want us to have a positive relationship again.
4. \_\_\_ I have given up my hurt and resentment.
5. \_\_\_ Although he/she hurt me, I will put the hurts aside so we can resume our relationship.
6. \_\_\_ I forgive him/her for what he/she did to me.
7. \_\_\_ I will release my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health.

## My Relationship With My Partner

To what extent does each statement describe your feelings about your relationship? Please use the following scale to record your answers.

Response Scale:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Do Not Agree At All				Agree Somewhat				Agree Completely

- \_\_\_ 1) Though times may change and the future is uncertain, I know my partner will always be ready and willing to offer me strength and support.
- \_\_\_ 2) My partner is very unpredictable. I never know how he/she is going to act from one day to the next.
- \_\_\_ 3) I feel very uncomfortable when my partner has to make decisions which will affect me personally.
- \_\_\_ 4) I have found that my partner is unusually dependable, especially when it comes to things which are important to me.
- \_\_\_ 5) My partner behaves in a consistent manner.
- \_\_\_ 6) Whenever we have to make an important decision in a situation we have never encountered before, I know my partner will be concerned about my welfare.
- \_\_\_ 7) I can rely on my partner to react in a positive way when I expose my weaknesses to him/her.
- \_\_\_ 8) When I share my problems with my partner, I know he/she will respond in a loving way even before I say anything.
- \_\_\_ 9) I am certain that my partner would not cheat on me, even if the opportunity arose and there was no chance that he/she would get caught.
- \_\_\_ 10) I sometimes avoid my partner because he/she is unpredictable and I fear saying or doing something which might create conflict.
- \_\_\_ 11) I can rely on my partner to keep the promises he/she makes to me.
- \_\_\_ 12) Even when my partner makes excuses which sound rather unlikely, I am confident that he/she is telling the truth.

Trust Scale developed by:

Rempel, J. K., & Holmes, J. G. (1986). How do I Dyadic Adjustment thee? *Psychology Today*, 20, 28-32

### Describing my Relationship

- 1) I want our relationship to last a very long time. (please circle a number)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Do Not Agree Agree  
At All Somewhat Completely

- 2) I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Do Not Agree Agree  
At All Somewhat Completely

- 3) I would feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Do Not Agree Agree  
At All Somewhat Completely

- 4) It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Do Not Agree Agree  
At All Somewhat Completely

- 5) I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Do Not Agree Agree  
At All Somewhat Completely

- 6) I want our relationship to last forever.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Do Not Agree Agree  
At All Somewhat Completely

- 7) I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
Do Not Agree Agree  
At All Somewhat Completely

To what extent does each statement describe your attitudes about your partner? Please use the following scale to record your answers.

Response Scale:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Do Not Agree At All				Agree Somewhat				Agree Completely

- \_\_\_ 1. I feel satisfied with our relationship.
- \_\_\_ 2. My relationship is much better than others' relationships.
- \_\_\_ 3. My relationship is close to ideal.
- \_\_\_ 4. Our relationship makes me very happy.
- \_\_\_ 5. Our relationship does a good job of fulfilling my needs for intimacy, companionship, etc.

Relationship Commitment & Satisfaction Scale developed by:

Rusbult, C. E., Martz, J. M., & Agnew, C. R. (1998). The investment model scale: Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships*, 5, 357-391.

## Self-Compassion Scale

### HOW I TYPICALLY ACT TOWARDS MYSELF IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Please read each statement carefully before answering. To the left of each item, indicate how often you behave in the stated manner, using the following scale:

**Almost  
never**  
**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**Almost  
always**  
**5**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When I'm feeling down I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When things are going badly for me, I see the difficulties as part of life that everyone goes through.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When I think about my inadequacies, it tends to make me feel more separate and cut off from the rest of the world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I try to be loving towards myself when I'm feeling emotional pain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When I fail at something important to me I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When I'm down and out, I remind myself that there are lots of other people in the world feeling like I am.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. When times are really difficult, I tend to be tough on myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. When something upsets me I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I'm intolerant and impatient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. When I'm going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. When something painful happens I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. When I see aspects of myself that I don't like, I get down on myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. When I fail at something important to me I try to keep things in perspective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. When I'm really struggling, I tend to feel like other people must be having an easier

time of it.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. When something upsets me I get carried away with my feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I can be a bit cold-hearted towards myself when I'm experiencing suffering.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. When I'm feeling down I try to approach my feelings with curiosity and openness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I'm tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. When something painful happens I tend to blow the incident out of proportion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. When I fail at something that's important to me, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. I try to be understanding and patient towards those aspects of my personality I don't like.

## **Appendix B**

### Online Script of Transgression Scenario

Imagine that you and your romantic partner are at a gathering of friends. Somehow, you all start talking about different fears over dinner. To your partner's surprise, you tell some of your close friends about a strong fear that your partner has. Your partner doesn't like telling people about this issue at all and shared this with you in confidence. To make matters worse, you make fun of your partner for having this fear, saying it is completely irrational and silly and that she or he needs to "get over it."

Your partner is extremely hurt over your actions, and later you feel very remorseful for what you did. The next day, after having time to think about it, you decide to approach your partner and ask for forgiveness because you really care about him or her. Imagine yourself feeling very sorry for your actions and desirous of your partner's forgiveness as you prepare to confess your wrongdoing.

## **Appendix C**

### *Additional Measure Used in Study 2*



## BFI

There are a number of characteristics that may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who likes to spend time with others? Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement

---

Disagree strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree strongly
1	2	3	4	5

---

I see Myself as Someone Who...

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| __ 1. Is Talkative                            | __ 23. Tends to be lazy                           |
| __ 2. Tends to find fault with others         | __ 24. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset    |
| __ 3. Does a thorough job                     | __ 25. Is inventive                               |
| __ 4. Is depressed, blue                      | __ 26. Has an assertive personality               |
| __ 5. Is original, comes up with new ideas    | __ 27. Can be cold and aloof                      |
| __ 6. Is reserved                             | __ 28. Perseveres until the task is finished      |
| __ 7. Is helpful and unselfish with others    | __ 29. Can be moody                               |
| __ 8. Can be somewhat careless                | __ 30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences     |
| __ 9. Is relaxed, handles stress well         | __ 31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited                |
| __ 10. Is curious about many different things | __ 32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone |
| __ 11. Is full of energy                      | __ 33. Does things efficiently                    |
| __ 12. Starts quarrels with others            | __ 34. Remains calm in tense situations           |
| __ 13. Is a reliable worker                   | __ 35. Prefers work that is routine               |
| __ 14. Can be tense                           | __ 36. Is outgoing, sociable                      |
| __ 15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker           | __ 37. Is sometimes rude to others                |
| __ 16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm          | __ 38. Makes plans and follows through with them  |
| __ 17. Has a forgiving nature                 | __ 39. Gets nervous easily                        |
| __ 18. Tends to be disorganized               | __ 40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas          |
| __ 19. Worries a lot                          | __ 41. Has few artistic interests                 |
| __ 20. Has an active imagination              | __ 42. Likes to cooperate with others             |

\_\_ 21. Tends to be quiet

\_\_ 43. Is easily distracted

\_\_ 22. Is generally trusting

\_\_ 44. Is sophisticated in art, music or literature

**Please check: Did you write a number in front of each statement?**

## Rating of Actor

Instructions: We must cut our costs on future studies based on this project. We have three women employed as actors, but in the future we must cut back to only one. We want to choose which two we must let go in as rational, objective, and (we hope) least hurtful way as possible, so we are asking participants to provide objective data to help us decide. Each participant sees only one actor. We are asking each participant to rate the woman he sees on video. We will compare ratings and allow the woman with the best ratings to continue to work with the project. Please do not feel that you have to give “nice” responses; be honest in your ratings. Your ratings will be strictly confidential. Two of the women will have to be let go, and we really would like to keep the one to which participants respond most positively. **Please rate the actor below by placing an X in the box that best describes your opinion of each of the qualities listed.**

Quality	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Acting Ability					
Believability					
Talent					
Professionalism					
Competency					
Effectiveness					
Genuineness					
Likeability					
Convincing Ability					
Mannerisms					

**Bottom Line: Would you recommend keeping this actor for the present study? Please circle one.**

**Yes**

**No**

## Vita

David Jefferson Jennings II was born on February 10, 1972, in Galveston, Texas. He is a United States citizen. He graduated from Colonial High School, Orlando, Florida in 1990. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts from Bryan College in 1994, where he graduated Summa Cum Laude, and his Master of Arts in Counseling from the Psychological Studies Institute, Atlanta, Georgia in 2003.