THE CONSEQUENCES OF INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS
FOLLOWING TRUST BREACH

by

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Abstract

In organizational life, trust breach is a common but destructive phenomenon. This dissertation explores how a prosocial, virtuous response to trust breach -- interpersonal forgiveness -- might influence the behaviour and attitudes of teams and their members in the wake of such a breach. In a series of three manuscripts, the dissertation looks at the consequences of forgiveness for the person perceived to have broken a victim’s trust (the transgressor), and for the teammates who observe the breach and the response that follows it. Forgiveness is described as playing two important roles. For transgressors, we describe forgiveness as a favour, drawing on social exchange theory to argue that forgiveness triggers reciprocal helping directed at both the victim and the team at large. And for teammates, we argue that forgiveness serves as a powerful signal, communicating the cohesion and efficacy of the group. These predictions are tested experimentally with a laboratory study of transgressor-victim dyads (Chapter 2) and of transgressor-victim-teammate triads (Chapter 3), and a series of two vignette studies from the perspective of teammate observers (Chapter 4). Focusing on the linkages between forgiveness and justice, each study considers the interaction between forgiveness various transgressor-initiated and victim-initiated attempts at restoring justice, including apologies, punishment, and restorative justice practices. Chapter 5 discusses the mixed support found for our predictions, considers how the limitations of our studies might be addressed, and introduces a series of directions for future research.
Co-Authorship

Susan Brodt is gratefully acknowledged as a coauthor on the manuscripts in this dissertation.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

When team members come together in pursuit of a common purpose, they must often rely on one another in the face of uncertainty and risk. Interpersonal trust\(^1\) describes the willingness to be vulnerable to others, based on confidently-held positive expectations about their behaviour, rather than the assurances of strict contracting and control (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998). When the members of a team trust one another, a number of felicitous things happen. Particularly in weak or ambiguous situations, trust allows teams to cooperate and perform; it is a key by which teams unlock their individual motivation and are able to collectively perform (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Teams whose members trust one another and feel trusted tend to avoid the allure of opportunism (McKelvey & Palfrey, 1992), delegate freely, share information and pool resources (Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009; Korsgaard, Pitariu & Jeong, 2008), learn from their failures (Carmeli, Tishler & Edmondson, 2012), endorse norms of responsibility (Salamon & Robinson, 2008), and solve problems creatively (Barczak, Lassk & Mulki, 2010).

But these confidently-held, positive expectations can be shattered by disconfirming events. A trust breach\(^2\) can be a transformative event in the life of team. Research shows that many forms of trust breach are difficult, if not impossible, to fully restore. Trust, once broken, may never return to pre-breach levels (Lount, Zhong, Sivanathan & Murnighan, 2008). In addition to diminished trust, trust violations also engender negative affect (Chen, Saparito & Belkin, 2011; Jones & George, 1998), and can lead to exacerbated conflict as future behaviours

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\(^1\) There are a number of spans of trust, including generalized trust (broad trust in others as a general rule) and impersonal trust (trust in roles, institutions, or organizations). The focus here is on interpersonal trust (trust in specific others).

\(^2\) The terms ‘trust breach’ and ‘trust violation’ are used interchangeably here and in the manuscripts contained in this dissertation.
by a transgressor are interpreted through the lens of sinister attributions (Dirks & McLean Parks, 2008).

The manuscripts in this dissertation focus on the consequences of a less contentious response to trust breach: Interpersonal forgiveness. By focusing on a positive, prosocial response to the turbulence of trust breach, we aim to respond to Dutton and Glynn’s (2008) call for research to consider the “everyday... relational stocks and practices” that allow organizations to cope with challenges resiliently and emerge strengthened from upheaval. The dissertation frames trust violation and forgiveness as phenomena that occur in the context of an embedded dyad (Burt & Knez, 1996). The transgressor and victim’s interactions occur in the social milieu of a team, and their dyadic interactions are observed and responded to by others on the team. When a trust violation occurs, it often unfolds in the presence of team members who are not part of the trustor-trustee (transgressor-victim) dyad, but whose work is interdependent with one or both of the dyad’s members. As anyone who has had to suffer through a conflict between two teammates would know, the ‘uninvolved’ others on the team tend to be deeply affected by how both the victim and transgressor respond and behave in the wake of a transgression. The consequences of their behaviour spill over and are felt by group members outside of the dyad. This embedded-dyad approach allows us to focus on consequences of forgiveness that tend to be underexplored in the existing literature on the topic.

This introductory chapter serves to identify the context (trust and trust breach) and key constructs (forgiveness and forbearance) that are explored in the manuscripts. It also provides a framework for organizing the dissertation, identifying the theoretical frameworks on which the

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3 In the absence of a better term, we use ‘victim’ to designate the trustor who perceives themselves to have suffered a breach of trust, and ‘transgressor’ to designate the trustee who is perceived to have committed the breach.
papers draw. Predictions are made about forgiveness’ consequences for two sets of actors in the workplace context: Transgressors, and the teammates who work interdependently with both transgressors and victims.

First, this chapter introduces the role of forgiveness a *favour* from the perspective of the transgressor. It then frames forgiveness as serving as a *signal* to other teammates who observe the breach and response. The introductory chapter closes by describing two gaps in the literature addressed by the dissertation, and describes the practical importance of addressing each of these gaps.

**Context and Key Constructs**

**Trust**

The study of trust has taken place in a range of disciplines, including psychology, sociology and economics. As might be expected, there are points of contention related to definitions and measurement among these disciplines. However, there are broad areas of convergence: Across disciplines, there is agreement that trust involves risk and interdependence: It involves the willingness to be vulnerable to another person, despite uncertainty about their intentions and likely behaviours (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer, 1998). This definition maps reasonably well onto the dimensions of trust described by McEvily and Tortoriello (2011). They focus on attitudes and perceptions (trusting beliefs), the willingness to be vulnerable (trusting intentions), and actual acts of risk or dependence (trusting behaviour). In this
dissertation, we focus on trust as voluntary acts of dependence predicated on positive and confident beliefs, a definition that captures each of these dimensions.

These trusting intentions and behaviours can be (but are not exclusively) based on perceptions of the party’s trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is a dimensional construct, comprising beliefs about a target’s ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). Such beliefs may develop by virtue of observing certain behavioural patterns, including consistency, sharing of control, communication and demonstrations of concern (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner, 1998). However, a range of trust beliefs (and other factors) beyond trustworthiness judgments do bear on the formation and maintenance of interpersonal trust. A recent meta-analytic review (Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007) affirms that some people are simply dispositionally prone to trusting others (Rotter, 1967). There are also situational determinants at play: The institutional and structural context of the situation, the roles the individuals occupy and the group memberships they hold all influence trust development (McKnight, Cummings & Chervany, 1998). Though they may stem from a multitude of sources, though, trusting beliefs, intentions and behaviours have salutary effects on the performance and coherence of working teams.

Trust Breach

Trust violations, by extension, are events that “...provide disconfirming evidence of confident positive expectations” (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). They occur when the trustor has made themselves vulnerable, only to perceive that their good faith is betrayed, or their expectations are unmet (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). We stress the term ‘perceive’, because although
trust violations involve the perception of a substantiative harm and the contravention of a shared norm (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998: 548; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro & Hannon, 2002), trust violations are inherently subjective. As Kim, Dirks and Cooper (2009) note, trust breach is in the eyes of the beholder. The subjective nature of trust breach enhances the need for a careful examination of its repair: We are not only describing the restoration of relationships after volitional and malicious acts of bad faith, but also a range of much more benign misunderstandings. Trust is easier to break than build (Kramer, 1999), and trust breach can result in outrage and negative affect (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996), revenge (Bies & Tripp, 1996), and deviance (Bordia, Restubog & Tang, 2008), so it is of considerable importance to better understand the mechanisms that can mitigate those effects and help foster conciliation.

Though we know of no comprehensive study of prevalence, evidence seems to suggest that trust breach in the workplace is a common phenomenon. A conservative set of estimates suggests perhaps a quarter of employees have had their trust betrayed by coworkers or bosses (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998), while another study found that more than half of employees had experienced a psychological contract breach that eroded their trust in their managers (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Conway and Briner (2002) add some insight into frequency of trust breach: In their convenience sample of bank managers and (employed) masters-level students, they found 91 instances of broken promises at work in a two-week diary study of only 45 participants. In other words, trust breach at some level was a weekly event in the lives of the employees sampled. Given the prevalence and frequency with which trust is damaged or broken, it seems appropriate that researchers look beyond the simple formation and preservation of trust to consider issues of breach and repair (Dirks & De Cremer, 2011; Kramer & Lewicki, 2010), and
how damaged relationships can be restored when trusting relationships are ruptured (Dirks, Lewicki & Zaheer, 2009).

Trust breaches are different than many other common forms of interpersonal transgressions in the workplace, since they begin from a positive starting point of interpersonal trust. Other types of transgressions (for instance, incivility, harassment, bullying and abusive leadership) may be negative, but are simply waypoints along a long trail of disfunction and negativity. Trust violations, by contrast, represent an important turning point. They start from a positive state, and there is the potential to return to one. While trust breach can lead to an intensifying cycle of hostility, it may also be a point from which relational repair is possible, buffering team members from the expansion and escalation of conflict.

Forgiveness

Not all trust violations leave lasting rifts in previously positive interpersonal ties. Though the most common responses to serious trust violations are avoidance and revenge (Bies & Tripp, 1995), there are occasions when victims choose to respond with interpersonal forgiveness instead. On such occasions (however rare relative to revenge; Aquino, Grover, Goldman & Folger, 2003), victims offer an olive branch to the violator. They choose to forgo revenge and avoidance, they release their hostility and they adopt a benevolent outlook toward the transgressor.
The forgiveness construct is frequently described as a suite of affective, cognitive and behavioural changes in the victim (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999) that can occur in the wake of an interpersonal transgression and that may develop over time (McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003). Affectively, forgiveness tends to involve the reduction in negative affect, particularly in terms of bitterness toward the violator (McCullough, 2001). Revenge and avoidance cognitions are reduced, and are thoughts of conciliation, benevolence and goodwill toward the violator are increased (Kearns & Fincham, 2004; McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997). Forgiveness, however, is conceptually distinct from condoning, excusing or forgetting a transgression (Exline, Worthington, Hill & McCullough, 2003).

Some definitions of forgiveness include a wider span of behavioural accompaniments, like statements of forgiveness, restoration of pre-transgression behaviours toward the offender (Finkel, Rusbelt, Kumashiro & Hannon, 2002), or demonstrations of caring or concern (McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown & Hight 1997). Some lay perspectives of forgiveness even emphasize reconciliation as a part of forgiveness itself (Friesen & Fletcher, 2007; Kearns & Fincham, 2004).

However, including these behaviours may be problematic. It mingles two entirely distinct responses, and in so doing risks confounding the forgiveness construct with the consequences of forgiveness. Baumeister, Exline and Sommer (1998) advance the idea of treating forgiveness in terms of two different, entirely distinguishable dimensions: Forgiveness as an internal, intrapsychic transformation within the victim, and the “ongoing relationship within which forgiveness takes place or fails to do so.” They distinguish forgiveness as an
intrapsychic change in motives, distinct from any behaviours (whether conciliatory or vengeful) that might accompany these motivational changes.

This approach squares with Kearns and Fincham’s (2004) argument that forgiveness describes changes in the individual, while reconciliation is a property of the violator-victim dyad. In this proposal, forgiveness is used to refer to an affective and cognitive transformation of motives (from revenge and retaliation, toward benevolence), rather than the interpersonal behaviours that may result from forgiveness. Since the focus of the dissertation is on the consequences of forgiveness, this distinction is particularly important. We distinguish forgiveness from conciliatory behaviours like the choice to refrain from punishment (an issue we cover in our description of forbearance later in this section).

Forgiveness is not simply an event, a gesture, or a choice taken at a single point in time. Rather, it is a gradual and lasting process of affective transformation that occurs in the victim of a transgression. In fact, simple “proclamations” of forgiveness alone tend to be ineffective in promoting genuine motivational change in the victim (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Research has demonstrated that forgiveness offered out of a sense of obligation dulls its positive effects both on the forgiving party (Cox, Bennett, Tripp & Aquino, 2012; Huang & Enright, 2000) and the party receiving forgiveness (Gassin, 1998).

**Forbearance**

Forbearance describes the victim’s deliberate choice to refrain from exercising what they perceive to be their right to punishment in the wake of a transgression. This is distinct from forgiveness; one need not refrain from punishment in order to forgive. That said, those who forgive do tend to engage in less retaliatory behaviour: “Absent the possibility of revenge,”
write McCullough, Kurzban and Tabak (2010), “people tend not to punish.” But, this does not rule out vengeful punishment occurring before forgiveness is offered, nor does it exclude punishment executed for reasons other than the primal desire for revenge. Few definitions of forgiveness require an absence of “punishments and sanctions” (Exline, Worthington, Hill & McCullough, 2003), and the empirical record suggests that punishment and forgiveness do often co-occur.

Across a range of contexts, research shows that victims often seek out punishment in the process of arriving at forgiveness, setting conditions and finding means of compensation first (Gerlach, Agroskin & Denissen, 2012). For instance, more than half of all forgiven betrayals by spouses have been shown to involve punishment of some kind prior to forgiveness being offered (Fitness, 2001). In the political sphere, David and Choi (2006) describe the non-vengeful reasons that victims seek punishment: “If a victim forgives, he or she overcomes his or her hatred”, they write, but note that those victims may still want a process of punishment for other reasons, “… for example, justice, deterrence, isolation of the transgressor, victims’ acknowledgement, compensation, and so on.” Previous work on trust repair suggests that such compensatory actions are often necessary to restore trust (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996).

These results can all be consolidated with the notion of the injustice gap (Exline, Worthington, Hill & McCullough, 2003): Victims often need to feel that the injustice created by the transgression has been remedied before being willing to forgive. The way in which the gap is closed can take a range of forms, from demanding or receiving apologies or amends, through the use of organizational or legal recourse, to individual vigilanteism and retaliation (Tripp, Bies & Aquino, 2007). When victims forgive without receiving amends, it can lead to diminished self-
respect and self-concept clarity, a phenomenon dubbed the “doormat effect” (Luchies, Finkel, McNulty & Kumashiro, 2010).

On the other hand, forgiveness and forbearance may diverge in an entirely different way. Those who forbear may not necessarily be forgiving: As Brown (2003) writes, some individuals “might abhor vengeance-seeking enough to control their impulse to retaliate against those who wrong them, even while retaining a grudge.” In such cases, individuals may choose to forbear, but might nonetheless revel in revenge cognitions. Both cases (forgiveness without forbearance; forbearance without forgiveness) suggest the need to look independently at forgiveness (as a suite of motivational changes) and forbearance (the behavioural restraint from punishment).

Overview of Studies

Theoretical Lenses

In this chapter, we provided a brief development of our focal constructs. Below, we set out an organizing framework for the dissertation, and we offer a brief preview of some of our findings. The dissertation contains four empirical studies in three manuscripts, examining forgiveness’ effects on the transgressor, and on teammate-observers. It focuses on outcomes which are measured at the individual level for each of these actors, but which are implicated in the broader functioning and cohesion of the team.

We refer to this overview as a framework, since the manuscripts draw on different theoretical lenses in constructing their predictions. The first and second manuscripts, about the effects of forgiveness on transgressors’ helping behaviour, draw on social exchange theory (Blau,
1964) and self-construal theory (Cross, Bacon & Morris, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) to describe potential mediating mechanisms. The last manuscript, about the effects of forgiveness on teammates, takes a social information processing approach (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), thinking of forgiveness as a signal, or social cue, about the nature of the transgression, the appropriate response, and the nature of the team’s functioning in general.

Using this plurality of theoretical approaches, we think in broad strokes about forgiveness as having distinct functions for both of these involved actors: A favour to transgressors, and a signal to teammates. Throughout the studies, we focus on implications that are meaningful for the team (variables closely associated with team functioning, including discretionary effort and identification), but our level of both theory and measurement remains the individual.

For Transgressors: A Favour

In the second and third manuscripts (Chapters 3 and 4), we analyze forgiveness as a form of favour given to the transgressor. Considering how forgiveness might heighten transgressors’ perceptions of having been respectfully treated (i.e., interpersonal justice), we draw on social exchange theory to think about how this treatment might be a type of unearned gift, paid to the transgressor, and repayable by the transgressor by offering amends. This offers a novel reversal of the usual direction of the amends-forgiveness relationship. Rather than thinking about how amends promote forgiveness, we ask whether offering forgiveness can lead transgressors to voluntarily pay amends. This is important, because it suggests the potential of a virtuous cycle, and a means by which relational repair after trust breach (Dirks, Lewicki & Zaheer, 2009) might
be achieved. If forgiveness, offered early on, encourages amends to be made; those amends might in turn deepen forgiveness further.

In the first of the two manuscripts (both employing a laboratory experiment in which participants were assigned to the transgressor role), we find support for the idea that forgiveness is repaid with discretionary helping (a way of offering unsolicited amends), and that it only occurs if the victim is also forbearing, refraining from settling the score themselves. However, we find mixed support for our prediction that this obligation can also be discharged with helpful behaviour directed toward the group at large. Though obligation to the victim does spill over into some group-directed behaviours (conflict management style), we find that forgiveness’ effect on helping is not mediated by obligation (nor is it moderated by forbearance). The paper closes with a discussion of other potential mediating mechanisms that might explain the increase in the quality of forgiven transgressors’ contributions to the group.

For Teammates: A Signal

In the third manuscript (Chapter 4), we conclude by analyzing forgiveness’ role as a signal to teammates. We theorize that victims would simply follow the lead of the direct victim, ceding to the aggrieved party the right to determine how to respond. We tested our predictions with a series of two vignette studies, and found no such effect. Instead, our most interesting finding was that the victim’s forgiveness communicated that the team was high in procedural justice. When victims forgave, teammates assumed the team would be just in the future, and that perception of justice drove increases in identification with the team and expectations about the team’s collective efficacy. We also looked beyond simple vengeance, and compared retributive
and restorative approaches to justice. We found that both promoted positive perceptions of the group relative to forbearance, but that the positive effects of restorative justice on expected cohesion (relative to forbearance) hinges on a forgiving victim.

Contributions

The last chapter provides the general discussion. It offers a synthesis of the findings, drawing practical and theoretical implications from the studies’ results, and sketching the contours of a research agenda to further advance the study of forgiveness in the organizational context and its interaction with justice. The general discussion also considers two managerial questions: First, if there are benefits to forgiveness, how can organizations promote forgiveness without simply forcing employees into obliged, inauthentic forgiveness?

And, secondly, given that justice-seeking is positive for victims and teammates, but dulls the compensatory impulses of the victim, how can managers promote a balance between forcefully bridging the injustice gap with managerial action, and encouraging transgressors to make justice-restoring amends themselves? In the discussion of justice found in the final chapter, we consider how to promote forgiveness in ways that do not embolden transgressors to reoffend.

Finally, for researchers exploring this topic, the final chapter offers a critical reflection on the limitations of our design and methodology, offering insights into how the validity of future research taking a similar approach might be refined and improved.
Rationale

Why study forgiveness as a response to trust breach? This dissertation aims to help address two substantial gaps in the previous literature, in addition to examining trust in the underexplored context of trust breach (Schoorman, Mayer & Davis, 2007). The first gap is the scarcity of research focused on the effects of forgiveness for transgressors and others outside of the transgressor-victim dyad. The second is a need for additional research into the interplay of forgiveness and justice. Both of the gaps are described below, and a rationale is developed for why these gaps matter.

Forgiveness’ Effects Beyond the Victim. Forgiveness research is often focused on consequences for the victim of an interpersonal transgression. Worthington (2005) called for researchers to more fully examine the effects of forgiveness beyond the victim, looking at the effects on the transgressor, and on “involved observers” outside of the victim-transgressor dyad. The studies in this dissertation address this call by linking forgiveness to outcomes that are manifested for two sets of focal actors (the transgressor and their teammates), but that have implications for the overall functioning of the group. In creating a truly organizational perspective on forgiveness, this is a limited but necessary first step. This dissertation asks: How does forgiveness, offered in the dyad, shape the transgressor’s behaviour directed toward victims and toward others in a team? And, how does it shape teammate observers’ attitudes toward the team, and their relationship with the victim?

Looking at team-relevant consequences (like trust repair, citizenship behaviours, and attitudes toward the team) is also important given the seemingly open question of whether forgiveness is a virtue that is appropriate for the workplace. Comparisons of home and work
values suggest that many people view forgiveness as more relevant in their personal lives than their professional ones (Chusmir & Parker, 1991), forgiveness tends to decline over the course of management education in a way that it does not in other fields of study (Petrof, Sayegh & Vlahpoulos, 1982), and research shows that hierarchical status differences (of the sort ubiquitous in organizational life; Magee & Galinsky, 2009) can serve to inhibit interpersonal forgiveness (Aquino, Tripp & Bies, 2001). Since these findings imply that a climate for forgiveness (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012) may be challenging to promote in many workplaces, the question then becomes whether it is worth the effort. The urgency of advancing a research agenda on forgiveness in organizations depends greatly on whether forgiveness has salutary, neutral, or negative effects.

Forgiveness and Justice. It is also vital to understand how forgiveness’ effects are influenced by the types of justice-seeking that occurs in organizational life. The studies in this dissertation are positioned to contribute to the burgeoning literature linking forgiveness and justice (Exline, Worthington & Hill, 2003). In particular, they examine how forgiveness’ effects are changed by various victim- and transgressor-initiated approaches to restoring justice in wake of a trust violation (including apology, retribution, and restorative justice).

This is vital in order to bring forgiveness research into the organizational domain. Workplaces have policies, procedures, as well as informal practices and routines, for dealing with breaches of trust. It is important to understand how the effects of forgiveness as an intrapsychic transformation in motives is influenced by punishment and other forms of justice meted out in the organization or team.
Finally, the studies in this dissertation also examine how justice perceptions serve as the mediating mechanisms connecting forgiveness with its outcomes. In Chapters 2 and 3, we consider transgressors’ perceptions of interpersonal justice (fair and respectful interpersonal treatment), while in Chapter 4 we examine teammates’ perceptions of the team’s procedural justice (perceptions that the team’s processes are fair). It is our hope that this focus helps researchers draw new connections between the nascent study of forgiveness in organizations and the well-established lines of research on organizational justice perceptions and their effects.
References


Chapter 2: Returning the Favour:  
The Effects of Receiving Forgiveness on Transgressor Helping Behaviour

Abstract

Previous research has speculated about the virtues of forgiveness as a workplace value and as a human resource practice. However, empirical research lags behind, and has focused primarily on the causes and consequences of forgiveness for the victim. In this paper, we look beyond the victim, considering the effects of receiving forgiveness on the attitudes and behaviour of transgressors. In particular, we look at the case of trust breach, and ask whether offering forgiveness to transgressors leads them to engage in more voluntary helping behaviour toward their victims. Drawing on a social exchange approach to trust breach, we predicted that receiving forgiveness would lead transgressors to feel that they were treated with interpersonal justice, engendering feelings of obligation, in turn promoting discretionary helping behaviour toward the victim. Applying a social exchange perspective, we also predict that this compensatory helping will hold only when victims are also forbearing (forgo punishing the transgressor). We find support for these predictions in a laboratory experiment, in which we induce participants to breach a partner’s trust, after which we manipulated the response of the partner, offering forgiveness (or a grudge), and forbearance (or punishment). As predicted, transgressors engaged in greater helping behaviour when victims offered forgiveness (rather than a grudge), but only when they were forbearing (rather than punitive). We find support for a fully mediated path from receiving forgiveness, through interpersonal justice perceptions and obligation, to helping behaviour. We also find that the effect of receiving forgiveness on transgressors’ helping behaviour is reduced when the forgiving person also pursues punishment.
Trust is important, but is oftentimes fragile in organizations. When team members expect trustworthy conduct and rely on each other based on those expectations, it enables cooperation in the face of risk (Dirks, 1999; Korsgaard, Brodt & Sapienza, 2003), and reduces the costs of monitoring and controlling others’ behaviour (Dyer & Chu, 2003). But on occasion, these confidently-held, positive expectations are disconfirmed. Team members cheat, lie, or fail to deliver on promises (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998). Such violations of trust can engender suspicion, conflict, and contribute to escalating and expanding spirals of retaliation and counter-retaliation (Bies & Tripp, 1996).

Offering forgiveness is an alternative to these contentious responses. Forgiveness describes a reduction in revenge and avoidance motives, and the restoration of benevolence motives (McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003). Management research on forgiveness has focused principally on the perspective of the person offering forgiveness (Palanski, 2011), examining the causes and consequences of forgiveness for the victim of the workplace transgression. Scholars have also theorized about how forgiveness might benefit the organization, by creating an environment safe for risk-taking and creativity (Caldwell & Dixon, 2010), and by contributing to conflict resolution (Kurzynski, 1998).

However, despite this optimism, there is empirical evidence to suggest that forgiveness is met with some skepticism in organizational life. In a direct comparison of home and work values, Chusmir and Parker (1991) found that individuals chose forgiveness as their sixth most important value when ranking their values related to their home life or social situations. But when thinking of their most important values when working at their job, the same participants

\[4\text{ Again, for brevity, we use ‘victim’ throughout to refer to the person who perceives themselves to have had their trust breached.}\]
relegated forgiveness to 16th place in their list of 18 values. Management education may play a part in this disjuncture; indeed, business students come to abandon forgiveness as a personal value over the course of their studies more readily than do students in other fields of study (Petrof, Sayegh, & Vlahopoulos, 1982).

In this article, we focus on the transgressor. We aim to contribute to a clearer understanding of the interpersonal and organizational consequences of forgiveness in terms of the transgressor’s behaviour and attitudes. We offer a unique perspective looking beyond the victim and considering the effects of receiving forgiveness on transgressors. In so doing, we contribute to an emergent stream of research that empirically demonstrates the salutary effects of forgiveness (Kelln & Ellard, 1999; Struthers, Eaton, Shirvani, Georghiou, & Edell, 2008; Wallace, Exline, & Baumeister, 2008). We specifically test whether receiving forgiveness can promote unsolicited and discretionary acts of prosociality by transgressors toward their victims. In other words, we ask whether receiving forgiveness (rather than a grudge) can lead transgressors to be more spontaneously helpful toward their victims. We also seek to better understand the psychological mechanisms linking victims’ forgiveness to this positive behaviour among transgressors. We propose and test a model of interpersonal justice and felt obligation as the mediational path connecting forgiveness with transgressor prosociality.

We also aim to further examine the interplay between forgiveness (as a motivational transformation), and forbearance (as the behavioural decision to forgo or pursue punishment). The decision to forgive is distinct from the decision to seek justice (either through individual vigilantism or organizational disciplinary procedures; Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006). If forgiveness does indeed have a salutary effect on transgressors’ attitudes and behaviours, it is
important to understand whether this effect holds when forgiveness is (or is not) accompanied by punishment. Drawing on social exchange theory, we explain how forgiveness creates felt obligation and encourages discretionary helping behaviours directed at the forgiving victim. However, we argue that if this obligation is discharged by punishment (that is, the victim bridges the injustice gap themselves), forgiveness’ effect on helping will be attenuated.

We test our predictions in a laboratory experiment in which we induce a competence-based trust violation. That is, we create a situation where a confederate trusts a participant, and the participant is led to breach the confederate’s trust. Following a predetermined script, the confederate then punishes (or forbears, refraining from punishment), and responds by expressing forgiveness (or unforgiveness, holding a grudge). We test the effects of these responses on the behaviours and perceptions of the participant in the ‘transgressor’ role.

We conclude by discussing how forgiveness as a virtuous, prosocial response to trust breach can lead transgressors to voluntarily engage in prosocial helping behaviour toward the victim. We speculate about how this dynamic might contribute to longer-term processes of trust repair and reconciliation in organizations. Mindful of recent research on the potential drawbacks of forgiving exploitative and unrepentant transgressors (Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, & Kumashiro, 2010), we also consider potential boundary conditions on these effects. Finally, we focus on an intriguing tension revealed by our analysis: We predict that punishment will dull the positive effects of forgiveness, but at the same time we know from prior research that victims often want to see punishment served before forgiving. We end by describing approaches to organizational justice that might allow this tension to be reconciled, and by outlining an agenda for future research.
Theoretical Development

Perceptual Asymmetry

In social transgressions of many kinds, transgressors and victims often make different attributions, and arrive at divergent, incompatible perceptions of the transgression. Victims tend to view transgressions as severe, controllable, intentional, deliberate and part of an ongoing pattern; transgressors see those same actions as justified, unintentional, or the result of uncontrollable forces (Feeney & Hill, 2006; Kearns & Fincham, 2004; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002).

This perceptual asymmetry can be even more extreme in the case of a trust breach. Trust violations, Kim and colleagues remind us, are often in the eye of the beholder. Victims may perceive a trust violation even when the ‘transgressor’ is objectively blameless (Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009). Or, a simple failure of ability can be interpreted as a lack of benevolence: I may fall short on my part of a shared project simply because it is more difficult or time-consuming than originally anticipated, but my teammates might imagine that my failure is because I am not adequately interested in my group’s interests, or because I hope others will contribute more to make up for my loafing.

Given these asymmetries, victims’ post-breach responses are fraught with potential for escalation and mutual resentment. Victims may tend toward unforgiveness and punishment, while transgressors feel they merit some degree of forgiveness and forbearance. We consider these responses further in the section that follows.
Distinguishing Forgiveness and Forbearance

Forgiveness refers to a transformation in interpersonal motives that may unfold over time in the wake of a transgression (McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003). Forgiveness is characterized by a move away from vengeful and avoidant motives, and a move toward the restoration of benevolence (McCullough, 2001). Forgiving victims acknowledge the wrongfulness and injury associated with a transgression (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003), but they abandon their angry, vengeful thinking about the incident. They are also less motivated to withdraw or distance themselves from the transgressor. And, forgiving victims restore (at least partially) their feelings of goodwill and compassion toward the transgressor (Karremans, van Lange, & Holland, 2005).

However, forgiveness does not imply an absence of punishment or sanctions. That is, it is not always accompanied by forbearance. Indeed, one of the barriers to forgiveness is the “injustice gap” created by a breach (Exline, Worthington, Hill & McCullough, 2003). Forgiveness is made easier when attempts are made to restore justice by mitigating or undoing some of the harm suffered in the transgression, by means of apologies, amends, or restitution (Exline et al., 2003). We may forgive, but we do not want to be a ‘doormat’ over whom transgressors will continue to tread (Luchies et al., 2010). In fact, victims will often seek justice before forgiving, whether through individual sanctions or organizational discipline (Aquino et al., 2006). Even forgiving victims may seek punishment for reasons other than motives of vengeance, including justice, deterrence, and acknowledgement of the transgression (David &
The evidence from the domain of intimate relationships, for example, shows that punishment accompanies forgiveness more than half of the time (Fitness, 2001).

The opposite dynamic is also possible: Even unforgiving, grudge-holding victims may nonetheless show forbearance and choose not to punish. These individuals may nurture a grudge, but choose not to punish their transgressors, because punishment may violate their groups’ norms or their organizations’ policies (Butterfield, Treviño, & Ball, 1996). Or, they may feel bound by an ethical code to refrain from taking vengeance, but find themselves unable to release their anger or feel true benevolence toward their transgressors. In such cases, these individuals may refrain from punishment, but fail to truly forgive (Brown, 2003). Finally, we may desire revenge but cannot exercise punishment because the transgressor has power or status (Zaibert, 2009: 391).

To summarize, not all behavioural forbearance necessarily implies forgiveness, nor does forgiveness necessarily mean that victims choose to forbear. As we explain in the next section, there is good reason to distinguish motivation from behaviour. Sometimes individuals who forgive also exact punishment, and those who are unforgiving forgo punishment. We must look carefully, therefore, at these two distinct aspects of victims’ responses to a trust breach: Their forgiveness (or not, holding a grudge), and their forbearance (or not, exacting punishment). Where forgiveness describes motivational changes with affective and cognitive dimensions, forbearance describes the intentional restraint from behaving punitively.
Forgiveness, Interpersonal Justice, and Obligation

Our predictions about the interplay of forgiveness and forbearance are rooted in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). Social exchange theory focuses on unilateral acts of giving that create diffuse obligations and provoke reciprocation (Blau, 1964). When individuals trust one another, they become participants in an exchange relationship. The vulnerability offered by one partner tends to be reciprocated by trustworthy behaviour on the part of the other (Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000). In fact, people often respond to being trusted by acting in trustworthy ways (Reuben, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2009), in order to avoid the guilt associated with an imbalance of this exchange relationship. A violation of trust, by contrast, pushes this exchange out of balance.

In response to interpersonal transgressions like trust breach, forgiveness has been described as a gift -- and one, at that, which is often bestowed on the undeserving (Enright, 1996; Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998). Receiving forgiveness helps restore transgressors’ feelings of self-worth (Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996), offers a sense of relief, freedom and release (Worthington, 1998), and in exchange, engenders feelings of obligation, indebtedness, gratitude and guilt toward the forgiving victim (Gassin, 1998; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Bauer, 2002).^5

Where transgressors often see victims’ unforgiving responses as unjustifiable overreactions (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990), forgiving victims are viewed by transgressors as understanding, kind, and empathetic (Kearns & Fincham, 2004). Indeed,

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^5 This logic, of course, applies only to repentant transgressors. The case of the exploitative or unrepentant transgressor is considered in the discussion.
forgiveness tends to demonstrate caring and sensitivity to the transgressor’s emotional needs (McCullough, 2000; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008), while a refusal to forgive generates negative emotions and leads transgressors to feel that they have been themselves wronged (Jennings, 2010). In other words, those who receive forgiveness are likely to view themselves as having been treated with sensitivity and respect -- the type of fair interpersonal treatment that constitutes interpersonal justice (Bies, 2001).

In addition, transgressors are likely to perceive forgiving victims as empathetic. Forgiveness and empathy are closely linked in previous research. Victims who are capable of seeing the transgressor’s perspective, whether by disposition (McCullough, Sandage, Wade-Brown, Rachal, Worthington & Hight, 1998) or as the result of an experimental manipulation (Takaku, 2001), tend to be more forgiving. This connection is reflected in lay perspectives on forgiveness: We tend to think of forgiveness as an empathic act (Kearns & Fincham, 2004), and expressions of empathy are also linked to perceptions of fair interpersonal treatment (Patient & Skarlicki, 2005; 2010). So, forgiving victims are again more likely to be seen as interpersonally just by transgressors.

Taken together, these arguments lend support our general proposition that transgressors, whether or not they merit forgiveness, are likely to respond favourably to receiving it. Forgiveness is a source of interpersonal justice perceptions, and creates an obligation to be discharged by the transgressor. Where a trust violation pushes the exchange relationship out of balance, the victim’s choice to offer forgiveness afterwards further heightens the imbalance.
Discharging the Obligation

So once a victim sways the exchange relationship even further out of balance by offering forgiveness, how do forgiven transgressors return the favour? Previous research shows that being forgiven can motivate repentance (Struthers, Eaton, Shirvani, Georghiou & Edell, 2008) and reduce recidivism (Wallace, Exline & Baumeister, 2008), while justice researchers have demonstrated that perceptions of interpersonal justice often elicit altruism (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000). These studies, taken together, lead to the prediction that receiving forgiveness will motivate unsolicited, compensatory helping behaviour directed toward the victim.

The closest previous test of such a hypothesis was performed by Kelln and Ellard (1999). They found that transgressors may restore equity in the exchange relationship by complying with requests made by the victim. However, we expect that an explicit and specific request by the victim is unnecessary. Social exchange theory emphasizes obligations that are diffuse and unspecified, without the need to immediately solicit reciprocation (Blau, 1964). If the logic of social exchange does underpin forgiveness, and transgressors do seek to right the scales with their forgiving victims, they will likely seek out opportunities to help the victim rather than wait for a request.

In sum, we predict that transgressors will engage in spontaneous, discretionary forms of helping directed at the forgiving victim. The reason they do so, we posit, is because the sense of interpersonal justice elicited by the victim’s forgiveness creates a feeling of obligation toward the victim.
The Role of Punishment or Forbearance

To fully understand victims’ responses to transgressions, though, we must look beyond forgiveness and grudge alone. As discussed earlier, transgressors are also treated with forbearance, or alternately, subjected to punishment. We expect that forgiveness’ effect on unsolicited helping will be stronger when the victim is forbearing rather than punitive. From a social exchange perspective, punishment rebalances the ledger of social exchange, removing the obligation owed by the transgressor to the victim. However, this rebalancing through punishment may reduce the impetus for the forgiven transgressor to rebalance the ledger of social exchange themselves by helping the victim.

This perspective is consistent with earlier research on forgiveness and compliance, where compliance was highest when transgressors received forgiveness without punishment (Kelln & Ellard, 1999). Absent punishment, we expect violators will need to discharge their obligation through prosociality, and therefore predict that forgiveness’ effect on transgressors’ helping behaviour will be stronger when victims withhold punishment, and weaker when they do not.

Forbearance alone may not be sufficient to promote helping behaviour; rather it depends on whether it occurs in the context of forgiveness (or not). Forbearance accompanied by unforgiveness or the holding of a grudge may be interpreted as a temporary stay of execution, with no certainty that the forbearance will be lasting. In other words, an unforgiving but forbearing victim may leave transgressors waiting for the other shoe to drop. In addition, we expect forgiveness to operate through perceptions of interpersonal justice; this path to helping behaviour is simply not present in the case of unforgiving forbearance.
We therefore predict an interaction between forgiveness and forbearance: Forgiveness without forbearance will not lead to prosocial helping behaviour, as the victim themselves balance the ledger, dulling transgressors’ restorative impulses. And, on the other hand, forbearance without forgiveness is unlikely to lead to prosocial helping behaviour, as it does not close the door to future retaliation, nor does it promote interpersonal justice perceptions.

Method

Participants

Participants were 97 full-time undergraduate students enrolled in a management program at a mid-sized Canadian university. They ranged from 17 to 26 years of age (M=19), and 49% (n=48) were female. Participants received course credit in exchange for their participation. Data from 8 participants were excluded from the analysis (2 were friends with the confederate, 5 were suspicious of the confederate or the manipulation, and 1 did not receive the experimental manipulation because of a technical glitch). Data from 89 participants were retained for analysis.

Design

We tested our hypotheses in a laboratory experiment, randomly assigning participants to one of 4 conditions in a 2x2 factorial design. The design crossed forgiveness (forgiving vs. unforgiving) and forbearance (punishment vs. forbearance) in response to an induced (competence-based) trust breach.
**Procedure**

Participants were paired with a female experimental confederate who appeared to be another participant. First, an introductory trust-building exercise was conducted. The confederate guided the participant in a blindfolded walk, and both participant and confederate described a time they felt they had accomplished something they were proud of (the confederate shared a story about their team winning the provincial moot court championships, a mock-trial extracurricular). These tasks built trust through vulnerability and self-disclosure, providing a pretense for the confederate’s later (scripted) trust in the participant.

The confederate was carefully trained to deliver this interaction consistently (and the confederate was blind to the experimental condition during this initial introductory task, in order to avoid experimenter effects). The remainder of the study was conducted online, using a written script for all interactions.

After the initial trust-building exercise, the participant and confederate were separated into different rooms to complete a series of tasks using laptop computers and communicating via an online chat room (the study’s cover story was about testing collaboration software). The tasks all involved pay in the form of tickets for a gift card raffle to be conducted at the end of the experiment.

The confederate signaled their trust in the participant in two ways. First, they chose to risk their pay on the participant’s task performance. Secondly, they sent a trusting message to the participant, expressing full confidence in the participant’s ability, and the confederate’s expectations of success. So, the confederates made themselves vulnerable to the participants,
and made clear that vulnerability was predicated on positive, confident expectations about the participant’s performance.

Participants were then given an unsolvable manufacturing-line problem to work on. The task was inspired by the unsolvable tracing problems of the ego-depletion literature (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven & Tice, 1998). It was a graph-theory problem with no possible solution, disguised as an operations problem at a factory. The task appeared to be solvable (and followed an earlier, solvable, confidence-building task). However, it had no solution, meaning that once time elapsed, the confederate would announce that they had solved their part, leaving the participant to either provide an incorrect solution or admit they could not find a solution. The experimenter reinforced the breach by explaining to both parties that the confederate would lose their task pay because of the participant’s failure.

Like previous research creating a transgression in the laboratory context, our breach was related to competence (ability) rather than integrity or benevolence. This characteristic is consistent with previous research in this area, and hinges on the difficulty of reliably inducing experimental participants to engage in integrity breaches. Kelln and Ellard (1999) led participants to believe they had inadvertently damaged a piece of computer equipment; Wallace and colleagues (2008) blamed participants for software that appeared to freeze and delete data; Struthers et al. (2008) forced partners to provide incorrect information to their counterpart. The limited previous literature, like the present study, tends to use induced breaches that are not the fault of the participant. This approach affords experimental control (we can assign participants to be transgressors, rather than studying only those participants who will voluntarily choose to
transgress). However, it may imply a boundary condition to our results, an issue we consider at greater length in the discussion.

Experimental Manipulations

Following the ability-based breach of the confederate’s trust, the confederate delivered the experimental manipulations via a private, on-screen message to the participant. Participants, according to their experimental condition, received either punishment or forbearance, and then received either a forgiving or unforgiving message.

Punishment versus forbearance. In the punishment condition, confederates told the participant (in a private online message) they were rating their performance as poor, causing the participant to lose a portion of their overall study pay (raffle tickets). Confederates who were forbearing instead indicated they were leaving an ‘excellent’ rating, allowing the participant to keep their pay despite their failure.

Forgiveness versus unforgiveness. Forgiving messages (also sent via private online message) communicated that the confederate had let go of their anger, felt positively toward the participant, and wanted to work together in the future. Unforgiving messages communicated feelings of resentment, negative feelings toward the participant, and a desire not to work together again.
Dependent Measures

After the manipulations were delivered, the participant and confederate were logged off the chat system, and participants completed a questionnaire containing the dependent measures. The first of these measures was the “paymaster task” (described below), which constituted the measure of discretionary helping behaviour. Following this task, participants completed a questionnaire asking them to reflect on how they felt while allocating the tickets, including measures of perceived interpersonal justice and felt obligation. Following the study, participants were debriefed thoroughly and provided with course credit.

Helping behaviour. In the final questionnaire, participants were presented with the “paymaster task”. The task endowed the participant with ten tickets of “bonus pay”, allowing them to allocate it in any way they saw fit, from keeping it all to sending it all to their partner. This gave participants the opportunity to engage (if they so chose) in unilateral, unprompted helping behaviour toward the confederate (‘victim’), along a continuum from 0 to 10, using a slider on the online questionnaire.

Interpersonal justice. Interpersonal justice was measured using a four-item, five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree), adapted from Colquitt (2001). A sample item reads, “my partner treats me with dignity.” The scale exhibited acceptable reliability (α=.96).

Felt obligation. Feelings of obligation during the allocation (“paymaster”) task were measured using a four-item, five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The items were adapted from Goei and Boster’s (2005) measure of perceived obligation in
compliance situations. A sample item reads, “I felt indebted to my partner”. This scale was also acceptably reliable ($\alpha=0.89$).

**Manipulation Checks**

We included two manipulation checks to ensure that our experimental manipulations had the intended effect. For forgiveness, we used the TRIM-18 measure of forgiveness (an 18 item, 5-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, $\alpha=0.94$; McCullough, Root & Cohen, 2006), with the questions adapted to measure participants’ perceptions of how much their partner forgave them. We also asked a subset of participants whether their partner had rated them well or poorly (i.e., recalled the punishment/forbearance manipulation).

**Results**

Means, standard deviations, reliabilities and correlations for the dependent variables (as well as gender and negative affect, both gathered during the study but not included in our analysis) are presented in Table 1.

**Manipulation Fidelity**

We found that participants who received the forgiving message from their partner viewed their partner as more forgiving ($M_{\text{forgiveness}}=2.76$, $M_{\text{grudge}}=3.78$, $t[87]=-8.51$, $p<.001$). We found that all participants asked about the punishment manipulation correctly remembered receiving the appropriate manipulation for their condition.
Confederates

Though the two confederates received identical training and practice in their roles during piloting, we nonetheless tested for differences between our confederates. We found no significant effect of confederate on interpersonal justice (t[89]=1.31, p=.20), felt obligation (t[89]=.34, p=.74), or helping behaviour (t[89]=.94, p=.35). We therefore collapsed the data from both confederates prior to analysis.

Forgiveness Main Effects

We conducted a multivariate analysis of variance to test the effect of forgiveness on the dependent variables, and found a significant effect (Wilks’ λ=.62, F[3,83]=17.22, p<.001). Examining the univariate results, we found, as expected, that those who received forgiveness felt treated with greater interpersonal justice (M=3.90, SD=.82) than those who received a grudge (M=2.50, SD=1.01; F[1,85]=52.53, p<.001). They also felt more obliged (M=3.67, SD=.94) than those who received a grudge (M=3.24, SD=.97, F[1,85]=4.93, p<.05), and engaged in greater discretionary helping by passing more tickets to their partner when they were forgiven (M=5.93, SD=2.48) than when they were not (M=4.95, SD=2.09, F[1,85]=5.03, p<.05).

Forbearance Main Effects

As expected, forbearance did not have a significant multivariate effect on the dependent measures (Wilks’ λ=.94, F[3,83]=1.63, p=.19, n.s.).
Interactive Effects

A significant multivariate effect was found for the interaction between forgiveness and forbearance on the dependent variables. As expected, a univariate interaction between these variables was found on helping behaviour (F[1,85]=5.19, p<.05). Post-hoc comparisons using a Bonferroni correction found that transgressors who received both forgiveness and forbearance passed significantly more tickets (M=6.90, SD=2.26) than did transgressors who received only forgiveness (M=5.12, SD=2.40, p=.05) or only forbearance (M=4.76, SD=2.00, p<.05), and marginally more than those who received neither forgiveness nor forbearance (M=5.14, SD=2.21, p=.07). These differences were all significant (p<.01) using uncorrected (LSD) comparisons. The interaction between forgiveness and forbearance on helping is presented in Figure 1.

Contrary to our expectations, we did not find an interaction between forgiveness and forbearance on felt obligation (F[1,85]=.03, p=.86).

Mediational Tests

In our theoretical development, we proposed a mediational chain linking forgiveness to helping: We predicted forgiveness would increase interpersonal justice perceptions, leading to greater felt obligation, leading to more discretionary helping behaviour aimed at the victim. As described earlier, forgiveness has a significant total effect on helping behaviour. To examine the mediation path through which this effect is exerted, we tested a multiple-step serial mediation model using Hayes’ PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012). As predicted, we found that forgiveness
had an effect on the first mediator, interpersonal justice ($b=1.40$, $t(89)=7.19$, $p<.001$). Interpersonal justice, in turn, had an effect on the second mediator, felt obligation ($b=.39$, $t(89)=3.69$, $p<.001$). Finally, felt obligation had a significant effect on helping behaviour ($b=1.18$, $t(89)=5.07$, $p<.001$).

Analysis also rules out either a direct or single-step mediation model. Controlling for the indirect paths, the direct effect of forgiveness on helping behaviour was reduced to non-significance ($b=-.06$, $t(89)=-.12$, $p=.91$), as was the effect of forgiveness on obligation ($b=-.11$, $t(89)=-.45$, $p=.66$) and the effect of interpersonal justice on helping ($b=-.38$, $t(89)=1.57$, $p=.12$). The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 2.

This analysis was confirmed with bootstrapping, extracting 1,000 samples from the data and estimating indirect effects from the resampled dataset. The 95% confidence intervals for the sequential (multiple-step) mediation model did not contain zero (point estimate=.64, 95% CIs .26 to 1.38). We compared this serial mediation model (Forgiveness -> Interpersonal Justice -> Obligation -> Helping) to two alternative single-step mediation models. In the first, forgiveness operated only though interpersonal justice, while in the second, it operated only through obligation. Both alternate models had non-significant indirect effects, with 95% confidence intervals containing zero (interpersonal justice effect=.53, 95% CIs -.08 to 1.28; obligation effect = -.13, 95% CIs -.75 to .33).
Moderation Tests

As described earlier, the interaction of forgiveness and forbearance had a significant effect (in the predicted direction) on discretionary helping behaviour -- but not on feelings of obligation. To further explore the nature of this contingent effect on helping, we used the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012) to probe four possible patterns of moderation: That forbearance moderates (1) the forgiveness-interpersonal justice link, (2) the interpersonal justice-obligation link, (3) the obligation-helping link, or (4) only the direct forgiveness-helping link. We found no support for the first three possible moderated links (forgiveness-justice $\Delta R^2=.01$, $F[1,85]=1.54$, $p=.22$; justice-obligation $\Delta R^2=.01$, $F[1,85]=1.42$, $p=.24$; obligation-helping $\Delta R^2=.02$, $F[3,85]=1.93$, $p=.17$), but consistent with the analysis of variance reported earlier, found that forbearance did moderate the direct path between forgiveness and discretionary helping ($\Delta R^2=.05$, $F[1,85]=5.19$, $p=.03$).

Discussion

Forgiveness can be a favour. Those who receive it feel obligated, and pay it back with prosocial behaviour. A common concern about offering forgiveness is that it may leave us vulnerable to further exploitation (Burnette, McCullough, Van Tongeren, & Davis, 2012; Luchies et al., 2010). But in this study, we find quite the opposite: After receiving forgiveness, transgressors behave more prosocially toward their victims, offering them greater spontaneous helping than do unforgiven transgressors. Combined with previous research on recidivism (Wallace et al., 2008) and compliance (Kelln & Ellard, 1999), this study gives credence to the view that forgiveness can actually reduce the odds of being further exploited by a transgressor.
This occurs because the perceptions of fair interpersonal treatment from forgiving victims leads to felt obligation to reciprocate among transgressors -- an effect that further underscores the link between experienced interpersonal justice and social exchange motives (Masterson et al., 2000). Our study helps to set out the mechanisms that link received forgiveness to prosociality, drawing fresh linkages between the forgiveness literature and previous work on interpersonal justice and social exchange.

For managers, it strengthens the view of forgiveness as not only an ethical virtue, but a practical tool in promoting positive employee behaviours. Though forgiveness can occur within a transgressor-victim dyad, managers and organizations can do a great deal to promote forgiveness; a recent conceptual paper by Fehr and Gelfand outlines a number of organizational cultural values, leader attributes, and organizational practices that can contribute to a climate for forgiveness where the ‘restorative changes’ like our transgressors’ discretionary helping are more likely to occur (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012).

However, we find that the salutary effect of forgiveness on spontaneous helping behaviour is contingent. It only occurs when victims offer transgressors both forgiveness and forbearance. When the victim restores equity themselves by punishing the transgressor, there is no difference between forgiven and unforgiven transgressors’ helping behaviour. However, contrary to our expectations, we found that this moderating effect of punishment was not mediated through changes to feelings of obligation. Future research might give further examination to the mechanisms through which being punished serves to change transgressors’ willingness to help.
In particular, this result suggests the need for a closer look at the dynamic, bilateral interaction between victims’ punitive behaviours and transgressors’ restorative ones. Since both parties may keep different accounts of what is ‘owed’, the process of recalibrating the exchange relationship may be challenging (Fitness & Peterson, 2008). It may be that more modest levels of punishment would have less of an inhibitory effect on forgiven victims’ helping behaviours. It is also worth considering the long-term restoration of balance to the relationship, considering whether the net restorative effect of transgressors’ compensatory actions are equivalent to victims’ punitive actions. It is possible that the dynamic of unsolicited helping could well initiate a virtuous cycle, with early expressions of forgiveness being met with discretionary helping, and those good-faith actions deepening the victim’s forgiveness. Forgiveness, after all, often unfolds gradually over time (McCullough et al., 2003); early expressions of forgiveness reciprocated with helping behaviour by the transgressor might in turn strengthen the victim’s willingness to forgive. This possibility merits exploration in future research.

However, this paper also sounds a cautionary note about the forgiveness dynamic. Previous research has emphasized that victims often feel a need to see justice done before they are willing to forgive (Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2007). As Kurzynski notes, “forgiveness does not imply the remission of punishment”, and victims and organizations alike may seek to discipline workplace transgressors (Kurzynski, 1998: 81). Our data therefore suggest a dilemma: Victims seek punishment to forgive, but punishment may keep transgressors from responding to forgiveness with the type of compensatory helping that might help repair relationships harmed by trust breach.
To resolve this dilemma, further research might focus on approaches to discipline that (like punishment) serve to remedy the “injustice gap” created by the transgression, but (unlike punishment) do not reduce transgressors’ helping behaviour. In particular, restorative justice, which focuses on developing a shared understanding of the transgression and reaffirming shared values (Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather & Platow, 2008) may be a means by which justice may be served while preserving the positive effects of forgiveness.

In our theoretical elaboration, we emphasized the role that perceptual asymmetries can play in transgressions; punitive justice can aggravate these asymmetries. A victim might see a punishment as entirely appropriate and perhaps even a bit lax; the transgressor might view the same punishment as unwarranted and unnecessarily vengeful. By contrast, restorative justice offers the promise of resolving the tension, as both sides work to establish a shared understanding of the transgression and restore shared values. It provides a path for allowing victims to feel justice is served, allowing them to forgive -- which, in turn, can promote positive and prosocial behaviour on the part of the transgressor. Further research is warranted into how the effect of forgiveness on discretionary helping is influenced by justice -- both in terms of levels (as a matter of degree, from mild to severe) and in terms of type (comparing retributive and restorative approaches).

Another limitation of our study is that it applies a largely cognitive lens, focusing on appraisals of interpersonal treatment and thoughts about what is owed to others. The affective dimension should be given consideration in future research. We describe the role of obligation using the calculative logic of social exchange. But moral emotions like guilt, shame and
gratitude (Tangney, Stuewig & Mashek, 2007) might also play a role in shaping the felt obligation that drives helping.

Future research may also benefit from stepping outside the laboratory. Though our experimental structure offered control and the ability to draw clear causal inferences, it had a number of limitations and threats to ecological validity. The transgression, such as it was, was inadvertent: It was not a deliberate breach of integrity, but rather an unavoidable shortcoming of ability. Of course, this type of breach is commonplace in organizational life: Transgressors often think of their transgressions as being unavoidable, externally controlled, and so on, as we considered earlier in this paper. However, the conclusions from this paper would be more robust if they could be replicated in the context of actual trust breach between coworkers, rather than an induced breach among strangers working on a laboratory exercise. In the field, considering transgressions that involve integrity-based breach of trust, we may also find that moral emotions like shame and guilt provide a second path from forgiveness to helping.

Lastly, we encourage future research to examine the moderators of the effects found in this paper. Our argument was that receiving forgiveness would create feelings of obligation. But we dealt with reasonably repentant transgressors -- ordinary students who were led to breach their partner’s trust through no fault of their own. A highly Machiavellian transgressor (or one low in guilt-proneness) who breaks someone’s trust calculatedly and without remorse might view forgiveness as a signal of weakness. Or, a narcissistic or entitled transgressor might view others’ forgiveness for errors and transgressions as their natural right in life. The overall effect we demonstrate here might be moderated by the disposition of the transgressor and the nature of their breach. Future research might explore this possibility.
Figures

Figure 1: Interactive Effects of Forgiveness and Forbearance on Transgressor Helping Behaviour

Error Bars: +/- 1 SE
Figure 2: Serial Mediation Model

* = p < .05; ** = p < .01; *** = p < .001. Dashed line represents direct path.
### Tables

#### Table 1: Means, Correlations, Standard Deviations and Reliabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Helping behaviour (raffle tickets given)</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Perceived interpersonal justice</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>.39***</td>
<td>0.96</td>
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<td>3. Felt obligation</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>.57***</td>
<td>.42***</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gender (dummy)</td>
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<td>0.50</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Negative affect</td>
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<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001. Numbers on the diagonal are reliabilities. Gender and negative affect were collected but not used in our analysis.
References


Chapter 3: Do The Effects of Dyadic Forgiveness Spill Over To The Team?

Abstract

Can forgiving a transgressor for breaking your trust cause them to make better contributions to your team’s work? In a laboratory experiment, we examine the effect of receiving forgiveness for a trust breach on transgressors’ interpersonal attitudes and behaviours toward both the victim and the team. Drawing on social exchange theory and previous research on forgiveness and self-construal, we predict that transgressors who receive forgiveness will have more positive attitudes toward the victim (feelings of interpersonally fair treatment and obligation), and more positive attitudes and behaviours directed toward the team (feelings of team identification, contributions to a shared task, and conflict management styles used in teamwork). We also hypothesize that punishment, relative to forbearance (the withholding of punishment), will reduce the salutary effect of offering forgiveness on transgressors’ discretionary effort in pursuit of the team’s aims. We find mixed support for our predictions. Consistent with our previous research and with social exchange theory, we find forgiveness leads to feelings of obligation, mediated fully through interpersonal justice perceptions. We also find a main effect of offering forgiveness on transgressors’ efforts directed toward the group, but do not find support for a mediational path through either felt obligation or self-construal. We find that forgiveness also has a (marginally-significant) positive influence on collaborative conflict management. Contrary to our predictions, we do not find that forbearance moderates these effects, but do find that forbearance has a main effect on justice perceptions, obligation, and identification with the team. We conclude with speculation about the temporal ordering of forgiveness and forbearance, and the specific moral emotions involved in the effects of forgiveness.
Previous research in social and clinical psychology show that a victim’s forgiveness (their transformation in interpersonal motives away from revenge and avoidance and toward benevolence; McCullough, Worthington & Rachal, 1997) can have a positive effect on how transgressors comport themselves. Forgiven transgressors feel more empathetic toward their victims (Jennings, 2010), more justly treated and obliged toward their victims (Neville & Brodt, 2012), more gratitude (Witvliet, Ludwig & Bauer, 2002), and more responsibility for their actions (Gassin, 1998). They also behave better. Relative to a grudge, transgressors who receive forgiveness engage in more helping behaviour toward their victim (Kelln & Ellard, 1999; Neville & Brodt, 2012; Wallace, Kah, Gilts, Bilbao & Dawson, 1998), and tend to engage in fewer repeat offenses (Wallace, Exline & Baumeister, 2008). This dynamic appears to often be contingent on forbearance (withholding punitive action); the positive effect of forgiveness on a transgressor’s behaviour has been shown to be dulled when forgiveness is accompanied by punishment (Kelln & Ellard, 1999; Neville & Brodt, 2012).

The majority of previous research on this topic, however, tends to look only at dyads: How the transgressor perceives and behaves toward the victim, with little mention of a broader social context. But in contemporary working life, such dyads do not necessarily operate in isolation. They are often socially embedded in interdependent teams. Teammates and coworkers are as subject to the post-breach behaviour of the transgressor as the direct victim. In other words, forgiveness may have secondhand effects on teammates outside of the transgressor-victim dyad.

This paper predicts that forgiveness will improve transgressors’ attitudes and behaviours toward the victim and the team in general, and tests those predictions experimentally in the
context of trust breach. Trust breach occurs when a trustor’s willingness to be vulnerable based on positive confident expectations about the trustee is perceived to have been disconfirmed by the trustee’s actions (Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003). In plainer English, trust is a willingness to risk because you expect someone to behave well; trust violation occurs when the person you trust behaves badly. Such breaches are a common and problematic form of workplace interpersonal transgression (Bies & Tripp, 1995; Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998; Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2003; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

**Theoretical Elaboration**

We employ two theoretical lenses in establishing predictions about the effects of forgiveness. The first is social exchange (Blau, 1964). We expect forgiven transgressors to make better contributions to their team’s work as a means of indirectly reciprocating the received ‘favour’ of forgiveness. We expect these effects to be strengthened by forbearance and weakened by punishment.

The second theoretical lens is self-construal theory (Cross, Bacon & Morris, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). We draw on research linking forgiveness to connectedness, inclusion and affiliation, and argue that receiving forgiveness (as compared to grudge) will activate relational and interdependent self-construal, thereby increasing positive attitudes felt by the transgressor toward their team.

We elaborate on both perspectives in the following section, drawing predictions about how receiving forgiveness might yield benefits for parties other than the direct victim, by improving transgressors’ post-breach attitudes and behaviour toward the team at large.
Forgiveness has been described as an “unconditional gift given to one who does not deserve it” (Al-Mabuk, Enright & Cardis, 1995). This type of unilateral act of consideration would be described in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) as a favour. Favours serve to instill a sense of obligation and promote reciprocation. When individuals trust one another, they become participants in a relationship of social exchange (Molm, Takahashi & Peterson, 2000). A violation of trust pushes the exchange relationship out of balance. By offering forgiveness, victims respond to a harm with benevolence and interpersonal justice (the experience of dignified and respectful treatment). This treatment by a forgiving victim, heightens the imbalance in the social exchange relationship, and promotes feelings of obligation in the transgressor (Neville & Brodt, 2012).

This is further amplified when victims forgo punishment or retribution: If forgiveness creates a sense of obligation, punishment serves to rebalance the ledger of social exchange and eliminate this obligation, as evidence from Kelln and Ellard (1999) demonstrates. When victims are forgiving and forbearing, they create an obligation that transgressors must seek to discharge.

In the absence of an opportunity to reciprocate directly, transgressors may attempt to reciprocate indirectly. They may do so by paying the favour forward to a close other (like a teammate); this type of indirect reciprocity is weaker than direct reciprocity, but does nonetheless occur (Buchan, Croson & Dawes, 2002). Transgressors may engage in prosociality toward teammates as a way of signaling their altruism and benevolence to the victim (see Diekmann, 2004). Or, their citizenship behaviours directed at the victim may simply spill over to aid the
group and its other members as an unintended (but salutary) consequence (Lavelle, Rupp & Brockner, 2007). In summary, we expect that receiving forgiveness will enhance the level of contributions transgressors make to their shared group work, that this effect will be mediated through perceived interpersonal justice and felt obligation, and that the effect will be contingent on forbearance.

**Interdependent and Relational Self-Construal**

Qualitative evidence suggests that receiving forgiveness can trigger affective and cognitive changes in transgressors beyond the feelings of obligation described above. The informants in Gassin’s (1998) retrospective-recall study reported feeling increased respect for others, a sense of responsibility for their actions and stronger moral commitments about human relationships. These changes share a common thread: They each affirm social connections with others and emphasize the violator’s sense of belonging to a moral community. Receiving forgiveness also promotes feelings of gratitude (Bono & McCullough, 2006) and empathy (Enright, 1996), which in turn stimulates “...behaviour that is motivated by a concern for another person’s well-being.” By contrast, those who are unforgiven tend to feel greater shame (Fitness, 2001), a social emotion prototypically linked with the desire for seclusion. Shame leads people to “hide and get out of the interpersonal realm” (Lindsay-Hartz, 1984), promotes self-focus, inhibits other-oriented empathic concern (Tangney, 1995), and may limit violators’ efforts directed toward the relationship (Zechmeister & Romero, 2002).

Taken together, we conclude that receiving forgiveness enhances feelings of social connection and relatedness, while receiving unforgiveness leads to feelings of withdrawal,
separateness, and a focus on the self apart from the social context. These characteristics map, respectively, onto interdependent and independent self-construal (Singelis, 1994). These types of self-construal can vary as individual differences, but are also shaped by situations. State self-construal can be meaningful to the functioning of work groups. Interdependent self-construal has been shown to promote greater cooperation and participation in group work, and to reduce withheld effort (Oetzel, 2001). It is associated with more cooperative rather than competitive approaches to conflict resolution (Oetzel, 1998). And identification (an affiliative link to the group made more likely by interdependent self-construal) is associated with discretionary effort directed at both the workgroup and the organization (Dukerich, Golden & Shortell, 2002; Feather & Rauter, 2004; Oikkonen & Lipponen, 2006). We expect, based on previous research, that psychological safety in the team may also be enhanced by feeling included (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), and having strong affiliative ties to the team (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Of course, psychological safety may also be directly influenced by received forgiveness, as forgiveness communicates that mistakes are not held against you -- an important element of feeling psychologically safe in making contributions to the team. We therefore expect that forgiveness will promote positive attitudes toward and about the team (identification and psychological safety), and promote positive and prosocial behaviour (conflict management and group contributions) in the team, and that these effects will be mediated through changes to relational and interdependent self construal (RISC; Cross, Bacon & Morris, 2000). In other words, where individual helping might result from social exchange within the dyad, helping aimed at the group might result in part from feelings of affiliation and connection beyond the dyad.
Method

We tested our predictions in a laboratory experiment that placed transgressors and victims in the context of a three-person group. Each group’s three members included two participants (the focal ‘transgressor’ participant, as well as a second ‘teammate’ participant), along with an experimental confederate playing the role of the ‘victim’. The confederates were extensively trained prior to their involvement in the task. The training involved practicing the scripted interactions in a number of pilot rounds. Confederates practiced engaging in the introductory task (including how to avoid unscripted chit-chat). The dyadic task was conducted online with a written script, and the small-group task was also conducted online, with a set of guidelines about how to respond to the participants’ ideas and contributions.

In a dyadic task, we induced the focal participant to (unintentionally) break the trust placed in them by a confederate. Following this ability-based breach, the focal participant received forgiveness (or unforgiveness), followed by forbearance (or punishment), in a 2x2 factorial design. We then had the transgressor and victim join their third team member (another participant), and examined the effect of these manipulations on the transgressor’s attitudes and behaviours in a three-personal task involving the participant, confederate, and a teammate. We describe the procedure in greater detail in the following section.
Participants

Participants were 186 undergraduate business students, who participated in the study in exchange for a bonus credit to be applied to their grade in a course of their choosing, as well as the chance to win one of 8 $25 gift cards at the end of the term.

Procedure and Manipulations

**Introductory task.** Upon arrival, after completing a letter of information and informed-consent form, the three individuals (two participants and a confederate) were introduced to one another. As a short icebreaker task, they were asked to introduce themselves by sharing one personal accomplishment or task they felt they did well in. Participants tended to describe class projects they succeeded on, extracurricular or sport teams they were members of, or charity events they helped organize (the confederate in each trial described having won a moot-court tournament with her high school team). The aim of this task was to create a basis for the confederate to reasonably choose to trust the participant in the later task.

**Trust breach.** Following the introductory task, participants were moved into separate private rooms and were given login information for the online questionnaires and chat system (the cover story for the study related to the use of online systems for teamwork). The focal participant and confederate were assigned to a dyadic task, while the other participant completed an unrelated study as a filler task. These tasks (and the remainder of the study) were conducted through a Qualtrics questionnaire with embedded Campfire (online chat) rooms.
Throughout the procedure, participants received ‘pay’ for their work in tickets for the gift card raffle mentioned earlier. This is important in understanding the lost pay and punishment in the dyadic task, and the incentives associated with the group task. Throughout our description of the experimental procedure, when discussing pay, we refer to compensation paid in raffle tickets.

In the dyadic task, the confederate was (seemingly) selected at random to make a decision about cooperation. The confederate was asked to make a choice between working “solo”, or “as a team”. Their choice was visible to their partner. It was made clear to both participants that if the confederate chose the team option, they would only receive their task pay if their partner (the participant) successfully completed the task. On the chat system, the confederate asked a question to clarify the choice, and make underscore the risk involved. Once the decision was made clear, the confederate publicly chose to rely on the participant, and sent a message expressing their positive, confident expectations about the participant’s abilities.

Once the confederate had chosen to trust and rely on the participant, the two parties were given their tasks. The participant’s task was to design an efficient way of routing juice bottles through a factory. Though the task appeared achievable, it was actually unsolvable (the task is based on an unsolvable graph theory problem; Gribkovskaia, Halskau & Laporte, 2007). After a period of four minutes, the confederate presents a solution to their task, and the participant is left either out of time or having found an incorrect answer. The experimenter informs the confederate that despite having provided a correct solution to their own task, they will receive no pay for the task because of the participant’s failure. To summarize, the confederate trusts the participant, and the participant is unwittingly made to breach the confederate’s trust. This
constitutes, of course, an ability/competence-based breach, rather than a breach of integrity or benevolence (Kim, Dirks, Cooper & Ferrin, 2006) -- an issue we revisit in the discussion.

**Forgiveness manipulation.** Following the manipulated breach, the confederate sent one of two messages to the participant. In the forgiveness condition, the confederate sent a message expressing benevolence and a willingness to work together again: “i think you gave it a good shot. no hard feelings at all. hope we get the chance to work together on the next part :).” In the unforgiveness condition, participants received a message expressing a grudge and desire for avoidance: “you should have tried harder. i shouldn’t have bet on you. hope we dont [sic] have to work together on the next part :(".

**Forbearance manipulation.** Following the dyadic task and forgiveness manipulation, participants were shown a screen that indicated how their partner had rated their performance (used to determine the allocation of bonus tickets). In the punishment condition, the system’s message read, “Your partner gave you a score of 0/10 (poor performance). You earn 0 of a possible 10 bonus draw tickets.” In the forbearance condition, by contrast, participants read a different message: “Your partner gave you a score of 10/10 (excellent performance). You earn 10 of a possible 10 bonus draw tickets.”

**Questionnaire 1.** After the breach and the experimental manipulations had occurred, the focal participants completed a brief questionnaire containing measures of relational and interdependent self-construal, felt interpersonal justice, and felt obligation (along with distractor questions to mask the purpose of the study). During this time (indeed, throughout the dyadic interactions between the ‘transgressor’ participant and ‘victim’ confederate), the second participant (the ‘teammate’) completed an unrelated filler task.
**Group task.** Following the first questionnaire, the full group of 3 participants (the focal ‘transgressor’ participant, the confederate ‘victim’, and the teammate participant) were brought together in a second online chat room for a team task. The ‘teammate’ participant did not read any of the previous interactions between the focal participant and the confederate, and were naive to what had occurred in the first task. None of the participants in our study made any mention of what had occurred in the dyadic task during the group task.

In the group of three, participants were given four minutes to brainstorm uses for a warehouse worth of unsalable audio cassettes. Participants were given a description of the cassette, and instructed to come up with as many creative and practical uses as possible to liquidate the cassettes (with those criteria made explicit in the instructions, and the group sharing the bonus pay for each generated idea). The confederate made the same three suggestions in each trial (using the magnetic tape as material for scarves, using the cassette as a case for a notepad, and using the tapes as decorative wall art). The three suggestions were made by the confederate with the same timing in every trial, to keep the confederate’s contributions constant. Rewards for contributions in this task were shared, in order to create a degree of interdependence between the group’s members (and allow for the possibility of free riding on others’ contributions).

Following the generation of ideas, the group of three was given an additional four minutes to select the top three ideas. During this task, the confederate took a passive role, asking only diagnostic questions (e.g., “which ideas do you guys like?”), and deferring to the other participants’ suggestions rather than guiding the decision themselves.
These two tasks gave the ‘transgressor’ participant opportunity to engage in group-serving discretionary behaviour in the idea generation task, then the opportunity to engage in conflict management in the ranking task.

**Questionnaire 2.** Following the group task, participants completed a brief questionnaire containing the measures of team identification and self-reported approach to conflict management.

After the questionnaire was complete, participants were thoroughly debriefed as to the nature of the study, the impossibility of the task provided, and the role of the confederate. They were also assured that their ‘failure’ in the impossible task would not have any consequences for their remuneration.

**Measures**

The scale items (along with the preamble or instructions for each) are presented in Appendix A.

**Questionnaire 1.**

**Interpersonal justice.** In the questionnaire immediately following the forgiveness and forbearance manipulations, we measured the degree to which participants, as transgressors, felt that they had been treated with interpersonal justice by the confederate. Participants’ perceptions were captured using a 4-item, 7-point (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree) Likert-scaled interpersonal justice subscale from Colquitt’s (2001) organizational justice scale. A sample item
for this scale read, “my partner treats me with dignity.” The scale exhibited acceptable reliability ($\alpha=.95$).

**Felt obligation.** Participants also rated the degree to which they felt obligated to the confederate, using a 4-item, 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree; $\alpha=.83$) adapted from a measure originally designed to capture feelings of obligation in a compliance situation (Goei & Boster, 2000). A sample item from this scale was, “I feel like I have to do something for my partner.”

**Relational and interdependent self-construal.** We measured participants’ state relational and interdependent self-construal (that is, the degree to which they defined themselves in terms of their relationships with close others) using an 11-item, 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree; $\alpha=.86$) developed by Cross, Bacon and Morris (2000). A sample item reads, “When I feel close to someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am.” While there may be trait tendencies in self-construal, previous research shows that these modes of self-construal can be activated with priming (Gardner, Gabriel & Lee, 1999).

**Group Task.**

**Discretionary contributions to the group.** We measured participants’ the quality and quantity of discretionary contributions to the group process in three ways. First, we counted the number of ideas they contributed during the group idea generation task. Next, two raters (the
first author, using a blinded dataset, and another doctoral student trained in the coding protocol) independently coded each contributed idea for creativity and practicality.

We initially attempted the use of a procedure (using undergraduate student raters) that allowed for self-defined, uninstructed ratings of creativity, following Amabile’s (1982) consensual assessment technique, but found that we were unable to reach acceptable levels of agreement, perhaps because our raters were not domain experts as is common in the consensual assessment technique. Instead, we chose to code creativity in terms of the remoteness of association between the original form and the proposed idea, rating the degree to which participants’ proposed use of the cassette tapes broke from a fixation on the tape’s original form and use, from 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely). Ideas which were less fixed on the tapes’ original function were judged to be lower in creativity (Silvia, Winterstein, Willse, Barona, Cram, Hess, Martinez & Richard, 2008). An example of a low-creativity idea would be, “use them to record phone conversations”. An example of a high-creativity idea would be, “use the plastic tape as material for confetti”.

Finally, the same two raters coded each idea for practicality, rating whether each idea could work and generate revenues, from 1 (“NO!”) to 5 (“YES!”). An example of an impractical idea was, “attach it to a marketing campaign perhaps?”, while an example of a potentially profitable idea was, “Take the cassette apart and use the plastic part to re-create it into two iPhone covers”. The ratings were based on subjective assessments of the ideas relative to others in the set of contributed ideas, since relatively few ideas in the dataset would seem on their face to be blockbuster business ideas.
After confirming that levels of interrater reliability were acceptable (ICC(2,1)_{creativity}=0.96; ICC(2,1)_{practicality}=0.89), the judgments of the two raters were averaged to produce a creativity and practicality score for each generated item, which in turn were averaged to produce a mean creativity and mean practicality score for each participant. The ICCs were high in part because the two raters spent considerable time in training (coding example ideas generated during the piloting of the study) prior to coding the actual study data. While the ratings used were generated from independent coding, the interpretation of each idea’s creativity and practicality is probably best described as intersubjective, as it was influenced by time spent in the training rounds of coding to align the raters’ implicit categorizations of different broad classes of ideas. In simpler English, the two raters agreed because they had spent time together aligning their judgements about how to code before starting to (independently) code the ideas.

To measure overall contributions to the group task, we used the product of the number of ideas, the average creativity of those ideas, and the average practicality of those ideas. We chose a multiplicative approach because the overall quality of contribution to the group task required all three factors: A large number of bad ideas, or creative-but-impractical ideas, might not represent a strong contribution to the group’s task. Some disengaged participants, for instance, flippantly offered highly creative but impossible ideas; we would not want to code these as ‘high quality’ only because they departed greatly from the cassette’s original purpose.

**Questionnaire 2.**

*Psychological Safety.* We use a traditional measure of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). However, we use it in a slightly non-traditional manner, conceptualizing psychological safety in terms of individuals’ own perceptions of the climate in their team (i.e., psychological
climate; Glick, 1985). We therefore use the individual as the unit of both theory and measurement (a departure from Edmondson’s group-level theorizing and measurement). The 7-item, 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree) exhibited acceptable reliability (α=.70).

**Identification.** To measure the participant’s identification with their three-member team after the idea-generation and sorting tasks, we used a six-item, seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree; α=.87) adapted from Mael and Ashforth (1992) to refer to the team rather than the organization. A sample item from this scale reads, “This team’s successes are my successes”; the items all speak to the group’s work being integrated into the participant’s self-concept.

**Conflict Management Style.** Following the group task, we asked participants to report the approach they took to the management of conflict during the group task, in which teams were required to reject suggested ideas, a task that could be navigated diplomatically or which could engender conflict. We used a 19-item, 5-point Likert scale, where participants rated the degree to which they used various tactics and approaches to conflict management, from 1 (‘almost never’), to 5 (‘almost always’). The scale was drawn from Montoya-Weiss, Massey and Song (2001). The scale is dimensionalized into five types of conflict management behaviour. We found acceptable reliabilities for four of the five dimensions: Accommodation (4 items, for example, “I went along with the suggestions of the other teammates.”; α=.75), competition (5 items, for example, “I was generally firm in pushing my side of an issue.”; α=.85), collaboration (5 items, for example, “I tried to work with my team members to find solutions that satisfied our expectations”; α=.79), and compromise (2 items, for example, “I tried to find a middle course to
resolve impasses or conflicts.”; \( \alpha = .70 \). However, reliability was found to be unacceptably low for the two-item measure of avoidant conflict management (for example, “I kept my disagreements with my teammates to myself in order to avoid hurt feelings”; \( \alpha = .42 \)). As a result, the analysis was conducted only on the four subscales that exhibited acceptable levels of reliability.

**Results**

The means, deviations, correlations, and reliabilities for the dependent variables are presented in Table 1.

**Attitudinal Outcomes**

To test our predictions about the effect of forgiveness and forbearance on transgressors’ attitudes, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). We tested the effects of our forgiveness and forbearance manipulations (and their interaction) on transgressors’ perceptions of having been treated with interpersonal justice and feelings of obligation toward the transgressor, their relational self-construal, their feelings of psychological safety during the team task, and their degree of identification with the team. Contrary to our predictions, though both forgiveness (Wilks’ \( \lambda = .31 \), \( F[5, 83] = 36.6, p < .001 \)) and forbearance (Wilks’ \( \lambda = .79 \), \( F[5, 83] = 4.53, p = .001 \)) had an effect on the dependent variables, we did not find any interactive effect of forgiveness and forbearance on the dependent variables (Wilks’ \( \lambda = .98 \), \( F[5, 83] = .27, p = .93, n.s. \)).
Examining the univariate results, we find that receiving forgiveness increased the transgressors’ feeling of being treated with interpersonal justice (M\textsubscript{forgive}=6.22, SD=.84, M\textsubscript{grudge}=3.48, SD=1.26, F[1,87]=161.68, p<.001, η\textsuperscript{2}=.62) and increased their feelings of obligation toward the victim (M\textsubscript{forgive}=5.89, SD=1.02, M\textsubscript{grudge}=5.16, SD=1.09 F[1,87]=12.31, p=.001, η\textsuperscript{2}=.12). In addition, receiving forgiveness influenced transgressors’ perceptions of and attitudes toward the team in the three-person task. Forgiven transgressors perceived their team as offering greater psychological safety to its members (M\textsubscript{forgive}=4.94, SD=.67, M\textsubscript{grudge}=4.23, SD=.70, F[1,87]=22.82, p<.001, η\textsuperscript{2}=.19). However, contrary to our expectations, forgiveness did not significantly increase transgressors’ feelings of identification with the team (F[1,87]=1.80, p=.18, n.s.), nor did it influence transgressors’ state relational and interdependent self-construal (F[1,87]=.78, p=.78, n.s.).

To test our prediction that forgiveness’ effect on obligation operates through interpersonal justice perceptions, we analyzed the data using Hayes’ (2012) PROCESS macro for testing mediation. We found that forgiveness had a total effect on obligation ($b=.71$, $t(92)=3.62$, $p<.001$). We also found a significant indirect path: Forgiveness increased perceptions of interpersonal justice ($b=2.74$, $t(92)=12.53$, $p<.001$), which in turn increased feelings of obligation ($b=.27$, $t(92)=2.93$, $p<.01$). Controlling for this indirect path, the direct effect of forgiveness is reduced to non-significance ($b=-.02$, $t(92)=-.06$, $p=.95$, n.s.), suggesting full mediation. We confirmed this mediated effect using bootstrapping, extracting 1,000 samples from the data and estimating indirect effects from the resampled data set. Consistent with our predictions, the 95% confidence interval for the mediated model excluded 0 (bootstrapped point estimate = .75; bias-corrected 95% confidence .17 to 1.71).
Examining the univariate results for forbearance, we found that participants who received forbearance rather than punishment also had heightened feelings of interpersonal justice ($M_{forbear}=5.47, SD=1.48, M_{punish}=4.55, SD=1.84; F[1,87]=11.11, p=.001, \eta^2=.04$), felt obligation, ($M_{forbear}=5.78, SD=.88, M_{punish}=5.35, SD=1.14; F[1,87]=3.92, p=.05, \eta^2=.04$), and psychological safety ($M_{forbear}=4.86, SD=.72, M_{punish}=4.37, SD=.73; F[1,87]=9.54, p<.01, \eta^2=.08$). In addition, receiving forbearance increased transgressors’ feelings of team identification during the three-person team task ($M_{forbear}=5.43, SD=.78, M_{punish}=4.58, SD=1.19, F[1,87]=16.04, p<.001, \eta^2=.07$). Forbearance, like forgiveness, had a non-significant influence on relational and interdependent self-construal ($F[1,87]=1.04, p=.31, n.s.$).

**Behavioural Outcomes**

**Conflict management style.** To test our predictions about participants’ approaches to conflict management in the group task, we conducted a MANOVA of forgiveness, forbearance, and their interaction on the four dimensions of conflict management style for which acceptable reliabilities were achieved (i.e., compromising, collaborating, competing, and accommodating. No multivariate effect was found for forbearance (Wilks’ $\lambda=.96, F[4,84]=.80, p=.53, n.s.$) or the interaction of forgiveness and forbearance (Wilks’ $\lambda=.95, F[4,84]=1.20, p=.32, n.s.$). However, we did find a marginally-significant main effect of forgiveness on the dependent measures (Wilks’ $\lambda=.90, F[4,84]=2.33, p=.06$).

Examining the univariate ANOVAs, we found no effect of forgiveness for either the use of compromising ($F[1,87]=.31, p=.58, n.s.$) or competing ($F[1,87]=1.21, p=.28, n.s.$) styles of conflict management. However, we did find that those who had been forgiven were significantly
more likely to engage in accommodating approaches to conflict (M\text{forgive}=3.88, SD=.63, M\text{grudge}=3.57, SD=.49; F[1,87]=5.74, p<.05, \eta^2=.06), and marginally more likely to engage in collaborating approaches (M\text{forgive}=3.84, SD=.63, M\text{grudge}=3.58, SD=.68; F[1,87]=2.95, p=.09, \eta^2=.03). Given the small effect sizes and the marginally-significant overall multivariate test, these results should be interpreted cautiously, but it would appear that receiving forgiveness spills over into a more diplomatic (accommodating and collaborative) approach to the management of conflict in group work.

Our original hypothesis was that the change in conflict management style would be due to greater relational and interdependent self-construal (RISC). Forgiven transgressors, we speculated, would think of themselves more in terms of their connections and relationships with others, which would steer them to more diplomatic and sensitive approaches to managing conflict. As mentioned earlier, however, forgiveness did not yield the expected effect on RISC.

**Discretionary contributions to the group.** Finally, we tested whether forgiveness and forbearance had main or interactive effects on participants’ overall contributions to the group task, as measured by the product of the number of ideas contributed, the average creativity of those ideas, and the average practicality of those ideas. That is, we used a single score capturing the overall quantity and quality of effort contributed to the team task. In an ANOVA of forgiveness and forbearance on this measure of discretionary effort, we found a significant effect of forgiveness: Forgiven participants put forth more effort (as measured using number of ideas * creativity of ideas * practicality of ideas) than did unforgiven participants (M\text{forgiven} = 30.81, M\text{unforgiven} = 19.95; F[1,88]=5.97, p<.05, \eta^2=.06). There were no significant effects of either forbearance (F[1,88]=.82, p=.37, n.s.) or the forgiveness-forbearance interaction term (F[1,88]=.80).
The effect of forgiveness on participants’ overall contribution to the group effort is presented in Figure 3.

While we found that being forgiven enhanced participants’ contributions to the group, we did not find support for our prediction that this effect would be mediated through interpersonal justice and obligation. Using a procedure for path-analysis based mediation analysis (a tool called PROCESS; Hayes, 2012), we examined single-step and serial mediation models, and found no support for them. The bias-corrected bootstrapped (1,000 samples) 95% confidence intervals for each included zero (Interpersonal justice alone, effect point estimate 2.99, 95% CIs -5.57 to 12.42; obligation alone, point estimate -2.09, 95% CIs -7.95 to .84; serial mediation through interpersonal justice to obligation, point estimate .06, 95% CIs -2.33 to 3.72).

To gain a more nuanced understanding of how forgiveness influenced contributions, we also looked at quantity and both measures of quality separately. We conducted a MANOVA of forgiveness and forbearance on the number of ideas generated, the average creativity of the ideas generated, and the practicality of the ideas generated. The main effect of forgiveness was marginally significant (Wilks’ $\lambda=.92$, $F[3,83]=2.24$, $p=.09$). Examining the univariate results, we found one significant effect: Forgiven participants generated significantly more practical ideas than those who received an unforgiving response ($M_{forgive}=2.53$, $M_{grudge}=2.20$, $F[1,83]=6.02$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.07$). They did not generate more ideas overall ($F[1,83]=.86$, $p=.36$, n.s.), nor did they generate more creative ideas ($F[1,83]=1.43$, $p=.24$, n.s.).

Returning to the multivariate tests, we found that neither forbearance (Wilks’ $\lambda=.96$, $F[3,81]=1.15$, $p=.33$, n.s.), nor the interaction of forgiveness and forbearance (Wilks’ $\lambda=.94$, $F[3,81]=1.15$, $p=.33$, n.s.).
F[3,81]=1.63, p=.19, n.s.), yielded any effect on participants’ quantity or quality of discretionary effort.

**Post-hoc Exploratory Analyses**

Earlier, we reported effects on accommodation and collaboration which were not, as we had predicted, mediated by self-construal. To better understand the mechanisms linking forgiveness and conflict management style, we conducted a series of unplanned and exploratory mediation tests.

We used the PROCESS procedure (Hayes, 2012) to compare three indirect paths from forgiveness to each of the two forms of conflict resolution. In particular, we examined two single-step mediation models (with forgiveness operating through interpersonal justice alone, or through obligation alone), along with a serial mediation model through justice to obligation.

In the case of collaboration, we found support for full mediation through interpersonal justice alone (point estimate of the indirect effect using 1,000 bootstrapped samples = .35, bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals .06 to .74). The lower confidence interval is exactly zero for the serial mediation model (estimate=.15, 95% CIs .002 to .56), while the single-step mediation model through obligation alone has CIs that include 0 (estimate=-.01, 95% CIs -.19 to .11), suggesting a non-significant effect. The total effect of forgiveness (b = .25, t[91]=1.84, p=.07) is reduced from marginal to non-significance when controlling for the indirect path through interpersonal justice (b = -.24, t[91]=1.15, p=.25, n.s.) The mediation model for collaboration is presented in Figure 2.
For accommodation, by contrast, all three mediation models were non-significant using 1,000 bootstrapped samples, including the indirect effect through obligation alone (point estimate = -.001, 95% CIs -.08 through .05), through justice alone (estimate = .06, 95% CIs -.26 through .28) and serially through both variables (estimate = .05, 95% CIs -.03 through .19). Though there is a total effect of forgiveness on accommodation ($b = .31, t[91]=2.54, p=.01$), it does not appear to be mediated through justice or obligation.

Given the exploratory and unplanned nature of this analysis (along with the marginal total effect on collaboration), these results should be taken with a measure of conservatism. Keeping that in mind, our data in this study suggest that receiving forgiveness has a direct effect on accommodating conflict management behaviour in group work, and an effect on collaborative conflict management that occurs both as a result of interpersonal justice perceptions, and as a result of the felt obligation that just treatment engenders. The former effect needs further research to identify its underlying mechanism, but the latter effect is more consistent with social exchange (paying back obligation with a collaborative approach) than to our originally-proposed mechanism of self-construal.

**Discussion**

Consistent with our previous research (Neville & Brodt, 2012), we find that receiving forgiveness increases feelings of obligation in the transgressor receiving it. Again consistent with our previous findings, this effect is fully mediated by perceptions of interpersonal justice: Those who are forgiven feel treated with greater respect and dignity, and it is this respectful treatment that drives their sense of obligation to the forgiver.
These effects, of course, are in the context of a ‘breach’ that is induced and is involuntary for the participant placed into the role of the transgressor. It may be that transgressors feel ‘owed’ apologies when they breach trust unintentionally or for reasons beyond their control in a way they might not in intentional breaches of integrity or benevolence. However, as with other research inducing a transgression (Kelln & Ellard, 1999; Wallace et al., 2008; Struthers et al., 2008), we used a competence-based breach because of the challenge associated with getting participants to reliably and consistently choose to engage in a more serious, integrity-based breach. This offers us experimental control and the ability to make clearer causal inferences, but it may be important to replicate these effects cross-sectionally using the wider range of transgression types and severities found in real work contexts.

We find mixed evidence about whether received forgiveness has positive spillovers to the group context. Being cautious not to overstep the data (which are in some cases only approaching significance, and in others have very small effect sizes), this study is suggestive of a positive spillover from receiving forgiveness on attitudes and behaviours directed toward the group beyond the forgive party. Forgiven transgressors viewed the group as offering greater psychological safety. And in a three-person group task where all group members benefitted from discretionary effort, forgiven transgressors made greater contributions to the group’s task, particularly in terms of making practical suggestions. Finally, when it came to a task requiring the group to weed through the generated ideas and come to a consensus about which ones were the best, forgiven transgressors adopted a more conciliatory approach to conflict management, engaging in more accommodative forms of conflict resolution and marginally more collaborative forms to resolving disputes.
These results contribute to a burgeoning literature on the benefits of forgiveness. Our own previous work (Neville & Brodt, 2012) points to an effect of forgiveness on discretionary helping aimed at the victim, and Karremans and colleagues have found previous links between being forgiven and acts of selflessness like giving to charity or volunteering (Karremans, Van Lange & Holland, 2005). The present study suggests the possibility of other potential positive implications for forgiveness on the efficacy of teams, including team identification, task performance, and conflict management. Though further replication and extension would be wise before offering managerial prescriptions, our findings (despite their tentative nature) are certainly consistent with theorizing about the potential benefits of forgiveness as a workplace practice (Kurzynski, 1998). They provide additional impetus to extend empirical investigations into the organizational consequences of interpersonal forgiveness, and to consider how leaders and teammates might create an organizational climate which promotes forgiveness (Fehr & Gelfand, in press). However, additional efforts are necessary to begin identifying the theoretical mechanisms underlying these effects. While we find some support for the social-exchange account of forgiveness, other effects observed in this study are not mediated through obligation. Better understanding why forgiveness promotes pro-organizational attitudes and behaviours is an important step to designing appropriate interventions for promoting workplace forgiveness.

Our findings in this study depart in one important way from our own previous research (Neville & Brodt, 2012): In this study, we found a main effect of forbearance on perceptions of interpersonal justice, while we did not find such an effect in our previous research. It is important to note that the present study differs in two ways from the previous study’s experimental paradigm. First, the forbearing/punishing message is delivered impersonally (they
read about their partner’s decision to punish in the questionnaire, after leaving the chat room), whereas in our previous research it was delivered directly by the confederate. It may be that the choice to punish, when delivered impersonally and without explanation, is viewed as being less interpersonally respectful.

Secondly, in the current study, the punishment-forbearance decision came after the expression of forgiveness, whereas in our earlier research we delivered the forbearance decision first, then the forgiving or unforgiving message. It may be that a recency effect in the delivery of the forbearance manipulation changed its effects. Or, since the manipulation of forbearance and the measure of interpersonal justice were closer together in time in this study, it may be that this study captures a momentary or episodic change in interpersonal justice perceptions, rather than a lasting one.

In either case, future research in this area may want to carefully examine how these dynamics unfold over time in victim-transgressor interactions. The timing and sequence with which forgiveness and forbearance are offered appear to be consequential in predicting how transgressors respond. Mitchell and James (2001) called on researchers to attend carefully to the “specification of when things happen”; our data seem to suggest that such a focus is warranted here.

Further attention is also needed to examine the mechanisms that drive prosocial responses to being forgiven. In our study, we speculated that some of the benefits of received forgiveness might come from increased relational and interdependent self-construal. We found no support for this hypothesis, nor our related prediction that forgiveness would trigger identification with the group. We also suggested that social exchange might play a role. People pay back the
‘favour’ of forgiveness with helpful, conciliatory behaviour. We found mixed support for this view. Obligation drove collaborative conflict management, but it did not seem to drive either of the other effects observed. Obligation did not mediate the link between forgiveness and accommodative conflict resolution, and it did not mediate the link between forgiveness and participants’ overall contributions to the group task. We speculate below about what alternative mechanisms might be at play.

One potential avenue for future explanation might be the moral emotion of gratitude. In previous research (Witvliet, Ludwig & Bauer, 2002), receiving forgiveness actually lowered feelings of guilt and shame, but dramatically increased feelings of gratitude. It is possible our measure of obligation asked the wrong questions: It asked about helping the victim in terms of duties, obligations, and imperatives. McCullough and colleagues (2001) argue that gratitude is associated with reciprocated benevolence, but describe it in very different terms:

The motivational effects of gratitude are probably distinct from those of ... indebtedness. Most people experience indebtedness as an unpleasant and aversive psychological state... In contrast, gratitude is a pleasant emotion... linked to positive psychological states such as contentment, happiness, pride, and hope.

(McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons & Larson, 2001: 253)

Gratitude, like guilt, motivates reciprocity and prosociality. But unlike guilt, it would seem that gratitude does so not by making transgressors feel beholden and obliged, but rather by triggering in them a selfless desire to help. Forgiveness may lead people to help because they want to, rather than because they feel they have to. This study’s design failed to capture this sentiment, and we encourage future researchers to explore and compare the roles of guilt and gratitude as potential sources of prosocial behaviour in response to forgiveness.
A second explanation would focus on cognitive load. It is possible that receiving forgiveness enhances the quality of contributions to the group by lessening the transgressor’s cognitive resource availability. Previous research shows that being unforgiving (as a victim) is a source of cognitive load that can interfere with the creative process (Fehr, 2010). It may be that being unforgiven (as a transgressor) occupies cognitive resources in a similar way. In fact, Fehr argues that the cognitive rigidity and depleted mental resources result from conflict, and are released by forgiveness. The same argument can be seen from the transgressor’s perspective: Having a grudge held against you might promote rumination about the transgression and conflict that occupies cognitive resources, depleting task performance. Future research might consider whether the effects observed here can be explained with a focus on cognitive load theory.
Figures

Figure 1: Mediational Path from Forgiveness to Obligation

* = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001. Dashed line signifies the direct path from the independent to the dependent variable, controlling for the indirect path.

Figure 2: Mediational Path from Forgiveness to Collaboration

† = p < .10, * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001. Dashed line signifies the direct path from the independent to the dependent variable, controlling for the indirect path.
Figure 3: Effect of Forgiveness on Contributions to Group Task

Forgiveness Manipulation

Error Bars: +/- 1 SE
### Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations and Reliabilities

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† = p<.10; * = p<.05; ** = p<.01; *** = p<.001
References


Chapter 4: Teammate Responses to Observed Interpersonal Forgiveness

Abstract

Focusing on trust violations as a phenomenon that occurs within ‘embedded dyads’ (transgressors and victims in the social context of a team), we examine teammates’ responses when they witness a trust breach between two coworkers. Drawing on a social learning perspective, we make predictions about how direct victims’ choices to forgive or hold a grudge, and to forbear or punish, could influence coworkers’ own response through observational learning. We also consider a social information processing perspective, conceptualizing forgiveness as a social cue -- a signal -- to teammates about the functioning of the group. In a series of two vignette studies, we place participants in the role of a teammate observing a trust violation between two coworkers. We test the effect of forgiveness on participants’ attitudes toward both the transgressor and the team in general, and whether those effects interact with the victim’s choice to forbear, to punish, or (in Study 2) to seek restorative justice. We did not find evidence to support our prediction that observational learning from the victim would shape teammates’ own forgiveness. We found mixed support for the signaling effect of forgiveness: Across both studies, we did find that observing forgiveness led teammates to expect more collective efficacy and identify more strongly with the team. We found that this effect was mediated by forgiveness’ effect on justice perceptions. Forgiveness was found to signal cohesion to teammates, but only when the victim sought justice rather than forbearing (Study 1), and only in the case of restorative, rather than retributive, justice (Study 2). We close by discussing the implications of our findings for the study of forgiveness in the organizational context.
Though the “paradigmatic case” in forgiveness research involves a transgressor and victim in isolation (Fincham, 2000), this corresponds poorly with the realities of work that occurs in interdependent groups. In the workplace, trust, trust breach and forgiveness still occur within dyads -- but they are what Burt and Knez (1995; 1996) call “embedded dyads”. Interactions within these dyads are observed by, have an influence on, and are often responded to by group members outside of the dyad. Whether a victim is forgiving (that is, changes their motives from revenge and avoidance toward benevolence) and forbearing (exercises restraint from punishing the transgressor) is something that may be witnessed by others in the social context of the team.

Research into how forgiveness and forbearance shape post-breach team dynamics must take into account the attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of teammates outside of this dyad. However, most previous forgiveness research has focused exclusively on the transgressor and victim, ignoring what Worthington (2005) calls ‘involved observers’. Teammates, as such involved observers, can be influenced by forgiveness and forbearance in two ways. First, observing a victim forgive and/or forbear could influence their own attitudes and behaviour toward the transgressor. And secondly, that same experience could shape their beliefs and actions toward the team and its members more broadly. This focus fits with the movement in trust research toward an interest in the role of third parties (Burt & Knez, 1995; Brodt & Neville, forthcoming; Chung & Jackson, 2011; Lau & Liden, 2008).

In this paper, we consider two ways in which observing forgiveness (or unforgiveness) and forbearance (or punishment) can influence the attitudes and behaviours of teammates outside of the transgressor-victim dyad. First, we argue that forgiveness can spread from victims to teammates through observational learning. Secondly, we argue that forgiveness serves as a
social cue, signaling the value and cohesion of the group, promoting identification and pro-
organizational attitudes. We describe the results of two vignette studies, which fail to confirm
our observation-learning perspective, and provide mixed evidence for the role of forgiveness as a
signal to teammates. We conclude by discussing the role of justice in predicting teammates’
responses to observed forgiveness, and the challenge of promoting forgiveness in the
organizational context.

**Theoretical Elaboration**

In the wake of an observed transgression, what factors lead teammates to choose to
forgive transgressors themselves? When will third parties like teammates take punitive action on
behalf of the direct victim? Previous research has had relatively little focus on third parties as
forgivers in their own right, perhaps because the primary right to respond is presumed to belong
to the direct victim of a breach (Griswold, 2007). However, it is important to understand what
leads teammates to forgive, since the empirical record suggests that as a general rule, they are
often less forgiving than direct victims are (Green, Burnette & Davis, 2008). If there are
organizational benefits to forgiveness, these might be easily undone if the direct victim’s
forgiveness is outweighed by the grudge of one or many of the victim’s teammates. In this
paper, we ask whether the forgiveness of the direct victim can spill over to encourage teammates
to forgive as well.
Modeling Forgiveness and Forbearance

We expect the reaction of the third parties like teammates to be influenced by observational learning (Bandura, 1977) from the victim’s response. Thoresen, Harris and Luskin (2001) apply this social-cognitive approach: Observing forgiveness, they argue, can promote the practice of forgiveness through a modeling effect. When teammates witness forgiveness, it can serve as a morally ‘elevating’ experience, propelling them to seek and demonstrate similarly virtuous behaviour (Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004). “All human beings possess the capacity to be virtuous, and are inspired by the demonstration of virtuous behaviour,” argue Cameron and Caza (2002). McCullough, Sandage and Worthington (1997: 109) suggest that the experience of witnessing forgiveness can show us the righteousness of such a response: “Learning how other people forgive,” they write, “can motivate us to forgive those who harm us... by seeing the nobility of forgiveness in the face of injustice.”

The response of the direct victim also offers teammates social information about the breach, allowing them to make inferences about the severity and impact of the violation, and signaling that the response chosen by the victim is socially appropriate.

We also expect that when victims choose to forgive and forbear (that is, they chose to forgo punishing the transgressor), their forbearance will also shape teammates’ own forbearance. When victims choose to forbear, they signal to others in the team that they do not desire redress. Teammates, even if they want to punish (because they feel a ‘restorative impulse’ rooted in moral outrage; Darley & Pittman, 2003), may nonetheless follow the victim’s lead and forbear as well. If observers are indeed seeking to punish the offender on behalf of the victim, it becomes difficult to rationalize such a pursuit when the victim themselves have chosen not to do so.
In both cases, modeling one’s behaviour after the victim’s own may also help to afford the victim a sense of control that may have been lost during a transgression. By providing the victim with autonomy and following their lead, teammate observers demonstrate deference to the victim. Following the victim’s lead serves as a gesture of respect to the victim, and a reaffirmation that the control over the team’s response rests with them. Research shows that forgiveness serves to restore feelings of control to the victim (Witvliet, Ludwig & Vander Laan, 2001), and that people prototypically associate forgiveness with gaining peace of mind (Kearns & Fincham, 2004). Teammates may be reluctant to undermine the direct victim’s choice to forgive, since it would threaten to erode the control and peace of mind they presumably gained through that change.

We anticipate one exception to our overall expectation that teammates will follow the forgiving and forbearing paths chosen by the direct victim. When direct victims are forbearing but unforgiving (i.e., express that they are motivated toward revenge but behaviourally forbear and do not punish the transgressor), teammates may view this as ‘unfinished business’. The unforgiving posture may signal that the victim desires punishment, even if for some reason they are unable or unwilling to seek it out themselves. Jones (2010: 133-134) argues that teammates will seek revenge on behalf of the direct victim out of a deontological need to right wrongs. If victims have not punished the transgressor or expressly signaled with forgiveness that they do not desire punishment for the transgressor, teammates may seek to intervene.

Our consideration of teammates’ responses contributes to the embryonic literature on how third parties come to forgive transgressors for acts committed against others (Brown, Wohl, &

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6 This impulse may be even stronger in contexts with strongly institutionalized ‘honour cultures’ (Cohen & Nisbett, 1997), particularly when groups are tight-knit (Gelfand, Shteynberg, Lee, Lun, Lyons, Bell, Chiao, Bayan Bruss, Al Dabbah, Aycan, Abdel-Latif, Dagher, Khashan & Soomro, 2012)
Exline, 2008; Green, Burnette, & Davis, 2008). This perspective is important for organizations, since (in the team context), any salutary effects of the victim’s forgiveness or forbearance could easily be undone by the unforgiveness or retaliation of a teammate.

 Forgiveness as a Signal: Teammates’ Attitudes and Behaviours Toward the Team

Observing forgiveness and forbearance are likely to influence broader attitudes about the group. Trust breach can be a warning alarm to teammates, and in teams with high interdependence, where trust is vital, a breach may mark the beginning of a period of lowered cohesion and efficacy. The value of the team and its appeal as a target for effort may be eroded, as team members anticipate withdrawal (Robinson, 1996) or deteriorated performance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001).

So, we expect that the victim’s response will be carefully attended to as a form of social information (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) -- a cue in the social context that indicates what attitudes are appropriate and what expectations to hold about the consequences of the transgression for the team. In particular, we propose that both forgiveness and forbearance serve to signal the efficacy, cohesion, and value of the group.

Collective efficacy. In addition, since teammates of unforgiving victims are likely to expect future distrust and conflict in the team, they should expect that the team’s resources will be spent monitoring and attempting to control each other’s behaviour. This is likely to reduce perceptions of collective efficacy, the belief that the team is collectively capable of succeeding in its tasks (Tasa, Taggar, & Seijts, 2007). By contrast, when the victim is forgiving, it signals that the resources of the team are not likely to be spent in counterproductive cycles of suspicion and
revenge. Forgiveness, therefore, will signal an increased likelihood that the team will be collectively efficacious in the future.

**Cohesion.** Trust violations are also likely to degrade teammates’ perceptions of the team’s cohesion -- that is, their team’s morale and affective bonds (Chin, Salisbury, Pearson, & Stollak, 1999; Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998). But forgiveness may help to restore some of these bonds. Forgiveness is associated with relational commitment and ingroup ties (Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, 2003; Wohl & Branscombe, 2005; Younger, Piferi, Jobe, & Lawler, 2004). Compared to unforgiveness, it communicates that the victim values group ties, and is engaged in what Aquino and colleagues describe as problem-solving coping aimed at salvaging social relationships (Aquino, Grover, Goldman & Folger, 2003). Since forgiveness communicates that the victim values the group and intends to preserve the integrity of the group’s ties, we expect observing forgiveness will promote expected cohesion.

**Identification and effort.** If forgiveness does enhance certainty about the cohesion and efficacy of the team, it is likely to promote the sense that membership in the team is valuable and worthwhile. We expect that identification (i.e., the “self-definitional aspect of organizational membership”; Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006) will be enhanced by observing victims forgiving their transgressor.

As a corollary, we would expect teammates who observe the victim’s forgiveness to choose collective goals over individual ones (Deshon, Kozlowski, Schmidt, Milner, & Wiechmann, 2004) more often than those who witness unforgiving responses by the victim. Identification, of course, promotes citizenship behaviours directed at the team (cf. Janssen & Huang, 2008; van Dick, Grojean, Christ & Wiseke, 2006) But decisions to pursue
interdependent work also rest on assumptions about the group’s ability to cooperate and function together. When further discord is expected, the safest response may be to retreat to independent work. If forgiveness signals that the group is likely to be effective and cohesive in the future, it allows team members to feel more confident in contributing to group efforts.

**The interaction of forbearance.** We expect that forbearance will moderate some of these effects. Even when victims are forgiving, their decision to punish the transgressor is likely to contribute to concerns of counter-retaliation. There is considerable evidence that trust breach often involves differing attributions between transgressor and victims as to the cause of the breach (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998; Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002). The risk of punishment is that what is perceived by the victim as just or fair may be perceived by the transgressor as unjust or disproportionately harsh, leading to an escalation or expansion of the original conflict (Kim & Smith, 1993). Thus, the positive effects of forgiveness on cohesion, efficacy, identification and group goals are likely to be strongest when the forgiveness is accompanied by forbearance rather than punishment. Similarly, when forbearance is offered without forgiveness, observers are likely to simply be waiting for the other shoe to drop. Without a restoration of benevolence, forbearance may be considered temporary, with retaliation possible at any moment. We therefore predict that teammates will view the team as most likely to be cohesive and efficacious in the future when victims are both forgiving and forbearing.
Study 1

Design

We tested our predictions in a vignette study with a 2x2 factorial design, crossing the observed forgiveness of the victim (unforgiving; forgiving) and their choice to punish the transgressor (punitive; forbearing). We asked participants to imagine themselves as teammates who witness a trust breach between two fellow team members. After reading two manipulations (describing the direct victim’s forgiveness and their forbearance), participants complete a questionnaire measuring their attitudes and intentions toward the transgressor and the team in general.

Participants

Participants in this study were 137 undergraduate business students (57% female) who were volunteers in a departmental research participant pool. In exchange for their participation in the study, participants received a bonus of 0.5% toward their final grade in a course of their choice, and a chance to win a gift card to the campus computer store.

Procedure

Participants were run in groups of 30-50 and were seated in a large classroom (80-student capacity) with ample space in between them as they completed the study online using their own personal computers. The experimenter wandered among the participants to ensure that participants completed the study independently. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions in the 2x2 between-subjects factorial design.
All participants were asked to imagine themselves in the role of a summer intern at a consulting firm. Participants read a scenario in which they saw a trust breach occur between two of the other summer interns in their group. In the scenario, these two interns work together to prepare a pitch for the firm’s senior partners, and one of them steals credit for the work and fails to acknowledge the other’s contributions. The vignette is presented in Appendix C.

In the punishment condition, participants read that the victim reported the betrayal to a partner in the firm and that the transgressor was disciplined. In the forbearance condition, participants learned that the victim chose not to report the betrayal, saving the transgressor from punishment. In the forgiveness manipulation, participants either read that afterwards, the victim “no longer felt mad... didn’t want to hurt [the transgressor] anymore... [and] wanted to end the quarrel and restore their relationship.” By contrast, in the unforgiveness (grudge) condition, participants read that the victim remained “consumed with anger... never wanted to have anything else to do with [the transgressor], and expressed a desire to get even”. The full text of the manipulations are presented in Appendix C.

After reading the vignette, participants completed a series of scale measures, including their own forgiveness (in the role of a teammate) of the transgressor, their behavioural intention to punish the transgressor, and their perceptions and attitudes toward the team (perceptions of cohesion and expected collective efficacy, along with feelings of identification with the team).

In addition, participants were presented with a time-allocation choice as a way of measuring their willingness to pursue collective over individual goals. In their role as a team member, they were presented with the decision of how to allocate five hours of work time, and given two options. First, they could allot time to a team task (shared work and shared rewards),
and secondly, they could allot time to an individual task (individual work and individual rewards).

Participants then completed two short manipulation check questions, and were then thanked, provided with course credit, and debriefed.

**Dependent Measures**

Items and instructions for the scales can be found in Appendix C.

**Forgiveness.** Participants completed a slightly adapted TRIM-18 measure of forgiveness, measuring their vengeance (e.g., “I would want to make Alex pay”), avoidance (e.g., “I would want to avoid Alex”) and benevolence motives (e.g., “I would let go of my anger so that I could have a healthy working relationship with Alex.”) toward the transgressor. Previous research has shown that the TRIM-18, though comprised of three different motives, does measure forgiveness as a unidimensional construct (McCullough, Root Luna, Berry, Tabak & Bono, 2010). As a single-factor, 18-item, 7-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree), the TRIM-18 exhibited acceptable reliability (α=.87).

**Intention to punish.** Forbearance was measured using a four-item, seven-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree; α=.86) created for this study, capturing the participant’s intention to take specific retaliatory action. The items read, “I wouldn’t just get mad, I would get even against Alex”, “I would punish Alex myself”, “I would personally get revenge against Alex”, and “I would make sure to get justice against Alex”. Participants were asked to answer about whether they would take specific action, “answering about how you would act, regardless of how you felt.”
**Expected cohesion.** To measure expectations about team cohesion, we used six items adapted for the group context from the Perceived Cohesion Scale (Chin, Salisbury, Pearson & Stollak, 1999). Sample items from this scale include, “I think I am going to feel like a real member of this group.” and “I think I will feel content to be part of this group.” Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). The scale exhibited acceptable reliability (α=.94).

**Expected collective efficacy.** Participants’ expectations about their group’s collective efficacy (in their role as a prospective team member) were measured using six items adapted from the Collective Efficacy Beliefs Scale (Riggs & Knight, 1994). Sample items include, “I expect this team will have above-average ability,” and “I think this team will be poor compared to other teams doing similar work” (reverse-coded). Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree; the reliability of the scale was acceptable (α=.85).

**Expected identification.** Participants indicated how closely they would expect to identify with their team in the remainder of their summer internship, using an adaptation of the Inclusion of Others in Self (IOS; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992) measure, a single-item pictorial measure of closeness with the group. Participants chose one of seven sets of circles labeled ‘self’ and ‘team’, from not overlapping at all to almost entirely overlapping. Responses were coded from 1 to 7, and the item was used as an interval-level variable.

**Group vs. individual goal pursuit.** Participants were asked to imagine a day later in their summer internship, having to make a decision about how to spend the remainder of a workday. They were given five hours to divide between two tasks. The first task was a shared team task involving interdependent work and shared rewards, while the second was an
independent task with individual rewards. Participants allocated time using two sliders on the online survey page. The two sliders allocated time to individual and collective goals, and their sum had to total five hours. This created a continuous measure of group goal pursuit.

**Dependent Measures**

Two questions were included as manipulation checks. In two multiple-choice questions, we asked participants to indicate whether they recalled the victim punishing the transgressor or choosing to not punish, and whether they recalled the victim expressing forgiveness or a grudge.

**Results**

**Manipulation Fidelity**

To ensure that participants had attended to the forgiveness and forbearance manipulations, we included two manipulation checks at the end of the study. Participants who could not recall the (un)forgivingness or forbearance/punitiveness of the victim in the scenario, or who recalled it incorrectly, were excluded from the analysis. Data from 15 participants were excluded from the analysis on the basis of failing one or both of the manipulation checks, leaving a sample of 122 participants. The cell sizes were 31 (unforgiveness and punishment), 30 (unforgiveness and forbearance), 31 (forgiveness and punishment), and 30 (forgiveness and forbearance).
Multivariate Analysis

The means, standard deviations, reliabilities and correlations for the dependent variables are presented in Table 1.

We began by conducting a multivariate analysis of variance to examine the effects of our manipulations (and their interaction) on the six dependent variables. We found that both forgiveness (Wilks’ $\lambda=.94$, $F[6,113]=1.19$, $p=.32$, $n.s.$) and forbearance (Wilks’ $\lambda=.97$, $F[6,113]=.53$, $p=.78$, $n.s.$) had non-significant multivariate main effects. However, as expected, we found a significant interaction between forgiveness and forbearance on the dependent measures (Wilks’ $\lambda=.87$, $F[6,113]=2.94$, $p=.01$).

Univariate Analysis

Next, we examined the univariate results of the forgiveness-forbearance interaction. Contrary to our predictions, we found no interactive effect of our forgiveness and forbearance independent variables on four of the six dependent measures: Intention to punish ($F[1,118]=1.42$, $p=.24$, $n.s.$), expected collective efficacy ($F[1,118]=.52$, $p=.47$, $n.s.$), identification ($F[1,18]=1.19$, $p=.28$, $n.s.$), and the allocation of time to teamwork ($F[1,18]=2.08$, $p=.15$, $n.s.$).

However, we found a significant interaction, both with the same pattern of results, for the participants’ own forgiveness of the transgressor ($F[1,118]=9.41$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.07$) and for their expectations about the team’s cohesion ($F[1,118]=8.11$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.06$). For both, the victim’s forgiveness has a positive impact (increasing the participant’s own willingness to forgive, and
improving their expectations about group cohesion) -- but only when the victim also punishes the transgressor.

When victims punished the transgressor, their choice to forgive increased participants’ own willingness to forgive ($M_{grudge} = 3.22$, $M_{forgive} = 3.66$, $t[59]=-2.72$, $p < .01$). But when victims were forbearing (forgoing punishment), their forgivingness did not have any effect on participants’ willingness to forgive; in fact, it led to a marginally-significant decrease in participants’ forgiveness ($M_{grudge} = 3.45$, $M_{forgive} = 3.11$, $t[59]=1.70$, $p = .09$). (See Figure 1). Evidently, observing a forgiving victim only has salutary effects on fellow teammates when the victim also exerts some punishment; otherwise, the victim’s forgiveness has little effect on the observing teammates.

Similarly, forgiveness had a positive effect on participants’ expectations about the group’s cohesion when the victim also punished the transgressor ($M_{grudge} = 4.28$, $M_{forgive} = 5.42$, $t[59]=-2.73$, $p < .01$), but not when the victim was forbearing and withheld punishment toward the transgressor ($M_{grudge} = 5.06$, $M_{forgive} = 4.63$, $t[59]=1.19$, $p = .24$, n.s.). These results are presented in Figures 1 and 2.

In addition to these interactions, two predicted univariate main effects of forgiveness were found. It is important to interpret these cautiously, however, given the non-significant multivariate test statistic paired with the small effect sizes. As predicted, victims’ forgiveness increased observers’ expectations of team collective efficacy ($F[1,118]=4.33$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2 = .04$; $M_{grudge} = 4.22$, $M_{forgive} = 4.61$), and their feelings of identification with the team ($F[1,118]=3.45$, $p=.07$, $\eta^2 = .03$; $M_{grudge} = 4.10$, $M_{forgive} = 4.48$).
Discussion

Our results suggest that teammates do not simply model their own attitudes toward a transgressor based on the direct victim’s own attitudes. Whether teammates follow the victim’s lead seems to be contingent on the victim’s decision to punish the transgressor. When victims punish as well as forgive, teammates also forgive. But when victims’ forgiveness is gratis -- when they fail to impose a sanction on the transgressor -- it does not appear to provide a convincing model for teammates to forgive as well. This finding extends previous work on the so-called ‘sequencing of virtues’ (Tripp & Bies, 2009) that suggests that justice must often precede forgiveness (Exline, Worthington, Hill & McCullough, 2003). For third parties like teammates, it would appear that seeing justice served may be necessary in order to see the victim’s forgiveness as “noble” (McCullough et al, 1997) and worthy of modeling their own behaviour after. In this study, we looked only at a narrow form of justice-seeking -- that is, punishment. In the study that follows, we extend our consideration to different means by which victims can close the ‘injustice gap’ (Exline, Worthington, Hill & McCullough, 2003) resulting from trust breach.

The results of this study, in any case, underscore the need for forgiveness research to continue and deepen its consideration of parties outside of the transgressor-victim dyad. Though Benn (1996) scoffs at the notion of third parties forgiving transgressors for harms caused to others (he describes the idea as akin to a “lunatic who believes he is the Queen conferring ‘knighthoods’”), it appears that third parties have transgression-related motives that depart from those of direct victims. More research is necessary to better understand what types of justice-
serving are necessary in order for third parties like teammates to follow the lead of the direct victims. Our study looked at only one kind of justice (that we might label retributive).

A comment is also merited about our main effects of forgiveness. We found that forgiveness, regardless of the form of justice employed by the victim, improved teammates’ expectations about the team’s collective efficacy, and made them feel more strongly identified with the team. The small and marginally-significant effects, of course, suggest that replication is in order before too much confidence is attached to the outcomes. And, greater insight is still required into the mechanism that links forgiveness to these outcomes. What is it about observing forgiveness that leads observers to identify with the team and view it as likely to be efficacious?

**Study 2**

In our second study, we sought to both replicate and extend the findings of our first study. In particular, we sought to examine the role that the form of justice might play in shaping the attitudes of teammates. In the first study, we contrasted justice-seeking (reporting the transgression to a manager and having the transgressor punished) with forbearance. We found that forgiveness was, for certain outcomes, contingent on punishment being part of the mix. When the victim acted punitively, their forgiveness led teammates to look more forgivingly on the transgressor themselves, and expect greater cohesion in the team. If the victim had not sought justice though, their forgiveness had little impact on their teammates’ own forgiveness or expected cohesion.

But trust breach in organizational life has options between the extremes of vengeful retribution and passive forbearance. As discussed earlier, previous research shows people often
feel a thirst for justice that must be quenched before they feel willing to forgive. But Aquino and colleagues’ (2006) conception is somewhat agnostic to the source of justice. They argue that forgiveness can be promoted to varying degrees by any restoration of justice, whether from formal organizational sanctions or from individual vigilantism. Indeed, it may be possible to bridge the ‘injustice gap’ (Exline et al., 2003) created by a transgression and promote forgiveness without necessarily resorting to retributive discipline.

In fact, rather than using disciplinary approaches based on punishment, some organizations may promote processes of restorative justice. Restorative justice focuses on conciliation and the reaffirmation of shared values as a means to restore justice after a breach or transgression (Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather & Platow, 2010). Restorative justice can include a wide range of practices (restorative community service, victim-offender mediation, restitution chosen by the victim, offender mentoring, reeducation, etc.), but there is no single definitive, cardinal practice (Bazemore, 1998). The defining characteristics of restorative justice are its underlying aims and philosophy: To promote restitution and healing for the victim, reintegration for the transgressor, and a restoration of shared values for both (Goodstein & Aquino, 2010).

We expect that while observers will seek to see justice done, they will not necessarily fixate only on punitive approaches. As Bies and Tripp (2001) note, justice is not a singular category of behaviour, but rather any active process that serves to respond to perceptions of wrongdoing and harm. It can be, as they argue, a perfectly “... cool and calculated response”, and need not always involve a red-hot impulse toward vengeance. We have established in Study 1 that teammates, like victims themselves, tend not to look favourably on forgiveness offered without some way of also restoring justice. However, we argue that retribution is not a necessary
characteristic of justice-seeking, and that restorative approaches may be equally quenching to teammates’ thirst for justice.

By virtue of restorative practices’ tendency to reintegrate the offender and seek conciliation, we predict that restorative justice, relative to retributive justice, will lead teammates to expect greater cohesion and collective efficacy in the future. Retributive justice runs the risk of being seen by the transgressor as an overreaction, and sparking off a vicious cycle of retaliation, counter-retaliation, and ongoing feuding. Restorative justice, we predict, will satisfy teammate observers in the same way that retributive justice does -- but will improve upon retributive justice in terms of teammates’ expectations for future performance and cohesion.

Method

Design

As in Study 1, participants read a scenario involving a workplace trust breach in which they were coworkers on a work team with both the victim and transgressor. The trust violation described involved one teammate promising to take a graveyard shift for another, failing to show up for the shift, and then denying that they had ever made the promise. After reading about the transgression, participants read about the victim’s response.

We manipulated both the victim’s forgiveness (forgiveness vs. grudge, as in Study 1), and their behavioural response to the transgression. In this study, we presented one of three behavioural responses: (1) Forbearance, where the victim chose not to report the transgressor to managers, saving them any kind of punishment, (2) Retributive justice, where the transgressor
was brought before a manager to determine responsibility and mete out punishment, or (3) Restorative justice, where both parties were brought together in a “community conference” aimed at allowing both sides to develop a shared understanding of the transgression, and to reaffirm the values harmed in the breach. Crossed fully with forgiveness, these responses created a 2x3 between-subjects factorial design. The full text of the transgression and the various responses (manipulations) are presented in Appendix C.

Participants

Participants were 231 undergraduate business students (46% female) drawn from the same participant pool as Study 1; no participant completed both studies. Participants were remunerated with partial course credit and the opportunity to win one of five $20 gift cards.

Procedure

As in Study 1, participants were run in groups of 30-50 in a large classroom, and the study was completed online using participants’ personal computers.

Measures

The measures are presented in Appendix C. The same measures were used as in Study 1 to measure participants’ forgiveness of the transgressor (α=.89), intention to punish the transgressor (α=.84), their identification with the team, and their expectations about the team’s cohesion (α=.93) and collective efficacy (α=.84).

Justice perceptions. In addition to these measures, we also asked participants about their overall impressions about the procedural justice in the group in general. The items were
created for this study (though they are heavily adapted from original items found in Blader & Tyler, 2003). The scale ($\alpha=.90$) included four items rated on a seven-item (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree) Likert scale; a sample item read, “Issues and decisions that come up in this workgroup will be handled fairly.”

**Manipulation Checks**

Consistent with the approach used in the first study, manipulations were checked with two simple multiple-choice recall questions. The first, like the previous study, asked whether the victim had expressed forgiveness or a grudge. The second asked participants to recall the justice manipulation, offering three options (transgression not reported; disciplinary hearing for punishment; community conference for restoring shared values).

**Results**

**Manipulation Fidelity**

As with the first study, we included two manipulation checks questions at the end of the study to ensure that participants recalled having read about the victim’s response (forgiveness or forbearance, and either forbearance, retributive justice, or restorative justice). We excluded any participant who incorrectly recalled (or could not recall) the forgiveness manipulation or justice-type manipulation that they read during the study. A total of 47 participants (20%) were excluded from the analysis for incorrectly recalling one or both of the manipulations, leaving a total sample of 184 participants. Though this is a substantial exclusion rate, it is below the rates of instructional manipulation check failures reported by Oppenheimer and colleagues.


(Oppenheimer, Meyvis & Davidenko, 2009); we attribute the rate to fast or incautious reading of the second page of our vignette, which contained the experimental manipulation (the study was conducted near the end of term, and we have anecdotally observed higher rates of gaming and satisficing during these periods in the academic year). The final cell sizes were as follows:

Forgiveness and forbearance, n=33; forgiveness and retributive justice, n=26; forgiveness and restorative justice, n=27. Unforgiveness and forbearance, n=35; unforgiveness and retributive justice, n=39; unforgiveness and restorative justice, n=24.

Main Effects

We found a marginally-significant multivariate effect of forgiveness on the dependent variables (Wilks’ $\lambda=.94$, $F[6,172]=1.85$, $p=.09$). We found no main effects of the approach to justice on the dependent measures (Wilks’ $\lambda=.93$, $F[12,342]=1.15$, $p=.32$).

Consistent with the univariate results from Study 1, we found main effects of forgiveness on expectations of collective efficacy and identification. Teammates who observed the direct victim’s forgiveness of the transgressor expected marginally greater collective efficacy ($M_{\text{grudge}} = 3.93$, $SD=.92$, $M_{\text{forgive}} = 4.16$, $SD=.90$; $F[1,177]=3.33$, $p=.07$, $\eta^2 = .02$) and felt significantly more identification with the team ($M_{\text{grudge}} = 4.06$, $SD=1.11$ $M_{\text{forgive}} = 4.43$, $SD=1.11$; $F[1,177]=5.79$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2 = .03$). Though caution is warranted because of the small magnitude of the effects and the marginal multivariate test statistic, these results are consistent with the direction of effects observed in the previous study.

We also found a significant effect of forgiveness on perceptions of justice: When the direct victim was forgiving, teammates were more likely to see the team as generally a fair place
to work ($M_{\text{grudge}} = 4.56$, SD=1.12, $M_{\text{forgive}} = 4.97$, SD=1.10, $F[1,177]=7.25$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2 = .04$). Interestingly, the form of justice employed (forbearing, retributive, or restorative) had no main effect on justice perceptions ($F[2,177]=1.29$, $p=.28$, n.s.).

**Interactive Effects**

We did not find an overall multivariate interactive effect on the dependent variables (Wilks’ $\lambda=.95$, $F[12,344]=.76$, $p=.69$, n.s.). And, examining the univariate results, we find that our results do not consistently replicate the first study with regard to teammates’ forgiveness. In the first study, we found that forgiveness spilled over from victim to observer if the transgressor had been punished. Here, we find no interaction of the victim’s forgiveness and forbearance on teammate forgiveness ($F[2,177]=.64$, $p=.53$, n.s.). However, we do find a marginal interactive effect ($F[2,177]=2.47$, $p=.09$) of forgiveness and justice type on perceptions of the team’s cohesion. As shown in Figure 4, we found that this effect is driven by a contrast between forgiveness and unforgiveness when restorative justice is employed ($M_{\text{forg}} = 5.94$, SD=1.21; $M_{\text{grudge}} = 4.99$, SD=1.47, t[49]=-2.47, $p=.02$). Forgiveness does not have an effect on cohesion perceptions when the victim chooses either forbearance ($t[66]=.74$, $p=.46$, n.s.) or retributive justice ($t[63]=-.78$, $p=.44$, n.s.). As before, this effect should be interpreted cautiously given the marginal overall F-statistic (and the differences reported here are uncorrected for familywise error, despite involving multiple comparisons). However, our tentative conclusion from these data is that restorative justice may be beneficial in promoting perceptions of cohesion -- but only when victims signal through their forgiveness that the restorative justice was adequate or appropriate. We consider this result further in the discussion.
Contrary to our expectations, we did not find an interactive effect of the form of justice used and the victim’s forgiveness on how fair participants perceived the group to be. The main effect of forgiveness was unqualified by the form of justice used (F[2,177]=1.91, p=.15, n.s.). However, the marginal means are consistent with our predictions. Conducting three contrasts between forgiveness and unforgiveness in each of the justice conditions, we find that forgiveness only significantly changes perceptions of justice in the case of restorative justice (M_{grudge}= 4.49, SD=1.25; M_{forg}= 5.36, SD=.68; t[49]=-3.00, p<.01), not in the cases of forbearance (t[66]=- .23, p=.82, n.s.) or retributive justice (t[63]=-1.41, p=.16, n.s.). The pattern of results for justice perceptions are consistent with those found for expected cohesion. These means are presented in Figure 5.

Post-hoc Mediation Analysis

We found evidence suggesting that forgiveness can be a signal of the group’s functioning. To explore this effect further and understand its underlying mechanism, we used Hayes’ (2012) PROCESS tool for testing mediation. In particular, we looked to see if the effects on identification and efficacy perceptions resulted from forgiveness’ unexpected effect on justice perceptions. We found evidence of full mediation in both cases. For identification, forgiveness had a significant total effect on identification (b = .37, t[183]=2.24, p<.05), which was reduced to non-significance (b = .24, t[183]=1.50, p=.14, n.s.) when controlling for the indirect path from forgiveness through justice (b = .41, t[183]=2.50, p=.01) to identification (b = .32, t[183]=4.49, p<.001). The marginally-significant total effect of forgiveness on perceptions of collective efficacy (b = .23, t[184]=1.73, p=.09) is reduced to non-significance (b = .02, t[184]=.16, p=.87,
n.s.) when controlling for the indirect path from forgiveness, through justice (\(b = .40, \text{t}[184]=2.45, p<.05\)), to collective efficacy perceptions (\(b = .53, \text{t}[184]=11.61, p<.001\)). Both mediation models were confirmed with bootstrapping, extracting 1,000 samples and generating point estimates and bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals. The confidence intervals for the indirect excluded zero for both identification (point estimate = .13, 95% CIs .03 to .28) and collective efficacy (point estimate = .21, 95% CIs .05 to .40). The results of our mediation analysis are presented visually in Figure 3.

**Discussion**

The results of the second study extend and partially replicate those of the first study. Like Study 1, we found effects of observed forgiveness on collective efficacy perceptions and identification. In this study, we identified an unexpected mechanism for these effects -- perceptions of justice. Though the actual justice mechanism used had no effect on justice perceptions, forgiveness did. Forgiveness promoted perceptions that the team was just, and it was those justice perceptions that led participants to expect their team to be efficacious and identify with the team. We consider explanations for this effect later in the general discussion.

Our second study did not replicate the interactive effect of victims’ forgiveness and forbearance in shaping teammates’ own forgiveness of the victim. This may suggest that there are boundary conditions on this effect. One reason may be the certainty with which the victim’s behavioural response was presented. In Study 1, participants were told that the victim reported the breach, which “resulted in disciplinary action”; it was clear that the transgressor was punished. In Study 2, participants learned only that a meeting had been called with the purpose
of the manager “administer[ing] punishment for the transgression.” It may be that our failure to replicate the forgiveness-forbearance interaction may be that there was less certainty in the second study about whether the punishment had in fact occurred, or would occur. If future research affirms that the interaction only occurs in the presence of clear knowledge about the punitive outcome, it would underscore the importance of transparency in punishment processes (Neville & Brodt, 2010) as a means of assuring teammates that punishment has in fact occurred.

We turn to further comparisons and synthesis of the two studies’ results and implications in the general discussion below.

**General Discussion**

How do forgiveness and forbearance shape the perceptions and attitudes of teammates who observe a trust breach? Contrary to our expectations, we did not find that the form of justice employed had any influence by itself in how fair observers expected the team as a whole to be. But forgiveness did have such an effect. When victims were forgiving, teammates expected the team to be fairer and more collectively efficacious in the future, and they were more willing to invest their own identity in organizational membership. We found evidence for this relationship across both studies, albeit with small effect sizes that were in some cases only marginally-significant.

A mediation analysis in the second study provides empirical insight into why forgiveness leads teammates to think of the group as more functional and worthy of their identification. In each case, the effects were fully-mediated through justice perceptions. When victims were forgiving, teammates’ perceptions of justice in the team was higher, and it is through this
increase to justice perceptions that collective efficacy and identification are improved by forgiveness. However, why this is the case remains an open question. We think that forgiveness may serve as an important signal about the sufficiency of the process. They then extend this inference to the group as a whole: Forgiveness signals that justice was achieved in the context of the trust breach; this signals that the team tends to be just in general. We should not that this is not a wholly convincing explanation. Judgments about justice may not travel from the specific to the general as easily in an established team as it does in a vignette where the scenario is the only information the teammate has on which to base his or her impression of the team.

That said, the notion that teammates look to the victim’s forgiveness to make sense of whether the process of justice was adequate finds support in the pattern of interactive results. We found that the effect of forgiveness on justice perceptions was strongest in the case of restorative justice: When restorative justice was used but victims walked away carrying a grudge, teammates viewed the team as no more just than if the victim had been entirely forbearing. But, when the use of restorative justice left the victim ready to forgive the transgressor, teammates viewed the team as more just. Teammates may be willing to accept restorative justice, but they attend carefully to the victim’s response in determining whether such a process, lacking in retributive punishment, is actually just and acceptable.

In other words, forgiveness matters in teams, and not only for the members of the dyad directly involved in a trust breach. In the wake of a trust violation, forgiveness shapes the attitudes of other team members. Teammates attend to the victim’s forgiveness (or lack thereof), in setting their expectations about the team’s performance, setting their level of identification with the team, and (particularly in the case of restorative justice), assessing whether the
workplace is a fair environment in general. When a trust breach occurs in an organization, managers and team members may want to ensure that the approach taken is one that facilitates interpersonal forgiveness as an outcome, based on its importance as a signal to other members about the team’s functioning.

We do caution that organizations should avoid pressuring victims to forgive. Prior research suggests that the salutary effects of forgiveness can be reduced when it is offered out of a feeling of obligation (Huang & Enright, 2000), and that forgiveness offered before the transgressor provides amends can erode the victim’s self-respect (Luchies, Finkel, McNulty & Kumashiro, 2010). Indeed, when forgiveness does have a main effect on teammates’ perceptions, it is because forgiveness signals that the team is a fair and just environment. Though we did not directly test this, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that ongoing, one-sided forgiveness of an unrepentant transgressor would be unlikely to yield any of the effects on cohesion or identification that we found in the present study.

Limitations

Our evidence is particularly equivocal about the impact that the victim’s own forgiveness has on their teammates’ forgiveness. In our first study, we found that a forgiving victim seemed to convince teammates to be forgiving themselves, but only when the victim had punished the transgressor rather than offered forbearance. However, in our second study, we found no such effect (even when looking only at the retributive-justice and forbearance cells that were present in our first study). Our failure to replicate this effect across the two studies merits some scrutiny.
The most obvious difference between the studies relates to the nature of the transgression. In the first study, the trust breach involves stealing credit for shared work, while in the second study, the breach involves failing to live up to a promise to take a shift from a colleague. The scenarios do differ in important ways. The credit-stealing scenario seems like a very deliberate breach, while the shift-skipping scenario could be chalked up to a lapse of memory. But, on the other hand, the former scenario is likely more correctable than the latter (the harm has already been done. Recent research by Tomlinson and his colleagues has shown that the breach and repair of trust are influenced by the characteristics of the breach, including severity and magnitude (Tomlinson, 2011), causal attributions (Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009), and whether a broken promise is involved (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2004). The ‘virtue sequencing’ (first justice, then forgiveness) that appeared to guide teammates in our first study was not evident in our second study. We encourage future research to look more carefully at what context and situational characteristics are necessary for this forgiveness-forbearance interaction to shape teammates’ own forgiveness of a transgressor.

Another extension of this research might be to consider how forgiving shapes teammates’ perceptions of the victim. In our studies, we focused on responses to the transgressor. But it is possible that forgiving leads teammates to take a different view of the victim: They may respond negatively to forgiving and forbearing victims, for instance, because they are seen to be unwilling to enforce the social norms that the group needs to cohere and work effectively. Research on passive victim precipitation suggests that seemingly weak or helpless victims are often aggressed against (see the review in Aquino & O’Reilly, 2011). If forgiving and forbearing victims are seen as willfully passive, for instance, they may suffer backlash for forgiveness from
observers. This research question merits future investigation, since negative perceptions of forgivers may be one of the forces inhibiting people’s willingness to forgive in the workplace.

A limitation of both studies is the vignette approach used. This method allowed us to manipulate victim responses to a transgression, holding constant the details of the breach and the parties involved, to understand how observers respond. It afforded us the ability to carefully control for the vast individual differences in propensity to forgive, vengefulness, and a host of other unmeasured personality factors that might shape teammates’ responses to an observed trust breach. In both vignettes, we chose scenarios that were appropriate to the age and experience of our participants, who were undergraduate business students. In the first, participants imagined themselves in a summer internship; in the second, an entry-level professional job (a shift work support role in a commercial bank).

Overall, though, our experimental control came at the cost of ecological validity. With a vignette approach, we measure only participants’ stated intentions (cheap talk that may imperfectly correspond to how they might actually act in a real situation), and asked about their impressions and expectations about the team based on the rather minimal information offered in the vignette. We found, for instance, that none of our manipulations changed participants’ stated intentions to punish the transgressor personally. It may be that the psychology of the workplace context is lost somewhat in a short vignette: Participants do not have to actually work up the nerve to take action in this pen-and-paper context. And, on the other hand, participants also do not have to work alongside an unpunished transgressor. Our inability to find significant results related to specific punitive intent might result from the distance between the highly stylized environment of our study as compared with the richness of actual organizational life.
So, a complimentary line of future research might examine these same dynamics in the field. Doing so would cost some experimental control, but would enhance the ecological validity of the findings. It would also allow for the measurement of actual attitudes and behaviours toward the transgressor and group, rather than expectations and behavioural intentions alone. A longitudinal design in groups, for instance, could identify focal transgressions, and then track the attitudes and behaviours of both victims and teammates over time, allowing for the possibility of dynamic and bilateral influence, as victims influence teammates’ responses, and teammates’ responses influence victims’ own. Triangulating between observed workplace dynamics and the clear causal directionality established by the vignette studies in this paper would do a great deal to establish the robustness of our findings.
Figures

Figure 1:

Interaction of Victim’s Forgiveness and Forbearance on Teammate’s Forgiveness

[Graph showing interaction of victim’s forgiveness and forbearance on teammate’s forgiveness]
Figure 2: Interaction of Victim’s Forgiveness and Forbearance on Expected Cohesion

Victim's Forgiveness
- Unforgiving
- Forgiving

Teammate's Expectations of Cohesion

Victim's Choice of Punishment
Error Bars: +/- 1 SE
Figure 3: Effects of Victim Forgiveness on Teammate Expectations of Cohesion and Identification, as Mediated by Justice Perceptions

\[ b = .41^{**} \]
\[ b = .32^{***} \]
\[ b = .37^{*} \]
\[ b = .24, n.s. \]
\[ b = .53^{***} \]
\[ b = .23^{†} \]
\[ b = .02, n.s. \]

† = p < .10, * = p < .05, ** = p < .01, *** = p < .001. Dashed line represents the direct path, controlling for the indirect path.
Figure 4: Interaction of Victim’s Forgiveness and Justice Type on Expected Cohesion
Figure 5: Interaction of Victim’s Forgiveness and Justice Type on Justice Perceptions

![Graph showing the interaction of victim's forgiveness and justice type on justice perceptions.](image)

Victim's Forgiveness
■ Unforgiving
■ Forgiving

Errors Bars: +/- 1 SE

- Retributive Justice
- Forbearance
- Restorative Justice

Teammates' Justice Perceptions

Victim's Choice of Punishment
# Tables

**Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities & Correlations, Study 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Participant’s forgiveness of the transgressor</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td><strong>0.87</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2. Participant’s intention to punish the transgressor</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>-0.30 ***</td>
<td><strong>0.86</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Perceived team cohesion</td>
<td>4.84</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0.22 *</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td><strong>0.94</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Expected collective efficacy</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.65 ***</td>
<td><strong>0.86</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Identification with team</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.38 ***</td>
<td>0.29 ***</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Hours allocated toward group task</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.36 ***</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-</td>
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* † = p < .10; * = p < .05; ** = p < .01; *** = p < .001. Reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) presented on the diagonal.
Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities & Correlations, Study 2

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<td>1. Participant’s forgiveness of the transgressor</td>
<td>3.97</td>
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<td>2. Participant’s intention to punish the transgressor</td>
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<td>1.38</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>0.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Perceived team cohesion</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Expected collective efficacy</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.84</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Identification with team</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Perceived justice</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† = p < .10; * = p < .05; ** = p < .01; *** = p < .001. Reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) presented on the diagonal.


Janssen, O. & Huang, Xu. Us and me: Team identification and individual differentiation as complementary drivers of team members' citizenship and creative behaviors. *Journal of Management 34*(1), 69-88.


Chapter 5: General Discussion

By comparison to the rich tradition of forgiveness research in the domain of close relationships, forgiveness research remains somewhat embryonic in the organizational sciences. However, it would appear that research interest in this area is intensifying. Where Jeni Burnette’s near-census of published peer-reviewed empirical research on forgiveness included no studies of forgiveness focused on organizational settings or outcomes in 2008-09, the 2010-11 period saw seven articles on workplace relationships and organizationally-relevant variables, some in high-impact journals in the organizational sciences (Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Organization Studies, and Journal of Managerial Issues). The interest in forgiveness can also be seen in the range of conceptual and review articles recently published about the interface between forgiveness and organizational life (cf. Fehr & Gelfand, 2012; Palanski, 2011; Worthington, Greer, Hook, Davis, Gartner, Jennings, Norton, van Tongeren, Greer & Toussaint, 2010).

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the consequences of both receiving and observing interpersonal forgiveness on the attitudes and behaviours of transgressors and the team in which the transgressor-victim dyad is embedded.

The data from our studies underscore the relevance of forgiveness for organizations, teams, and their members. In the introduction (Chapter 1), we described forgiveness as having two roles in generating organizationally-relevant outcomes: It serves as a favour to transgressors, creating an obligation through the mechanisms of social exchange that is discharged with prosocial behaviour, and as a signal to teammates, acting as information about the sufficiency of the form of justice employed, and setting expectations about the likely
cohesion and efficacy of the group in the future. Below, we consider each of these effects, considering their empirical support and noting the limitations and shortcomings of our studies. We also suggest potentially fruitful avenues for future exploration and research.

**Forgiveness as a Favour**

We find evidence for the role of forgiveness as a favour offered to transgressors. The first manuscript (Chapter 2) shows that receiving forgiveness leads transgressors to feel justly treated, which increases felt obligation to the victim. This obligation is discharged with discretionary helping behaviour directed at the victim. But, consistent with a social exchange perspective, this obligation is discharged by punishment: The salutary effect of received forgiveness on helping was contingent on also receiving forbearance from the victim. In Chapter 3, we tested to see if the same sense of indebtedness could spill over and lead to prosocial behaviour by the transgressor toward the team as a whole. The results from the second study replicated the role played by interpersonal justice perceptions as a mediator of forgiveness’ effects on felt obligation. And, mediated both directly through interpersonal justice perceptions and through justice’s effect on obligation, we found that forgiveness’ effects spilled over into the team at large, as forgiven transgressors engaged in a (marginally) more collaborate approach to conflict management.

While we did find that being forgiven spilled over to influence transgressors’ contributions to a later group task, this effect did not appear to be related to forgiveness’ role as a favour. It was not mediated by obligation, nor was it moderated by punishment. This disjuncture, though unexpected, is not entirely inconsistent with previous work about the nature
of reciprocity, which tends to be stronger when directly paid to the recipient and weaker when ‘paid forward’ to parties other than the recipient. As Engelmann and Fischbacher (2009: 406) write, indirect reciprocity (paying back the favour with helpful behaviour toward the entire team) can be thought of as a “noisy signal of B’s kindness towards A,” and any prosociality directed toward the team may be simply a side-effect of the prosociality aimed at the victim specifically.

Another explanation we explored was that forgiveness would awaken a communal orientation in the transgressor, as their ‘moral reintegration’ serves to increase their relational and interdependent self-construal. No evidence was found for this perspective. In the manuscript, we suggest that future research might consider gratitude and the desire to help (distinct from the need to help associated with feelings of obligation and indebtedness).

In any case, it would appear that receiving forgiveness has salutary effects on how the transgressor behaves toward both the victim and others in a team, and promotes behavioural changes (helping toward both individual and team, as well as a collaborative approach to solving conflict) that could well result in enhanced team functioning.

However, the moderating effect of punishment requires further scrutiny and consideration. With regard to individual helping, we found that transgressors only took action to even the scales of social exchange themselves if the victims were both forgiving and forbearing. When victims chose to punish, transgressors’ unsolicited helping dried up. This suggests a role for forgiveness offered prior to the closing of the justice gap. Forgive first, the logic would dictate; transgressors might help to undo the harm of the trust violation themselves by making amends, and victims might be more open to those efforts at repair.
However, the process is not so simple. It is this precise form of forgiveness (forgiveness without amends) that Luchies and colleagues (2010) find can erode self-respect and self-concept clarity. And research from close relationships suggests that transgressors low in agreeableness may be emboldened rather than chastened by forgiveness; forgiving the wrong transgressors may increase rather than reduce recidivism (see McNulty & Fincham, 2011, for a review). The dilemma is clear: Forgive before receiving amends, and you might catalyze a positive cycle of relational restoration and trust repair. But forgive before receiving amends, and you might feel like a doormat.

One solution may be the notion of ‘temporary forgiveness’, which McCullough and colleagues describe as a state of reversible change in transgression-related interpersonal motives (McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003). Victims may benefit from adopting an initially forgiving posture, but ensure that it is clear that their forbearance is not assured in the absence of appropriate amends (whether substantive or symbolic; Exline et al., 2003).

Future research on forgiveness as a favour should also seek to move beyond the experimental laboratory. Our research designs allowed for clear causal inference, without the confounds associated with who forgives, what transgressions are more or less forgivable, and so on. However, they establish a causal order at the expense of ecological validity. To integrate these findings into the organizational context, future research may want to examine these dynamics cross-sectionally or longitudinally with workplace transgressions. Research using diary methods and panel designs has examined forgiveness in populations of undergraduate students reporting on transgressions committed by close others like friends, relatives, or romantic partners (McCullough, Bono & Root, 2007; Bono, McCullough & Root, 2008). A similar
approach would allow for the replication and extension of the findings of our studies in the context of the workplace.

Forgiveness as a Signal

We then arrive at the question of what others in the team make of the victim’s response to a transgression. Our theorizing focused on observational learning: We expected that teammates would follow the decision of the victim, following their modeled forgiveness and forbearance after the victim’s own choice to forgive. The actual pattern of relationships in the third manuscript (Chapter 4) suggested that teammates prefer to see justice done if the victim is forgiving. Forgiveness increased expected cohesion and (marginally) increased teammates’ own forgiveness of the victim - but only when the direct victim chose to punish rather than forbear. Probing further into the forgiveness-justice relationship, we compared forgiveness’ effects on the reactions to both retributive and restorative justice. We found that it was the restorative form of justice that was most influenced by forgiveness. Perceptions of justice and cohesion in the group in general were higher than forbearance when victims chose restorative justice, but only if they were also forgiving.

This, along with a number of other results from the pair of vignette studies in Chapter 4, suggests that teammates look at the forgivingness of the victim as a source of social information -- a signal about the adequacy of the justice meted out; a sign about what to expect from the team in the future. We found that observing forgiveness led teammates to feel more highly identified with the group, and expect greater collective efficacy. The reason teammates felt more positively
toward the group was because forgiveness signals justice. It serves as an all-clear whistle to
others to indicate that the harm and injustice of the transgression have been resolved.

This explanation, though, frames our effects in terms of a positive outcome of
forgiveness. In fact, this is true of all of the manuscripts in this dissertation. What we frame as
the salutary outcomes of forgiveness could equally be interpreted in terms of negative outcomes
of grudge, since the two were compared directly with each other, absent a neutral control
condition. Future research should investigate whether these effects represent a positive effect of
forgiveness, or whether -- bad being “stronger than good” (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer
& Vohs, 2001) -- they simply represent a resentful and negative response to grudge.

In addition, the results we found in Chapter 4 involved small effect sizes, some marginal
effects, and some puzzling disjunctures (a main effect for collective efficacy expectations, for
instance, as compared to an interaction for cohesion expectations). A constructive replication in
the organizational context would be a useful and necessary next step, particularly given recent
meta-analytic findings that small and medium-sized laboratory effects do not always reliably
reproduce in the field (Mitchell, 2012). The degree to which forgiveness is used to make
inferences about the way the team operates might hinge on the strength of the situation and
degree of prior knowledge and relationships. In long-established teams, teammates might read
very little into the victim’s reaction, relying on more reliable indicators to draw conclusions
about the likely cohesion of the group. In other words, there may be challenges of external
validity associated with our vignette approach (and, of course, our student sample).

However, if these results do hold in a more ecologically-valid context and sample, it
would suggest that organizational researchers need to pay greater attention to the question of
third parties, how they respond to victims’ forgiveness, and how they forgive transgressors for harms committed to others (Eaton & Sanders, 2011; Green, Burnette & Davis, 2008). Since forgiveness seems to increase the favourability with which disciplinary processes are viewed by teammates, it also suggests that achieving interpersonal forgiveness may be an important aim in the design of dispute resolution and disciplinary procedures. Fehr and Gelfand (2012) suggest a range of organizational practices that can promote interpersonal forgiveness. They speculate employee support programs and mindfulness training can contribute to a climate of forgiveness, as might the attributes of leaders. The question of leadership is particularly interesting, and was left unexplored in this dissertation.

Though our focus was on peer relationships, it is important to consider how these dynamics might be shaped by hierarchical position, power or organizational status. For instance, previous research indicates that leaders’ requests for forgiveness are responded to less kindly than those of peers (Stouten & Tripp, 2009). While observers expect leaders to be less deserving of forgiveness, those same high standards may mean that followers expect and demand more forgivingness from their leaders than from their peers. Or, returning to the question of signaling, leaders’ forgiveness might be viewed as more diagnostic of the team’s coherence and functioning, given the “romance of leadership” and centrality of leaders in our judgments about organizations (Meindl, Ehrlich & Dukerich, 1985).

Finally, in our introduction (Chapter 1), we specified that our level of theory and measurement was the individual, albeit with regard to social attitudes and behaviours (how transgressors behave toward victims, whether victims are willing to trust transgressors, etc.). A fruitful path for future research would be a more explicit consideration of forgiveness at the
group level, both in terms of central tendency, but also dispersion. What are the effects when forgiveness is offered by one teammate or group of teammates, and denied by another? When forgiveness is offered by both the victim and by teammates, to whom is the transgressor’s reciprocal helping directed? And how might group dynamics be implicated in the forgiveness process? Could the resistance threshold to trust repair, for instance, be socially shared rather than being set individually? A great many directions are possible for bringing a dynamic, multilateral lens to the issues explored in this dissertation.

Conclusion

Forgiveness, at its heart, represents a transformation in the victim, away from vengeance and isolation, and toward benevolence and the restoration of relationships. In the context of trust, this type of transformation may be very valuable. Trust is vital to organizational life, but trust breach is commonplace, and the restoration of trust has been shown to be a recalcitrant challenge. More than a simple virtue, forgiveness may represent a resource upon which organizations can draw to repair relationships and enhance team functioning.

The data from the studies in this dissertation are far from being the last word on the topic, but they add provisional and suggestive results to a growing body of evidence establishing positive effects of forgiveness for organizations and their members. Forgiveness may enhance organizational trust, as -- under certain conditions -- victims who forgive are more willing to accept apologies and restore trust. It may enhance various forms of organizational citizenship, including helping behaviours directed toward the victim, and the quality of contributions to shared group work. It may help to mitigate conflict, as forgiven transgressors take a more
diplomatic tack in dealing with their teammates. And, it may lead team members outside the dyad to hold more positive views and feel more strongly identified with their team. While previous research shows that forgiveness improves individual health and well-being (Lawler, Younger, Piferi, Billington, Job, Edmondson & Jones, 2005), the studies in this dissertation suggest that forgiveness may also enhance the functioning of teams.

But, of course, many of these effects hinge on justice: Unconditional forgiveness of unrepentant offenders need not be (and should not be) an organizational imperative. Instead, organizations and their members must seek to find disciplinary approaches that address all the involved parties’ needs: Closing the injustice gap for victims, creating an imperative for transgressors to behave prosocially, and sending an appropriate signal to teammates about the justice with which the team’s affairs are conducted.
References


Appendix A: Chapter 2 Measures

Interpersonal Justice

The following questions ask you about your perceptions of your partner. *(Scale from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree. Items with an asterisk are reverse-coded.)*

1. My partner treats me in a polite manner.
2. My partner treats me with dignity.
3. My partner treats me with respect.
4. My partner doesn't make improper remarks or comments to me.*

Felt Obligation

Think about how you felt when you were allocating the bonus tickets. *(Scale from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree.)*

1. I felt obligated to help my partner
2. I simply had to do something for my partner
3. I felt indebted to my partner
4. I felt pressure to do something for my partner

Forgiveness Manipulation Check

Now, think about how your partner felt after the consulting task.

For each question, answer with your impression of how much your partner thought or felt these things at the end of the consulting task. You might not know what they are thinking and feeling, but answer with your best guess about their feelings. *(Scale from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. Items with an asterisk are reverse-coded. Items were presented in random order.)*

1. My partner wanted to make me pay*
2. My partner wished that something bad would happen to me.*
3. My partner wanted me to get what I deserved.*
4. My partner wanted to get even*
5. My partner wanted to see me hurt and miserable.*
6. My partner wanted to keep as much distance as possible between us*
7. My partner pretended like I didn't exist or wasn't around.*
8. My partner didn't trust me.*
9. My partner found it difficult to have warm thoughts about me.*
10. My partner wanted to avoid me.*
11. My partner wanted to cut off the relationship with me.*
12. My partner wanted to withdraw from me.*
13. My partner had goodwill toward me
14. My partner wanted to bury the hatchet and move forward in our working relationship.
15. My partner wanted us to have a positive relationship.
16. My partner wanted to continue our working relationship.
17. My partner gave up their hurt or resentment
18. My partner wanted to restore our working relationship to a healthy state.

**Forbearance Manipulation Check**

When your partner was asked to report on the quality of your work, did they rate your work as:
1. Excellent
2. Poor

Because of your partner's evaluation, would you say you:
1. Lost some bonus tickets
2. Earned more bonus tickets

**Appendix B: Chapter 3 Measures**

**Interpersonal Justice Scale**

*As presented in Appendix A.*

**Obligation**

*As presented in Appendix A.*

**Relational and Interdependent Self-Construal**

Next, think about how you define yourself, in general, across all situations (not just here in this study). *(Scale from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree. Items with asterisks are reverse-coded.)*
1. My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am.
2. When I feel close to someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am.
3. I usually feel a strong sense of pride when someone close to me has an important accomplishment.
4. I think one of the most important parts of who I am can be captured by looking at my close friends and understanding who they are.
5. When I think of myself, I often think of my close friends or family also.
6. If a person hurts someone close to me, I feel personally hurt as well.
7. In general, my close relationships are an important part of my self-image.
8. Overall, my close relationships have very little to do with how I feel about myself.*
9. My close relationships are unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.*
10. My sense of pride comes from knowing who I have as close friends.
11. When I establish a close friendship with someone, I usually develop a strong sense of identification with that person.
Conflict Management

During the group task, how would you describe how you worked with your group? (1=Almost never; 5=Almost always).
1. I tried to keep my disagreements with my teammates to myself in order to avoid hurt feelings.
2. I tried to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my teammates.
3. I accommodated the wishes of my teammates.
4. I gave in to the wishes of my teammates.
5. I went along with the suggestions of my teammates.
6. I allowed concessions to my teammates.
7. I used my power to promote my side of the issue.
8. I used my authority to push the decision I wanted.
9. I used my influence to get my ideas accepted.
10. I used my expertise to encourage a decision in my favour.
11. I was generally firm in pushing my side of an issue.
12. I collaborated with my teammates to come up with decisions acceptable to all of us.
13. I tried to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues could be resolved in the best possible way.
14. I tried to work with my team members to find solutions to the problem that satisfied our expectations.
15. I exchanged information with my teammates to solve a problem together.
16. I tried to investigate issues with my team members so that we could find a solution that was agreeable to all of us.
17. I proposed a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.
18. I tried to find a middle course to resolve impasses or conflicts.

Identification

Now, think about your tasks with the group of three people together, and reflect on how you feel about your group as a whole. (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).
1. If someone were to criticize my team, it would feel like a personal insult.
2. I would be very interested to know what others think about my team.
3. If I were to talk about my team, I would say 'we' rather than 'they'.
4. This team's successes are my successes.
5. If someone were to praise my team, it would feel like a personal compliment.
6. If someone were to tell a story that criticized my team, it would make me feel embarrassed.

Psychological Safety

Again, with regard to your work in the three-person group tasks, think about how your perceptions of your group as a whole. (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree).
1. If you made a mistake on this team, it would be held against you.
2. Members of this team would feel comfortable bringing up problems and tough issues.
3. People on this team would reject others for being different.
4. It is safe to take a risk on this team.
5. It would be difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
6. Members of this team would not deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.
Appendix C: Chapter 4 Measures

Vignette Root (Study 1)

You are working at a summer job at a small but prestigious consulting firm. There are about half a dozen summer interns working at the firm, including you. Over the course of the summer, the interns get chances to develop proposals for real clients, and pitch their ideas to the consultancy’s senior partners. If the partners like the idea, they’ll bring it forward to the clients. This is a big deal for you and the other interns: The best proposals may be implemented by the consultancy’s clients -- and in the past, interns who have presented the best pitches have been offered lucrative jobs upon graduation.

This month, Alex, one of the other interns, started to work on an ambitious marketing strategy for a wireless company, one of the firm’s biggest clients. Early on, you heard Alex ask Jamie, another intern, to partner up on the project.

You overhear Alex and Jamie agree that they’ll divide the work evenly, and share credit for the idea. Over the course of several weeks, you’ve seen them pull late nights at the office frantically working to assemble a killer pitch for the partners. From what you see at the office, Alex and Jamie are working equally hard, and from what you can see, they are relying on each other completely to make the proposal perfect. Although sometimes it seems that Jamie is doing slightly more of the work, on the whole they are equal partners.

At the next team meeting, Alex stands up to present the plan the two have been working on together. Jamie’s sitting next to you in the meeting room. This isn’t a surprise -- the firm's senior partners prefer to have one person making the presentation.

But once the presentation ends, you’re shocked to see what unfolds. One of the senior partners showers Alex with praise for the idea presented in the plan. The senior partner calls the presentation brilliant, and says Alex has a “bright future in the firm.” Because it was a team effort and you know that Jamie also worked on the plan, you expect Alex to correct the senior partner and identify Jamie. But that’s not what unfolds. When the partner asks Alex who came up with the idea, you are totally surprised by the response: Alex takes full credit for the idea - and doesn’t mention Jamie at all! Looking to your side, you can see that Jamie is beet red and is glaring daggers at Alex. You know that Jamie and Alex had agreed to share credit. Judging by Jamie’s reaction, Alex taking full credit was completely unexpected.

Manipulations (Study 1)

You're curious to know what happened in the wake of the incident you saw.

Right now, all you know is that Jamie was harmed by Alex stealing credit, but you don't know Jamie’s emotions toward Alex, whether Jamie wants to avoid or maintain contact with Alex, or whether Jamie wants revenge or wants to let it go.

At lunch, however, you run into a fellow intern who was at the presentation and who knows Jamie well. The two of you begin to talk and the conversation quickly turns to what happened between Alex and Jamie. “Do you know how Jamie responded?”, you ask your friend.

Punishment

Your friend tells you that Jamie reported Alex’s malfeasance to the company’s managing partner, which resulted in disciplinary action for Alex.

Forbearance

Your friend tells you that Jamie chose not to report Alex’s malfeasance to the company’s managing partner, which saved Alex from disciplinary action.

Unforgiveness
 Forgiveness
Your friend also tells you that Jamie and Alex met after this unfolded. When they met, Jamie no longer felt mad toward Alex, and didn’t want to hurt Alex anymore. Jamie wanted to end the quarrel and restore their relationship.

Intention to Punish (Study 1)

In the next questions, we would like to know how you personally would feel if you oversaw the incident between Alex and Jamie described earlier.

As someone who saw what Alex did to Jamie, would you take specific action against Alex? Remember, in these questions, you are answering about what you would act, regardless of how you felt. (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree.)

1. I wouldn't just get mad - I would get even against Alex.
2. I would punish Alex myself.
3. I would personally get revenge against Alex.
4. I would make sure to get justice against Alex.

Forgiveness (Study 1)

In the next questions, we would like to know how you personally would feel if you oversaw the incident between Alex and Jamie described earlier.

How do you think you would feel toward Alex?

These questions are not about how you would act -- just about how you would feel.

1. I would want to make Alex pay.
2. I'd wish that something bad would happen to Alex.
3. I would want Alex to get what they deserve.
4. I would want to avoid Alex.
5. I would want to get even with Alex.
6. I would want to see Alex hurt and miserable.
7. I would try to keep as much distance between myself and Alex as possible.
8. I would try to behave as if Alex doesn’t exist or isn’t around.
9. I wouldn't trust Alex.
10.I would find it difficult to act warmly toward Alex.
11.I would want to cut off my relationship with Alex.
12.I would want to withdraw from Alex.
13.Even though Alex’s actions hurt Jamie, I would still have goodwill for Alex.
14.I would want to bury the hatchet with Alex move forward with our working relationship.
15.Despite what Alex did to Jamie, I would still want us to have a positive working relationship.
16.Even though Alex hurt Jamie, I would put that aside so that we could resume our working relationship.
17.I would give up my resentment toward Alex.
18.I would let go of my anger so that I could have a healthy working relationship with Alex.

Discretionary Group Contributions (Study 1)

Next, imagine you are working at the consultancy later that same summer.

You have two projects on the go.
1) You are working in the team on an industry research project. You, along with five other students, are researching competitors’ marketing for a client poised to launch a new line of products. If you do an exceptional job as a team, your team will all be invited to the annual President’s Circle luncheon -- the top honour for intern teams! This would be a huge win for your team.

2) You have an individual presentation to make related to your findings from a consumer opinion study that you carried out. This opinion research is going to be used by a client seeking to dramatically realign their pricing strategy. If you do well on this presentation, your individual performance is likely to catch the notice of the company's senior partners. This could be very good for you personally.

Both projects are in acceptable shape, but could be enhanced with some extra work.

It’s Friday at about 11:30am. You’re going to grab a quick lunch, and then you’ve got five hours left you can dedicate to your work. Plan the rest of your day!

I would spend this many hours working on my team’s industry research project:
Slider from 0 to 5
I would spend this many hours working on my individual consumer opinion project:
Slider from 0 to 5.

**Expected Cohesion (Study 1)**

Now, imagine having to work in the group described in this scenario for a whole summer. The group includes you, Alex, Jamie and four other student consultants.

We would like to know what you would expect working with all the other interns at the consulting firm to be like.

It doesn’t matter that you don’t know all that much about your team - just give your gut feeling about what you would expect about your team.

*(1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree)*

1. I expect to feel like I belong to this group.
2. I expect to see myself as part of this group.
3. I think I am going to feel like a real member of this group.
4. I expect to be happy about being a part of this group.
5. I think this group is going to be one of the best in the industry.
6. I think I will feel content to be part of this group.

**Collective Efficacy (Study 1)**

Again, think about what you expect out of this team over the course of the summer's work. *(1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree) Items with asterisks are reverse-coded.*

1. This team will have above-average ability
2. This team will perform poorly compared to other teams doing similar work*
3. This team will not be able to perform as well as it should*
4. The members of this team will have excellent job skills.
5. Members of this team will have problems performing.*
6. This team will not be very effective.*
7. Some members of this team will not be able to do their jobs well.*
Identification

In the seven sets of circles above, 'self' refers to you. 'Team' refers to your entire team of interns.

Choose which of the sets of circles best represents how close you expect you would feel to your teammates if you were an intern at this consulting firm.

Vignette Root (Study 2)

Imagine working in a large multinational commercial bank as a summer job.

Your job is to provide analytical support to commercial bankers in a variety of countries by email and phone. Your team works in three different shifts (morning, 5am-1pm, afternoon, 1pm-9pm, and graveyard, 9pm-5am) in order to support bankers working in different time zones.

Last week, after getting the schedule for the month, you overheard your teammate Jill talking to Abbie, another one of your coworkers. In their conversation, Abbie agreed to cover Jill's shift.

Jill: "Hey Abbie, on the 7th, I'm scheduled for a graveyard shift. Listen, is there any way you'd be able to take my shift? I'm supposed to go to my brother's birthday party that evening, and it conflicts with my shift"

Abbie: "Yes, definitely. I'm not scheduled that day, I'd be happy for the extra hours."

Jill: "That would be amazing. So, will you log into the scheduling system to sign up for the 9pm until 5am shift?"

Abbie: "Definitely. Consider it done! Enjoy the party, and don't worry about the shift."

But when the 7th came around, things had clearly gone wrong.

Abbie never showed for the graveyard shift. When the manager phoned Jill to ask where she was, it became clear that Abbie had never signed up for the shift. When Jill confronted Abbie about failing to show up, Abbie denied ever having agreed to cover it.

Jill got in trouble with her manager for missing a shift. She felt betrayed and hurt by Abbie's failure to live up to her promise, and by Abbie's denial.

Manipulations (Study 2)

Here's what happened after Abbie failed to cover Jill's shift and denied having taken it:

Forbearance

You learn (from a friend) that Jill chose not to report Abbie's malfeasance to the company's managing partner, which saved Abbie from disciplinary action.
Retributive Justice
You learn (from a friend) that Jill chose to report Abbie's malfeasance to the company’s managing partner. The managing partner called a disciplinary hearing between Jill and Abby. The purpose of the meeting was for the manager to administer punishment for the transgression.

Restorative Justice
You learn (from a friend) that Jill chose to report Abbie's malfeasance to the company’s managing partner. The managing partner called a community conference between Jill and Abby. The purpose of the meeting was for both parties to develop a shared understanding of what had happened, and for both parties to reaffirm that they share the same values.

Unforgiveness
Later on, Jill was still consumed with anger toward Abbie. Jill kept wishing she could get even with Abbie for the betrayal, and wanted to avoid working with Abbie in the future.

Forgiveness
Later on, Jill no longer felt mad toward Abbie. Jill no longer wanted to get even with Abbie for the betrayal, and wanted to end the quarrel and restore her working relationship with Abbie.

Intention to Punish, Forgiveness, Identification, Cohesion, Collective Efficacy (Study 2)

Measures are the same as presented in study 1.

Justice Perceptions

What is your impression of how things work in this team? (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree.)

1. Issues and decisions that come up in this workgroup will be handled fairly.
2. Overall, this team will use fair processes to resolve issues.
3. Most employees in this group will expect fairness from the team.
4. People in this group will put a lot of effort into being fair when making decisions.