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Third-Party Forgiveness in Ambivalent and Supportive Relationships

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science

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## ABSTRACT

### Third-Party Forgiveness in Ambivalent and Supportive Relationships

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A recent trend in the study of forgiveness is to look at forgiveness outside of traditional victim-perpetrator dyads. One way of going beyond these dyads is to look at third-party forgiveness. A recent advance in the study of relationship valence is to look at the amount of positivity and negativity in a relationship as on independent scales rather than on two ends of the same spectrum. This allows for categorization of relationships that are high in both positivity and negativity—ambivalent relationships. This study attempts to combine these two recent advances. I hypothesized that participants would have more difficulty forgiving offenders with whom they had ambivalent relationships, that participants would be more forgiving when they were personally offended compared to when they were a third-party to an offense committed against a friend, and that participants would be more forgiving of a perpetrator when an offense was committed against an ambivalent relation than when the same offense was committed against a positive relation. Strong support was obtained for the first hypothesis, but little support for the second and third hypotheses. The implications of these results are discussed and possible directions for future research are recommended.

Keywords: third-party forgiveness, ambivalent relationships

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Thanks go to my committee. They have made substantial contributions to this project and also to my individual academic growth. My chair, Robert D. Ridge, patiently helped me refine my thinking and refocus my attention throughout the course of this work. Lane Fischer kindly encouraged me at times when it seemed like it might be easy to give up. Thanks also go to my family for cheering me on and sharing the adventure.

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### **Third-Party Forgiveness in Ambivalent and Supportive Relationships**

The concept of forgiveness is likely as old as mankind. It has been emphasized in the religious texts of both Eastern and Western religious traditions for centuries (Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004). However, the concept of forgiveness was largely ignored by psychology's founders. Indeed, although forgiveness had been mentioned in Piaget's (1932) developmental theories, or suggested as a positive outcome for pastoral counselors, it wasn't until Heider wrote *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations* in 1958 that the concept received more direct treatment (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Heider (1958) defined forgiveness as choosing not to seek revenge after being offended in an interpersonal relationship. While Heider suggested several possible motivations for forgiveness (e.g., adherence to a higher ethical standard), he did not elaborate further and little research ensued. It wasn't until the 1980s that psychologists began to show more interest in forgiveness research; an interest that has continued to grow to the present day (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000).

Heider's (1958) definition of forgiveness, though it did not lead immediately to experimental research, has served as a basis for how forgiveness is typically conceptualized in social psychological research. Recent conceptualizations of forgiveness in psychological research have elaborated Heider's definition and now include letting go of anger, resentment, revenge, shame, the record of wrongdoing, judgment, condemnation, negative or indifferent thoughts and behaviors, bitterness, or emotional debts (Cloke, 1993; Davenport, 1991; DiBlasio, 1992, 1998; Enright, 1994, 1996; Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1991; Fitzgibbons, 1986; Halling, 1994, as cited in Sells & Hargrave, 1998). Note that although revenge isn't always operationally defined in Heider's terms, these studies' definitions do share

an emphasis on letting go or forgoing some negative emotion or behavior in response to an interpersonal offense (Sells & Hargrave, 1998).

Some researchers have suggested that forgiveness is marked by a substitution of positive emotions (e.g. empathy, sympathy, love) for negative emotions (Worthington & Wade, 1999). Others contend that forgiveness is merely the letting go of the negative, and that any positive emotions or behaviors following an interpersonal offense should be considered part of the separate, but related, process of reconciliation (e.g. Worthington & Drinkard, 2000). In either case, there is some agreement that forgiveness includes letting go or giving up negative emotions or behaviors (Sells & Hargrave, 1998).

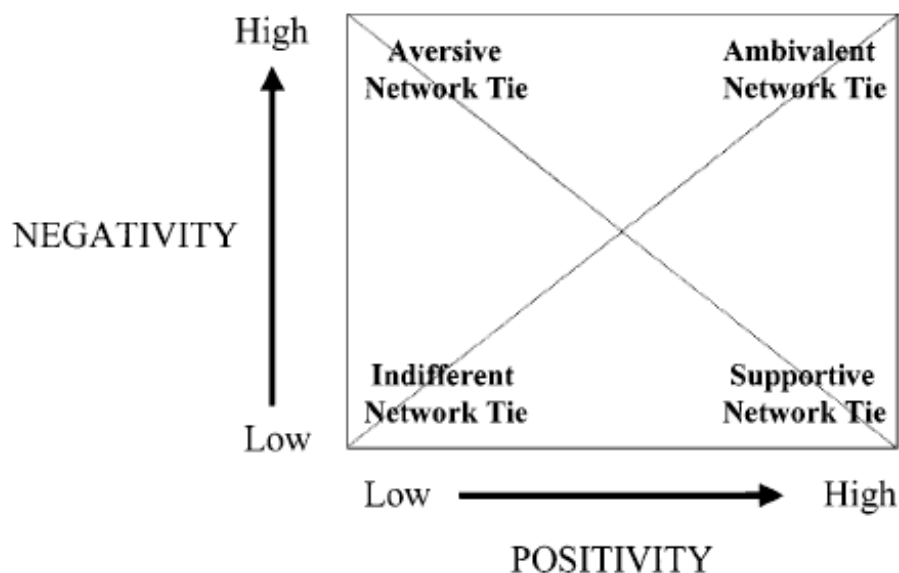
More recently, relationship-level variables such as relationship closeness, commitment, satisfaction, and valence have been examined in what McCullough et al. (1998) refer to as a “social-psychological conceptualization of forgiveness.” This conceptualization continues the tradition of defining forgiveness as forgoing negative emotions or behaviors, but seeks to examine this process in the social context in which forgiveness is likely to occur. In a typical instantiation of the social-psychological conceptualization of forgiveness, data are gathered about closeness, commitment, satisfaction, and valence in an existing relationship to see how these different measures might correlate with measures of forgiveness within that relationship. Two new areas of research are developing under the umbrella of this new conceptualization of forgiveness: 1) a deeper look at relationship valence and how it might be better defined, and; 2) expanding the context in which forgiveness occurs to include people outside the victim-perpetrator dyad. I will discuss each of these newer areas of research in the next two sections and then propose a study that allows for their dual examination in a third section.

## **Relationship Valence**

Of particular interest is the construct of relationship valence. In past forgiveness research, measures of relationship valence have failed to be sensitive to the potential heterogeneity of social relationships (Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Bloor, 2004). Research indicates that positivity and negativity in social relationships are statistically independent dimensions (Okun, Melichar, & Hill, 1990; Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Bloor, 2004). Therefore a characterization of social relationships ought to consider positivity and negativity as two separate dimensions rather than as the bipolar ends of a single continuum. Taking this evidence for the separate domains of positivity and negativity seriously, it would seem important to include a quality-of-relationship scale that is separately sensitive to both positivity and negativity within a relationship. Since forgiveness necessarily involves interpersonal relationships (with the possible exception of self-forgiveness), this intersection of forgiveness research and social relationships research deserves more attention.

The study of positivity and negativity as being separate dimensions, rather than being bipolar ends of a single construct, warrants a new look at how relationship valence might best be operationalized.





*Figure 1.* General conceptual framework in incorporating the positive and negative aspects of social relationships (Uchino et al., 2001).

Looking at Figure 1, the two categories that have been studied in the existing literature are the upper left “Aversive” corner and the lower right “Supportive” corner. These correspond to the familiar positive and negative relationship categories in the existing literature. The lower left “Indifferent” corner likely excludes any close relationships and includes casual relationships that do not involve a positive or negative valence. The “Indifferent” corner will not be addressed in this study, although it would be an interesting topic of study for further research. The upper right “Ambivalent” corner is high on both the positivity and negativity dimensions. An example of an ambivalent relationship might be a classmate you enjoy chatting with, but secretly dread having to collaborate on assignments with. It is this corner that is of greatest interest for the present study.

Research by Uchino et al. (2004) indicates that ambivalent relationships are much more prevalent than negative ones. Their research indicates that people have the same number of

supportive and ambivalent relationships, about 9 to 10. Conversely, they found that people have an average of only 0.38 negative relationships within their social network.

Although more research still needs to be done on the short- and long-term effects of ambivalent relationships, there is some evidence that ambivalent relationships can negatively impact an individual's physical and mental health. For example, Holt-Lunstad, Uchino, Smith and Hicks (2007) found that individuals discussing a traumatic life event with an ambivalent friend experienced higher blood pressure reactivity compared to individuals communicating with a supportive friend. Additionally, having more ambivalent ties in one's social network has been linked to increased depression and cardiovascular reactivity to stress (Uchino et al., 2001). It is interesting to note that these detrimental effects are opposite the beneficial effects of supportive social relationships. That is, while supportive social relationships are linked to healthier cardiovascular functioning (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988; Reifman, 1995) and less depression (Elliott, Herrick, Witty, & Godshall, 1992; La Roche, 1999), ambivalent relationships are linked to greater depression and worse cardiovascular health.

The literature on relationship-level factors of forgiveness indicates that relationship valence is correlated with self-reported and other measures of forgiveness (Mead, 2008). Yet the measures of valence employed in previous research have failed to account for the inherent heterogeneity in social relationships (Uchino, 2004). Given this legitimate and unexamined relationship-level variable, one wonders how levels of forgiveness might differ for relationships that have been primarily supportive or ambivalent up to the point of a need to forgive. Some preliminary research by Mead (2008) indicates that people are less likely to forgive those with whom they share an aversive or ambivalent relationship compared to a supportive relationship.

This paucity of research on ambivalence and forgiveness suggests the need for further study in order to explore new ideas and bolster confidence in preliminary findings.

### **Going Beyond the Dyad**

Another blossoming area of forgiveness research reflects an interest in going beyond the traditional victim-perpetrator dyad. This involves the study of self-forgiveness, which has recently received a great deal of theoretical and experimental attention from social and clinical psychologists (Worthington, 2005), but it also involves forgiveness of a perpetrator by anyone outside the victim-perpetrator dyad. The latter, called third-party forgiveness, has received some theoretical attention from within (Worthington, 2005) and outside (Helmick & Petersen, 2001) the discipline. The reasons for this interest typically include the fact that interpersonal transgression and forgiveness often involve persons outside the victim-perpetrator dyad. For example, the Hatfield versus McCoy case involved more than a dozen murders between those two families. In each case, a murder was committed by surviving family members to get revenge for a previous murder (or in the case of the first murder, to get revenge for an affair that occurred between Johnse Hatfield and Roseanna McCoy). In each case it is arguable that offenses were not committed directly against the parties who sought revenge. Rather, these family members were offended on behalf of other members of their families (Green, Burnett, & Davis, 2008).

Political situations may also involve third-party forgiveness. For example, in 2007 the Virginia Legislature apologized for the state's role in slavery despite the fact that slavery has ceased since before any living Virginians were born (Green, Burnett, & Davis, 2008). Even large-scale conflicts such as war and terrorism might be, in part, related to a large base of offended third-parties. Despite the obvious relevance and need for experimental research on

third-party forgiveness, such work did not begin to surface until 2008 (Green, Burnett, & Davis, 2008).

Green, Burnett, and Davis (2008) started with the premise, “Transgressions frequently involve more than the perpetrator and the victim.” (p 408). Seeing that little experimental work had been done in the area, they set out to examine third-party forgiveness in the context of romantic relationships. They conducted two separate studies.

For the first study, the researchers recruited participants from introductory psychology courses. The study required that participants be currently involved in a romantic relationship. Participants were then placed into either a first party condition or a third-party condition. In the first party condition, participants reported willingness to forgive following a hypothetical scenario involving their own romantic partner teasing them publicly. In the third-party condition, participants reported willingness to forgive their close friend’s partner for teasing their close friend publicly. Forgiveness was recorded on a 5-point scale (5 = complete forgiveness; 1 = no forgiveness). Green, et al. (2008) found that first party offenders received significantly more forgiveness ( $M = 4.29$ ) than third party offenders ( $M = 3.71$ ).

For the second study, Green, et al. (2008) decided to use real offense scenarios rather than hypothetical scenarios. Participants were recruited in a similar manner to the first study. Rather than responding to a hypothetical scenario, participants were asked to write a few sentences about an actual offense that occurred either between them and their romantic partner (first party condition) or between their close friend and his or her romantic partner (third party condition). Additionally, participants reported their own perception of the severity of the offense. Forgiveness ratings were taken using the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale (TRIM) to capture a broader range of forgiveness motivations. First party

participants reported fewer unforgiving motivations (were more likely to be forgiving) compared to third-party participants even though first parties reported greater negative affect in response to the offensive event than did third parties.

These results indicate that third parties were less forgiving than first-party victims, an effect termed the “third-party forgiveness effect.” This effect was found to be constant even when controlling for perceived severity and negative affect, self-reported commitment to the relationship, and the presence or absence of apologies. Like research involving ambivalent social relationships, research on third-party forgiveness hasn’t received much experimental attention. Therefore, third-party forgiveness still requires further exploration and replication.

### **Combining Perspectives**

What are the possible effects of ambivalent relationships on the third-party forgiveness effect? Although the third-party forgiveness effect has been examined in conjunction with some relationship-level variables (e.g., commitment to the relationship), no study has included a measure of relationship valence that was sensitive to the heterogeneity inherent in social relationships. In order to examine the effects of ambivalent relationships on the third-party forgiveness effect, there are several possible scenarios to consider. In the following paragraphs I discuss some of these possible scenarios.

Suppose two college students are taking a class together. One student, Ann, is very studious and always attends class. The other student, Bert, often misses class and doesn’t spend time studying. Toward the end of the term, there is a high-stakes final exam that all students must complete. Around the time this final exam is due, Bert asks Ann to borrow her class notes to study. Ann agrees, but tells Bert to bring the notes back as soon as possible because she still needs to use them for her own study. Bert agrees, indicating that he will bring the notes back in

an hour. An hour later, Bert still has not returned the notes. He also is not answering his phone. Another hour goes by and Bert still has not returned the notes, nor answered his phone. Ann leaves a message on Bert's phone, reminding him that she needs the notes back in order to prepare for the final exam the next day. Ann tells her roommate Carla about the situation. Carla responds supportively toward Ann and expresses negative feelings toward Bert. Later that evening, about six hours after the notes were supposed to be returned, Bert finally shows up to return Ann's notes. However, Bert has lost several of the pages, including some important pages that the professor had indicated would be important to know for the final exam. Ann is now in a difficult position with not much studying time left before the final exam and she doesn't have any way of getting back the important notes that were lost. How will she respond to Bert's carelessness? How will Ann's roommate and friend, Carla, respond?

Assuming Ann has an ambivalent relationship with Bert, we expect her to be less forgiving than if she had a supportive relationship with him. But how will Carla respond? Considering preliminary work on third-party forgiveness, we might expect Carla to be less forgiving than Ann regardless of whether she had a supportive or ambivalent relationship with Bert. However, in the third-party situation, we actually have two relationships to consider. In addition to the forgiver's relationship to the perpetrator, we also have to look at the forgiver's relationship to the victim. In conjunction with the two categories of relational valence we are considering, these two relationships make for four possible scenarios in the third-party condition. I will consider each of the possible four combinations of relationships in a third-party scenario.

First, suppose Carla has a supportive relationship with both Ann and Bert. We might expect that, due to the supportive relationship Carla shares with Ann, she will be less forgiving of Bert than if she had an ambivalent relationship with Ann. Similarly, Carla will likely be

comparatively more forgiving of Bert considering that she has a supportive relationship with him than if she had an ambivalent relationship with him.

Suppose Carla has a supportive relationship with Ann, but an ambivalent relationship with Bert. In this situation we might expect Carla to be the least forgiving of Bert out of the four third-party scenarios. This is because Carla having a supportive relationship with Ann should make her less forgiving of any offenses committed against Ann. Additionally, Carla having an ambivalent relationship with Bert would indicate that she is less likely to forgive him for any offenses he commits.

Next, suppose Carla has an ambivalent relationship with Ann, but a supportive relationship with Bert. Since Carla has an ambivalent relationship with Ann, it is likely that she won't be quite as offended on Ann's behalf compared to if they shared a supportive relationship. We might also expect Carla to be more forgiving of Bert given her supportive relationship with him. These expectations indicate that Carla should be the most forgiving in this third-party scenario.

Finally, suppose Carla has an ambivalent relationship with both Ann and Bert. There is little in the forgiveness literature to suggest how this scenario will play out. On the one hand, we might expect Carla to be less offended on Ann's behalf than if they shared a supportive relationship. On the other hand, we expect Carla to be less forgiving of Bert than if they shared a supportive relationship. A scenario like this might result in Carla being more indifferent to the situation. See Table 1 for the six forgiveness scenarios discussed above. Scenarios A and B are traditional first-party forgiveness scenarios. Scenarios C, D, E, and F are all third-party forgiveness scenarios.

Table 1

*Forgiveness Scenarios*

Scenario	Forgiver	Relationship to Victim	Relationship to Perpetrator
A	Ann	Self	Supportive
B	Ann	Self	Ambivalent
C	Carla	Supportive	Supportive
D	Carla	Supportive	Ambivalent
E	Carla	Ambivalent	Supportive
F	Carla	Ambivalent	Ambivalent

Scenarios A and B are traditional first-party forgiveness conditions, which are included for comparison purposes. In both of these conditions we are interested in how the victim will forgive the perpetrator of an offense. In scenario A the victim shares a supportive relationship with the perpetrator. In scenario B their relationship is ambivalent. Scenarios C, D, E, and F involve the forgiveness of a third party. In scenarios C and D the third-party forgiver has a supportive relationship with the victim. In scenario C the third party also has a supportive relationship with the perpetrator. In scenario D the third party has an ambivalent relationship with the perpetrator. The final two scenarios involve a third-party forgiver who shares an ambivalent relationship with the victim. The third party's relationship with the perpetrator is supportive in scenario E and negative in scenario F.

A little additional research may be helpful in sorting possible hypotheses from the scenarios listed above. Although previous research has shown that ambivalent social relationships are characterized by lower levels of forgiveness compared to supportive



relationships (Mead, 2008), we have no forgiveness research on how people might respond toward an ambivalent or supportive victim, let alone the possible effect of the complex interaction of victim and perpetrator relationships. One possible line of research may be helpful to guide our thinking here. In the realm of person perception, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, and Vohs (2001) cite a number of studies from a wide variety of sources to contend that, in general, negative events are given more attention than are positive ones. For example, they discuss the concept of positive-negative asymmetry in impression formation theory. The crux of positive-negative asymmetry is that negative information has a stronger impact than positive information when a person is formulating an impression of a new acquaintance.

Toward a similar point, Rozin & Royzman (2001) describe the concept of negativity bias. The aptly-named negativity bias states that humans tend to pay more attention to negative entities and give them more weight than positive entities. An accessible example of this would be that a single cockroach in a bowl of candy will, for many people, ruin the pleasantness of the candy. On the other hand, a single piece of candy in a bowl of cockroaches does nothing to “sweeten” the idea of eating one of the cockroaches, nor does it somehow make the cockroaches seem more pleasant. The negativity bias is well documented and has multiple facets (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Considering positive-negative asymmetry and the negativity bias may help to sort out possible expectations in different scenarios.

### **Hypotheses**

Forgiveness in third-parties and measures of relational valence that allow for heterogeneity both represent recent and potentially fruitful areas of research. Having already explored some potential scenarios which might occur at the intersection of these two fields, I

now turn to a more formal conceptualization of how to go about studying relational valence in the context of third-party forgiveness.

The design of this study will be a 2 X 3 factorial as characterized in the scenarios above. The two factors in this design are relationship to the perpetrator (two levels: supportive or ambivalent) and relationship to the victim (three levels: self, supportive friend, ambivalent friend). The dependent variable is the amount of forgiveness offered to the perpetrator. I expect main effects to be found for both factors. Although there is not sufficient evidence to suggest a directional prediction for an interaction effect, the examination of the interaction effect represents a potentially important contribution of this study. Consequently, I will hypothesize the null for the interaction effect and inspect it to see what I find. Finally, I have made several predictions based on my review of the literature. These predictions can be expressed as simple effects comparisons of one of the main effects and will be assessed using planned contrasts. Each of my predictions is discussed in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

Because previous research has shown that ambivalent social relationships are characterized by higher stress and negative affect, it is reasonable to expect that ambivalent relationships will be characterized by lower levels of forgiveness overall. Thus I predict that when a forgiver has a supportive relationship with a perpetrator, forgiveness will be greater than when a forgiver has an ambivalent relationship with the perpetrator. This is a prediction for a main effect of relationship to perpetrator. Further support for this prediction can be found in the negativity bias (Rozin & Royzman, 2001) and positive-negative asymmetry (Baumeister et al., 2001) mentioned previously.

Ambivalent relationships consist of a mix of both positive and negative emotions and exchanges, so given the negativity bias and positive-negative asymmetry, it seems reasonable to

expect that the negative aspects of an ambivalent relationship would be given more weight than the positive aspects following an offense. The negativity bias provides a reasonable ground to suggest that, all things being equal, those offended by an ambivalent friend will be less likely to forgive the friend than those offended by a supportive friend. Similarly, third parties who are offended on behalf of another person might be less likely to forgive an offender with whom they have an ambivalent relationship than a supportive relationship. Therefore:

*H<sub>1</sub>: When the forgiver has a supportive relationship with the perpetrator, forgiveness ratings will be greater than when the forgiver has an ambivalent relationship with the perpetrator.*

My next two hypotheses are simple effects analyses of the main effect of relationship to victim. In short, I expect forgiveness to be the greatest when the forgiver is the victim and lowest when the forgiver has a supportive relationship with the victim. In other words, I expect third-party forgiveness ratings will be lower compared to first party forgiveness ratings. This hypothesis stems directly from Green, et al.'s (2008) study and is expected to be a replication of their findings. Nevertheless, there are several important differences in the design of this study that serve to extend and build upon this previous research. This study will involve forgiveness in same-gender friendships rather than romantic relationships. This extends the concept of third-party forgiveness to new kinds of relationships. Further, the study of friendships may allow for clearer comparisons between first and third-party conditions. Consider the Green, et al. study. In the first party condition the participant was in a romantic relationship with the perpetrator of an offence. In the third-party condition, the participant was in a friendship relationship with the victim of an offence. Ensuring that both the first and third-party conditions involve the same kind of relationship (i.e., friendship) is an important contribution of this proposed study. Thus:

*H<sub>2</sub>: When the forgiver is the victim of an offense, forgiveness ratings will be higher than when the forgiver is forgiving on behalf of a supportive or ambivalent friend.*

My final hypothesis deals with only third-party conditions. Because ambivalent relationships include higher amounts of negativity than supportive relationships, there is a greater likelihood for offense to occur when interacting with an ambivalent other compared to a supportive other. It seems likely that people in an ambivalent relationship will have had a greater number of opportunities to be offended or hurt and to either forgive or not forgive an ambivalent other as opposed to a supportive other. Because of this potential history in an ambivalent relationship, people might be more understanding when an ambivalent relation is offended or hurt by another person. Thus, participants in the third-party condition may be less likely to take offense when an ambivalent relation is the victim compared to when a supportive relation is the victim. This suggests that forgiveness ratings will be higher when the forgiver has an ambivalent relationship with the victim. Conversely, forgiveness ratings should be lower when the forgiver has a supportive relationship with the victim.

*H<sub>3</sub>: When the forgiver is a third party, forgiveness ratings will be higher when the forgiver has an ambivalent relationship with the victim compared to when the forgiver has a supportive relationship with the victim.*

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from undergraduate psychology classes at Brigham Young University through emails and in-class announcements where permitted. Prospective participants signed up on the Sona experiment management system that is housed on the BYU Department of Psychology website. No direct benefits were offered for participation, although

some students did receive extra credit at their instructor's discretion in exchange for participating.

Two hundred thirty one participants were included in the study. Two thirds of the participants were female ( $N = 154$ ; 66.7%). Nearly all participants were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ( $N = 225$ ; 97.4%). Participants ranged in age from 17 to 89 years old, though the majority clustered around the average age of 21 ( $M = 21.10$ ,  $SD = 5.76$ ). The majority of participants were Caucasian ( $N = 208$ ; 90%), with the remaining participants being African American ( $N = 2$ ; .8%), Asian ( $N = 2$ ; .8%), Hispanic ( $N = 4$ ; 1.7%), or Pacific Islander ( $N = 2$ ; .8%). Thirteen participants claimed membership in two or more racial groups (5.6%).

### **Design**

The design of this study was a 2 X 3 factorial. The two factors in this design were relationship to the perpetrator (two levels: supportive friend or ambivalent friend) and relationship to the victim (three levels: self, supportive friend, ambivalent friend). The dependent variable was the amount of forgiveness offered to the perpetrator.

In the first party forgiveness situations, participants responded to a hypothetical offense scenario as if they were offended by either a supportive or ambivalent friend as determined by the Social Relationships Index (SRI). In the third-party situations, participants responded to a hypothetical offense scenario in which they were the third party. Both the victim and the perpetrator of the offense were either supportive or ambivalent friends of the participant as measured by the SRI. The dependent measure of forgiveness was assessed by the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) and also by two additional face-valid forgiveness questions. As in Mead (2008), these questions were asked in addition to the TRIM

because they ask participants to rate forgiving motivations directly rather than indirectly through unforgiving motivations as in the TRIM.

## **Procedures**

Participants were recruited from undergraduate psychology courses and signed up through the Sona experiment management system. They were then emailed a hyperlink to participate in this study through the Qualtrics survey tool. This allowed them to participate at a time and place most convenient for them. The survey included instructions and a consent form as well as the contact information for the researcher.

Participants first read and indicated agreement to the consent form (see Appendix A). Then they filled out a brief demographic questionnaire that elicited age, gender, ethnicity, year in school, and religious affiliation information from them. Next, they were presented with an overview of the study so they knew what was expected of them (this same overview was available on Sona and was described to potential participants prior to participation). The overview described the study as dealing with forgiveness in relationships and that participants would be required to think about and answer questions concerning their relationships with some of their close friends. After reading the overview, participants were instructed to think of two close friends of their same gender to consider for the remainder of the study. After participants selected two friendships they were asked to input the initials of each friend. This allowed for subsequent questions in which either friend might be referred to by these initials. Participants then completed the Social Relationships Index (SRI) form, which enabled me to categorize the relationships as either supportive or ambivalent. In cases where a given relationship was neither supportive nor ambivalent, the relationship was excluded from the study and the participant was

included in the first-party condition (which only requires one relationship). There were no participants for whom both chosen relationships were neither positive nor ambivalent.

To ensure that every condition in the experiment was adequately populated, the survey tool used branching logic to assign participants to either the first or third-party forgiveness condition and to assign supportive and/or ambivalent friends to the scenarios based on participants' SRI data. Participants were shown which friends were selected and were asked to enter the initials of the friend or friends into a text box to confirm their understanding. Next participants were presented with a hypothetical scenario involving the selected friends. Throughout the scenario, participants were required to input the initials of the appropriate individual into strategically placed blanks. Because there was no researcher present for the administration of the computer survey, participants might have made errors in filling out these blanks. To prevent this, the survey detected any errors before allowing participants to proceed from one segment of the survey to the next. When errors were detected, the survey indicated which blanks were incorrect and prompted participants to insert the correct initials. This ensured that participants were thinking of the correct individuals in either the victim or perpetrator roles throughout the hypothetical offense scenario. Finally, participants filled out an adjusted TRIM and two face-valid likelihood to forgive questions. Participants were thanked for their time and were given contact information of the researcher in case they have any questions or feedback.

### **Stimulus Materials**

The stimulus materials were presented to participants in this order: A consent form, a demographics survey, the Social Relationships Index (SRI) that categorizes relationships as supportive, ambivalent, or negative, a hypothetical interpersonal offense scenario, an adjusted

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) and self-report forgiveness measures. The SRI, adjusted TRIM and self-report measures are described below.

*Social Relationships Index (SRI)* (Uchino et al., 2001; Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Bloor, 2004; see Appendix C). The SRI is designed to be a self-report version of the social support interview (Uchino et al, 2001). Participants are instructed to list the initials of up to five of their closest same-gender relationships in their social network. Each of these chosen individuals are then rated by participants on how helpful or upsetting they are in providing a) tangible and b) emotional support on a 6 point scale (1= not at all to 6 = extremely). Participants also indicate the approximate duration of each indicated relationship and give a rating of how often they see each person in a given week.

After averaging helpfulness ratings across tangible and emotional support and averaging upsetting ratings across tangible and emotional support, the researcher categorizes each relationship listed by the participant as supportive, negative, or ambivalent. Supportive ties are defined as average helpfulness ratings greater than one and average upsetting ratings no greater than one. Negative ties are the reverse, with no greater than a one in helpfulness and greater than one in upsetting. Ambivalent ties have both helpfulness and upsetting ratings greater than one (Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Bloor, 2004). In the event a relationship has average helpfulness and upsetting ratings both not greater than one, the relationship would be given an indifferent categorization. Since this version of the SRI asks participants to only list close relationships, it is unlikely that many indifferent relationships are identified. In any case, no indifferent relationship ties were included in the present study. The SRI has demonstrated adequate two-week test-retest reliability:  $r = .81$  for helpful ( $p < 0.01$ ) and  $r = .83$  for upsetting ( $p < 0.01$ ) (Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Bloor, 2004).



*Adjusted Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM;* McCullough et al., 1998; see Appendix E). The TRIM consists of 12 items rated on five-point scales (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) and is designed to measure forgiveness motivations. The instructions ask the participant to consider his/ her thoughts and feelings about a person who recently offended him/ her and then to use the included scale to indicate his/her agreement to each of the listed statements. The first five items (e.g., *I want to get even*) assess the motivation to retaliate and are known as the retaliatory subscale. The following seven items (e.g., *I want to avoid him/her*) measure avoidance and make up the avoidance subscale. According to Tsang, McCullough, and Fincham (2006), these subscales have good internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ) and moderate test-retest reliability (8-week test-retest  $r_s$  = approximately .50; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). Additionally there is evidence that the TRIM demonstrates both convergent and discriminant validity (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998). The TRIM is administered as a self-report measure.

Consistent with Mead (2008), the TRIM was adjusted for use with a hypothetical scenario rather than an actual event. For example, the first TRIM item will ask for a rating of the statement “I want to make him/her pay,” rather than “I’ll make him/her pay.” Additionally the instructions were adjusted to read “Please think of the hypothetical scenario that supposedly occurred,” rather than “Please indicate your current thoughts on the person who recently hurt you.” For the current study, the adjusted TRIM demonstrated excellent internal consistency as a global scale ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ), and the avoidant ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and retaliatory ( $\alpha = .90$ ) subscales were similarly reliable.

The two face-valid forgiveness questions (see Appendix F) were adapted from Mead (2008). The first question asked participants to rate on a 5-point scale (1= easy, 2= somewhat easy, 3= neither easy nor difficult, 4= somewhat difficult, 5= difficult) how difficult it would be to forgive the perpetrator if the situation had actually occurred. The second question asked participants to rate on a different five-point scale (1= completely forgive, 2= mostly forgive, 3 = somewhat forgive, 4= mostly do not forgive, 5= completely do not forgive) how much they think they would forgive the perpetrator if the situation had actually occurred.

## Results

The primary aim of this study was to examine the intersection of two relatively new areas of social psychology: relational measures sensitive to heterogeneity and third-party forgiveness. Specifically, three hypotheses were of interest:

*H<sub>1</sub>: When the forgiver has a supportive relationship with the perpetrator, forgiveness ratings will be greater than when the forgiver has an ambivalent relationship with the perpetrator.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: When the forgiver is the victim of an offense, forgiveness ratings will be higher than when the forgiver is forgiving on behalf of a supportive or ambivalent friend.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: When the forgiver is a third party, forgiveness ratings will be higher when the forgiver has an ambivalent relationship with the victim compared to when the forgiver has a supportive relationship with the victim.*

For the purpose of testing these hypotheses, we compared three levels of victim type (self, supportive, ambivalent) with two levels of perpetrator type (supportive, ambivalent). We utilized four separate dependant variables. Two of them, the TRIM subscales mentioned above, have been established in previous research. Consistent with previous research, the TRIM subscales are reported separately rather than as a single score. The other two dependant

variables were face valid forgiveness questions. The first was, “How much would you forgive this person if the offense had actually occurred?” The second was, “How difficult would it be to forgive this person if the offense had actually occurred?” Hereafter I refer to these as “Much” and “Difficult.”

In order to test our first hypothesis, a 2 (perpetrator type: supportive, ambivalent) x 3 (victim type: self, supportive, ambivalent) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted separately for each of the four dependent variables. To test our second and third hypotheses, a *t*-test was conducted for each dependent variable comparing the relevant set of means for either  $H_2$  or  $H_3$ . Because we used multiple dependent variables, a Bonferroni adjustment was made to avoid Type-I error. For each of our analyses, a *p*-value of .013 or smaller is required to reject the null hypothesis. Means and standard deviations for each dependent variable are presented in Table 2.

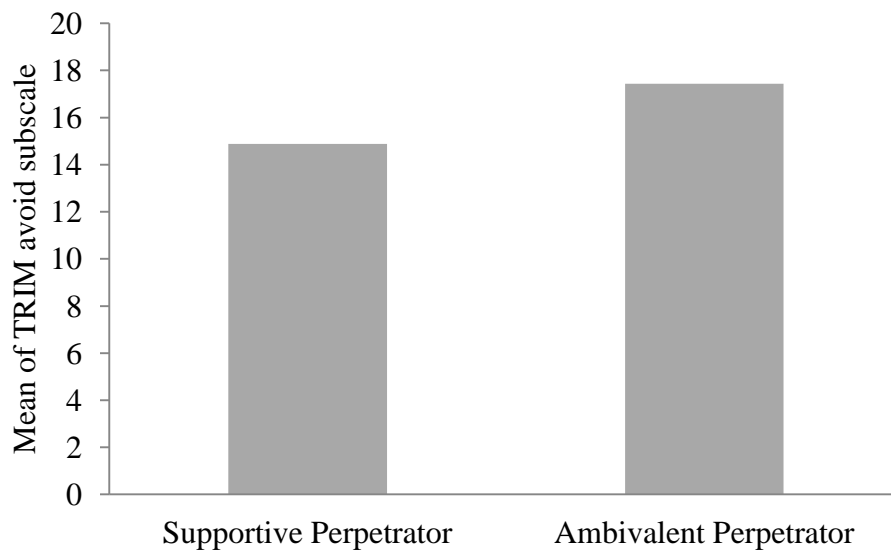
Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Study Dependant Variables*

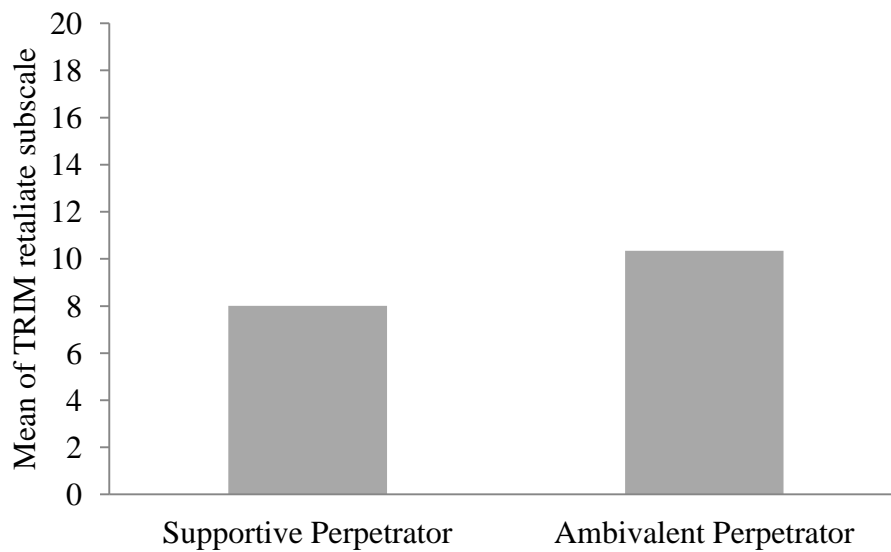
DV	Perpetrator	Victim						Total					
		Self			Supportive			Ambivalent					
		Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N			
Trim retaliate	Supportive	8.57	3.48	35	7.41	2.82	32	8.00	2.45	29	8.01	2.99	96
	Ambivalent	10.00	4.02	50	10.11	4.80	28	10.72	4.60	57	10.33	4.41	135
	Total	9.41	3.85	85	8.67	4.07	60	9.80	4.19	86	9.36	4.04	231
Trim avoidance	Supportive	16.09	6.28	35	13.00	5.33	32	15.48	6.13	29	14.88	6.03	96
	Ambivalent	19.08	5.70	50	15.64	6.62	28	16.86	6.32	57	17.43	6.26	135
	Total	17.85	6.09	85	14.23	6.07	60	16.40	6.26	86	16.37	6.28	231
Much	Supportive	1.46	0.51	35	1.48	0.68	31	1.48	0.63	29	1.47	0.60	95
	Ambivalent	1.46	0.58	48	1.65	0.89	26	1.74	0.81	57	1.62	0.76	131
	Total	1.46	0.55	83	1.56	0.78	57	1.65	0.76	86	1.56	0.70	226
Difficult	Supportive	2.46	1.15	35	2.38	1.13	32	2.66	0.90	29	2.49	1.07	96
	Ambivalent	2.96	1.05	50	2.82	0.94	28	2.89	1.10	57	2.90	1.04	135
	Total	2.75	1.11	85	2.58	1.06	60	2.81	1.03	86	2.73	1.07	231

*H<sub>1</sub>: When the forgiver has a supportive relationship with the perpetrator, forgiveness ratings will be greater than when the forgiver has an ambivalent relationship with the perpetrator.* This hypothesis was tested by examining the main effect for relationship with the perpetrator. For both of the TRIM subscales and one of the two face-valid forgiveness questions (Difficult) results obtained were consistent with this hypothesis. Specifically, independent of relationship to the victim, participants reported fewer retaliatory motivations when they had a supportive relationship with the perpetrator ( $M = 8.01, SD = 2.99$ ) as opposed to an ambivalent relationship ( $M = 10.33, SD = 4.41$ ),  $F(1, 225) = 18.41, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$  (see Figure 1). Similarly, participants reported less desire to avoid the supportive perpetrator ( $M = 14.88, SD = 6.03$ ) than the ambivalent perpetrator ( $M = 17.43, SD = 6.26$ ),  $F(1, 225) = 7.97, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .03$  (see Figure 2), and they asserted that it would be easier to forgive the supportive perpetrator ( $M = 2.49, SD = 1.07$ ) than the ambivalent culprit ( $M = 2.90, SD = 1.04$ ),  $F(1, 225) = 7.53, p = 0.007, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , (see Figure 3). The second face-valid forgiveness question (Much) produced no significant mean differences, suggesting that participants would be willing to forgive a supportive or ambivalent perpetrator equally. So there was general support for the hypothesis that forgiveness is more likely to occur when a person enjoys a positive, as opposed to an ambivalent, relationship with the perpetrator of an offence.

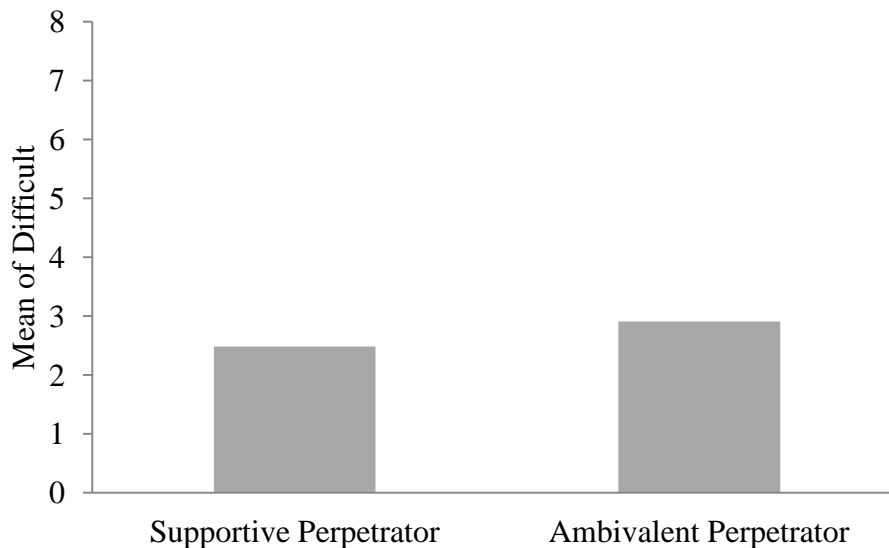
As for the main effect for relationship to the victim, I conducted planned comparisons to investigate my second and third hypotheses (see below). Nevertheless, the omnibus test revealed a single main effect for the TRIM avoid subscale,  $F(2, 225) = 5.00, p = .008$ , but nothing for the other dependent variables,  $F_s(2,225) < 1.00, p_s > .37$ . In addition, none of the interactions were significant,  $F_s(2, 225) < .69, p_s > .50$ . I now turn to a discussion of the results obtained for the remaining hypotheses, which required the use of separate planned comparisons.



**Figure 1.** Means for Supportive and Ambivalent groups for TRIM avoid subscale.



**Figure 2.** Means for Supportive and Ambivalent groups of TRIM retaliate subscale.



**Figure 3.** Means for Supportive and Ambivalent groups of “Difficult”.

*H<sub>2</sub>*: When the forgiver is the victim of an offense, forgiveness ratings will be higher than when the forgiver is forgiving on behalf of a supportive or ambivalent friend. In other words, regardless of relationship to the perpetrator, forgiveness ratings will be higher in first- as opposed to third- party forgiveness scenarios. To test this hypothesis, a t-test was conducted comparing the means of participants in the first-party conditions with the combined means of participants in third-party conditions (supportive and ambivalent) for each of the four independent variables. In three of the four analyses, no support was obtained for this hypothesis,  $t_s(229) < 1.79$ ,  $p_s > .075$ ,  $d_s < .03$ . In just one of the four dependant variables was a significant effect found for victim type. The TRIM avoidance subscale produced a significant effect in the opposite direction as hypothesized. That is, participants in the first-party condition reported more avoidant motivations ( $M = 17.85$ ,  $SD = 6.09$ ) compared to participants in the third-party condition ( $M = 15.5$ ,  $SD = 6.25$ ),  $t(229) = 2.77$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $d = .37$ . As the sole significant effect was found to act in the opposite direction as hypothesized, no support was found for *H<sub>2</sub>*.

*H<sub>3</sub>: When the forgiver is a third party, forgiveness ratings will be higher when the forgiver has an ambivalent relationship with the victim compared to when the forgiver has a supportive relationship with the victim.* In other words, regardless of relationship to the perpetrator, participants in the third-party condition with an ambivalent relationship with the victim will be more forgiving than participants in the third-party condition with a supportive relationship with the victim. In order to test this hypothesis, a *t*-test was conducted comparing the means of participants in the third-party ambivalent condition with participants in the third-party supportive condition. A separate *t*-test was run for each of the independent variables. For this hypothesis, no significant effects were found  $t_s(144) < 2.08$ ,  $p_s > .11$ ,  $d_s < .35$ .

### **Discussion**

Forgiveness remains a relatively new topic in the field of psychology. Although forgiveness within dyads has been given more attention in recent years, forgiveness involving three or more people is only just starting to receive experimental attention. Concurrently, it seems appropriate to study forgiveness in the context of recent research on social relationships. It was in the context of these ideas that the current study was conceived. My aims included an attempt to ascertain whether the third-party forgiveness effect found by Green, Burnett, and Davis (2008) would extend to new contexts, and an examination of the effects of relationship valence on forgiveness.

My first hypothesis asserted that forgiveness would be higher when participants had a supportive relationship with the perpetrator as opposed to an ambivalent relationship with the perpetrator. In support of this hypothesis, participants showed more forgiveness for supportive friends who perpetrated an offense than for ambivalent friends who perpetrated an offense. This supports the conclusion made by Mead (2008) that ambivalent relationships are about as



prevalent (Uchino et al., 2004) and important (Uno, Uchino, & Smith, 2002) as supportive relationships, but are characterized by lower levels of forgiveness than supportive relationships. This is an expected outcome considering previous research.

In the case of one of the face-valid forgiveness question that asked “How much would you forgive this person if the offense had actually occurred?,” I found no difference in participant responses between those with supportive perpetrators and those with ambivalent perpetrators. This suggests that although subjects felt that it would be difficult to forgive an ambivalent friend and that they would want to retaliate against and avoid the person more, they would still forgive him/her the same amount as a supportive friend. One might argue that this finding is the result of the question eliciting a socially desirable response. However, participants’ responses to the TRIM subscales suggested that they were willing to admit to having avoidant and even retaliatory motivations toward perpetrators. Further, participants indicated that they would have difficulty forgiving perpetrators in their responses to the first face-valid forgiveness question. As all of the questions in the TRIM subscales are also relatively face-valid (e.g. “I want to get even with him/her.”), we would expect any effects of social desirability to affect participant responses on all of the dependant variables rather than just one of them. Therefore, it seems appropriate to suggest that these participants were willing to forgive equally even when they believed it would be difficult to forgive and in spite of having unforgiving motivations.

My second hypothesis was an attempt to reproduce the third-party forgiveness effect. I expected to see lower forgiveness from participants in the third-party condition. No third-party forgiveness effect occurred in this study. Although one of the dependent variables, TRIM avoid, produced a statistically significant result, the result was in the opposite direction as hypothesized.

Participants reported more avoidance of perpetrators who directly offended them, and less avoidance of perpetrators who offended their close friends. None of the other dependant variables produced a significant result. This suggests that the participants' willingness to forgive is unrelated to whether the offense occurred directly to the participant or indirectly via a third party, though participants may feel more avoidant motivations when they are directly offended.

One might suggest that perhaps the design of the present study was not capable of detecting a third-party forgiveness effect. However, the present study was capable of detecting effects for  $H_1$ , suggesting that the study design may not be the reason for this failure to replicate the third-party forgiveness effect. Currently, there have been no published follow-up studies to Green, Burnett, and Davis' (2008) paper on the third-party forgiveness effect. This may or may not be due to a lack of significant findings. In the end, the third-party forgiveness effect remains a recent and intriguing finding that has yet to be reproduced in any follow-up studies. Future research might tease apart whether idiosyncrasies within the offense scenario or differences in forgiving when it involves romantic relationships rather than only friendships might better explain and situate the third-party forgiveness effect.

My final hypothesis predicted higher forgiveness ratings when the forgiver had an ambivalent relationship with the victim compared to a supportive relationship with the victim. No support was obtained for this hypothesis. I had anticipated that participants would focus on the negative aspects rather than the positive aspects of their ambivalent relationships and would therefore be less offended when an ambivalent friend was victimized. This follows the positive-negative asymmetry effect (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001) and the negativity bias (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). This does not appear to have been the case. As I did not attempt to ascertain whether participants were focusing on the negative aspects of ambivalent

relationships, I cannot say for certain why I did not find the hypothesized result. However, one intriguing possibility is that participants may not have focused on the negative aspects of their relationship with the victim. This would be unexpected as it does not follow the negativity bias (Rozin & Royzman, 2001) nor does it harmonize with my finding that an ambivalent perpetrator received less forgiveness than a supportive perpetrator (see also Mead, 2008). In other words, as ambivalent relationships and supportive relationships only differ in that ambivalent relationships include high amounts of negativity (i.e., both relationship types are high in positivity) one possible explanation for the lack of difference between the two conditions in this study is that participants were not attending to the negative aspects of the relationship when thinking about a victim other than themselves. Perhaps when considering someone as a victim rather than an offender, people are more likely to focus on the positive aspects of the relationship instead of the negative aspects. Future research could examine this possibility.

### **Conclusion**

While this study did not find evidence of a third-party forgiveness effect, it did find additional evidence of the important distinction between supportive and ambivalent relationships. Future research on forgiveness might benefit from the more useful contrast between supportive and ambivalent as opposed to more traditional measures of relational valence that place positivity and negativity on the same scale.

This study did not find any evidence for a third-party forgiveness effect. Indeed, there was evidence that in some situations, people do not feel more or less forgiving motivations when forgiving a direct offender as opposed to forgiving someone who has offended a close friend. An important part of researching forgiveness beyond the dyad is to better understand the situations in which it might not make a difference in terms of people's willingness to forgive. In

any case, research on forgiveness beyond the traditional victim-perpetrator dyad is still needed.

This remains a little-studied yet potentially fruitful area of research.

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## Appendix A

Consent form

Code: \_\_\_\_\_

### Consent to be a Research Participant

**Brief Description:** This research is being conducted by Dan Allen in the Department of Psychology at Brigham Young University. You are participating because you voluntarily responded to an invitation to participate from the Sona experiment management system in the BYU psychology department.

**Procedures:** You will be asked to complete a background and social relationship questionnaire. The social relationship questionnaire will ask you to rate several friendships along several dimensions. Upon completion, the researcher will ask you to think of one friend that was listed on the questionnaire as you read a hypothetical scenario that supposedly occurred between yourself and your friend. You will then be asked several questions about how you would think and feel if this scenario were to truly occur.

**Risks/Discomforts:** The risks for participating in this study are minimal. You may feel some discomfort while reading about a hypothetical social transgression that occurred between yourself and your friend. Although some participants may feel some discomfort, there is minimal risk.

**Benefits:** There are no direct benefits to you.

**Confidentiality:** All information will remain confidential and will be reported only as group data with no identifying information. Your responses will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and on the primary investigators computer that is password protected. Only the primary investigator, supervisory professor, and approved research assistants will be permitted to access the data.

**Participation:** Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty. Compensation for partial-participation will be proportional to duration of participation.

**Compensation:** You will receive extra credit or course credit if authorized by your instructor. If not, there is no compensation.

**Questions about the Research:** If you have any questions regarding this research project you may contact Dan Allen at 801-429-9957.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participant: If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact a BYU IRB Administrator at 422-1461 or [irb@byu.edu](mailto:irb@byu.edu).

I have read, understood and may receive a copy of the above consent, and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Demographics Questionnaire

*We would like you to complete the following questions to help us get to know you better. Please circle the one best answer.*

**What is your gender?** 1. Male 2. Female

**What is your age?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What year in school are you?**

1. Freshman
2. Junior
3. Sophomore
4. Senior
5. Graduate Student
6. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you define your ethnicity?**

- |                     |                      |                           |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. African American | 4. Native American   | 7. Other:<br>_____        |
| 2. Asian            | 5. Pacific Islander  | 8. Multi-racial:<br>_____ |
| 3. Hispanic         | 6. White (Caucasian) |                           |

**What is your marital status?**

- |                                     |                  |             |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Married; how many years: ____    | 3. Never married | 5. Divorced |
| 2. Living with partner; # years: __ | 4. Separated     | 6. Widowed  |

**What is your religious affiliation?**

- |             |           |                                       |
|-------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Buddhist | 4. Jewish | 7. Protestant                         |
| 2. Catholic | 5. LDS    | 8. Other:<br>_____                    |
| 3. Hindu    | 6. Muslim | 9. I have no religious<br>affiliation |

## Appendix C SRI-Social Network Members

Instructions: For the following questionnaire, we would like to know more about your social network. When we need support such as advice, understanding or a favor, our relationships with other people (for example, parents, spouses, friends), may or may not have both helpful and upsetting aspects. Please list and rate the friends in your life with which you have regular contact. Please only list friends that are the same gender as yourself (Note: When asked to rate the extent the individual is HELPFUL, you should ignore any upsetting aspects of the relationship. When asked to rate the extent this individual is UPSETTING, you should ignore any helpful aspects of your relationship.) Remember that your responses are confidential and that there are no right or wrong answers.

When you need support such as advice, understanding or a favor...								
Initials of person :	Relationship to you:	Gender of person: (Please only list friends that are the same gender as you)	Approximate length of time you have known the person: (years or months)	Average number of days per week you have contact with the person:	HOW IMPORTANT is the person to you? 1=Not at all 2=A little 3=Somewhat 4=Moderately 5=Very 6=Extremely (circle one number)			
			HOW HELPFUL is this person to you? 1=Not at all 2=A little 3=Somewhat 4=Moderately 5=Very 6=Extremely (circle one number)	HOW UPSETTING is this person to you? 1=Not at all 2=A little 3=Somewhat 4=Moderately 5=Very 6=Extremely (circle one number)	HOW MIXED OR CONFLICTED are your thoughts and feelings for the person? 1=Not at all 2=A little 3=Somewhat 4=Moderately 5=Very 6=Extremely (circle one number)	HOW UNPREDICTABLE is this person to you? 1=Not at all 2=A little 3=Somewhat 4=Moderately 5=Very 6=Extremely (circle one number)	HOW LIKELY are you to go to this person? 1=Not at all 2=A little 3=Somewhat 4=Moderately 5=Very 6=Extremely (circle one number)	
1.		M F			1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
2.		M F			1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
3.		M F			1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
4.		M F			1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6
5.		M F			1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6	1 2 3 4 5 6

## Appendix D

### Interpersonal offense scenario

Please write the initials of the person that you have been asked to think about in each of the following blank spaces before reading the scenario. This will help you to imagine that this scenario has actually transpired between you and that person. Please write their initials in each of the blank spaces now.

---

Please read the following brief description of an incident involving you and \_\_\_\_\_. As you do so, try to imagine how you would really feel and what you would really think in the situation described.

---

You and \_\_\_\_\_ are taking a class together and are preparing for an important final exam. A day before the final, this person asks you if he or she can borrow your notes from the previous week in order to make copies. You agree but tell \_\_\_\_\_ to bring them back as soon as possible because you have not gone over them yet and have to leave in an hour and a half. This person tells you that he or she needs to go to a final review put on by the professor for another class and that it will only last an hour. This person will hurry and copy your notes and bring them right back to you before you have to leave.

An hour later, \_\_\_\_\_ has not returned from making the copies. You try to reach this person on his or her cell phone but this person does not answer. You wait for another hour but cannot wait any longer. You call one more time but this person does not answer. You leave a message letting them know once again that you really need your notes so that you can prepare for tomorrow's final and ask them to bring them to you at your apartment as soon as possible.

That evening, \_\_\_\_\_ finally returns to your apartment and brings you back some of your notes. \_\_\_\_\_ has lost several important pages that your professor has said will be on the final exam. You do not know anybody else in the class and do not know how you will be able to prepare for the part of the final exam.

### Interpersonal offense scenario (third-party conditions)

Please write the initials of the people that you have been asked to think about in each of the following blank spaces before reading the scenario. This will help you to imagine that this scenario has actually transpired between these people. Please write their initials in each of the blank spaces now.

(A) \_\_\_\_\_

(B) \_\_\_\_\_

Please read the following brief description of an incident involving (A) \_\_\_\_\_ and (B) \_\_\_\_\_. As you do so, try to imagine how you would really feel and what you would really think if the following events actually occurred.

(A) \_\_\_\_\_ and (B) \_\_\_\_\_ are taking a class together and are preparing for an important final exam. A day before the final, (B) \_\_\_\_\_ asks (A) \_\_\_\_\_ if he or she can borrow (A) \_\_\_\_\_'s notes from the previous week in order to make copies. (A) \_\_\_\_\_ agrees but tells (B) \_\_\_\_\_ to bring the notes back as soon as possible because (A) \_\_\_\_\_ has not gone over them yet and has to leave in an hour and a half. (B) \_\_\_\_\_ tells (A) \_\_\_\_\_ that he or she needs to go to a final review put on by the professor for another class and that it will only last an hour. (B) \_\_\_\_\_ will hurry and copy (A) \_\_\_\_\_'s notes and bring them right back before (A) \_\_\_\_\_ has to leave.

An hour later, (B) \_\_\_\_\_ has not returned from making the copies. (A) \_\_\_\_\_ tries to reach (B) \_\_\_\_\_ on his or her cell phone but he or she does not answer. (A) \_\_\_\_\_ waits for another hour but cannot wait any longer. (A) \_\_\_\_\_ calls one more time but (B) \_\_\_\_\_ still does not answer. (A) \_\_\_\_\_ leaves a message letting (B) \_\_\_\_\_ know once again that (A) \_\_\_\_\_ really needs his or her notes so that he or she can prepare for tomorrow's final and asks (B) \_\_\_\_\_ to bring them to (A) \_\_\_\_\_'s apartment as soon as possible.

That evening, (B) \_\_\_\_\_ finally returns to (A) \_\_\_\_\_'s apartment and brings back some of (A) \_\_\_\_\_'s notes. (B) \_\_\_\_\_ has lost several important pages that (A) \_\_\_\_\_'s professor has said will be on the final exam. (A) \_\_\_\_\_ does not know anybody else in the class and does not know how he or she will be able to prepare for those parts of the final exam.

## Appendix E

### TRIM

For the questions on this page, please think of the hypothetical scenario that supposedly occurred and indicate your current thoughts and feelings about \_\_\_\_\_ (initials of the person thought about) as if this scenario actually happened.

1 = Strongly disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Neutral    4 = Agree    5 = Strongly Agree

---

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



**TRIM (third-party conditions)**

For the questions on this page, please think of the hypothetical scenario that supposedly occurred and indicate your current thoughts and feelings about (A) \_\_\_\_\_ as if this scenario actually happened.

1 = Strongly disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Neutral    4 = Agree    5 = Strongly Agree

---

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

## Appendix F

### Forgiveness Questions

Please answer the following questions while thinking about the hypothetical scenario that supposedly occurred between you and your friend, \_\_\_\_\_ (initials of person thought about). Please circle the answer that best describes what you remember from the scenario and how you would think and feel. Please DO NOT reread the scenario as you answer these questions.

---

1. How difficult would it be for you to forgive this person if this situation had really occurred?

Easy	Somewhat Easy	Neither Easy Nor Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Difficult

2. How much do you think you would forgive this person if this situation had really occurred?

Completely Forgive	Mostly Forgive	Somewhat Forgive	Mostly Do Not Forgive	Completely Do Not Forgive

### Forgiveness Questions (third-party conditions)

Please answer the following questions while thinking about the hypothetical scenario that supposedly occurred between your friends (A) \_\_\_\_\_ and (B) \_\_\_\_\_. Please circle the answer that best describes what you remember from the scenario and how you would think and feel. Please DO NOT reread the scenario as you answer these questions.

---

1. How difficult would it be for you to forgive (A) \_\_\_\_\_ if this situation had really occurred?

Easy	Somewhat Easy	Neither Easy Nor Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Difficult

2. How much do you think you would forgive (A) \_\_\_\_\_ if this situation had really occurred?

Completely Forgive	Mostly Forgive	Somewhat Forgive	Mostly Do Not Forgive	Completely Do Not Forgive