

**PREDICTING PRO-RELATIONAL AND PROSOCIAL RESPONSES TO
RECEIVED FORGIVENESS: THE ROLE OF STATE GRATITUDE**

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfilment

Of the

Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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December, 2012

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ABSTRACT

Despite the significant interest forgiveness has attracted in recent years, researchers have yet to systematically explore the *offender's* perspective and experience of forgiveness. Limited attention has been paid to the potential positive intrapsychic and interpersonal consequences of receiving forgiveness, or any of forgiveness' possible harmful effects from the transgressor's point of view. Yet, many conceptualisations situate forgiveness in an interpersonal context and describe forgiveness as a prosocial gesture, implying that forgiveness will impact the recipient—the transgressor—in some way. This thesis sought to attend to this gap in the literature by examining forgiveness from the standpoint of the transgressor. The overarching aim of this thesis was to investigate when transgressors would respond in pro-relational and prosocial ways toward the forgiving victim. It was argued that one motivation for forgiven transgressors to respond in positive ways was because they appreciated the victim's forgiveness and felt grateful. An emerging literature empirically demonstrates the prosocial qualities of gratitude: This thesis was the first to examine the prosocial effects of gratitude in the context of received forgiveness. To test this hypothesis, four experimental studies were conducted. Participants recalled past episodes of being forgiven or remaining unforgiven; participants responded to hypothetical transgressions presented in vignettes; and two studies induced participants to commit an offence in a real-time laboratory context. Findings suggest the following. First, people across different relational contexts appear to respond with gratitude following an expression of forgiveness. Second, gratitude following forgiveness is dependent on how genuine and sincere the victim's offer of forgiveness is judged to be. Third, in response to retrospective, hypothetical and laboratory-based transgressions, genuine forgiveness was associated with pro-relational and prosocial responses in transgressors. Fourth and finally, the current work provides tentative support to suggest that state gratitude may be

associated with forgiven offenders' pro-relational motivations. This work has highlighted the pro-relational and prosocial outcomes following the receipt of forgiveness, and tested one potential mechanism via which forgiveness might benefit transgressors and the victim-offender relationship: State gratitude.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library catalogue and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Louise Mooney

December, 2012

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people to whom I wish to express my deepest gratitude.

Thanks to my two incredible supervisors, Dr Peter Strelan and Dr Ian McKee for their constant support, advice and particularly their patience with me during the completion of my PhD. I would like to thank both Peter and Ian for their direction and encouragement, whilst allowing me the room to work in my own way; I could not have wished for more from my supervisors. Peter, thank you for your guidance and expertise. I have learned so much under your mentorship, and I have enjoyed developing my research skills under your direction. Ian, thank you for always making yourself available to answer my (many!) questions, and providing me with invaluable advice at each stage of my research.

Many, many thanks to my fellow PhD candidates: Heather, Letty, Jeremy, Emma, Bec and Laura. You are all such intelligent, lovely people; it was wonderful sharing this journey with you. I wish you each the very best and thank you for your advice and support.

I would like to especially thank Heather Pearce. Thank you for the detailed feedback of my drafts, our therapeutic chats, and your friendship. You are one very passionate, gifted lady, and I wish you the very best with your own PhD and your future endeavours.

I would like to thank the participants for their involvement in this research. A special thank you to the participants of Study 1 for sharing your personal experiences of receiving forgiveness.

I wish to thank my family: Mum, Dad, Stu, Andy and Jess. You are my best friends. I love you all completely.

Thanks to my fiancé, the lovely Glenn. You are so much fun and I love you to bits. You are a blessing to me in so many ways, and your support and practical help with my thesis has been overwhelming.

Finally, my deepest gratitude to the one who has shown me the rich blessings that come from the offering and receiving of forgiveness.