

## P2 – Gratitude and Forgiveness as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction

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- Research Purpose:** This project examines gratitude, forgiveness, and relationship satisfaction in a sample of people who are currently involved in a romantic relationship.
- Research Description: Overall series of projects:** Although Emmons, McCullough, and Tsang (2003, p. 327) argued that gratitude “enhances one’s personal and relational well-being”, most of the research linking gratitude to interpersonal relationships has focused on prosocial behaviour rather than ongoing personal relationships. Indeed, Algoe, Haidt, and Gable (2008) claimed that their recent study was the first to examine gratitude as a factor in the promotion of relationships. This project is one of a series of three studies that will explore the association between gratitude and relationship outcomes in ongoing romantic relationships. The students involved in the three projects will collect data together, but will focus on separate aspects of the overall study for their individual theses.
- Project 2:** The second project will examine the extent to which gratitude and forgiveness predict relationship satisfaction. A growing body of research has confirmed the importance of forgiveness in close interpersonal relationships (e.g., Allemand, Amberg, & Zimprich 2007; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). If willingness to forgive interpersonal transgressions is important for the maintenance of close relationships, it seems logical that individuals who are less willing to forgive may find it difficult to establish or maintain satisfying romantic relationships. However, no previous study has examined the relationships between gratitude, forgiveness, and satisfaction in romantic relationships.
- Participants:** The overall study will include approximately 150-200 adult participants who have been in a relationship for at least six months (i.e., married, de facto, or dating). These participants will be recruited via the first-year psychology student experimental pool, community groups and organisations, and networks available to the three Honours students involved in the overall study. The supervisor will arrange for permission letters from any groups or organisations prior to data collection. Each student will be responsible for recruiting approximately 50-70 participants for the study.
- Methodology:** The following questionnaires will be used:
- (a) The Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test (GRAT; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). This is a 44-item dispositional measure of gratitude that breaks down into three subscores: resentment, simple appreciation for common pleasures, and social appreciation for others.
  - (b) The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005). This questionnaire has three subscales measuring forgiveness of self, others, and situations.
  - (c) The relationship satisfaction subscale from the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998).

**Data Analysis:** Pearson product-moment correlations and regression analyses will be the main analyses used. The three students involved in the overall study may choose to do the data screening either individually or together. However, each student will be responsible for individually analysing the data relevant to his/her specific project.

**Student friendliness:** This project is suitable for local or distance students. Weekly contact will be required in the early stages of the project, but can be more flexible throughout the year to reflect the different needs of the students. If two or more local students are involved in the project, I would prefer as many joint supervision sessions as possible. Contact with distance students will mainly be via email or phone. It may also be beneficial for distance students to allow a little extra time at the workshops (e.g., a day at the beginning or end) to provide more time for face-to-face supervision, though this can be negotiated. While the student will be able to find plenty of articles on gratitude, forgiveness, and relationship satisfaction, no studies have linked these three variables together. Therefore, the student will need to use critical thinking in order to integrate different bodies of research. If you are interested in this project, please send me an email and include two or three sentences indicating why you are interested in the project.

**Expected research outcomes:** It is hoped that the results of the overall study will be published in a journal article and/or presented at a psychology conference. The supervisor and the three students will all be co-authors on these papers.

**Further reading:** Algoe, S. B., Haidt, J., & Gable, S. L. (2008). Beyond reciprocity: Gratitude and relationships in everyday life. *Emotion*, 8 (3), 425-429.

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

Thompson, L. Y., Snyder, C. R., Hoffman, L., Michael, S. T., Rasmussen, H. N., Billings, L. S., Heinze, L., Neufeld, J. E., Shorey, H. S., Roberts, J. C., & Roberts, D. E. (2005). Dispositional forgiveness of self, others, and situations. *Journal of Personality*, 73, 313-359.

Watkins, P. C., Woodward, K., Stone, T., & Kolts, R. L. (2003). Gratitude and happiness: Development of a measure of gratitude, and relationships with subjective well-being. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 31 (5), 431-452.

**Ethics:**  Ethical approval will be sought by supervisor; or  
 Ethics approved – number \_\_\_\_\_

**Resources:**  Project able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit  
 Project not able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit – additional funds will come from: \_\_\_\_\_

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