

Research Incubator: Forgiveness



Event date: **Wednesday March 30, 2016**

Location: **UQBS Executive Education Venue**
Level 19, Central Plaza One, 345 Queen Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

Organized by: **Tyler G. Okimoto**

This research incubator brings together leading scholars whose work promotes a better psychological understanding of interpersonal forgiveness. In an intimate, small-group forum, we will discuss recent and ongoing research on this topic. Invited speakers will deliver a 30-minute focal presentation on their recent forgiveness-related research program, and each presentation will be followed by a 15-minute group discussion. The day concludes with analysis and discussion on the future of forgiveness scholarship in social psychology, facilitated by two discussants. We will then continue our informal discussions over dinner. The specific objectives of this meeting include:

- (1) promoting active dialogue between researchers studying the psychology of forgiveness;
- (2) stimulating novel research questions and approaches for better understanding forgiveness; and
- (3) considering the future of forgiveness, both in development of theory and its impact on policy.

This meeting is free to participants, made possible by contributions from the UQ Business School.

Preliminary agenda (subject to change):

9:15am – 9:30am	Arrival Tea and Coffee
9:30am – 10:00am	<i>Welcome and introductions</i> Tyler Okimoto
10:00am – 10:45am	<i>Causal reasoning and interpersonal forgiveness</i> Ramona Bobocel
10:45am – 11:00am	Morning Tea Break
11:00am – 11:45am	<i>The forest for the trees: Potential pitfalls in the way transgression-specific forgiveness is measured</i> Peter Strelan
11:45am – 12:30pm	<i>The complicated relation between revenge and forgiveness</i> Mario Gollwitzer
12:30pm – 1:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm – 2:15pm	<i>Why is self-forgiveness so difficult?</i> Lydia Woodyatt
2:15pm – 3:00pm	<i>Dynamics of forgiveness and self-forgiveness</i> Michael Wenzel
3:00pm – 3:15pm	Afternoon Tea Break
3:15pm – 3:35pm	<i>Discussant #1</i> Julie Fitness
3:35pm – 3:55pm	<i>Discussant #2</i> Jerry Goodstein
3:55pm – 4:45pm	<i>Group Discussion</i> Facilitated by the two discussants
4:45pm – 5:00pm	<i>Closing remarks</i> Tyler Okimoto
5:30pm –	Please join us for drinks and dinner at the Blackbird Bar & Grill Riverside Centre, 123 Eagle Street, http://www.blackbirdbrbane.com.au

PARTICIPANTS:

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* *PhD student participant*

Ramona Bobocel

The University of Waterloo, Canada



Causal reasoning and interpersonal forgiveness

Abstract: In our research, we have begun to examine the effect of victims' causal reasoning on their forgiveness of interpersonal transgressions. Drawing on construal level theory research (Rim, Hanson, & Trope, 2013) and prior research on forgiveness (e.g., McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003), we predicted that, relative to thinking about the consequences, thinking about the causes of an interpersonal transgression would promote forgiveness. This would be due to the effect of causal thinking on perceived psychological distance and high-level construal, which in turn reduce negative emotions regarding the event. The results of three experiments support these ideas, and build on the forgiveness literature by focusing on cognitive factors that influence victim forgiveness.

Presenter Bio: Ramona Bobocel received her PhD from Western in 1992, and is a Full Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Waterloo. Her research focuses on social and organizational justice, with a continuing interest in understanding how people form judgments of fairness and how they cope with unfair treatment. Recent work has included the study of forgiveness as a prosocial response to interpersonal wrongs. Her research has appeared in top-tier scientific journals, such as the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Dr. Bobocel has served as Consulting Editor for several journals including the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, and the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and as Associate Editor for *Social Justice Research*. She is Fellow of APS, and Past President of the Canadian Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

Peter Strelan

The University of Adelaide



The forest for the trees: Potential pitfalls in the way transgression-specific forgiveness is measured

Abstract: Forgiveness is a complex, multi-faceted construct. While researchers may broadly agree on what forgiveness is (and isn't), I argue that we need to pay closer attention to how transgression-specific forgiveness is measured. I briefly address the limitations associated with behavioural indicators of forgiveness. My main focus, however, is on relations between certain well-established predictors and self-report measures of intra- and interpersonal forgiveness. I present data to indicate the potential problems of mono-measure bias, particularly when measuring self-reported forgiveness at the interpersonal level. I discuss the theoretical and applied implications of adopting a more cautious approach to measurement.

Presenter Bio: I am a Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychology at the University of Adelaide. My PhD (2003, Flinders) was on the deterrents of performance-enhancing drug use in elite sport. Since about 2006 my research focus has been primarily on forgiveness, with an emphasis on its relation to justice—in particular, the extent to which punishment, and individual differences in inclinations towards justice, predicts transgression-specific forgiveness.

Mario Gollwitzer

Philipps-University Marburg, Germany



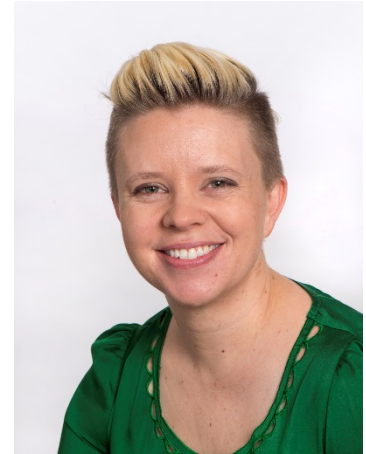
The complicated relation between revenge and forgiveness

Abstract: Forgiveness is usually conceptualized as the opposite of revenge: Forgiveness heals, but revenge hurts; forgiveness is based on prosocial motives, revenge is based on antisocial motives; forgiveness is future-oriented, revenge is backward-oriented, etc. In this talk, I argue that the relation between revenge and forgiveness is more complicated than that. First, I will show that revenge and forgiveness are not as incompatible as they seem to be: in fact, people may sometimes be more willing to forgive (or, to endorse restorative justice procedures) if the perpetrator has suffered from revenge or punishment. Second, I will argue that revenge is not as backward-oriented as it is often thought of: Taking revenge aims at delivering a message (“don’t mess with me!”) to the perpetrator, and being willing to forgive may require that this message has been delivered and understood. Third, I will discuss conditions under which acts of forgiveness may actually be based on vengeful motives. I conclude that the complicated relation between revenge and forgiveness requires more refined research in which forgiveness is not simply conceptualized (and operationalized) as the opposite of revenge.

Presenter Bio: Mario Gollwitzer is a professor of methodology and social psychology at the department of psychology at Philipps-University Marburg, Germany. He received his doctoral degree from the University of Trier in 2004 with a dissertation on revenge. His research focuses on (a) social psychological research on retributive justice, (b) individual differences in “justice sensitivity” and their relation to moral reasoning and moral behaviour, (c) new methodological approaches to social psychological processes, and (d) public understanding of and engagement with science in the context of socio-scientific issues.

Lydia Woodyatt

Flinders University



Why is self-forgiveness so difficult?

Abstract: At times, we hurt and offend others, violate ethical values, and fail to live according to our self-expectations. Without resolution, these events can have ongoing negative consequences. For example, when self-condemnation persists long after a failure or transgression occurred, it can threaten personal well-being by eliciting stress-related health problems. Also, it can create patterns of avoidance and denial that impair social functioning. Self-forgiveness is the processes by which people move towards repair and restoration after transgressions and failures occur. However many people find self-forgiveness difficult. In this session we will discuss the dimensions of self-forgiveness that make it difficult for many people to achieve. Self-forgiveness is difficult because it potentially implies both responsibility and release from self-condemnation. But these two things are not easily balanced. In this presentation we will explore the intersection between psychological needs, social processes (such as acceptance and stigma) and emotions (shame), in order to explore the knowns and unknowns about self-forgiveness and processes of moral engagement and repair.

Presenter Bio: Lydia Woodyatt completed her PhD at Flinders University of South Australia on the topic of self-forgiveness. She is currently a lecturer at Flinders University in the School of Psychology and researches on a range of issues relating to justice, emotions and morality. Her focus is on responses to committing transgressions. These responses include self-forgiveness, self-punishment, defensiveness, responsibility taking, and shame. She also examines the outcomes of these responses in terms of restoration of offenders, victims and communities. She is currently examining the motives that underlie these responses, and the consequences of these motives on memory for transgressions, and on engagement with reconciliation processes.

Michael Wenzel

Flinders University



Dynamics of forgiveness and self-forgiveness

Abstract: Research on forgiveness and self-forgiveness has considerably furthered our understanding of their antecedents and consequences, including benefits for the individual. However, research has been limited in that these issues have mainly been investigated in isolation, not considering the interdependencies that may exist between victim forgiveness and offender self-forgiveness. Moral repair following wrongdoing needs to be understood as a project in which offenders and victims are conjointly engaged; modelling each other's levels of moral engagement, reciprocally satisfying each other's social/moral needs, and developing a shared understanding of means and state of repair. In this paper I will sketch a theoretical perspective on the dynamics between forgiveness and self-forgiveness, and discuss methodological implications. I will present some illustrative findings from a study of 82 dyads, who were prospectively recruited for the study and individually completed repeated surveys on a transgression event between them from their different perspectives. The results indicate that forgiveness and self-forgiveness affect partner perceptions and responses and thus contribute to a dynamic process of moral repair.

Presenter Bio: Michael Wenzel is Associate Professor in the School of Psychology at Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia. He has published around 70 journal articles and book chapters in the fields of social justice; justice restoration, forgiveness and moral repair in interpersonal and intergroup relations; social discrimination and tolerance between groups; and compliance with the law. He was President of the International Society for Justice Research in 2012-14.

Julie Fitness

Macquarie University

Discussant

Bio: After obtaining her PhD in social psychology from the University of Canterbury, NZ, in 1991, Julie joined the Psychology Department at Macquarie. Over the last 25 years she has pursued an active research program in the broad field of human relationships, with a particular focus on issues relating to the experience and expression of emotions in marriage and the workplace, and on issues around betrayal, revenge, and forgiveness in close relationships. Along with publishing widely on these topics, she has addressed a large number of community groups on topics such as the emotionally intelligent marriage, and the causes and consequences of familial rejection.



Jerry Goodstein

Washington State University, Vancouver USA

Discussant

Bio: Jerry is a Professor in the Department of Management, Information Systems, and Entrepreneurship in the Carson College of Business at Washington State University Vancouver. He graduated from UCLA with his BA in Economics/Geography in 1975 and also received his MBA from UCLA in 1978. From 1978-1983 Goodstein worked in a number of positions in the education (Northeastern University in Boston), non-profit (210 National Foundation in Boston), and corporate (Hewlett-Packard in the Bay Area) sectors. In 1983 he left HP to pursue his Ph.D. in Management at UC Berkeley where he graduated in 1988. After joining the faculty at the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana) in 1988, Goodstein taught there for two years before moving to the beautiful Pacific Northwest to teach at Washington State University Vancouver. Goodstein's research in the past has focused on organizational governance and strategic choices. More recently he has pursued research on a series of topics in the area of business ethics, with a particular interest in offender reintegration and restorative justice conferencing.



Tyler G. Okimoto

The University of Queensland

Meeting Organizer

Bio: Tyler is a Senior Lecturer in Management in the UQ Business School. Prior to joining UQ, he received his Ph.D. in Social and Organisational Psychology from New York University in 2005, and worked as a Postdoctoral Researcher at Flinders University, and then at Yale University. Tyler's research tackles issues of social justice in organizations, politics, and society more broadly, particularly how biases in organisational and ethical decision-making contribute to discrimination, unethical practices, injustice, and conflict within and between groups. He is particularly interested in forgiveness as a critical part of the overall process of seeking justice and reconciliation.

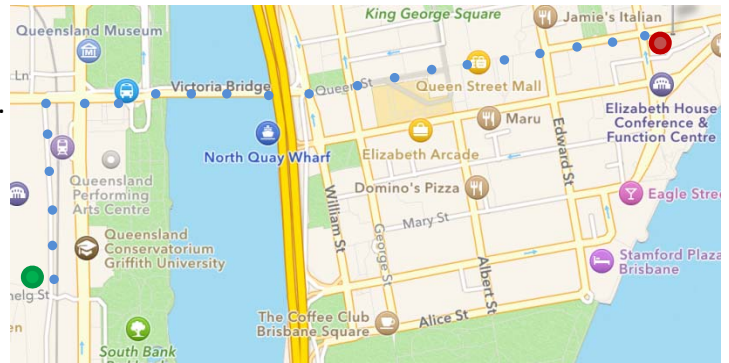


Getting to the UQBS Executive Education Venue

Level 19, Central Plaza One, 345 Queen Street, Brisbane QLD 4000

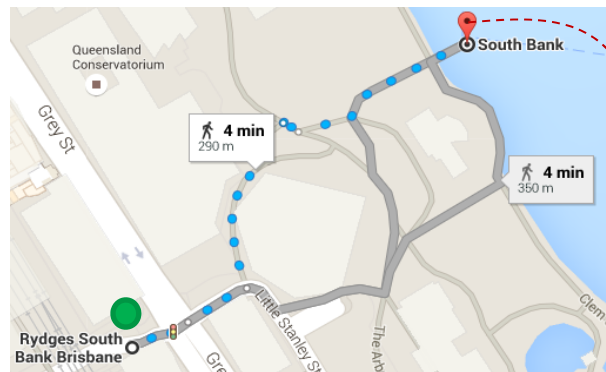
WALKING: (2 km – approx. 30 minutes)

- (1) Exit the Rydges and head left down Grey Street.
- (2) Turn right on Melbourne Street, and cross the Victoria Bridge. Continue down Queen St Mall.
- (3) Arrive at **Central Plaza One** on the corner of Queen & Creek. Take the elevator to **Level 19**.



CITYCAT FERRY + short walk: (approx. 30-40 minutes)

- (1) From the Rydges Hotel, head towards the river and the “South Bank 1” ferry terminal.
- (2) Board the Citycat heading **Downstream** towards Northshore. The ferry comes every 15 minutes. Once you board, go inside to pay (**\$5.00 cash only**) – tell them you are headed to “Riverside”.



- (3) Ride the ferry for two stops, disembarking at the “Riverside” terminal.

- (4) After exiting the ferry, head to the left along the river. Then go up the stairs towards Eagle St. Find the intersection of Eagle/Creek/Elizabeth, with the big tree in the middle of the crossing. Follow Creek Street to **Central Plaza One**. Take the elevator to **Level 19**.

