Betrayal, Rejection, Revenge, and Forgiveness:
An Interpersonal Script Approach

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Introduction

Throughout recorded human history, treachery and betrayal have been considered amongst the very worst offences people could commit against their kith and kin. Dante, for example, relegated traitors to the lowest and coldest regions of Hell, to be forever frozen up to their necks in a lake of ice with blizzards storming all about them, as punishment for having acted so coldly toward others. Even today, the crime of treason merits the most severe penalties, including capital punishment. However, betrayals need not involve issues of national security to be regarded as serious. From sexual infidelity to disclosing a friend's secrets, betraying another person or group of people implies unspeakable disloyalty, a breach of trust, and a violation of what is good and proper. Moreover, all of us will suffer both minor and major betrayals throughout our lives, and most of us will, if only unwittingly, betray others (Jones & Burdette, 1994).

The Macquarie Dictionary (1991) lists a number of different, though closely related, meanings of the term "to betray," including to deliver up to an enemy, to be disloyal or unfaithful, to deceive or mislead, to reveal secrets, to seduce and desert, and to disappoint the hopes or expectations of another. Implicit in a number of these definitions is the rejection or discounting of one person by another; however, the nature of the relationship between interpersonal betrayal and rejection has not been explicitly addressed in the social psychological literature. In fact, most scholars treat the two as distinct phenomena. For example, Jones and Burdette (1994) argued that rejection tends to occur early in the process of trying to establish a relationship, whereas betrayal occurs in an established relationship where partners are involved with, and to an extent, trust one another. According to their argument, rejection is painful, but the pain is for the loss of a potential relationship. Betrayal, however, is devastating because it disrupts an ongoing, meaningful relationship in which partners have invested material and emotional resources. Similarly, Jones, Couch and Scott (1997) argued that rejection and betrayal are the two basic risks people take in close relationships, but that betrayal is worse than rejection.

I will argue in this chapter, however, that this conceptualization of interpersonal rejection is too narrow and misses the essential meaning of what it is to betray, and to be betrayed, within an interpersonal relationship. Essentially, betrayal means that one party in a relationship acts in a way that favors his or her own interests at the expense of the other party's interests. In one sense, this behavior implies that the betrayer regards his or her needs as more important than the needs of the partner or the relationship. In a deeper sense, however, betrayal sends an ominous signal about how little the betrayer cares about, or values his or her relationship with, the betrayed partner. In particular, and as Gaylin (1984) noted, when those on whom we depend for love and support betray our trust, the feeling is like a stab at the heart that leaves us feeling unsafe, diminished, and alone. Psychologically, then, betrayal may be conceived as a profound form of interpersonal rejection with potentially serious consequences for the healthy functioning of the betrayed individual.

This chapter focuses on interpersonal betrayal and the ways in which relationship partners cope or do not cope with the rejection it implies. The first section will review the theoretical and empirical work on the nature and causes of betrayal in different relational contexts, with a particular focus on perceived violations of relationship rules. The second section will focus on the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral concomitants of betrayal from the dual perspectives of the betraying and betrayed parties. The third section will explore the aftermath of betrayal and present relevant data from a recent study on forgiven and unforgiven marital

offences. The chapter will conclude with a consideration of the long-term consequences of betrayal and suggestions for future research.

The Nature of Betrayal

As children grow to become adults, they learn from their caregivers and culture what relationships are all about - that is, they acquire theories, or knowledge structures, about relationships and how they work (Baldwin, 1992; Fletcher & Thomas, 1996; Knee, 1998). Although these laytheories of relational processes may have limited scientific validity, social cognitive research has amply demonstrated the power of such theories to influence laypeople's perceptions, judgments, and memories, both of relationships in general and of their own relationships in particular (e.g., see Fletcher & Fitness, 1996).

Relationship knowledge structures include beliefs about the importance of various aspects of relationships such as passion and intimacy (Fletcher, Rosanowski, & Fitness, 1994), rules about proper conduct within relationships (Argyle & Henderson, 1985; Jones & Gallois, 1989), and expectations about how partners will (or ought) to behave toward one another (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991; Metts, 1994). When two partners play by the rules and meet each other's expectations, their relationship runs smoothly, and relatively little emotion, positive or negative, is experienced. However, when relationship partners behave in ways that violate each other's expectations, there is a "hiccup", or interruption, to the smooth running of the relationship and the scene is set for an emotional interaction between the partners (Berscheid, 1983). In particular, the partner whose expectations have been violated must attend to the situation and decide what it means in relation to his or her needs, concerns, and goals (Fitness & Strongman, 1991; Lazarus, 1992).

Of course, not every interruption is unpleasant; some expectation violations may be highly positive and elicit emotions such as happiness and love (Kelley & Burgoon, 1991). For example, an individual who holds a strong belief that his mother must be kept happy at all costs, but who also has rather gloomy expectations about how his relationship partner is likely to behave when his mother comes to stay, may feel delighted when his partner violates his expectations with her exemplary behavior. On the other hand, an individual who holds a strong belief that sexual infidelity is wrong and who expects her partner will be faithful is likely to be shocked and disappointed to discover his infidelity; and to the extent that she had trusted him not to behave in such a fashion, she is also likely to feel betrayed.

The key to betrayal, then, lies in relationship knowledge structures - people's theories, beliefs, and expectations about how relationships in general, and their own relationships in particular, should work - and also in people's trust that their partners will share, or at least respect, those beliefs and meet those expectations (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998; Holmes, 1991). Indeed, trust is integral to betrayal because of its intimate connection with relational expectations. Boon (1994), for example, defined interpersonal trust as "the confident expectation that a partner is intrinsically motivated to take one's own best interests into account when acting - even when incentives might tempt him or her to do otherwise" (p. 88).

Clearly, trusting others exposes us to the risk of betrayal if they violate those confident expectations and take advantage of us. Moreover, if the relationship between two parties has been an intimate one, then the implications of betrayal are especially painful: The person to whom we have disclosed and entrusted our deepest fears and vulnerabilities appears neither to

care about our relationship nor to be committed to it. Little wonder, then, that such experiences of betrayal trigger feelings of rejection, abandonment, and aloneness.

Contexts of Betrayal: Who betrays Whom?

Over the course of their evolutionary history, humans have become finely attuned to the possibility of betrayal by others (Shackelford & Buss, 1996). Indeed, for social animals, knowing who to trust and how much to trust them is a critical survival mechanism. Shackelford and Buss (1996) have suggested that our "cheater-detector" mechanisms (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992) are somewhat domain-specific, and that human beings are attuned to detect different types of betrayal in different types of relationships, e.g., between spouses, friends, and coalition members. Typically, people tend to think of betrayal in the context of romantic relationships, and with good reason, since spouses and romantic partners are the most frequently cited sources of betrayal (e.g., Hansson, Jones, & Fletcher, 1990; Jones & Burdette, 1994). However, Shackelford and Buss (1996) claimed that to really understand betrayal, it is necessary to consider the relationship context within which it occurs because different kinds of relationships involve different kinds of rules and expectations.

One line of research that supports this argument derives from the work of Clark and her colleagues (e.g., Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark & Waddell, 1985) on communal versus exchange relationships. In communal relationships, the expectations are that partners will care about one another's welfare, and will support and help each other without expecting immediate reward. Typically, marital and familial relationships are characterized as communal in orientation. However, in exchange relationships the expectations are that partners are not responsible for one another's welfare, and that benefits obtained from either partner should be promptly reciprocated. Typically, relationships between clients and service providers are characterized by exchange principles. These differences in orientations and expectations set the scene for specific types of relationship betrayal, such as might happen if a partner in a supposedly communal relationship demanded the kind of formal reciprocation of benefits normally associated with an exchange relationship (Shackelford & Buss, 1996). One recent example involved a man who, against his parents' wishes, married a woman of a different ethnicity and religion. On his wedding day he received an itemized bill from his embittered parents charging him thousands of dollars for the "cost of his upbringing." The son felt betrayed, not so much because his parents disapproved of his marriage, but because the itemized bill redefined what he had assumed was a communal relationship as an exchange relationship. He was now expected to repay love with money.

Fiske (1992) made two additional distinctions among types of social relationships. Specifically, along with what he called communal sharing relationships and equality matching relationships (ones based on exchange principles), he added authority ranking relationships, in which people are ordered according to status differences (such as exist in the armed forces), and market pricing relationships, in which people, like material resources, have a particular market value (e.g., as employees). Again, each type of relationship implies different rules, expectations, and forms of betrayal.

For example, many older wives who have been "traded in" by their husbands for younger women perceive that what was meant to be a communal sharing relationship was actually a market pricing one in which they were a low-valued commodity. Similarly, part of the discomfort many people feel about pre-nuptual agreements derives from the belief that a

communal relationship that should be based on love and trust is being treated as an exchange, or market pricing relationship. These violations of relational expectations have been termed "taboo trade-offs" by Fiske and Tetlock (in press), who suggested that such violations are not just cognitively confusing, they also trigger negative emotional and behavioral reactions, including feelings of distress, anxiety, and punitive rage.

Betrayal, then, may occur in any kind of relationship context if one or other party violates salient relational expectations or "breaks the rules" in some way. Close friends, for example, hold mutual expectations about one another's behaviors, based on shared understandings of the rules of friendship (Wiseman & Duck, 1995). Such rules typically include respecting privacy, volunteering help when needed, not criticizing one another in public, and sharing confidences, but not disclosing them to others (Argyle & Henderson, 1985). Violating any of these friendship rules may be appraised as a betrayal and lead to the breakdown of the relationship (Fehr, 1996). Indeed, Jones and Burdette (1994) found that women reported betrayal by same-sex friends almost as frequently as betrayal by spouses.

The workplace is another potent context for interpersonal betrayal. Jones and Burdette (1994) found that nearly 19% of men reported having been betrayed by a colleague at work; similarly, in a study of anger in the workplace, Fitness (in press) found betrayal-related rule violations (e.g., lying and exploitation) were amongst the most frequently reported types of anger-eliciting offence amongst co-workers. Betrayal may also occur in employer-employee relationships. For example, employers may draw up a contract that specifies the rights and responsibilities of both parties with respect to wages and working conditions. If either of the two parties violates a provision of the contract, then technically speaking, a breach has occurred that may evoke anger in the aggrieved party. However, not every kind of workplace-relevant rule is explicitly accounted for in an employment contract. Equally as important (and perhaps, more so) is the so-called "psychological contract," comprising the beliefs employees hold about the reciprocal obligations between themselves and their employers, including procedural and interactional fairness, and the right to be treated with respect. When employees are deceived or unjustly treated by their employers, it is this perceived violation of the psychological contract that elicits outrage and a sense of betrayal with potentially serious consequences, including industrial sabotage (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Employers, too, may feel betrayed when deceived, cheated, and exploited by trusted employees.

In summary, not every interpersonal rejection implies betrayal, but every betrayal implies interpersonal rejection and/or a devaluation of the relationship between two parties. Moreover, and in line with Shackelford and Buss's (1996) argument, relational context is clearly important with respect to understanding the nature of betrayal. Even more important, however, is knowledge of the socially-shared rules and expectations that are most salient to any particular relational context.

The Process and Outcomes of Betrayal: An Interpersonal Script Approach

Previously it was argued that people hold lay theories about the nature of relationships and how they work, as well as beliefs about what they can expect from their relationship partners. One important type of relational knowledge structure, called a script, comprises beliefs and expectations about the ways in which relationship events typically unfold (Baldwin, 1992). For example, partners may have a "going out for a romantic dinner" script that involves expectations about how they will dress, where they will go, who will order what for dinner, how

much wine they will drink, and what will happen once they have arrived home. Over time, relationship partners acquire a large number of relational scripts with respect to the many and varied routines of their lives together, including domestic chores (who does what), conflicts (what they are typically about, who gives in first, who sulks, how the fight is resolved), and various kinds of emotional interactions involving, say, jealousy, or anger (Fehr & Baldwin, 1996; Fitness & Fletcher, 1993).

The process and outcomes of interpersonal betrayal may also be regarded as a form of interpersonal script in that people hold socially shared beliefs about the kinds of behaviors that constitute acts of betrayal and expectations about the ongoing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of both parties to the betrayal. These beliefs and expectations play an important role in directing people's attention to particular kinds of relationship behaviors and in shaping their interpretations of those behaviors with respect to their needs and goals. The next section of the chapter will examine some of the ways in which relationship partners betray one another, and explore the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral features of the interpersonal betrayal script from the perspectives of the betrayed and betraying parties.

Acts of betrayal

Theoretically, any kind of relational transgression may be appraised by relationship partners as a betrayal, depending on the extent to which relational expectations and trust have been violated. In general, however, the most commonly reported acts of explicit betrayal involve sexual and emotional infidelity, lies, and deception (Fitness & Mathews, 1998; Hansson, Jones, & Fletcher, 1990; Jones & Burdette, 1994). Sexual infidelity, in particular, is regarded by many as the epitome of marital betrayal, and with good reason. Betzig (1989), for example, found sexual infidelity to be a significantly more common cause of marital dissolution than any other factor except sterility in 88 societies. Similarly, Pittman and Wagers (1995) observed that, in their clinical experience, more than 90% of divorces in established first marriages have involved sexual infidelity.

Clearly, the discovery that a spouse or romantic partner has been unfaithful strikes a devastating blow to an individual's sense of self-worth and needs for commitment and emotional security (Charney & Parnass, 1995; Weiss, 1975). However, an even more tormenting aspect to infidelity derives from the degree of deception that typically accompanies it. Indeed, many people regard deception in any relational context as the ultimate betrayal. Psychological research and popular literature alike attest to the multitude of ways in which relationship partners deceive one another, from simple non-disclosure, to half truths and white lies, to full-scale falsification and outright lies (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998; Metts, 1994; Peterson, 1996). As De Paulo and Kashy (1998) pointed out, people's reports of what they value most in their close relationships revolve around issues of authenticity and the ability to reveal their true selves to someone who can be counted on not to betray their trust. Lying is, by definition, inauthentic communication; thus, if my relationship partner lies to me, I may assume that he is promoting his own interests over mine and that he cares more about protecting himself than about caring for me or our relationship.

Despite the opinions of betrayed parties about their partners' motives, however, liars frequently do not regard their deceptions as selfishly motivated. Metts (1989), for example, found the predominant motive for spouses' deception was actually to avoid hurting their partners, or to help maintain their self-esteem. Similarly, in a study of relational deception,

Barbee, Cunningham, Druen, and Yankeelov (1996) found 70% of participants admitted they had lied to their current partner at least once; however, 79% of these respondents also claimed their lies were motivated by a desire to protect their partners. An example might involve a husband who believes his wife would be upset to know he is dining with an ex-girlfriend, so he tells her he is working late to spare her the "unnecessary" pain of feeling betrayed. Ironically, however, this benevolent strategy may work against his interests if the deception is unmasked, since research suggests that, compared with men, women view lies and deception as more profound relational transgressions (Levine, McCornack, & Avery, 1992). Thus, his wife may appraise her husband's lie as a more serious betrayal than his dinner.

Whether or not an act of betrayal involves lies, deception, or infidelity, one important aspect of the experience that intensifies its severity and painfulness is humiliation, or the perception that one has been shamed and treated with disrespect, especially in public (Gaylin, 1984; Metts, 1994). A number of studies have the examined the role of humiliation in exacerbating interpersonal conflict in different contexts. For example, Jones and Gallois (1989) found that not belittling or humiliating one's partner was one of the most important endorsed rules for handling marital conflict constructively. Similarly, Fitness and Fletcher (1993) found that being mocked or publicly shamed by one's spouse evoked strong feelings of hatred for him or her, and several researchers have noted the link between perceived humiliation and physical violence in marital and dating relationships (e.g., Dutton & Browning, 1988; Foo & Margolin, 1995; Lansky, 1987). In the workplace, too, Fitness (in press) found that public humiliation by superiors was associated with the most destructive long-term outcomes of an anger-eliciting incident, and Bies and Tripp (1996) claimed that workplace violations involving public ridicule may be virtually irreparable.

According to Miller's (1993) detailed exposition, humiliation involves the perception that one has been treated as contemptible, or exposed as an inferior or ridiculous person. From an evolutionary perspective, our survival as social beings critically depends on the degree to which valued others accept and respect us, and people will go to extreme lengths to avoid looking weak or foolish - indeed, some will even die to protect their reputation (Miller, 1993). The horror of humiliation, then, derives not simply from its assault on a person's self-esteem, but also from the perceived loss of social status it evokes. So, for example, the humiliating discovery that one has been the "last to know" about a partner's infidelity, and the suspicion that one has been the subject of other people's gossip and pity, may trigger as much pain as the act of betrayal itself. Similarly, the humiliation of being discarded by one's partner for someone more physically attractive compounds the pain of betrayal and rejection (Shettel-Neuber, Bryson, & Young, 1978).

In summary, laypeople appear to have firm views about the kinds of acts that constitute betrayal in different relational contexts. Many such acts, however, involve a common, underlying theme: Specifically, the power balance between two, interdependent parties has been disrupted. In particular, when a betrayal has been accompanied by deceit or humiliation, the betrayer effectively assumes a "one-up" position to the betrayed, who has been duped or demeaned. Even without explicit humiliation, however, the betrayed party is disadvantaged relative to the betrayer, who has put his or her own interests first and discounted the needs and concerns of the betrayed party. The next important step in the interactional sequence, then, is for the betrayed partner to respond to the act of betrayal and to the shift of power it implies.

Discovering Betrayal

        Discovering a betrayal may come "out of the blue" and constitute a deeply distressing shock. On the other hand, if relational trust is low, or the betrayer has been "on probation" because of a prior offence, a partner may actively search for evidence of deception, drawing on his or her implicit theories about the kinds of behaviors that suggest there may be "something going on." Once looked for, such evidence may not be hard to find, since research suggests people regard a wide range of partner behaviors as potential pointers to deception. For example, Shackelford and Buss (1997a) examined laypeople's beliefs about the kinds of cues that suggested a partner was being sexually or emotionally unfaithful and found a large number of supposedly diagnostic behaviors, including perceiving the partner was angry, critical or apparently dissatisfied with the relationship; believing the partner was acting guilty, anxious, or emotionally disengaged; and an unaccountable increase or decrease in the partner's attentions or sexual interest. These findings suggest, in line with Berscheid's (1983) interruption theory, that virtually any noticeable disruption to the normal day-to-day functioning of the relationship can be interpreted by a suspicious partner as an alarm signal.

        Betrayal may also be revealed by way of a partner's confession. Confessing misdeeds has a long history in Western culture, and many Westerners believe that confession is good for one's bodily health and emotional well-being (Georges, 1995). According to Weiner, Graham and Zmuidinas (1991), the function of confession derives from a naive, confession-forgiveness association; that is, offenders believe that "coming clean" will both ease their guilt and win them forgiveness from the person they have wronged ("a fault confessed is half-forgiven", p. 283.) Of course, this belief may be mistaken. Indeed, although confessing infidelity can provide great relief to the offender, it shifts a considerable burden of pain to the one who has been betrayed, and forgiveness is frequently not forthcoming (Lawson, 1988). Confession, then, like other forms of betrayal discovery, effectively sets the scene for the betrayed partner to make the next move in the interpersonal drama.

Reacting to Betrayal

        According to Morrison and Robinson (1997), the initial discovery and experience of betrayal goes beyond the mere cognitive awareness that a violation has occurred; rather, the feeling of violation is registered at a deep, visceral level. Other researchers have also noted that pain and hurt are amongst the first and most acute emotional reactions to the awareness that one has been betrayed (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998). For example, Leary et al. (1998) found 20% of recalled "very hurtful" events reported by 168 students involved betrayal, with their ratings of how hurt they felt positively associated with how rejected they felt. These findings support the central argument of this chapter that betrayal implies rejection and relational devaluation, or the realization that one's partner holds neither oneself nor the relationship in high regard (Leary et al., 1998).

        Given the visceral impact of betrayal, it is interesting to speculate, in line with the evolutionary arguments proposed by Shackelford and Buss (1996), whether humans may affectively register betrayal before very much conscious cognitive work is undertaken at all, particularly when the revelation constitutes a severe interruption to the betrayed party's expectations of their partner. Under such circumstances people may register pain through an emotional calculus, rather than a so-called rational, cognitive one (see Planalp & Fitness, 1999).

At some point, however, the powerful emotional impact of betrayal will motivate a considerable amount of conscious, cognitive effort to figure out its causes and implications, both for the betrayed partner and for the relationship. And, depending on how the betrayed partner interprets the situation, a variety of negative emotions other than hurt may then be experienced. For example, Fehr and Baldwin (1996) found students rated betrayal of trust as the most intensely anger-provoking type of relational transgression; anger that arises, no doubt, because betrayed individuals typically appraise the motives of their betrayers as malevolent, dispositional ("a mean streak"), and intentional (Hansson, Jones, & Fletcher, 1994; Jones & Burdette, 1994). Such appraisals, along with perceptions of unjustness and moral "wrongness," reliably elicit anger in most relational contexts (Fehr & Baldwin, 1996; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987).

Another emotion that may be experienced in response to betrayal is hatred - an emotion about which psychologists know little, but that is considered by laypeople to be a powerful motivator of destructive and vengeful behaviors. As noted previously, Fitness and Fletcher (1993) found that humiliation and appraisals of relative powerlessness were important elicitors of hatred for an offending spouse; thus it might be expected that hatred would be experienced in response to deeply humiliating betrayals involving deceit, severe loss of social status and appraisals of powerlessness. Moreover, betrayals that have involved sexual or emotional infidelity are likely to evoke the highly complex emotional syndrome known as jealousy, comprising elements such as fear of rejection, anger, and sadness (Sharpsteen, 1991). Of course, jealousy is not always destructive. Indeed, research has shown that laypeople tend to regard a partner's occasional, mild jealousy as flattering, and as a signal of how much they mean to them (Fitness & Fletcher, 1993). However, researchers have also noted the often serious concomitants and consequences of chronic or intense jealousy, including hostility, resentment, alienation, withdrawal, and even murder (e.g., Daly & Wilson, 1988; van Sommers, 1988).

Specifying the kinds of emotions that may be experienced in response to betrayal is not just an academic exercise because different emotions motivate different kinds of behaviors, and so play a major role in how the interpersonal betrayal script progresses. Anger, for example, typically tends to motivate confrontation and engagement with the offending party, whereas hate tends to motivate avoidance or emotional withdrawal (Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989). Jealousy, with its complex blends of emotions, may motivate a variety of behaviors, from anxious clinging, to depressed rumination and brooding, to angry confrontation or revenge (Sharpsteen, 1991; van Sommers, 1988). The emotional reactions of the betrayed party, then, are cues to how he or she has interpreted the betrayer's behavior, and what the consequences might be. The next move is for the betrayer to react to those cues with his or her own interpretations, emotions and behaviors.

Accounting for Betrayal

Once a betrayed individual has discovered and reacted to a partner's betrayal, the typical next step is for the betrayer to provide some kind of explanatory account of his or her behavior (Cody, Kersten, Braaten, & Dickson, 1992; Metts, 1994). As noted in the discussion of deception, betrayers may believe their intentions were good. They may argue they were doing their victims a favor, or at least, that their betrayals were unintended, excusable, and due to temporary, extenuating, or unstable causes (Baumeister, Stillwell & Wotman, 1990; Hansson et al., 1994; Jones & Burdette, 1994; Leary et al., 1998). However, regardless of how benignly

betrayers regard their own motives, the accounts they give of their actions must be carefully tailored if they are to achieve their relational goals. For example, whereas a fervent wish to repair the breach may call for a contrite account, a desire to end the relationship may call for a rather callous one. Making the issue more complex is the fact that relational goals may not always be compatible with one another. For example, a betrayer may sincerely regret her behavior and desire her partner's forgiveness, but she may also desire to defend herself in order to maintain self-esteem and save face. Or, a betrayer may desire his partner's forgiveness, yet also desire to end the relationship.

Studies from the communication literature suggest that accounts fall into one of four, broad types, with each type serving to accomplish different kinds of relational goals (e.g., Cody et al., 1992). The first, most mitigating type of account involves conceding that an offence has been committed, along with a sincere expression of remorse, and perhaps an offer to make some form of restitution. The second, not quite so mitigating type, involves excuses, whereby the offence is admitted, but various kinds of extenuating circumstances are offered as reasons for it (e.g., alcohol, stress, illness). The third, even more defensive type of account involves justifications, whereby the offence is admitted, but the offender minimizes its wrongness or seriousness; and the fourth, most aggravating type, includes denials that the account-giver committed an offence or refusals to take any responsibility for it.

Naturally, the kind of account proffered by a betrayer has an important impact on the next stage of the betrayal script. For example, Gonzales, Haugen, and Manning (1994) found that victims judged aggravating accounts, involving justifications and refusals, more harshly than mitigating accounts. Similarly, in a study of hypothetical relationship transgressions, Hodgins, Liebeskind, and Schwartz (1996) found that offenders preferred to give more mitigating than aggravating accounts in the expectation that victims would receive the former more favorably. However, they also found that the most blameworthy offenders told more lies and gave the shortest and most aggravating accounts, suggesting that these highly culpable offenders may have been more motivated to save face than to win forgiveness. Pittman and Wagers (1995) also remarked on the kinds of inventive excuses and justifications people give for having or continuing extramarital affairs, including one man who explained to his wife that "she was lucky to be married to him because she was such an ugly woman. She should feel proud to be married to a man who was able to get such a beautiful affairee" (p. 311). Needless to say, his wife was not mollified.

Without doubt, the most constructive kind of account if the betrayer's goal is to repair the relationship is a concessionary one involving apologies and the sincere expression of remorse. A wealth of psychological literature attests to the power of the apology in ameliorating relational damage. For example, in a study of school-aged children, Darby and Schlenker (1982) found more profuse apologies resulted in less blame, greater forgiveness, less desire for punishment, greater liking, and a stronger belief that the offender was really sorry for his or her offence. Similarly, Ohbuchi, Kameda and Agarie (1989) found apologies were helpful in softening negative attitudes toward an offender and in reducing urges to aggressively retaliate.

Apologies, then, are powerful, but why? According to Tavuchis (1991), the original meaning of the term apology was to defend, justify, or excuse one's behavior. The modern meaning, however, is to admit one has no defense, justification, or excuse for behavior that has wronged another. Apologies, then, have been described as both paradoxical and powerful. No matter how sincere, an apology cannot undo what has been done, and yet somehow, it does (Tavuchis, 1991). Miller (1993) claimed that the magic of the apology derives from the

submissive posture of the apologizer, and its implications for restoring the face or esteem of the injured party. Essentially, the offender abases himself before the person he has wronged, unconditionally admits his offence, and, even if only briefly, invests the wronged person with a higher moral status than himself. The power of the apology to repair, then, derives from the gift of status that helps redress the power imbalance between the two parties.

Of course, apologizers may not actually feel sorry - but they must look sorry. As Miller (1993) pointed out, "if an apology does not look somewhat humiliating.. it would be utterly ineffective in accomplishing the remedial work it is supposed to do. We have all given, witnessed, and received surly apologies that are intended and received as new affronts requiring more apology" (p. 163). Similarly, a truly contrite offender must take full responsibility for the offence; as Jacoby (1983) explained, there is a big difference between a friend or lover who simply says, "I'm sorry you're hurt", and one who says, "What I did was wrong; you have every right to be hurt and I'm sorry" (see also Cody et al., 1992).

Sincere apologies, then, imply that an offender is feeling guilt, an emotion that comprises an essential element of the interpersonal betrayal script. Several researchers have demonstrated that people feel most guilty about offences that threaten their relational bonds (e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1995; Jones, Kugler, & Adams, 1995), and Vangelisti and Sprague (1998) claimed that an offender's guilt sends a powerful signal to the hurt partner that the betrayer still cares and is committed to the relationship. However, another important facet of guilt that makes it so functional in the context of interpersonal betrayal relates to its motivational aspect. Specifically, feelings of guilt are theorized to derive from empathic distress over the suffering of the betrayed partner; the pain of guilt, then, motivates atonement and a desire to make the suffering partner feel better (Baumeister et al., 1995; Tangney, 1995). Indeed, the suffering of guilty offenders often goes quite some way toward compensating victims for their own suffering (referred to by O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983, as the "down payment" effect). For example, Baumeister et al. (1995) found that reproachers felt much better once they had successfully made offenders feel guilty, "as if some of the negative affect had been transferred out of one person and into another" (p. 266). Guilt, then, appears to more fairly share the suffering between script interactants.

Once a betrayed partner is feeling better because the betrayer is feeling guilty, it might be assumed that the emotional balance is more or less restored between the two parties, and that the next act in the interpersonal drama will be the concluding one, involving the betrayed party's forgiving and forgetting the offence. However, forgiveness is not the only possible outcome of a betrayal event, regardless of an offender's remorse. For example, the betrayed partner may decide that an offence is simply unforgivable and terminate the relationship, or that an offence is unforgivable and warrants revenge. Or the partner may decide that long-term, forgiveness is not impossible, but that the betrayer has a great deal more suffering to do before the debt is paid. In the next section of the chapter I will discuss some of the betrayed partner's response options, beginning with the most potentially damaging for the long-term future of the relationship: Revenge.

Coping with Betrayal: Revenge and Forgiveness

<u>Revenge</u>

> A 27-year-old Perth woman who poured a pot of boiling liquid over her former partner's penis as he slept was jailed for seven years yesterday.. She concocted and boiled the brew of floor cleaner, disinfectant, bleach, candle wax and honey because she was angry the man wanted to break up with her after four years together (Sydney Morning Herald, 24 Sept., 1998).

According to Frijda (1994), the ancient and universal desire to get even with those who have betrayed us is one of the most fundamental and potent of human passions. Despite the fundamental nature of the human urge to retaliate, however, revenge is generally regarded as unhealthy and signifying some kind of mental illness (Jacoby, 1983). Bagnall (1992) also noted how revenge has largely fallen out of our vocabulary, "as if modern humanity were embarrassed by its melodrama" (p. 37). Certainly, few admit to plotting revenge with Machiavellian relish, although some will freely admit to exacting revenge on their enemies; e.g., Australian politician Ros Kelly apparently claimed on television that she always exacted revenge on people who betrayed her, no matter how long it took (Bagnall, 1992).

Surprisingly, very little psychological research has focused on revenge, which Stuckless and Goranson (1992) defined as the infliction of harm in return for perceived wrong. In early times, people coped with injustice through revenge; indeed, for many peoples, including the ancient Greeks, revenge was equated with justice (Kim & Smith, 1993; Solomon, 1994). At various times in history it was even considered acceptable to take revenge against inanimate objects, like trees, that were perceived to have harmed an individual (Cloke, 1993). Similarly, parents frequently "punish" inanimate objects on behalf of their hurt children (witness, for example, parents who console a toddler who has stumbled into a table by "smacking" the table and informing it of its "naughtiness").

What motivates betrayed individuals to take revenge on their betrayers? Clearly, one important motive is that revenge helps "even the score" between the two parties. In this sense, revenge and guilt are functionally similar in that both help to share the pain - causing one's betrayer to suffer makes one feel better (Planalp & Hafen, 1998). Gabriel and Monaco (1994), for example, cited a case study in which an abandoned husband broke into his ex-wife's apartment and shredded all of her clothing. "This, he said, had made him feel 'much improved'". However, he also "talked in some detail of his fervent wish and intention to do more than simply kill her. He wanted her to suffer the way in which he had suffered, i.e., feeling alone, frightened, and humiliated" (p. 173). Again, this case points to the strong links between humiliation, rejection, and revenge that have been noted by several researchers (e.g., Baumeister, 1997; Brown, 1968; Frijda, 1994; Kim & Smith, 1993; Vogel & Lazare, 1990). Given that humiliation inflicts such a deep and painful injury to a person's self-esteem and social status, taking revenge might well be regarded as a powerful means of restoring dignity and regaining some control over the situation.

With respect to actual revenge behaviors, there is no limit to human inventiveness, from everyday acts of vindictiveness (e.g., being unhelpful, gossiping), to torture, rape, or mass murder (Frijda, 1994). Jacoby (1983) claimed that people generally have some sympathy for the vengeful behaviors of rejected lovers; certainly, one famous case that recently inspired much

public amusement, if not sympathy, concerned Lady Graham-Moon, an Englishwoman whose husband left her for a younger woman, and who cut four inches off the sleeves of all his suits, daubed his BMW with paint, and gave away his vintage wine collection to the local villagers (Bagnall, 1992). Usually, revenge is not so dramatic, though fantasies can be lurid. For example, in a study of students' experiences of desiring revenge, Frijda (1994) found "vivid thoughts of revenge.. for erotic unfaithfulness, indiscretions, having been slighted, being cheated" (p. 264). Fortunately, students' fantasies tended to far outweigh vengeful actions; even so, a number of acts were reported, including the destruction of cherished possessions, public humiliation, and gossip.

The impulse to take revenge in response to a betrayal, then, is undoubtedly powerful and profoundly human; but actually taking revenge can cause problems, especially when the act of revenge itself constitutes a relational betrayal that encourages further revenge in a tit-for-tat cycle. Part of the problem derives from what Bies and Tripp (1994) refer to as the "different arithmetics" between victims and perpetrators. As discussed previously, betrayers and their victims interpret and respond to the same act of betrayal differently (see also Mikula, 1994). In particular, betrayers tend to minimize the harm they have caused, whereas the betrayed tend to maximize their own suffering (Baumeister, 1997). Thus, the betrayed party perceives a great deal more pain and suffering is "owing" than the betrayer believes is fair and reasonable, and this perceptual mismatch leads to escalating cycles of revenge and counter-revenge (Kim & Smith, 1993).

Despite its unsavory reputation, revenge may play a constructive role in the relational context. Certainly, Frijda (1994) noted that the desire for revenge is not irrational, though its expression requires moderation. Solomon (1994), too, claimed the dangers of vengeance are exaggerated and its importance for a "sense of self-esteem and integrity underestimated" (p. 308). Revenge can even motivate constructive behavior change ("I'll show them!") (Bies & Tripp, 1996). Clearly, people who have been rejected and deeply hurt feel a powerful impulse to reciprocate the pain; perhaps, then, society needs to find ways for helping people to deal constructively with this impulse. One innovative approach has been taken by an Australian florist shop called "Drop Dead Flowers" which organizes revenge packs for jilted and betrayed lovers including everything from a single dead rose to the "ultimate revenge pack": 13 dead roses and a box of melted chocolates packaged in black paper and a box. They claim divorcees are their main clientele and that many customers find it therapeutic to send a revenge pack because it means they can get on with their lives and not have to think about their betrayal any more.

Finally, Cloke (1993) claimed that if wished-for revenge is illegal or impossible to obtain, one can stay angry, which is bad for one's health, or one can deny one's anger and try to forget the betrayal, which is often impossible because of its painful nature. The third option is to forgive, and in so doing, to paradoxically achieve the highest form of revenge. In this respect, Cloke notes Oscar Wilde's (reputed) advice to "always forgive your enemies - nothing infuriates them so!" (p. 78).

Forgiveness

Until recently, the study of forgiveness was the almost exclusive preserve of philosophers, theologians, and clinicians; consequently, there is very little material in the social psychological literature on laypeople's theories of how forgiveness works, or what is forgivable or unforgivable in close relationships. Thus, there are many unanswered questions about the

nature and process of forgiveness. For example, Tavuchis (1991) noted that sorrow and guilt are the energizing forces behind apology, but what motivates betrayed parties to forgive their betrayers? According to McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997), empathic distress for a guilty party's suffering plays a crucial role in a victim's willingness to forgive; does this mean, however, that forgiveness can never occur if a betraying partner is unremorseful? Or that forgiveness will always occur if the betrayer is patently sorry?

In a recent study of forgiven and unforgiven, self- and partner-caused marital offences, I attempted a preliminary exploration of some of these issues (see also Fitness & Mathews, 1998). The study was based on the premise that laypeople hold implicit theories about the ways in which various kinds of relational events unfold, and that these event scripts may be accessed by having people recall episodes from their own relationship experiences. Based on the evidence discussed in this chapter, for example, it could be argued that the prototypical interpersonal betrayal and forgiveness script works something like this: A relationship partner perceives that an offence has been committed; a rule has been broken or expectation violated. To the extent that the partner appraises the violation as caused by a close, trusted other who both intended to do it and is to blame for it, he or she will feel angry and betrayed, and will call for an account from the offender. Now, the offender should concede an offence has been committed, accept responsibility for it, feel guilty, apologize, and make reparation; at which point the victim will perceive the offender is sorry, feel sorry for him or her, and forgive the offence. It might also be hypothesized, on the basis of folklore, that once the victim has forgiven the offence, it should also be forgotten; the relational slate is wiped clean.

But how might an unforgiven offence work? Given the previous discussion about the emotional consequences of betrayal, we would expect feelings of hurt and anger to comprise an important aspect of both forgiven and unforgiven offence scripts. We would also expect offender guilt and apology to figure less prominently in unforgiven, as opposed to forgiven, offence scripts. However, a number of other potentially important emotions and behaviors may be more typical of unforgiven than forgiven offences. For example, as previously noted, Fitness and Fletcher (1993) found marital hate accounts were characterized by themes of relative powerlessness, humiliation, and shame – all potent motivators of revenge. Anecdotally, several of their respondents also commented that if the researchers really wanted to know about hatred, they should have asked about unforgiven offences committed by ex-partners, rather than current spouses. Taken together, these findings suggest that humiliation, shame, powerlessness, hatred, and revenge might be more distinctive of unforgiven rather than forgiven offence scripts.

It was also hypothesized in the current study that the role of shame in unforgiven offence scripts would not be restricted to the emotional reactions of the betrayal victim; rather, shame was also expected to figure prominently in offenders' feelings about their own betrayals, making forgiveness-seeking particularly difficult. As noted earlier, guilt is a generally functional emotion that derives in part from an offender's empathic distress in response to the pain he or she has caused. It is this distress that is held to motivate remorseful behaviors and attempts to restore the relationship. Shame, however, is a profoundly painful, self-focused emotion that typically motivates attempts to hide or escape from the situation, or alternatively, to retaliate against whoever has caused or even simply witnessed the shame in what Tangney (1995) referred to as "externally-directed, humiliated fury" (p. 123). Clearly, if a betrayer's shame-induced withdrawal or defensive anger are misinterpreted by the betrayed party as signs of callous unrepentance then the delicate interactional negotiations involved in seeking and being granted forgiveness will run into problems.

To investigate these hypotheses and explore the features of self- and partner-caused forgiven and unforgiven offences, 90 long-term married (mean length of marriage = 21.3 years) and 70 divorced individuals recalled either a partner-caused or a self-caused marital offence; divorced participants described unforgiven offences, and married participants described forgiven offences. Respondents were asked to write an account of what had happened, what they had thought and felt at the time, how humiliating the offence had been, and how powerful they had felt relative to their partners. They also recalled their perceptions at the time of their partners' thoughts and feelings, and answered a series of open-ended questions about self and partner behaviors during and after the incident. Finally, respondents were asked either why they had forgiven or not forgiven their partner's offence, or why they thought they had or had not been forgiven by their partners.

Forgiven and Unforgiven Marital Offence Scripts

Offence Types

Overall, most of the offences reported in this study could readily be classified as betrayals of one kind or another. Over half of the unforgiven, partner-caused offences involved explicit betrayals such as lies, deception, and sexual infidelity, compared with 33% of forgiven partner-caused offences, 17% of unforgiven, self-caused offences, and 14% of forgiven, self-caused offences. The bulk of remaining offences such as "neglect, uncaring behavior," "public embarrassment," or "third party conflict " comprised rule violations and implicit betrayals involving personal rejection or perceptions of relational devaluation. For example, a male respondent laconically describing a forgiven, self-caused offence explained that he had "fallen asleep during intercourse. Needless to say, partner was there at the time. She thought it meant I didn't love her." And a woman discussing a partner-caused, unforgiven offence explained how her partner had sided with his mother against her in a serious family conflict; an offence she clearly interpreted as a betrayal. As she said, "my husband should have put me first, not his mother. I should have been his priority."

Given that betrayals were found in forgiven as well as unforgiven accounts it was clearly not betrayal per se that made an offence unforgivable. In addition, and as predicted, respondents reported high levels of anger and hurt on behalf of the injured party, regardless of forgiveness condition. One important discriminating factor that did emerge between the two conditions, however, was offence repetition: Specifically, some 60% of unforgiven, partner-caused offences had happened more than once, compared with only 30% of forgiven, partner-caused offences and both forgiven and unforgiven self-caused offences. Repeat offences were typically regarded by respondents as a signal that the offender had neither truly regretted his or her previous behavior, nor had any serious intention of behaving differently in future, despite protestations to the contrary. As one woman explained, "I think the old Christian adage, turn the other cheek and just keep on forgiving, no matter how many times it happens, is for the birds who don't have the brains to figure out what's going on, not real human beings who have to move on with their lives."

Along with offence repetition, a second discriminating factor between forgiven and unforgiven scripts involved perceived humiliation and the emotions of shame and hatred. In particular, and as predicted, unforgiven offences were significantly more likely to have involved humiliation than forgiven offences; furthermore, unforgiven self-offenders reported feeling

significantly more shame than forgiven self-offenders, and sadly, were significantly more likely than forgiven self-offenders to believe their partners hated them. Finally, and irrespective of forgiveness condition, feeling intense shame over a self-caused offence was positively associated with either withdrawing from or attacking the injured partner; feeling intense guilt, on the other hand, was positively associated with efforts to repair the damage to the relationship.

Overall, these data support the hypothesis that feeling shame in response to a self-caused offence, and subsequently withdrawing from or attacking an injured partner, may impede the flow of the prototypical forgiveness script and make it more difficult for the injured partner to forgive. However, the data also suggest that an initially hateful, unforgiving reaction from a rejected partner may heighten an offender's shame and so further reduce the possibility of constructively resolving the situation. Clearly, more fine-grained research is required to tease out the potentially disruptive and destructive roles of humiliation, hate, and shame in the process of interpersonal forgiveness, for both the betrayed and betraying parties.

Remorse and Forgiveness

Another important contrast between forgiven and unforgiven partner-caused offences concerned the role of offender remorse. Over 50% of forgiven self-offenders claimed they were "truly sorry" (even if not entirely to blame) for the offence, compared with 31% of unforgiven self-offenders; similarly, nearly 50% of forgiven partners were believed to have been "truly sorry", compared with only 15% of unforgiven partners, despite the fact that unforgiven partners were more likely to have verbally apologized (40%) than forgiven partners (9%). Respondents' accounts made it clear that being "truly sorry" went far beyond verbal apologies. As several long-term married respondents observed, showing true remorse can take weeks, months, or even years, of "making up" for an offence and proving one's commitment to one's partner and the relationship. For example, in one moving account, an 81-year old man who had deceived his wife some 30 years previously described how it had taken some two years of patient and persistent effort following the betrayal to rebuild her trust in him, and to convince her that he truly wanted no other but her.

One reason that a betrayer might experience such difficulty in convincing a partner that he or she is truly sorry is that, along with feeling hurt and rejected, the partner appraises the offence to mean that the relationship is not important to the betrayer. To win forgiveness, then, a betrayer must reassure his or her partner that the offence was an inexplicable aberration reflecting only the betrayer's unworthiness, rather than any kind of partner or relational deficiency. In addition, a betrayer must convince his or her partner that their relationship is still of primary importance, and that almost any sacrifice would be made to repair and restore it.

In the current study, repentant offenders used a number of strategies to demonstrate their contrition. For example, nearly half the respondents who had forgiven their partners referred explicitly to their remorseful partners' guilty, hang-dog expressions and dejected body language, including weeping. The majority of these respondents, however, along with the majority of forgiven self-offenders, claimed forgiveness was won through persistent, constructive efforts to repair the situation; e.g., by regularly demonstrating thoughtfulness, or kindness; seeking counseling for drinking or gambling problems; resolutely ending extra-marital liaisons; and firmly admonishing troublesome third parties, including in-laws. In contrast, only a small proportion of unforgiven self or partner offenders were reported to have made such constructive efforts. They were more likely to have angrily retaliated, taken revenge (including physical

abuse), or packed their bags and moved out - behaviors that may have been triggered in part by their feelings of shame, but that also reinforced the impression that they cared neither for their partners nor for the relationship.

It should be noted, however, that even true contrition was not always a sufficiently good reason to forgive an offender. Of those respondents who claimed they could not forgive a clearly remorseful partner, 20% claimed the offence simply broke the rules and so fell outside the bounds of forgiveness, regardless of how sorry the offender was; 80%, however, cited betrayal severity and the complete breakdown of trust as the primary reason forgiveness was impossible. In particular, these respondents did not believe that spouses who really loved their partners would treat them as if they meant so little. For the most part, they appraised their partners' repentance as sincere; however, they did not believe they could ever be adequately compensated for the damage done. In line with these data, the majority of remorseful but unforgiven self-offenders believed it was the severity and painfulness of the betrayal, and the breakdown of relational trust, that had made forgiveness impossible.

There was more of a contrast, however, in respondents' reported reasons for forgiving an apparently unremorseful offender. Of these, 40% charitably agreed that there were extenuating circumstances involved in the offence (e.g., alcohol, stress); a further 30% reported, with some degree of resignation, that the passage of time had healed their wounds; 22% reported they had forgiven their partners simply because it was the right thing to do, either for the sake of the relationship or for their own personal well-being, and only 8% claimed they had forgiven their unremorseful partners because they loved them. Somewhat accurately, then, 40% of unremorseful self-offenders believed they had been forgiven because their partners had accepted their offence was more or less excusable. Less realistically, however, 60% believed they had been forgiven simply because their partners loved them. None believed they had been forgiven because of the passage of time, or because their partners believed it was their "duty" to forgive them. These findings suggest a number of different motives for forgiving betrayals that have little to do with offender remorse; however, it is interesting to speculate whether some unrepentant offenders may misinterpret the reasons for their partners' forbearance and even regard their apparent indulgence as license to repeat the offence.

Punishment and Forgiveness

As mentioned previously, one of the most important tasks for repentant offenders is to convince their partners that they would pay almost any price to repair and restore their relationships. One way for betrayed partners to assess the extent and sincerity of offenders' contrition and test their resolve to put things right is to inflict costs and seek compensation for the offence. Accordingly, respondents were asked if they had punished or been punished by their partners for the offence, and to describe the kinds of punishments that were meted out.

Surprisingly, perhaps, over half the respondents reporting on forgiven, partner-caused offences claimed they had punished their partners, compared with less than one third of respondents reporting on unforgiven, partner-caused offences. However, the type and severity of punishments differed according to forgiveness condition. For example, nearly 75% of forgiven partners' punishments involved ongoing reminders of the offence; similarly, 100% of punished but forgiven self-offenders reported periodic reminders about what they had done. However, 70% of unforgiven partners' punishments and 58% of unforgiven self-offenders' punishments comprised acts of revenge including physical abuse, denunciation to family and friends,

destruction of possessions, and abandonment. Both revenge and reminding were reportedly motivated by the betrayed party's need to communicate the depth of their hurt or to regain some power in the relationship - to feel "one-up" relative to the partner; however, reminders were also reportedly given to ensure the offender did not reoffend.

These findings have interesting implications for the delicate negotiations involved in the interpersonal betrayal and forgiveness script. For victims of betrayal, reminders appear to serve at least three purposes: fine-tuning the degree of mutual suffering, readjusting the balance of power, and behavioral deterrence. Clearly, as O'Malley (1983) theorized, expressing guilt goes some way toward making the betrayed party feel better, but guilt alone is not sufficient. Rather, as discussed previously, convincing partners in the aftermath of betrayal that they are, in fact, cherished, requires considerable effort and persistence on the part of remorseful offenders, especially if trust is to be fully restored.

This raises the interesting question of how sorry is sorry enough, and when and how betrayed partners decide it is safe to fully trust again. Certainly, a number of forgiven respondents expressed some puzzlement, irritation, and sadness that they were still being reminded of something they had hoped was behind them. As one self-offender pointed out, "she said she had forgiven me, so she had no right to keep bringing it up and throwing it in my face." Pittman and Wagers (1995) also noted the extent to which punishments following infidelity may persist for years; indeed, they recommended a statute of limitations to such punishments, after which "all emotional rights should be restored" (p. 312).

One reason why betrayed spouses may refuse to forgive, despite the best efforts of their partners to behave well over an extended period of time, is that they believe letting their partners "off the hook" somehow diminishes the significance of the betrayal and exonerates their betrayers (Glass & Wright, 1997) – as if forgiving the offence served to legitimize it. Betrayed partners may also be reluctant to let go and lose the upper hand, or moral advantage in the relationship. Indeed, refusing to forgive can be a very effective, if dysfunctional, way to exert relational power. At some point, however, remorseful offenders believe they have paid their dues and earned forgiveness, and their partners' reluctance to let go may be interpreted as a sign that they themselves do not truly care about the relationship, or about the offender. Indeed, ongoing punishment may itself constitute a relational betrayal that signals rejection to a confused partner. Given how little is known about the ways in which betrayed and betraying partners go about making these kinds of complex cognitive and emotional calculations over time, this is clearly a fascinating and fertile research area.

Summary

Overall, the findings of this study support the idea that laypeople hold elaborate theories about the nature of forgivable and unforgivable offences in marriage. In particular, the results suggest that forgiven offences tend to be once-only events; that sincere contrition is essential for forgiveness, but that verbal apologies are not necessarily the best indicator of being "truly sorry"; that forgiven offenders must work hard to regain their partners' trust and repair the damage they have done, and that even then, they can expect to be periodically reminded about the offence. Unforgiven offences, on the other hand, tend to involve humiliation, shame, hatred, and revenge; the offender is neither perceived to be (nor often actually is) truly sorry, despite his or her verbal apologies, and there is a good chance that the same offence, or something similar, has happened before.

In line with previous research, the results of this study demonstrated the striking difference in perspectives between perpetrators and victims. For example, although self-caused offences involved exactly the same kinds of betrayal incidents as partner-caused offences, they were more likely to be justified as accidents, misunderstandings, or understandable reactions to prior partner provocations. In addition, many forgiven self-offenders were almost smug in their assumptions that ultimately they were understood, excused, loved, and forgiven by their partners. However, respondents recalling forgiven, partner-caused offences emphasized the hard work that went into the forgiveness process, with many claiming that even though the offence was officially forgiven, it was not forgotten. It might be argued that self-offenders chose less serious offences to remember and write about; however, types of offence and ratings of offence severity for self-offences were the same as for partner-caused offences, and as noted before, self-offenders acknowledged the degree of hurt and anger their partners had experienced in response to the offence.

The interesting point about these results is that respondents were randomly selected to report on a self- or partner-caused offence; thus, any one of them could have been asked to recall a marital betrayal from the opposite perspective, and presumably, they would have reported the entire sequence of events in line with the appropriate script. This suggests that many long-term married couples may be privately nursing long-standing, partner-instigated hurts and rejections; yet neither partner may realize that their own acts of betrayal are still remembered and still painful.

It should also be noted that very few significant gender differences were found in this study, and the differences that were obtained are in line with other researchers' findings. As previously noted, Levine et al. (1992) found that women regard deception as a more profound relational transgression than men; similarly, Mikula (1994) found that women appraised relational offences as more serious and unjustified than men. He speculated that, compared with men, women have higher relational expectations and so feel more let down when their expectations are violated. In line with these findings, women in the current study appraised forgiven partners' offences as less fair and harder to forgive, and unforgiven partners' offences as more serious, than men. However, although these findings suggest that, as one male respondent claimed, "women sure do find it hard to forgive and forget," it may be too simple to conclude that the results merely reflect women's more exacting standards. As Mikula (1994) pointed out, women tend to have less power than men: they occupy lower status positions, earn less money, and have less economic power than men. Consequently it may be that in general, men's betrayals really do have more serious consequences for their partners than women's betrayals, and that women's judgments derive from a complex combination of relational expectations, and social and economic realities.

The Long-Term Consequences of Betrayal

Predictably, the long-term consequences of interpersonal betrayal depend on whether one asks the betrayed or the betrayer. For example, Hansson et al. (1994) found 26% of respondents reporting on their own betrayals claimed their behavior had actually improved the relationship, 41.5% reported no change or only temporary harm, and only 29% claimed their betrayal had damaged or ended the relationship. However, not one betrayal victim claimed the relationship had been improved by their partner's behavior; rather, 86% claimed it had damaged or destroyed it. Jones and Burdette (1994) obtained very similar findings.

The consequences of sexual infidelity may be particularly dramatic and long-lasting. Glass and Wright (1997) noted that the discovery of infidelity means the shattering of "long-held assumptions about the meaning of marriage, perceptions of the partner and views of oneself" (p. 471), with the severity of reaction being associated with the strength of those assumptions. Similarly, Charney and Parnass (1995) found that 67% of betrayed husbands and 53% of betrayed wives suffered significant damage to their self-image and confidence, and 18% and 21% respectively suffered feelings of abandonment and attacks on their sense of belonging. Nevertheless, as demonstrated by the study of forgiven offences reported in this chapter, many relationships do survive infidelity and other forms of betrayal; so how do partners go about repairing the damage and maintaining the relationship?

According to Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, and Lipkus (1991), one important factor involves accommodation - individuals' willingness to inhibit their destructive urges and to behave constructively in response to their partners' offences. Rusbult et al. (1991) found a number of factors influenced people's willingness to accommodate, including the extent to which they felt invested in and committed to the relationship, and, reasonably enough, whether or not there were any promising alternatives on the horizon. Other researchers, too, have found that the knowledge that one has access to desirable alternatives plays an important role in the decision to leave a relationship following partner betrayal. Shackelford and Buss (1997b), for example, found that women rated by observers as highly attractive were more likely to report they would seek a divorce if their husbands went on a date or had a one-night stand than women rated as less attractive; similar results were obtained for women judged to be more attractive than their husbands.

Partners who wish to repair or at least maintain their relationship in the aftermath of betrayal have a number of options potentially available to them. Roloff and Cloven (1994) identified a number of relational maintenance strategies, including one called reformulation, whereby an offence is redefined so that it no longer violates a rule. Thus, a couple may decide that infidelity will be ok after all, but that it must always involve safe sex or no emotional involvement. Another strategy is prevention, whereby partners agree to avoid conflict areas. Baumeister et al. (1990), for example, found that happily married spouses apparently do not tell each other up to 44% of their marital grievances, presumably in the belief that there is no point in "rocking the boat."

Another strategy described by Roloff and Cloven (1994) is minimization, whereby the offence is recast in such a way that it no longer seems like a "big deal." As a respondent in the forgiveness study explained, "it was trivial; in the wider scheme of things, what did it matter?" Roloff and Cloven noted that this strategy may even encourage a victim to accept blame for the offence ("I made you do it!") in an effort to convince the partner that the relationship is worth maintaining. Wiseman and Duck (1995) have also pointed out that betrayed friends will often apologize first in an effort to repair the friendship.

A final strategy is relational justification, whereby partners focus on reasons for staying in the relationship. Bowman (1990) found focusing on good memories, expressing positive feelings, and initiating shared experiences is a common and functional strategy for coping with marital difficulties. Certainly, some of the comments made by forgiving partners in the study discussed previously reflected this theme. For example, one man claimed that "in a relationship, there is both pleasure and pain. If you concentrate on the pain, sooner or later the whole relationship will become painful, and you'll feel drained;" another respondent explained that

"it's a matter of weighing up whether the result of non-forgiveness, i.e., unhappiness and the loss of that person in your life, is worth maintaining the rage for. If it isn't, you should let it go."

As a last resort, betrayed partners who have no viable alternatives may simply bide their time. As one recently divorced woman explained, "I just didn't love my husband anymore.. what he did killed my love for him. However, his betrayal made me realize I had to become more independent so that when the children got older I would have some options; so I just waited it out."

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

This chapter has examined the process and consequences of interpersonal betrayal and rejection from an interpersonal script perspective. It was argued that the drama of betrayal, rejection, revenge, and forgiveness is played out between relationship partners who hold beliefs and expectations about the rights and wrongs of relationship behavior, and the consequences of breaking the rules. Clearly, our understanding of this fascinating area of human social behavior still has some way to go, particularly in relation to the various script components, such as the art of taking "just enough" revenge and the complex negotiations involved in winning forgiveness. Indeed, some of these components themselves constitute "mini-scripts" with important implications for the ongoing emotions and behaviors of the interacting parties. Much also remains to be learned still about forgivable and unforgivable betrayals in different relational contexts, such as among family members and within different cultures. For example, in the forgiveness study described earlier, a Javanese respondent provided an intriguing account of why she had forgiven her husband's betrayal, suggesting that in this case, cultural prescriptives were far more relevant than either partner's feelings.

It would also be fruitful for researchers to examine ways in which individual differences moderate the process and outcomes of interpersonal betrayal. For example, using a self-report test called the Interpersonal Betrayal Scale, Jones and Burdette (1994) found divorced individuals were more likely to report betraying others than married individuals, and that high betrayers were less committed to their marriages, had more affairs, and told more lies than low betrayers. Presumably this propensity to betray is linked to people's beliefs that self-interest should usually take precedence over the interests of others. However, the tendency to betray may also be linked to people's beliefs about the inherent untrustworthiness of others. As Holmes (1991) noted, some individuals are chronically distrustful of relationship partners, possibly because they have experienced betrayal and rejection in past relationships.

This suggests an important role for attachment style in people's expectations of and responses to betrayal, given that insecurely attached individuals hold pessimistic beliefs about the likely trustworthiness and reliability of relationship partners (Shaver, Collins, & Clark, 1996). Rejection sensitivity, too, may mean individuals are always on the lookout for potential betrayal cues and interpret all kinds of partner behaviors as reliable signs of the rejection they dread (Downey & Feldman, 1996; see also Downey, this volume). High self-esteem has also been associated with destructive responses to relationship conflict (Rusbult, Morrow, & Johnson, 1987), apparently because people with high self-esteem believe they are valuable human beings who do not deserve to be badly treated. Ironically, however, too strong a sense of entitlement may make it difficult either to forgive a betrayal or to humble oneself sufficiently to acknowledge and be truly sorry for one.

In conclusion, a great deal more can be learned about the nature and consequences of interpersonal betrayal. Hopefully this chapter will stimulate further exploration of its causes in

different relational and cultural contexts, its psychological links with rejection, and its associations with the rich and endlessly fascinating relational phenomena of revenge and forgiveness.

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