Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong
香港大學心理學系

Brown Bag Lunchtime Seminar
(Theme: Social and Health Psychology)

Empathy is associated with and impacts forgiveness: Registered Report revisiting and extending McCullough et al. (1997; 1998)

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.│ October 27, 2023 (Friday)
Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower │ Centennial Campus │ The University of Hong Kong

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Abstract
Numerous theories and models have been proposed to explain forgiveness. Among these, McCullough et al. (1997) put forth an empathy-based model of forgiveness that has received significant attention as one of the most extensively cited frameworks in psychology for explaining interpersonal forgiveness. According to this model, forgiveness is mediated by empathy, and encompasses the motivation to restrain relationship-destructive responses while engaging in constructive behavior towards the offender.

We conducted a close replication of this influential model of forgiveness as a Registered Report with a US American Prolific sample (N = 794). We revisited Study 1 from McCullough et al. (1997) with extensions manipulating empathy to determine causality and measuring revenge motivation adopted from McCullough et al. (1998). We found support for an association between affective empathy of the wronged person and perceived apology (r = 0.45, 95% CI [0.35, 0.55]) and forgiveness toward the offender (r = 0.64, 95% CI [0.56, 0.70]). In terms of behavioral motivations, we found support for a negative association between forgiveness, avoidance motivation (r = -0.51, 95% CI [-0.59, -0.42]), and revenge motivation (r = -0.43, 95% CI [-0.52, -0.33]). We found support for a positive association between forgiveness and conciliatory motivation (r = 0.51, 95% CI [0.41, 0.59]). Extending the replication by manipulating empathy, we found that empathy had a causal impact on forgiveness ($\eta2p$ = 0.08, 90% CI [0.05, 0.11]). Overall, we concluded strong empirical evidence for the empathy model proposed by McCullough et al. (1997). All materials, data, and code were made available on: https://osf.io/fmuv2/

This project was one of the world's first UG theses to be conducted as a Registered Report with the Peer Community in Registered Report initiative. Pre-registration went through a Stage 1 expert open peer review, with community in-principle acceptance prior to data collection (https://rr.peercommunityin.org/articles/rec?id=380), and Stage 2 after data collection endorsed by the community for publication following verification of following the Stage 1 plan and documenting deviations (https://doi.org/10.24072/pci.rr.100444). PCIRR endorsement means the ability to publish with any of the PCIRR supportive journals with no additional peer-review.

We will discuss the implications of conducting UG/MSc/RPg theses as Registered Reports with PCIRR.

About the speaker
Timothy completed his thesis in psychology in the year 2023, working with Gilad Feldman.

Zoom (For participants who couldn't attend the Seminar in person)
https://hku.zoom.us/j/3951550048?pwd=SncvL3RYakEycUtpL29vdDJEdlEwdz09
Meeting ID: 395 155 0048 │ Password: psyc

~All are Welcome~

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