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FORGIVENESS AND HAPPINESS. THE DIFFERING CONTEXTS OF FORGIVENESS USING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HEDONIC AND EUDAIMONIC HAPPINESS

ABSTRACT. The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between forgiveness and happiness using a two-dimensional model of happiness (hedonic and eudaimonic happiness). 224 United Kingdom students were administered the Enright Forgiveness Inventory, The Depression–Happiness Scale and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire – Short-form. The present findings suggest that forgiveness accounts for statistically significant variance, albeit quite low, in both hedonic and eudaimonic happiness and the relationships may vary depending on which aspect of happiness is being considered. In terms of shorter-term hedonic happiness, the present findings suggest it is important not to engage in negative cognitions about the transgression. In terms of maintaining eudaimonic happiness, engaging in positive behaviours and feelings may lead to, be the result of, or be very much part of longer-term happiness.

KEY WORDS: forgiveness, happiness, psychological well-being, subjective well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the work around forgiveness has concentrated on forgiveness as an attempt to address feelings as a result of a transgression, and to overcome those negative feelings that are associated with that transgression. The majority of the research into forgiveness has concentrated on negative consequences of a failure to forgive, or barriers to forgiveness. As such, narcissism, neuroticism, anger, anxiety, depression, hostility, and resentment have all been associated with low levels of forgiveness (Ashton et al., 1998; Davenport, 1991; Davidson, 1993; Enright et al., 1992; Kaplan, 1992; Worthington, 1998; Williams and Williams, 1993).

The nature of forgiveness is currently not well defined within the existing literature. One description highlights distinctions

between intrapersonal and interpersonal forgiveness (Pargament et al., 2000), whereby intrapersonal forgiveness involves changes within individual cognitions and interpersonal forgiveness involves the way in which events and consequences of actions occur within on-going relationships and are acted upon (Exline and Baumeister, 2000; Gordon et al., 2000). Other authors make the distinctions between negative and positive forgiveness reactions to a transgression (Gordon et al., 2000; Temoshok and Chandra, 2000). Alternatively, positive forgiveness processes are also believed to be involved in forgiveness and are expressed as deliberate attempts not to avoid the perpetrator of the offence and to positively reconsider and re-interpret feeling around the event (Pargament et al., 2000).

Recently, authors have extended the latter consideration and suggested that positive psychology presents an adequate theoretical context within which to examine forgiveness (Snyder and McCullough, 2000; Yamhure-Thompson and Snyder, 2003). These authors stress the importance of forgiveness as a human strength and that the positive aspects of human functioning, in relation to forgiveness, can be explored. These authors emphasise the importance of positive outcomes from forgiveness. This emphasis on positive outcomes to reflect positive psychology is important as it stresses a continual engagement with resolving inter-personal situations rather than the traditional view of forgiveness, which emphasises a state of mind that has to be overcome in order to prevent poorer mental well-being.

Empirical research on forgiveness and mental health has largely concentrated on negative outcomes. Brown (2003), Karremans et al. (2003) and Maltby et al. (2001) have found failure to forgive to be related to indicators of poor mental health such as depression and anxiety. Though Karremans et al. (2003) also report findings that suggest forgiveness is related to positive affect and self-esteem, and suggest some confidence in following research in forgiveness that emphasises positive psychology.

One such area is to explore the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. Happiness can be postulated as the ultimate form of human contentment and if forgiveness is a reflection of human strength and positive thinking and engagement it would be expected that forgiveness shares a positive association with hap-

piness. Further, it can be suggested that the relationship between forgiveness and happiness can be explored within a theoretical model. Happiness is often treated, both theoretically and empirically, as a one-dimensional concept (Hills and Argyle, 2002), and some authors have noted that measures of happiness lack a theoretical context for measuring the concept of happiness (Kashdan, in press). However, a theoretical context can be applied to measures of happiness when using an empirical distinction that has been made between different aspects of well-being (Diener et al., 1999; Kahneman et al., 1999; Veenhoven, 1991). This well-bein literature has been concerned with identifying real distinctions between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Within this model, hedonic well-being is the relatively shorter-term evaluation of present day subjective well-being as a balance within positive and negative affect, pleasure attainment and pain avoidance and eudaimonic well-being is the longer-term psychological well-being resulting from the engagement with individual development and the existential challenges within life, meaning and self reflection (Keyes et al., 2002; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993).

Two happiness scales exist that reflect this distinction in well-being, and therefore, may allow a comprehensive examination of forgiveness against a two-dimensional model of happiness. The first happiness measure is the Depression–Happiness Scale (Joseph and Lewis, 1998; McGreal and Joseph, 1993), in which the items are based around relatively simple statements based on the last seven days (for example, "I felt cheerful [item 6]", "I felt happy [item 12]"), and reflects hedonic happiness. The second happiness measure is the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short-Form (Hills and Argyle, 2002), which measures more global aspects of happiness over a longer period of time (for example, "I am well satisfied about everything in my life" [item 12], "I feel that life is very rewarding [item 3]", and "I find beauty in some things" [item 16]). As no time period is given for completion of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short-Form, and the items seem to reflect general contentment and reflection on aspects of ones life, scores on the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire Short-Form seem to reflect eudaimonic happiness.

The use of the two scales together will allow a theoretical examination of the relationship between forgiveness and happiness; using the distinction between hedonic and eudaimonic happiness. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between forgiveness and two theoretical distinct measures of happiness.

METHOD

Sample
The sample comprised of 244 (116 males and 128 females) UK students aged from 18 to 56, with a *M* age of 22.45 years (SD = 6.8).

Questionnaires
All respondents completed a questionnaire booklet containing:

The Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI; Subkoviak et al., 1995). This is a 65-item scale designed to measures 6 dimensions of forgiveness related to a specific transgression encompassing cognitive, affective and behavioural components; (1) negative affect, (2) negative judgement, (3) negative behaviour, (4) positive affect, (5) positive judgement and (6) positive behaviour. The inventory measures non-dispositional forgiveness of another person for a specific transgression (Yamhure-Thompson and Synder, 2003). Cronbach's α for all subscales are high ($\alpha > 0.93$), and re-retest reliability for all subscales are satisfactory (>0.67) (McCullough, 1999). Validity has been shown for the scale by the scales' correlation with each other, single item measures of the constructs, and lower anxiety within intimate relationships (Subkoviak et al., 1995; McCullough, 1999).

The Depression-Happiness Scale (Joseph and Lewis, 1998; McGreal and Joseph, 1993) was used to measure hedonic happiness. It is a 25-item scale designed to measure positive affect. It contains 12 items concerned with positive feelings (e.g., "I felt happy", item 12) and 13 items concerned with negative feelings (e.g., "I felt sad", item 1). Items concerning negative feelings are reverse scored so that lower scores on the scale indicate a lower frequency of positive feelings and a higher frequency of negative

feelings. Respondents are asked to think about how they have felt in the past seven days and to rate the frequency of each item on a 4-point scale: never (0); rarely (1); sometimes (2); and often (3). Scores range between 0 and 75, with higher scores indicating a higher frequency of positive feelings and a lower frequency of negative feelings.

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire – Short form (Hills and Argyle, 2002) was used to measure eudaimonic happiness. The scale contains 8 items that have been revised down from a well-established reliable and valid longer 29-item version (Argyle et al., 1989; Hills and Argyle, 2002). The short-form of the scale was devised for use when time and space is limited and its correlation with the full-length scale is 0.90 (Hills and Argyle, 2002). Sample items include; "I am well satisfied with everything in my life" [item12], and "I feel fully mentally alert" [item21]. Responses to items are scored on a 6-point likert-type scale: strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Scores range from 8 to 48 with higher scores indicating a measure of broad happiness.

RESULTS

Table I shows the alpha coefficients and mean scores (standard deviation) statistics for all the scales by sex. Alpha coefficients were above the 0.7 criteria suggested for satisfactory reliability (Kline, 1986). No significant differences were found between men and women for any of the variables.

Table II shows the Pearson product moment correlation coefficients between all the variables. As predicted, a significant positive correlation occurred between forgiveness and both measures of happiness.

To allow for a full consideration of the relationship between the variables, a standardised multiple regression was used to explore which dimensions of forgiveness shared unique variance with each dimensions of happiness. Though happiness can not necessarily be seen as a dependent variable in the present consideration, particularly as the measure of forgiveness relates to a specific transgression, the multiple regressions were performed to see which aspect of forgiveness shared unique variance with each

TABLE I

Alpha coefficients and mean scores of all the scales by sex

Scale	α	Men (n = 116)		Women (n = 128)		t
		M	SD	M	SD	
EFI – Negative affect	0.92	34.73	9.5	35.53	10.0	−0.64
EFI – Negative cognition	0.93	34.96	8.6	35.80	8.9	−0.75
EFI – Negative behaviour	0.92	35.01	9.1	35.88	9.2	−0.74
EFI – Positive affect	0.94	24.86	9.1	24.27	9.0	0.52
EFI – Positive cognition	0.95	24.86	9.1	24.00	8.8	0.76
EFI – Positive behaviour	0.94	24.72	8.8	24.15	9.4	0.49
Depression–Happiness Scale	0.80	50.91	10.6	48.80	11.4	1.49
Oxford Happiness Q'naire	0.73	32.88	5.0	32.70	5.5	0.27

$*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.$

aspect of happiness. For both measures of happiness, the regression statistic was significantly different from zero (Oxford Happiness Inventory, $F (6, 237) = 7.06$, $p < 0.01$; Depression–Happiness Scale; $F (6, 237) = 6.17$, $p < 0.01$).

Table III shows the full results for an unstandardised multiple regression. Included in this table is the unstandardised regression coefficients (β), the standardised regression coefficents (β), the semipartial correlations (sr^2), r, r^2 and adjusted r^2. The present findings suggest that positive behaviour and positive feelings around forgiveness shares unique variance with eudaimonic happiness, and negative cognitions around forgiveness share unique variance with hedonic happiness.

DISCUSSION

The present findings suggest that hedonic happiness shares unique variance with forgiveness related to negative cognitions. Therefore, the present findings suggest that negative cognitions relating to forgiveness (e.g., ''Regarding the person, I disapprove of him/ her'') is related to lower levels of shorter term happiness. This finding suggests that not engaging in negative thinking about a specific forgiveness incident protects the individual from poorer

TABLE II

Pearson product moment correlation coefficients between all the subscales of the Enright Forgiveness Scale, Depression–Happiness Scale and the Oxford Happiness Inventory and the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire

Total sample ($n = 244$)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
EFI – Negative affect	1.00	0.83**	0.85	−0.88**	−0.88	−0.83	−0.27**	−0.30**
EFI – Negative cognition		1.00	0.80**	−0.86**	−0.85**	−0.84**	−0.35**	−0.30**
EFI – Negative behaviour			1.00	−0.84**	−0.86**	−0.85**	−0.26**	−0.26**
EFI – Positive affect				1.00	0.87**	0.86**	0.28**	0.35**
EFI – Positive cognition					1.00	0.90**	0.30**	0.28**
EFI – Positive behaviour						1.00	0.31**	0.34**
Depression–Happiness Scale							1.00	0.60**
Oxford Happiness Q'naire								1.00

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.

TABLE III

Regression analysis with both measures of happiness used as dependent variables and each dimension of the Enright Forgiveness Inventory as predictor variables

Scales	Hedonic happiness (Depression–Happiness)			Eudaimonic happiness (Oxford Happiness)		
	B	β	sr^2	B	β	sr^2
Forgiveness						
Negative affect	0.24	0.21		0.01	0.01	
Negative cognition	−0.65	0.51	0.26*	0.02	0.03	
Negative behaviour	0.07	0.06		0.16	0.27	
Positive affect	0.21	0.17		0.25	0.42	0.18**
Positive cognition	0.01	0.03		0.14	0.23	
Positive behaviour	0.30	0.25		0.22	0.40	0.16**
		$r^2 = 0.14$			$r^2 = 0.15$	
		Adj $r^2 = 0.11$			Adj $r^2 = 0.13$	
		$R = 0.37$			$R = 0.39$	

$*p < 0.01; **p < 0.05$.

hedonic well-being. This finding is consistent with the traditional view of forgiveness proposed by Seligman that suggests that forgiveness protects the individual. However, this finding needs to be further explored, as lower scores on the depression–happiness scale are thought to measure depression, the reported relationship could be part of a range of negative cognitions (e.g., attribution style, pessimism) that may lead, or be a part of, depressive symptomology. Consequently, future research should examine the relationship between these negative cognitions around forgiveness and lower levels of hedonic happiness within in the context of other pessimistic styles, such as, attributions style, pessimism, and negative coping approaches.

In terms of the relationship between forgiveness and eudaimonic happiness, the findings suggest that positive behaviours (e.g., "Regarding the person, I am or would be considerate") and affect (e.g., "I feel warm toward him/her") are positively related to type of happiness. These findings are consistent with the positive psychology theoretical approach emphasisinf forgiveness as a human strength and the positive aspects of human functioning, and suggest that active and positive forgiveness feelinga and

behaviours leads to eudaimonic happiness. The present findings also suggest that positive behaviours and affect are most important in this relationship, rather than positive cognition, and suggests that ''doing'' rather than ''thinking'' is an important part of this relationship. Consequently, the forgiving individual who is most likely to act positively and feel positively towards those who transgress against them are more likely to be happy. Whether this relationship is the result of eudaimonic happiness allowing the individual to be more forgiving, or/and that being positive in forgiveness leads people to be happy, needs to be further explored. However, the present findings suggest that positive psychology may provide an insight into the relationship between positive forgiving behaviours and affect and eudaimonic happiness.
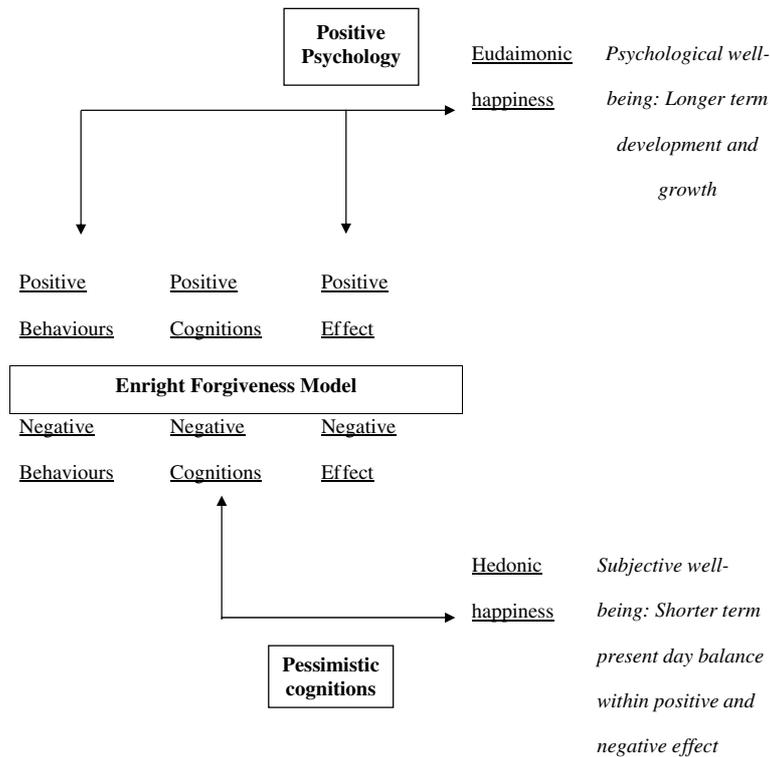

Figure 1. A model of the relationships between Enright's model of forgiveness and Hedonic and Eudaimonic happiness.

Consequently, the following model can be suggested (see Figure 1). In terms of the relationship between forgiveness and happiness, in the shorter term context of present day balance within positive and negative affect, the relationship between forgiveness and happiness is the result of the tendency not to adopt negative cognitions regarding the transgression. However, in the longer term, and wider sense of development and growth, the relationship between forgiveness and happiness is the result of a tendency to engage in positive behaviours and feelings about the forgiveness event. Therefore, the present findings suggest that when it comes to forgiveness for a specific transgression and happiness, the Enright model of forgiveness is important in helping distinguishing between positive and negative approaches to forgiveness and hedonic and eudaimonic happiness. These findings also perhaps indicate how forgiveness might be related to happiness over time. Further research is needed to examine this proposed model longitudinally.

Presently, this research may be limited by using the Enright model as it refers to forgiveness to a specific incident. Future research should begin the seek to see the validity of the model by exploring these correlations over time, to begin to explore the extent to which happiness influences forgiveness within a specific situation and then to what extent forgiveness then leads to new or further happiness. There is also a need to extend the consideration to other measures of forgiveness which reflect other theoretical domains, such as dispositional forgiveness (e.g., Hebl and Enright, 1993) or multi-dimensional measures of forgiveness which encompass not only forgiveness of others, but also of oneself (Yamhure-Thompson and Synder, 2003).

In summary, the present findings suggest that forgiveness accounts for statistically significant variance, albeit quite low, in both hedonic and eudaimonic happiness, and the relationships may vary depending on which aspect of happiness is being considered. In terms of shorter-term hedonic well-being happiness, the present findings suggest it is important not to engage in negative cognitions about the transgression. In terms of maintaining eudaimonic happiness, engaging in positive behaviours and feelings may lead to, be the result of, or be very much part of longer-term happiness.

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