Conditional or Unconditional Forgiveness? An Instrument to Measure the Conditionality of Forgiveness

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Among the beliefs and concepts people hold about the nature of forgiveness, their notions of conditionality and unconditionality have not received sufficient study. The concept of conditional forgiveness posits that before forgiveness can be granted, the offender must take certain steps and meet specific conditions. From an unconditional forgiveness concept, the victim can forgive independently of the behavior of the wrongdoer. Hence, the aim of our study has been to develop a strong psychometric instrument to measure the beliefs people hold about the conditionality of forgiveness. This article presents the development and validation of a tool to measure these beliefs. Study 1 was comprised of 181 participants, whilst 492 conformed Study 2 and 109 took part in Study 3. Internal consistency and validity were analyzed. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were conducted, along with correlational analysis to test convergent validity, stability and prediction capability. Results show a two-dimensional structure of the Conditional—Unconditional Forgiveness Scale, indicating the appropriateness of this tool to assess beliefs about the conditionality of forgiveness. The belief in the unconditional nature of forgiveness showed positive and significant correlations with all the measurements of offense-specific forgiveness. On the other hand, the belief that forgiveness should be conditional showed lower correlations with all the forgiveness measurements. Not only the ultimate level of forgiveness the subjects experienced, but their emotional experience of the process as well can be very different depending on their views of forgiveness, among them their beliefs about conditionality.

Keywords: forgiveness assessment, unconditional forgiveness, reconciliation, CUFS Scale

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Introduction

Among the beliefs and concepts people hold about the nature of forgiveness, their notions of conditionality and unconditionality have not received sufficient study. These notions confront the ideas on the one hand that it is necessary for the offender to participate in the forgiveness process (by showing contrition, apologizing, undertaking acts of reparation, etc.) and, alternatively, on the other that the victim can forgive independently of the behavior of the wrongdoer.

Enright's and Fitzgibons' definition of forgiveness (2000) enshrines the unconditional concept:

People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love (to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right) (p. 24).

As these authors indicate, 'Because forgiveness is a free choice on the part of the one wronged, it can be unconditional regardless of what the offender does' (p. 41). This view holds that forgiveness should not be contingent on the offender's desire for reconciliation, since that would condemn the person who was wronged to the state of unforgiveness as long as the wrongdoer desired, vesting too much power in the offender. For these researchers, the offender's wish for reconciliation is not a prerequisite for forgiveness.

Since Enright and his team defined forgiveness in these terms, the majority of researchers have accepted a unilateral concept of forgiveness, understanding that the act is something the person who has been hurt can perform alone, independently of the perpetrator's participation in the process. As Andrews (2000) indicates, the person who confers forgiveness in this manner seeks nothing from the offender in return, nor is there any expectation that the wrongdoer will change his behavior. Any repentance or future changes that unilateral forgiveness may promote in the wrongdoer are irrelevant to the person who forgives from the unilateral perspective. Forgiveness understood in this light is an unconditional act controlled exclusively by the victim, which allows him to break the bonds of hatred and resentment that tie him to the wrongdoer.

Enright, thus, proposes a definition of forgiveness that is associated with the notion of compassion. The injured party responds to the aggressor with compassion, even though hatred would be a well-deserved reaction to the wrong committed. This idea is also found in Pingleton (as cited in Sells and Hargrave, 1998) when he defines forgiveness in operational terms as renouncing the right to revenge or retaliation that the wrong has conferred. This author claims that forgiveness acknowledges, anticipates and attempts to mitigate 'An eye for an eye' or *lex talionis* (the universal tendency and near-reflex in the human organism towards retaliation and retribution after being wronged by another). According to Enright, forgiveness cannot be based on the principle of reciprocity. Rather, forgiveness springs from the principle of social unconditionality, the understanding that our human condition cannot be altered by changes in superficial characteristics. If the person who has been wronged recognizes the perpetrator as his equal, independently of the offense, forgiveness does not hinge on a dialogue or negotiation between the parties.

The concepts of unilateral (Andrews, 2000) and unconditional forgiveness have been amply discussed with authors adopting their own terminology: *Hyperbolic Forgiveness* (Jankélévitch, 1967/2005), *Disjunctive Forgiveness* (Berecz, 2001), *Humanitarian Forgiveness* or *Unconditional Forgiveness* (Miceli and Castelfranchi, 2011), *Direct Forgiveness* (Merolla and Zhang, 2011) and again, *Unconditional Forgiveness* (Mukashema and Mullet, 2013). Yet, as Krause and Ellison (2003) express, the question is open: As attractive as forgiving someone unconditionally may seem, allowing the victim to concentrate on the positive aspects of life rather than being at the mercy of the offender's performing acts of contrition, is it truly possible to forgive unconditionally, simply because the injured party choses to do so?

Negotiated or Conditional Forgiveness

The concept of negotiated forgiveness posits that before forgiveness can be granted, the offender must take certain steps and meet specific conditions. Fulfilling these requirements, however, does not imply that the relationship will be resumed. The victim may grant forgiveness when the offender has accepted responsibility for the wrong, apologized, shown repentance or made reparations, without necessarily returning to the relationship. According to Andrews (2000), 'forgiveness transpires through actual dialogue between the aggressor and the victim.' Many victims of injustice or personal wrongs feel that the wrongdoer must participate in the act in order for forgiveness to be complete. Often people who have been wronged would be willing to forgive the perpetrator if they admitted their actions, acknowledged responsibility and showed contrition. If these steps are not taken, however, the victim may decide not to forgive, believing the prerequisites for forgiveness to be absent.

For Miceli and Castelfranchi (2011), *conditional forgiveness* is different from what these researchers call *direct forgiveness*, since it implies the offenders' meeting certain stipulations and identifies conditions he must accept before being forgiven. *Worth-dependent forgiveness* is the term these authors use to discuss *negotiated forgiveness*, defining this as forgiveness that is based on the wrongdoer's moral behavior. Conditional forgiveness can be used to prevent future offenses from being perpetrated (Waldron and Kelley, 2005) since, as Exline, Worthington, Hill and McCullough (2003) point out, 'If people communicate forgiveness without setting limits, an exploitative perpetrator might view it as a license to harm again' (p. 345). Nevertheless, to forgive continues to be a choice and a gift. What is more, both unconditional and conditional forgiveness are compatible with the absence of positive feelings towards the perpetrator of the wrong. They are also both compatible with a lack of confidence in the offender and the decision not the resume the relationship (Thomas, 2003).

As outlined above, one school of thought postulates that various prerequisites must be fulfilled before forgiveness can take place. For Andrews (2000), there are three steps the offender must take: confession (the aggressor must acknowledge having committed the act), recognition (the wrongdoer must recognize his responsibility for his actions and all of their consequences, without forwarding excuses) and repentance (he must express contrition for what he has done).

Therefore, the following elements should clearly appear when defining unconditional forgiveness: the possibility to start and finish the process without the wrongdoer participation, as well as the nature of forgiveness as a free and undeserved gift regardless the aggressor's behavior. A definition of conditional forgiveness should include, first of all, the wrongdoer's participation, as the one who should start the forgiveness process, showing repentance, apologies and reparation, before forgiveness occurs. In addition, the demand of justice is essential. These are conditional and unconditional forgiveness concepts used in this study.

The conditionality of forgiveness is especially interesting for the study of wellbeing and happiness. The relation between forgiveness and wellbeing is broadly established (Maltby, Day & Barber, 2005; Toussaint y Friedman, 2009), and some authors (Krause and Ellison, 2003) hold that the manifestation of these acts of contrition on the part of the wrongdoer should produce a greater sense of psychological well-being in the victim. However, some studies have revealed a disturbing link between requiring repentance from the offender and health and well-being indicators. Krause and Ellison (2003), in an older population, found that demanding a show of repentance from the offender was associated with greater psychological

distress and a reduced sense of well-being. These authors point out that some forms of forgiveness granting can have harmful effects and, thus, that it is not enough simple to know whether to forgive or not. Toussaint, Owen and Cheadle (2012) found a correlation between conditional forgiveness and a higher mortality risk after controlling for socio-demographic and health variables. These authors suggest that placing the conditions necessary for forgiveness in the control of others erects barriers to the process, and may result in prolonging unforgiveness. Those for whom forgiveness in unconditional, in contrast, can initiate the forgiveness process whenever they choose.

Religious differences in views of conditionality of forgiveness

Different religions offer diverse ways to understand forgiveness as well as its conditionality. According to Christian theology, Forgiveness should be given unconditionally to friends and enemies alike independently of the magnitude of the crime or the behavior of the perpetrator. Christianity teaches its believers to cherish love and mercy and to express these feelings through forgiveness to their enemies. The devout Christian is required to follow the example of Jesus, who forgave his enemies on the cross, without even waiting for them to ask for forgiveness.

Judaism (following Auerbach, 2005) has strict rules regarding forgiveness. Forgiveness can be asked only from the victim himself, and only the victim can forgive. According to Rambam (Maimonidis), there are three essential stages in the process of teshuvah (repentance). Firstly, the sinner has to confess the sin in front of the community and must compensate the victim, thereafter the person is requested to repent their wrongdoing, and finally the person must undertake not to repeat such sins. The wrongdoer shall confess to the sin. Only after having fulfilled these requirements is the transgressor entitled to forgiveness. Teshuvah—repentance—is the sine qua non for forgiveness. Without teshuvah there is no forgiveness.

In Islam, Tawba (repentance), like its Jewish equivalent teshuvah. is a demanding process consisting of three phases identical to those requested by the Jewish law63 and considered a necessary condition for Ghufraˇ n—forgiveness granted by God to the repenting sinner.64 The rituals of sulh (settlement) and musalaha (reconciliation), usually performed within a communal framework, are meant to end conflicts among believers and establish peace through acknowledgement and forgiveness of the injuries between individuals and groups (Auerbach, 2005).

The discrepancy between Christianity and the two other Abrahamic religions can be summarized as follows: in the Muslim (and Jewish) tradition, as opposed to the Christian tradition, forgiveness must not

be unconditional (Mullet y Azar, 2009); while Judaism and Islam highlight the idea of repentance and justice, Christianity emphasizes the importance of mercy, love, and forgiveness.

Due to these different visions on forgiveness conditionality within each religion, one could expect there would be differences in the views on the conditionality of forgiveness among people with different religious affiliations In fact, some studies have found unconditional forgiveness in a greater extent within Christians than in other religions.

However, not all Christians endorse unconditionality. Some Christian scholars have denied the need of a universal, unconditional forgiveness, or consider it as morally problematic (Giannini, 2017), whereas some other studies conclude that religiosity (rather than religion) is a stronger predictor on conditional /unconditional forgiveness). Akl y Mullet (2010) conclude that the Unconditional Forgiveness score was strongly correlated with intrinsic religious motivation. This pattern of results was consistent with the findings of Krause and Ellison (2003) and of Exline et al. (1999), and with Mullet et al.'s (2006) findings. It was also consistent with Mullet et al.'s (2003) findings showing a strong relationship between unconditional forgiveness and religious involvement: In this study, nuns' unconditional forgiveness score was shown to be close to the maximum value, whereas regular attendees' scores, although lower than nuns' score, were however still relatively high in relation to believers' scores, which were similar to the nonbelievers' ones.

However, some studies don't find any relation between conditionality and religiosity. Hui et al (2006) didn´t find any significant difference on forgiveness understood as unconditional between Chinese with Christian religious beliefs and those without, nor concerning religious practice (participating in religious acts), nor depending on religious practice (participating in religious acts). Ballester et al (2009) didn't find any correlation between unconditional forgiveness and religious involvement (that is, believing/not believing in God and going/not going to Church) in a sample of French citizens.

Therefore, it seems interesting to highlight the role that religiosity plays in conditionality of forgiveness.

Lay Concepts of Unconditional or Conditional Forgiveness

As stated by McCullough, Pargament and Thoresen (2000), to understand the antecedents and consequences of forgiveness in the general population, it is import to review people's overall concept of the subject. In theory, whether a person believes that forgiveness is unilateral or negotiated would have an

impact on their behavior when faced with the option of forgiving another. This hypothesis, however, has yet to be studied in depth within the psychology of forgiveness.

The few studies conducted on the opinions of the population at large reveal that people hold as broad a range of beliefs about forgiveness as do experts in this specialized field of research. Some of these assumptions have proven to be so different from those held by researchers that it has been suggested that the general population should receive instruction about forgiveness (Enright, Freedman, and Rique, 1998) in order to correct misconceptions and raise motivation to forgive.

Some studies show that a percentage of the population confuses forgiveness with reconciliation, or believes forgiveness to be the path to repair and resume a relationship (Kearns and Fincham, 2004; Younger, Piferi, Jobe and Lawler, 2004).

Other studies show that there are many who adhere to the unilateral concept of forgiveness (Kanz, 2000; Kearns and Fincham, 2004; Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Edlis-Matityahou and Moore, 2007; Merolla and Zhang, 2011). Yet others have encountered that the concept of negotiated forgiveness is widespread, finding that those surveyed believe that repentance is a prerequisite to forgiveness (Macaskill, 2005). Still others have detected that the notion of forgiveness as a gift for both the offender and the person offended is 'noticeably lacking' (Younger et al., 2004, p. 866).

Measuring the Conditionality of Forgiveness

Whether working in the clinical setting, attempting to grasp a particular subject's concept of forgiveness, with a view to better evaluate and measure progress, or exploring the concepts and beliefs of the population at large, it is necessary to use tools with proven validity and reliability. Yet no tool has been developed to accurately measure people's assumptions about the conditionality of forgiveness.

Mukashema and Mullet (2013) use the Forgiveness Questionnaire (Mullet, Barros, Frongia, Usai and Neto, 2003) and call *Unconditional Forgiveness* the concept that is measured on the subscale originally termed *Willingness to Forgive*. Number of items of this subscale (sometimes even their wording) varies among different studies of this same research group, depending on the context where it is applied, fluctuating between 4 and 5 items, including: *I can easily forgive even if the consequences of the harm have not been cancelled, I can easily forgive even if the consequences of the harm are serious ones, I can easily forgive even if the offender has not begged for Forgiveness, I can easily forgive even if the offender has not apologized, I can easily forgive even if the offender did the harm intentionally.*

This scale, however, does not cover the concept of unconditional forgiveness suggested in our research. We don't clearly identify the difference between "apologize" and "beg for forgiveness", which would also be the only items on the Forgiveness Questionnaire that correspond to our concept (indicating whether the offended person could easily forgive the offender even if he did not apologize). The other items on the subscale evaluate ease in forgiving when an offense is serious or when the offender intended to hurt the victim, circumstances that are not related to the wrongdoer's behavior after the event.). Thus, we consider that measuring the need of apologies does not completely cover our concept of unconditionality, since it does not explicitly indicate the possibility to start and finish this process without the aggressor´s participation, nor the undeserved and freely-given nature of the gift, regardless the aggressor´s behavior. Moreover, the scale Mullet et al. use includes the concepts of ease and intentionality in the items, which might make harder the accurate assessment of unconditionality (that is not necessarily easy and might occur in both intentional and non-intentional offenses).

Cohen, Malka, Rozin and Cherfas (2006) have also developed a scale that gauges beliefs about the need of repentance as a prerequisite to forgiveness. This scale, Repent Scale, is composed by 7 items evaluating the (victim's) need of specific agressor's behaviors before forgiveness is given. Specifically, it is composed by following items: *Before I can forgive someone for an offense, they have to repent in some way, A person who did something to hurt me would not have to try to make it up to me before I could forgive them, An offender would not deserve forgiveness if they did not try to make up for their offense, People deserve forgiveness even if they do not ever accept responsibility for what they did, I would forgive someone for an offense even if they never apologized to me, Justice should come before forgiveness, and A person does not have to change for the better before I can forgive them.*

However, although several of its items include precisely some of the conditional forgiveness aspects, this instrument is not designed to evaluate the subjects' concepts of the nature of forgiveness, therefore we consider this unconditional forgiveness evaluation uncomplete, due to unconditional forgiveness do not revolve exclusively around repentance or other conditions such as admitting responsibility, apologizing and acts of reparation as well.

The tool that is closest to measuring beliefs about the conditionality of forgiveness is the one used by Toussaint et al. (2012). This group evaluated beliefs about conditional forgiveness with two items (of the three proposed initially by Krause and Ellison, 2003, to assess the need of acts of contrition): *Before I can forgive others, they must apologize to me for the things they have done; Before I can forgive others,*

they must promise not to do the same thing again) and unconditional forgiveness with three (*I can forget as well as forgive; I still remember times when others hurt me, but I no longer feel sad about what they have done; Others do not have to do anything before I forgive them*). As can be seen, in light of the definition we propose, in both cases, the items only reflect partial aspects of the nature of conditional (apologies and promises to refrain from repeating the offense), but they don't include the need of regret nor of reparation, and don't mention justice need. Only one item of the unconditional forgiveness (see the last item above) takes into account the unilaterality of the process, while the two remaining evaluate forgetting or discomfort overcoming, components that we don't consider included in unconditional forgiveness. Furthermore, the reliability of the scale for unconditional forgiveness was very low in this study (0.55).

Hence, the aim of our study has been to develop a strong psychometric instrument to measure the beliefs people hold about the conditionality of forgiveness. Our two-fold objective was, on the one hand, to measure the relevance of the dimension of conditionality to people's willingness to forgive and, on the other, to gain insight into beliefs about the link between conditional forgiveness and reconciliation.

We predicted that each scale would show a unidimensional structure and good convergent validity: specifically we expected to find that beliefs in unconditional forgiveness would correlate positively with offense-specific forgiveness, willingness to forgive and personal well-being. We also expected to find that beliefs in conditional forgiveness would show lower correlations with offense-specific forgiveness and well-being. Lastly, we expected that beliefs in unconditional forgiveness would be a good predictor of specific forgiveness in the longitudinal study.

Finally, various studies in the literature have detected some degree of correlation between Social Desirability and forgiveness (Rye et al., 2001; Taylor and Bates, 2001; Thompson et al., 2005), although these findings are not universal (Gisi and D'Amato, 2000). From the perspective of our proposal, while we expected to find that the belief that forgiveness is unconditional would facilitate willingness to forgive, we did not predict a correlation with Social Desirability, but rather that the scale we propose would be an indicator with discriminant validity.

Overview of the Studies

Study 1 of this project is a pilot study of the first version of the instrument developed to measure conditional and unconditional forgiveness with a view to selecting the items that would constitute the final version. Study 2 was designed to measure the internal consistency and factorial structure of the final

instrument, and to gauge its convergent validity. It, further, sought to shed light on theoretical questions related to conditional and unconditional forgiveness: exploring the relevance a person grants conditionality in forgiveness to his willingness to forgive others, and it's a link to his own degree of well-being. Finally, the aim of Study 3 was to analyze the change-over-time stability of the instrument developed and examine whether a person's beliefs concerning conditional or unconditional forgiveness would be a predictor of offense-specific forgiveness behavior evaluated in a longitudinal study.

Study 1

Study 1 is the pilot study of the first version of the instrument used in our research. Our objective was to use the pilot to select the items that would ultimately comprise the final version of the scale we developed.

Participants

Participants were selected through incidental sampling, using the snowball technique in an effort to include subjects of different age groups and educational levels and to include equal numbers of women and men. The final sample included 180 people, 50% men and 50% women, with an average age of 38.65 years (sd = 18.29). Of the total, 28.9% of the subjects were married, 61.1% were single and 7.8%, legally separated, divorced or widowed. Most had a high educational level (56.4%, Bachelor's degrees; 11.6%, lower tertiary education diplomas). All of the subjects had received some offense they considered serious in the last years.

Instruments

The items we selected to include in this initial version of the questionnaire were those that had been used in various previous studies designed to evaluate the concept of forgiveness in the general population. We specifically chose those whose contents best reflected the aspects of conditionality and unconditionality of forgiveness.

The Conditional or Unconditional Forgiveness Scale I (CUFS-I). Table 1 shows the items included in the pilot version of the instrument, along with their original sources. The participants were asked to respond to these statements on a scale of 1 to 5, scoring their reactions from *I strongly disagree* to *I strongly agree.* Items 3, 7, 8 y 9 were selected to reference the necessity of offender actions before forgiveness (attempting to measure conditional forgiveness), and other items were selected since they explicit the unidirectional and unilateral nature of forgiveness (1, 2, 5, 6, 11 y 12). Finally, items 4, 10 and 13 were

included to test whether the subjects tended to confuse forgiveness with reconciliation and to see whether they distinguish between the concepts of conditional forgiveness and reconciliation.

Insert Table 1 around here

Procedure

To contact with the participants we asked for collaboration from first year students of Psychology in a Catholic University of Spain, both to answer the questionnaire and to distribute it around their peers of different ages and level of studies. The participants in our sample responded to the questionnaire with pencil and paper and returned it in a stamped self-addressed envelope to ensure the anonymity of the process at every time. Thus, in this study there were no online questionnaires. The subjects were asked to read the questions and score their responses on a scale of 1 to 5, from *I strongly disagree* to *I strongly agree*. All the data collected in this pilot study as well as in Studies 2 and 3 of our research was handled confidentially under de guarantees extended by the Spanish law regulating the protection of personal data (Ley 15/1999).

Results

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted using maximum likelihood extraction and oblimin rotation (delta=0), showing acceptable KMO and Bartlett tests (KMO=0.786, p<0.001). This parallel analysis determined that three factors should be retained, explaining 10.9%, 29.3% and 4.6% of the variance respectively (44.8% in total). A first factor grouped three items (4, 10 and 13) whose contents referred to reconciliation, as had been predicted. This confirmed our hypothesis that conditional, or negotiated forgiveness is conceptually different from reconciliation, which emerged as a different factor. A second factor grouped five items (5, 3, 7, 8 and 9) which all referred to the belief that forgiveness is conditional. A third factor grouped four items (1, 2, 6 and 12), all of which referred to the unconditional quality of forgiveness. Factor analysis was repeated after eliminating from the next version of the questionnaire the items relating to reconciliation (with the exception of Item 4, as it also achieved saturation when testing for beliefs in the unconditional nature of forgiveness). Again, KMO and Bartlett results were acceptable, with KMO=0.834, p<0.001. Two factors were selected with the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues greater than 1; see table 2); these accounted for 49.7% of the variance and correlated strongly with each other (rf1-f2=-0.623).

Insert Table 2 around here

Using rational criteria and taking into consideration the secondary weights of some of the items, the final version of the questionnaire (see Appendix I) included four items in the Unconditional subscale

and four items in the Conditional subscale. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the two subscales was 0.735 (unilateral forgiveness) and 0.787 (negotiated forgiveness) respectively.

Study 2

The object of Study 2 was to confirm the internal consistency and the factorial structure of the final version of the Conditional or Unconditional Forgiveness Scale (CUFS-II), and to verify its convergent validity.

Participants

A total of 492 adults from Spanish population participated in the study. Of these, 311 (63,2%) were women. The average age of the sample was 37.7 years (SD = 15.35), ranging between 18 and 80 years. The sample's educational level was high (70% held university degrees). The subjects' educational levels were broken down as follows: 6% held PhD's; 49.8 %, Bachelor's Degrees; 14.2%, Higher Education Diplomas; 25.3%, Secondary Education Diplomas; and 4.7%, had only completed Primary Education. The sample's working status was as follows: 45.5% worked; 38.1% were students; the remaining 16.4% either were unemployed, retired or had never worked outside the home. Of the total, 35.6% were married, 49.4 % were single, 6.3% were legally separated, divorced or widowed and 6.3% were members of catholic religious orders.

Variables and Instruments

The variables tested in this study were operationalized as follows:

Socio-demographic and work-related variables: The questionnaire included specific items soliciting information about the subjects' gender, age, marital status, educational level, work, profession and whether they were living with their partners.

The following six measurement tools were administered to assess the constructs that were predicted to correlate significantly with unconditional or conditional forgiveness:

The *Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory* (TRIM, McCullough et al., 1998), a tool that measures offense-specific forgiveness. It contains 18 items scored on a five-point scale going from *I strongly disagree* to *I strongly agree* through which the subject is asked to reflect his willingness to forgive (Benevolence subscale), motivation to avoid physical and psychological contact with the offender (Avoidance subscale) and motivation to seek revenge and retaliate for the wrong committed

(Revenge subscale). The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the three subscales in our study ranged from 0.85 to 0.905.

The *Forgiveness Scale (FS)* (Rye et al., 2001), which distinguishes between the two dimensions of forgiveness: the Negative dimension (FS Negative), entailing reducing negative feelings and thoughts, and the Positive dimension FS Positive), entailing the existence of positive feelings and thoughts. It contains 15 items scored on a five-point scale going from *I strongly disagree* to *I strongly agree*. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the two subscales in our study was 0.70 (FS Positive) and 0.82 (FS Negative).

The *Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)* (Thompson et al., 2005), a self-reporting instrument containing 18 items to evaluate dispositional forgiveness. It is comprised of three subscales with six items each, *Forgiving oneself*, *Forgiving of others* and *Forgiving situations*. (The Forgiving situations subscale was not used in our study). The subjects are asked to score the items on a seven-point system ranging from 1: *Almost Always False of Me,* 3 to 7: *Almost Always True of Me*. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the two subscales in our study was 0.606 (*Self*) and 0.485 (*Others*) so this scale had to be excluded from the analysis.

Religious practices and beliefs: These were measured with Rohrbaugh and Jessor's *Religiosity Scale* (1975), taken from Orathinkal and Vansteenwegen (2007). This tool attempts to capture important dimensions of religiosity such as ritual, consequence and experience, and provides an overall score for religiosity. It comprises 4 items that the subjects are asked to respond to on a scale of 1-5. Totaling the scores assigned the answers gives an general rating of religiosity as weak (between 1 and 9 points), medium (between 10 and 14 points) or strong (between 15 and 20 points). Orathinkal and Vansteenwegen (2007) reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.90 and a high and significant correlation between items. In the present study, we predicted a higher correlation between religiosity and unconditional forgiveness (Krause and Ellison, 2003). The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale in our study was 0.92.

Next, we administered short Form C of the *Marlowe-Crowne Desirability Scale*, as per Reynolds (1982). This tool includes 13 items that the participants are asked to respond to as either True or False, assigning them 0 or 1 point respectively. A sample item from this scale is *No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener*. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the scale in our study was 0.71.

Psychological Well-Being. This variable was analyzed with Ryff's *Psychological Well-Being Scale* (1989), using an abbreviated version that had been adapted to the Spanish population by Díaz et al. (2006).

The questionnaire used includes 29 items that the participants are instructed to score from 1 to 6 (1: *I strongly disagree;* 6: *I strongly* agree) to gauge six dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. In our study, we predicted a correlation between beliefs concerning the conditionality of forgiveness and scores for well-being, thus demonstrating the model's convergent validity. The reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the six subscales ranged from 0.60 (Environmental Mastery) to 0.83 (Purpose in Life), and 0.91 for the Total Well-being.

Procedure

The study's participants were contacted through university students and colleagues (convenience sampling), and they were also asked for inviting other people to participate in a study about forgiveness by filling in a questionnaire. Participants were informed that the study was anonymous and voluntary, and they could choose the way they prefer to answer the questionnaire. Half of the subjects answered the questionnaire with paper and pencil (N=248), and the other half answered the same questionnaire in an electronic format (N=208). Those replying with the paper and pencil format received a package containing brief instructions, the questionnaire and a prepaid self-addressed envelope in which to return the questionnaire, to assure that all replies were anonymous. Those responding in the electronic format received a link to the internet survey with the same instructions and questionnaire. The brief introductory instructions informed about the topic of the study, the importance of answering sincerely and fill in all the questions, and assured that the confidentiality of the data furnished was guaranteed under Spanish Law 15/1999 for the Protection of Personal Data. Paper and pencil and electronic groups showed no significant differences in the study variables, before combining them for overall analysis.

Results and Discussion

Initial analyses revealed no significant differences in conditional or unconditional scores between men and women. Thus, all analyses were conducted with these groups combined.

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted again with the final version od CUFS. KMO and Bartlett results were acceptable, with KMO=0.830, p<0.001. Two factors were selected that accounted for 44.3% of the variance and correlated strongly with each other (r=-0.647). Loadings from an EFA in study 2 are reported in table 3:

Table 3 around here

Fit was evaluated with confirmatory factor analysis (see table 4), using the values proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999) (p>0.05, χ^2/gl<4, RMSEA<0.05, p-clos>0.05, CFI, GFI, AGFI>0.95, RMR <0.08, SRMR<0.08). Results showed that fit was low for the model proposed (p>0.05, χ^2/gl = 3.135, RMSEA=0.069, p-clos=0.054, CFI=0.842, GFI=0.967, AGFI=0.937, RMR=0.100, SRMR=0.048). Nevertheless, we proposed a change that would correlate the errors in Items 4 (*Forgiveness is a unilateral process where the hurt party forgives without the transgressor's involvement in the process)* and 5 (*Forgiveness is a social process requiring the involvement of both the victim and the transgressor)*. This change was justified as the two items are from the same study (Rata et al., 2008) and share content elements, as can be seen by the way they are written. With this change, the model's fit improved considerably (p= .241, χ^2/gl = 1.211, RMSEA=0.022, p-clos=0.954, CFI=0.985, GFI=0.988, AGFI=0.976, RMR =0.040, SRMR=0.024). The initial model confirmed a coherent bifactor structure.

Insert Table 4 around here

To evaluate the convergent validity of the model, we checked for correlations between measurements of unilateral and negotiated forgiveness and the remaining measurements of forgiveness. As seen in Table 5, all of the correlations were significant (with the exception of self-forgiveness) and confirmed our predictions.

Insert Table 5 around here

Theories in the field of forgiveness point towards significant correlations between various of the variables used in this study. These assumptions were borne out; conditional forgiveness showed a significant and negative correlation with religiosity (r = -.193, p<.01) and environmental mastery (r = -.108, p<.05), and unconditional forgiveness showed positive and significant correlations with religiosity (r = .227, p<.01), self-acceptance (r = .179, p<.01), environmental mastery (r = .132, p<.01), purpose in life (r = .167, p<.01) and total well-being (r = .123, p<.05), thus confirm our initial hypotheses.

As an indicator of the model's discriminant validity, we predicted that social desirability would not correlate significantly with either conditional or unconditional forgiveness. The link between social desirability and conditional forgiveness was small (r = .074) and not did reach significance, thus confirming

that the model's discriminant validity is satisfactory and that our results were not affected by social desirability.

Study 3

The aim of Study 3 was to verify the stability of the proposed instruments over time, and examine the prediction capability of beliefs concerning conditional and unconditional forgiveness for the degree of offense-specific forgiveness in a longitudinal study.

Participants

Of the 208 subjects who were administered the electronic format of the questionnaire, 206 (99.03%) agreed to continue collaborating with the project and gave their email addresses and the last four digits of their national identification numbers in order to participate in the longitudinal study. Of this group, 109, or 52.9%, responded. For this leg of the study, the sample was, thus, comprised of 109 participants (67% women, 33% men) with an average age of 37.37 year (sd = 11.66), 37.6% of whom were married, 50.5% were single and 8.2% were legally separated or widowed; 96.3% had received university education.

Variables and Instruments

In this last phase of the project, the *CUFS scale,* the *Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM)* (McCullough et al, 1998) and the *Forgiveness Scale (FS)* (Rye et al, 2001) were administered for a second time.

Procedure

One year after having participated in the initial phase of the present study, the subjects who had given their email addresses were contacted again and sent a second, shorter questionnaire. We decided to deliver a long period to reduce as much as possible the memory of previous answers on forgiveness conditionality. The subjects were reminded of their answers to the questions about a specific offense (who had hurt them, and to what degree) and were instructed to answer questions about this offense again.

Results and Discussion

The stability over time of this instrument (test retest) was found to be significative ($p < .01$) in both cases; $r = -348$ (Unconditional test-retest) and $r = .386$ (Conditional test-retest).

We also wanted to examine criterion validity and verify whether the subjects' beliefs about the conditionality of forgiveness would predict offense-specific forgiveness behavior over time. Table 6

indicates that the conditionality of forgiveness in Time Frame 1 shows correlations that are statistically significant and positive, although with a small magnitude, with the TRIM subscales (avoidance, revenge and benevolence) as they were re-evaluated in Time Frame 2. When evaluating offense-specific forgiveness with the FS, only conditional forgiveness presented a statistically significant correlation with the positive elements of offense-specific forgiveness (r= -0.276, p=0.004).

Insert Table 6 around here

Multiple regression analysis was applied using the measurements obtained when examining beliefs about the conditionality of forgiveness as the predictor variables of varying degrees of offense-specific forgiveness. The subjects' opinions regarding the conditionality of forgiveness as measured in Time Frame 1 explained the degree of offense-specific forgiveness they manifest 12 months later, with the exception of the negative aspects included in the FS. Results were statistically significant with a medium magnitude (approximately 10% of the variance). The belief that forgiveness is conditional directly predicted avoidance and revenge attitudes, and indirectly predicted the appearance of positive aspects and benevolence (see Table 7).

Insert Table 7 around here

General Discussion

The instrument to evaluate the concept that people have of the nature of forgiveness has demonstrated to work well, and constitutes a tool that can be quickly administered to have very useful implications in clinical practice as well as in research. Although test-retest reliability is low, probably due to a too long period between both measures, this result could suggest that belief on conditionality or unconditionality of forgiveness is not a so steady belief as it could be supposed, and therefore it could be modified if convenient. As far as we know, this is the first Study to longitudinally assess the belief on forgiveness conditionality, so we cannot compare this finding with other investigations; it could be a challenging future research to confirm the stability of this belief.

Conditionality and levels of forgiveness

This study highlights the importance of the subjects' concept of the conditionality of forgiveness and its relevance in determining their forgiveness. The belief in the unconditional nature of forgiveness showed positive and significant correlations with all of the measurements of offense-specific forgiveness. On the other hand, the belief that forgiveness should be conditional showed lower correlations with all of the forgiveness measurements. The only type of forgiveness that was not predicted by conditionality was

the negative dimension of forgiveness as measured by the FS. This means that the reduction of negative feelings and thoughts is not affected by the subjects' beliefs about the conditionality of forgiveness, while the development of positive feelings and thoughts towards the offender is hindered by the belief that forgiveness should be conditional. In this light, not only the ultimate level of forgiveness the subjects experienced, but their emotional experience of the process as well can be very different depending on their views of forgiveness, among them their beliefs about conditionality.

Our results did not find a significant link between belief in the unconditional nature of forgiveness and forgiveness of self as measured by the HFS. Various studies have questioned whether forgiveness of self is similar to forgiveness of others, with some even questioning whether forgiveness of self can be considered "forgiveness" at all (Vitz y Meade, 2011). Our findings illustrate how forgiveness of self operates differently and seems to depend on different variables from those involved in forgiveness of others. This result makes sense, as conditionality measured by our scale refers to forgiveness of others process, and none of the items refers to the conditionality or unconditionality of self-forgiveness, so that it is not surprising to find the absence of relation between the view of conditionality of forgiveness to others and dispositional self-forgiveness.

Conditionality and religiosity

Our results reflect a wide-held view among our subjects that forgiveness is unconditional. This was particularly true for those with stronger religiosity. Many studies have found a link between religiosity and forgiveness (Fox and Thomas, 2008; Mullet et al., 2003; Toussaint and Williams, 2008; Sandage and Williamson, 2010). The belief that forgiveness is unconditional may be a mediating variable between religiosity and forgiveness, as suggested by Fox and Thomas (2008), who posit that the differences between believers and non-believers can be attributed to the way they build their meaning-making systems.

It would have been interesting to compare the role of religious affiliation and religiosity on the presence of the unconditional belief of forgiveness. Although our research has been conducted in a European cultural setting, where Christianity is the dominant religion, so it could be assumed that most participants are mostly Catholic, we didn´t collect measures on religious affiliation, so it remains pending for future research to compare the role that these two variables might have on conditionality.

Conditional forgiveness and well-being

Finally, in our study, the belief that forgiveness should be conditional had extremely low correlations with well-being, only showing a negative and significant link with Environmental Mastery.

This is logical as, from the offended party's perspective, depending on the offender's behavior in order to complete the forgiveness process grants the offender more power, shifting control over the situation to the perpetrator of the wrong. Our result support those found in Krause y Ellison (2003) and Toussaint et al (2012), mentioned above, about the negative effects of the conditional forgiveness on the wellbeing and health. It could be understood that the presence or absence of relation between these variables could be mediated by religious affiliation, which hasn´t been measured in our study. However, the two studies reviewed were restricted to individuals who were currently practicing Christians, people who were Christians in the past but no longer practice any religion, and individuals who were not affiliated with any faith at any point in their lifetime. People who practice a religion other than Christianity (e,g,, Jews or Muslims) were excluded. These results suggest that perhaps religious affiliation is not as relevant as religiosity when trying to understand the role conditionality plays in wellbeing, although future investigation should confirm the relationship we found between forgiveness conditionality and wellbeing.

Some limitations affected our study. Among them, our samples are not representative, and a bias was introduced into them because their educational level was higher than in the population at large. Besides, some of the questionnaires used showed a low reliability (e.g. Subscale Environmental Mastery, from the scale of Wellbeing, or the subscale of Self-Forgiveness and Others-Forgiveness of the Heartland Forgiveness Scale). Moreover, in this study we haven't assessed participants religious affiliation.

It would be interesting in future research to examine more closely the variables that may affect a person's beliefs about the conditionality of forgiveness. Waldron and Kelley (2005), for example, showed that the more serious the offense, the greater the tendency on the part of the offended party to pursue conditional, rather than direct forgiveness. Merolla and Zhang (2011) also found that direct forgiveness increased satisfaction in the relationship and decreased relational damage, while conditional forgiveness was associated with greater relational damage. These authors suggest various possible explanations for these findings. The first is that conditional forgiveness will most likely be used after particularly severe offenses, thus explaining why more relational damage is observed in situations where conditional forgiveness is used. It is the nature of the offense in these situations that dictates the use of conditional forgiveness and that accounts for the relational damage caused in these cases, rather than the subject's beliefs about the nature of forgiveness. 2) Offenders who have been granted forgiveness subject to conditions may perceive that the person they have hurt has not fully forgiven them. Conditional forgiveness

and the demand of other forms of compensation may imply that the forgiveness experience is incomplete for the offender.

Finally, from the light of these results, there are some questions that remain uncertain: We have seen that both concepts may suppose important differences in the forgiving individual's wellbeing; nonetheless, could unconditional forgiveness have negative effects in the long term, as an increased offense reception? Is it possible for people to change over time regarding the conditionality of their forgiveness with regard to a person or group of people or is this a trait?

Our research has lead to the development of an instrument to evaluate people's beliefs concerning the conditionality of forgiveness, providing a viable and useful tool to further knowledge in this area. As has been seen, the various concepts that people harbor concerning forgiveness can either facilitate or hinder the forgiveness process. This is why better knowledge of these perceptions will allow mental health professionals, educators and researchers to work more efficiently when helping others with the forgiveness processes. Greater insight into these beliefs will contribute to designing better interventions both in therapeutical as well as psycho-educational settings.

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Table 1. Items included in the pilot version of the Conditional or Unconditional Forgiveness Scale I

Items	Source
1. Forgiveness should be offered unconditionally and without any expectations of compensation from the offender.	*Fu, Watkins and Eadaoin (2004)*
2. Forgiveness is a unilateral process where the hurt party forgives without the transgressor's involvement in the process.	*Rata, Lui and Hanke (2008)*
3. Forgiveness is a social process requiring the involvement of both the victim and the transgressor.	
4. The person who did something to hurt me would not have to try to make it up to me before I could forgive them.	
5. A person does not have to change for the better before I can forgive them.	
6. I would forgive someone for an offense even if they never apologized to me.	
7. Justice should come before forgiveness.	*Cohen et al. (2006)*
8. Before I can forgive someone for an offense, they have to repent in some way.	
9. An offender would not deserve forgiveness if they do not try to make up for their offense.	
10. To forgive someone who has done you wrong necessarily means to reconcile with him/her.	
11. You can forgive a person who has done you wrong even without personally knowing him/her.	*Bagnulo, Muñoz-Sastre and Mullet (2010)*
12. You can forgive a person who has done you wrong even after he/she has passed away.	
13. True forgiveness means that a person is restored to an ongoing relationship with the offender.	*Frise and McMinn (2010)*

Table 5. Correlations between CUFS scores and other measurement tools

Measurements of forgiveness	Conditional forgiveness	Unconditional forgiveness
HFS Self	-.096*	.048
FS Negative	-.117*	.126*
FS Positive	-.219**	.279**
FS Total	-.195**	.221**
TRIM Revenge	.181**	-.198**
TRIM Avoidance	.128*	-. 142**
TRIM Benevolence	-.160**	.257**

* p < .05; ** p < .01 HFS: Heartland Forgiveness Scale / FS: Forgiveness Scale / TRIM: Transgression

Related Interpersonal Motivation

Table 6. Correlations between the conditionality of forgiveness (Time Frame 1) and offense-specific forgiveness (Time Frame 2)

Offense-specific forgiveness (Time Frame 2)	Conditionality of forgiveness (Time Frame 1)	
	Unconditional	Conditional
TRIM avoidance	-.257**	.311**
TRIM revenge	-.192*	.308**
TRIM benevolence	.252**	-.295**
FS negative	.009	-.082
FS positive	.160	-.276**

*$p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ FS: Forgiveness Scale / TRIM: Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivation*

Table 7. Prediction capability of beliefs about the conditionality of forgiveness (Time Frame 1) for offense-specific forgiveness (Time Frame 2)

Predicted variable	F(2,106), p	R2	Predictor variables	
			Unconditional Beta (p)	Conditional Beta (p)
TRIM avoidance	6.32, p=0.003**	0.107	-0.120(0.280)	0.243(0.030)*
TRIM revenge	5.61, p=0.005**	0.096	-0.028(0.799)	0.293(0.010)*
TRIM benevolence	5.75, p=0.004**	0.098	0.126(0.260)	-0.244(0.047)*
FS negative	0.47, p=0.630	0.009	-0.054 (0.0647)	-.112 (0.340)
FS positive	4.38, p=0.015*	0.076	0.008(0.944)	-0.272(0.018)*

*p < .05; **p < .01 FS: Forgiveness Scale / TRIM: Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivation*