

Forgiveness Among Families

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"Betrayal, Forgiveness & Reconciliation in Close Relationships"

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About the Investigators and Their Research in Forgiveness

Dr. Caryl E. Rusbult has, since her grant was funded under the 1998 RFP, moved from the University of North Carolina to the Free University in the Netherlands. She is Professor and Chair of the Department of Social Psychology at the Free University. She has published over 90 journal articles or chapters, along with two books. She is best known for her theory and research regarding commitment processes and relationship maintenance behaviors (e.g., forgiveness, accommodation, derogation of alternatives). Much of her recent work concerns the "Michelangelo phenomenon," which concerns the ways in which close partners shape one another's dispositions, values, and behavioral tendencies, thereby moving each person closer to (vs. further from) his or her ideal self. Dr. Rusbult fostered a generative laboratory of researchers who studied forgiveness as one part of the interdependence theory. These researchers have seen forgiveness as involving interpersonal processes (thus considering interactions between victims and offenders and measuring their behavior among other variables. So they deviate from most researchers who have studied forgiveness, who understand forgiveness to be an internal intrapersonal process that is situated within an interpersonal context. Nevertheless, the work of Dr. Rusbult and her colleagues have tied forgiveness to a larger more established literature on interdependence theory.

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