‘Bouncing back’ from conflict: The role of relationship resilience and hope for reconciliation in romantic couples following interpersonal transgressions

By

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Dedication

Dedicated to my late grandfather C.P Govender for his aptitude for education and love of learning that has always inspired me to complete this doctorate.

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Summary

All couples face hardship, and wrongdoings, yet some relationships are able to persevere, bounce back, and even evolve, while others crumble and break down. Research has sought to identify the aspects within the individual as well as the processes shared between partners that strengthen couples to cope, withstand and overcome relational conflicts (e.g., infidelity, betrayal or lies). These resources and processes can cultivate *relationship resilience*. We define relationship resilience as the dyadic processes exchanged between interactive and interdependent partners for coping, adapting, bending, flexibly maneuvering and overcoming conflict.

Much of psychological research has conceptualized resilience as an independent process within individuals for coping and overcoming hardship (Rutter, 2012), yet resilience in relationships is not simply an intra-psychic process, but one that is dynamic and interactive between partners. To date, resilience has predominantly been studied using individual approaches for overcoming external stressors arising outside the relationship (e.g., a partner's medical illness; Ong et al., 2006), yet is inadequate in capturing resilience within relationships for internal stressors (e.g., conflict). Research eludes dyadic processes are exchanged between partners for coping (Bodenmann et al., 2018; Gottman et al., 2018; Rutter, 2012) and partners are interactive when responding, reciprocating efforts to reconcile as well as when accommodating relationship changes to restore the relationship (Thompson & Ravlin, 2017; Woodyatt et al., 2022). I propose relationship resilience will reflect dyadic resources (relationship commitment and mutual trust) and interdependent processes (relationship flexibility and dyadic coping) for reaching reconciliation and repair. Furthermore, hopefulness is argued to be resistant and resilient to hardship as well as a resource for partners to reach forgiveness, particularly when the chances of repair are slim (Merolla, 2014). I propose hope may support relationship resilience and in turn these patterns of resilience may sustain conciliatory efforts including forgiveness and self-forgiveness.

Across all studies utilising hypothetical and real-life transgressions within experimental, cross-sectional and prospective paradigms, I primarily aim to provide a theoretical model of relationship resilience for overcoming relationship resilience. Secondly, I aim to validate the dyadic resources and interdependent processes by developing a relationship resilience measurement tool for reaching repair. Thirdly, I aim to empirically test the capacity of hope to support relationship resilience under conditions of small possibility and high personal investments to reach conciliatory processes.

Overall, the research provides preliminary support for the conceptualisation of relationship resilience and its factors for reaching repair. Further, the research suggested hope may support relationship resilience and in turn sustain partners' efforts to reach forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes. Yet, hope may play a more pronounced role for offenders in reaching repair, than victims when the possibility of repair is small and there are greater investments. This thesis presents important considerations for understanding how dyads engage, interact, exchange, and reciprocate resources and processes of resilience for reconciling as well as preventing relationship termination. The findings provide a novel pathway for research to explore the resiliences within dyads (i.e., teammates, friends, colleagues) that is dynamic between partners for building hardier relationships and even transforming dyads beyond conflict.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis:

1. Does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any University.
2. The research within will not be submitted for any other future degree or diploma without the permission of Flinders University.
3. To the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Additionally, I confirm that I received an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship to support me throughout my PhD candidature at Flinders University (2018-2021).

Reneshree Govender *18th November 2022*

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Summary of Thesis Approach and Co-Authorship

In this thesis, the chapters have been written for publication. As such, chapters may contain some repetition where necessary. Additionally, chapters have been written to conform to manuscript guidelines. The following statement contextualizes each chapter.

Chapter 1

Govender, R., Woodyatt, L., Wenzel, M., & Worthington, E. (2022) An Integrative Model of Relationship Resilience in the Face of Couple Conflict, *Manuscript in preparation for Social and Personality Psychology Compass.*

Chapter 1 was generated to synthesise existing research on relationships, dyadic and interdependent approaches as well as research on moral repair following transgressions to develop an integrative model of relationship resilience in romantic couples for overcoming conflict.

Chapter 2

Govender, R., Woodyatt, L., Wenzel, M. (2022) Relationship Resilience in the Face of Couple Conflict: Scale Development and Validation, *Manuscript in preparation for Personality and Individual Differences.*

Chapter 2 empirically tested the model of relationship resilience developed in Chapter 1 through the construction and validation of the relationship resilience scale. This chapter involved item generation and factor analyses to identify dyadic and interdependent factors of relationship resilience for conflict resolution.

Chapter 3

Govender, R., Woodyatt, L., Wenzel, M. (2022) Strength in Hope & Relationship Resilience: Reaching Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness in Romantic Relationships following Conflict, *Manuscript in preparation for Social and Personal Relationships.*

Chapter 3 continues the exploration of hope and relationship resilience, experimentally investigating the capacity of hope and the relationship resilience scale constructed in Chapter 2

for supporting conciliatory processes over time including forgiveness and self-forgiveness in victim and offender partners.

Lastly, Chapter 4 builds on the findings of hope on relationship resilience for reaching reconciliation. This chapter uses an experimental approach to further investigate the role of hope under conditions of small possibility of repair and greater investments to arise and support relationship resilience to reach repair in victim and offender partners following conflict.

CHAPTER 1: An Integrative Model of Relationship Resilience in the Face of Couple Conflict

"We simply can't abandon ship every time we encounter a storm in our marriage. Real love is about weathering the storms of life together." – Seth Adam Smith

All couples experience stress, hardship, and difficulties. The above quotation seems true for relationships able to persevere through hardship and even evolve. Yet, why are some relationships unable to weather rough storms, ultimately sinking? Psychological science has sought to identify the aspects of the individual, as well as processes within the couple, that strengthen couples to withstand stressors. These factors collectively can foster *relationship resilience*. Relationship resilience can be defined as the dyadic, interactive-interdependent processes couples engage in that serve their relationship to be protected from, to adjust to, or recover from stressors. This paper will examine in what way this might apply to how partners cope with stressors that arise internally from within a romantic couple– namely in the course of relationship conflict.

Much of recent psychological research has largely focused on resilience as an intra-individual feature, exploring the independent processes individuals engage in to cope, adapt and recover from stressors, as well as the traits and resources that support this individual coping (Garcia-Dia et al., 2013; Kinsel, 2005; Tenhula et al., 2014). Yet, coping is not simply an individual intrapsychic process, but one that is dynamic in response to our environment, specifically our social environment. This is particularly true for couples in romantic relationships where interdependent partners impact the experience and coping of one another. Capturing resilience at only an individual level of analysis has limited our understanding of resilience as a multi-faceted and multi-leveled resource (Rutter, 2012; Shaw et al., 2016). Consequently, relationship researchers have begun to examine the resilience of couples, not just as individuals but as interdependent members of a dyad (under several terms, e.g., couple

resilience (Skerrett & Fergus, 2015); dyadic resilience (Thompson & Ravlin, 2017); relational resilience (Jordan, 2013; Murray et al., 2012).

To date, relationship researchers have focused on relationship resilience in the face of external stressors arising from causes outside the relationship (e.g., a spouse diagnosed with cancer, language barrier or financial issues; (Badr et al., 2010; Traa et al., 2015). Yet, internal stressors such as interpersonal conflicts (e.g., infidelity, lies or betrayal) can also arise from within the couple, impacting both partners as conflict threatens partners' relationship security. Relationship resilience may also play a role in how couples adapt to the stressor of transgressions and conflict within the couple.

Transgressions are the leading cause of relationship breakdowns including 25% caused by destructive conflicts such as verbal abuse or violence, 53-58% due to partner infidelity or betrayal of trust and 8% arising from work-family conflicts (Allen & Atkins, 2012; Burke, 2000; Yllo & Straus, 1981). Research suggests that 5-25% of couples report being in high-conflict relationships with 40% of those relationships ending in divorce (Hald et al., 2020). Separation negatively impacts individuals and their families. For the individuals, relationship termination can have long-term consequences on psychological distress, life satisfaction and results in a poorer adjustment in subsequent relationships (Rhoades et al., 2011). While likely conflicted with a wide range of other factors, research suggests children of divorced parents exhibit significantly greater psychological problems than children whose parents remain together (Strohschein, 2005; Vangelisti, 2006). With the odds of successful relationships being low, and the effort required to sustain a relationship over a long time being high, I propose the resilience of the couple is key to enabling partners to persevere over time and in the face of the types of stressors that arise from within the dyad, conflict and transgressions.

In this chapter, I will synthesise existing theories on resilience, relationships, dyadic approaches and interdependence theories to develop a foundation for understanding relationship resilience as a tripartite construct (Bodenmann, 2005; Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019; Falconier & Kuhn, 2019; Gottman, 1994; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Rutter, 1979). I propose there are three levels of resilience that interact to form relationship resilience. (1) *Individual resources.* Individual resources (e.g., optimism) are the individual traits, dispositions, habits, and capacities that arise from individual development and are present long before partners form their relationship. In line with traditional theories of resilience (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1979), I propose partners will utilise individual protective resources or strengths such as conscientiousness, positive affect and problem solving when adapting, responding, or recovering from conflict (Bradley & Hojjat, 2017; Fayombo, 2010; Smith et al., 2008). (2) *Dyadic resources*. Dyadic resources are shared by both partners as a consequence of them being part of the relationship or extending from the relationship. They are dyadic resources in so far as they are accessible to both partners as individuals and shape how the partner copes during conflict (e.g., relationship commitment and mutual trust). Dyadic approaches and relationship theories suggest stressors impact the couple on an individual level and together as a dyad (Bodenmann, 2005; Conger et al., 1999; Papp & Witt, 2010; Rock et al., 2014). Couples access dyadic resources of resilience shared within the couple including relational commitment and mutual trust important for acting as a functional unit in the face of conflict (Murray et al., 2012; Roloff et al., 2001). (3) *Interdependent processes.* Accessing dyadic resources to cope with conflict may not be sufficient for both partners to resolve and ameliorate conflict as well as reach repair, particularly for severe conflicts (e.g., broken trust or infidelity). It is the interdependent nature of romantic couples as interacting partners to influence one another's perspectives, motives, responses and behaviours to move towards reconciling and reach a renewed

relationship (Arriaga, 2013; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). It is the couples' collaborative capacity such as sharing perspectives or being flexible (i.e., a couple's plasticity) when interacting with each partner's efforts (e.g., responding to one's apology) that may facilitate repair (Venetis et al., 2020; Wenzel et al., 2021; Zemp et al., 2017). Thus, interdependent processes are the patterns of how partners interact and respond to one another that enables the couple to bend and stretch in response to each other during and following the conflict. These interactive patterns may develop a couple's capacity to transform the relationship beyond the conflict (e.g., flexibility to adapt to changes or new roles in the relationship). I propose the three levels form relationship resilience and may synergistically interact to provide a relational reciprocity (i.e., the give and take within the couple) that contributes toward the 'bouncing forward' quality of hardy relationships following conflict (see *Figure 1*). In this review, I will only discuss some examples of resilience resources that the literature suggests may play a role in promoting conflict resolution in dyads. Yet, other resources could also cultivate resilience in relationships (see Miller-Graff (2022) for a taxonomy on individual resources as well as Hartling (2008) for a review of resources in strengthening relationships).

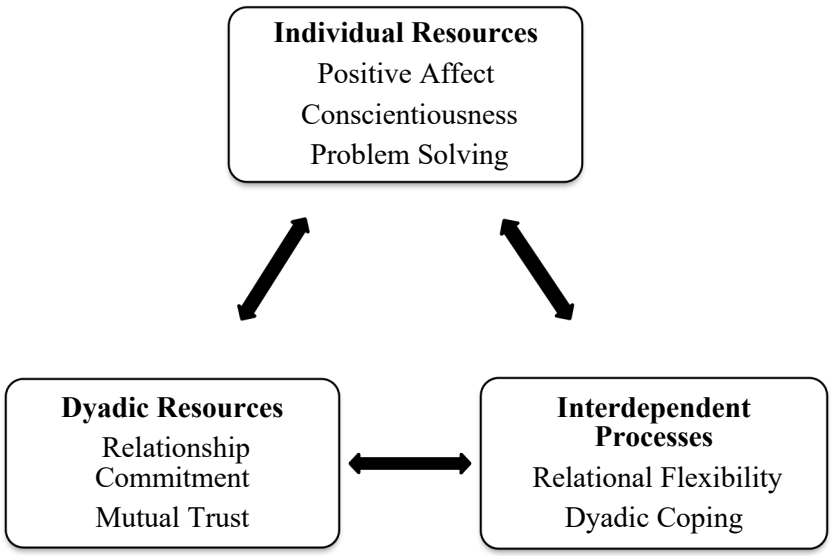

Figure 1. *Theoretical model of relationship resilience. Individual, dyadic resources and interdependent processes form relationship resilience and share a bidirectional relationship.*

Moving Towards a Theory of Relationship Resilience

Individual resources of resilience are conceptualised as the traits or strengths (e.g., positive affect, conscientiousness or problem solving) residing within the individual for coping and adapting to external stressors arising outside the relationship (Block & Kremen, 1996; Cicchetti, 2010; Connor & Davidson, 2003; Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 2012). For decades, research investigating resilience tend to focus on the traits and experiences of the individual for surviving childhood adversities, medical illness or natural disasters (Chang & Shinozuka, 2004; Farber et al., 2000; Fraser et al., 2004; Mosavel et al., 2015; Schetter & Dolbier, 2011). Therefore in romantic relationships, research has focused on how partners independently overcome external stressors arising outside the relationship such as the medical or mental illness of one's spouse and spousal bereavement (Mannion, 1996; Spahni et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2021). Sun et al. (2021) reviewed and synthesised twenty-six longitudinal and cross-cultural studies investigating resilience in spousal caregivers of partners with cancer. Findings showed spousal caregivers with resilient traits including emotional well-being and psychological coping were predictive of caregiver well-being (Sun et al., 2020). Similarly, Mannion (1996) investigated resilience in spousal caretakers of partners with mental illness. The study asked couples to complete a national resilience survey, where one partner had a primary diagnosis of bipolar disorder, depression or schizophrenia. Spousal caregivers reported self-reliance (i.e., the ability to do things on their own), tolerance of distress and humility as resilient traits for coping with a partner's mental illness. Further, Spahni et al. (2016) investigated the role of trait resilience in spouses following the death of one's romantic partner. The study compared trait resilient scores from the Brief Resilience Scale between widowed individuals as well as married partners to explore psychological adaptation to spousal bereavement. Widowed individuals high scores on trait resilience related to more beneficial scores on depression, ability to psychologically

adapt to loss and life satisfaction. To date, resilience in relationships has predominantly been studied using individual approaches to understand how individual partners cope and adapt to external adversities (Mannion, 1996; Spahni et al., 2016; Sun et al., 2021). Theories of individual resilience assume healthy development coincides with separating the individual from relationships to become a strong, independent self that can cope with hardship (Rutter, 1987). The literature indicates partners possess intra-individual resilience traits that are developed prior to the relationship forming and partners will utilise resources to independently cope and adapt to external hardships (Rutter, 1987).

When internal relationship adversities such as conflict arise, research implies partners possess traits including positive affect, conscientiousness and problem-solving skills to cope with conflict (Bradley & Hojjat, 2017; Shamai & Lev, 1999). Smith et al. (2013) investigated positive affect such as optimism as a resilient trait for overcoming negative social exchanges including marital conflict. Married couples completed surveys on marital adjustment, optimism and pessimism following conflicts. Findings revealed independent partner effects of optimism on conflict by facilitating marital and emotional adjustment (Smith et al., 2013). Claxton et al. (2012) investigated personality traits on marital satisfaction in longstanding relationships. A sample of longstanding heterosexual married couples completed measures of personality, marital satisfaction and adjustment. Conscientiousness emerged as the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction (Claxton et al., 2012). Specifically, partners that are organized, plan ahead and complete goals are able to remain calm, have greater psychological adjustment (Fayombo, 2010) and marital satisfaction following conflict (Botwin et al., 1997). Further, Masarik et al. (2016) investigated partners' problem-solving skills on financial conflicts across husbands and wives as well as adolescents and their siblings. The dyads completed surveys on their experiences following low income or high debt stressors. Findings suggested partners that possess greater problem-solving skills were able to generate

different perspectives and ideas on solving financial conflicts in a manner that was less critical or hostile to their spouse (Masarik et al., 2016). Indeed, when conflicts arise, research suggests partners possess intra-individual resilient traits such as optimism, conscientiousness and problem-solving skills that facilitate each partner to independently cope and adapt to conflict (Claxton et al., 2012; Masarik et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2013).

Dyadic Resilience Resources that Support Coping following Relationship Conflict

Moving beyond individual resilience theory (Rutter, 1987), I argue resilience processes for mitigating conflict is not entirely inherent (i.e., fixed traits such as positive affect that someone is born with) or developed in isolation from the interdependent relationships in which individuals are embedded (Walsh, 1996; Ungar, 2013). For partners to overcome conflicts, partners can draw not just on intrapersonal traits, but couples as a consequence of operating within a 'unit' can utilise interpersonal resources that are available and flow from the dyad (Donnellan et al., 2009). Family resilience frameworks (Walsh, 1996) and community/culture resilience theories (Ungar, 2013) highlight the resources shared between family members (i.e., the family climate, emotional support or warmth) and groups (i.e., psychological, physical or social resources) that facilitate the individual to overcome hardship. In line with family and cultural resilience theories, I argue in romantic relationships, dyadic processes must be shared between partners to support the dyad in coping, adapting and overcoming conflict (Ungar, 2013; Walsh, 1996).

Relationship theorists (Bodenmann, 2005, 2008; Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Gottman et al., 2002; Rusbult, 1980; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993) predict or measure dyadic processes for relationship maintenance, yet the theories do not suggest how dyadic processes operate for conflict resolution. Relationship theorists imply a dyadic element exists between partners by suggesting couples engage in positive relationship interactions (Gottman & Levenson, 1992), relationship connections (Jordan, 2008) and

relationship bonds (Rusbult, 1980) important for relationship maintenance. The theories do not explain the relationship processes or identify dyadic resources shared between partners for relationship maintenance following conflict. For example, Gottman's ratio (Gottman, 2008) is a predictive model suggesting less than five positive interactions (e.g., engaging in problem-solving) to one negative interaction (e.g., criticism, contempt or defensiveness) would result in divorce, yet the 5:1 ratio does not explain how partners reach repair. Similarly, Jordan (2008) suggests that five good things arise as a consequence of building relationship connections (i.e. a sense of zest, clarity about relationship, personal worth, creativity and desire for further connection). Relationship theories indicate dyadic resources are built and are available as a consequence of dyadic connections or bonds (Gottman, 2008; Jordan, 2008). Yet, I argue couples engaging in relationship connections, bonds or interactions must cultivate resources available to partners and the dyad that serve the couple in coping, adapting and overcoming conflict.

The literature recognises dyadic resources including relationship commitment and mutual trust that support and strengthen partners as well as the dyad in the face of conflict (Murray et al., 2012; Roloff et al., 2001). Research implies commitment and mutual trust are attributes and qualities within the dyad that are resources for both individual partners and the couple to cope when conflict arises (Murray et al., 2012; Roloff et al., 2001). A consequence of belonging to the dyad is partners' socially identify and act as a functional unit important for sharing resources such as 'we are committed to the relationship' or 'I trust my partner' that support the relationship when conflicts arise (Larzelere & Huston, 1980). Relationship commitment is a resource to the dyad following conflict, as highly committed partners that fear losing investments (e.g., children or financial dependence) if the relationship is to be terminated maintain partner closeness and investment in the dyad (Connolly, 2005; Roloff et al., 2001). Further, both partners' mutual trust indicates that the relationship is dependable

and trustworthy and each partner's investments are secure important for the dyad to continue seeking connection (Murray et al., 2012). Mutual trust exchanged between partners facilitates the judgement that the dyad is resilient and is a resource to the couple (Murray et al., 2012). I argue relationship resilience must reflect the dyadic resources, attributes, or qualities such as relationship commitment and mutual trust that is a resource to partners and the dyad. Dyadic resources of resilience shared and flow within the dyad support the couple to act as a relational entity when coping and adapting to conflict as well as in maintaining the relationship. Yet, for conflicts to resolve and for partners to move forward with the relationship, resilience must also reflect the reciprocal social processes between individuals that cultivates resilience within the dyad for partners to reach a consensus to repair and reconcile (Hartling, 2008).

Interactive, Interdependent Processes Transform Partners Beyond Conflict

For the couple to overcome conflict and reach repair, partners must not only share dyadic resources, but must also influence one another's perspectives, motivations, and change behaviours through a cyclical pattern of exchange important for reaching repair (Thompson & Ravlin, 2017; Woodyatt et al., 2022). I propose relationship resilience must also reflect the bilateral and reciprocal processes exchanged between interdependent partners that transform partner motivations to seek reparative acts (Thompson & Ravlin, 2017; Woodyatt et al., 2022). Interdependence theory (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008) denotes the view that an outcome of one partner's behaviour (e.g., forgiveness) depends on the behaviour of the other interaction partner (e.g., conciliatory efforts), highlighting partners influence and motivate responses to conflict. Conflict is not simply overcome at the individual and dyadic level of resilience, but repair is dependent on the dynamic-interactive processes (e.g., perspective-taking and relationship flexibility), as partners influence, engage and respond to the other partner's conciliatory efforts (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013; Woodyatt et al., 2022).

The capacity for a couple to share perspectives and respond to each partner's point of view builds relationship resilience important for combatting conflict, because a partner's failure to respond favourably to the interacting partner (e.g., providing negative feedback to one's apology efforts) threatens motivations to seek repair (Thompson & Ravlin, 2017).

Dyadic approaches such as dyadic coping (Revenson et al., 2005) suggest dyadic processes residing within couples are used to overcome external stressors only, yet I argue for internal conflict to resolve partners must interact in efforts to cope and reach a consensus to reconcile. Dyadic coping theory (Bodenmann, 2005, 2008) suggests if a husband perceives the stressor as external (e.g., wife's diagnosis of cancer) and not caused by the wife (e.g., betrayal of trust), he will appraise the stressor as shared by the couple and exchange dyadic resources or interactive processes such as mutual support, perspective-taking and coping (Berg & Upchurch, 2007; Bodenmann et al., 2019; Falconier & Kuhn, 2019). Falconier and Kuhn (2019) argue if a husband appraises the stressor as internal and is caused by his wife (e.g., wife's infidelity), he is unlikely to view the conflict as shared and will not engage in dyadic processes such as taking the wife's perspective. Each partner is argued to overcome internal conflicts independently. Contrary to Falconier and Kuhn (2019) assertion, internal stressors cannot simply be ameliorated independently by partners (i.e., using individual resilience) or by sharing dyadic resources that exist within the couple. I argue it is the capacity of romantic couples to influence, interact and reciprocate efforts to overcome conflict. For example, an item of the Dyadic Coping Inventory (Bodenmann, 2005) states 'we help each other put the problem into perspective and see it in a new light'. This highlights a shared, dyadic element 'we help each other', but also indicates partner's perspectives are interdependent. Specifically, one partner's perspective on the conflict (e.g., betraying the trust of their partner to protect them from harm) can influence the other partner to change their position or feelings regarding the betrayal (i.e., viewing the betrayal in a more positive

light) important for responding with reparative action (Berndsen et al., 2018; Long, 1994; Wenzel et al., 2021). Likewise, one partner's motivation may become less conciliatory and their propensity to divorce increased if their perspective is either rejected or efforts are not made to consider the interacting partner's point of view (Long, 1994). Dyadic Coping theory and inventories imply internal stressors cannot resolve without the collaborative capacity between interdependent partners such as shared perspective-taking important for influencing partners to repair the relationship (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008).

More recently, the Communicative Resilience Theory (Buzzanell, 2010; Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019; Lillie et al., 2021; Lillie et al., 2018) implies relationships encompass interactive-interdependent communication processes, yet this has only been explored in the context of external stressors (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic). According to Communicative Resilience Theory (CRT), resilience is constructed by the interactive communication within the couple that builds relationship flexibility when partners respond and negotiate to reach a renewed relationship beyond the stressor (Buzzanell, 2010). For example, CRT refers to partners' ability to 'craft normalcy' following hardship by negotiating and responding to each other on how the couple can create new relationship routines to reach a new normal (e.g., partners negotiate less expensive vacations following one partner's job loss due to COVID-19). I propose following conflicts such as infidelity, partners may negotiate normalcy by flexibly changing relationship routines such as the offender partner keeping promises or not staying out too late at night to not violate the victim's trust again. The CRT implies interactive-interdependent processes such as relationship flexibility exist as partners are accommodating when responding, negotiating and engaging with each other to reach new routines within a renewed relationship (Buzzanell, 2010). The CRT suggests relationship resilience must reflect the interdependent capacity of romantic couples to be flexible when

interacting, negotiating, responding, and reciprocating resources, as partners evolve beyond the conflict.

Research on moral repair is starting to explore the dyadic and interactive-interdependent processes partners mutually exchange to reconcile, highlighting the need for research on resilience within relationships to include interdependent interactions and responsiveness between partners that influences repair efforts (Wenzel et al., 2021). Woodyatt et al. (2022) argue moral repair must be understood as dyadic and reciprocal within interacting partners, as a victim partner's willingness to forgive the offender following wrongdoing is influenced by whether the offender shows conciliatory action (e.g., providing an apology). Woodyatt et al. (2022) argue at the dyadic level, both partners must determine if they will co-engage in reparative efforts including disclosing their feelings important for signalling their commitment (and closeness) to the relationship. Further, at an interdependent level, partners must interact when co-constructing, reshaping, and negotiating each partner's understanding of the relationship and validating their shared values in the relationship (e.g., trust) important for restoring the relationship and moving forward (Woodyatt et al., 2022). I argue relationship resilience must reflect the capacity for interdependent partners to co-construct a shared understanding of the conflict important for repair by adopting a shared perspective of the conflict. Berndsen et al. (2018) investigated perceived perspective-taking on victims' conciliatory actions. The study found victims indicated greater trust and forgiveness when the offender had taken the perspective of the victim, as victims perceived the offender had greater moral emotions (e.g., guilt or remorse). Research suggests resilience within relationships for internal conflict must not only reflect the dyadic resources shared between partners; but for the couple to evolve beyond the conflict, resilience is shaped by the dynamic interactions partners reciprocate such as perspective-taking for reaching repair (Berndsen et al., 2018; Woodyatt et al., 2022). Similarly, Wenzel et al. (2021) prospective-

longitudinal study repeatedly surveyed victim and offenders following relationship transgressions to highlight partners' efforts for overcoming conflict is reciprocal and bilateral. The study found forgiveness not only increases victims' confidence in a value consensus shared with offenders; but through this also their partner, the offenders, perception of value consensus and their engagement in genuine self-forgiveness (Wenzel et al., 2021). The literature on moral repair highlights the need for research to evolve beyond an independent perspective (e.g., a victim seeking an apology or an offender seeking forgiveness), towards an understanding of the dynamic interactions and transactions between interdependent partners in coping with conflict and engaging in repair (Berndsen et al., 2018; Wenzel et al., 2021; Woodyatt et al., 2022). Research on moral repair suggests romantic couples build relationship resilience through dyadic, dynamic interactions, as partners influence, negotiate and respond to each other's reparative efforts important for reconciling and reaching a renewed relationship beyond the wrongdoing (Berndsen et al., 2018; Wenzel et al., 2021; Woodyatt et al., 2022)

Multi-levels of Relationship Resilience for Overcoming Conflict

Taken together, I propose the individual, dyadic and interdependent multi-levels form relationship resilience as well as synergistically interact with each other to provide plasticity within the couple, making the relationship more elastic and durable when faced with future conflict (Papp & Witt, 2010; Shaw et al., 2016). Throughout a relationship, conflicts will continue to arise, therefore couples must possess a plasticity to 'bounce back' from every conflict that emerges and evolve toward a renewed relationship. Research implies the strength and plasticity of a couple's resilience may depend on the bilateral interactions between the resources and processes of the multi-levels (Assad et al., 2007; Özgen & Tangör, 2022; Saeed Abbasi, 2017). In romantic relationships, partners with greater individual resilient traits such as optimism strengthened the couple's relationship commitment (i.e.,

dyadic resource) as well as increased the couple's flexibility when problem-solving (i.e., an interdependent process) important for providing a more enduring relationship (Assad et al., 2007). Similarly, partners with greater commitment and closeness in the relationship (i.e., dyadic resources) were more accommodating and flexible when taking the other partner's perspective (i.e., an interdependent process) important for strengthening the couple in the face of couple dilemmas (Arriaga & Rusbult, 1998). In romantic couples, partners with greater flexibility maintained relationship commitment important for marital satisfaction (Saeed Abbasi, 2017) and flexibility also promoted conscientiousness as individuals adapt when task planning and reaching goals such as relationship repair (Özgen & Tangör, 2022). Indeed, there is a need to further understand how intra-individual, dyadic and interdependent levels interact at varying strengths to cultivate hardier and sturdier relationships when faced with future conflict. Yet, research is starting to recognise a bidirectionality exists between the dimensions of resilience within relationships making couples stronger and more durable in the face of conflict (Assad et al., 2007; Özgen & Tangör, 2022; Saeed Abbasi, 2017; Shaw et al., 2016). Specifically, Papp and Witt (2010) investigated the interrelations between individual and dyadic coping on relationship functioning in romantic couples. The study found individual differences in coping strategies covaried with dyadic coping (i.e., couples' positive affect, emotion regulation and problem-solving) important for strengthening the relationship functioning (Papp & Witt, 2010). Importantly, individual and dyadic coping interactions facilitated relationship functioning beyond the unique contribution of individual and dyadic coping alone, suggesting that the proposed multi-levels of resilience may interact bilaterally to cultivate hardier more resistant relationships (Papp & Witt, 2010). For conflicts with greater severity (e.g., infidelity) where reaching repair is more difficult, research should seek to investigate how the dyadic and interdependent systems in which partners are embedded interact and facilitate the couple to 'bounce back' (Shaw et al., 2016).

Conclusion

Traditional conceptualisations of resilience (Rutter, 1987, 2012) narrowly focus on intra-individual traits, resources or processes residing within an individual, limiting the applicability to relationship or dyadic research. This review highlights that resilience in relationships must encapsulate the dyadic processes exchanged between interdependent partners that facilitate plasticity within the couple to bend, adapt to, cope with, and manoeuvre through the stressor and change in response to hardship. If the synthesis of the present research and its implications for a theory of relationship resilience are accurate, then establishing how the dyadic resources and interdependent processes cultivate resilience within relationships, will be instrumental in understanding the many ways dyads act as a functional unit when overcoming conflict. At present, our proposed theoretical understanding of resilience within relationships must include (1) individual and (2) dyadic resources (3) exchanged and reciprocated between interdependent partners important for facilitating relationship repair.

I concede that there may also be other resources or processes that synergistically interact and form resilience important for furthering our understanding of how dyads cope with conflict as well as develop a degree of immunity to future conflict (Connolly, 2005; Hartling, 2008; Skerrett & Fergus, 2015). Therefore, future research is required to empirically investigate as well as validate dyadic resources (e.g., relationship commitment and mutual trust) and interdependent processes (e.g., relationship flexibility and dyadic coping) that cultivate resilience in relationships following conflict to confirm the proposed multidimensional theory of relationship resilience. Research implementing controlled, experimental approaches and prospective studies with dyads facing internal stressors (of which there are very few studies) are needed to permit conclusions about the role of relationship resilience on reconciliation (e.g., forgiveness) following conflict. Indeed, I argue

relationship resilience may facilitate couples to resolve conflict and reach reconciliation. Yet, future research should also aim to investigate factors or resources that can support, sustain and strengthen relationship resilience (and its factors), particularly for severe conflicts, when the chances of repair are slim. For example, hope is recognised as more resistant and resilient to adversity (Nelissen, 2017) and forgiveness may proceed from a couple's relationship-specific hope (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). Hence, future studies should aim to investigate other factors such as hope that may (together with relationship resilience) provide the behavioural patterns of resilience needed for couples to reconcile and reach repair. Such efforts will aid in the development of targeted interventions for dyads or even groups to cope, adapt, repair as well as even transform relationships, making them hardier and sturdier to conflicts faced in the future.

CHAPTER 2: Relationship Resilience in the Face of Couple Conflict- Scale Development and Validation

It is inevitable that relationships encounter stressors such as interpersonal conflicts over time. Although partners strive to be congenial, conflicts arising within the relationship (e.g., wrongdoing, betrayal, or infidelity) place pressure on the relationship structure (Halilova et al., 2020; Neff & Broady, 2011). When couples break down under pressure, the separated partners and their children face poorer mental and physical health as well as greater economic burdens on single-family households (Akpan & Ezeume, 2020; Raley & Sweeney, 2020). Why do some relationships crumble following conflicts, while others emerge relatively unscathed, and even appear to strengthen as a consequence of overcoming conflict? Resilience can be, and often only is depicted as intra-individual processes for coping, adapting, recovering, and thriving in the face of stressors (Garcia-Dia et al., 2013; Kinsel, 2005; Tenhula et al., 2014). Yet, conceptualisations of resilience in relationships must reflect the dyadic processes exchanged between interactive-interdependent partners for bending, adapting, coping, flexibly maneuvering and overcoming conflicts (Connolly, 2005; Walsh, 1996; Yorgason et al., 2007). Individual-focused approaches in the measurement of resilience limit the applicability of resilience to relationship research and restrict advancements in our understanding of the multidimensional nature of resilience (Rutter, 1987, 2012). Our objective is to construct a measure of relationship resilience that reflects the dyadic resources and interactive-interdependent processes for bolstering efforts to reconcile and repair the relationship following conflicts.

Existing research has narrowly assessed resilience as a unitary measure of protective traits or attributes (e.g., optimism, hardiness or intelligence) residing within the individual in the context of relationships. Individuals access these resources to overcome stressors external to the relationship such as the medical illness of one's partner, natural disasters, or war

(Friborg et al., 2005; Lowe et al., 2015; Segovia et al., 2012). Indeed, several scales have been developed to assess resilience including the Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003); the Resilience Scale for Adults (Hjemdal et al., 2011); the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008) and more recently the Dyadic Communicative Resilience Scale (Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019). Yet, the current measurement tools are designed for use for intra-individual resilience investigations following external stressors (e.g., cancer or COVID-19 pandemic), drawing attention away from the role dyads play in fostering resilience for overcoming internal stressors arising within relationships (Lillie et al., 2021; Lillie et al., 2018).We argue theories and measurement tools that reduce resilience to an intra-individual phenomenon for overcoming adversity arising outside relationships have contributed to an unclear operationalization of resilience within relationships and inadequately capture the multi-faceted nature of resilience following conflict. Protective resources such as dyadic coping, relationship commitment, mutual trust or relationship flexibility cannot be measured in isolation from the interdependent partnerships in which the individuals are embedded (Murray et al., 2012; Revenson et al., 2005; Yorgason et al., 2007). Rather than treating resilience as an individual capacity alone, our relationship resilience scale will reflect the emergent capacity of dyads to flex with and transform beyond the conflict.

To overcome these limitations, the primary goal of the present studies is to expand our understanding of resilience by including dyadic and interdependent approaches to the study of relationship resilience for internal conflict. A clear operationalisation of relationship resilience that accounts for dyadic resources (relational commitment and mutual trust) and interdependent processes of resilience (relationship flexibility and dyadic coping) will allow us to translate a theoretical understanding of relationship resilience into a measurement tool using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis and validity analysis. Investigating the

multi-faceted qualities of relationship resilience has implications for clinicians to identify resilience in dyads (work colleagues, teammates, friends, couples, families) needed to strengthen relationships and develop the capacity to cope with future stressors and conflict.

Moving Resilience Beyond a Single-Dimension Measure

To date, resilience has been assessed as a single unitary measure of resources, traits or individual processes residing within the individual, inadequately capturing the dyadic processes between partners for cultivating resilience within relationships (Ungar, 2013; Walsh, 1996). Traditional theories (Rutter, 1987, 2012) define resilience as an intra-individual process (i.e., fixed trait or attribute) that allows the individual to cope, adapt, and overcome hardship. Individual approaches have predominantly investigated protective resources including optimism in the context of external stressors (e.g., natural disasters, PTSD or school) using the Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003), the Resilience Scale for Adults (Hjemdal et al., 2011) and the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008). Yet, these measures represent an individual's capacity to adapt, cope and bounce back from personal or environmental hardships in isolation from the relationships in which the individuals are embedded. Resilience must also reflect the social processes between individuals (the dyadic processes within couples) that cultivates resilience within a relationship for overcoming hardship (Hartling, 2008). In the context of conflict, individual resources alone are not sufficient in overcoming conflict threatening both partner's relationship security and personal investments. Dyadic resources exist within the couple allowing both partners to act as a functional unit in the face of conflict (Bodenmann, 2008). Further, we argue it is the patterns of interactions between interdependent partners including partner's responsiveness, reciprocity, and engagement to each other's reparative efforts (e.g., victim's response to an offender's apology) needed to reach repair (Thompson & Ravlin, 2017). More recently, dyadic approaches and tools including dyadic coping theory

(Bodenmann, 2005) the Dyadic Coping Inventory; (Bodenmann, 2008) and Dyadic Communicative Resilience Scale (Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019) imply dyadic resources arise from the couple and support both partners as well as the dyad to cope and resolve conflict.

Dyadic approaches such as dyadic coping theories (Bodenmann, 2008) indicate couples will engage in dyadic processes (i.e., a give and take of dyadic resources) for coping, adapting and overcoming external stressors, yet not for internal stressors (conflict). Dyadic coping theory argues dyadic resources such as exchanging mutual support, empathy, and coping will be shared by partners that appraise stressors as not caused by one's spouse (e.g., external stressors such as a wife's medical illness; (Falconier & Kuhn, 2019). Specifically, partners will independently overcome internal stressors arising within the relationship (e.g., infidelity caused by one partner) by utilizing individual resilience, as the stressor will be appraised as not shared by the couple and the couple will not exchange coping resources (Falconier & Kuhn, 2019). Yet, conflict cannot simply be ameliorated independently, given partners are interdependent in efforts to overcome conflict threatening both partners' relationship security.

Zemp et al. (2017) and Meier et al. (2021) have recently confirmed dyadic resources including dyadic coping and "we" talk exist between partners for buffering conflict, suggesting research is starting to address relational resources for conflicts. Zemp et al. (2017) investigated the role of dyadic approaches in couples' co-parenting conflict. The study found higher perceived dyadic coping in mothers is linked to a decrease in co-parenting conflict. Zemp et al. (2017) highlight dyadic coping resources exist between partners to overcome co-parenting conflict. Meier et al. (2021) investigated couples' pronoun use in conflict and dyadic coping. The study predominantly focused on conflicts arising outside the relationship such as financial hardship, yet some attention was drawn to internal conflicts arising from

partner communication and partner habits. The study found independent partner talk (you-talk) was dysfunctional in overcoming conflict, yet couple-focused talk (e.g., we are in this together; we-talk) represented a dyadic resource that can promote couple coping and buffer conflict. Zemp et al. (2017) and Meier et al. (2021) highlight research is starting to investigate dyadic resources that support couples in the face of conflict.

More recently, the validation of the Dyadic Communicative Resilience Scale (DCRS) (Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019) has been designed to determine dyadic communication in couples, yet the scale also implies interdependent processes exist between partners for overcoming hardship. For couples to resolve conflict and 'bounce back', partners must not only share dyadic resources, but must influence each other, exchange perspectives, and reciprocate efforts to reach repair. Communicative Resilience Theory (Buzzanell, 2010) suggests resilience is constructed by the interactive communication efforts between partners that build flexibility as partners respond and negotiate to reach a renewed relationship. In the face of COVID-19, couples must 'craft normalcy' by negotiating and responding to each other on how the couple can overcome financial hardship such as negotiating budgets or responding to partner's perspectives on having less expensive family holidays (Lillie et al., 2021). Following conflict (e.g., infidelity) we argue, partners can craft normalcy by negotiating new relationship routines (e.g., partner keeping promises or not staying out late to not violate victims' trust) to reach a new normal. Indeed, the DCRS highlights measures are being developed to assess dyadic resilience and may also capture interdependent processes between partners for combatting external stressors (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic). Yet, the present measure of relationship resilience is required to validate and address the dyadic resources and interdependent interactions between partners for ameliorating internal stressors.

The Current Research

We propose relationship resilience is cultivated by the dynamic interaction between the (1) individual resources of resilience each partner possess, (2) dyadic resources of resilience and the (3) interdependent processes of resilience required to reach relationship repair. It is the inclusion of the dyadic and interdependent conceptualization on which a reliable scale that assesses the resilience within relationships following conflict will be designed. The goal of the current research is to create the relationship resilience scale to evaluate the (2) dyadic resources and (3) interdependent processes that exist within couples and assess the scale using hypothetical and real-life transgressions across victim and offender partners. In Study 2.1, the preliminary relationship resilience scale was created, and the factor structure of the construct was revised (N = 507) using a hypothetical transgression scenario. The factor structure was confirmed in a sample of offender partners using real-life transgressions in Study 2.2 (N = 960). The inclusion of an additional factor (dyadic coping) to the scale was also evaluated and convergent as well as discriminate validity was determined. In Study 2.3, the final factor structure developed in Study 2.2 was validated using a new sample of offender partners (N = 329) and external validity was evaluated. Finally, in Study 2.4 the scale was validated using a new sample of victim partners following a real-life transgression (N = 593) and convergent, discriminant as well as predictive validity were assessed. Together, the studies provide initial theoretical development of the multidimensional nature of relationship resilience following conflict and predict partners' willingness to reconcile. The scale provides researchers with a preliminary psychometric 16-item tool for assessing relationship resilience for internal stressors (conflict).

Conceptualization and Hypothesized Factorial Structure of Relationship Resilience

To build our multidimensional relationship resilience construct, we firstly conducted a literature review to identify perceived resources of resilience for overcoming conflict. Given,

extensive reviews that exist identifying individual resources of resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Howard et al., 1999; Martin-Breen & Anderies, 2011) we focused on identifying protective dyadic resources and interdependent processes of resilience to operationalise relationship resilience as a tripartite measure. To guide our review, we investigated resources based on our theoretical understanding and conceptualization of relationship resilience to develop and construct our measure. We looked for articles under the terms "resources OR reasons OR resilience AND relationship maintenance OR marital satisfaction", "resilience OR marital qualities AND relationship conflict OR interpersonal transgression", "resilience in romantic couples", "dyadic resilience", "couples resilience" and "marital resilience". We translated this review into five resources of relationship resilience under the two dimensions: dyadic resources and interdependent processes.

Dyadic Resources

Relationship Commitment. Relational commitment refers to each individual's expression of interest or commitment to the relationship and is pivotal for relationship maintenance following conflict (Roloff et al., 2001). Roloff et al. (2001) highlighted committed partners respond more constructively to conflict as they fear losing investments (e.g., children or financial dependence) by ending the relationship. Commitment is predictive of greater relationship satisfaction, a decrease in individual stress and couple burnout (Kazemi & Motlagh, 2020). Connected and committed partners were able to work more constructively in solving problems leading to better marital satisfaction following conflict (Kazemi & Motlagh, 2020). Marital commitment was associated with resilience and long-lasting marriage (Kazemi & Motlagh, 2020). Therefore, we include relationship commitment as a dyadic resource factor in our relationship resilience measure.

Mutual Trust. Mutual trust signals safety (i.e., comfort and relationship security) in one's partner and increases the perception that the relationship is resilient (Murray et al.,

2012) Trusting one's partner signals to the other partner that there is a possibility of gaining investments (e.g., relationship security) and facilitates partner's willingness to continue to seek connection in the face of conflict (Murray et al., 2012). Alternatively, a lack of mutual trust signals loss and motivates efforts to reduce relationship maintenance (Murray et al., 2012). Mutually trusting partners faced with a longer list of complaints about them by their partner compared to a shorter list were more resilient and less vulnerable to the negative impact of partner criticism, as partners felt secure in the relationship (Murray et al., 2012). When conflicts arise, partners' mutual trust in each other facilitates relationship resilience as partners perceive relationship security and investments (or future gains) are maintained. Therefore, we include mutual trust as a dyadic resource factor in our relationship resilience measure.

Interdependent Processes

Relationship Flexibility. An innate feature of intimate relationships is partners influence one another's perspectives, motivations, and change behaviours through a cyclical pattern of exchange that requires flexibly maneuvering through conflicts (Thompson & Ravlin, 2017). Specifically, relationship flexibility refers to each partner's ability to bend, adapt and accommodate each partner's needs and demonstrates partner compatibility important for long-lasting relationships (Allen et al., 2013). Yorgason et al. (2007) investigated the role of flexibility in the relationship when one partner has a hearing loss. Partner's and the couple's ability to adapt and change their identity in the relationship (e.g., one partner not able to be the sole provider), signalled greater relational flexibility, as partners adjust to new roles as caregivers or caretakers. When relationship stressors arise, couples able to sustain positive adaptation (flexibility in the relationship) over time and evolve with relationship demands, demonstrate the couple's resilience important for maintaining the relationship (Yorgason et al., 2007). As no study is yet to assess relationship flexibility in the

context of conflict, we include relationship flexibility as an interdependent process of resilience in relationships.

Intent to Reconcile. Intentions to reconcile including providing forgiveness and self-forgiveness are interactive processes reciprocated within the couple, as one partner's efforts to reconcile (i.e., an actor effect) can influence the other partner's (i.e., a partner effect) intentions to engage in prosocial responses (e.g., forgive or apologise) promoting relational longevity (Fenell, 1993; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015; Wenzel et al., 2021). Forgiving and self-forgiving individuals are thought to have less stressful marriages as they are better able to overcome conflicts than couples who are less forgiving (Worthington et al., 2007). In line with Worthington et al. (2007), we included intentions to reconcile as an interdependent process of relationship resilience.

Dyadic Coping. Dyadic coping has been recently associated with overcoming conflict as both partners' efforts to exchange empathy, mutual support and perspective-take are perceived as a source of relational resilience (Zemp et al., 2017). Zemp et al. (2017) argue parental relationships are interdependent in their efforts toward co-parenting. The study investigated dyadic coping between partners in overcoming co-parenting conflict and found perspective-taking and mutual support were effective in reducing conflict. A mother's capacity to reduce conflict was influenced by the father's engagement in dyadic coping including making mothers feel confident in the involvement of fathers in co-parenting as well as the father's support towards mothers in times of stress (Zemp et al., 2017). We introduce dyadic coping as an interdependent resource of resilience in relationships, reflecting partners' interactions important for influencing and motivating behavioural change to reach relationship repair (in Study 2.2-2.4).

Based on the review presented above, we conceptualize relationship resilience as a five-factor model under two dimensions (1) dyadic resources: relationship commitment,

mutual trust and (2) interdependent resources: relationship flexibility, intent to reconcile and dyadic coping. We define relationship resilience as the dyadic resources and interactive-interdependent processes exchanged between partners for bending, adapting, coping, flexibly maneuvering, changing, and overcoming relationship conflict.

Study 2.1: Initial Scale Development, Exploratory Analysis and Revision

Method

Scale Development and Item Generation

The relationship resilience scale was developed across four studies (one hypothetical and three real-life transgression studies) using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. The full description of the first iteration of the scale (first four constructs) is described here. Study 2.1 was a pilot study to develop measures of our relationship resilience construct and includes scale revisions. The second iteration of the scale contained (final four constructs) 12 items from the previous version of the scale alongside 4 items from the common dyadic coping subscale of the Dyadic Coping Inventory described in Study 2.2-2.4.

We follow recommendations for scale construction from Furr (2011) and Hinkin (1998) in developing the relationship resilience scale. In Study 2.1, we generated 17 items for the relationship resilience scale that assessed four constructs (relationship commitment, mutual trust, intent to reconcile and relationship flexibility). Participants were asked to imagine being in a hypothetical relationship and respond to each item on a 7-point likert scale ranging from 0 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”. Example items include: “I want our relationship to last a very long time” (relationship commitment); “I believe my partner is dependable” (mutual trust); “I am willing to be flexible in our relationship” (relationship flexibility) and “I want to be reconciled with my partner” (pro-reconciliatory action). We discussed the items in terms of potential relevance to the dyadic or interdependent

dimensions prior to conducting the study. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were used to analyse the factor structure of the relationship resilience scale using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 and IBM SPSS AMOS 27 Graphics.

Participants

US adults (N = 1053) aged between 18-89 (M= 36.7, SD= 10.49) years were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). After the removal of surveys of participants who did not meet the criteria or who withdrew from the survey (N = 28) as well as participants who failed the English Proficiency Test check used to ensure English was their first language (N = 518), there were 507 surveys remaining for analysis, with 50% of participants being female. MTurk eligibility was contingent upon having at least 100 tasks, a 95% or higher approval rate and fluency in English.

Procedure

Participants read a scenario about a transgression in a relationship. In the study, participants were randomly allocated to either a victim or transgressor partner role, high (20 years together) or low (6 months together) personal investment role and provided either zero or small feedback on the chance of relationship repair. See Appendix A for details of experimental conditions. This experimental component of the data was not analysed in this paper. Participants responded to the 17 proposed relationship resilience items based on how they would think and feel towards their partner in the scenario (See Appendix C Supplementary Table 1 for the full list of the 17 items). Participants responded to each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Participants also completed the 25-item CD-RISC scale to measure individual resources of resilience on the following factors: 1. personal competence and high standards and tenacity, 2. tolerance and negative affect, 3. positive acceptance of change and secure

relationships, 4. control and 5. spiritual influences. The CD-RISC has previously demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach α = .85; Campbell-Sills et al., 2007) and high test-retest reliability (Cronbach α = 0.87; Connor & Davidson, 2003). We computed the mean scores for each subscales and determined the following reliability estimates for each subscale[1]; (1) personal competence (*M* = 21.44 , *SD* = 5.70; Cronbach α =.84), (2) tolerance of negative affect (*M* = 18.43, *SD* = 4.91; Cronbach α =.81), (3) positive acceptance of change and secure relationships (*M* = 13.78, *SD* = 3.72; Cronbach α =.81), (4) control (*M* = 8.35, *SD* = 2.38; Cronbach α =.71) and (5) spiritual influences (*M* = 5.17 , *SD* = 1.85; Cronbach α =.53).

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Following recommendations of Furr (2011) and Hinkin (1998), an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted with the 17 relationship resilience item data, using Dimension Reduction Factor Analyses with Direct Oblimin Rotations, identifying the number of factors for extraction based on findings from the scree plot as well as its correspondence to our theory. Our initial EFA extracted a single factor model fit, explaining 69.94% of the total item variance (See Appendix C Supplementary Table 1). Items with small loadings (<. 0.4), or with substantial cross-loadings (>0.5), or small differences between two or more component loadings were discarded. Five of the items were subsequently removed due to items 3 and 17 demonstrating low item loading (<. 0.4) and items 14, 15 and 16 reflecting more of an outcome of resilience variable than a latent resilience factor. Subsequently, the intent to reconcile factor was removed and a second EFA was conducted on the reduced pool

[1] We also conducted exploratory factor analysis of the CD-RISC factors (See Appendix B). Only a single factor was extracted, suggesting that the 5 factors do not hold as previously reported (Connor & Davidson, 2003). To be consistent with the scale use, we treated the CD-RISC scale as it was designed to be used. Reliability of some of the sub-scales were low and could be due to the experimental situation in which the measure was used. Due to not demonstrating the validity that we would expect we have not reported the findings of the relationship resilience scale and the CD-RISC in the manuscript text, but it is available in Appendix B.

of 12 items reflecting a three-factor solution: relationship commitment (four items), mutual trust (four items) and relationship flexibility (four items). The revised scale received a stable structure with factor loadings ranging from 0.69-0.93 (M = 5.13, SD = 2.15). See *Table 1* for the final list of items showing each item mean, standard deviation and pattern matrix holding the factor loadings (Appendix C Supplementary Table 2 shows the standardised regression weights for the revised items).

Table 1

Mean, standard deviation and factor loadings for the 12 relationship resilience items in the pattern matrix

Items	M	SD	Factor		
			Relationship Commitment	Mutual Trust	Relationship Flexibility
I want our relationship to last a very long time	5.47	2.33	**.90**		
I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner	5.41	2.34	**.93**		
I want our relationship to last forever	5.35	2.40	**.91**		
I imagine being with my partner several years from now	5.16	2.41	**.89**		
I would trust my partner still, even in contexts where other people might not	4.88	2.44	.41	**.79**	
I believe my partner is dependable	4.97	2.48	.39	**.80**	
I am certain my partner would be faithful	4.77	2.56	.35	**.76**	
I am confident that my partner will tell the truth	5.08	2.45		**.81**	

I am willing to be flexible in our relationship	5.36	2.30	**.85**
I am ready to accept future changes to the relationship	5.56	2.03	**.71**
I am willing to try different solutions that my partner proposes to solve the problem	5.54	2.20	**.87**
I am willing to create a new version of our relationship with my partner	5.34	2.28	**.88**

Note. $N = 507$; values in bold indicate the factor on which the item loads.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We examined the factor structure of the remaining 12 items and the model fit using CFA in IBM SPSS AMOS 27 Graphics. Increasing the number of factors continued to improve the model goodness-of-fit, particularly with a three-factor model showing the best conceptual model fit and was thus deemed as the model of choice (see *Table 2*). For the model fit, chi-square values were reported as per conventions (Hu & Bentler, 1999) however chi-square values are sensitive to large sample sizes such as the present study ($N = 507$), as the value is nearly always significant (Byrne, 2012a). Therefore, we judged the hypothesised model fit as per recommendations (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006) using the following indices: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; good fit <.05, mediocre fit .08), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; cut off close to >1 for good fit) and comparative fit index (CFI; cut of close to >1 for good fit). The CFA retained items from the best EFA factor solution. We note the RMSEA can be artificially large in models with small degrees of freedom and sample size, therefore it is interpreted with some caution (Kenny & McCoach, 2003).

The remaining 12 items were subjected to a three-factor second order confirmatory factor analysis, revealing a good model fit; χ^2 (51) = 118.52, RMSEA [90% CI] = .053 [.04; .06], TLI= .98, CFI = .99. All items had strong standardised factor loadings (See Appendix C Supplementary Table 2). Thus, the refined three-factor second order model was used for remaining analyses and was deemed to best represent the structure of relationship resilience.

Table 2

CFA fit indices of the models in the sample of Study 2.1.

Model	X^2	*df*	RMSEA [90% CI]	CFI	TLI
1-factor	1666.93***	120	.16 [.15; .17]	.837	.790
2- factor	850.66***	118	.11 [.10; .12]	.923	.900
3- factor	118.52***	51	.05 [.04; .06]	.991	.980

Note. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; X^2 = robust maximum likelihood chi-square; df = degrees of freedom. p <.001***.

Internal Consistency

Using alpha to determine internal consistency can be sensitive to the number of items in a measure (Hinkin, 1998). As per recommendations, α = .70 should serve as an absolute minimum for evidence of internal consistency for newly developed measures (Hinkin, 1998). An analysis of the internal consistency of the three subscales produced excellent alpha coefficients. Dyadic resource subscale (Cronbach α = .97) includes the relationship commitment (Cronbach α = .95) and mutual trust (Cronbach α = .95) items. Interdependent process subscale includes the relationship flexibility items (Cronbach α = .90). The perceived relationship resilience scale demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach α = .97). All

inter-item correlations of the 12 items ranged from (r = .52 to .86) (see Appendix C Figure 1 for the three-factor second-order model).

Factor Invariance across Victim & Offender Conditions

Following suggestions (Byrne, 2012a), we investigated multi-group invariance of the 3-factor second-order model across victim and offender groups. There was a non-significant decrease in model fit across the original and constrained models; $\Delta\chi^2$ (114)= 252.73, RMSEA= .051, CFI = .97, TLI= .97, p = .111, suggesting that the factor loadings and items thresholds could be constrained to be the same across both groups. Results support the generalisability of the scale across the sample and across the victim and offender groups.

Study 2.2: Offender Partner Scale Validation and Inclusion of Dyadic Coping Factor

In Study 2.2, the factor structure of relationship resilience was verified using a new sample of participants reporting real-life transgressions. The sample comprised of romantic partners who were perceived to be the offending partner (i.e., the partner identified as having caused the interpersonal transgression). The three-factor structure was examined with the inclusion of an additional factor (dyadic coping). The final iteration of the scale (described here and in all subsequent studies) included items 31, 32, 33 and 35 from the common dyadic coping subscale of the Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI) (Bodenmann, 2005). For convergent validity, we expect the four focal constructs (commitment, mutual trust, flexibility and dyadic coping) will be positively correlated with the trust scale (Rempel et al., 1985) and the commitment level subscale items of The Investment Model Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998).

The DCI (Bodenmann, 2005) highlights the emergence of interdependent processes of resilience such as perspective-taking that is bilateral and reciprocal within dyads for influencing and motivating partners to reach repair. Interdependence theory suggests an outcome of one partner's behaviour (e.g., forgiveness) depends on the behaviour of the other interaction partner (e.g., conciliatory efforts), highlighting the interdependent nature of

romantic partners (Randall et al., 2016). The DCI (Bodenmann, 2005) item, “we help each other put the problem into perspective and see it in a new light”, suggests resources of resilience within relationships must integrate a dyadic element ‘we help each other’ (i.e., exchanging of shared resources) and an interdependent element ‘put the problem into perspective and see it in a new light’. One partner’s perspective on the conflict (e.g., lying to one’s partner to protect them from emotional harm) can influence the other partner to see the betrayal in a new light and reach relationship repair. Likewise, one partner’s motivation to engage in conciliatory efforts to reach repair may decrease if their perspective is rejected by the other partner. The DCI highlights conceptualization of resilience must reflect interactive-interdependent processes partners engage in for reaching a consensus to reconcile and repair the relationship (Randall et al., 2016). The present measurement tool included dyadic coping to determine the capacity for partners to influence and motivate behavioural change for reaching relationship repair.

Method

Participants

US adults (N = 1869) aged between 18-89 (M= 38.66, SD= 12.00) years were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). After the removal of surveys of participants not meeting the criteria or withdrawing from the survey (N = 74) as well as participants that failed the English Proficiency Test check (N = 835) there were 960 surveys remaining for analysis, with 61.8% identifying as female, 37% as male, and 1.1% as nonbinary. Participants indicated most transgressions involved verbal arguments (28.6%) or betrayal of trust (25.6%). The majority of participants were in a relationship with their partner for less than 10 years (63.7%), with the median relationship duration between 6 to 6.5 years. At the time of the survey, most participants were living with their partner (74.9%).

Measures and Procedure

To assess eligibility for the study (i.e., participants identified as having committed an interpersonal transgression toward their romantic partner in the last 48 hours) participants were asked to indicate the type of event that occurred in the last 48 hours. Three of the events did not involve an interpersonal transgression (e.g., 'an unsatisfactory customer experience'), while one of the events involved 'an interpersonal transgression with your romantic partner which you caused'. Participants were excluded if the interpersonal transgression item was not selected. The remaining participants were asked to briefly report an interpersonal transgression they had caused with their romantic partner in the last 48 hours.

Participants were asked to complete the following scales in relation to the reported transgression (1) Trust Scale (Rempel et al., 1985), (2) commitment level subscale of the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998), (3) remaining 12 Relationship Resilience items developed in Study 2.1 (4) Joint (common) coping items from the Dyadic Coping Inventory (Randall et al., 2016).

The Trust Scale. The Trust Scale (Rempel et al., 1985) is a 17-item measure designed to assess trust within close interpersonal relationships. The *dependability* subscale reflects qualities of one's partner that warrant confidence in the partner when faced with the risk of potential hurt. Participants indicated the extent to which they agree or disagree with items, as they relate to the partner with whom they have a close relationship with on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (-3) to strongly agree (3). Higher scores reflect greater partner trust. The internal consistency of the dependability subscale ($\alpha = .72$) was satisfactory (Rempel et al., 1985).

The Investment Model Scale. Participants completed the commitment level subscale of the Investment Model scale (Rusbult et al., 1998). The commitment level subscale measured participants' intent to persist in their romantic relationship, including perceived long-term

orientation toward relationship involvement and attachment to their partner. Participants were asked to think about the transgression reported and respond to the 7-item subscale ranging from (0) do not agree at all to (8) agree completely. Relationship commitment level is determined by summing the scores of the items. The internal consistency of the commitment level subscale revealed good reliability (ranging from α = .91 to α = .95) (Rusbult et al., 1998).

The Dyadic Coping Inventory. The Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI) (Randall et al., 2016) is a 37-item scale used to determine dyadic coping (mutual support) in partners as well as perceived communication of couples under stress. The DCI includes the joint (common) dyadic coping subscale measuring both partners mutually working together to reduce stress and increase joint coping. Participants were asked to think about 'when you or your partner are stressed, how often do you react in the following ways' to each item on a 5-point scale from (1) very rarely to (5) very often. The DCI joint common coping subscale score is determined by summing the items 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35 with higher scores reflecting greater joint coping. The DCI displays high internal consistency for the subscales (ranging from α = .71 to α = .92) (Randall et al., 2016).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Three-Factor Second-Order Structure

We examined the factor structure of the relationship resilience scale and the fit indices using CFA in AMOS 27. We examined the factor structure using the same recommendations for the model fit indices detailed in Study 2.1 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006). Following the findings from Study 2.1, a 3-index second-order presentation strategy was used to validate the scale. The model revealed a mediocre model fit; χ^2 (51) = 370.03, RMSEA [90% CI] = .08 [.07; .08], TLI= .95, CFI = .97. All items had strong standardised factor loadings (all 0.52-0.96; see *Table 3* for standardised regression weights) and the scale showed

good reliability (Cronbach α = .94). Results from the CFA indicates that the three-factor second-order structure of relationship resilience held across independent samples of romantic partners (offender) following an interpersonal transgression.

Scale Revision with Inclusion of the Dyadic Coping Factor

We explored the model fit of the relationship resilience items with the common dyadic coping subscale of the Dyadic Coping Inventory items based on prior theory. Following recommendations from Furr (2011) and Hinkin (1998), an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted with the 12 relationship resilience items and the five common dyadic coping subscale items. We used Dimension Reduction Factor Analyses with Direct Oblimin Rotations, identifying the number of factors for extraction based on findings from the scree plot as well as its correspondence to our theory. Our initial EFA extracted a four-factor model fit, explaining 57.23.% of the total item variance. Inter-item correlations were conducted to identify the factor loadings with the relationship resilience items. Items with small loadings (>0.4), or with substantial cross-loadings (>0.5), or small differences between two or more component loadings were discarded (Furr, 2011; Hinkin, 1998). Item 35 of the common dyadic coping subscale was removed due to loading poorly (0.39). In all, there were 16 items for the relationship resilience scale which we subjected to a second-order CFA with four extracted factors. The final list of the 16 items is reported in *Table 3*. (See Appendix D for descriptive statistics and pattern matrix of the four-factor solution).

Table 3

Standardised Regression Weight for a Four-Factor Second Order Relationship Resilience Model

Items of each subscale	Standardised Regression Weight
Commitment to the Relationship	.88
1. I want our relationship to last a very long time	.96
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner	.93
3. I want our relationship to last forever	.94
4. I imagine being with my partner several years from now	.93
Trust in the relationship	.87
5. I would trust my partner still, even in contexts where other people might not	.85
6. I believe my partner is dependable	.86
7. I am certain my partner would be faithful	.84
8. I am confident that my partner will tell the truth	.91
Flexibility in the relationship	.86
9. I am willing to be flexible in our relationship	.74
10. I am ready to accept future changes to the relationship	.52
11. I am willing to try different solutions that my partner proposes to solve the problem	.87
12. I am willing to create a new version of our relationship with my partner	.71
Dyadic Coping	.72
13. We try and cope with the problem together and search for ascertained solutions	.89

14. We engage in a serious discussion about the problem and think through what has been done	.85
15. We help one another put the problem into perspective and see it in a new light	.88
16. We are affectionate to each other, make love and try that way to cope with stress	.67

Note. All regression weights are significant at p <.001.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Four-Factor Second Order Model

The four-factor second-order model revealed a good model fit; χ^2 (100) = 511.61, RMSEA [90% CI] = .06 [.06; .07], TLI= .96, CFI = .97. All dyadic coping items had strong standardised factor loadings (all >.67). An analysis of the internal consistency of the four subscales produced excellent alpha coefficients. The dyadic resource subscale (Cronbach α = .95) includes the relationship commitment (Cronbach α = .97) and mutual trust (Cronbach α = .92) items. Interdependent processes subscale (Cronbach α = .87) includes the relationship flexibility items (Cronbach α = .81) and the dyadic coping items (Cronbach α = .89). The total relationship resilience scale received high internal consistency (Cronbach α = .95), as per the .70 minimum alpha cut off recommendation for evidence of internal consistency using new measures (Hinkin, 1998). Thus, the refined four-factor second order model was deemed to best represent the structure of relationship resilience (see *Figure 1* for the four factor second-order model fit).

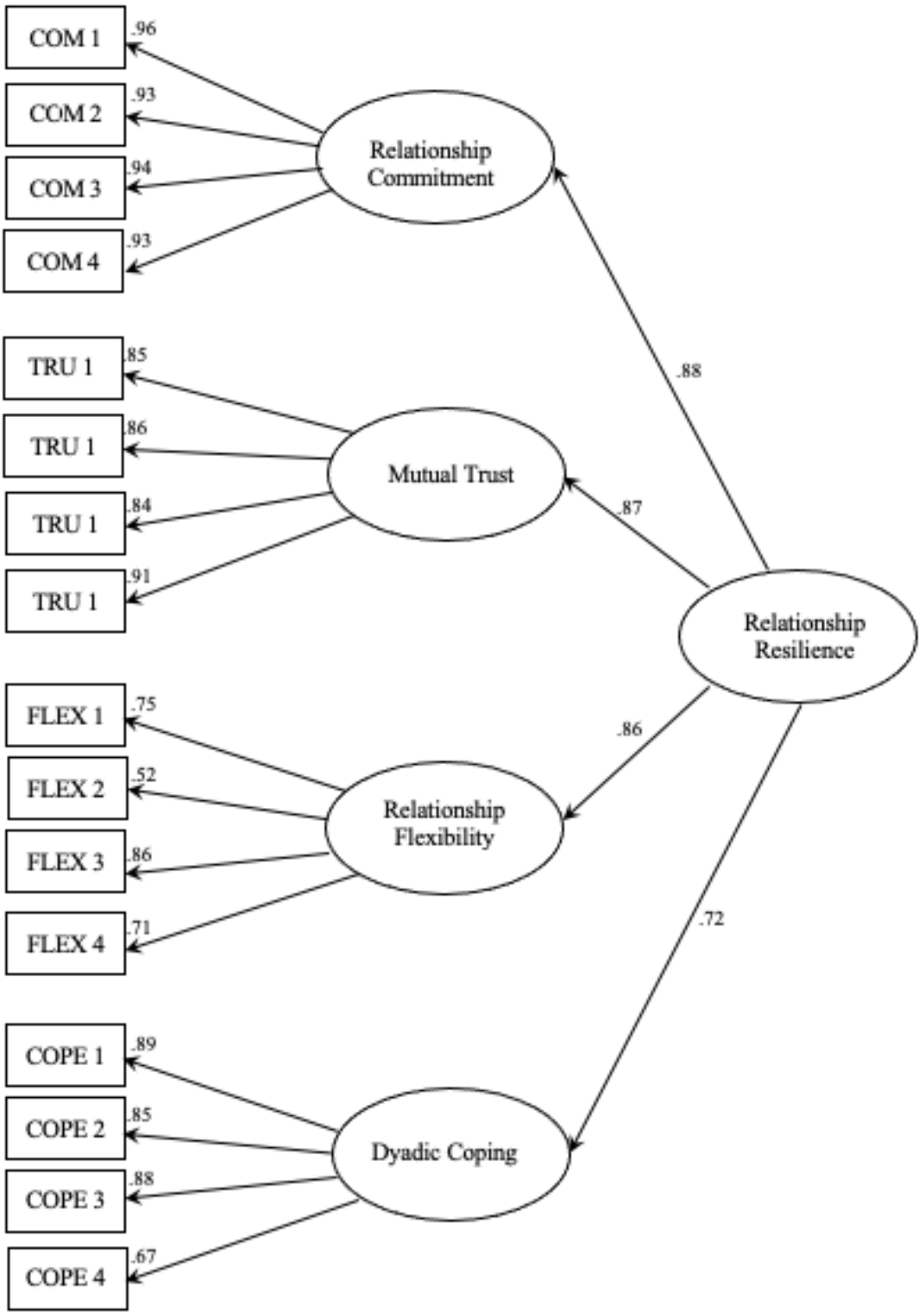

Figure 1. *Study 2.2 SEM results for a four-factor second-order CFA model of relationship resilience with standardised regressions. All unstandardized regressions were significant at p <.001.*

Convergent Validity

To provide evidence of convergent validity, we posited each of the four relationship resilience subscales would correlate positively with the dependability subscale of the Trust Scale (Rempel et al., 1985) as well as the commitment level subscale of the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998). We predicted perceiving one's partner as dependable and perceiving oneself to be committed to the relationship will positively correlate with relationship resilience. The dependability subscale of the trust scale provided evidence of convergent validity with the relationship resilience scale ($r = .75$, $p < .001$). The Investment Model Commitment subscale revealed a strong positive correlation with the relationship resilience scale ($r = .85$, $p < .001$) and provided evidence of convergent validity (See Appendix D Supplementary Table 2 for all correlations).

Study 2.3: External Validity using Offender Partners

In Study 2.3, the same procedure was carried out as Study 2.2 using a different sample of offender partners. The four-factor scale was validated and external validity analyses were conducted using the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008) and the Big 5 Personality Test (Goldberg, 1992). We further posited that our preliminary scale will provide predictive evidence of genuine self-forgiveness for offender partners following conflict using the genuine self-forgiveness subscale of the Differentiated Process of Self-Forgiveness Scale (DPSFS) (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013).

Method

Participants

US adults ($N = 539$) aged between 20-74 ($M = 37.76$, $SD = 10.91$) years were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). After the removal of surveys of participants not meeting the criteria or withdrawing from the survey ($N = 224$), there were 329 surveys remaining for analysis, with 55.9% identifying as female, 42.9% as male, and 0.3% as

nonbinary. Participants indicated most transgressions involved personal insults (28.8%) or verbal arguments (28.2%).

Measures and Procedure

To assess eligibility for the study, participants were asked to report an interpersonal transgression they had caused (or committed) toward their romantic partner in the past 48 hours. Participants were asked to think about the transgression caused and complete the following measures (1) 16-item Relationship Resilience Scale developed in Study 2.2; (2) the Brief Resilience Scale (Smith et al., 2008); (3) the Big Five Personality Test (Goldberg, 1992) and (4) the Differentiated Process of Self-Forgiveness Scale (DPSFS) (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013).

Brief Resilience Scale. The BRS (Smith et al., 2008) is a 6-item scale assessing the ability to bounce back, cope and recover from stress. Participants were asked to think about the transgression reported and respond to each item on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Items 2, 4 and 6 are reverse scored. A brief resilience score is obtained by determining a mean score, with higher mean scores representing greater personal resilience. Cronbach alpha was .80-.91 in the Smith et al. (2008) sample and was .94 in the current sample.

The Big Five Personality Test. The BFPT (Goldberg, 1992) provides scales that measure the following personality domains: emotion stability, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and intellect. Participants were asked to rate how true the 50 items are about themselves on a 5-point scale from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree). The BFPT is scored by tallying the responses to items that reflect each of the personality trait domains. The BFPT has demonstrated excellent test-retest reliability (r = .83) and satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach α = .77; Smith and Snell (1996)). The internal consistency was excellent in the current sample (α = .91).

The Differentiated Process of Self-Forgiveness Scale. The DPSFS (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013) reflects an individual's ability to demonstrate self-forgiveness after wrongdoing. Participants were asked to respond to the 25 statements based on how they think and feel towards their partner following the interpersonal transgression. Participants' responses were on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The DPSFS scale items 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21and 23 represented genuine self-forgiveness. The internal consistency of the genuine self-forgiveness subscales has good reliability in previous research (genuine self-punitiveness α = .85; (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013). The internal consistency of the subscale in Study 2.3 revealed good reliability (α = .85).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The four-factor second-order model revealed a good model fit; χ^2 (100) = 232.28, RMSEA [90% CI] = .06 [.05; .07], TLI= .96, CFI = .97. All 16 items had strong standardised factor loadings (all >.67; see Appendix E for the standardised regression weights of the model). An analysis of the internal consistency of the four subscales produced excellent alpha coefficients: relationship commitment (Cronbach α = .97), mutual trust (Cronbach α = .91), relationship flexibility (Cronbach α = .81) and dyadic coping (Cronbach α = .89). The total relationship resilience scale received high internal consistency (Cronbach α = .94).

Assessment of Convergent, Discriminant and Predictive Validity

For convergent validity, we expect the relationship resilience scale and subscales will be positively or strongly correlated with the conscientious factor of the BFPT. Conscientiousness refers to the ability to be organised as well as plan ahead and is associated with less stress, better coping and is perceived as a protective resource of resilience (Fayombo, 2010). Contrary to our anticipations, conscientiousness was only weakly associated with the relationship resilience scale and subscales (see *Table 4*).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Pearsons Correlations of the BFPT Subscales & the 16-item Relationship Resilience Scale and Subscales

Measure	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Total Relationship Resilience	.16**	.28***	.08	.16**	.13*
Relationship Commitment	.08	.19***	.05	.07	.09
Mutual Trust	.17**	.21***	.08	.19***	.05
Relationship Flexibility	.15**	.29***	.01	.10	.19***
Dyadic Coping	.19**	.28***	.15**	.25***	.18***
M (SD)	*2.76 (.96)*	*3.89 (.70)*	*3.92 (.68)*	*3.45 (.97)*	*3.86 (.63)*

Note. Factor 1 = extraversion. Factor 2 = agreeableness. Factor 3 = conscientiousness. Factor 4 = emotional stability/neuroticism. Factor 5 = intellect. Correlations significant at $p < .001$***; $p < .01$** $p < .05$*.

For discriminant validity, we expected the relationship resilience scale, and the four subscales will be negatively or poorly correlated with the BRS and the emotional stability (narcissim) factor of the BFPT. The BRS is a measure of intra-individual resilience and does not account for the dyadic and interdependent processes of resilience between partners. Emotion instability (neuroticism) is associated with anxiety, guilt, depressed mood, a decrease in motivation or perseverance to overcome obstacles and poor coping (Fayombo, 2010). Therefore, the BRS and neuroticism were expected to provide evidence of discriminate validity. The BRS was weakly correlated with the relationship resilience scale ($r = .08$, $p = .15$) as well as the mutual trust ($r = .11$, $p = .04$) and dyadic coping subscales ($r = .15$, $p = .01$). The BRS was not associated with the relationship flexibility ($r = .02$, $p = .70$) and relationship commitment subscales ($r = .03$, $p = .64$). The neuroticism factor of the BFPT was weakly associated with the relationship resilience scale and subscales (see *Table 4*).

Therefore, we found some empirical evidence supporting the discriminate validity of the newly developed relationship resilience scale that distinguishes it from individual traits associated with individual resilience.

To provide evidence of predictive validity, we posited the overall scale, and the four subscale scores will have positive relationships with the DPSFS subscale genuine self-forgiveness (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013). Positive emotions compared to negative emotions (e.g., anger or hostility), including compassion and acknowledgment of one's wrongdoing is associated with greater self-forgiveness (Worthington et al., 2016). The overall relationship resilience scale and subscales showed moderate positive correlations with the genuine self-forgiveness subscale (r = .24 to .49, p <.001), suggesting relationship resilience is a significant predictor of an offender partner's intentions to genuinely self-forgive important for overcoming the conflict and repairing the relationship.

Study 2.4: Scale Validation and External Validity using Victim Partners

In Study 2.4, the factor structure of relationship resilience was verified using a new sample of victim participants reporting real-life transgressions. The sample comprised of romantic partners who were perceived to be the victim partner (i.e., their partner had committed an interpersonal transgression toward them). Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to validate the four-factor second-order model fit and external validity (convergent, discriminant and predictive) was evaluated using the HEXACO Personality Inventory Revised (Lee & Ashton, 2009), the Narcissism Personality Inventory (Pinsky & Young, 2009) as well as items measuring participants intentions to forgive and reconcile with the offender partner.

Method

Participants

US adults (N = 961) aged between 18-89 (M = 37.27, SD = 10.81) years were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). After the removal of surveys of participants not

meeting the criteria or withdrawing from the survey (N =18) as well as participants that failed the English Proficiency Test check (N = 350) there were 593 surveys remaining for analysis, with 58.2% identifying as female, 40.5% as male, and 0.8% as nonbinary. Participants indicated most transgressions involved a betrayal of trust (26%). The majority of participants were in a relationship with their partner for less than 5 years (53.5%).

Measures and Procedure

In Study 2.4, a similar procedure was carried out as seen in Study 2.2 and 2.3 using a new sample of victim partners. Specifically, to assess eligibility for the study, participants were asked to report an interpersonal transgression committed towards them by their romantic partner in the last 48 hours. Participants were asked to think about the transgression committed toward them and complete the following measures (1) 16-item Relationship Resilience Scale developed in Study 2.2; (2) Narcissism Personality Inventory (Pinsky & Young, 2009); (3) HEXACO Personality Inventory Revised (HEXACO-PI-R) (Lee & Ashton, 2009); and (4) intentions to forgive one's partner and reconcile with one's partner measured on a 7-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

HEXACO Personality Inventory Revised. The HEXACO-PI-R (Lee & Ashton, 2009) is a 60 item self-report measure assessing 6 factors: (1) agreeableness; (2) conscientiousness; (3) emotionality; (4) extraversion; (5) humility and (6) openness to experience. Participants read each statement and decided how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The The HEXACO-PI-R demonstrated good internal consistency (α = 0.82 to 0.89) as reported in Lee and Ashton (2009) and good consistency in the present study (α = .81).

Narcissism Personality Inventory. The NPI-40 (Pinsky & Young, 2009) was used to assess narcissism. Participants read 40 pairs of statements and were asked to choose the statement that 'best matched you', with one response of each pair being consistent with

narcissism. The scale is scored by assigning a point to each response consistent with narcissism and obtaining a mean. Higher scores represent greater narcissism (Pinsky & Young, 2009).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Table 5 displays the means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha values and correlations among study variables. The four-factor second-order model revealed a good model fit; χ^2 (100) = 308.87, RMSEA [90% CI] = .06 [.05; .06], TLI= .97, CFI = .98. All items had strong standardised factor loadings (all >.56), see Appendix F for standardised regression weights. An analysis of the internal consistency of the relationship resilience scale and subscales produced excellent alpha coefficients (see *Table 5*).

Assessment of Convergent, Discriminant and Predictive Validity

For convergent validity, we expect the overall relationship resilience scale and the four focal constructs will positively correlate with the factors conscientiousness and humility from the HEXACO-PI-R scale (Lee & Ashton, 2009). Research suggests resilience is related to virtues such as humility (Dwiwardani et al., 2014). In romantic relationships, humility has been related to positive outlooks on others, social relationships, greater self-esteem/ confidence as well as better coping skills (Dwiwardani et al., 2014). The HEXACO-PI-R humility and conscientiousness subscales revealed positive relationships with the overall relationship resilience scale and subscales (see *Table 5*).

For discriminant validity, we propose the overall relationship resilience scale and each of the four subscale scores will have low or negative relationships with the individual trait's narcissism (Narcissism Personality Inventory) and emotionality (HEXACO-PI-R). Emotional instability is associated with greater anxiety and distress as well as lower coping (Fayombo, 2010). Both narcissism and emotionality were negatively associated with the relationship

resilience scale and subscales (see *Table 5*). The traits provide evidence of discriminant validity with our scale.

To provide evidence of predictive validity of the preliminary scale, we posited that the overall scale and the four subscale scores will have positive relationships with willingness to reconcile as well as willingness to forgive the offender partner. Research suggests resilience is a predictor of forgiveness as it produces positive emotions, persistence, flexibility, perspective-taking and the impetus to reach relationship repair (Dwiwardani et al., 2014). The relationship resilience scale and subscales showed moderate positive correlations with the victim partners' intentions to reconcile as well as to forgive the offender partner (see *Table 5*). This suggests the scale is a predictor of relationship repair following conflict, as it produced greater intentions to engage in reconciliatory behaviours with the offender partner.

Table 5

Means, Standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha values and bivariate correlations among variables in Study 2.4

	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Relationship Resilience	5.99	1.53	.94	-													
2. Commitment	7.23	2.21	.96	.93***	-												
3. Mutual Trust	6.44	2.20	.92	.92***	.79***	-											
4. Flexibility	6.82	1.72	.85	.86***	.75***	.67***	-										
5. Dyadic Coping	3.47	0.92	.86	.63***	.55***	.52***	.44***	-									
6. Humility	3.45	0.71	.78	.16***	.13**	.17***	.14***	.06*	-								
7. Emotionality	3.26	0.72	.80	-.06	-.09*	-.08	-.01	-.10	-.03	-							
8. Agreeableness	3.25	0.70	.81	.14**	.06	.15***	.13**	.15***	.41***	-.13**	-						
9. Conscientiousness	3.80	0.60	.75	.18***	.14**	.16***	.15***	.22***	.19***	-.12**	.19***	-					
10. Openness	3.63	0.71	.80	.06	.03	-.03	.15***	.13**	.04	-.04	.10*	.30***	-				
11. Extraversion	3.10	0.76	.84	.15***	.05	.17***	.08	.27***	.02	-.35***	.23***	.25***	.15***	-			
12. Total NPI	3.45	0.49	.13	-.04	-.03	-.03	-.06	-.01	-.23***	-.05	-.22***	-.16***	-.04	-.13***	-		
13. Reconcile	5.64	1.53	-	.70***	.69***	.60***	.64***	.56***	.18***	.06	.08**	.10**	.07	.03	-.03	-	
14. Forgive Offender	5.53	1.52	-	.66***	.62***	.58***	.59***	.49***	.16***	.09**	.15***	.06	.05	.05	-.08*	.79***	-

Note. HEXACO-PI-R subscales are 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. NPI = Narcissism Personality Inventory. Correlations significant at $p < .001$***; $p < .01$** $p < .05$*.

Discussion

At present, we progress the understanding of resilience within relationships as a multidimensional construct that reflects dyadic resources and interdependent processes within couples for coping, adapting, flexibly maneuvering, and overcoming conflict. In this paper, we developed the 16-item relationship resilience scale for overcoming conflict that includes the existence of a four-factor second-order structure: relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping, measuring two distinct facets of the relationship resilience construct, dyadic resources and interdependent processes. This was accomplished through the construction and development of the first iteration of the scale (Study 2.1), scale revision and assessment of validity using a sample of offender partners (Study 2.2), scale validation and external validity analyses using a new sample of offender partners (Study 2.3) and victim partners (Study 2.4). Furthermore, we investigated relationship resilience as a discrete predictor of reconciliatory efforts following conflict across offender and victim partners (Study 2.3 and 2.4). The relationship resilience scale and subscales showed good internal consistency values (through alpha coefficients identified in Study 2.2-2.4) and evidence of convergence and discriminate validity. The relationship resilience tool advances our understanding of resilience to reflect the emergent capacity of dyads to flex with and transform beyond conflict.

At a theoretical level, the studies provide preliminary evidence for the psychometric evaluation of relationship resilience for overcoming relational conflict and suggest they may be related to relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping. Two of the strongest predictors of relationship resilience following conflict across the four studies were relationship commitment and mutual trust. Contrary to common theories of resilience (Rutter, 1987, 2012) and dyadic coping theory (Bodenmann, 2005; Falconier & Kuhn, 2019), that have suggested dyadic resources are shared between partners for only

external stressors, this study provides evidence to suggest dyadic resources including relationship commitment and mutual trust are accessible to both partners as individuals (i.e., victim and offender) and support the dyad when conflicts arise. Our findings are in line with previous research arguing commitment and trust are facilitated between partners, as the couple strives to maintain relational investments (e.g., financial dependence) that are threatened when conflict arises (Merolla, 2014; Rusbult, 1980). Maintaining a commitment to one's partner and perceiving that one's partner is dependable and trustworthy may support the couple to act as a relational entity when coping and adapting to conflict as well as in maintaining the relationship (Merolla & Harman, 2018). Our findings add to the body of research on resilience to suggest dyadic resilience emerges from a strong commitment to the longevity of the relationship as well as mutual trust in one's partner. (Gamarel & Revenson, 2015; Thompson & Ravlin, 2017).The present findings suggest relationship resilience must reflect the dyadic resources, attributes, or qualities such as relationship commitment and mutual trust that support the dyad to resolve conflict.

Further, relationship resilience involves the collaborative capacity between interdependent partners to reconstruct, bend or reframe the conflict (relationship flexibility) as well as the couple's ability to influence each partner to appraise stressors as shared during dyadic coping efforts *(*i.e., joint coping, perspective-taking support) (Carnelley & Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Revenson et al., 2005). Across the studies, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping were predictive of interdependent processes of relationship resilience. In line with interdependence theory (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008), the findings suggest offender partners need to flexibly accommodate the needs of the victim, take the victim's perspective and adapt to changes in the relationship for victims to reciprocate offenders' efforts by responding with conciliatory behaviours (Berndsen et al., 2018; Rusbult et al., 1991). Importantly, the Dyadic Coping Inventory (Bodenmann, 2008) and the Dyadic

Communicative Resilience Scale (Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019) imply interdependent processes exist between partners for overcoming external stressors (e.g., COVID-19) including partners ability to perspective-take during coping efforts (i.e., seen in the DCI) and ability to 'craft normalcy' when flexibly negotiating and responding to relationship changes. Yet, in the face of internal conflict, the present scale provides empirical evidence that partners influence, reciprocate and engage in interactive-interdependent processes including dyadic coping and relationship flexibility important for reaching a consensus to repair the relationship.

Implications for Research and Practice

We build on the theory of relationship resilience by confirming dyadic resources and interdependent interactions (i.e., the patterns of couples' resilience) are measurable facets arising from the dyad to cope and bounce back from conflict. Investigating the multi-faceted qualities of relationship resilience has several practical strengths for clinicians to identify how building resilience in dyads (work colleagues, teammates, friends or couples) can facilitate the couple to act as a functional unit when reconciling. Researchers and clinicians can utilise the relationship resilience scale to explore how dyads share resources as well as interact, reciprocate, and influence partner responses to overcome conflict. The findings could aid interventions for romantic couples facing relationship breakdowns (particularly when severe conflicts such as infidelity arise). Specifically, clinicians could aim to address the capacity of the dyad to strengthen commitment and trust as well as build flexibility within the relationship to adapt to relationship changes and encourage partners to reciprocate coping efforts to 'bounce back' from conflict. The findings suggest interventions should seek to address the capacity of the dyad to cultivate dyadic and interdependent patterns of resilience for reconciling, resolving conflict and reaching shared goals of renewing the relationship.

The tool may also assist researchers in capturing a more comprehensive picture of the unique contributions of dyadic and interdependent resources on individual resilience (and vice versa) as well as the interactions within the multi-levels for overcoming conflict. Study 2.1 included the CD-RISC scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003) to investigate the individual resilience traits each partner brings when conflicts arise for cultivating relationship resilience as well as exploring how individual resources interact with dyadic and interdependent resilience. However, we were unable to use the CD-RISC scale as we did not obtain a consistent model fit (i.e., only one factor loaded), which could be due to the hypothetical context in which it was used, a limitation of the study. Yet, a strength of conceptualizing relationship resilience as a multi-levelled structure allows for future research to explore the discrete predictors (commitment, mutual trust, flexibility and dyadic coping) and their synergistic interactions (e.g., commitment facilitating dyadic coping) in influencing individual partner efforts to reach relationship repair. Research suggests individual personality traits such as optimism strengthen relational commitment and trust (Assad et al., 2007) as well as dyadic coping and flexibility (Cutrona & Gardner, 2006; Hanssen et al., 2015). Alternatively, relational commitment facilitated partner's optimism as well as the couple's dyadic coping efforts (Assad et al., 2007; Landis et al., 2014). Research supports the bidirectionality that exists between the proposed dimensions of resilience within relationships and in particular, the role individual differences (partners with more or less resilience traits) play in strengthening relationship resilience. For instance, future research wherein intra-individual, dyadic and interdependent levels are combined at varying levels may be useful in identifying how the multi-levels interact to cultivate hardier and sturdier partners and relationships (Papp & Witt, 2010; Shaw et al., 2016). Such an approach would be firstly useful to establish how reconciliation and repair are reached by varying strengths of the dyadic and interdependent resources (e.g., partners with more commitment) and testing their

interaction with individual differences in resilient traits. Secondly, identifying if our theory holds across a range of dyads (e.g., teammates, work colleagues, romantic partners) when the dimensions of relationship resilience are varied (e.g., one partner with less or more commitment than the other).

Limitations and Future Directions

In Study 2.1, the EFA and CFA revealed the 'intent to reconcile' factor items had small loadings and substantial cross-loadings. Indeed, poor item convergence and factor loading could have been due to a lack of items (i.e., three items included) measuring intentions to reconcile in the original item pool (e.g., "I am willing to forgive my partner", "I want to be reconciled with my partner"). Yet, when the intent to reconcile items was removed from the initial 17-item scale, the model fit of the revised 12 items improved. We predicted intentions to reconcile is an interdependent process that may cultivate relationship resilience, given research implied the ability for partners to mutually engage in the process of reconciliation (i.e., forgiving the offender and apologising to the victim partner) develops resilience in relationships (Woldarsky Meneses & Greenberg, 2014). Yet, reconciliation can also be understood as the restoring of one's relationship as a result of one's re-affirmed commitment to the relationship, mutual trust in one's partner and recognition that the relationship will have flexibility in accommodating the renewed relationship (Woldarsky Meneses & Greenberg, 2014). The predictive validity assessment (Study 2.3 and 2.4) revealed the relationship resilience scale and subscales are significant predictors of reconciliatory behaviours (genuine self-forgiveness) for offender partners and (forgiveness) victim partners following relational conflict. Our findings highlight relationship resilience may play a particularly powerful role for partners in supporting reconciliatory processes (e.g., forgiveness, self-forgiveness), particularly when chances of repairing the relationship are low. Partners' sustaining trust and commitment as well as flexibility and coping when

adapting to relationship challenges supports victim and offender partners to reach reconciliatory action, aligning with previous research (Allen et al., 2013; Murray et al., 2012; Roloff et al., 2001; Zemp et al., 2017). Future research should empirically test the capacity of relationship resilience to support forgiveness and self-forgiveness in couples needed to repair the relationship, as well as explore other resources for promoting conciliatory efforts.

We recognise other resources not acknowledged in this paper could cultivate relationship resilience (see Miller-Graff et al. (2020) and Hartling (2008) for a review on resilience resources) and resources such as hope can support relationship resilience and conciliatory efforts for repair (Merolla & Harman, 2018). Recent literature eludes dyadic communication "we" talk may facilitate resilience within relationships (Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019; Fergus, 2015; Meier et al., 2021; Nuru & Bruess, 2021). Dyadic talk (e.g., we are in this together; we-talk) appears to buffer financial conflicts in couples compared to independent partner talk (I or you talk) and could represent a possible dyadic resource of resilience (Meier et al., 2021; Nuru & Bruess, 2021). Further, dyadic adjustment is recognised as an interdependent process for relationship functioning, as couples that respond with caregiving, relational security and positive partner attachment following conflict influence the other partner to perceive they are well adjusted and safe in the relationship (Riggs et al., 2011). Indeed, dyadic talk and adjustment are possible resources that could cultivate resilience in relationships, highlighting the need for research to identify other sources that contribute to conflict resolution. In addition, relationship-specific hope is recognised as an additional strength and resistance for the resources of relationship resilience to reach repair (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Nelissen, 2017; Worthington et al., 1997). Hope for repair facilitated relationship commitment and mutual trust as partners are motivated to repair the relationship to maintain relational investments (e.g., finances). Further, hope provides flexibility and dyadic coping as partners are better equipt to generate

pathways in the face of obstacles (e.g., partner's negative feedback to one's efforts to reconcile; Merolla and Harman (2018)). To reach more robust conclusions, we call for more research investigating other resources in building relationship resilience as well as sources like hope for supporting, strengthening, and shielding the resiliencies within the couple to reconcile and reach relationship repair following conflict.

Furthermore, the samples used in the present studies were romantic partners from hypothetical transgression settings or one partner's perspective of relationship resilience (e.g., victim) following a real-life transgression, limiting the external validity of our scale across a diverse range of dyads and transgressions. Study 2.1 utilised a multi-method approach to explore relationship resilience across both victim and offender, a strength of the present research. However, Studies 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 measured relationship resilience from either a victim or offender perspective, hindering the applicability of the scale across all dyads. Dyadic and interdependent factors (or items) may behave differently across dyads (e.g., teammates, work colleagues). For instance, romantic partners are heavily interdependent and intertwined in the relationship, as romantic couples have greater investments to be lost (e.g., children, house, financial dependence). Romantic partners may exhibit stronger commitment, trust, flexibility and dyadic coping following conflict compared to other dyads such as teammates or work colleagues, as there are more relational investments at stake. Research needs to distinguish if all dyads (e.g., work colleagues) contribute the same dyadic and interdependent capacity when faced with conflicts by utilising both members of a dyad facing the same interpersonal transgression. In addition, research should utilise different types of transgressions that range in severity (e.g., infidelity, financial conflicts, lies) to identify the strength and capacity of relationship resilience to reach repair, particularly when relationship investments are high and the possibility of resolving the conflict small. Such an approach could confirm how dyadic and interdependent resources of resilience build resistant and

sturdier relationships as well as facilitate couples to persevere and strive to reach reconciliation despite low odds of repair. Future studies should replicate the research conducted here following a diverse range of real-life transgressions in a more heterogeneous sample of dyads (e.g., employer-employee, both teammates) to confirm external validity, versatility, and usability of the relationship resilience scale, as well as confirm if the theory holds across all dyads.

Conclusion

In summary, this paper provides the first factor-analytic evidence of relationship resilience as a reliable and valid measure of resilience in dyads following conflict. This paper presents the psychometric properties of a scale designed to measure resources and processes of resilience contributing toward relationship resilience that could be important for predicting reconciliation, relationship stability and longevity following conflicts. Our findings provide evidence for the dyadic and interdependent transactions and interactions within dyads for coping, adapting and overcoming hardship. Specifically, we provide evidence for relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping in the relationship as mechanisms for cultivating relationship resilience and in turn sustaining relationships through the challenges that arise over time. The relationship resilience scale could be a useful instrument in investigating the mediating role of relationship resilience in reconciliation (i.e., forgiveness or self-forgiveness) and preventative interventions for dyads at risk of relationship dissolution. This paper provides a novel pathway for research to further investigate the facet of resilience that resides within dyads for reaching conflict resolution and relationship restoration.

CHAPTER 3: Strength in Hope and Relationship Resilience: Reaching Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness in Romantic Relationships Following Conflict

Paradoxically, romantic partners who feel loved and cared for, may nevertheless at some point during the relationship feel betrayed, lied to, wronged, or hurt by their partner. Relationship conflicts (e.g., lying, cheating or betrayals) involve one partner (whom we will refer to as the "offender" to designate the role they may play in a given context) committing a wrongdoing toward the other partner (i.e., the "victim"). When conflicts arise, victims may be motivated to avoid, retaliate or seek revenge against the offender, while offenders may self-punish or shift blame to reduce distress from hurt caused, increasing relationship breakdowns (Fincham et al., 2006). Research suggests that approximately 44% of marriages end in divorce (Fackrell, 2012), with only 10% of couples in the process of divorce being effective in their efforts to reconcile (Wineberg, 1994). Conciliatory efforts such as forgiveness and self-forgiveness, necessary for resolving conflict and repairing relationships, are difficult to achieve in practice, particularly for severe conflicts such as infidelity. What resources do couples draw on to overcome transgressions and reach forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes?

In this paper, I argue that two resources may play a pivotal role in moral repair processes: hope (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Worthington et al., 1997) and relationship resilience. I define relationship resilience as the dyadic resources exchanged between interactive-interdependent partners for bending, adapting, coping, flexibly maneuvering and changing in response to conflict. Research suggests forgiveness may proceed on the basis of hope for the future (Little, 2017). I suggest that this hope can enable partners to draw on relationship resilience- the dyadic resources and interdependent processes which support couples to bounce back from stressors like conflict - including relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Rusbult et al., 1991). More recently, relationship-specific hope theory

suggest hope provides partners with the motivation to maintain relationship commitment and mutual trust important for partners to maintain relational investments following conflict (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). Furthermore, relationship-specific hope theory suggests hope provides partners with the flexibility to accommodate relationship changes, devise new pathways to reach repair and take each other's perspective through dyadic coping efforts following conflict (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). I propose it is these patterns of resilience within couples (i.e., hope as a resource for relationship resilience) that in turn support victims to forgive offenders and offenders to self-forgive for resolving conflict and restoring the relationship (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Ozag, 2006).

The present research aims to empirically test whether hope can support relationship resilience and in turn sustain moral repair efforts including forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes. In this chapter, I build on our theoretical development and understanding of relationship resilience developed in previous chapters to firstly investigate the capacity of hope to support relationship resilience (and its factors). Secondly, I aim to investigate the strength in hope and relationship resilience to in turn sustain conciliatory efforts. Specifically, promoting victims' forgiveness of the offender and offenders' self-forgiveness as well as mitigating victims' responses to conflict in the form of vengeance and avoidance, and offenders' responses in the form of self-punishment or pseudo self-forgiveness (i.e., shifting blame). I further aim to investigate whether these patterns of resilience within couples (i.e., hope and relationship resilience) can sustain conciliatory efforts across time.

Conciliatory Processes are Dyadic and Interactive between Interdependent Partners

When conflicts arise, one partner's destructive response to conflict (e.g., victim engaging in avoidance and revenge) may facilitate the other partner to reciprocate their partner's response (e.g., offender punishing the self or pseudo self-forgiving) increasing the likelihood of relationship termination (Thai et al., 2021; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013;

Woodyatt et al., 2022). Forgiveness and self-forgiveness are dyadic and interactive processes reciprocated within the couple, as one partner's efforts to forgive can influence the other partner's intentions to engage in conciliatory responses such as providing an apology (Fenell, 1993; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015; Wenzel et al., 2021). Research on moral repair and the restoration of couples following transgressions has primarily utilized an independent perspective to examine individuals' responses to conflict (e.g., forgiveness, self-forgiveness, punishment, or revenge), as a self-enhancing process that each partner chooses to engage in (Chi et al., 2019; Walton, 2005). Yet, forgiveness or self-forgiveness necessary for restoring the relationship and preventing relationship dissolution is not simply a victim's or offender's choice, as partner interactions, perspectives or responsiveness (e.g., showing empathy) can influence conciliatory processes (Woodyatt et al., 2022). Both partners are psychologically interdependent in their efforts to reach repair, as a victim's forgiveness may depend on whether the offender shows conciliatory action (e.g., providing an apology) and likewise, an offender's forgiveness of the self may become less conciliatory if their apology is rejected by the victim (Thai et al., 2021; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013; Woodyatt et al., 2022). Consistent with previous research, I suggest reaching forgiveness or self-forgiveness may be supported by dyadic and interactive processes that couples have and share such as relationship resilience, as they aim to resolve conflict and restore the relationship (Pelucchi et al., 2013, 2015).

Theory of Relationship Resilience

In previous chapters, I argue relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping cultivate relationship resilience and are the resources couples draw on to cope in times of conflict. In this chapter, I test the capacity of relationship resilience (and its factors) to reach conciliatory processes within victims and offenders. Common theories of resilience (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1987, 2012) suggest each

partner will utilise individual resources (e.g., conscientiousness or positive affect) that arise from individual development (and are present long before couples form their relationship) to cope and overcome hardship (Bradley & Hojjat, 2017). Yet, conflict impacts both partners as it threatens the couple's relationship security and, correspondingly, couples rely on shared resources that are property of the dyad. Dyadic resources including relational commitment and mutual trust have been identified as resources for the dyad to cope, jointly adapt and overcome conflict; see Chapter 2 (Murray et al., 2012; Roloff et al., 2001). For conflicts to resolve and the relationship to be restored, partners are interdependent in their efforts to reach a consensus to reconcile. Interdependent processes refer to the capacity of partners to reciprocate, influence and engage with each other including processes such as relational flexibility and dyadic coping for influencing partners to repair the relationship (Thompson & Ravlin, 2017). Interdependence theory suggests romantic couples possess a collaborative capacity when responding to conflict such as sharing perspectives or utilizing relational flexibility (i.e., a couple's plasticity) as well as reciprocating each partner's efforts to reconcile (Venetis et al., 2020; Wenzel et al., 2021; Zemp et al., 2017). I propose relationship resilience may represent the dyadic resources and interactive interdependent processes that facilitate forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes for resolving conflict.

Relationship Resilience Facilitates Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness

I propose the dyadic resources of relational resilience including relationship commitment and mutual trust (i.e., the give and take within the couple) support forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes. The Investment Model of Commitment (Rusbult, 1980; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Wieselquist, 2009) suggests that highly committed and trusting partners are motivated to forgive and self-forgive to restore the relationship and continue to invest in the relationship (e.g., having a positive view of one's partner or not holding a grudge) important for maintaining relational security. Research suggests mutual trust

increases victims' perception of safety from the possibility of future offenses (i.e., reduced perceived threat of further losses) important for motivating victims to reduce impulsive orientated reactions such as retaliation, vengeance, and avoidance as well as facilitate forgiveness (Finkel et al., 2002). Further, Pelucchi et al. (2015) found an offender's perception of the victims' closeness and trust in the offender following a betrayal maintained the offender's positive self-image (i.e., decreasing feelings of shame and guilt), as the offender perceives the victim to still see value in the relationship. Relationship commitment and trust in turn reduced the offender's punishment of the self, efforts to shift blame toward the victim (i.e., pseudo self-forgive) and facilitated self-forgiveness (Pelucchi et al., 2015). Relationship commitment and mutual trust are dyadic resources shared within the couple for supporting victims to forgive offenders and offenders to self-forgive, as well as reducing relationship damaging responses including avoidance, revenge, self-punishment and pseudo-self-forgiveness (Pelucchi et al., 2015; Wieselquist, 2009).

Research indicates that the partners' ability to respond with relationship flexibility following conflict can transform their motivations to seek forgiveness and self-forgiveness (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015). Bem et al. (2021) investigated psychological flexibility on genuine self-forgiveness in offender partners. The study found offender partners who perceive victim partners to show flexibility following conflict - including re-evaluating the offense, adopting a positive view of the offender or allowing compensation of a mistake - felt supported to also be flexible in their response to conflict (Bem et al., 2021). Specifically, research suggests offenders' accepted wrongdoing and increased self-compassion important for inhibiting self-punishment or shifting blame to others (Bem et al., 2021). Likewise, the flexibility of an offender to forgo one's needs and engage in reparative acts (e.g., providing an apology) or accommodating the victims' needs following

conflict, transformed victims to inhibit destructive acts (e.g., avoidance, revenge) and forgive the offender (Bem et al., 2021; Hall & Fincham, 2006).

Furthermore, partners who are able to take each other's perspective when appraising the meaning of the wrongdoing can influence each other to respond positively to conflict by providing forgiveness and self-forgiveness (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Research suggests, if the victim appraises the conflict negatively as a harm or threat, this results in avoidant coping, revenge or withdrawing from the offender (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007). Dyadic coping interactions within the dyad support victims' efforts to forgive, as victims that adopt a positive perspective of the offender or that appraise the conflict as not a threat but a challenge reduced victim's revenge and avoidance motivations and increased forgiveness (Strelan & Covic, 2006). Likewise, a victims' positive appraisal of the offender influenced offender partner's to adopt a positive self-image important for preventing punishment of the self or shifting blame toward others and self-forgiving by taking responsibility for the offense (Strelan & Covic, 2006). Dyadic coping and relationship flexibility are interdependent processes important for facilitating partners to respond positively to conflict with forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007).

Hope Sustains Relationship Resilience for Reaching Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness

I propose hope and relationship resilience - the patterns of behaviours including relationship commitment, mutual trust, relational flexibility and dyadic coping - will support and motivate partners to reach forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes. Hopefulness is argued to be a resource for sustaining resilience (Ong et al., 2006; Ong et al., 2018) as well as a support for couples to reach the goal of forgiveness and reconciliation (Merolla, 2014). Research suggests hope sustains individual resilience processes by providing flexibility, positive coping, optimism and hardiness for individuals to overcome hardship (Braun-

Lewensohn et al., 2021; Duggal et al., 2016; Ong et al., 2006). In the context of relationship conflict, I argue hope is not only a resource individual's possess, but should also reflect the capacity of couples to have hope for the relationship to be repaired and renewed. If couples are able to hold onto hope in the face of hardship, then I propose hoping for repair and one's future with their partner in turn may facilitate relationship resilience processes within the couple to reach reconciliation.

Recently, relationship-specific hope theory implies partners' hope for repair supports commitment and trust, as partners are motivated to reach forgiveness and self-forgiveness to maintain relational investments such as financial dependence (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Ozag, 2006). For victims, hope's capacity to sustain relationship commitment and perceived trust in the offender to not violate future trust decreases the threat to the victim's investments important for reducing avoidance and vengeance as well as facilitating forgiveness (Simpson et al., 1996). Further, offenders' hope for the future with one's partner motivates offenders' commitment to the relationship and perceived self-trust needed for intrapersonal restoration (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013). Offenders' restoration of the self reduces self-punishment or shifting blame to others for the wrongdoing (pseudo self-forgiveness) and promotes self-forgiveness important for maintaining relational investments that could be lost if the relationship was to end (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013). Following conflict, I propose partners' hopes support dyadic resources of resilience to reach forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes necessary for restoring one's relationship.

In addition, relationship-specific hope theory implies hope supports interdependent resilience processes needed for the couple to reach a consensus to reconcile, as hopeful partners possess dyadic coping efforts such as perspective-taking and relationship flexibility to accommodate relationship changes and partner needs (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). For victims, hope for repair facilitates victim's flexibility in adapting to relationship

changes and devising alternate routes, as victims are better equipped to cope by appraising stressful conflicts as a challenge and not a threat (Chang & DeSimone, 2001). Hope's capacity to support victims' relational flexibility and dyadic coping when responding to conflict reduces threat-related destructive responses such as avoidance and revenge, as well as facilitates forgiveness processes (Chang & DeSimone, 2001). Similarly, hope supports offenders' relational flexibility (i.e., accommodating the victim's needs or revising one's plans) as well as dyadic coping (i.e., problem-solving, positive emotions or considering the victim's perspective) important for facilitating self-forgiveness and mitigating punishment of the self as well as pseudo-self-forgiveness (Chang & DeSimone, 2001; Merolla, 2017). Taken together, I propose that hope supports patterns of relationship resilience within couples which, in turn, facilitate victims to forgive offenders and offenders to self-forgive, as well as sustain conciliatory efforts across time (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Ozag, 2006).

The Present Studies

The present studies aim to explore the capacity of hope to sustain relationship resilience and in turn support victim partners to forgive the offender as well as the offender partner to self-forgive over the course of conflict. Study 3.1 utilizes the data from Study 2.1; therefore, the relationship resilience construct is based on the three-factor solution developed in Study 2.1. In Study 3.1, I use a hypothetical transgression scenario to investigate whether hope is positively associated with relationship resilience (including relational commitment, trust, and relationship flexibility). In turn, I investigate if relationship resilience is positively associated with forgiveness and self-forgiveness as well as negatively associated with revenge, avoidance, self-punishment, and pseudo-self-forgiveness.

In both Studies 3.2a and b, I use a prospective design to investigate the capacity of relationship resilience to sustain forgiveness and self-forgiveness over time across victim and

offender partners. Study 3.2a utilizes the offender data from Study 2.2 and Study 3.2b from the victim data in Study 2.4, therefore the relationship resilience construct is based on the four-factor solution developed with the inclusion of dyadic coping. In Study 3.2a, I aim to test whether offenders' hope is positively associated with relationship resilience (including relational commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping). In turn, I propose relationship resilience will be positively associated with offenders' self-forgiveness as well as negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness and self-punishment. In Study 3.2b, I investigate whether victims' hope is positively associated with relationship resilience. In turn, I propose relationship resilience will be positively associated with victims' forgiveness of the offender and negatively associated with avoidance and revenge. In both Studies 3.2, I further propose hope and relationship resilience will sustain forgiveness and self-forgiveness across time.

Across all studies it is hypothesized:

H1. Hope for relationship repair and the future with one's partner will be positively associated with relationship resilience including relationship commitment, mutual trust, and relationship flexibility (in Study 3.1) as well as dyadic coping (in Study 3.2a and 3.2b).

H2. In turn, for offenders, relationship resilience will be positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness and will be negatively associated with self-punishment and pseudo-self-forgiveness. The predicted effects will be maintained across time in Study 3.2a.

H3. In turn, for victims, relationship resilience will be positively associated with benevolent forgiveness and will be negatively associated with avoidance and revenge. The predicted effects will be maintained across time in Study 3.2b.

Analysis Approach

Prior to conducting the main analyses of all studies, the data was checked for normality to ensure all assumptions underlying statistical analysis were met. Listwise exclusion criteria was used to check for missing data. For all studies depicted in the present paper, constructs measured in the analyses are represented by rectangles. All predicted relationships were modelled in IBM SPSS AMOS 27 Graphics using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation and 1000 bootstrap samples to test the indirect effects (Kline, 1998). All three studies utilize large sample sizes ($N > 500$). Given X^2 is usually significant with a larger sample (Byrne, 2012a, 2012b; Kenny & McCoach, 2003), goodness of fit of the SEM analyses was also assessed per recommendations (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schreiber et al., 2006) using the following indices: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; good fit <.05, moderate fit <.08), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; cut off close to 1 for good fit) and comparative fit index (CFI; cut of close to 1 for good fit).

Study 3.1

Study 3.1 uses a hypothetical transgression scenario across victim and offender partners to investigate each partner's hopes for supporting relationship resilience. In turn, I investigate if relationship resilience is positively associated with self-forgiveness and forgiveness as well as negatively associated with self-punishment, pseudo-self-forgiveness, avoidance, and revenge. Study 3.1 uses the relationship resilience data from Study 2.1; therefore, the relationship resilience construct is based on the three-factor solution develop in Study 2.1. This experimental component of the data was not analysed in this Chapter.

Method

Participants

For Study 3.1, participants aged between 18-89 (M= 36.7, SD= 10.49) years were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (N = 1053). After the removal of surveys of participants who did not meet the criteria or who withdrew from the survey (N = 28) as well

as participants who failed the English Proficiency Test check (N = 518) there were 507 surveys remaining for analysis, with 50 percent of participants being female.

Procedure

Participants were randomly allocated to either a victim or offender partner role and instructed to read the hypothetical infidelity scenarios as well as imagine themselves in the scenario (See Appendix A). Participants were asked to complete 4 blocks of items: hope items; the Relationship Resilience Scale reported in Study 2.1; only participants allocated to the offender scenario also completed the Differentiated Process of Self-forgiveness Scale and only participants allocated to the victim scenario also completed the Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivation Inventory. The presentation order of blocks was as above and items within blocks were randomised across participants.

Statistical Power

A Monte Carlo simulation was used to carry out a sensitivity analysis in MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 2002) for the predicted mediation between an observed predictor variable, a latent mediator with three indicator variables (with average loadings of .75), and an observed outcome variable. The given sample size of N = 507 is sufficient to detect, with a target power of .80, a standardised indirect effect of ab = .04 composed of two paths β = .20 (predictor to mediator, and mediator to outcome), representing small-to-medium effects.

Measures

For scales with multiple items, scores were obtained by averaging across items.

Hope items. Participants' perceived hopefulness was measured directly with the questions, "How hopeful are you that your relationship with your partner can be repaired?" and "How hopeful are you when you think about the future with your partner?". Participants responded to all items on a 7-point scale ranging from (1 = not at all to 7 = very much), with

higher scores reflecting greater hopefulness. The final hope construct used in all study analyses was based on the two items 'hope for relationship repair' and 'hope for the future with your partner' averaged to create a scale score. The hope construct in the present study showed good internal consistency (Cronbach α = .85).

The Differentiated Process of Self Forgiveness Scale. The Differentiated Process of Self-Forgiveness Scale (DPSFS) items reflect three different processes of responding to the self after wrongdoing: genuine self-forgiveness, pseudo self-forgiveness and self-punishment (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013). Offender participants were asked to respond to 20 statements based on how they think and feel following the wrongdoing in the scenario. Participants responses were on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 =strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. The internal consistency of the three subscales revealed good Cronbach alpha in previous research; self-punitiveness α = .85; pseudo self-punitiveness α = .81; and genuine self-punitiveness α = .85 (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013). The subscales in the present study revealed satisfactory internal consistency (self-punitiveness α = .86; pseudo self-punitiveness α = .75; and genuine self-punitiveness α = .79).

Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivation Inventory. The Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivation Inventory (TRIM-18) assesses a victim's motivations toward a transgressor, both negative (revenge and avoidance) and positive (benevolence forgiveness) motivations (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 2000). Participants were asked to respond to all 18 items based on their current thoughts and feelings towards their partner in the scenario right now, on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The TRIM-18 demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach α = .85) and moderate test-retest reliability (.50) (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). In the present study, the TRIM-18 showed good internal consistency across the subscales (benevolent forgiveness α = .90; avoidance α = .87 and revenge α = .91).

Relationship Resilience Scale. Participants completed the relationship resilience items reported in Study 2.1. Participants responded to each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. Only the 12 items comprising of the three-factor solution (relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility) obtained from the exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis in Study 2.1 were used in the present study's analyses. The scale demonstrated excellent internal reliability (Cronbach α = .97), as did each subscale: relationship commitment (Cronbach α = .95), mutual trust (Cronbach α = .95) and relationship flexibility (Cronbach α = .90).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and inter-correlations for all Study 3.1 factors are provided in *Table 1* below.

Genuine Self-Forgiveness, Pseudo Self-Forgiveness and Self Punishment

The results indicated hope was positively related to relationship resilience (as a latent factor composed of relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility), providing support for H1. In turn, relationship resilience was positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness, negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness and, not as anticipated, positively related to self-punishment, providing partial support for H2. The hypothesised model for the relationship between hope and the relationship resilience factors on the offender partners' DPSSF outcome variables had a weak fit for the data $\chi 2$ (11) = 68.65, p <.001, RMSEA = .15, CI_{90} = [.000, .100]; CFI = .93, TLI = .87.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations between Main Variables (Study 3.1)

	Condition		Correlations										
Variable	Victim M (SD)	Offender M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Relationship Resilience	4.47 (2.44)	5.77 (1.58)	-										
2. Hope	4.07 (1.85)	5.01 (1.53)	.83***	-									
3. Commitment	4.77(2.54)	5.93 (1.72)	.96***	.79***	-								
4. Mutual Trust	4.28 (2.64)	5.54 (1.78)	.93***	.80***	.85***	-							
5. Flexibility	4.96 (2.26)	5.93 (1.49)	.92***	.69***	86***	.78***	-						
6. Genuine SF	-	5.22 (.93)	.54***	.36***	.49***	.42***	.58***	-					
7. Pseudo SF	-	3.68 (.57)	.22***	.30***	.16**	.25***	.19*	.19*	-				
8. Self-Punitiveness	-	4.64 (1.24)	.37***	.24***	.30***	.41***	.29***	.55***	.30***	-			
9. Forgiveness	3.31 (1.02)	-	.88***	.79***	.85***	.83***	.84***	-	-	-	-		
10. Avoidance	2.37 (.85)	-	.25***	.19**	.31***	.14*	.28***	-	-	-	.21***	-	
11. Revenge	2.90 (1.14)	-	-.50***	-.48***	-.40***	-.61***	-.42***	-	-	-	-.46***	.41***	-

Note. $N = 507$. SF refers to self-forgiveness. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Given the RMSEA exceeded the recommendation (0.08), the model required some modifications (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2003). Modification indices showed substantial variance shared between relational commitment and pseudo self-forgiveness, between mutual trust and self-punitiveness as well as between relationship flexibility and genuine self-forgiveness. Covarying the error terms to account for the shared variance resulted in a revised model with good model fit; $\chi 2$ (8) = 12.08, p =.148, RMSEA = .04, CI_{90} = [.000, .100]; CFI = .99, TLI = .99. The revised model (depicted in *Figure 1*) did not change the substance of the hypothesised model.

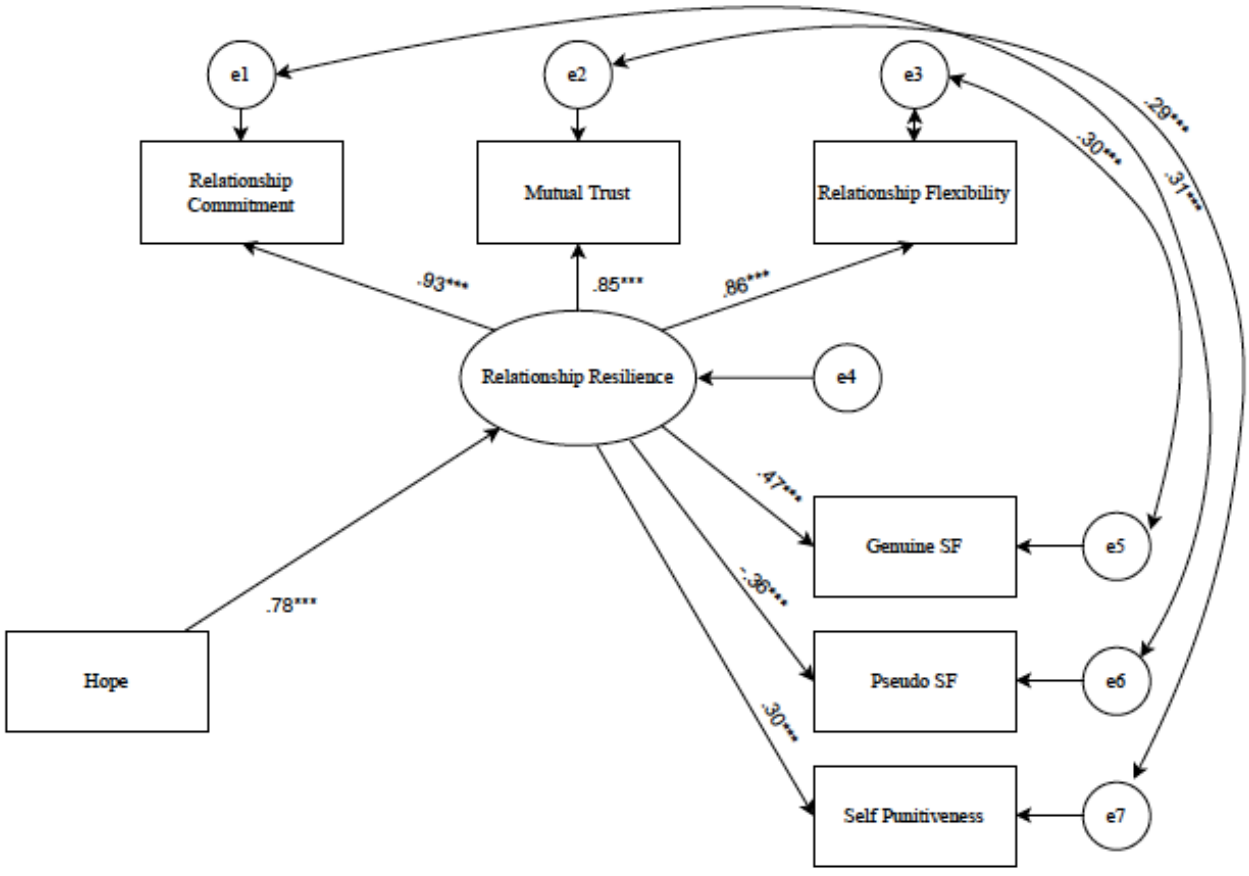

Figure 1. *Standardized regression rates for hope and relationship resilience on genuine self-forgiveness, pseudo self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness. All correlations were significant, p <.001****.

Benevolent Forgiveness, Avoidance Motivations and Revenge Motivations

The results indicated victims' hope was positively related to relationship resilience (again, as a latent factor composed of relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility), providing support for H1. In turn, relationship resilience was positively associated to benevolent forgiveness, negatively related to revenge motivations, and not as expected, positively related to avoidance motivations, providing partial support for H3. The hypothesised model for the relationship between hope and the relationship resilience factors on the TRIM-18 outcome variables also revealed a weak fit for the data $\chi 2$ (11) = 120.73, p <.001, RMSEA = .19, CI_{90} = [.069, .146]; CFI = .94, TLI = .89. Indeed, modification indices show hope is a strong predictor of mutual trust. Research suggests, in the face of uncertainty, hopeful individuals invest their trust and faith into others to reach a desired goal, when couples perceive limits to their own agency (McGeer, 2008). In line with previous theory (McGeer, 2008) and our studies data, mutual trust was predicted by hope. Modification indices further indicate substantial variance shared between relational commitment and revenge motivations, between mutual trust and avoidance motivations as well as between mutual trust and revenge motivations. A revised model including the predicted pathway between hope and mutual trust as well as covarying the error terms to account for the shared variance showed a good fit; $\chi 2$ (7) = 21.25, p =.003, RMSEA = .08, CI_{90} = [.047, .132]; CFI = .99, TLI = .97. Covarying the error terms did not change the substance of the hypothesised model; therefore, we have selected the revised model (depicted in *Figure 2*).

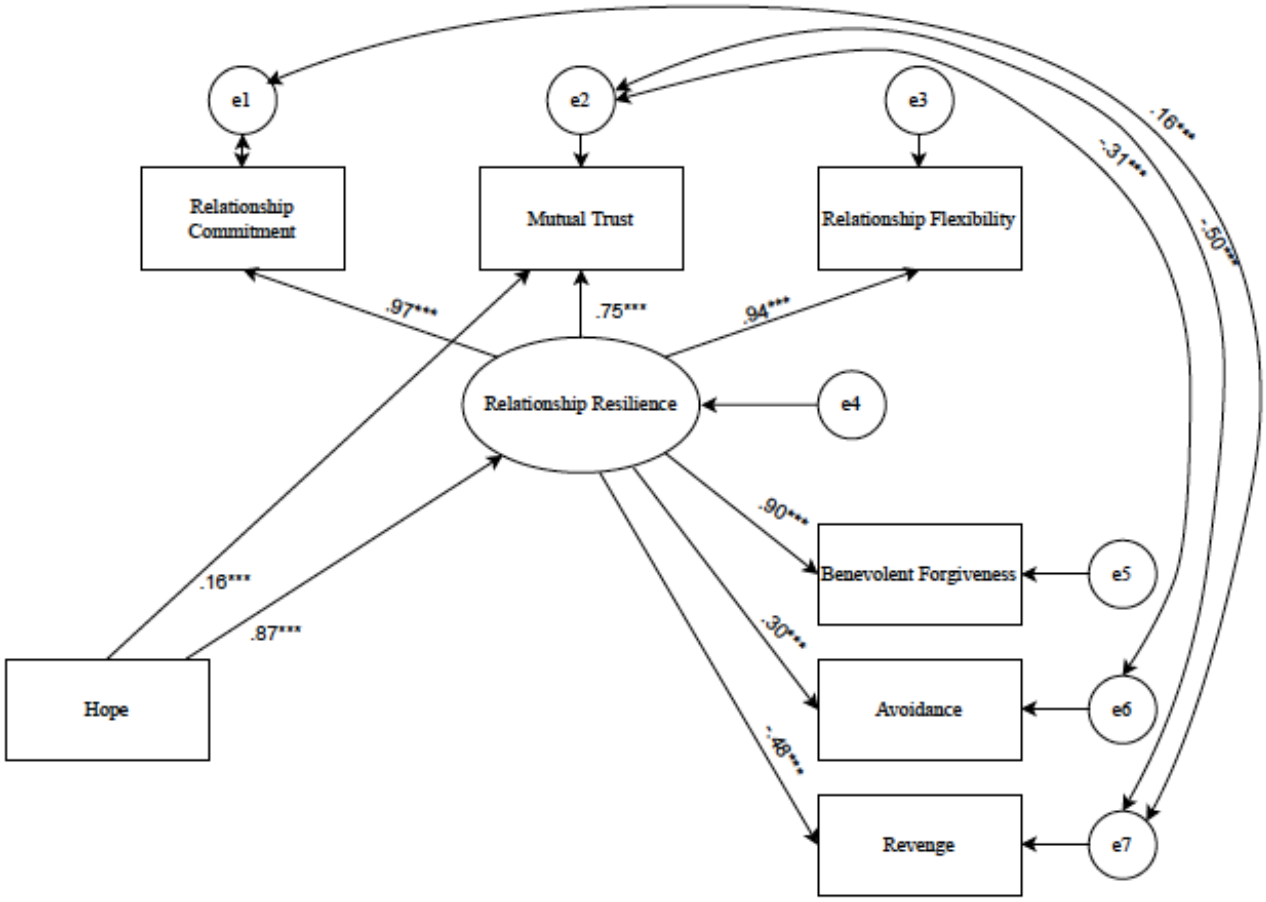

Figure 2. *Standardized regression rates for hope and relationship resilience on benevolent forgiveness, revenge motivations and avoidance motivations. All correlations were significant, p <.001****.

Study 3.1 provided preliminary evidence that hope is associated with greater relationship resilience (including relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility) and in turn positively related with forgiveness and self-forgiveness across victim and offender partners. The results provide partial support for the multidimensional nature of relationship resilience (commitment, mutual trust and flexibility) in reaching conciliatory efforts in offenders and victims (Sheldon & Antony, 2019; Wieselquist, 2009). The results suggest that hope via relationship resilience may be associated with facilitating conciliatory efforts in couples (victims' forgiveness and offenders' genuine self-forgiveness) as well as with mitigating offenders' motivations to pseudo-self-forgive and victims to seek revenge, as

predicted. Yet, not as anticipated, hope via relationship resilience was positively associated with offenders' self-punishment and victims' motivations to avoid the offender. The results further suggested the individual factors of relationship resilience may play a role above that of the latent relationship resilience construct on conciliatory efforts.

For offender partners, relationship resilience was positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness, yet a positive residual covariance with relationship flexibility may suggest a greater association with self-forgiveness than that implied by the effect of relationship resilience on self-forgiveness. As predicted, the results suggest offender's commitment and trust in their partner to maintain the relationship as well as flexibility in accommodating relationship changes or adapting to conflict (i.e., relationship resilience) support self-forgiveness processes (Pelucchi et al., 2015). Research suggests mutual trust and relationship commitment shared within the relationship maintain the offenders' positive self-image (i.e., decreasing feelings of shame and guilt), as the offender perceives the victim to still see value in the relationship important for self-forgiveness (Pelucchi et al., 2015). The results further imply offenders' flexibility in accommodating the needs of the victim, adapting to changes in the relationship may support offenders' motivations to forgive the self for committing a wrongdoing (Rusbult et al., 1991). Bem et al. (2021) found offender partners who perceive victim partners to show flexibility following conflict such as the victims' ability to re-evaluate the offense or allow compensation of a mistake supported the offender to also be flexible in their response to conflict and in turn forgive the self.

Further, relationship resilience was negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness, but an opposite, positive residual covariance for relationship commitment indicated that the association with pseudo self-forgiveness was less negative for commitment. Consistent with research, the findings suggest offenders' perceived relationship resilience (comprised of commitment and trust in the relationship as well as flexibility to accommodate

victims' needs) may reduce offenders' efforts to shift blame toward the victim as offenders strive to reconcile to maintain the relationship security and investments (Pelucchi et al., 2015). Yet, the positive residual correlation with commitment implies that, among the relationship resilience facets, offenders' commitment to the relationship may play a weaker role in pseudo self-forgiveness. Specifically, being committed, offenders may shift blame or try to explain away their behaviour, as offender's perceive the wrongdoing did not align with their personal values, sense of identity, relationship values or the offense does not represent who they are in the relationship (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013). Offenders committed to the relationship may be driven to reduce threats of rejection by the victim and minimise any risks to one's belonging by engaging in pseudo-self-forgiveness and downplaying the wrongdoing (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013).

Not as anticipated, the results suggested relationship resilience was positively associated with self-punishment, yet mutual trust alone may have a greater association on offenders' punishment of the self than that implied by the effect of the latent relationship resilience factor on self-punishment. Firstly, the findings suggest offenders' commitment, trust in the relationship and flexibility to adapt to relationship challenges (relationship resilience) are positively associated with offenders' punishment of the self. Research argues punishment has an emotion-regulating function and is perceived as an expected response for one's wrongdoing and needed for promoting reconciliation and restoring offenders' sense of moral restoration (de Vel-Palumbo et al., 2018). Following severe conflicts (e.g., infidelity), I argue relationship resilience is positively related to self-punishment, as relationship resilience may support offenders' efforts to strive for moral restoration as well as show remorse for one's action needed to facilitate reconciliation (de Vel-Palumbo et al., 2018; Hechler et al., 2022). Furthermore, mutual trust showed a greater association on self-punishment than the latent relationship resilience construct. The results may suggest offender partners' trust in the

relationship and dependence on the victim might be associated with greater punishment of the self, as offenders may punish the self to communicate to victims that they have remorse, good moral character and can be trusted again to maintain relationship investments and prevent relationship break down (Hechler et al., 2022).

For victims, the results suggested relationship resilience was positively associated with forgiveness, negatively associated with revenge and positively associated with avoidance, providing partial support for H3. Research suggests commitment and trust facilitates victims' perception of safety important for reducing impulsive reactions such as vengeance (Finkel et al., 2002). Further, research argues victims' flexibility in accommodating the offender partners' needs and adapting to relationship challenges transformed victims motivations to inhibit vengeance seeking (Bem et al., 2021; Hall & Fincham, 2006). In line with previous research, the findings suggest dyadic resources and interdependent processes of resilience are associated with reducing vengeance seeking as partners may have a greater perception of safety and reduced threat to relational investments (Finkel et al., 2002). Not as anticipated, relationship resilience was positively associated with avoidance motivations. Research suggests, if the victim appraises the conflict negatively as a harm or threat, this results in avoidant coping, and withdrawing from the offender (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007). Perhaps, when conflicts arise relationship resilience might be associated with reducing revenge, as trust, commitment and flexibility may support victims to reduce their appraisal of the conflict as a threat to their relationship security and in turn reduce vengeance. Yet, victims may cope with the hurt inflicted by drawing on dyadic resources and interdependent processes of resilience and in turn relationship resilience could be associated with greater avoidance of the offender to cope with distress from the wrongdoing (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007).

Furthermore, the present findings for avoidance and revenge showed a negative residual correlation for mutual trust implying that the association with avoidance is less positive for trust, yet the association with revenge is more negative for trust. Further, for revenge, the positive residual correlation with relationship commitment suggested the association with revenge is less negative for commitment. Research argues if victims perceive they can depend on and trust the offender to not hurt or betray the victims' trust in the future, victims continue to invest in relationship maintenance important for reducing avoidance motivations (Murray et al., 2011). The findings imply trusting the offender may be less positively associated with victims' motivations to avoid the offender as victims may perceive the offender can be trusted important for supporting repair. Yet, the findings further imply trust may also have a greater negative association with revenge, suggesting victims who depend on and are trusting of the offender may seek revenge following betrayal. Further, research suggests that partners highly committed to the relationship may be less negatively associated with revenge as partners may retaliate with vengeance if one's investments (e.g., children, financial dependence) were perceived to be threatened (Murray et al., 2012; Murray et al., 2011).

Overview of Studies 3.2

Study 3.1 was based on a hypothetical transgression, limiting our ability to generalize the findings to the real world. Specifically, Study 3.1 findings were based on cross-sectional data, therefore we are limited in drawing conclusions on the role of hope and relationship resilience in supporting conciliatory processes. A prospective study using real-life transgressions across offender (Study 3.2a) and victim partners (Study 3.2b) was carried out to confirm Study 3.1 findings. The prospective approach is used to identify the capacity in hope to sustain relationship resilience and reach forgiveness in victims and self-forgiveness in offenders over time. Furthermore, Studies 3.2a and 3.2b use the four-factor model solution

of relationship resilience developed in Studies 2.2 and 2.4 with the inclusion of dyadic coping.

Study 3.2a

In this study, the sample comprised of offender partners to investigate whether offenders' hope for repair and future with one's partner is positively associated with relationship resilience (relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping). In turn, I explored whether relationship resilience is positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness and negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness across time.

Method

Participants

In Study 3.2a, participants aged between 18-89 (M= 38.66, SD= 12.00) years were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (N = 1869). After the removal of surveys of participants who did not meet the criteria or who withdrew from the survey (N = 74) as well as participants who failed the English Proficiency Test check (N = 835), there were 960 surveys remaining for analysis, with 61.8% identifying as female, 37% as male, and 1.1% as nonbinary. Participants indicated most transgressions involved verbal arguments (28.6%) or betrayal of trust (25.6%). Most participants were in a relationship with their partner for less than 10 years (63.7%), with the median relationship duration between 6 to 6.5 years. At the time of the survey, most participants were living with their partner (74.9%).

Sensitivity Analyses

Equivalent to the approach in Study 3.1, a Monte Carlo simulation was used to carry out a sensitivity analysis in MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 2002), except that the latent mediator now had four indicator variables (with loadings averaging .75), and the observed outcome variable was measured at two time points with an autoregressive effect (set at .70) between

them. Also, in light of Study 3.1 findings, the predictor-to-mediator effect was now expected to be of large size (β = .50). The power requirements for the indirect effect of the predictor variable onto the Time 2 outcome measure is the critical test. The given sample size of N = 960 is sufficient to detect, with a target power of .80, a standardised indirect effect of ab = .05 composed of a predictor-to-mediator path of β = .50 and a mediator-to-Time 2 outcome path of β = .10. That is, the sample size was sufficiently sensitive to detect a small, lagged effect (mediator to outcome at Time 2), as well as the implied indirect effect.

Procedure

Time 1: Previous 48 hours. To be eligible for the study participants needed to have committed an interpersonal transgression toward their romantic partner in the last 48 hours. To check eligibility, participants were asked to indicate the type of event that occurred in the last 48 hours. Three of the event types did not involve an interpersonal transgression (e.g., 'an unsatisfactory customer experience'), while one of the event types involved 'an interpersonal transgression with your romantic partner which you caused'. Participants were excluded if the interpersonal transgression item was not selected. The remaining participants were asked to briefly report an interpersonal transgression they had caused with their romantic partner in the last 48 hours.

Participants were asked to complete the 16-item Relationship Resilience scale in relation to the transgression. After completion, participants were presented with a hypothetical text message scenario from their partner that read, 'I am feeling quite upset. Can we meet up tomorrow to discuss what happened?'. Participants were then asked to imagine receiving the text message from their partner and complete the hope items as well as the Differentiated Process of Self-Forgiveness Scale[1] (detailed in Study 1).

[1] In Study 3.2a, the hope items demonstrated good internal consistency (α = .84). The DPSFS revealed good internal consistency for all subscales at Time 1 (genuine self-forgiveness α = .88; pseudo self-forgiveness α = .82 and self-punitiveness α = .89) and at Time 2 (genuine self-forgiveness α = .88; pseudo self-forgiveness α = .86 and self-punitiveness α = .90).

Time 2: After 48 hours. Participants were re-contacted approximately 48 hours after completing the first part, and were asked to reflect on the interpersonal transgression they had reported in the first survey and complete the Differentiated Process of Self-Forgiveness Scale for the second time.

Measures

Relationship Resilience Scale. Participants were asked to respond to the 16 relationship resilience items that comprised of the four focal constructs: commitment, trust, flexibility and dyadic coping items 31, 32, 33 & 35 from the Dyadic Coping Inventory joint common coping subscale (Bodenmann et al., 2018) developed in Study 2.2. The subscales showed high internal consistency: relationship commitment (α = .97), mutual trust (α = .92), relationship flexibility (α = .81) and dyadic coping Cronbach α = .89), as did the total relationship resilience scale (α = .95), see Chapter 2.

Results

Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients and intercorrelations for Study 3.2a are displayed in *Table 2*. The results of the structural equation models (Figures 3-5) indicated offender's hope was positively related to relationship resilience (including relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping), providing support for H1.

Genuine Self-Forgiveness

In turn, relationship resilience was positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness at Time 1, and this effect was maintained across time (at Time 2 while controlling for the autoregressive effect of genuine self-forgiveness), providing support for H2. The hypothesised model for the relationship between hope and the relationship resilience factors on genuine self-forgiveness across Time 1 and 2 had a weak fit for the data; $\chi 2$ (13) = 142.58, p <.001, RMSEA = .11, CI_{90} = [.100, .134]; CFI = .95, TLI = .92.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations between Main Variables (Study 3.2a)

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Relationship Resilience	5.65 (1.40)	-											
2. Hope	5.95 (1.52)	.79***	-										
3. Commitment	6.84 (2.05)	.90***	.84***	-									
4. Mutual Trust	6.02 (2.01)	.89***	.65***	.74***	-								
5. Flexibility	6.13 (1.52)	.80***	.57***	.65***	.58***	-							
6. Dyadic Coping	3.61 (.98)	.74***	.56***	.58***	.63***	.48***	-						
7. T1 Genuine SF	4.87 (1.32)	.27***	.20***	.22***	.19***	.26***	.26***	-					
8. T2 Genuine SF	4.94 (1.30)	.26***	.16***	.19***	.22***	.24***	.25***	.68***	-				
9. T1 Pseudo SF	2.89 (1.36)	-.39***	-.37***	-.34***	-.37***	-.24***	-.36***	-.39***	-.38***	-			
10. T2 Pseudo SF	2.86 (1.42)	-.38***	-.34***	-.34***	-.36***	-.25***	-.31***	-.41***	-.39***	.78***	-		
11. T1 Self-Punitiveness	2.83 (1.43)	.006	-.08*	-.02	.03	-.01	.01	.38***	.30***	-.06	-.14***	-	
12. T2 Self-Punitiveness	2.54 (1.34)	-.06	-.14***	-.09*	-.01	-.06	-.02	.27***	.35***	-.10*	-.07*	.77***	-

Note. $N = 960$. $^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

Modification indices revealed substantial variance shared between relationship flexibility and genuine self-forgiveness at Time 1, as well as three residual correlations for the facets of relationship resilience. Including these covariances to account for the shared variance resulted in a revised model with good fit; $\chi 2$ (9) = 31.68, p <.001, RMSEA = .05, CI_{90} = [.037, .081]; CFI = .99, TLI = .98. However, this did not change the substance of the hypothesised model, therefore we have selected the revised model (depicted in *Figure 3*).

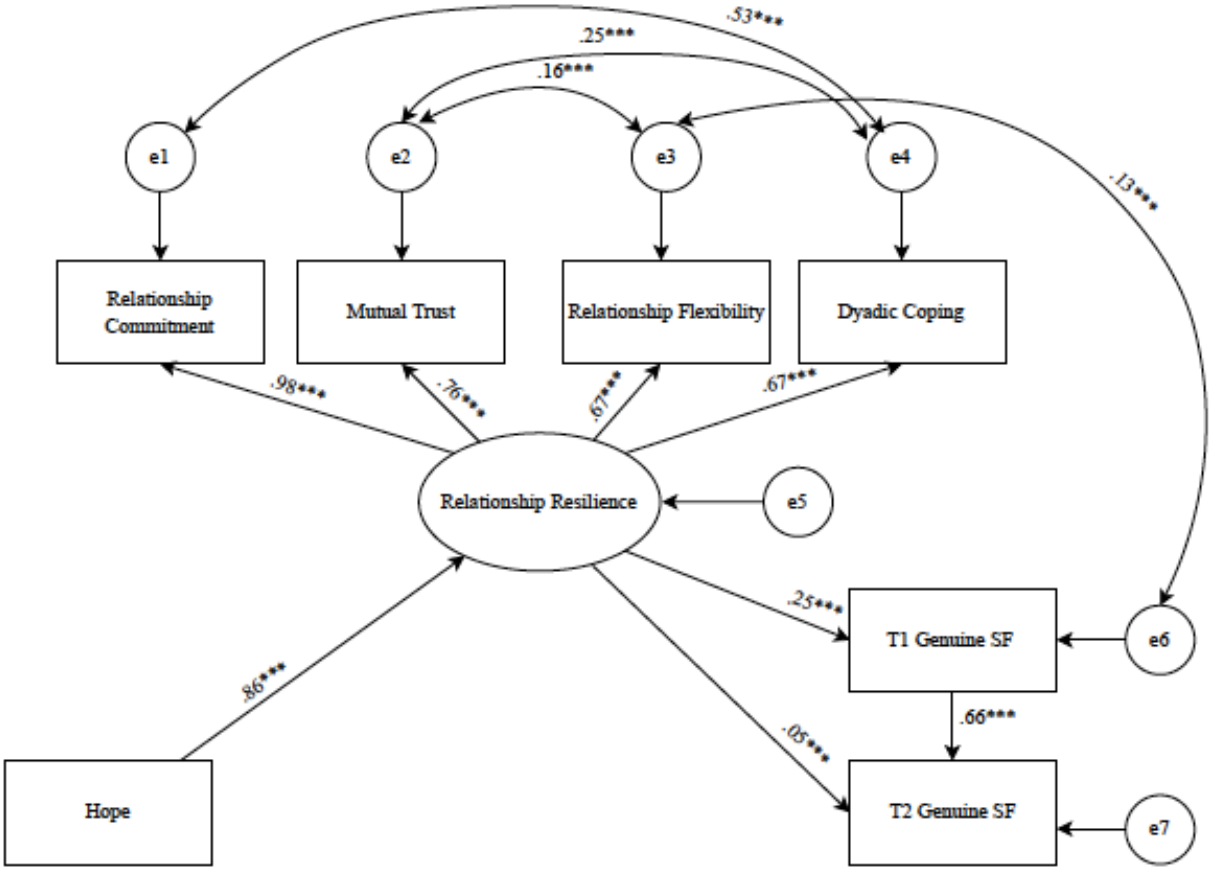

Figure 3. *Standardized regression rates for hope and relationship resilience on offender partner's genuine self-forgiveness across time with modification indices. All correlations were significant, p <.001****.

Pseudo Self-forgiveness

Relationship resilience was negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness at Time 1 and 2, and this effect was maintained across time, providing support for H2. The hypothesised

model for the relationship between hope and the relationship resilience factors on pseudo self-forgiveness across Time 1 and 2 showed a weak model fit; $\chi 2$ (13) = 142.51, p <.001, RMSEA = .11, CI_{90} = [.100, .134]; CFI = .96, TLI = .93. Modification indices showed substantial variance shared between relationship commitment and pseudo self-forgiveness at Time 1, as well as three residual correlations for the facets of relationship resilience. Including these covariances to account for the shared variance resulted in a revised model with good fit; $\chi 2$ (9) = 23.81, p =.005, RMSEA = .04, CI_{90} = [.025, .071]; CFI = .99, TLI = .98. However, it did not change the substance of the hypothesised model, therefore we have selected the revised model (see *Figure 4*).

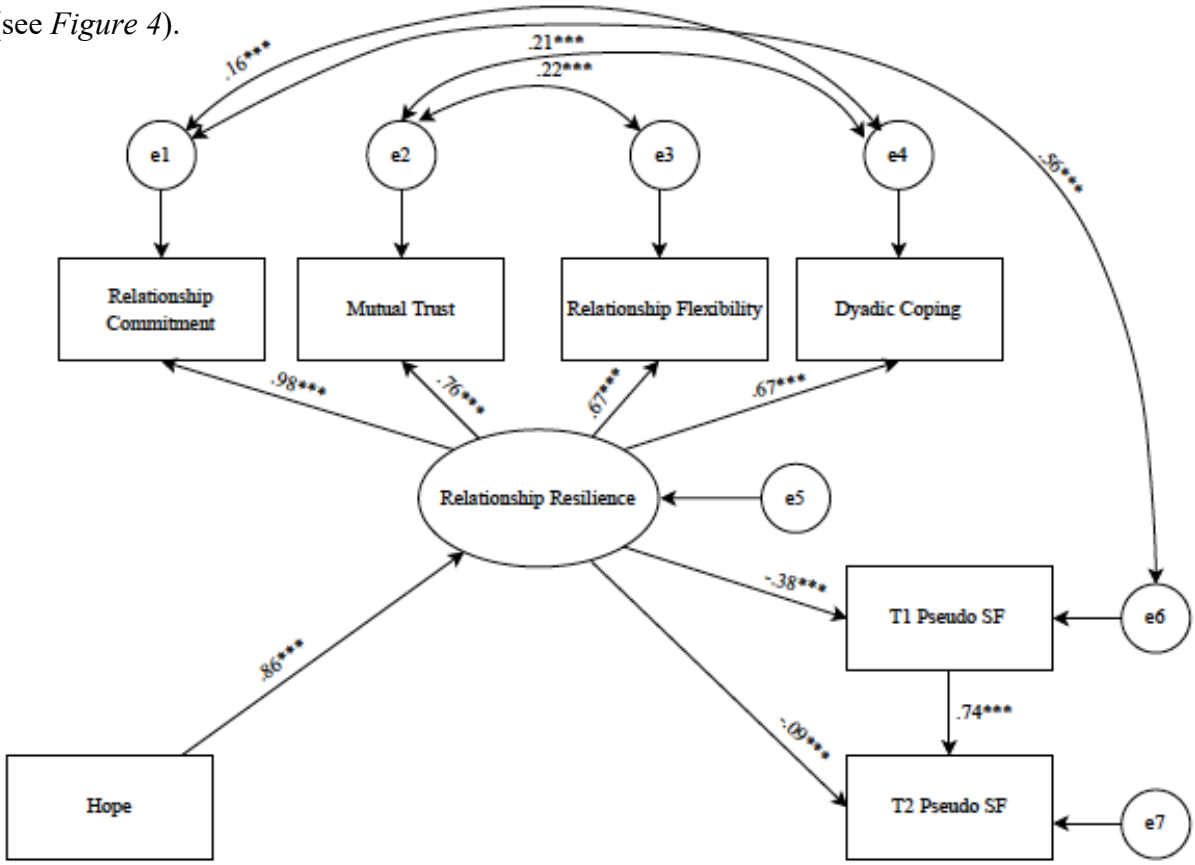

Figure 4. *Standardized regression rates for hope and relationship resilience on offender partner's pseudo self-forgiveness across time with modification indices. All correlations were significant, p <.001****.

Self-Punitiveness

Relationship resilience was negatively associated with self-punitiveness Time 2, providing partial support for H2. The hypothesised model for the relationship between hope and the relationship resilience factors on self-punitiveness across Time 1 and 2 showed a weak model fit; $\chi 2$ (13) = 121.48, p <.001, RMSEA = .10, CI_{90} = [.100, .134]; CFI = .96, TLI = .94. The model showed relationship resilience did not predict self-punitiveness at Time 1 (β = -.02, p =.510). Indeed, modification indices suggested substantial variance shared between mutual trust and self-punitiveness at Time 1, as well as three residual correlations for the facets of relationship resilience. Including these covariances improved the fit for the data; $\chi 2$ (9) = 20.18, p =.017, RMSEA = .04, CI_{90} = [.017, .065]; CFI = .99, TLI = .99. However, it did not change the substance of the hypothesised model, therefore we have selected the revised model (depicted in *Figure 5*).

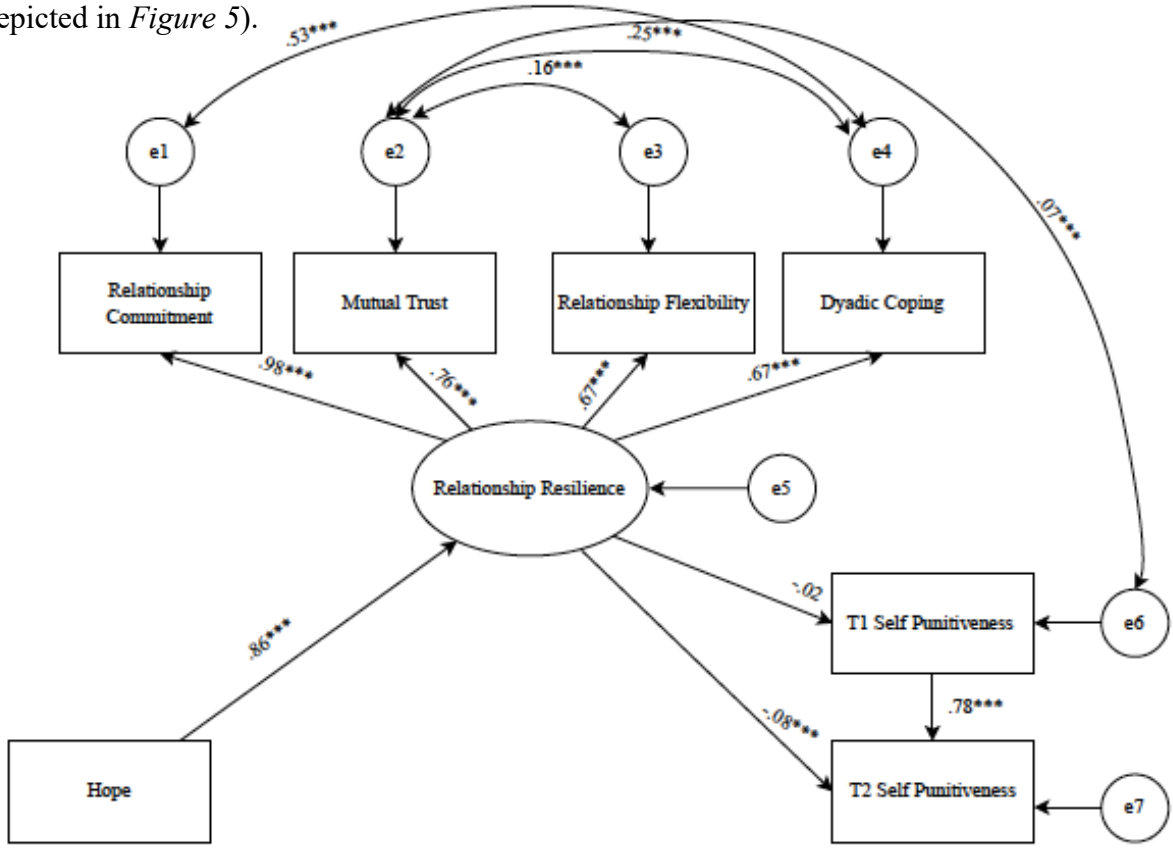

Figure 5. *Standardized regression rates for hope and relationship resilience on offender partner's self-punitiveness across time. Significance at p <.001****.

Study 3.2b

Study 3.2b uses a similar design and procedure as carried out in Study 3.2a, therefore we only report the key measures and procedural differences in the method. In this study, I investigate whether victims' hope is positively associated with relationship resilience (relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping). In turn, I explore whether relationship resilience is positively associated with forgiveness and negatively associated with revenge and avoidance, across time. The relationship resilience scale data used in this study is the four-factor solution developed in Study 2.4.

Method

Participants

US adults (N = 961) aged between 18-89 (M= 37.27, SD= 10.81) years were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk). After the removal of surveys of participants not meeting the criteria or withdrawing from the survey (N =18) as well as participants that failed the English Proficiency Test check (N = 350), there were 593 surveys remaining for analysis, with 58.2% identifying as female, 40.5% as male, and 0.8% as nonbinary. Participants indicated most transgressions involved a betrayal of trust (26%). The majority of participants were in a relationship with their partner for less than 5 years (53.5%).

Sensitivity Analyses

A Monte Carlo simulation was used to carry out a sensitivity analysis in MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 2002), similar to the one in Study 3.2a. However, given the further evidence from that study, the predictor-to-mediator effect could be expected to be even larger (β = .85). Again, the power requirements for the indirect effect of the predictor variable on the Time 2 outcome measure is critical. The given sample size of N = 593 is sufficient to detect, with a target power of .80, a standardised indirect effect of ab = .085 composed of a predictor-to-mediator path of β = .85 and a mediator-to-Time 2 outcome path of β = .10. That is, the sample size was

sufficiently sensitive to detect a small, lagged effect (mediator to outcome at Time 2), as well as the implied indirect effect.

Procedure

Time 1: Previous 48 hours. To assess eligibility for the study, participants were asked to report an interpersonal transgression committed towards them by their romantic partner (i.e., offender partner) in the last 48 hours. Participants were asked to think about the transgression committed toward them and completed the 16-item Relationship Resilience Scale[2] detailed in Study 3.2a as well as the hope items[3] and the Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivation Inventory[4] detailed in Study 3.1 (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002).

Time 2: After 48 hours. Approximately 48 hours later, participants were asked to reflect on the same interpersonal transgression reported in the first survey and complete the TRIM-18 scale again at Time 2.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics, alpha coefficients and intercorrelations for Study 3.2b are displayed in *Table 3*. The results from the structural equation model (Figures 6 to 8) indicated victim's hope was positively related to relationship resilience (including relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping), providing support for H1.

[2] The relationship resilience scale demonstrated high internal consistency for the total scale (α = .94) and subscales: relationship commitment (α =.96), mutual trust (α = .92), relationship flexibility (α = .85) and dyadic coping (α = .86), see Chapter 2.
[3] Hope items revealed good internal consistency (α = .87).
[4] The TRIM-18 revealed good internal consistency for all subscales at time point 1 (benevolent forgiveness α = .88; avoidance α = .91 and revenge α = .85) and at time point 2 (benevolent forgiveness α = .89; avoidance α = .94 and revenge α = .87).

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations between Main Variables (Study 3.2b)

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Relationship Resilience	5.99 (1.53)	-											
2. Hope	5.62 (1.69)	.83***	-										
3. Commitment	7.23 (2.21)	.93***	.82***	-									
4. Mutual Trust	6.44 (2.20)	.92***	.74***	.79***	-								
5. Flexibility	6.82 (1.72)	.86***	.66***	.75***	.67***	-							
6. Dyadic Coping	3.47 (.92)	.63***	.55***	.49***	.52***	.44***	-						
7. T1 Forgiveness	3.70 (.90)	.74***	.71***	.72***	.66***	.62***	.44***	-					
8. T2 Forgiveness	3.94 (.90)	.69***	.66***	.67***	.63***	.59***	.39***	.76***	-				
9. T1 Avoidance	2.07 (.99)	-.71***	-.70***	-.68***	-.66***	-.55***	-.48***	-.74***	-.68***	-			
10. T2 Avoidance	1.96 (1.03)	-.73***	-.72***	-.70***	-.69***	-.60***	-.43***	-.70***	-.81***	.81***	-		
11. T1 Revenge	1.49 (.69)	-.40***	-.40***	-.41***	-.37***	-.33***	-.23***	-.42***	-.40***	.55***	.51***	-	
12. T2 Revenge	1.45 (.68)	-.42***	-.36***	-.41***	-.38***	-.37***	-.22***	-.42***	-.47***	.50***	.55***	.76***	-

Note. $N = 593$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Benevolent Forgiveness

Relationship resilience was positively associated with benevolent forgiveness at Time 1, with this effect maintained across time (at Time 2 while controlling for the autoregressive effect of genuine self-forgiveness), providing support for H3. The hypothesised model for the relationship between hope and the relationship resilience factors on benevolent forgiveness motivations across Time 1 and 2 had a weak fit for the data; $\chi 2$ (13) = 35.99, p <.001, RMSEA = .06, CI_{90} = [.043, .096]; CFI = .98, TLI = .98. Modification indices suggested substantial residual covariance between mutual trust and relationship flexibility, between mutual trust and dyadic coping as well as between relationship commitment and dyadic coping. Covarying the error terms in the revised model improved the fit for the data; $\chi 2$ (10) = 20.84, p =.022, RMSEA = .05, CI_{90} = [.020, .087]; CFI = .99, TLI = .99. However, this did not change the substance of the hypothesised model, therefore we have selected the revised model (depicted in *Figure 6*).

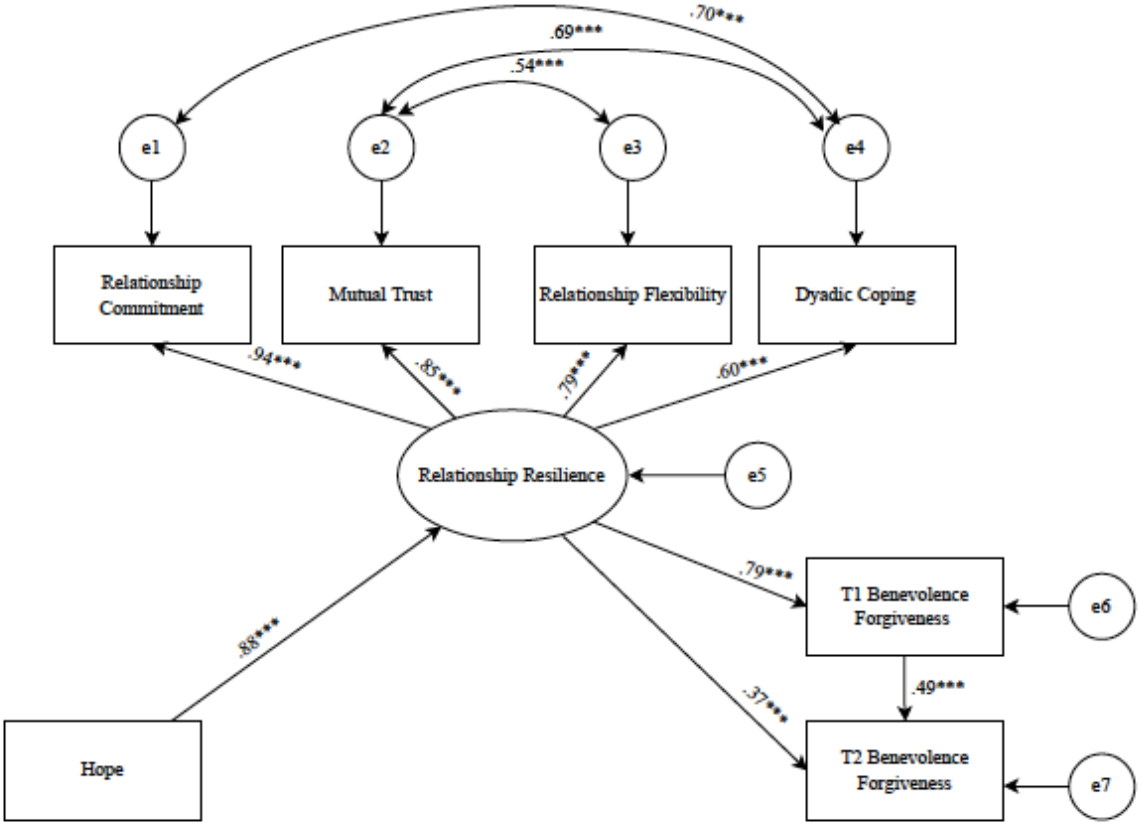

Figure 6. *Standardized regression rates for hope and relationship resilience on victim partner's benevolent forgiveness across time. All correlations were significant, p <.001****.

Avoidance Motivations

Relationship resilience was negatively associated with avoidance motivations at Time 1, with this effect being maintained over time, providing support for H3. The hypothesised model for the relationship between hope and the relationship resilience factors on avoidance motivations across Time 1 and 2 had a weak fit for the data; $\chi 2$ (13) = 54.51, p <.001, RMSEA = .09, CI_{90} = [.067, .116]; CFI = .98, TLI = .95. Modification indices suggested substantial residual covariance between dyadic coping and avoidance motivations at Time 2, as well as three residual correlations for facets of relationship resilience, that is between mutual trust and relationship flexibility, between mutual trust and dyadic coping as well as between relationship commitment and dyadic coping. Covarying the error terms in the revised model improved the fit for the data; $\chi 2$ (9) = 30.40, p < .001, RMSEA = .07, CI_{90} = [.049, .110]; CFI = .99, TLI = .97. However, this did not change the substance of the hypothesised model, therefore we have selected the revised model (depicted in *Figure 7*).

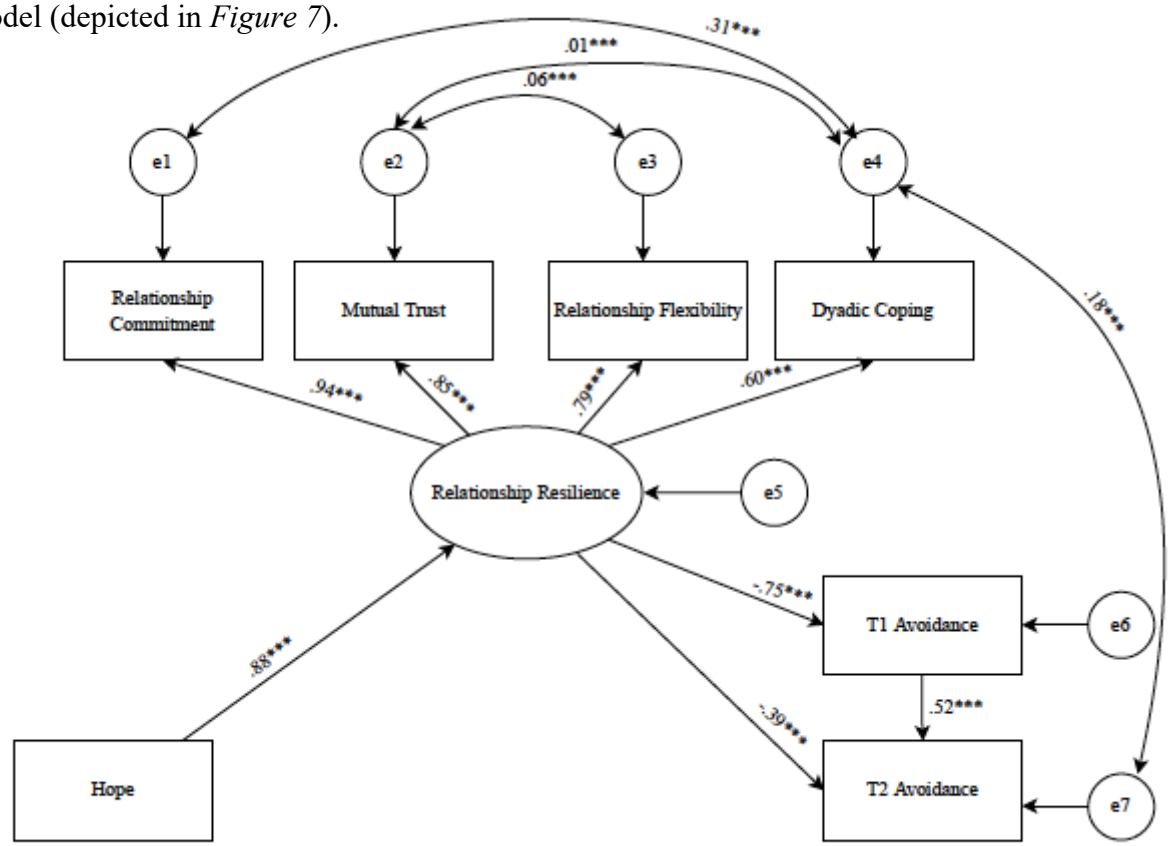

Figure 7. *Standardized regression rates for hope and relationship resilience on victim partner's avoidance motivations across time. All correlations were significant, p <.001****.

Revenge Motivations

Relationship resilience was negatively associated with revenge motivations at Time 1, with this effect maintained over time, providing support for H3. The hypothesised model for the relationship between hope and the relationship resilience factors on avoidance motivations across Time 1 and 2 had a weak fit for the data; $\chi 2$ (13) = 35.91, p <.001, RMSEA = .07, CI_{90} = [.041, .094]; CFI = .98, TLI = .97. Modification indices suggested substantial residual covariance between dyadic coping and avoidance motivations at Time 2, as well as three residual correlations for facets of relationship resilience, that is between mutual trust and relationship flexibility, between mutual trust and dyadic coping as well as between relationship commitment and dyadic coping. Covarying the error terms in the revised model improved the fit for the data; $\chi 2$ (9) = 14.91, p =.093, RMSEA = .04, CI_{90} = [.000, .077]; CFI = .99, TLI = .99. However, this did not change the substance of the hypothesised model, therefore we have selected the revised model (depicted in *Figure 8*).

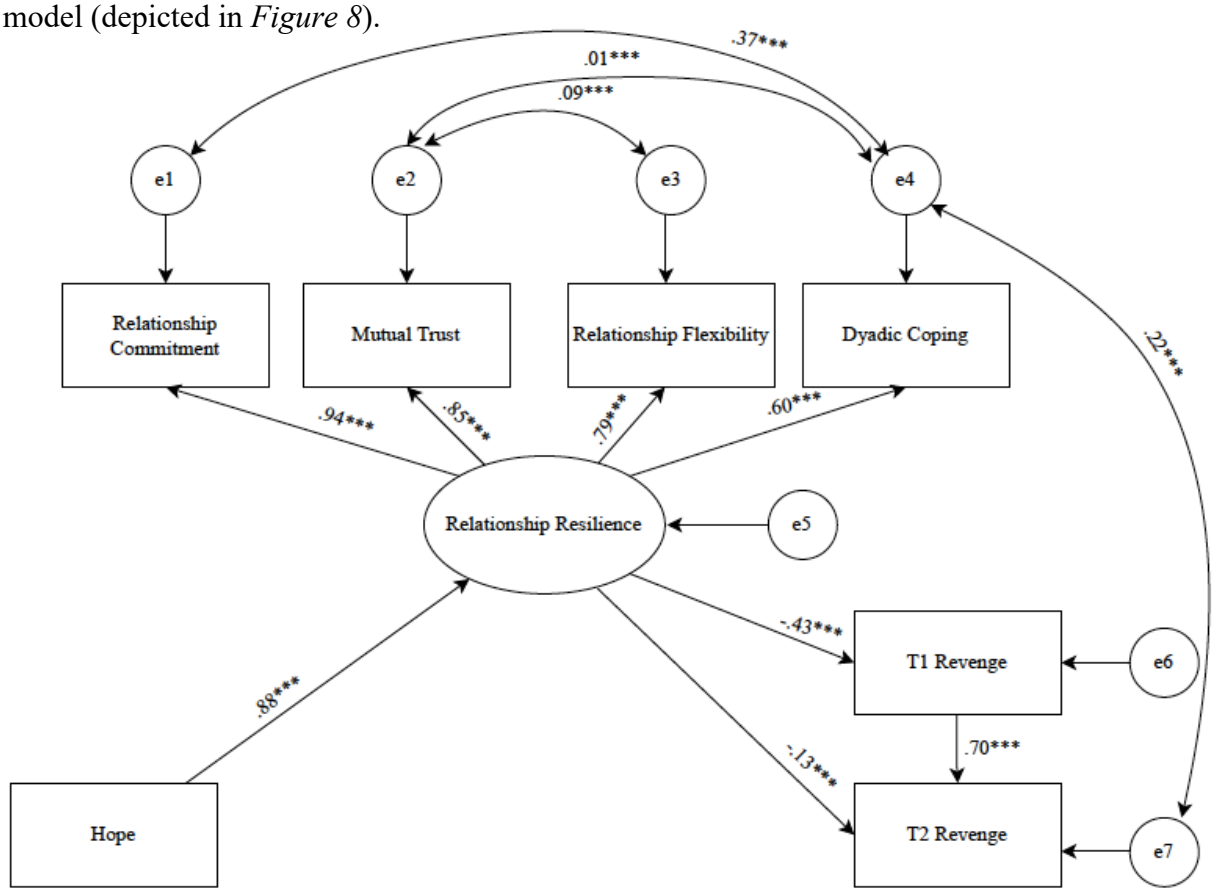

Figure 8. *Standardized regression rates for hope and relationship resilience on victim partner's revenge motivations across time. All correlations were significant, p <.001****.

Studies 3.2a and b sought to further test the role of hope and relationship resilience on reaching conciliatory processes in victim and offender partners following real-life transgressions as well as further aimed to investigate whether relationship resilience can sustain conciliatory efforts across time. The two studies replicated the findings of Study 3.1 to suggest hope is positively related to relationship resilience (relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping) across both victim and offender partners, providing support for H1. For Study 3.2a, the results suggested relationship resilience was positively related to offenders' genuine self-forgiveness as well as negatively associated with pseudo-self-forgiveness at both time points, as predicted in H2. However, contrary to H2, relationship resilience was not related to self-punitiveness at Time 1, yet relationship resilience was prospectively negatively related to self-punitiveness at Time 2. For Study 3.2b, the findings showed relationship resilience in turn was positively associated with benevolent forgiveness as well as negatively associated with avoidance and revenge motivations at both time points, as predicted in H3. Importantly, both studies indicated that relationship resilience factors may play a role in conciliatory efforts above that of the latent relationship resilience construct.

For offenders, the present findings showed mixed evidence for the role of relationship resilience on self-punitiveness across Time 1 and 2. Study 3.2a showed relationship resilience was not associated with self-punitiveness at Time 1, but was negatively associated with self-punitiveness at Time 2. Research suggests self-punitiveness is complex as it has multiple functions for offenders (de Vel-Palumbo et al., 2018; Hechler et al., 2022). de Vel-Palumbo et al. (2018) argue that self-punitiveness may function to reduce offenders' guilt and shame (and regulate emotions). Furthermore, self-punitiveness may function to facilitate reconciliation as self-punitiveness signals to victims that offenders are trustworthy and remorseful. Therefore, punishing the self can support the restoration of the offenders' morality, for offenders to learn from wrongdoing as well as prevent punishment from others (Hechler et al., 2022). It may be that relationship resilience is not associated with self- punitiveness at Time 1, as punitiveness has

multiple functions. In the face of conflict, offenders may be driven to punish the self for a range of purposes irrespective of their commitment, mutual trust, flexibility or dyadic coping (relationship resilience) in the relationship.

The results for Study 3.2b suggested relationship resilience was negatively associated with avoidance and revenge motivations, as predicted, but an opposite positive residual covariance with dyadic coping at Time 2 indicated that the association with avoidance and revenge was less negative for dyadic coping. The findings suggest victims' relationship resilience (comprised of commitment and mutual trust in the offender to maintain relational investments, flexibility to accommodate relationship challenges and dyadic coping including taking the offenders' perspective) is associated with reducing vengeance and avoidance (Bem et al., 2021; Hall & Fincham, 2006). However, dyadic coping shows a positive residual covariance to avoidance and revenge, suggesting dyadic coping is less negatively related to both than the latent relationship resilience factor is. Research argues avoidance and revenge are avoidant coping mechanisms used when victims appraise the conflict as a threat of further harm to self, threat to personal investments, or when they perceive the offender will not respond with efforts to reconcile (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007). Specifically, victims engage in avoidance and revenge to cope with injustices following conflict. The findings imply victims' ability to cope with conflict and wrongdoing could be less negatively associated with withdrawing from the relationship (avoidance) or seeking out vengeance by retaliating to protect the self and one's investments (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007).

General Discussion

The current studies aimed to investigate the capacity of hope for repair to support relationship resilience and in turn sustain victim partners to forgive offenders and offender partners to self-forgive following conflict. All studies consistently show hope for repair is positively associated with relationship resilience across both victim and offender partners. Consistent with recent research on relationship-specific hope, partners' hope for repair has been

argued to sustain commitment and mutual trust to reach the goal of repair as couples strive to maintain relational investment by resolving conflict (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). Further, relationship-specific hope theory suggests hope supports interdependent processes of resilience including flexibility in accommodating partner needs, adapting to relationship changes as well as dyadic coping such as taking each partner's perspective (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). The present findings provide some empirical evidence to suggest hope for repair may support and sustain dyadic resources and facilitate interdependent processes of relationship resilience for partners to resolve conflict. The findings provide some evidence that these patterns of resilience (i.e., hope for relationship repair and relationship resilience) can in turn sustain conciliatory processes across victim and offender partners.

For offenders, in both Studies 3.1 and 3.2a hope via relationship resilience was in turn positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness, with relationship flexibility providing a greater association on offenders reaching self-forgiveness than the latent relationship resilience factor. Further, relationship resilience was negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness, but an opposite positive residual covariance with relationship commitment indicated that the association with pseudo self-forgiveness is less negative for commitment. Not as anticipated, the effect of hope via relationship resilience on offenders' self-punitiveness revealed mixed findings across both Study 3.1 and 3.2a. In Study 3.1 relationship resilience was (cross-sectionally) positively related to self-punitiveness, but in Study 3.2a it was not significantly related (with a negative trend) to self-punitiveness, cross-sectionally and prospectively. More consistently, the two studies revealed mutual trust was more positively associated with self-punitiveness than relationship resilience overall was. Results pertaining to the victim partner revealed that relationship resilience was positively associated to victims' forgiveness and negatively related to revenge motivations, cross-sectionally and prospectively, as predicted. Further, the studies showed mixed findings for avoidance, with relationship resilience showing a positive association with avoidance in Study 3.1, yet as predicted revealed a negative association with avoidance

across Time 1 and 2 in Study 3.2b. Study 3.1 also showed a more negative residual covariance with mutual trust for revenge and avoidance than the latent relationship resilience factor, yet in Study 3.2b the positive residual covariance with dyadic coping showed that the association with avoidance and revenge was less negative than the relationship resilience construct. Importantly, the studies provided some empirical evidence that relationship resilience showed a sustained effect on conciliatory processes across victim and offenders, prospectively. The findings could imply that the individual resources and processes of relationship resilience may play a role in conciliatory efforts above that than the relationship resilience construct.

Consistent with predictions, the present research findings provide support for the prediction that hope is via relationship resilience, associated with sustaining victims' forgiveness and offender's to genuinely self-forgive across time. In line with previous research, the present findings suggest partners with relationship commitment and mutual trust are resources to the couple as partners are motivated to engage in conciliatory processes including forgiveness and self-forgiveness to maintain relational investments following conflict (Rusbult, 1980; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Wieselquist, 2009). Further, research argues dyadic coping efforts and relational flexibility including adopting a positive perspective of one's partner, accommodating partner needs and adapting to challenges is associated with forgiveness and self-forgiveness (Strelan & Covic, 2006). Importantly, the present findings suggest that forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes necessary for resolving conflict is not simply a partner's choice to engage in (i.e., a single process), but as recent research eludes, reaching conciliatory processes involves partner interactions, perspectives or responsiveness (Woodyatt et al., 2022). Specifically, the present research suggests reaching forgiveness and self-forgiveness may require dyadic and interactive processes such as relationship resilience that couples have and share, providing further support for the conceptualisation of relationship resilience as a multidimension tool for reaching repair.

Across both studies 3.1 and 3.2a, the results suggested hope via relationship resilience was negatively associated with offenders' pseudo self-forgiving across time, prospectively as

predicted. Research suggests offenders' commitment and mutual trust in the relationship reduces efforts to shift blame, as the offender perceives there is still value in the relationship (Pelucchi et al., 2015). Further, the offender's flexibility to forgo one's needs, accommodate the victims' needs as well as consider the victims' perspective to cope, can inhibit efforts to downplay one's actions (Bem et al., 2021; Hall & Fincham, 2006). Consistent with previous research, the findings suggest relationship resilience can support offenders to reduce conflict damaging responses including pseudo self-forgiveness. Further, an opposite positive residual covariance for relationship commitment indicated that the association with pseudo self-forgiveness is less negative for commitment than the latent relationship resilience factor. Research implies offenders' commitment to the relationship is associated with downplaying one's actions or attributing blame to the victim or others (pseudo self-forgive) to minimise the threat of investments lost if the relationship ended (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013).

Relationship commitment could be confounded by relationship duration, where offenders' attribution of blame is entangled by the complexity of long-term relationships, as both partners contribute to conflicts arising over time (Henning & Connor-Smith, 2011; Henning & Holdford, 2006). Long relationships have deeper relationship history and with it, several conflicts, arising and escalating over time involving both partners. For couples with a complex relationship history, attribution of blame following conflict is not simply one-sided as both partners are perceived to have played a role in the wrongdoing arising (Henning & Connor-Smith, 2011; Lila et al., 2013). Future research should seek to explore the separate effects of relationship duration and relationship commitment on offenders' pseudo self-forgiveness to identify how offenders perceive attribution of blame following conflicts.

The role of hope and relationship resilience on self-punitiveness revealed mixed findings across both Studies 3.1 and 3.2a. The findings revealed relationship resilience was positively related to self-punitiveness in Study 3.1, but not related to self-punitiveness at Time 1 and negatively prospectively related to self-punitiveness at Time 2 in Study 3.2a. Research suggests

self-punitiveness has multiple functions and purposes for offenders. Specifically, de Vel-Palumbo et al. (2018) found that self-punitiveness serves offenders to reduce negative emotions (guilt and shame), facilitate reconciliation as it signals to victims that the offender is remorseful and can be trusted in the future as well as for offenders' moral restoration by redeeming the self. Perhaps, the findings could also suggest the function of self-punitiveness can change over time, as it might initially serve as an expression of remorse for one's actions, but over time self-punitiveness could be considered as self-indulgent (de Vel-Palumbo et al., 2018). Therefore, the psychological processes underlying offenders' decision to self-punish requires further research. Research is needed to understand why offenders self-punish, the types of conflicts that facilitate self-punitiveness as well as whether relationship resilience plays a role in offenders' punishment of the self following conflict.

For victims, hope via relationship resilience in turn was negatively associated with revenge across both Studies 3.1 and 3.2b consistent with predictions, yet avoidance showed mixed findings. In Study 3.1, relationship resilience was positively associated with avoidance, however in Study 3.2b was negatively associated with avoidance. In line with Study 3.2b findings, research suggests commitment and mutual trust may reduce avoidance motivations and facilitate forgiveness as partners strive to protect the self against the loss of the relationship (Molden & Finkel, 2010). Further, flexibility and dyadic coping including re-appraising the meaning of the conflict, taking the offenders' perspective, viewing the offender in a positive light and accommodating the offenders' needs was associated with reducing avoidance (Bem et al., 2021; Hall & Fincham, 2006). Yet, research also argues avoidance is a coping mechanism victims engage in following conflict and the strength of victims' motivations to engage in avoidance depends on the severity of the transgression as well as the perceived injustice of the offense (Tripp et al., 2007). Perhaps, in Study 3.1 victims showed a positive association between relationship resilience and avoidance as infidelity may have been perceived as a severe injustice that motivated avoidance behaviours to cope. Future research should investigate victims'

motivations to engage in avoidance following different transgression contexts when victims perceive greater injustices following an offense. Findings could identify the motivations that serve victims to engage in conflict damaging responses as well as the role of relationship resilience in mitigating avoidance and revenge.

The present research utilised cross-sectional and prospective designs to explore the role of hope and relationship resilience on conciliatory processes in dyads, which provided some initial evidence that hope supports relationship resilience and in turn sustains reparative efforts (based on prospective evidence in Study 3.2). However, the findings are based on correlational data from either a victim or offender perspective, a limitation of the studies. Future research is needed and encouraged to utilise victim and offender partners within the same dyad following a real-life interpersonal conflict, to further understand how the dyadic, interactive-interdependent process between couples transforms partners' motivations to reach conciliatory actions. Findings could have implications for understanding how dyads draw on hope and relationship resilience as resources to the couple as well as how dyadic hopes and relationship resilience is socially-interactively constructed and formed for reaching forgiveness and self-forgiveness. Specifically, research suggests forgiveness and self-forgiveness are dyadic interactive processes as one partner's efforts to engage in conciliatory efforts (e.g., apology) may influence the other partner to reciprocate the effort such as forgiveness (Fenell, 1993; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015; Wenzel et al., 2021). Future research should investigate where one partner's flexibility and dyadic coping (e.g., offender) such as accommodating their partner's needs, adapting to challenges and perspective-taking may facilitate the other partner (e.g., victim) to reciprocate interdependent processes of relationship resilience and in turn support forgiveness and self-forgiveness efforts. Future research needs to identify how the dyad shares dyadic resources and interacts interdependently for supporting conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Conclusion

The present research aimed to understand the role of hope and relationship resilience on offenders' and victims' conciliatory efforts following conflict. For couples at risk of relationship dissolution, the findings provide empirical evidence that holding onto hope is positively associated with relationship resilience and in turn is positively related to victims' forgiveness and offenders' self-forgiveness processes. The present studies suggest hope may support relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping within couples for reaching relationship repair to in turn reach conciliatory efforts. Importantly, the results provide some support that relationship resilience is negatively associated with conflict-destructive responses (i.e., pseudo-self-forgiveness, self-punishment, avoidance, and revenge), even if the specific dyadic resources and interdependent processes of relationship resilience occasionally vary in their associations with the various outcome variables. The role of hope and relationship resilience (and its factors) could inform future interventions for facilitating reparative action and reducing conflict-destructive motivations following conflicts in dyads (i.e., teammates, colleagues, friends). The present research provides a novel pathway for future research to explore the strength in hope for supporting relationship resilience and in turn sustaining dyads to reach reconciliation for resolving conflict and restoring the relationship.

CHAPTER 4: An Empirical Test of Hope on Relationship Resilience For Relationship Repair in Romantic Couples Following Conflict

"Hope is the grace of endurance in the stormy days." ~ Lailah Gifty Akita

All romantic couples experience conflicts, yet some couples can cope and stay afloat when the odds of the relationship surviving are not in their favour, while other relationships crumble and sink. Relational conflicts (e.g., infidelity, wrongdoing, or betrayal) can lead to relationship breakdowns, as greater efforts are required from partners to reconcile and restore the relationship. Research suggests when the chances of repairing a relationship seem bleak (e.g., severe conflicts such as infidelity), partners less personally invested in the relationship (e.g., have no children) are more susceptible to relationship dissolution, as partners are less motivated to strive to repair the relationship (Merolla & Harman, 2018; Simpson & Rholes, 2017). The present study aims to investigate the question: when the chances of successfully repairing relationships are low and higher efforts are required to sustain a relationship over time (particularly for more severe conflicts), will partner's hope arise and in turn support relationship resilience for reaching the goal of relationship repair? I define relationship resilience as the dyadic resources exchanged between interactive-interdependent partners – including relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility - for bending, adapting, coping, flexibly maneuvering and changing in response to conflict. Research implies hope motivates couples to reach repair as hope supports partners to draw on relationship resilience including maintaining commitment and trust as well as sustaining flexibility when adapting and responding to conflict (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018).

I draw on hope theory (Bury et al., 2016; Edwards et al., 2002; Rand & Cheavens, 2009; Snyder, 2002) to argue hope is motivational due to the anticipation of achieving a desirable, personally significant future with one's partner, which is potentially possible, but not necessarily probable (Worthington et al., 1997). Specifically, partners' hope for relationship repair will arise under conditions of low possibility of repair (i.e., following severe conflict) and high personal

investment in the relationship (Bury et al., 2016). I propose under these conditions (low possibility and high investment), hope supports and sustains relationship resilience. More recently, research investigating relationship-specific hope (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018) implies hope will motivate partners to maintain relationship commitment and mutual trust in the relationship when repair is worth investing in. Furthermore, relationship-specific hope suggests hope provides couples with the flexibility to devise alternate pathways, respond constructively to conflict and accommodate partners' needs to reach repair (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). I propose, when partners have greater investments in the relationship (e.g., children, financial dependence), hope's unique property lies in its ability to support and sustain relationship resilience, particularly when the likelihood of restoring the relationship is not in the couple's favour.

In this chapter, I investigate the experimental component reported in Studies 2.1 and 3.1. I build on our theoretical understanding of relationship resilience developed in previous chapters by empirically testing hope's positive association with relationship resilience - (1) dyadic resilience resources commitment and mutual trust and (2) interdependent process of relationship flexibility - to reach repair under conditions of small possibility of repair and high personal investment across victim and offender partners. Based on previous research, I propose partners may invest in a mere chance of successfully rekindling the relationship and imbue with it hope for repair (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010), thus fostering relational commitment, mutual trust and relational flexibility. Conversely, I ask: in the face of relationship ups and downs, does the ability to 'bounce back' from conflict necessitate *hope*?

Hope Arises Under Conditions of Possibility and Personal Investment

In line with previous research (Bury et al., 2016; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010), I propose for partners highly invested in the goal of repair, the slightest departure from impossibility will be sufficient to engender hope within partners to rekindle one's relationship following conflict (See *Figure 1*). Research suggests, that a partner's hope for relationship repair will firstly arise

when there is a mere *possibility* of overcoming the conflict, as it is under uncertainty of achieving the desired outcome of repairing the relationship that hope functions as a distinct motivator for couples to strive for repair (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002; Bruininks & Malle, 2005). According to common hope theories (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991), hope is an expectancy-based construct, as hope is commonly argued to be derived when the perceived probability or expectancy of reaching one's goals increases. Following Snyder et al. (1991), hopeful partners perceive a greater ability to achieve the goal of repair and subsequently perceive a high certainty of goal attainment. Yet, I argue individuals often hope when reaching a goal is out of one's control and there is greater uncertainty (i.e., hope is grounded in uncertainty). More recently, research suggests hope may not arise when an outcome is probable (i.e., there would be no reason to hope), but rather when couples perceive a mere possibility (and are invested in the relationship; Bury et al. (2016, 2020)). Specifically, partners' holding onto hopes of reconciling or hoping to get back together with one's partner may not solely act when the odds of repairing the relationship are favourable. Rather, research suggests when the chances of restoring the relationship are uncertain and out of one's control (e.g., severe conflicts that threaten partners' relationship security), hope is argued to be motivational as it arises despite a low possibility of repair and continues to support efforts to reach repair (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010). In line with Bury et al. (2016, 2020), I argue hope for relationship repair emerges when the desired outcome of rekindling the relationship is less than probable and rather slightly departs from the impossible. Without some possibility of successfully reaching repair, one may not be able to hope; partners would instead feel hopeless and have less motivation to rekindle the relationship (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010; Wenzel et al., 2017). Each partner's level of hopefulness important for reaching the goal of repair is derived from a small possibility of rekindling the relationship (i.e., it is not impossible; > 0% likelihood). I firstly propose when there is a mere possibility, each partner's hope amounts to investing this chance with positive affect and

motivation to reconcile (e.g., provide an apology or forgiveness) and reach relational repair (Bury et al., 2016).

In addition to a small perceived possibility of repair, for hope to arise it, secondly, requires *personal investment*. That is, partners will invest their desires and chances into striving to repair a relationship that is personally significant as well as desired and imbue with it hope (Edwards et al., 2002; Nelissen, 2017). Research suggests hope emerges when the relationship is desired by the couple, personally significant (e.g., children, pets or financial gain) and worth investing one's chances to reach repair (Bury et al., 2019). Further, research argues that a couple's hope important for pursuing the relationship may depend on the desirability of the goal (Bruininks & Malle, 2005). For example, 'hoping for the relationship to be repaired as we have children' suggests the goal of repair is personally significant, desirable and sufficiently important (i.e., children) for the couple to invest more resources to hope (Averill et al., 1990; Bury et al., 2016). I propose that the rise of hope for motivating couples to persevere in reconciling and repairing the relationship is dependent on a small possibility of successfully restoring the relationship and high personal investments (See *Figure 1*). It is under these conditions that hope emerges and acts as a unique and distinct motivator to support and sustain partners' efforts to reconcile. I extend on theories of hope (Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991) to investigate hope's capacity to facilitate relationship resilience (including relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility) when the chances of repair are bleak and there are greater investments in the relationship.

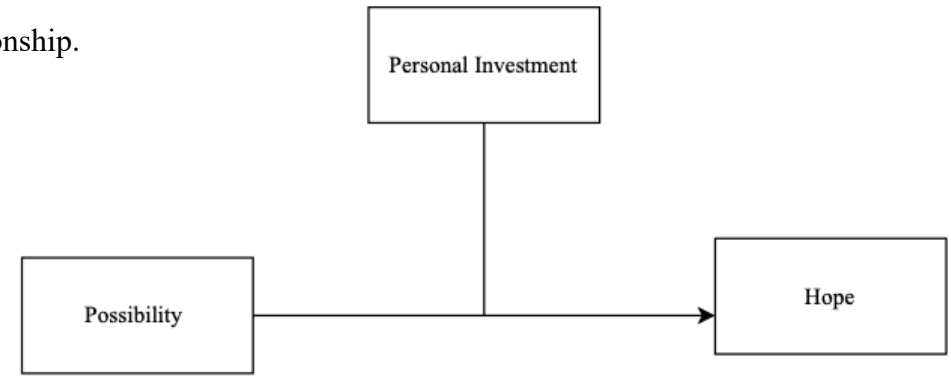

Figure 1. *The relationship between small possibility of relationship repair and hope for relationship repair is moderated by personal investment in the relationship.*

Theoretical Framework of Relational Resilience

I propose hope has the capacity to support and sustain aspects of relational resilience (including relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility) under conditions of small possibility and high investment. In previous chapters I suggest, dyadic resources refer to the resources shared by the dyad, as a consequence of partners belonging to the relationship that support individual partners and the couple to cope with conflict. Dyadic approaches (Bodenmann, 2005, 2008) argue dyadic resources exist for overcoming conflict as each partner's individual resources cannot be sufficient for both partners to act as a functional unit in the face of conflicts threatening the couple's relationship security and personal investments. The literature recognises relationship commitment and mutual trust as dyadic resources, as partners that fear losing investments will maintain one's commitment and trust to continue seeking connection and reach relationship maintenance following conflict (Murray et al., 2012). Yet, for couples to reach a consensus to reconcile and repair the relationship I argue partners must influence and exchange efforts to resolve conflict. Interdependent processes refer to the nature of romantic couples as interacting partners to influence one another's perspectives, motives, responses and behaviours to move toward reconciling and reaching a renewed relationship (Arriaga, 2013; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008). In line with interdependence approaches in close relationships (Arriaga, 2013; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993), I propose relationship resilience must reflect the bilateral and reciprocal exchanges between interdependent partners including relational flexibility in accommodating and adapting to partner's efforts to reconcile. Arriaga (2013) suggests an outcome of one partner's behaviour (e.g., efforts to repair the relationship) depends on the behaviour of the other interaction partner (e.g., flexibly adapting or accommodating to relationship changes such as changing partner roles). Conflicts are not simply overcome by each partner's individual resilience traits or at the dyadic level of resilience, but repair is dependent on the dynamic-interactive processes between partners for reaching repair (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

Hope Supports Relationship Resilience to Overcome Conflict Against the Odds

More recently, Merolla (2014) extends on common theories of hope (Edwards et al., 2002; Snyder, 2002; Snyder et al., 1991) to suggest relationship-specific hope exists in romantic couples and may support relationship resilience for partners to overcome conflicts. Merolla (2014) investigated relationship-specific hope on conflict management in romantic couples. Participants read a hypothetical infidelity scenario and completed measures of hope and conflict management. The study found relationship-specific hope supported maintenance behaviours including relationship commitment and trust important for motivating partners to repair the desired and valued relationship during hardship (Cohen-Chen et al., 2015). When conflicts such as infidelity arise, partners' lack of relational commitment and distrust in one's partner may impede efforts to reconcile. According to Merolla and Harman (2018), relationship-specific hopefulness promotes motivations (e.g., 'I have got what it takes to repair the relationship') to enact maintenance behaviours such as staying committed to the relationship and trusting one's partner as long as the goal of repair is salient, desired, valuable and worth investing efforts. Dortch (2020) investigated hope on trust and satisfaction in long-term marriage. The study found hopefulness was positively associated with greater dyadic trust. Hopefulness provided partners with the determination, energy and perceived ability to generate positive and stable evaluations of their partner as well as a greater dependence on their partner (mutual trust) to reach relational stability (Dortch, 2020). I argue partners' hope supports relationship commitment and trust in one another to strive to reach the goal of repairing the relationship (Merolla & Harman, 2018).

In addition, research suggests relationship-specific hope strengthens relationship accommodation behaviours including relationship flexibility for partners to adapt and constructively respond to conflict (Merolla, 2014). Relational flexibility and creativity in problem-solving indicative of hopefulness is thought to mitigate destructive conflict behaviours (Merolla, 2014). Merolla (2014) suggested when conflicts arise, hopeful partners have greater flexibility in the relationship to revise approaches to post-conflict relational repair, utilise

alternate communication responses, ‘let go’ of problems, adapt or accommodate relationship challenges (e.g., changing partner roles) as well as respond to partners in ways that motivate forgiveness (Laslo-Roth & George-Levi, 2022; Merolla, 2014). Laslo-Roth & George-Levi, (2022) suggest hope facilitates interdependent partners to reciprocate and share relationship flexibility, as one partner's efforts to accommodate their partner’s needs facilitatesfacilitate the other partner to adapt and respond to efforts by being flexible to relational changes. When there is a mere possibility of repairing the relationship (and greater investments), I propose hope arises to sustain and support relationship resilience (including commitment, mutual trust and relational flexibility) for couples to cope, adapt, persevere and strive to reach repair (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018) (see *Figure 2*).

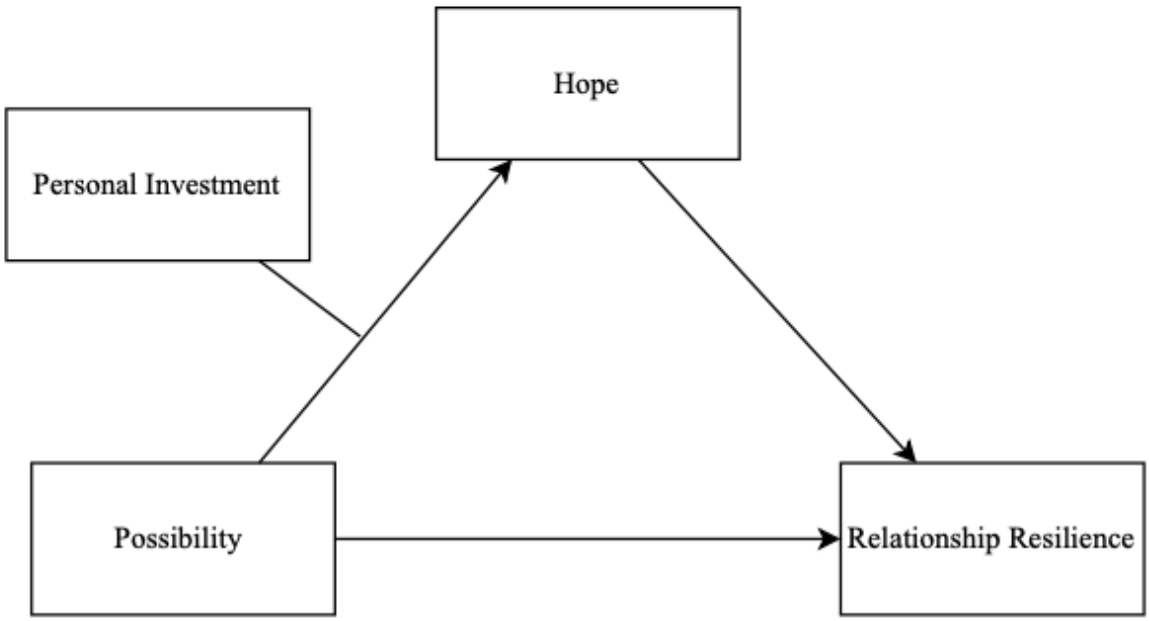

Figure 2. *Moderated mediation prediction: possibility of relationship repair and personal investment combine to increase hope, which in turn is related to greater relationship resilience.*

The Current Research

Given the development and validation of our theory on relationship resilience in previous chapters, Chapter 4 adds to the body of literature that exists on hope and resilience for dyads following internal conflicts (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Ong et al., 2006; Ong et

al., 2018). Specifically, the present research will explore the capacity of hope and relationship resilience, as a relational resource in couples to support relationship repair following conflict. When conflicts arise and there is a low possibility of repair, but high relationship investments, I propose hope will arise to increase relationship resilience within the couple (commitment, mutual trust and flexibility) for reaching the desired goal of repair (see *Figure 2*).

Study 4.1

In Chapter 2, Study 2.1 findings revealed relationship resilience encompasses the resources of relational commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility. In this chapter, the experimental component of the data from Study 2.1 will be analysed. I am interested in testing the theory that hope for relationship repair arises under conditions of low possibility and high personal investment across victim and offender partners, using a 2 (roleplay condition: victim, offender) x 2 (possibility of repair: small, zero) x 2 (personal investment: 20 years, 6 months) experimental paradigm. Under these conditions, I further aimed to build on our theoretical development of relationship resilience in previous chapters by experimentally investigating the role hope plays on relationship resilience for reaching repair when the chances of repair are unfavourable.

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are depicted in *Figure 1* (Hypothesis 1) and *Figure 2* (Hypotheses 2 and 3). For victim and offenders alike, it is hypothesized that:

H1. Following a transgression, personal investment will moderate the effect of possibility of relationship repair on hope for relationship repair, such that the effect of possibility on hope will be more pronounced for partners with high personal investment in the relationship than partners with low personal investment.

H2. Hope for relationship repair will be positively correlated with relationship resilience, such that partners with high hope will have higher scores on relationship resilience (relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility).

H3. Hope for relationship repair will mediate the effect of possibility of relationship repair on relationship resilience, in particular when there is a high personal investment in the relationship (moderated mediation).

Method

As mentioned, Study 4.1 is a secondary analysis of Study 2.1, therefore I report here only the key section of the method that is relevant.

Participants

Participants aged between 18-89 (M = 36.7, SD = 10.49) years were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (N = 1053). After the removal of surveys of participants who did not meet the criteria or who withdrew from the survey (N = 28) as well as participants who failed the English Proficiency Test check (N = 518), there were 507 surveys remaining for analysis, with 50 percent of participants being female.

Procedure

Participants were randomly allocated to either a high (20 years together) or low (6 months together) personal investment relationship scenario that varied in relationship length to manipulate participant's perception of personal investment. Participants were then asked to complete the relationship investment manipulation check items. Participants were again randomly allocated to either a victim or transgressor partner role. Finally, participants were also randomly allocated to read a possibility of repair scenario that manipulated whether there was zero possibility of repairing the relationship or a small possibility of repairing the relationship (See Appendix A). Participants were asked to complete 4 blocks of items: personal investment and possibility of repair items, the hope items, and the 12-item Relationship Resilience Scale.

Statistical Power

A Monte Carlo simulation was used to carry out a sensitivity analysis in MPlus (Muthén & Muthén, 2002) for the predicted moderated mediation. Based on the given sample size of N = 507 and for a targeted power of at least .80, an interaction effect of $\beta = .13$ would be detectable.

A conditional indirect effect (at +1SD of the moderator) would be detectable with a power of at least .80 if all relationships of the implied mediation (and the moderation effect) were $\beta = .15$, that is, of small to medium size.

Measures

Personal Investment and Possibility Manipulation Check items. The personal investment manipulation check measure was represented by the item "How invested are you in the relationship?". The possibility manipulation check measure was represented by the item "How possible is it that the relationship can be repaired?"

Personal investment referred to the degree to which the participant found the relationship both personally significant and desirable to them. Personal investment was measured by the two items "How invested are you in your relationship with your partner?" and "How important is the relationship with your partner". The two items demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .89$). Participants perceived possibility that the relationship could be repaired was measured by the question, "Do you believe there is a possibility that your relationship with your partner can be repaired?". All items were measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = not at all, 7 = very much, and averaged to create scale scores, with higher scores on items reflecting greater possibility (for the possibility item) or greater personal investment (for the personal investment items).

Hope items. Participants perceived hopefulness was measured directly with the questions, "How hopeful are you that your relationship with your partner can be repaired?" and "How hopeful are you when you think about the future with your partner?". Participants responded to all items on a 7-point scale ranging from (1 = not at all, 7 = very much), with higher scores reflecting greater hopefulness. The two items showed good internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .85$) and were averaged to create a scale score.

Relationship Resilience Scale. Participants completed the 12-item relationship resilience scale reported in Study 2.1. Participants responded to each item on a 7-point scale ranging from

1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Scores were obtained by averaging across the items. The scale demonstrated excellent internal reliability (Cronbach α = .97)

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to conducting the main analyses, the data was checked for normality to ensure all assumptions underlying statistical analysis were met. Independent *t*-tests were used to confirm the personal investment and possibility conditions were manipulated effectively. For the offenders, participants in the high personal investment condition ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.61$) reported higher investment in the relationship compared to the low investment condition ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.45$), $t\ (250) = -2.00$, $p = .046$, $d = .03$. Participants in the small possibility condition ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.55$) perceived a greater chance the relationship could be repaired compared to the zero possibility condition ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.49$), $t\ (250) = -1.40$, $p = .043$, $d = .27$. The results suggest personal investment and possibility of repair conditions for offender partners were effectively manipulated.

For victim partners, participants in the high personal investment condition ($M = 6.22$, $SD = 1.09$) reported higher investment in the relationship compared to the low investment condition ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.06$), $t\ (232) = -3.32$, $p < .001$, $d = .43$. However, there was no significant difference for victim's perceived possibility of repair between the small possibility and zero possibility of repair conditions $t\ (232) = -1.25$, $p = .212$, suggesting only personal investment was successfully manipulated. Further, preliminary analyses revealed offenders ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.53$) showed greater hope than victims ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.85$), $t\ (475) = -6.01$, $p < .001$, $d = .55$ and offenders ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.58$) showed greater relationship resilience[1] than victims ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 2.44$), $t\ (475) = -6.84$, $p < .000$, $d = .63$.

[1] Note. Pearsons correlations between hope and relationship resilience were significant (r = .83, p <.001).

Examining Hope under Small Possibility and High Personal Investment (H1)

To investigate the interaction between possibility of repair and personal investment on hope (as per the theory of hope; Bury et al., 2016) across the victim and offender condition, a three-way between-subjects ANOVA was employed. The ANOVA revealed non-significant main effect of personal investment F (1, 469) = 0.16, p = .900, η_p^2 = .01, significant main effect of possibility F (1, 469) = 4.22, p = .040, η_p^2 = .01 and role play condition, F (1,469) = 32.33, p <.001, η_p^2 = .06. All two-way interactions between personal investment and possibility (F (1, 469) = 2.68, p =.102, η_p^2 = .01), personal investment and role play condition (F (1, 469) = .02, p =.880, η_p^2 = .00) as well as possibility and role play condition (F (1, 469) = .11, p =.738, η_p^2 = .00) were non-significant. The three-way interaction between role play, possibility and personal investment conditions on hope was also non-significant F (1, 469) = 1.69, p =.193, η_p^2 = .00. see *Table 1* for descriptive statistics.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of possibility x personal investment on hope across role play condition

	Victim				**Offender**			
Possibility	High		Low		High		Low	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Small	4.25	1.22	4.15	1.21	5.37	1.19	4.92	1.22
Zero	4.19	1.20	4.09	1.23	4.54	1.24	5.00	1.21

Note. High = 20 years together, Low = 6 months together. Dependent Variable = hope

Within each role play condition, the experimental conditions between possibility and personal investment on hope was further explored using separate two-way ANOVAs. For the

victim condition, the analysis revealed non-significant main effect of possibility, F (1, 244) = 1.99, p =.159, η_p^2 = .01 and personal investment, F (1, 244) = .09, p =.758, η_p^2 = .00 as well as a non-significant two-way interaction between possibility and personal investment, F (1, 244) = .05, p =.815, η_p^2 = .00, see *Figure 3* below.

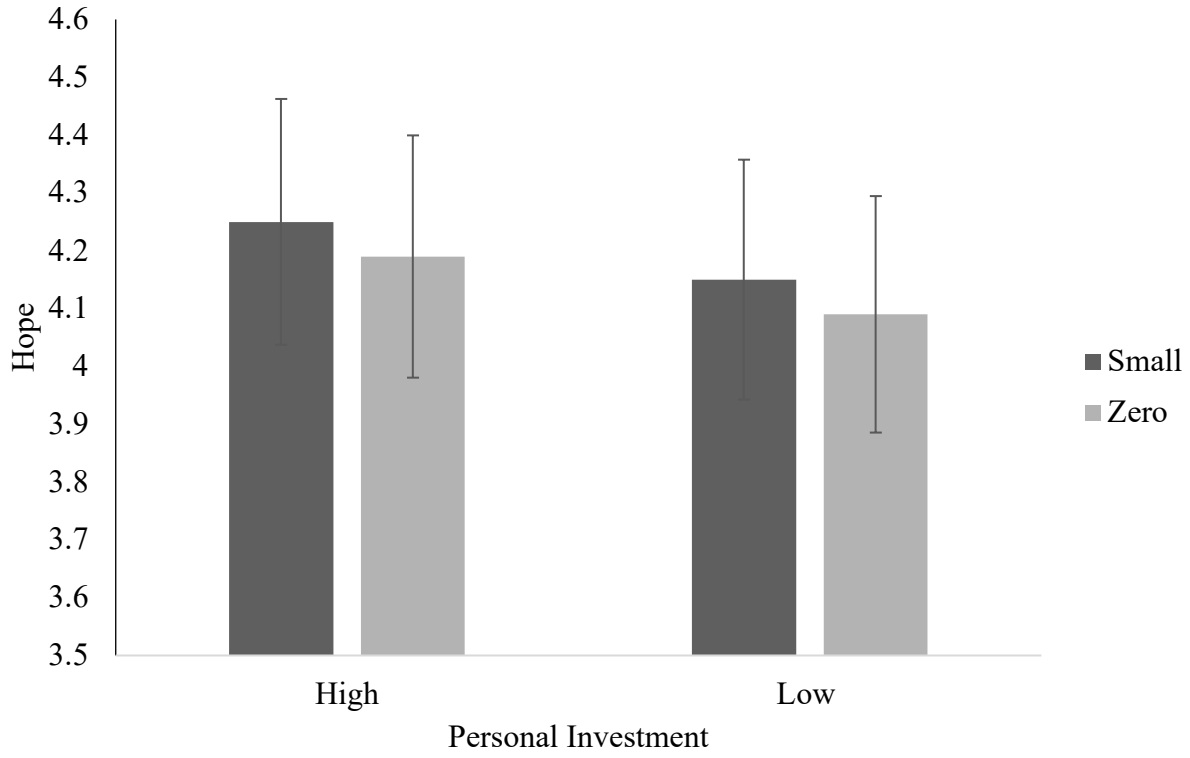

Figure 3. *Victim partner mean differences with 95% CI error bars. Note: small = small possibility, zero = zero possibility.*

Participants in the offender condition showed non-significant main effect of personal investment, F (1, 248) = .01, p =.945, η_p^2 = .00 and a significant main effect of possibility for relational repair, F (1, 248) = 4.71, p = .031, η_p^2 = .02. The two-way interaction revealed possibility and personal investment was significant, F (1, 248) = 5.59, p = .019, η_p^2 = .02, with simple effects analyses suggesting offender partners highly invested in the relationship (20 years together) were more hopeful for repair when offenders perceived a small possibility of repair compared to a zero possibility, F (1, 248) = 10.09, p =.002, η_p^2 = .03. For offender participants less invested in the relationship (6 months together), hopefulness did not

significantly differ between those with a small or zero possibility of repair F (1, 248) = .02, p =.891, η_p^2 = .00, see *Figure 4*. Our analyses suggest the results for the offender condition were consistent with our second hypothesis.

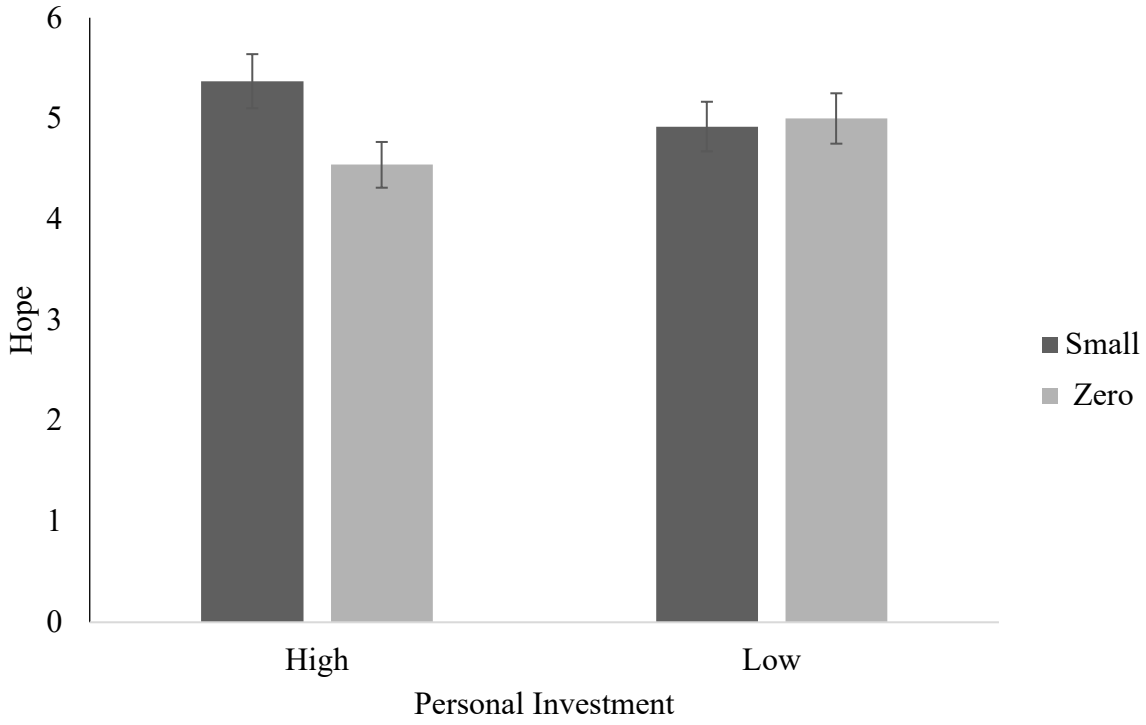

Figure 4. *Offender partner mean differences with 95% CI error bars. Note: small = small possibility, zero = zero possibility.*

Moderation Mediation (H2 & H3)

The hypothesised moderated mediation (see *Figure 2*) was tested separately for victims and offenders using PROCESS Model 7 (Hayes & Preacher, 2013). To test the conditional indirect effects of possibility on relationship resilience via hope, bootstrapping with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (5000 bootstrap samples) was used. The possibility condition was entered into the model as the independent variable, hope as the mediator, personal investment condition as moderator of the possibility-hope link, and relationship resilience as the outcome variable.

Offender Partner

For offenders, the moderated mediation analysis revealed a significant interaction between possibility and personal investment on hope, see *Table 2* for the results of the regression. Specifically, offender's perceived possibility of repair had a significant positive effect on hopefulness when there was high personal investment, B = 1.74, SE =.54, CI 95% [.66, 2.81], p = .002, but not for low personal investment, B = -.16, SE = .53, CI 95% [-1.22, .89], p = .760.

Hope showed a significant direct effect on relationship resilience, B = 1.55, SE = .08, CI 95% [1.38, 1.73], p <.001. The index of moderated mediation was significant, B = 2.96, SE = 1.19, CI 95% [.70, 5.28], p <.001, suggesting that the levels of investment significantly moderated the indirect effect of possibility on relationship resilience via hope. Specifically, the conditional indirect effect was significant when investment was high, B = 2.71, SE = .90, CI [0.90, 4.51], but it was not significant when investment was low, B = -.26, SE = .79, CI [-1.80, 1.32], see *Figure 5* for the moderated mediation.

Table 2

Moderation Mediation Analysis for the Offender Condition

Path	*B*	*SE*	*t*	[CI 95%]	ΔR^2	*F Change*	*df*
DV: Hope					.02*	6.21	1, 247
Possibility	.79	.382	2.07*	[.04, 1.55]			
Personal investment	.00	.381	.00	[-.75,.75]			
Possibility x investment	1.90	.765	2.49*	[.40, 3.41]			

DV: Relationship resilience				.55***	.04	1, 247
Possibility	-.76	.54	-1.41	[-1.83, .30]		
Hope	1.55	.08	17.51***	[1.38, 1.73]		

Note: *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p<.001

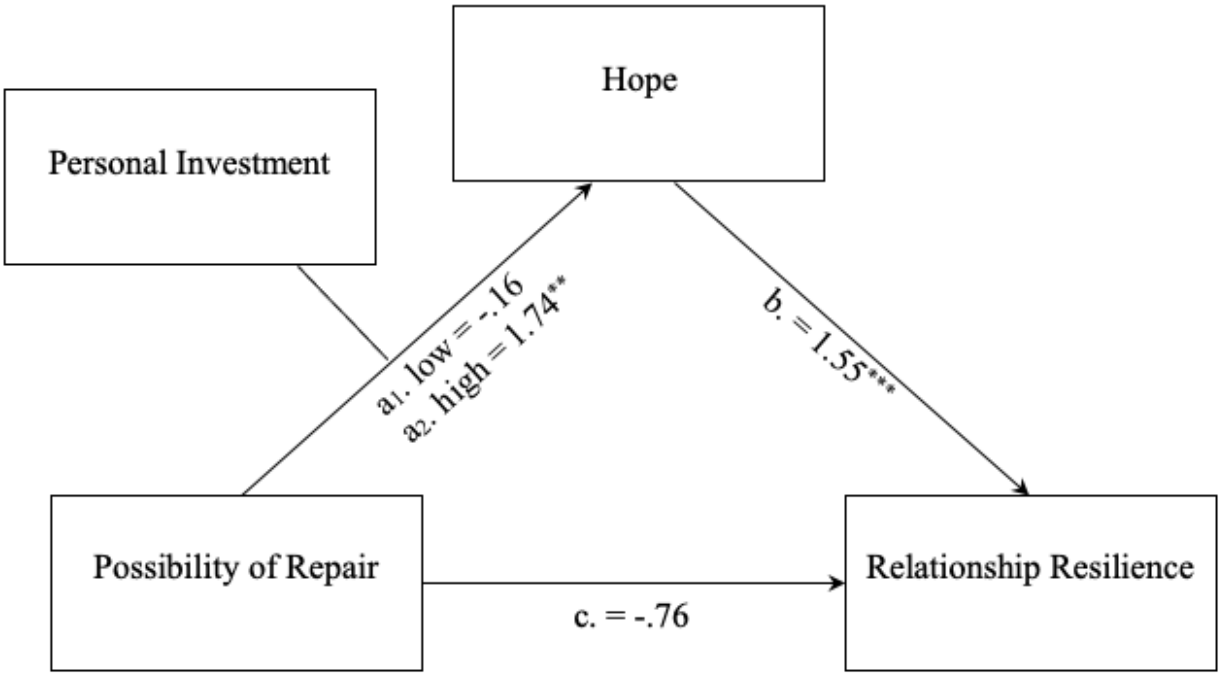

Figure 5. *Offender partner moderated mediation. Note. a_1 = low personal investment (6 months together), a_2 = high personal investment (20 years together). *p <.05; **p <.01; ***p<.001.*

Victim Partner

For victims, the moderated mediation analysis revealed the possibility and personal investment interaction on hope was not significant, see *Table 3* for the results of the regression. Therefore, since the analyses highlights hope is not related to relationship resilience, no indirect effect was found.

Table 3

Moderation Mediation Analysis for the Victim Condition

Predictor	*B*	*SE*	*t*	[CI 95%]	ΔR^2	*F Change*	*df*
DV: Hope					.00	.02	1, 241
Possibility	.72	.476	1.53	[-.20, 1.66]			
Personal investment	.09	.476	.19	[-.84, 1.03]			
Possibility x investment	.11	.953	.12	[-.76, 1.99]			
DV: Relationship resilience					.02	3.09*	2, 242
Possibility	2.84	1.17	2.42**	[.54, 5.14]			
Hope	.04	.15	.30	[-.26, .36]			

Note: *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p<.001

Discussion

With the odds of a relationship surviving following severe conflicts low and greater investments required to sustain relationships over time, can partner's hope support resources and processes of resilience within couples to 'bounce back' and reach repair? The present study aimed to answer this question by empirically testing the capacity of hope for repair to emerge under conditions of possibility and personal investment across victim and offender partners and support relationship resilience. For offender partners, the findings provide support for hope's role in sustaining relationship resilience to reach repair when the possibility of repair is small, particularly for offenders more invested in the relationship, consistent with the predictions.

However, this effect was only found for offender partners, as victims' hopes did not increase under conditions of small possibility and high investment. For victim partners, there was furthermore no support that hope was related to relationship resilience.

For offender partners, the study findings provide empirical evidence to suggest that, following conflict, offenders' hope may support relationship resilience to maintain offenders' efforts to reach the desired goal of repair, when the chances of repair are slim. Firstly, the findings provide support for H1 that, for offenders, hope increases when there is a small possibility of relationship repair and offenders are more highly invested in the relationship, aligning with previous theory on hope (Bury et al., 2016, 2020; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010). In line with common theories of hope, I argue when offenders commit a wrongdoing, offender partners' hopes of rekindling the relationship will arise, particularly if the relationship is highly desired and worth investing efforts to persevere and reach repair (Bury et al., 2016; Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2010). The results suggested offender partners with high investments in the relationship turned to hope when the prospects of repairing the relationship were less than probable (unfavourable), but merely possible (i.e., relationship was under threat of termination, but not beyond repair).

Importantly, hope for repair mediated the relationship between small possibility and relationship resilience, for offender partners with greater personal investments in the relationship, providing support for H2 and H3. Specifically, the results imply when the chances of rekindling one's relationship is slim, offenders' hope may sustain relationship resilience (including relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility) needed for reaching repair. Research suggests relationship-specific hope promotes offenders' commitment to the relationship and trust in the victim maintaining positive views or evaluations of the offender, important for encouraging the offender to strive for repair (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). Further, relationship-specific hope (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018), suggests hope facilitates relationship flexibility as partners accommodate each other's needs

and adapt to relationship changes. Furthermore, some research suggests hope supports offenders to be flexible when utilising alternative approaches (e.g., empathy when victims don't accept an apology) if victims respond unfavourably to offenders' efforts important for reaching repair (Merolla, 2014; Nelissen, 2017). In line with hope research, the findings suggest offender's hope may support relationship resilience including relationship commitment, mutual trust and relationship flexibility for resolving conflict (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018).

Future interventions on conflict resolution in offender partners may seek to make salient to offenders highly invested in the relationship that there is a chance that they can repair the relationship, to motivate and maintain reparative efforts. For offenders with greater stakes in the relationship, the findings suggest interventions could highlight there is still some possibility in reconciling (even if severe conflicts are committed) to engender hope. Hope may in turn support offenders' commitment, mutual trust and flexibility to manoeuvre through relationship challenges or setbacks and continue to strive to repair the relationship with the victim, despite a low likelihood of repair. Future research is needed to confirm the role of relationship-specific hopes in supporting relationship resilience when offenders highly invested in maintaining one's relationship, perceive a slim chance the relationship can be repaired.

Not as predicted, the findings suggested for victims highly invested in the relationship, hope did not arise when the chances of repair were slim, and hope was not directly related to relationship resilience. One explanation for the findings is that hope may play a less pronounced role for victims following severe conflicts, as victims may perceive greater control over the outcome of the relationship following a wrongdoing perceived to be caused by the offender (e.g., infidelity caused by offender). Specifically, when offenders commit a wrongdoing, the findings suggest victims may perceive they have the power and choice to terminate the relationship or reciprocate any efforts of repair from the offender (e.g., forgive and continue relationship). Hope theory (Snyder, 2002) predicts when one's perceived agency

and control is deflated, individuals with high compared to low hope can rebound from hardship quicker. The present findings suggest, when offenders' commit a wrongdoing and perceive low control over the outcome of the relationship, offenders' hopes may be sustained to persevere with repair efforts. Yet, the findings imply victims have greater internal locus of control and agency over the outcome of the relationship and therefore may not require hope. If victims perceive the offender to be predominantly responsible for the wrongdoing (e.g., cause of the infidelity and rupture in the relationship), hope may play a smaller role for victims, as victim partners may perceive it is ultimately their decision to give the offender a second chance and continue the relationship (Snyder, 2002). Future research should seek to explore the relationship between victims' hope and perceived agency and control on efforts to repair the relationship. Specifically, research should utilise methodological designs to investigate whether each partner's perceived level of agency or control in the outcome of the conflict moderates the relationship between possibility, investment, and hope. Findings could have implications for understanding the conditions when victim partners' hope arises following conflicts and the role victims' hope plays in sustaining efforts to repair the relationship.

Methodological Limitations and Future Directions

Previous research suggests hope is difficult to induce using experimental manipulations (Bury et al., 2016), therefore methodological difficulties in manipulating possibility of repair for victims could also explain why the present study was not able to induce victims' hope. Research has previously shown hope is methodologically difficult to induce when hypothetically manipulating participants perceived possibility and personal investments (Bury et al., 2016, 2019). One possible explanation is that when being told there was a zero chance of repair, victim partners in the present study may not have believed or rejected the fact that repairing the relationship with the offender is impossible (i.e., rejected zero possibility). In particular, it is possible that victims highly invested in the relationship continue to hold onto hope by overestimating their chances of successfully restoring the relationship (even when

given no perceivable chance); victims may have refused to accept the odds that the relationship could be over. Perhaps, the study was unable to observe victims hope arising under small possibility for victims, as research has shown individuals facing impossible but highly valued goals continue to hope to avoid despair, protect one's self esteem, cope and continue to strive to rekindle the relationship (Korner, 1970; Reimann et al., 2014; Snyder, 2002). It may be that in the present study, for victims, investment tended to lead to greater hope in both small and zero possibility conditions, which aligns with the interpretation that they may have reconstrued zero possibility as small possibility. Future research may benefit from taking a measurement approach to assessing victims' perceived possibility of repair, which would also allow empirically testing hope following real-life transgressions such as infidelity, hiding financial debts, lies or betrayal of trust that are personally significant to victims to induce a real threat to one's investments (e.g., financial dependence that could be lost) and measure victims' real-life perceived chances of restoring the relationship (i.e., rather than manipulating possibility). Findings could have implications for understanding the conditions for victims' hope to arise following conflict.

Additionally, the present study narrowly measured hope using two single-item measures that may not have captured what victims' hope for following conflict and could also explain why victims' hope did not arise, a possible limitation of the study design (even though the same measurements were used for offenders). The study deliberately measured two facets of hope (i.e., hope for repair and hope for the future with one's partner) well documented in previous literature for promoting reconciliation following conflict (Carotta, 2013). However, the hope measure could have had poor construct validity from a lack of items measuring hope and may not be generalisable across victim and offender partners. Research investigating hope following infidelity and violence has repeatedly found victims' 'hope for a change in the offender's behaviour' important for motivating victims to strive to repair the relationship if they perceive the offender can change (Carotta, 2013; Crapolicchio et al., 2021). In the present study, only

hope for repair and the future with one's partner was used as a measure of hope and may not reflect the hopes that victims have following conflict needed motivate efforts to restore the relationship. Research implies hope for the offender to change strengthens victims' commitment to the relationship, trust for the offender to be faithful in the future and relational flexibility to accommodate setbacks (i.e., relationship resilience) (Carotta, 2013). Future research may want to use a broader measure of hope as well as explore other facets of hope that victims have following conflict including 'hope for an apology', 'hope for the truth' or 'hope of improving their [the couples] lives collectively'. Findings could have implications for capturing and understanding what victim partners hope for following conflict that may support efforts to reach relationship repair.

I encourage future research to use a more dyadic approach to the study of hope in dyads by measuring partners' dyadic hopes in facilitating relationship resilience (Carotta, 2013; Little, 2017). More recently, hope has been shown to play a reciprocal, dyadic role within interdependent partners for enhancing resilience factors and relationship satisfaction (Laslo-Roth & George-Levi, 2022). Laslo-Roth and George-Levi, (2022) investigated a dyadic model of hope on relationship satisfaction using married couples. The study measured partners' hope and relationship satisfaction and found one partner's dyadic hopes such as 'we hope we can reconcile' facilitated the other partner to reciprocate similar hopes and in turn dyadic hopes supported each partners resilience for reaching conflict resolution (Laslo-Roth & George-Levi, 2022). When the chances of repair are small (and investments high), future research is encouraged to investigate the role dyadic hopes play on facilitating couples' dyadic resilience resources (relationship commitment and mutual trust) and interdependent resilience processes (relationship flexibility) to reach repair.

Conclusion

The present study is the first to empirically test hope's role in supporting relationship resilience for reaching relationship repair under conditions of possibility and personal

investment within romantic couples following conflict. The study has theoretical implications for our understanding of hope and relationship resilience on reaching repair when the chances of restoring the relationship are slim. The findings suggest that when offenders perceive a small chance of repairing the relationship and have greater investments to be lost, offenders' hope will arise to support relationship commitment, mutual trust and relational flexibility (relationship resilience) important for sustaining offenders' efforts to reach repair. I encourage future studies to confirm this finding for highly invested victim partners (with a small perceived chance of repair) using a broader measure of hope to identify if victims' hope plays a role on relationship resilience for victims in supporting their efforts to restore the relationship. Future studies should utilise real-life transgressions across a range of dyads (e.g., teammates, work colleagues, friends) to identify the effect hope has on relationship resilience for repair in the real world. The present study provides a novel pathway for future research to explore the role of hope on relationship resilience within romantic couples for restoring the relationship, particularly when 'bouncing back' from conflict is not in the couples' favour.

CHAPTER 5: General Discussion- Building Hope and Relationship Resilience to 'Bounce Back' from Couple's Conflict

"Together they stood in the storm, and when the wind did not blow her way, he adjusted her sails and discovered the secret to surviving the passing storm together." – Elizabeth Edwards

While Elizabeth Edwards describes a process of adjusting one's sails as a 'secret' for the ways a couple can survive hardship, in this thesis I have contributed to knowledge by investigating the secrets- the factors, resources and processes- that cultivate resilience in romantic couples to 'bounce back' and even transform the couple beyond conflict. Unlike common definitions of resilience (Rutter, 1987, 2012) that emphasise intra-individual processes for overcoming hardship, in this thesis I conceptualise *relationship resilience* as the dyadic and interactive processes exchanged between interdependent partners for coping, adapting, bending, flexibly maneuvering and overcoming conflict. I identify and validate the multidimensional resources and processes that form relationship resilience: relationship commitment, mutual trust (dyadic resources), relationship flexibility and dyadic coping (interdependent processes). I suggest hope for repair is positively associated with relationship resilience (and its factors) and these patterns of resilience may subsequently support reparative actions including forgiveness and self-forgiveness. Yet, the individual resources and processes of relationship resilience are complex and may have implications for supporting repair and mitigating defensive action (i.e., self-punitiveness, pseudo self-forgiveness, avoidance and revenge) above that of the relationship resilience construct. Further, I found under conditions of high investments and small possibility of repair, an offender partner's hope arises and may in turn support relationship resilience for repair. The findings have implications for resilience theory and practice, suggesting dyadic resources and interactive processes of relationship resilience operate between interdependent partners for coping as well as reaching a consensus to reconcile and maintaining hope may

support relationship restoration. This thesis demonstrated conflict resolution needed for relationship longevity may necessitate these patterns of resilience within couples.

In this final chapter, I will discuss the present findings focusing on the key aims of this thesis to (1) provide a theoretical framework for relationship resilience and validate its factors in combatting conflict in dyads and show how these findings contribute to existing knowledge on resilience; (2) explore the capacity of hope to sustain relationship resilience (and its factors) for repair, particularly when the chances of repair are slim; and in turn, (3) identify if these patterns of resilience facilitate forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes within victim and offender partners. I will discuss the implications of the findings for our understanding of resilience, relationships and moral repair theory and practice. Next, I will address possible interventions aimed at targeting romantic couples at risk of relationship breakdown by cultivating relationship resilience, based on the findings found in this thesis. Lastly, I will consider methodological limitations of this thesis as well as provide future directions for hope and relationship resilience research to further investigate how dyads build hardier and sturdier relationships in the face of conflict.

A New Perspective of Resilience in Relationships

A key contribution of this thesis is the theoretical development, measurement and validation of resilience that resides within dyads following conflict. The present research suggests resilience is not a single dimension in the face of hardship as commonly conceptualised (Rutter, 1987, 2012), but distinguishes dyadic and interactive-interdependent multidimensional levels that form relationship resilience for conflict resolution. I proposed dyadic resources are shared by both partners as a consequence of them being part of the relationship or extending from the relationship and support the dyad to cope during conflict. Further, I proposed interdependent processes refers to the nature of couples to be interdependent in their efforts to resolve conflicts as the couple possesses a collaborative capacity when interacting and responding to one another to reach a consensus to reconcile. Across all studies in Chapter 2, utilising both hypothetical and

real-life transgressions, the validation of the relationship resilience scale suggested relationship commitment and mutual trust (dyadic resources) as well as relationship flexibility and dyadic coping (interdependent processes) in Studies 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 are strong predictors of relationship resilience for both victim and offender partners for coping, adapting, and overcoming conflict.

For decades, resilience has been conceptualised as an intrapsychic process within individual partners for independently overcoming hardship (Rutter, 1987, 2012), yet the findings in this thesis suggested resilience within relationships is multi-faceted, dynamic and interactive within relationships, allowing partners to cope, flex with and resolve conflict. The present findings contribute to dyadic research (Bodenmann, 2005; Bodenmann et al., 2019; Falconier & Kuhn, 2019) by highlighting that when conflicts arise, individual resilience alone may not be able to resolve conflict from the relationship partners are embedded in. Dyadic researchers argue that dyadic processes (e.g., coping efforts or positive affect) may only operate between partners following external stressors (i.e., medical illness), as internal conflicts are appraised as caused by one partner, therefore the couple will not share resources to cope (Bodenmann, 2005; Bodenmann et al., 2019; Falconier & Kuhn, 2019). Yet, the present findings suggest that in the face of internal conflict, partners exchange dyadic resources including mutual trust and commitment to one's partner. Research suggests couples may sustain mutual trust and relationship commitment to maintain personal investments (e.g., financial dependence) that could be lost if the relationship was not repaired (Murray et al., 2012; Roloff et al., 2001). I argue, for couples with a shared goal of repairing the relationship, conflicts threatening both partners' relationship security cannot be ameliorated independently and may require dyadic resources. The present research provides support to suggest dyadic resources including mutual trust and commitment are shared between partners for internal stressors to support each partner and the dyad to cope, adapt and reach conflict resolution (Meier et al., 2021; Thompson & Ravlin, 2017; Zemp et al., 2017).

In this thesis, I identify that the interdependent processes of resilience within relationships including relationship flexibility and dyadic coping are reciprocated between partners (Study 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4), and I argue is a key advancement of resilience and dyadic theories (Rutter, 2012). In line with interdependence theories (Arriaga, 2013; Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Van Lange & Balliet, 2015), the findings suggest that repair is dependent on the dynamic responses and interactions between interdependent partners for reaching reconciliation including relational flexibility and dyadic coping. Interdependence theory argues an outcome of one partner's behaviour depends on the behaviour of the other interaction partner (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008), highlighting partners are interactive. The present research suggests one partner's flexibility in changing relationship routines, adopting their partners' perspective to view the conflict in a new light and responding to coping efforts may in turn facilitate the other partner to be flexible and utilise dyadic coping efforts to reach a consensus to repair the relationship. Importantly, previously developed scales including the Dyadic Coping Inventory (Bodenmann, 2008) and the Dyadic Communicative Resilience Scale (Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019) to date have only implied interdependent processes exist for external conflicts. The scales suggest partners have flexibility in negotiating new routines following COVID-19 financial conflicts such as negotiating cheaper family holidays as well as perspective-taking to cope following hardship (Chernichky-Karcher et al., 2019). Yet, the development of the present relationship resilience measurement tool provides some empirical support that relationship flexibility and dyadic coping reflect interdependent, interactive, and reciprocal processes couples engage in when responding to internal stressors and reaching a consensus to reconcile. The present research provides a new perspective of resilience in relationships and advances common resilience and dyadic theories to suggest resilience is not unidimensional or single-faceted but may reflect the dyadic and interdependent capacity of couples that serve their relationship to be protected from, to adjust to or recover from challenges.

The Capacity of Hope to Sustain Relationship Resilience when the Odds are Slim

The second key contribution of this thesis was to investigate the capacity of partner's hope to sustain relationship resilience (and its factors) to reach repair. Hope is argued to be more resistant and resilient to adversity (Nelissen, 2017), therefore Chapter 3 empirically tested hope as a resource to relationship resilience using hypothetical and real-life transgressions across victim and offender partners. Across all studies, I found hope was positively associated with relationship resilience and its factors: relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility (Study 3.1) and dyadic coping (Study 3.2 and 3.3). In line with relationship-specific hope theory and theories of hope, our findings suggest hope may provide victim and offender partners with the motivation to maintain trust in one's partner and the relationship as well as relationship commitment, as partners strive to keep relationship investments (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Ozag, 2006). Further, the findings suggest hope may support interdependent processes, as research argues couples' flexibly adapt to relationship changes as well as engage in dyadic coping efforts such as perspective taking to reach shared goals of conflict resolution (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018). In line with research that acknowledges hope sustains individual resilience, the present research provides some empirical evidence that hope may support relationship resilience for reaching repair (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Ozag, 2006).

In Chapter 4, I drew on theories of hope (Bury et al., 2016; Rand & Cheavens, 2009; Snyder, 2002) to investigate the capacity of hope to sustain relationship resilience in the face of severe conflicts, specifically, when the likelihood of repair is low and there are greater personal investments in the relationship. The findings suggested that offenders' hope for repair is associated with greater relationship resilience for reaching repair, when the chances of the offender repairing the relationship is slim (and there is greater investment). Yet for victims, hope played a less pronounced role in facilitating relationship resilience. The findings suggested for victim's hope did not arise under conditions of small possibility and high investment. One

explanation is that offenders can respond to wrongdoings (e.g., apologise or seek forgiveness), yet ultimately, victims may percieve they have the choice and power to reciprocate the offenders' conciliatory efforts (e.g., forgive and continue relationship) or end the relationship. Following hope theory (Snyder, 2002), when offenders' perceived agency and control on the future of the relationship is low, hopeful offenders compared to low hope offenders may bounce back quicker, with one's desires for the relationship and may provide offenders with the motivation to reach repair. Specifically, research argues maintaining hope will instil the agency lost and motivation to persevere with repair efforts (Snyder, 2002). The findings suggest that in contexts where the offender perceives limited control or agency in repairing the relationship (e.g., severe conflict such as infidelity), hoping could be a resource to sustaining relationship commitment, mutual trust, flexibility and dyadic coping (relationship resilience) needed for offenders to persevere and reach repair. Perhaps, when victims perceive the offender to be predominantly responsible for the wrongdoing (e.g., infidelity), the present findings suggest hope may play a smaller role for victims, as victims may perceive greater agency and control over the future of the relationship. Specifically, when an offender commits a wrongdoing and inflicts possible harm toward the victim, the findings imply that it is the victims' choice to give the offender a second chance, reconcile and continue the relationship, therefore hoping may play a small role when there is greater control on the outcome of the relationship.

The findings have implications for relationship repair in the context of severe conflicts, as one's reliance on hope to sustain relationship resilience may depend on partners' perceived agency. Study 4.1 asked participants to hypothetically imagine their partner cheating on them, therefore future research should seek to explore the capacity of hope to sustain relationship resilience in the face of real-life conflicts when partners perceive real limits and threats to their agency and control in restoring the relationship. Specifically, in the real world, hope may strongly arise when partners with real investments (e.g., children, house, financial dependence) face real threats such as infidelity or a partner hiding financial debt within the relationship. In

this context, hope may play a particularly powerful role for partners striving to maintain real investments when they perceive less agency in reaching repair. Future studies should utilise real-life transgressions with different levels of conflict severity to investigate whether hope plays a pronounced role in sustaining relationship resilience needed for repair. Particularly, when moderated by victims' and offenders' perceived agency and control in maintaining highly desired and wanted relationships.

Hope and Relationship Resilience for Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness

The third contribution of this thesis was to empirically test the capacity of hope to support relationship resilience and in turn for victims to forgive offenders and offenders to self-forgive. Consistent across the studies in Chapter 3, hope was positively related to relationship resilience and in turn these patterns of resilience were positively associated with reparative actions over time (i.e., forgiveness and self-forgiveness). Research on relationship-specific hope suggests partner's hopes provides the motivation to support partners' commitment in the relationship, trust in one's partner, as partners strive to maintain relationship investments such as children (Merolla, 2014; Merolla & Harman, 2018; Ozag, 2006). Further, relationship-specific hope theory implies hope provides couples with the flexibility to accommodate partners' needs and relationship challenges as well as perspective-taking to appraise the conflict as not a threat but a challenge important for coping (i.e., relationship resilience). In turn, research argues commitment and trusting one's partner support efforts to forgive and self-forgive, as partners strive to continue to invest in the relationship (e.g., taking a positive view of one's partner or not holding a grudge) important for maintaining relational security (Finkel et al., 2002; Pelucchi et al., 2015). Further, partner's flexibility to negotiate and respond to each other's conciliatory efforts, to re-appraise the offense as a stressor that both partners can cope with, adopt a positive view of the offender or allow compensation of a mistake supported forgiveness and self-forgiveness efforts (Bem et al., 2021; Hall & Fincham, 2006). The present findings suggest hope for repair supports relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic

coping, as partners strive to maintain the relationship and in turn these patterns of resilience are associated with facilitating the couple to reach a consensus to forgive and self-forgive following conflict.

The present research highlights the need for resilience within relationships to be conceptualised as a multidimensional construct cultivated from dyadic and interdependent processes as it allowed for investigations into how couples reach forgiveness processes, a strength of our theory. Previous research argues forgiveness is a single process that a partner chooses to engage in following conflict (Rosenak & Harnden, 1992; Walton, 2005). Yet, recent research argues forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes are dyadic as well as reciprocal and interactive processes between interdependent partners, as one partners' moral repair efforts (e.g., providing an apology) may facilitate the other partner to engage in conciliatory efforts such as forgiveness (Wenzel et al., 2021; Woodyatt et al., 2022). The multidimensional approach used to conceptualise relationship resilience that includes dyadic and interdependent levels allowed for research to investigate the dyadic and interdependent processes that support self-forgiveness and forgiveness processes. Further, the research in Studies 3.1 and 3.2 provide some empirical evidence to suggest that forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes are dyadic and interdependent processes between couples, and conciliatory processes in couples may require dyadic resources and interdependent processes of relationship resilience for reaching a consensus to reconcile.

Further, the research in Chapter 3 provided some empirical support that hope via relationship resilience is associated with reducing conflict-damaging responses including pseudo self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness in offenders as well as revenge and avoidance in victims. For offenders, relationship resilience was negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness in cross-sectional and prospective studies suggesting dyadic resources and interdependent processes of relationship resilience may mitigate offenders from shifting blame or downplaying' one's action to repair the relationship. Yet, the studies showed mixed findings for self-punitiveness, and this

could be due to research arguing self-punitiveness is a complex response to conflict and has different functions for offenders (de Vel-Palumbo et al., 2018). Research suggests the function of self-punitiveness can change over time, as initially it might serve as an expression of remorse for one's actions, but over time self-punitiveness could be considered as self-indulgent such as to restore one's moral self (de Vel-Palumbo et al., 2018). For victims, relationship resilience was negatively related to revenge in cross-sectional and prospective studies. Avoidance showed mixed findings suggesting avoidance is a coping mechanism and may depend on victim's perceived severity of injustice for the wrongdoing. Research argues avoidance is a coping mechanism victims engage in following conflict and the strength of victim's motivations to engage in avoidance may depend on the severity of the transgression as well as the percieved injustice of the offense (Tripp et al. 2003). Specifically, research suggests, greater percieved injustices (e.g., infidelity) are shown to increase the severity of victim's motivations to engage in avoidance to cope with distress (Molden & Finkel, 2010). The research presented in Chapter 3 suggests hope via relationship resilience may play a role in reducing conflict-damaging responses including pseudo self-forgiveness, self-punitiveness, revenge and avoidance. However, partners' motivations to engage in these responses have different functions within victims and offenders and may also depend on the complexity of the conflict (e.g., severity, one's percieved injustice). Future research should seek to further understand the function at pseudo self-forgiveness, self-punitiveness, revenge and avoidance serve following conflict as well as the role of hope and relationship resilience in mitigating these responses.

The findings in Chapter 3 implied that the dyadic resources and interdependent processes are complex in reaching repair, as residual covariances with the factors of relationship resilience suggest the factors may play an independent role above that of the latent relationship resilience construct on conciliatory processes. For offenders, relationship flexibility may have a greater association with self-forgiveness than that implied by the effect of relationship resilience on self-forgiveness. Further, the association with pseudo self-forgiveness was less negative for

commitment. For victims, the findings suggested mutual trust may have a less positive effect on avoidance and a more negative effect on revenge (Study 3.1), however dyadic coping may have a less negative effect on avoidance and revenge at Time 2 than the latent relationship resilience construct (Study 3.2b). Given the findings are based on correlational data from post-hoc analyses, future research needs to further explore whether relationship resilience or specific factors of relationship resilience including mutual trust, relationship commitment and dyadic coping play a role on victim and offenders' responses to conflict. Findings could have implications for the theory of relationship resilience, as the factors of relationship resilience may function differently for partners depending on their role in the conflict and may influence the other partner's efforts to engage in defensive and reparative action above that of the relationship resilience construct.

Importantly, the present research design was limited in not experimentally testing how the factors of relationship resilience operate on a dyadic level (e.g., mutual trust across partners in the same couple) for reaching reparative action. The present research only investigated one partner's (e.g., victim's trust) resources on conciliatory processes in each study, therefore future research is encouraged to utilise a dyadic design to investigate how the factors of relationships resilience operate between victim and offender partners for repair as well as support conciliatory processes (e.g., mutual trust within the dyad). Findings have implications for the theory of relationship resilience in understanding how partners interact and exchange relationship resilience and its factors within the dyad to support the couple to reach reconciliation and prevent relationship breakdowns.

In this thesis, the prospective approach used in Studies 3.2 allowed for investigating how relationship resilience sustains conciliatory processes across a 48-hour time period, however I was not able to explore how couples' relational behaviours continue to evolve beyond forgiveness and self-forgiveness. Moral repair research highlights that following self-forgiveness and interpersonal restoration, offenders continue to grow by acknowledging negative feelings,

self-acceptance, letting go of shame and guilt (Fisher & Exline, 2010) as well as continue efforts to develop the relationship through avoiding repeating future offenses and taking care of the victim (Pelucchi et al., 2013). Future research should investigate whether partners continue to work and restore the relationship following conciliatory efforts to identify if relationship resilience processes sustain relationship restoration efforts beyond conflict resolution. Findings could have implications for the theory of relationship resilience to understand how hope supports dyadic and interdependent processes over the course of conflict as well as whether these patterns of resilience can transform couples beyond conflict (i.e., reaching a renewed or reimagined relationship).

Across all studies in Chapters 3 and 4, the findings suggested that partner's individual hopes are a resource to relationship resilience, yet I am limited in understanding how hope is constructed within a dyad, particularly when the goal is shared such as renewing the relationship. In this thesis, hope is measured as a pre-existing resource within a partner, and I explored how a victim's or offender's individual hopes support relationship resilience for reaching forgiveness or self-forgiveness processes. Recently, research has begun to investigate dyadic approaches to the study of hope as a resource to couples in overcoming hardship (Laranjeira et al., 2022; Laslo-Roth & George-Levi, 2022; Rock et al., 2014). Laslo-Roth and George-Levi (2022) investigated a dyadic model of hope in romantic couples. The study found each partner's hopes were dyadic processes reciprocated between partners that facilitated the couple to reach relationship goals such as improving their relationship functioning or navigating challenges within the relationship. Future research is needed to investigate how dyadic hope is cultivated and constructed within the dyad, as one partner's appraisal of reaching relationship satisfaction (e.g., we are hopeful for reconciling), might be reciprocated by the other partner and could be a resource to the dyad in reaching the shared goal of relationship repair (Laranjeira et al., 2022; Laslo-Roth & George-Levi, 2022; Rock et al., 2014). Importantly, investigations should seek to address how dyadic hopes support dyadic resources and interdependent resilience processes, as findings could have

implications for understanding how couples maintain motivations to reach shared goals or outlooks such as reaching a renewed relationship.

Practical Implications of Relationship Resilience

The development of relationship resilience in Chapters 1 and 2, as a multi-faceted and multidimensional model, is a strength of the present research as it may provide a framework for future research to develop interventions targeted at couples at risk of relationship dissolution. When conflicts such as betrayal arise, victims may perceive a violation of trust, less commitment toward the offenders and decrease in willingness to accommodate offenders that in turn may increase relationship breakdowns (Tomlinson et al., 2004). It seems the present findings suggest for conflicts to resolve, interventions should not simply address each partner's individual coping capability and resiliencies residing within partners (e.g., optimism), but rather target the dyads' capacity to share dyadic resources including relationship commitment and mutual trust. Research argues following conflict, offender partners demonstrating to victims that future trust will not be violated may increase victims' dependence and faith (i.e., trust) as well as sustain victims' commitment to the relationship (Tomlinson et al., 2004; Vasalou et al., 2008). Further, research suggests offenders' recommitment to the relationship and appraisal that the victim perceives the offender to still be dependable and trustworthy promotes reparative efforts (Ren & Gray, 2009; Tomlinson et al., 2004). In addition, clinicians may need to seek to develop flexibility and dyadic coping by facilitating partners to accommodate relationship changes, perspective-take and adapt to conflict. For example, the present research suggests victims' adapting to relationship changes may influence offenders to accommodate victims' needs (relational flexibility) as well as take the perspective of each partner (dyadic coping). Interventions should address the capacity for the dyad to build dyadic and interdependent patterns of resilience within the couple when conflicts arise to support the couple to cope, overcome conflict and reach conciliatory processes.

Methodological Limitations and Future Research

This thesis aimed to investigate the factors, resources or processes that build resilience within couples for reaching reconciliatory processes and overcoming conflict. This thesis utilised cross-sectional and prospective study designs following hypothetical and real-life transgressions that allowed for exploring the role of hope and relationship resilience on resolving conflict across victim and offender partners. However, methodological designs utilising a range of diverse dyads facing real-world transgressions are needed to further validate the theory of relationship resilience as well as confirm factors of relationship resilience that facilitate conflict resolution. To continue investigating the capacity of resilience and hope in supporting dyads to 'bounce back' following conflict, it is important to develop dyadic research methodologies to better capture how victim and offender partners build durable relationships that can withstand conflict and reach repair.

The findings in this thesis provided initial empirical support for the role of relationship resilience for reaching repair following conflict. However, the data on resilience relied on self-report measures of partner's perceived relationship resilience following hypothetical and real-life transgressions using static, cross-sectional designs. Therefore, causation cannot be inferred in relation to relationship resilience and reconciliation processes for conflict resolution. The present research surveyed participants perceived relationship resilience by asking participants to recall how resilient they were regarding their relationship after the conflict has occurred (e.g., "I am willing to be flexible in our relationship"). Yet, conflicts are not necessarily static, but rather evolve and progress over the course of a relationship such as financial debts that build overtime and result in financial conflicts. Instead, research should capture resilience at the point that transgressions arise and monitor how dyads share, interact, and reciprocate commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping as the conflict evolves overtime. For example, each partner may possess trust, yet may also be less or more trusting over the course of a relationship (e.g., following a betrayal). Therefore, methodological designs should also capture

the capacity of relationships resilience as being both a state and trait-based construct that interplay over time. This would provide a more comprehensive picture of how couples cultivate and use relationship resilience resources and processes to cope and adapt when conflicts arise, reach a consenus to reconcile following conflict as well as maintain the relationship over the course of future conflicts.

The present studies findings were obtained from an individual perspective of either the victim or the offender that provided initial empirical evidence and support for the theory of relationship resilience and allows for future research to confirm the present findings using dyadic approaches. Future research should utilise dyads following the same interpersonal transgression and investigate the couples' capacity to be resilient to provide further evidence of external validity as well as applicability of this research in dyads. Methodological designs that measure relationship resilience within dyads could provide further validation for the theory of relationship resilience as well as address the generalisability of the findings in this thesis that have been conducted at an individual level (i.e., victim or offender). Furthermore, I encourage future studies to utilise other dyads (e.g., teammates, work colleagues and best friends), where one's commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping may vary based on partners' level of investments in the relationship (e.g., high or low) if the relationship dissolved. This has implications for the present theory to identify if the model of relationship resilience holds across diverse dyads, even if I postulate that romantic couples may have greater investments to lose (e.g., their house and financial dependence) and therefore greater relationship resilience than other dyads such as employer and employee when facing conflict. Research methodologies using a diverse range of dyads should strive to holistically capture how relationship resilience and its factors facilitate conflict resolution and prevent relationship breakdowns.

This thesis investigated several resources and processes including relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping that provided some initial empirical evidence to validate the theory and conceptualisation of relationship resilience. Research is still

needed to investigate other resources of resilience that could cultivate relationship resilience in romantic relationships such as dyadic communication resilience, shared identity and dyadic closeness (Frost & LeBlanc, 2022; Lillie et al., 2021; Skerrett & Fergus, 2015; Venetis et al., 2020). In this thesis, relationship commitment and mutual trust as well as relationship flexibility and dyadic coping were identified and validated as possible dyadic resources and interdependent processes of relationship resilience. These factors were selected due to a wealth of research associating the factors with relationship functioning and relationship satisfaction following conflict in romantic couples (Allen et al., 2013; Murray et al., 2012; Roloff et al., 2001; Zemp et al., 2017). More recently, other factors have emerged in the literature for facilitating relationship functioning in romantic relationships. One partners' perceived emotional closeness and physical desires for distance is shown to influence the other partner to reciprocate dyadic closeness (Frost & LeBlanc, 2022). Dyadic closeness has been associated with relationship quality as well as satisfaction and could represent an interdependent process of relationship resilience (Frost & LeBlanc, 2022). Dyadic communication resilience (Lillie et al., 2021; Venetis et al., 2020) recognises partners' efforts to negotiate, respond and reciprocate when interacting in communication as indicative of relationship functioning (Baucom et al., 2015). If dyadic communication interactions exist following conflict as partners negotiate to reach conflict resolution, then research should investigate if dyadic communication is predictive of relationship resilience. Further, a shared or dyadic identity (i.e., a sense of "we-ness") within the couple could be a dyadic resource to the couple, as partners identifying themselves as part of a functional unit was shown to be positively associated with overcoming hardship and reaching shared goals (Skerrett & Fergus, 2015). Future research is encouraged to explore other resources and processes to the dyad in facilitating couples to cope, adapt, flex with, and recover from conflict. Findings could be used to inform interventions aimed at facilitating factors of relationship resilience within the dyad that can sustain reparative efforts needed to prevent relationship dissolution.

To date, research on resilience has commonly utilised individual approaches to identify intra-psychic traits and processes of resilience (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1979), yet this thesis aimed to develop, validate and experimentally investigate the capacity of dyadic resources and interdependent processes of resilience within couples to reach repair. In Chapter 1, I propose relationship resilience has three levels: (1) individual resources, (2) dyadic resources and (3) interdependent processes, however I only investigated the latter two levels given research on dyadic and interdependent processes for relationship repair is limited. Future research is needed to capture a comprehensive picture of how partners' *individual* resilience processes interact with dyadic and interdependent resilience processes for supporting relationship repair following conflict. Research suggests optimism, cognitive flexibility and conscientiousness are individual personality traits associated with resilience in overcoming hardship (Fayombo, 2010; Pathak & Lata, 2018; Soltani et al., 2013). Murray and Holmes (1997) found optimistic partners is associated with greater mutual trust, continuing commitments to the relationship and greater dyadic coping efforts. Research suggests individual resilient traits may support dyadic and interdependent levels of relationship resilience (Fayombo, 2010; Murray & Holmes, 1997; Pathak & Lata, 2018; Soltani et al., 2013). Future research, wherein intra-individual, dyadic and interdependent levels are combined at varying levels may be useful in identifying if individual resilience capacities or propensities can support relationship level dyadic and interdependent resilience resources and processes for cultivating hardier and sturdier partners and relationships.

Research is encouraged to investigate if there is a synergistic interaction between each level of relationship resilience in cultivating hardier and sturdier relationships (e.g., individual resilience traits on supporting dyadic and interdependent resources and vice versa). Such an approach could be useful to establish how repair is reached if individual differences in resilient traits (e.g., one partner with less or more cognitive flexibility, optimism and conscientiousness than the other partners) interplay with dyadic and interdependent resilience factors to build relationship resilience and support each partner and the couple to operate as a functional unit

when responding to conflict. This could allow for a greater understanding of the conceptualisation of relationship resilience. Furthermore, the theories used in this thesis were selected to support the operationalization of relationship resilience as a tripartite construct (Bodenmann, 2005; Lillie et al., 2021; Rutter, 2012). Future research should build on the theory of relationship resilience by including other relationship and resilience models such as the Vulnerability Stress and Adaptation model to further address how couples interact and adapt to relational stressors (Clabburn, 2022).

For decades, resilience and hope within relationships have mainly been studied in the literature (as well as in this thesis) within a positive psychology framework for overcoming hardship (Grunert, 2008; Neff & Broady, 2011; Turner & Ripley, 2007; Venter & Snyders, 2009), yet I argue there could be a '*darker side'* to hope and resilience. Research has tended to view both hope and resilience as resources to relational wellbeing (Laslo-Roth & George-Levi, 2022; Xiang et al., 2022). Yet, there is a need for research to investigate when cultivating hope and resilience might be maladaptive for couples facing repeated transgressions such as in the context of violent or toxic relationships. Research has shown that victims who are extremely hopeful the offender can change are more forgiving of offenders and willing to return to abusive partners (Crapolicchio et al., 2021; Marden & Rice, 1995). In turn, forgiveness encouraged offenders to repeatedly offend, thus maintaining dysfunctional and toxic relationships (Bell & Naugle, 2005; Martin & Stermac, 2010). Future research should similarly investigate when high hopes, which on one hand support resilient relationships to sustain commitment, mutual trust, flexibility in accommodating conflict and dyadic coping efforts for victims to reconcile, may on the other hand place individuals at greater risk of future victimisation and abuse (Crapolicchio et al., 2021). The findings could have implications for understanding how hope and relationship resilience is sustained in relationships that might best be terminated, and in which relationships these patterns of resilience are in fact not a resource to the dyad. For example, hopeful couples within resilient relationships where one partner is dominant and powerful (e.g., offender) and the

other partner is submissive and dependent (e.g., victim), could support victims to forgive and subsequently allow offenders to continue exploiting the victims' goodwill. Research should consider relational contexts and boundaries when hopefulness and relationship resilience for relationship restoration is maladaptive, as the findings could be used to address future interventions aimed at supporting victims at risk of maintaining cycles of abuse.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to identify the factors, resources or processes- the patterns of resilience- within couples that build relationship resilience needed for partners to overcome conflict. The studies within this thesis provide some empirical evidence that resilience within relationships is dynamic within couples. Specifically, relationship resilience encompasses dyadic and interactive processes exchanged between interdependent partners including relationship commitment, mutual trust, relationship flexibility and dyadic coping for adapting, bending, flexibly maneuvering and overcoming conflict. The research suggested hope may be a support and resource to couple's resilience when conflict arises. Specifically, offender's hope for repair seems to promote relationship resilience under conditions of low likelihood (high investment) and could provide motivations when offenders perceive limited agency or control in reaching repair. Furthermore, the findings suggest hope supports relationship resilience and in turn may motivate partners to reach forgiveness and self-forgiveness processes. Yet, the research implies the factors of relationships resilience independently are complex and may occasionally play a role on reparative or relationship damaging responses above that of the relationship resilience construct. Future research should focus on how these patterns of resilience (i.e., hope and relationship resilience) are cultivated and build durable relationships over the course of conflict as well as how the factors of relationship resilience alone have further potential unique effects on reconciliatory processes. In researching these questions, it would be useful to utilise a diverse range of dyads (e.g., friends, work colleagues or teammates) facing real life transgressions. The findings in this thesis encourages future research to move research on resilience in relationships

beyond a single dimension framework and toward a holistic picture that captures dyadic, interdependent, and dynamic partner interactions for building hardier relationships to ‘bounce back’ from conflict.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Hypothetical Infidelity Scenario Materials (used in Study 2.1, 3.1 & 4.1)

Relationship Investment Scenario

High investment relationship

"You and your partner have been together for 20 years and live together. You share two children and a small dog. You both are saving to buy a house"

Low Investment relationship

"You and your partner have been together for 6 months. You have had a brief discussion regarding getting a dog"

Partner Scenario

Victim Scenario

Imagine the following event occurs in this imagined relationship. Try and think about how you would feel and respond.

It is your normal day off work, but you have been called into the office. You have recently been working overtime, late at night, at your new job to help pay the bills. Your partner has been commenting on your absence. So, you promise your partner that you both will go out that night with some new friends.

Around 5 pm your boss asks if you would like to work a few extra hours for double pay. The extra overtime money would really help relieve the pressure of this week's bills. Plus, you are really hoping that your hard work gets noticed when you go for your next promotion.

You decide to meet your partner and friends later in the night. You feel a bit bad for leaving your partner to go by themselves, but figure it is important that you stay.

You arrive at drinks close to midnight.

[PAGE BREAK]

When you arrive, you notice your partner laughing with one of the new friends. Your partner seems like they are drunk. You watch as your partner and the friend both go onto the dance floor and then you see them kiss. A few moments later your partner walks away. They then see you walk over. They put on their coat, saying they want to go home.

Offender Scenario

Imagine the following event occurs in this imagined relationship. Try and think about how you would feel and respond.

It is your partner's normal day off work, but your partner has been called into the office. Your partner has recently been working overtime, late at night, at their new job to help pay the bills. Lately, you have been commenting on your partner's absence. Because of this your partner promises you that you both will go out that night with some new friends.

Around 5 pm your partner's boss asks your partner if your partner would like to work a few extra hours for double pay. The extra overtime money would really help relieve the pressure of this week’s bills. Plus, your partner was really hoping that all their hard work gets noticed when your partner goes for the next promotion.

Your partner tells you to carry on and decides to meet you and the friends later in the night. You feel a bit sad that your partner let you go by yourself, but figure it was important that your partner stayed at work.

[PAGE BREAK]

You went to drinks and really hit it off with the new friends. You were really enjoying yourself. You had not noticed the time that had passed and how much you had been drinking. One of the friends wanted to dance, so you both went on the dance floor. On the dance floor, your friend leant in and kissed you. When you both stop, you notice your partner walking toward you, so you put your coat on and say, "I want to go home".

Possibility of Repair Scenario

Zero possibility condition

This is not the first time your partner has [you have] been unfaithful in your relationship. In fact, after several previous indiscretions, you went to couples therapy to try to save the relationship. This is the worst the relationship has been. The counsellor stated that this is a pattern in your relationship that will continue to get worse. The counsellor pulled you aside after the session and told you that they see zero possibility that the relationship is reparable and can last.

Several days later your partner hasn't mentioned the situation at all.

Small possibility condition

This is not the first time your partner has [you have] been unfaithful in your relationship. In fact, after several previous indiscretions, you went to couples therapy to try to save the relationship. This is the worst the relationship has been. The counsellor stated that this is a pattern in your relationship that will continue to get worse. The counsellor pulled you aside after the session and told you that they see a small possibility that the relationship is reparable and can last.

Several days later your partner hasn't mentioned the situation at all.

Appendix B: Study 2.1 Analyses of the CD-RISC Scale with the Relationship Resilience Items

The three-factor relationship resilience model identified two dyadic resource factors (commitment & trust) and one interdependent resource factor (flexibility). To ascertain whether individual resilience factors provide a good fit within our model; an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted with the 12 modified relationship resilience items and CD-RISC scale items. The 25 CD-RISC items comprise of the following five factors: (1) personal competence; (2) tolerance of negative affect; (3) positive acceptance of change; (4) control; and (5) spirituality. (Connor & Davidson, 2003). We will explore the fit for our relationship resilience 3-factor structure (i.e., commitment, trust and flexibility in the relationship) with each of the CD-RISC factors and provide evidence of convergent and discriminate validity.

Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Following recommendations (Hinkin, 1998), an initial exploratory factor analysis of the 25 Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) scale items using Dimension Reduction Factor Analyses with Direct Oblimin Rotations, revealed that only a single factor could be extracted. Confirmatory factor analysis with the single factor revealed an inconsistent and poor model fit[2]; χ^2 (276) = 943.22, RMSEA= .11, TLI= .85, CFI = .87. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted with the 12 modified relationship resilience items and 25 CD-RISC items. Our initial EFA extracted a four-factor model fit, explaining 39.02% of the total item variance. *Supplementary Table 1* reports the factor loadings for all items.

Supplementary Table 1

EFA Results using Dimension Reduction Factor Analyses Extracting a Four Factor Solution with Direct Oblimin Rotation

Item	Factor Loading			
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Relationship Resilience				
1. I want our relationship to last a very long time	**.73**	-.50		
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner	**.75**	-.51		
3. I want our relationship to last forever	**.74**	-.52		
4. I imagine being with my partner several years from now	**.75**	-.51		
5. I would trust my partner still, even in contexts where other people might not	**.70**	-.53		
6. I believe my partner is dependable	**.73**	-.50		
7. I am certain my partner would be faithful	**.71**	-.52		
8. I am confident that my partner will tell the truth	**.72**	-.53		
9. I am willing to be flexible in our relationship	**.72**	-.51		
10. I am ready to accept future changes to the relationship	**.62**	-.30		
11. I am willing to try different solutions that my partner proposes to solve the problem	**.70**	-45		
12. I am willing to create a new version of our relationship with my partner	**.75**	-.46		
CD-RISC Personal Competence				
13. I put my best effort no matter what	**.55**	-.47		
14. I can achieve my relationship goals	**.69**			

15. When things look hopeless, I will not give up	**.58**			
16. I like relationship challenges	.63		.40	
17. I work to attain my relationship goals	**.63**			
18. I have pride in my achievements	**.55**	-.42		
CD-RISC Tolerance of Negative Affect				
19. I can see the humour side of things	**.56**			
20. Coping with stress strengthens me	**.57**			
21. Under pressure, I focus and think clearly	**.57**	.42		
22. I prefer to take the lead in problem solving	**.59**	.33		
23. I can make unpopular or difficult decisions	.40	.43		
24. I can handle unpleasant feelings	**.50**	.43		
25. I can act on a hunch	.47			
CD-RISC Positive Acceptance of Change				
26. I am able to adapt to change	**.55**	.40		
27. I have close and secure relationships	**.60**	.32		
28. I can deal with whatever comes	**.57**	.48		
29. Past success gives me confidence for new challenges	**.61**	.36		
30. I tend to bounce back after hardship	**.59**	.34		
CD-RISC Control				
31. I know where to turn to for help	**.54**	.38		
32. I have a strong sense of purpose	**.54**	.47		
33. I am in control of my life	**.51**	.42		
CD-RISC Spirituality				
34. Sometimes fate or god can help	.52		.50	
35. Things happen for a reason	.46		.35	-.32

Note. Factor Loadings in Component Matrix;

Pearson's correlations were performed to evaluate the relationship between the identified relationship resilience scale with the five factors from the CD-RISC (See *Supplementary Table 2*). All 25 CD-RISC items demonstrated moderate correlations with the relationship resilience scale ($r >$. 44) and showed poor internal consistency (Cronbach $\alpha = .61$).

Supplementary Table 2

Pearson Correlations of the five CD-RISC subscales with Relationship Resilience scale

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Relationship Resilience Scale	.53***	.33***	.35***	.28***	.34***
M (SD)	*21.44 (5.70)*	*18.43 (4.91)*	*13.78 (3.72)*	*8.35 (2.38)*	*5.17 (1.85)*
Range	0-32	0-28	0-20	0-12	0-8

Note. CD-RISC Factor 1 = personal competence. Factor 2 = tolerance of negative affect. Factor 3 = positive acceptance of change. Factor 4 =control. Factor 5= spiritual influences. Significance level = $p < .001^{***}$.

Appendix C: Study 2.1 Initial EFA and Three-Factor Model Results

Supplementary Table 1

EFA Results using Dimension Reduction Factor Analyses Extracting a single factor with Direct Oblimin Rotation

Item	Factor Loading
1. I want our relationship to last a very long time	.89
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner	.91
3. I want our relationship to last forever	.41
4. I would feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future	.75
5. I want to be reconciled with my partner	.88
6. I imagine being with my partner several years from now	.91
7. I would trust my partner still, even in contexts where other people might not	.86
8. I believe my partner is dependable	.86
9. I am certain my partner would be faithful	.85
10. I am confident that my partner will tell the truth	.87
11. I am willing to be flexible in our relationship	.87
12. I am ready to accept future changes to the relationship	.70
13. I am willing to try different solutions that my partner proposes to solve the problem	.84
14. I am willing to create a new version of our relationship with my partner	.87
15. I will try and analyse the situation together with my partner to fix the problem	.87
16. I am willing to forgive my partner	. 84
17. I think my partner should cope with the problem on his/her own	.39*

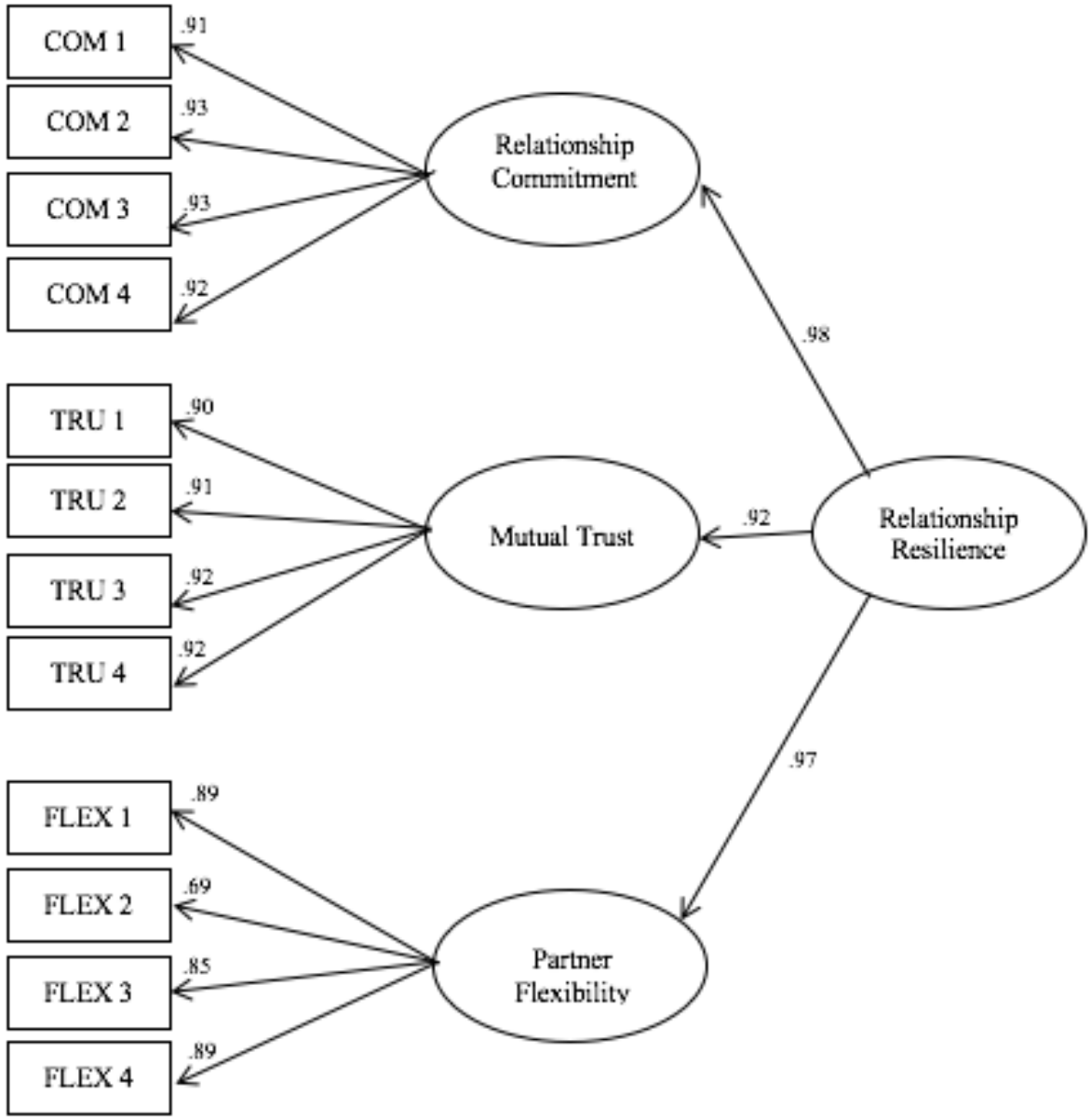
Note. Factor Loadings in Component Matrix; *Factor 2 loading = .88

Supplementary Table 2

Standardised regression weight for the three factor relationship resilience items

Item	Standardised Regression Weight
Commitment to the Relationship	
1. I want our relationship to last a very long time	.91
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner	.93
3. I want our relationship to last forever	.93
4. I imagine being with my partner several years from now	.92
Trust in the relationship	
5. I would trust my partner still, even in contexts where other people might not	.90
6. I believe my partner is dependable	.91
7. I am certain my partner would be faithful	.92
8. I am confident that my partner will tell the truth	.92
Flexibility in the relationship	
9. I am willing to be flexible in our relationship	.89
10. I am ready to accept future changes to the relationship	.69
11. I am willing to try different solutions that my partner proposes to solve the problem	.85
12. I am willing to create a new version of our relationship with my partner	.89

Note. All regression weights are significant at $p < .001$.



Supplementary Figure 1. *Study 2.1 SEM results for a three-factor second-order CFA model of the relationship resilience items with standardised regressions. All unstandardized regressions were significant at p <.001.*

Appendix D: Study 2.2 Four-Factor Model Factor Loadings and Convergent Validity Analyses

Supplementary Table 1

Mean, standard deviation and factor loadings for the relationship resilience items in the pattern matrix using Offender Partners

Items	M	SD	Factor			
			Relationship Commitment	Mutual Trust	Relationship Flexibility	Dyadic Coping
I want our relationship to last a very long time	7.52	2.18	**.92**			
I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner	6.56	2.09	**.88**			
I want our relationship to last forever	6.36	2.30	**.91**			
I imagine being with my partner several years from now	6.47	2.24	**.91**			
I would trust my partner still, even in contexts where other people might not	5.83	2.22		**.73**		
I believe my partner is dependable	6.10	2.18		**.74**		
I am certain my partner would be faithful	6.03	2.32	.	**.82**		
I am confident that my partner will tell the truth	5.89	2.28		**.76**		
I am willing to be flexible in our relationship	6.15	1.84			**.85**	
I am ready to accept future changes to the relationship	5.95	1.96			**.87**	
I am willing to try different solutions that my partner proposes to solve the problem	6.42	1.78		.43	**.83**	

I am willing to create a new version of our relationship with my partner	5.68	2.09	**.68**	
We try and cope with the problem together and search for ascertained solutions	3.69	1.05		**.83**
We engage in a serious discussion about the problem and think through what has been done	3.71	1.07		**.86**
We help one another put the problem into perspective and see it in a new light	3.65	1.06		**.89**
We are affectionate to each other, make love and try that way to cope with stress	3.34	1.29		**.39**

Note. $N = 960$; values in bold indicate the factor on which the item loads.

Supplementary Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations of the Commitment Level subscale of the Investment Model Scale and Dependability subscale of the Trust Scale with the Relationship Resilience Scale and subscales

Scale	Commitment Level Subscale	Dependability Subscale
Relationship Resilience Total	.85	.75
Relationship Commitment	.92	.60
Mutual Trust	.70	.86
Relationship Flexibility	.59	.50
Dyadic Coping	.57	.68
Total Scale M (SD)	*42.38 (12.00)*	*4.75 (6.99)*

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

Appendix E: Study 2.3 Standardised Regression Weights (Offender Partner)

Supplementary Table 1

Standardised Regression Weight for a Four-Factor Second Order Relationship Resilience Model using Offender Partners

Items of each subscale	Standardised Regression Weight
Commitment to the Relationship	.92
1. I want our relationship to last a very long time	.96
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner	.94
3. I want our relationship to last forever	.96
4. I imagine being with my partner several years from now	.93
Trust in the relationship	.83
5. I would trust my partner still, even in contexts where other people might not	.86
6. I believe my partner is dependable	.88
7. I am certain my partner would be faithful	.81
8. I am confident that my partner will tell the truth	.87
Flexibility in the relationship	.89
9. I am willing to be flexible in our relationship	.77
10. I am ready to accept future changes to the relationship	.67
11. I am willing to try different solutions that my partner proposes to solve the problem	.89
12. I am willing to create a new version of our relationship with my partner	.73
Dyadic Coping	.60
13. We try and cope with the problem together and search for ascertained solutions	.88
14. We engage in a serious discussion about the problem and think through what has been done	.87
15. We help one another put the problem into perspective and see it in a new light	.90
16. We are affectionate to each other, make love and try that way to cope with stress	.67

Note. All regression weights are significant at $p < .001$.

Appendix F: Study 2.4 Standardised Regression Weights (Victim Partner)

Supplementary Table 1

Standardised Regression Weight for a Four-Factor Second Order Relationship Resilience Model using Victim Partners

Items of each subscale	Standardised Regression Weight
Commitment to the Relationship	.93
17. I want our relationship to last a very long time	.95
18. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner	.92
19. I want our relationship to last forever	.93
20. I imagine being with my partner several years from now	.94
Trust in the relationship	.87
21. I would trust my partner still, even in contexts where other people might not	.87
22. I believe my partner is dependable	.86
23. I am certain my partner would be faithful	.82
24. I am confident that my partner will tell the truth	.98
Flexibility in the relationship	.90
25. I am willing to be flexible in our relationship	.85
26. I am ready to accept future changes to the relationship	.56
27. I am willing to try different solutions that my partner proposes to solve the problem	.87
28. I am willing to create a new version of our relationship with my partner	.73
Dyadic Coping	.54
29. We try and cope with the problem together and search for ascertained solutions	.87
30. We engage in a serious discussion about the problem and think through what has been done	.88
31. We help one another put the problem into perspective and see it in a new light	.83
32. We are affectionate to each other, make love and try that way to cope with stress	.60

Note. All regression weights are significant at $p < .001$.