3-2002

# Interpersonal forgiveness in elementary school-aged children

Susan M. Goss
*University of Nebraska at Omaha*

# INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

A Thesis

Presented to the

Department of Psychology

And the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements of the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

By

Susan M. Goss

March, 2002





ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

Laura Tilton-Weaver

Brigitte Reynolds

Mary Ann Lamanna

Chairperson Joseph C. LaVoie

Date March 13, 2002

# INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

Susan M. Goss

University of Nebraska, 2002

Advisor: Joseph LaVoie, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study was to extend the adolescent and adult research and assess how forgiveness develops in elementary school-aged children. Sixty-three children aged 7 to 12 reported how willing they would be to forgive three types of transgressions (emotional, physical, and property) involving an accidental or deliberate act, with or without an apology, and of either low or high severity. In addition, empathy, prosocial behavior, and religiosity were measured. Age, empathy, prosocial behavior, and religiosity were not related to willingness to forgive as had been expected. However, gender differences were found, with boys reporting a greater willingness to forgive than girls. As hypothesized, the children reported being more willing to forgive transgressions when an apology for the act was given, when the act was accidental, and when the transgression was of low severity. Unexpectedly, the children were more willing to forgive transgressions involving emotional damage than transgressions resulting in either property or physical damage. As expected, the children were least willing to forgive transgressions involving acts of physical aggression. A number of interactions were found, indicating a more complex relationship between the situational variables under study. An apology

seemed to have the greatest influence on willingness to forgive; however, the effectiveness of an apology was decreased when the transgression was deliberate or resulted in severe harm. In general, the younger children's willingness to forgive was influenced by the situational variables to the same degree as the older children, demonstrating that by age seven children take into consideration the intention, severity, and the lack of an apology when deciding to forgive a transgression. Baumeister, Exline, and Sommer's (1998) dimensions of forgiveness (total forgiveness, hollow forgiveness, silent forgiveness, and no forgiveness) were explored in the current sample. The pattern of findings using Baumeister et al.'s types of forgiveness by children suggest a trend towards greater use of hollow forgiveness (i.e., reconciling with the wrongdoer but maintaining negative cognitions or emotions towards the transgressor) in girls and total forgiveness (i.e., reconciling with the wrongdoer and holding positive thoughts and feelings towards the transgressor) in boys.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Joe LaVoie, for the guidance he provided and time he devoted to rereading and editing this manuscript. I would also like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Brigette Ryalls, Lauree Tilton-Weaver, and Mary Ann Lamanna for their suggestions and continuous encouragement while completing this study.

A special thank-you goes to my family and fellow students for their support and just generally putting up with me over the last few years, which, as I understand it, isn't easy at the best of times =).

Table of Contents

Chapter Page

List of Tables

Table Page

# List of Figures

# List of Appendices

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### Statement of the Problem

Throughout history the importance of forgiveness has been extensively discussed and expressed to the worlds' population via religion, philosophy, and literature. The unwillingness to forgive can be identified as one of the fundamental reasons for continued conflict between individuals, families, and larger social groups. Without forgiveness, a cycle of revenge seeking is produced with each injured party continually retaliating for perceived wrongdoings. According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1998), forgiveness involves, "Opening the door for the other person to have a chance to begin again...forgiveness can unite people...and without forgiveness there is no future" (p. xiii). The significance of forgiveness is further expressed eloquently by Yandell's (1998) truism, "The facts are that people harm people, and that people are inherently social and cannot flourish in isolation. The consequence is that people either forgive one another or else wither as persons; they reconcile or perish" (p. 45).

Although the importance of the ideal of forgiveness has been recognized, little is understood regarding either what forgiveness is or how forgiveness can be fostered in or between individuals. Scientific research involving the concept of forgiveness has been relatively sparse, with rigorous research only beginning in the early 1980s. A significant amount of the early research on forgiveness grew out of the recognition by mental health professionals and counselors of the positive effect of

both self-forgiveness and the forgiveness of others (known as interpersonal forgiveness which is the focus of this study) on the mental health and well being of their clients. Research suggests that forgiveness may reduce emotional and physiological stress responses and enhance health, while holding grudges may have negative impacts on health (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001). The recognition of the benefits of forgiveness towards positive individual outcomes has led researchers to investigate the process of forgiveness and how forgiveness can be fostered in an individual or between two or more parties. A number of models of the process of forgiveness as well as the variables that may enhance or inhibit the process have been proposed. The research on forgiveness up to this point in time has been conducted in adolescent and adult populations. Although a number of researchers (e.g., Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992; Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991; Park & Enright, 1997) have hypothesized how forgiveness may develop throughout childhood, no published research has included children under the age of nine, or attempted to study empirically how forgiveness develops in children.

The purpose of this study was to extend the adolescent and adult research and assess how forgiveness develops in elementary school-aged children (ages 7 through 12). A number of potential variables that may be related to the likelihood of a child forgiving were also studied; namely, empathy, prosocial behavior, religiosity, the necessity of a forthcoming apology, the intentional nature of the transgression (accidental or deliberate), the type of transgression (emotional, physical, or property

damage), and the severity of the transgression. Additional predictor variables included age and gender.

## Review of the Forgiveness Literature

### Definitions of Forgiveness

The concept of what it actually means to forgive has become more refined in recent years. The most often cited definition of forgiveness is one put forth by North (1987) which was expanded upon by Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1991). According to both North and Enright et al., genuine forgiveness occurs when an individual who has suffered some form of wrongdoing gives up the right to resentment and retribution and instead views the wrongdoer with compassion and benevolence. North suggests that the process of forgiving involves the release of negative emotions, for example anger, with the replacement by more positive emotions, such as compassion. Enright et al. further suggest that forgiveness involves the end of negative thoughts regarding the wrongdoer as well as the end of negative behaviors (e.g., revenge seeking). These negative cognitions and behaviors are replaced with more positive judgments of the wrongdoer and more positive behaviors (e.g., attempts at reconciliation). The release of these negative emotions, cognitions, and behaviors and their replacement with positive emotions, cognitions, and behaviors are the six components that represent true forgiveness (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998).

In further defining genuine forgiveness, Enright and Coyle (1998) explain what forgiveness is not. They suggest that true forgiveness does not involve

pardoning, condoning, excusing, denying, or forgetting the wrongdoer's actions. The injured individual retains the memories of the event as well as the recognition of the wrongdoer's responsibility for his/her behavior, but voluntarily chooses to change the way they think, feel, and behave towards the wrongdoer (Enright & Coyle, 1998; Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992). Finally, reconciliation is neither the same as forgiveness nor a necessary part of the forgiveness process. An individual can forgive a wrongdoer, but decide not to remain in a relationship with them (Enright & Coyle, 1998).

Dimensions of Forgiveness

Based on Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1998) definition of forgiveness, Baumeister, Exline, and Sommer (1998) produced a typology of forgiveness that encompasses two dimensions: an intrapsychic (cognition and affect) dimension and an interpersonal (behavioral) dimension. These two dimensions are independent, and, therefore, produce four possible combinations or categories of forgiveness. These categories of forgiveness (as suggested by Baumeister et al., 1998) are:

No forgiveness, in which the individual neither feels nor expresses forgiveness.

Hollow forgiveness, in which the individual expresses forgiveness but does not forgive internally and holds on to a grudge.

Silent forgiveness, in which the individual forgives the wrongdoer internally through experiencing changes from negative cognitions and emotions to positive cognitions and emotions, but does not express forgiveness to the wrongdoer.

Total forgiveness, in which the individual both feels and expresses forgiveness.

The Structural Model of Forgiveness

Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1994) propose a six-stage developmental model of forgiveness. Each of these stages is hypothesized to develop in parallel with each of Kohlberg's stages of moral development. According to Kohlberg (1976), moral reasoning increases with age through three stages with two levels of reasoning occurring during each stage. The first stage of moral development (preconventional morality) encompasses Level 1 and Level 2 reasoning. At Level 1 reasoning, an individual is most concerned with being punished and being obedient, and has a tendency to focus on the magnitude of a wrongdoing or the magnitude of the consequences. Level 2 reasoning involves reciprocal conformity where an individual conforms to the rules out of self-interest. This first stage of moral development generally includes children aged 4 to 10 years.

The second stage of moral development (morality of conventional role conformity) encompasses Level 3 and Level 4 moral reasoning. Level 3 reasoning is evidenced when an individual makes moral decisions based on enhancement of relationships and social approval. Individuals in this stage are able to evaluate acts based on the motives behind them and to take into account mitigating circumstances.

Level 4 reasoning involves a greater social concern within the individual and an adherence to duty and what should be done in order to maintain the social order. At this stage of moral development, individuals have a tendency to consider an act that is harmful or in conflict with the rules as always wrong regardless of any mitigating circumstances. This second stage of moral development generally includes children aged 10 to 13 years.

The third stage of moral development (morality of autonomous moral principles) encompasses Level 5 and Level 6 reasoning. Individuals at the fifth level of morality value the vote of the majority and what is best for society. Although laws and human need sometimes conflict, individuals reasoning at this level still believe it is better to adhere to the rules. At the sixth level of moral development individuals follow internalized standards regarding what is the right, moral thing to do regardless of the law or what others say. This third stage generally includes individuals age 13 years and onward. The sixth level represents true morality, and many individuals may never exhibit reasoning at this level.

Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1994) suggest that reasoning about forgiveness will follow the same developmental course as reasoning about moral issues in each of Kohlberg's stages of moral development. The stages of Enright et al.'s model of forgiveness in their developmental order of appearance are as follows:

Revengeful Forgiveness, involves forgiving a wrongdoer only when he/she is punished to the same degree of harm caused.

Restitutional/Compensational Forgiveness, involves getting back what is lost or forgiving only to relieve one's own guilt.

Expectational Forgiveness, involves forgiving only when one is expected or pressured to do so.

Lawful Expectational Forgiveness, involves forgiving when religion or another institution dictates it.

Forgiveness as Social Harmony, involves forgiving to decrease friction and restore good relations.

Forgiveness as Love, involves unconditional forgiving because it promotes a sense of love.

Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1994) tested their hypothesis that forgiveness would show the same patterns of development as moral development using Rest's Defining Issues Test to measure moral development and two modified dilemmas from the Rest's Defining Issues Test to measure the forgiveness stages. The sample in this study included 9-, 12-, 15-, and 18- to 21-year-old participants (both males and females). Results showed a strong correlation between age and forgiveness ($r = .72$), with the progression through the developmental stages increasing with age, and a moderate correlation between forgiveness stage and moral development stage ($r = .54$). The results of Enright et al.'s research suggest that reasoning about forgiveness develops and increases with age, along with an individual's cognitive skills and abilities to view situations from

another person's perspective and the ability to empathize (McCullough & Worthington, 1997).

The Process Model of Forgiveness

The process of forgiveness involves four major phases encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes (Enright & Coyle, 1998; Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991). These four phases are: an uncovering phase, a decision phase, a work phase, and a deepening phase.

The uncovering phase of forgiveness involves examining the mechanisms which the injured individual may have been using to avoid dealing with the transgression, which may in turn lead to the confrontation of anger and the recognition of shame or embarrassment. The injured individual may become more aware of the amount of effort expended as a result of the transgression, and how often the transgression has been replayed cognitively. By comparing oneself with the wrongdoer, the injured individual may realize the permanent, negative change caused by the transgression and recognize an alteration in their view of justice.

The decision phase involves a greater awareness of the impact of the transgression on oneself and the search for some type of resolution—forgiveness being one possible form of resolution. The recognition that forgiveness is one possible response may lead to the commitment to the response of forgiveness.

The work phase involves a "reframing" of the individual's perception of the wrongdoer through role-taking, or looking at the situation from the wrongdoer's perspective so that the wrongdoer's behavior seems less negative. Through

reframing, the individual may be in a better position to empathize and feel compassion for the wrongdoer. Lastly, during this work phase, the individual may accept the pain caused by the wrongdoer and through this acceptance give a "moral" or "altruistic" gift of forgiveness to the wrongdoer.

The deepening phase involves the recognition by the injured individual that as they move closer to forgiveness they begin to experience healing. The injured individual may also recognize that they have been forgiven in the past themselves and that others have suffered transgressions as well. The injured individual may also find new purposes in life due to the experienced transgression, and experience both an internal and external release due to a decrease in negative emotions and an increase in experienced positive emotions.

The process model of forgiveness outlined above was developed by Enright and the Human Development Study Group with the intention of being "as complete as possible in describing how people forgive, avoiding, as much as possible, reductionism and oversimplification" (1998, p. 143). A number of intervention studies involving the entire process model of forgiveness have been performed. The participants involved in these intervention studies included elderly women who had experienced overmedication, spousal conflict, and disappointment in their children; college students emotionally hurt by a parent; female incest survivors; and men hurt by their partner's decision to have an abortion. The focus of these intervention studies was on special populations of individuals who had experienced extreme injustices or transgressions. The question of whether the process of forgiveness is

the same for children who have experienced a transgression of similar magnitude to that of the adults in the studies mentioned above is an important one; however, it may be more appropriate to increase our understanding of the process of forgiveness for children experiencing "every day" types of transgressions first before moving on to more extreme situations. Forgiveness for the types of conflicts and transgressions typically experienced by children on a daily basis (for example, friends or siblings lying or breaking a possession) may not involve the extensive process of all four phases outlined by Enright et al.; however, the work phase of Enright et al.'s forgiveness model provides a starting point for understanding the underlying process involved in forgiving relatively minor transgressions. Therefore, the aspects involved in the work phase were focused on in this study. The work phase of forgiveness in Enright et al.'s model involves empathizing with the wrongdoer through reframing the transgression from the wrongdoer's perspective, and choosing to give forgiveness as an altruistic gift.

## Intrapersonal Variables Associated With Forgiveness

### Empathy and Forgiveness

Empathy has been defined as the ability to share vicariously the emotion of another individual (Hoffman, 1975). The capacity to empathize, according to Hoffman, develops through four stages: global empathy, where an individual feels that what is occurring to someone else is happening to themselves due to a lack of self-other distinction (first year); egocentric empathy, where an individual is aware that they are distinct and separate from another individual, but still assumes that

another's feelings are the same as their own (second year); the third stage involves an individual's awareness that another person's thoughts and feelings are different from their own, and an ability to respond to another person's distress based on the other person's needs rather than their own (age three into late childhood); by late childhood (fourth stage) individuals are capable of empathizing with a wide range of different emotions, are better able to respond to another person more appropriately, and can also imagine another person's thoughts or feelings even when no immediate cues are available.

Based, in part, on Hoffman's (1975) developmental model, Davis (1983) developed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), to measure four elements of dispositional empathy in adults. These four elements include: perspective taking, fantasy (imagining oneself in the position of a fictional character), empathic concern, and personal distress. Litvack-Miller, McDougall, and Romney (1997) modified Davis' IRI measure for use with children. In their study, Litvack-Miller et al. administered their version of the IRI to children in the second-, fourth-, and sixth-grades (ages 7 through 12). The results of Litvack-Miller et al.'s study indicated that sixth-grade children display empathic concern to a greater degree than either second- or fourth-grade children, and that girls are significantly more empathic than boys. Litvack-Miller et al. further suggest that while the factors measured with the adapted version of the IRI were not identical to the factors used in Davis' study, empathy in middle childhood can be understood using Davis' four-factor model.

According to McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997), empathy mediates the altruistic gift of forgiveness because an individual can understand the wrongdoer's behavior from the wrongdoer's perspective and imagine the thoughts and feelings of the wrongdoer. The capacity for altruistic behaviors, in the form of attempts to alleviate emotional distress in others, increases with age and has been correlated with empathy development (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992). However, research designed to study the relationship between empathy and altruistic behavior in adults has found the aspect of empathic concern from the Davis model of dispositional empathy to be predictive of altruism, but not the aspect of personal distress (Batson, Fultz, & Shoenrade, 1987; Davis, 1983). Litvack-Miller, McDougall, and Romney (1997) found empathic concern to account for the greatest amount of variance in altruistic behavior in children even after removing the variance attributable to age and gender.

Research specifically studying the effect of empathy on forgiveness in adults has found empathy and forgiveness to be correlated ($r = .67$) (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Further research involving the relationship between empathy and forgiveness in adults by McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, and Hight (1998) led these researchers to conclude that "empathy can be considered one of the most proximal determinants of the capacity to forgive others."

Given that empathy is a significant predictor of forgiveness in adults, it was assumed that the same association would be found in children. Based on the relationship between empathy and forgiveness in adults outlined above, the

relationship between empathy development and forgiveness in children was examined in this study.

Perspective Taking and Forgiveness

According to Selman (1976), perspective taking involves the ability to place oneself in the position of another individual and imagine what they may be thinking or feeling. Perspective taking is important for a wide variety of social-cognitive achievements such as understanding others' emotions, person perception, and inferring intentions.

Selman (1976) suggests that perspective taking ability develops through five stages. The first stage encompasses ages 3 through 6, during which children are unable to take the perspective of another person. At ages 6 through 8, children realize that others may view situations differently from themselves, but find it difficult to keep both perspectives in mind when evaluating a situation. By ages 8 through 10, children realize that one's own behavior may be evaluated by others, and they can think about their own thoughts from another person's perspective; however, children in this age range are still unable to consider their own perspectives and that of another simultaneously. Children aged 10 through 12 are able to consider two points of view simultaneously and understand that other people also have this ability. By age 12 (and beyond), individuals are able to objectively view a situation and take the perspective of a third person. Individuals 12 and older are also able to evaluate their own behavior and the behavior of others from a societal perspective. Researchers investigating perspective taking ability (Dekovic & Gerris, 1994; Zahn-

Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & Brady-Smith, 1977) have shown that perspective taking ability does increase with age.

The relationship between perspective taking and empathy, outlined in the previous section, suggests that the more advanced a child is in his/her perspective taking ability the more likely they are to understand and take into account the different aspects underlying the wrongdoer's behavior. The involvement of empathy in the willingness to forgive a wrongdoer, particularly during the "reframing" stage of forgiveness, and the increases in empathy that are associated with the development of perspective taking abilities lend support to the assumption that empathy should be predictive of forgiveness and that willingness to forgive should increase with age.

Prosocial Behavior and Forgiveness

Prosocial behavior encompasses all aspects of helping, caring, sharing, cooperation, and sympathy behaviors. Data shows that children as young as two years of age are capable of performing acts that fall within the category of prosocial behaviors (Hay, 1994). According to Dekovic and Gerris (1994), the ability to perform a prosocial act requires an understanding of the situation, taking into account the perspective of another person, the ability to empathize, and the ability to reason morally taking into account the needs of others.

Prosocial acts have been considered the behavioral manifestation of underlying empathic cognitions and emotions. For example, Batson (1995) discusses a number of empathic benefits associated with the motivation to help another individual. When faced with an individual who is experiencing some form of

negative emotions, as when a wrongdoer shows remorse for their transgression, we may feel motivated to relieve these negative emotions in the wrongdoer because this act in turn reduces our empathic experiences of the wrongdoer's emotions. One way to reduce these negative emotions is to forgive the wrongdoer. Alternatively, we may forgive a transgression because by so doing a positive emotional state will be induced in the wrongdoer, and in turn we empathically experience positive emotions ourselves.

According to North (1998), forgiveness is an altruistic act because forgiveness is something that is done for the benefit of the wrongdoer, not just the injured person. At least in part, the moral value of forgiveness is that it enables the wrongdoer to feel better. Forgiving a wrongdoer in order to help them feel better could be an act of altruism (i.e., given for no other reason then to relieve the wrongdoer's guilt or some other benefit) or forgiveness may be given due to the empathic benefits to the forgiver as outlined above. From either of these perspectives (empathic or altruistic), forgiveness could be considered a prosocial act.

Studies designed to understand prosocial behavior have investigated the relationship between prosocial behavior and a number of variables including perspective taking and empathy. The results of these studies have produced conflicting conclusions regarding the relationship between these variables. Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, and Brady-Smith (1977) found perspective taking ability and prosocial behavior in a sample of 3 to 7 year olds to be unrelated. However, Iannotti (1985) found perspective taking ability to be predictive of prosocial behavior in a

sample of 5-year-olds. Dekovic and Gerris (1994) found social cognition (perspective taking) to be predictive of prosocial behavior in their sample of 6- to 11-year-olds. Litvack-Miller, McDougall, and Romney (1997) also found perspective taking predictive of prosocial behavior in a sample of second-, fourth-, and sixth-grade children. A significant relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior has also been found by others (e.g., Litvack-Miller, McDougall, & Romney, 1997; Iannotti, 1985; Roberts & Strayer, 1996).

The idea that forgiveness is a prosocial act makes it reasonable to conclude that an individual's willingness to engage in prosocial acts across a number of situations may be predictive of their willingness to forgive a wrongdoer's transgression. It was therefore assumed that prosocial behavior would be predictive of the willingness to forgive in children.

Religiosity

The act of forgiving is taught and encouraged through most Christian based religions and Judaism. According to these religions one can not receive forgiveness from God unless one in turn forgives others. Several researchers have studied the relationship between forgiveness and the extent to which an individual practices their faith in adolescent and adult samples. The results of these studies have produced mixed results and, therefore, conflicting conclusions regarding the extent to which religiosity effects forgiveness.

Enright, Santos, and Al-Mabuk (1989) investigated the relationship between forgiveness and religiosity in a sample consisting of seventh- and tenth-grade

children and college students. The results of this study indicated a moderate correlation between forgiveness and religiosity ($r = .54$). Gorsuch and Hao (1993) also found religious variables to predict forgiveness based on responses to questions assessing how the participants dealt with deliberate offenses. However, Subkoviak, Enright, Wu, Gassin, Freedman, Olson, and Sarinopoulos (1995) found participants who were affiliated with a religion to show only slightly greater levels of forgiveness than those who were not.

There is currently no published research examining the relationship between religiosity and forgiveness in children; however, based on the results obtained in the adolescent and adult research, degree of religiosity may be predictive of willingness to forgive in children.

Age and Gender Differences in Forgiveness

As may be expected, the willingness to forgive differed with age of the participants in all the reviewed articles involving forgiveness where development was a consideration (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992; Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989; Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1994; Park & Enright, 1997; Subkoviak, Enright, Wu, Gassin, Freedman, Olson, & Sarinopoulos, 1995). These increases in the willingness to forgive may be attributable to the increases in cognitive and emotional abilities associated with age—increases in empathy (Litvack-Miller, McDougall, & Romney, 1997; Poresky, 1990; Roberts & Strayer, 1996), prosocial behavior and reasoning (Dekovic & Gerris, 1994; Iannotti, 1995; Roberts & Strayer, 1996), and perspective taking

(Dekovic & Gerris, 1994; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & Brady-Smith, 1977). It was assumed that the willingness to forgive would also differ linearly with age in children.

The reviewed research investigating forgiveness with adolescents and adults consistently failed to find any gender differences in ability or willingness to forgive (Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989; Park & Enright, 1997). However, the absence of gender differences found in these studies may be due to the age of the participants. Some gender differences have been found in perspective taking abilitiy (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & Brady-Smith, 1977), prosocial behavior (Iannotti, 1985), and empathy (Litvack-Miller, McDougall, & Romney, 1997; Roberts & Strayer, 1996), with girls either scoring higher on the measures or being rated higher than boys for all three variables in these studies. However, some investigators have found no gender differences in these variables. Litvack-Miller, McDougall, and Romney found no gender differences in prosocial behavior, and Knudson and Kagan (1982) found no gender differences in levels of empathy or prosocial behavior. Based on the conflicting results regarding gender differences in perspective taking ability, empathy, and prosocial behavior, gender differences in children's willingness to forgive are not expected, although gender differences were examined.

## Situational Variables Associated With Forgiveness

### Apologies and Forgiveness

According to Enright and Coyle (1998), forgiveness is not dependent on an apology from the wrongdoer, or even the recognition of wrongdoing by the offender.

However, researchers (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Darby & Schlenker, 1989) investigating children's reactions to apologies have found various patterns that would suggest that an apology from the wrongdoer may increase the likelihood that the wrongdoer will be forgiven.

Darby and Schlenker (1989) studied the effects of apologies on children's responses to transgressions in a sample of second- and fifth-grade children. Their results suggest that when an apology follows a transgression, children perceive the wrongdoer as more sorry, more likable, and less deserving of punishment than when an apology is not given. A previous study by Darby and Schlenker (1982) with a sample of kindergarten/first-, fourth-, and seventh-grade children, found that as apologies become more elaborate the wrongdoer was blamed less and received more positive evaluations, and the likelihood of forgiveness was increased. Interestingly, the children in kindergarten/first grade perceived the wrongdoer as sorry regardless of whether they apologized or not. Darby and Schlenker suggest that children this age may be attributing how they would feel in a similar situation to the wrongdoer, and therefore, projecting their own feelings of remorse. Darby and Schlenker also found that the amount of punishment given was negatively correlated with the attributions of how sorry a wrongdoer was in the fourth- and seventh-grade groups, but not in the kindergarten/first-grade group. This inverse relationship found between attribution of remorse and amount of punishment ascribed by the fourth- and seventh-grade children but not the kindergarten/first-grade children suggests that the

older children were more cognizant of the importance of an apology after a transgression has occurred.

McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) suggest that an apology leads to forgiveness because the offended individual experiences an increase in empathy. An apology may lead to the perception that the wrongdoer is experiencing feelings of guilt and distress, which in turn directs the offended individual to empathize with the wrongdoer thereby producing a reduction in the motivation for revenge and separation and increasing the likelihood of forgiveness. McCullough et al. further suggest that the likelihood that an apology will result in forgiveness is a function of the extent to which the offended individual empathizes with the wrongdoer.

Based on the above findings and the findings discussed in the previous section on empathy, it was assumed that an apology would increase the willingness to forgive among the age groups in the current study, but that the effect would be greater in older children than in younger children as a function of increases in the recognition that an apology is an important indication of remorse and that empathy increases with age.

The Effects of Intention and Type of Damage Caused on Forgiveness

An obvious yet important first step towards forgiveness in children is a recognition that a transgression, for which one response may be forgiveness, has taken place. The intention behind a transgression and the type of damage caused by the transgression are two variables that may exert an effect on an individual's recognition that a transgression has taken place and hence on their willingness to

forgive. An important consideration in the study of forgiveness in children is the extent to which a child is capable of discriminating between an intentional and a deliberate act. Research results (Berndt & Berndt, 1975; Shultz, Wright, & Schleifer, 1986) indicate that children as young as five years old are able to recognize when a wrongdoer's behavior was intentional or accidental. These children were also able to assign moral responsibility and degree of punishment appropriately. Intentional acts were assigned greater responsibility and perceived as being more deserving of punishment than accidental acts (Berg-Cross, 1975; Shultz, Wright, & Schleifer, 1986). The recognition by children that wrongdoers who accidentally transgress are less blameworthy and less deserving of punishment than wrongdoers who purposefully transgress may be indicative of children's greater willingness to forgive an accidental as opposed to a deliberate transgression.

A second consideration when looking at forgiveness in children is the importance that children place on different types of transgressions. Wellman, Larkey, and Somerville (1979) studied moral judgements in a sample of 3- to 5-year-olds. The children in this study rated which of two children in two pictures depicting different outcomes were "naughtiest." By age five, the children were consistently rating the child who caused physical harm as naughtier than the child who caused property damage.

According to Rotenberg (1991), sharing and keeping secrets and promise fullfilments are behaviors that affect friendships. If a promise is broken or secret revealed a child may experience anger or sadness because a trust has been broken.

The loss of trust between friends or another individual may be strong enough to end the relationship or prevent a relationship from beginning. Pilot data collected by this investigator regarding types of transgressions experienced by children aged 6 through 11 showed that the majority of reported transgressions involved some form of emotional hurt (for example, "my friend said I did something that I didn't do" and "my friend was playing with me, and then went off to play with somebody else"). The types of responses collected in the pilot work suggest that transgressions resulting in emotional pain may be particularly salient for children. Therefore, it seems likely that the type of damage (emotional, physical, or property) caused by the transgression may affect a child's willingness to forgive, with property and physical damage (respectively) being easier to forgive than emotional pain.

Aim of the Study

The first aim of the study was to investigate the development of the willingness to forgive in elementary school age children (grades 2, 4, and 6; ages 7-12). Age and gender differences in forgiveness were explored, along with the effects of the following situational variables—apology/no apology, intention of the wrongdoer, severity of the transgression, and outcome of the transgression (i.e., emotional, physical, or property damage). Age and situational variable effects on type of forgiveness were also explored using Baumeister, Exline, and Sommer's (1998) four categories of forgiveness (no forgiveness, hollow forgiveness, silent forgiveness, total forgiveness). The second aim was to explore the effects of empathy, prosocial behavior, and religiosity on the willingness to forgive.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were made:

Hypothesis One. Based on the research findings of increased willingness to forgive with increasing age in adolescents and adults discussed previously (e.g., Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994), differences in willingness to forgive were expected to increase linearly across age groups.

Hypothesis Two. Based on the research discussed previously (Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1994; Iannotti, 1985; Litvack-Miller, McDougall, & Romney, 1997; McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, & Hight, 1998; Roberts & Strayer, 1996), it was hypothesized that empathy and prosocial behavior would account for a significant proportion of variance found in forgiveness scores (either independently or in combination with each other).

Hypothesis Three. Based on the research previously cited (Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989; Gorsuch & Hao, 1993), it was hypothesized that religiosity and forgiveness would be significantly correlated.

Hypothesis Four. The situational variables of apology/no apology, accidental or intentional act, severity of the transgression, and type of damage caused by the transgression were expected to affect forgiveness in the following ways: (a) participants were expected to be more willing to forgive if an apology was given versus not given, (b) participants were expected to be more willing to forgive if the transgression was accidental versus intentional, (c) participants were expected to be more willing to forgive a moderate transgression versus a more severe transgression,

and (d) participants were expected to be more willing to forgive when an object was damaged versus a personal injury, and conversely were expected to be more willing to forgive if an object was damaged or person injured versus emotional hurt.

Exploratory Analyses. While gender differences in adolescents' and adults' and their willingness to forgive have not been found in previous studies, the effects of gender on forgiveness was explored in this study because children were involved. Based on differences in empathy, perspective taking, and prosocial behavior found in the published studies discussed above, gender differences in forgiveness were a possibility.

The forgiveness vignettes used in this study allowed an exploration of Baumeister, Exline, and Sommer's (1998) four categories of forgiveness (no forgiveness, hollow forgiveness, silent forgiveness, total forgiveness) as a viable model of types of forgiveness. The prevalence of these four categories in the children sampled was therefore analyzed.

# Chapter II

## Method

### Participants

Sixty-three children (34 boys and 29 girls) were included in this study. The sample consisted of: second grade (10 boys and 7 girls; mean age = 7 years, 9 months), fourth grade (15 boys and 10 girls; mean age = 9 years, 5 months), and sixth grade (9 boys and 12 girls; mean age = 11 years, 10 months). Forty-five children were Caucasian (71%), 13 were African-American (21%), and five were Hispanic or Asian (8%). Eleven children were living in single-parent homes (19%), and 52 children lived with either both parents or with one parent and a stepparent (81%). Five children had no siblings (8%), 27 had one sibling (43%), 17 had two siblings (27%), and 14 had three or more siblings (22%). Twenty-eight children were first born (44%), 25 were second born (40%), and 10 were third or lower in birth order (16%). The children in this study were recruited from after-school daycare programs in Omaha, through college students at UNOmaha, and on an individual basis.

### Measures

The Adapted-Interpersonal Reactivity Index (A-IRI). The IRI was developed by Davis (1983) to measure dispositional empathy in adults. This measure was modified by Litvack-Miller, McDougall, and Romney (1997) for use with children (using second, fourth, and sixth grades). The A-IRI is a 22-item measure with items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, including the following anchors: "yes, exactly like me," "yes, a lot like me," "yes, a little like me," "no, not really like me," "no, not

at all like me." The A-IRI is designed to obtain a high score associated with a high level of empathy; therefore the scores were assigned in the following manner: "yes, exactly like me" = 5, "yes, a lot like me" = 4, "yes, a little like me" = 3, "no, not really like me" = 2, "no, not at all like me" = 1. The highest possible score on this measure was 90. Item numbers 5 and 18 were reverse scored.

Litvack-Miller et al. report overall test-retest reliabilities for the four subscales of the A-IRI as ranging from .58 to .64 over a 5-week period. Overall internal reliabilities for the four subscales ranged from .44 to .64. These internal reliabilities (as expressed by Litvack-Miller et al.) are low. A reliability analysis performed on the pilot data collected in preparation for this study (N = 13) indicated an improvement in internal reliabilities for this measure with the removal of several items. The removal of these items resulted in an 18-item measure, with an overall internal reliability of .73 (Cronbach alpha), and the following reliabilities for each of the subscales: Fantasy = .65, Personal Distress = .47, Perspective Taking = .78, and Empathic Concern = .92.

An internal reliability analysis (Cronbach alpha) was performed on the reduced number of items from the A-IRI used with the current sample (see Appendix A). The analysis indicated a decrease in the reliabilities for each of the subscales identified by Litvack-Miller et al. (Fantasy = .35, Personal Distress = .37, Perspective Taking = .55, Empathic Concern = .63); however, the overall internal reliability of the 18 items used in the study sample remained the same (overall = .72). These lower reliabilities for each of the subscales indicate that the items identified by

Litvack-Miller et al. as representative of the four constructs involved in empathy were not as representative for the current sample. However, the overall internal reliability remained high, indicating that the reduced items reliably measured the construct of empathy.

The Prosocial Behavior Questionnaire (PBQ). The PBQ was developed by Weir, Stevenson, and Graham (1980), and is designed to measure the natural occurrence of a number of prosocial behaviors over a 2-month period in a classroom setting. The items on this measure were slightly modified to make them more applicable to a home setting (see Appendix B). The PBQ was completed by the mother of each participant, and involved checking the occurrence of each of the listed 20 behaviors as "does not apply" if the behavior had not been observed in the last two months, "applies somewhat" if the behavior had been observed once in the last two months, and "certainly applies" if the behavior was observed two or more times in the last two months.

The PBQ was designed to obtain a high score for a high level of prosocial behavior; therefore, scores were assigned as follows: "does not apply" = 0, "applies somewhat" = 1, and "certainly applies" = 2. The highest possible score on this measure was 40. An internal reliability analysis showed that the measure was highly reliable for the current sample, with a Cronbach alpha of .91.

Measure of Religiosity. Due to the unavailability of an established measure of religiosity, a religiosity scale was created for use in this study (see Appendix C). This scale consisted of five items designed to measure the participants' involvement

in church/religious activities. Parents were asked to complete this measure. Each item was rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale. The anchors and scoring for this measure were designed to obtain a high score for a high degree of religiosity. The items were scored as follows: anchor 1 = 4, anchor 2 = 3, anchor 3 = 2, and anchor 4 = 1. The highest possible score on this measure was 20. An internal reliability analysis showed that the measure was highly reliable for the current sample, with a Cronbach alpha of .82.

Forgiveness Vignettes. Forgiveness was operationally defined in terms of how long the child would stay angry with their friend, how long it would be until the child would play with their friend again, and how long the child's feelings would be hurt by the transgression. The six vignettes used in this study were designed to measure how willing each of the children were to forgive a transgression. The transgressions involved the following situations: emotional damage, property damage, and physical damage (both moderate and severe). Each vignette also asked how the children would respond if the transgression was accidental/deliberate and if the transgressor apologized/did not apologize. The type of damage, severity, accidental/deliberate, and apology/no apology variables were presented in such a way that 24 scorable responses were obtained: emotional hurt/accidental/with an apology; emotional hurt/intentional/with an apology; emotional hurt/accidental/ without an apology; emotional hurt/intentional/without an apology; physical hurt/accidental/with an apology; physical hurt/intentional/with an apology; physical hurt/accidental/without an apology; physical hurt/intentional/without an apology;

object damage/accidental/with an apology; object damage/intentional/with an apology; object damage/accidental/without an apology; object damage/intentional/ without an apology (both moderate and severe levels) (see Appendix D). The format of these vignettes was similar to the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgiveness (TNTF) developed by Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Connor, and Wade (2001). They reported reliabilities of .76 to .78 (Cronbach alpha) for their instrument and strong evidence of convergent and discriminant validity.

A manipulation check to ensure that the vignettes intended to represent moderate versus severe transgressions was performed. Three independent raters judged each of the vignettes for severity level. The judgements were analyzed using a Kendall's coefficient of concordance. Kendall's coefficient of concordance can be used to determine the degree of association or agreement between three or more judges or sets of data that are measured on an ordinal scale. The analysis of the independent judgements indicated an interrater reliability of .75, $\chi^2(5) = 11.19$, $p < .05$. The independent raters were in agreement regarding the severity level of the vignettes.

Two sets of counterbalanced vignettes were compiled and randomly assigned to children. One set began with the accidental/apology vignette and progressed to the accidental/no apology and deliberate/apology vignettes, and ended with the deliberate/no apology vignette. The second set of vignettes was presented in the reverse order. Fifty-seven percent of the participants received the vignettes ordered from accidental transgression with an apology to deliberate transgression with no

apology, and 43% received the vignettes in the reverse order. The vignettes were based on information gathered in a pilot study.

The participants were instructed to imagine that each of the above transgressions had happened to them. Each participant then rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1) how long they would stay angry with their friend, (2) how long it would be before they would play with their friend, and (3) how long their feelings would be hurt (ranging from forever to not at all for all three items).

Each of the items within each vignette was scored so that the highest value indicated a high level of willingness to forgive. The assigned scoring was: "forever" = 1, "at least a few days" = 2, "about a day" = 3, "at least a few minutes" = 4, "I would not be angry/upset" = 5. The scores from all three items for each vignette were added to give an overall forgiveness score for that particular vignette. The highest possible score for each vignette was 15. The total for all 24 vignettes was also computed to produce a total willingness to forgive score. The highest possible total forgiveness score was 360. An internal reliability analysis performed on the scores obtained using the 24 vignettes showed that this measure was highly reliable for the current sample, with a Cronbach alpha of .95. An internal reliability analysis performed on the scores obtained for each of the individual vignettes resulted in Cronbach alphas ranging from .77 to .95.

Design

This cross-sectional study used a mixed design, repeated measures analysis of variance. The independent variables used in the analysis of variance were four

vignette manipulations (apology/no apology, severity of transgression, intention, and type of damage caused). Additional independent variables used as predictors of the total forgiveness scores (a composite score based on the responses to the vignettes) were scores on the measures of empathy, prosocial behavior, and religiosity. The between subject variables included age and gender.

Procedure

Approximately 41% of the participants completed the measures in groups at after-school programs, and 59% of the participants completed the measures individually at home. For the participants who completed the measures in a group, packets were sent home with the potential participants containing a letter briefly explaining the study, the parental consent forms, and the parental measures. Participants returning a package from their parents/guardians then completed the children's measures at a later date in a designated room at the after-school program.

The groups consisted of approximately 10 participants at each of the three grade levels. The children were given a packet of measures stapled together in the order in which they were to be completed. The researcher explained to the children that they would be answering a number of questions about how they would react if their friend did something to make them angry or upset. The children were then told that they did not have to participate if they did not want to, that they could stop answering the questions at any time, and to raise their hands if any of the questions were not clear. The children were then asked if they had any questions about the study, and asked to sign the children's assent form if they wanted to participate. All

children agreed to participate in the study. The items on all the children's measures were read aloud by the researcher to the participants, with each participant completing each item/vignette before the next item/vignette was read (the older children were told that they could answer the questions at their own pace). Upon completion of the measures the participants were given a goody bag containing some candy and a small toy and thanked for their participation.

For the participants completing the measures individually at home, a packet was given to a parent which contained a letter briefly explaining the study, the parental consent form, the parental measures, the children's assent form, and the children's measures. The measures were stapled together in the order that they were to be completed. A note attached to the measures asked the parents to discuss the study with their child and to ensure that both they and their child signed the informed consent and assent forms. The parents were asked to read the items to their child or to allow their child to complete the measures independently depending on the age and reading ability of their child. The parents were then asked to return the entire packet upon completion to the researcher. Participants completing the measures individually at home either received a goody bag or, if the parent was a college student, received three points to be used as extra credit towards their grade in a college course.

# Chapter III

## Results

This study focused on a number of factors related to children's willingness to forgive. The first series of analyses examined the relationship between empathy, prosocial behavior, religiosity, age, and gender (respectively) on children's willingness to forgive relevant transgressions. The influence of situational factors (severity of the transgression, presence or absence of an apology, accidental or deliberate transgression, and the nature of the transgression) on children's willingness to forgive was also analyzed. Lastly, the type of forgiveness seen in children, based on Baumeister, Exline, and Sommer's (1998) four categories of forgiveness—no forgiveness, hollow forgiveness, silent forgiveness, and total forgiveness—was examined.

### Manipulation Checks

Due to the lack of availability of groups of children for the purposes of data collection, 59% of the data was collected from participants on an individual basis and 41% of the data collection occurred in groups. To ensure no systematic error variance was introduced into the data due to the differences in data collection procedures a t-test was performed using the total forgiveness scores. The analysis showed no significant differences between the two groups, $t = .961$, $p > .34$.

Two sets of vignettes were used in this study (one set beginning with an accidental transgression with an apology and progressing to the deliberate transgression with no apology, and the other set in the reverse order) to control for

order effects of transgression presentation. Fifty-seven percent of the participants received the vignettes ordered from accidental transgression with an apology to deliberate transgression with no apology, and 43% received the vignettes in the reverse order. A t-test was performed, using the total forgiveness scores, to ensure no systematic error variance was introduced into the data due to the presentation order of the vignettes. The analysis showed no significant differences due to vignette order, $t = -.667$, $p > .51$ (see Table 1).

Age Differences in Willingness to forgive

According to hypothesis one, willingness to forgive was expected to show a linear pattern across age groups. A regression analysis was performed with the total forgiveness scores as the dependent variable and age as the predictor variable. The regression of age on total forgiveness scores was not significant $R^2 = .005$, $F(1, 61) = .334$, $p > .57$, beta = -.074. An analysis of the mean forgiveness scores for each grade (see Figure 1) clearly shows that differences in willingness to forgive do not occur in a linear fashion for either gender.

The total forgiveness scores represent a composite of "amount" of forgiveness across the vignettes. It was thought that the contexts within each of the vignettes may have influenced the degree of willingness to forgive across the age groups that was not captured using the total forgiveness scores. Therefore, an exploratory analysis was performed to determine age differences in willingness to forgive when the transgression was moderate versus severe, when an apology was

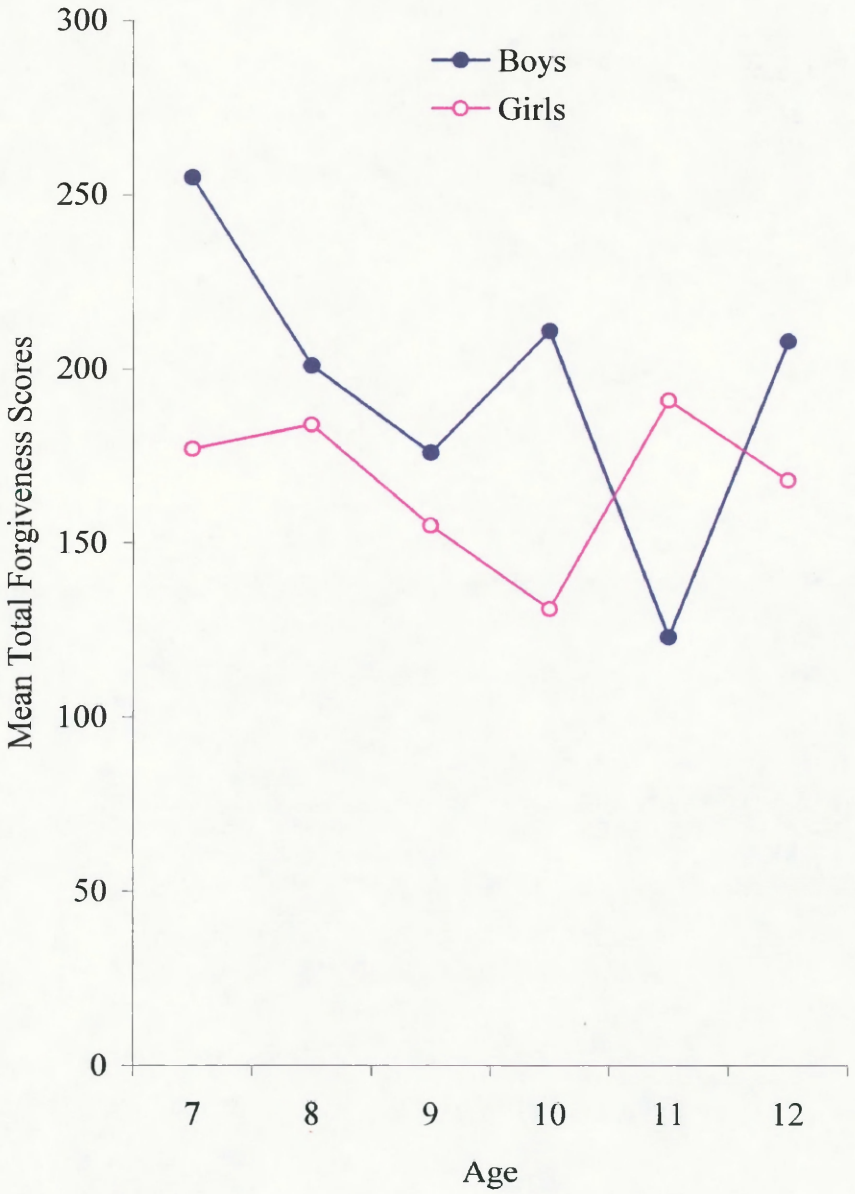
Table 1

Means for Manipulation Checks

| | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Type of Data Collection | | |
| In Groups | 192.59 | 71.13 |
| Individually | 177.53 | 45.91 |
| Counterbalanced | | |
| Order 1 | 179.89 | 63.93 |
| Order 2 | 189.44 | 49.75 |

Figure 1

Mean Total Forgiveness Scores By Age and Gender



given versus not given, and when the transgression was accidental versus deliberate. Three regression analyses were performed using forgiveness difference scores obtained between the vignettes involving moderate/severe transgressions, apology/no apology, and accidental/deliberate transgressions.

The regressions of age on severity difference scores and apology difference scores were nonsignificant, $R^2 = .02$, $F(1, 61) = 1.143$, $p > .29$, beta = .14 and $R^2 = .04$, $F(1, 61) = 2.691$, $p > .11$, beta = .21, respectively. The regression of age on intention difference scores was significant, $F(1, 61) = 5.219$, $p < .03$, beta = .28. Age accounted for 8% of the variance found in willingness to forgive when a transgression was deliberate rather than accidental. The results of the regression analyses suggest that under certain circumstances (i.e., when a transgression is deliberate rather than accidental) the younger children remained willing to forgive, whereas the older children became less forgiving (see Tables 2 and 3 for a summary of the mean forgiveness scores and regression analyses, respectively). The first hypothesis that age would predict linear differences in willingness to forgive was therefore, for the most part, not supported.

Effect of Empathy and Prosocial Behavior on Willingness to Forgive

The second hypothesis proposed that empathy and prosocial behavior would account for a significant proportion of variance found in forgiveness scores (either independently or in combination with each other).

Table 2

Mean Total Forgiveness Scores and Difference Scores by Age

| | Age | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Forgiveness Score | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Total Forgiveness | 204.11 | 194.25 | 167.92 | 180.15 | 176.22 | 189.91 |
| | (68.13) | (42.78) | (32.13) | (79.44) | (50.92) | (64.09) |
| Severity Difference Score | 4.33 | 18.88 | 21.46 | 8.15 | 20.67 | 16.82 |
| | (16.66) | (22.13) | (15.04) | (16.46) | (15.68) | (11.46) |
| Apology Difference Score | 21.22 | 26.88 | 31.00 | 20.77 | 36.67 | 34.64 |
| | (22.04) | (18.59) | (13.15) | (15.11) | (25.64) | (17.98) |
| Intention Difference Score | 6.56 | 22.63 | 22.23 | 18.00 | 22.20 | 29.18 |
| | (28.48) | (17.77) | (13.76) | (12.62) | (14.75) | (17.84) |

Note. The higher the difference score is, the greater the difference between willingness to forgive moderate vs. severe, apology vs. no apology, and accidental vs. deliberate transgressions. Values in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 3

Summary of Regression Analyses for Age as a Predictor of Willingness to Forgive

| Variable | B | SE B | β | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Forgiveness | -2.59 | 4.49 | -.074 | .005 |
| Severity Difference Scores | 1.38 | 1.29 | .136 | .018 |
| Apology Difference Scores | 2.34 | 1.43 | .206 | .042 |
| Intention Difference Scores | 3.10 | 1.36 | .281* | .079 |

*p <.05.

A regression analysis was performed with the total forgiveness scores as the dependent variable and empathy and prosocial behavior as the predictor variables (both entered simultaneously). The regression of empathy and prosocial behavior on total forgiveness scores was not significant, $R^2 = .06$, $F$ (2, 56) = 1.660, $p > .20$, beta = -.237. Furthermore, total forgiveness was not predicted by either empathy or prosocial behavior individually $R^2 = .05$, ($F(1, 61) = 3.027$, $p > .09$, beta = -.217 and $R^2 = .00$, $F(1, 61) = .006$, $p > .94$, beta = .01, respectively).

For the same reasons mentioned above, an exploratory analysis was performed to determine the predictive value of empathy on willingness to forgive when the transgression was moderate versus severe, when an apology was given versus not given, and when the transgression was accidental versus deliberate. Three regression analyses were performed using forgiveness difference scores obtained between the vignettes involving moderate/severe transgressions, apology/no apology, and accidental/deliberate transgressions. All regressions (severity difference scores, apology difference scores, and intention difference scores) were nonsignificant, $R^2 = .034$, $F(1, 61) = 2.13$, $p > .15$, beta = -.18; $R^2 = .035$, $F(1, 61) = 2.24$, $p > .14$, beta = .19; and $R^2 = .02$, $F(1, 61) = 1.28$, $p > .26$, beta = .14, respectively. Due to the low effect of prosocial behavior on willingness to forgive, prosocial behavior was not considered further (see Tables 4 and 5 for a summary of the mean empathy and prosocial scores and regression analyses). The second hypothesis that empathy and prosocial behavior either independently or together would predict willingness to forgive was not supported.

Table 4

Mean Total Empathy and Prosocial Behavior Scores by Age and Gender

| | Age | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Empathy | | | | | | |
| Male | 64.0 | 66.8 | 68.25 | 65.5 | 73.0 | 61.33 |
| | (13.0) | (6.98) | (4.80) | (13.0) | (19.8) | (11.2) |
| Female | 69.5 | 78.33 | 69.0 | 73.4 | 68.0 | 70.0 |
| | (14.5) | (1.15) | (11.3) | (2.07) | (9.97) | (7.14) |
| Prosocial Behavior | | | | | | |
| Male | 20.8 | 29.8 | 25.5 | 26.88 | 28.0 | 22.17 |
| | (8) | (2.52) | (7.77) | (6.17) | (4.24) | (5.78) |
| Female | 29 | 27.33 | 27.8 | 27.6 | 22.83 | 28.75 |
| | (8.04) | (2.52) | (7.4) | (.89) | (7.78) | (5.06) |

Note. Highest attainable score for empathy is 90. Highest attainable score for prosocial behavior is 40. Values in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 5

Summary of Regression Analyses for Empathy and Prosocial Behavior as Predictors of Willingness to Forgive

| Variable | B | SE B | β | $R^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Forgiveness | | | | |
| Empathy | -1.27 | .73 | -.217 | .047 |
| Prosocial Behavior | -.01 | 1.22 | -.01 | .00 |
| Empathy + Prosocial Beh | 1.36 | .75 | -.237 | .056 |
| Empathy | | | | |
| Severity Difference Scores | -.31 | .21 | -.184 | .034 |
| Apology Difference Scores | .36 | .24 | .188 | .035 |
| Intention Difference Scores | .26 | .23 | .143 | .021 |

Note. All regressions nonsignificant.

Gender Differences in Willingness to Forgive

While gender differences in adolescents' and adults' ability to forgive have not been found in previous studies, the effects of gender on forgiveness was examined in the current study. A regression analysis was used to examine the extent to which willingness to forgive was predicted by gender. Gender was dummy coded and regressed on the total forgiveness scores. Results of this regression suggest that willingness to forgive is significantly predicted by gender, which accounts for 6.6% of the variance, $F$ (1, 61) = 4.33, $p < .04$, beta = .26. Mean total forgiveness scores were 197.68 for boys (N = 34, SD = 62.90) and 167.93 for girls (N = 29, SD = 47.97). Analysis of the means indicate that the boys in this sample were more willing to forgive than the girls.

Effect of Religiosity on Willingness to Forgive

The third hypothesis stated that religiosity would be significantly correlated with forgiveness. The maximum obtainable score on the religiosity measure was 20. The mean religiosity score in this sample was 15.93 (N = 63, SD = 3.84). A Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between willingness to forgive and religiosity. The correlation failed to reach significance, $r = .25$, $p > .06$. Therefore, the third hypothesis that religiosity would be significantly correlated with willingness to forgive was not supported.

Effect of Situational Variables on Willingness to forgive

As stated in hypothesis number four, the situational variables of apology/no apology, accidental or intentional act, severity of the transgression, and type of

damage caused by the transgression were expected to affect forgiveness in the following ways: (a) participants were expected to be more willing to forgive if an apology was given versus not given, (b) participants were expected to be more willing to forgive if the transgression was accidental versus intentional, (c) participants were expected to be more willing to forgive a moderate transgression versus a more severe transgression, and (d) participants were expected to be more willing to forgive when an object was damaged versus an injury caused and conversely they were expected to be more willing to forgive if an object was damaged or injury caused versus emotional hurt.

In order to analyze the situational variables a mixed design, 2 (gender) x 3 (grade) x 2 (severity) x 2 (apology) x 2 (intention) x 3 (transgression type) repeated measures analysis of variance was performed. Homogeneity of variance was violated; therefore, a Greenhouse-Geisser adjustment was used for all proceeding effects to offset alpha inflation. The main effect means are presented in Table 6. The ANOVA main effects are summarized in Table 7.

The main effect of apology was significant, $F(1, 57) = 140.44$, $p < .001$. A pairwise comparison of the means indicated that the children in this sample were more willing to forgive when an apology was given ($M = 106.32$) than when an apology was not given ($M = 77.67$). The prediction that willingness to forgive would be greater when an apology was given versus not given was supported.

The main effect of intention was also significant, $F(1, 57) = 83.24$, $p < .001$. A pairwise comparison of the means indicated that the children in this sample were

Table 6

Summary of Main Effect Means

| | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Gender, Boys | 197.68 | 62.90 |
| Girls | 167.93 | 47.97 |
| Grade, Second | 199.47 | 56.10 |
| Fourth | 174.36 | 60.90 |
| Sixth | 182.90 | 56.15 |
| Situational Variables | | |
| Moderate | 99.54 | 28.66 |
| Severe | 84.44 | 31.69 |
| Apology | 106.32 | 30.36 |
| No Apology | 77.67 | 30.63 |
| Accidental | 102.37 | 29.83 |
| Deliberate | 81.62 | 30.86 |
| Emotional | 64.37 | 21.38 |
| Physical | 57.48 | 20.78 |
| Property | 62.14 | 20.62 |

Note. Severity, Apology, Intent Maximum possible score = 180; Minimum possible score = 36. Type Maximum possible score = 120; Minimum possible score = 24.

Table 7

Summary of Repeated ANOVA Main Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Between Subjects | | | |
| Gender | 537.94 | 1 | 4.06 | .05 | .07 |
| Grade | 154.97 | 2 | 1.17 | .32 | .04 |
| Error | 132.61 | 57 | | | |
| | | Within Subjects | | | |
| Severity | 569.57 | 1 | 46.56 | .001 | .45 |
| Error | 12.23 | 57 | | | |
| Apol | 2040.36 | 1 | 140.44 | .001 | .71 |
| Error | 14.53 | 57 | | | |
| Intent | 1090.00 | 1 | 83.24 | .001 | .59 |
| Error | 13.10 | 57 | | | |
| Type | 88.68 | 2 | 7.12 | .001 | .11 |
| Error | 12.46 | 110 | | | |

also more willing to forgive when a transgression was accidental (M = 102.37) than deliberate (M = 81.62). The prediction that willingness to forgive would be greater when the transgression was accidental versus deliberate was supported.

The main effect of severity was significant, F(1, 57) = 46.56, p <.001. A pairwise comparison of the means indicated that the children in this sample were more willing to forgive the less severe transgressions (M = 99.54) in comparison to the more severe transgressions (M = 84.44). The prediction that willingness to forgive would be greater for the less severe transgressions in comparison to the more severe transgressions was supported.

The main effect of transgression type was also significant, F(2, 110) = 7.12, p <.001. A Bonferonni pairwise comparison of the means indicated that the children in this sample were less forgiving when the transgression resulted in physical damage (i.e., when the child was pushed off his/her bike, resulting in a cut on the head that required stitches) (M = 57.48) in comparison to property damage (i.e., when the child's painting was ruined) (M = 62.14), t (62) = -2.773, p<.007. The prediction that children would be more willing to forgive a transgression involving property damage versus physical damage was supported. The prediction that a transgression resulting in emotional damage would be the least forgivable was not supported. A Bonferroni pairwise comparison between the means indicated the children in this sample were more willing to forgive an emotional transgression (i.e., when a friend told the child's secret) (M = 64.37) than a transgression that resulted in physical damage (M = 57.48), t(62) = 3.660, p<.001. A Bonferroni pairwise comparison

showed the children's willingness to forgive did not differ for transgressions resulting in emotional or property damage, $t(62) = 1.341$, $p > .19$. Overall, three of the four predictions comprising the fourth hypothesis were supported.

Interactions

As can be seen in Table 8, a number of interactions between the situational variables and age and gender were also significant. Therefore, simple effects analyses and post hoc pairwise comparisons of the means were performed.

Severity x Apology. A simple effects analysis of the significant Severity x Apology interaction showed significant simple main effects for severity and apology (severity, $F(1, 62) = 50.79$, $p < .001$ and apology $F(1, 62) = 141.17$, $p < .001$). However, this interaction was qualified by a significant, higher-order interaction of Severity x Apology x Type. A simple effects analysis of the Severity x Apology x Type interaction showed significant simple main effects for severity ($F(1, 62) = 50.79$, $p < .001$, apology, $F(1, 62) = 147.17$, $p < .001$, and type $F(2, 124) = 8.132$, $p < .001$). The significant Severity x Apology x Type interaction was further qualified by a significant Severity x Apology x Type x Gender interaction ($F(2, 97) = 4.23$, $p < .02$). Therefore, a univariate F-test was performed in order to determine where the differences in boys' and girls' willingness to forgive occured (means are summarized in Table 9). A one-way analysis of variance revealed that the girls were significantly less willing to forgive than the boys when a transgression involved severe emotional damage and there was no apology ($F(1, 61) = 8.46$, $p < .005$), when the transgression involved moderate physical damage and there was no apology ($F(1,$

Table 8

Repeated ANOVA Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Between Subjects | | | |
| Gender x Grade | 142.75 | 2 | 1.08 | .35 | .04 |
| Error | 132.61 | 57 | | | |
| | | Within Subjects | | | |
| Severity x Gender | 17.41 | 1 | 1.42 | .24 | .02 |
| Severity x Grade | 5.34 | 2 | .44 | .65 | .02 |
| Severity x Gender x Grade | .80 | 2 | .07 | .94 | .00 |
| Error | 12.23 | 57 | | | |
| Apology x Gender | 24.78 | 1 | 1.71 | .20 | .03 |
| Apology x Grade | 19.82 | 2 | 1.36 | .26 | .05 |
| Apology x Gender x Grade | 1.92 | 2 | .13 | .88 | .01 |
| Error | 14.53 | 57 | | | |
| Intent x Gender | 13.97 | 1 | 1.07 | .31 | .02 |

Table 8 (Continued)

Repeated ANOVA Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intent x Grade | 20.80 | 2 | 1.59 | .21 | .05 |
| Intent x Gender x Grade | 4.45 | 2 | .34 | .71 | .01 |
| Error | 13.10 | 57 | | | |
| Type x Gender | 1.06 | 2 | .09 | .92 | .00 |
| Type x Grade | 16.70 | 4 | 1.39 | .24 | .05 |
| Type x Gender x Grade | 11.11 | 4 | .92 | .45 | .03 |
| Error | 12.04 | 110 | | | |
| Severity x Apology | 72.74 | 1 | 15.94 | .001 | .22 |
| Severity x Apology x Gender | .00 | 1 | .00 | .99 | .00 |
| Severity x Apology x Grade | 1.17 | 2 | .26 | .78 | .01 |
| Severity x Apology x Gender x Grade | 5.10 | 2 | 1.12 | .33 | .04 |
| Error | 4.56 | 57 | | | |

Table 8 (Continued)

Repeated ANOVA Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Severity x Intent | 2.29 | 1 | .49 | .49 | .01 |
| Severity x Intent x Gender | 6.82 | 1 | 1.46 | .23 | .03 |
| Severity x Intent x Grade | .08 | 2 | .02 | .98 | .00 |
| Severity x Intent x Gender x Grade | 3.32 | 2 | .71 | .50 | .02 |
| Error | 4.67 | 57 | | | |
| Apology x Intent | 96.74 | 1 | 19.61 | .001 | .26 |
| Apology x Intent x Gender | 12.31 | 1 | 2.50 | .12 | .04 |
| Apology x Intent x Grade | 2.64 | 2 | .53 | .59 | .02 |
| Apology x Intent x Gender x Grade | 12.53 | 2 | 2.54 | .09 | .08 |
| Error | 4.93 | 57 | | | |

Table 8 (Continued)

Repeated ANOVA Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Severity x Apology x Intent | .43 | 1 | .10 | .76 | .00 |
| Severity x Apology x Intent x Gender | 6.61 | 1 | 1.51 | .22 | .03 |
| Severity x Apology x Intent x Grade | 1.63 | 2 | .37 | .69 | .01 |
| Severity x Apology x Intent x Gender x Grade | 3.04 | 2 | .69 | .50 | .02 |
| Error | 4.38 | 57 | | | |
| Severity x Type | 6.18 | 2 | 1.10 | .34 | .02 |
| Severity x Type x Gender | 5.85 | 2 | 1.04 | .36 | .02 |
| Severity x Type x Grade | 3.36 | 4 | .60 | .67 | .02 |
| Severity x Type x Gender x Grade | 15.96 | 4 | 2.83 | .03 | .09 |

Table 8 (Continued)

Repeated ANOVA Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Error | 5.91 | 114 | | | |
| Apology x Type | 7.87 | 2 | 2.77 | .07 | .05 |
| Apology x Type x Gender | .50 | 2 | .18 | .84 | .00 |
| Apology x Type x Grade | 5.57 | 4 | 1.96 | .11 | .06 |
| Apology x Type x Gender x Grade | 1.78 | 4 | .63 | .65 | .02 |
| Error | 2.84 | 110 | | | |
| Severity x Apology x Type | 24.29 | 2 | 5.33 | .01 | .09 |
| Severity x Apology x Type x Gender | 19.27 | 2 | 4.23 | .02 | .07 |
| Severity x Apology x Type x Grade | 3.70 | 4 | .81 | .52 | .03 |

Table 8 (Continued)

Repeated ANOVA Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Severity x Apology x Type x Gender x Grade | .26 | 4 | .06 | .99 | .00 |
| Error | 5.34 | 97 | | | |
| Intent x Type | 26.82 | 2 | 6.26 | .004 | .10 |
| Intent x Type x Gender | 3.10 | 2 | .80 | .45 | .01 |
| Intent x Type x Grade | 5.66 | 4 | 1.47 | .22 | .05 |
| Intent x Type x Gender x Grade | .28 | 4 | .07 | .99 | .00 |
| Error | 4.28 | 103 | | | |
| Severity x Intent x Type | 2.07 | 2 | .44 | .65 | .01 |
| Severity x Intent x Type x Gender | 4.19 | 2 | .89 | .41 | .02 |

Table 8 (Continued)

Repeated ANOVA Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Severity x Intent x Type x Grade | 3.08 | 4 | .65 | .63 | .02 |
| Severity x Intent x Type x Gender x Grade | 1.59 | 4 | .34 | .85 | .01 |
| Error | 4.80 | 112 | | | |
| Apology x Intent x Type | 3.05 | 2 | .85 | .43 | .02 |
| Apology x Intent x Type x Gender | 4.88 | 2 | 1.35 | .26 | .02 |
| Apology x Intent x Type x Grade | 2.51 | 4 | .70 | .60 | .02 |
| Apology x Intent x Type x Gender x Grade | 5.42 | 4 | 1.50 | .21 | .05 |
| Error | 3.92 | 105 | | | |

Table 8 (Continued)

Repeated ANOVA Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p | $\eta^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Severity x Apology x Intent x Type | 4.64 | 2 | 1.43 | .24 | .02 |
| Severity x Apology x Intent x Type x Gender | .63 | 2 | .19 | .83 | .00 |
| Severity x Apology x Intent x Type x Grade | 2.88 | 4 | .89 | .48 | .03 |
| Severity x Apology x Intent x Type x Gender x Grade | 4.08 | 4 | 1.26 | .29 | .04 |
| Error | 3.29 | 113 | | | |

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for Boys' and Girls' Willingness to Forgive the Three Types of Transgressions

| | Boys | | Girls | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD |
| Emot/Mod/Apology | 20.12 | 6.25 | 18.31 | 4.87 |
| Emot/Mod/No Apology | 15.91 | 7.19 | 13.97 | 6.65 |
| Emot/Sev/Apology | 18.38 | 6.84 | 15.72 | 5.15 |
| Emot/Sev/No Apology | 14.82 | 6.06 | 10.66 | 5.18** |
| Phys/Mod/Apology | 18.85 | 6.62 | 18.76 | 5.48 |
| Phys/Mod/No Apology | 13.71 | 5.97 | 10.76 | 5.15* |
| Phys/Sev/Apology | 16.18 | 6.59 | 13.10 | 6.28 |
| Phys/Sev/No Apology | 12.79 | 6.71 | 10.10 | 4.62 |
| Prop/Mod/Apology | 21.32 | 5.56 | 18.90 | 5.06 |
| Prop/Mod/No Apology | 15.21 | 5.10 | 12.31 | 5.20* |
| Prop/Sev/Apology | 16.62 | 7.32 | 15.48 | 6.14 |
| Prop/Sev/No Apology | 13.76 | 6.84 | 9.86 | 4.02** |

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

61) = 4.32, $p<.04$), and when the transgression involved either moderate property damage with no apology ($F(1, 61) = 4.95$, $p<.03$) or severe property damage with no apology ($F(1, 62) = 7.29$, $p<.009$). All other comparisons were nonsignificant (see Table 10).

Simple interaction effects analyses were then performed for boys and girls individually. Analysis of the Severity x Apology x Type interaction for boys and girls individually revealed a significant simple interaction for girls ($F(2, 56) = 8.33$, $p<.001$), but not for boys ($F(2, 52) = 1.49$, $p>.24$). Therefore, a simple effects analysis was performed for the significant simple interaction found for girls but not for boys. Each of the transgression types were analyzed individually. The simple interaction effects analysis for physical damage was significant ($F(1, 28) = 22.61$, $p<.001$). The simple interaction effects analyses for emotional and property damage were not significant ($F(1, 28) = .343$, $p > .56$ and $F(1, 28) = .70$, $p > .41$, respectively). Bonferroni pairwise comparisons of the physical transgression means indicated that the girls were significantly more likely to forgive a physical transgression that resulted in moderate damage when an apology was forthcoming ($M = 18.76$) than with no apology ($M = 10.76$), $t(28) = 8.508$, $p<.0005$; when a physical transgression resulted in severe damage when an apology was forthcoming ($M = 13.10$) than with no apology ($M = 10.10$), $t(28) = 4.181$, $p<.0005$; and when a transgression resulted in moderate physical damage in comparison to severe damage with an apology in both cases ($M = 18.76$ and 13.10, respectively), $t(28) = 6.620$,

Table 10

Univariate F Tests for Boys' and Girls' Willingness to Forgive the Three Types of Transgressions

| Source | MS | df | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional, Moderate, w/Apology | 51.12 | 1 | 1.60 | .21 |
| Emotional, Moderate, No Apology | 59.28 | 1 | 1.23 | .27 |
| Emotional, Severe, w/Apology | 110.59 | 1 | 2.95 | .09 |
| Emotional, Severe, No Apology | 271.94 | 1 | 8.46 | .005 |
| Physical, Moderate, w/Apology | .14 | 1 | .00 | .95 |
| Physical, Moderate, No Apology | 135.95 | 1 | 4.32 | .04 |
| Physical, Severe, w/Apology | 147.80 | 1 | 3.55 | .06 |
| Physical, Severe, No Apology | 113.31 | 1 | 3.32 | .07 |
| Property, Moderate, w/Apology | 92.19 | 1 | 3.24 | .08 |
| Property, Moderate, No Apology | 131.22 | 1 | 4.95 | .03 |
| Property, Severe, w/Apology | 20.16 | 1 | .44 | .51 |
| Property, Severe, No Apology | 238.37 | 1 | 7.29 | .009 |

$p<.0005$. The girls were unwilling to forgive a physical transgression when there was no apology regardless of the level of severity ($M = 10.76$ and $M = 10.10$), $t(28) = .926$, $p > .36$ (see Figure 2).

Analysis of the significant Severity x Type x Gender x Grade interaction showed a significant simple interaction effect for sixth grade boys ($F(2, 16) = 3.63$, $p < .05$) (see Figure 3). Means for the Severity by Type of Transgression simple interaction for sixth grade boys are presented in Table 11. All other simple interactions were nonsignificant (see Table 12). A Bonferroni pairwise comparison of the means showed that sixth grade boys were significantly less willing to forgive a transgression that resulted in severe property damage ($M = 24.11$) than a transgression that resulted in moderate property damage ($M = 35.11$), $p<.003$ or a transgression that resulted in moderate emotional damage ($M = 33.67$), $p<.03$. All other pairwise comparisons were nonsignificant.

As can be seen in Tables 13 and 14, the simple main effect of severity remained significant for all age groups except second grade boys. These significant simple main effects indicate that (except for second grade boys) the boys and girls at each grade level were less willing to forgive transgressions that resulted in severe damage in comparison to transgressions resulting in moderate damage regardless of the type of transgression. A significant simple main effect of type of transgression was also found for fourth grade boys only. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons showed fourth grade boys were significantly less willing to forgive transgressions resulting in severe property damage ($M = 24.11$) in comparison to transgressions resulting in

Figure 2

Simple Interaction for Severity x Apology for Physical Transgressions for Girls

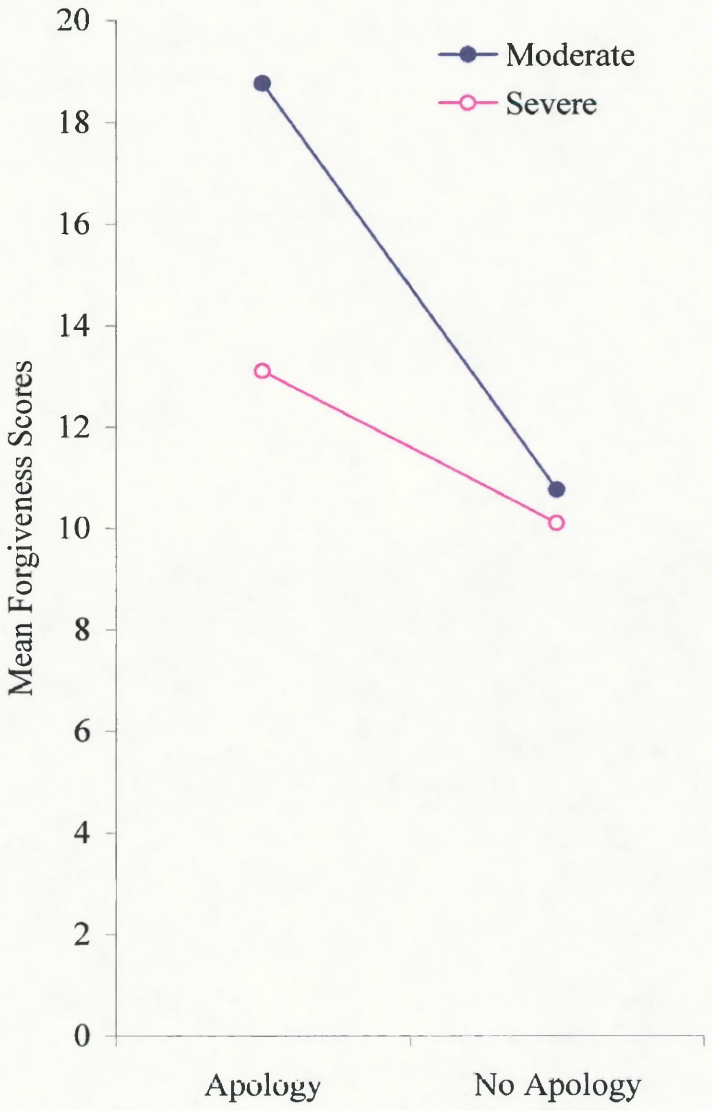


Figure 3

Significant Simple Interaction (Severity x Type) for Sixth Grade Boys

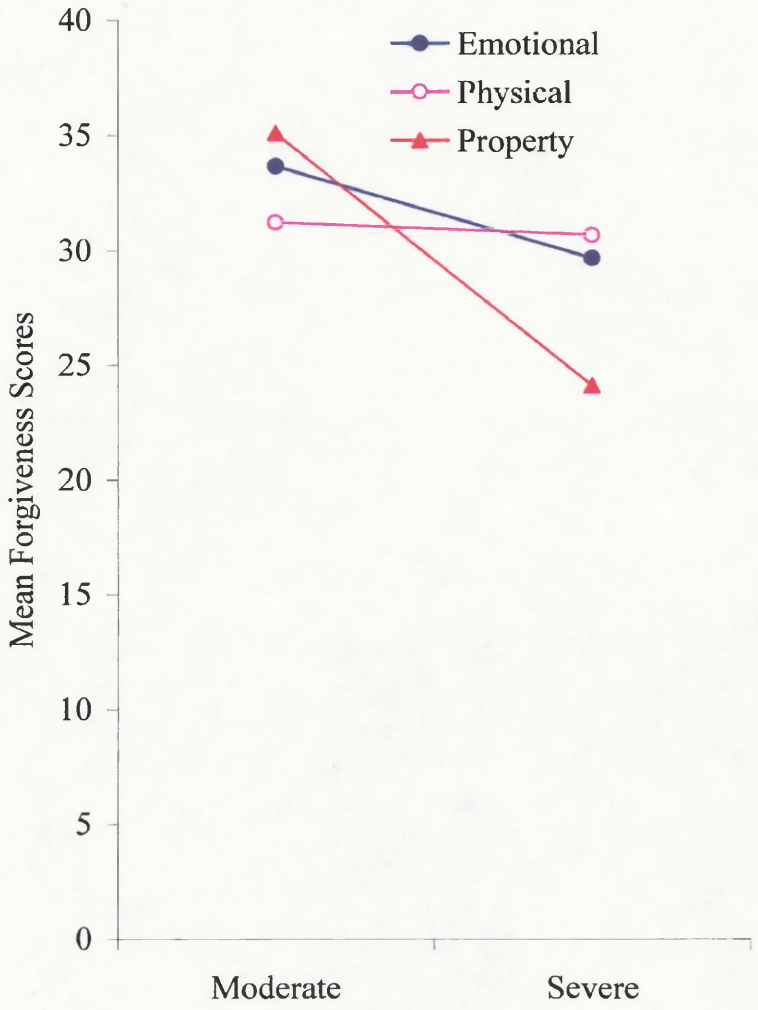


Table 11

Simple Interaction Means for Severity x Type of Transgression (for Sixth Grade Boys)

| | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Emotional, Moderate | 33.67 | 15.40 |
| Emotional, Severe | 29.67 | 13.10 |
| Physical, Moderate | 31.22 | 10.64 |
| Physical, Severe | 30.67 | 11.98 |
| Property, Moderate | 35.11 | 9.13 |
| Property, Severe | 24.11 | 10.72 |

Note. N = 9. Maximum possible score = 60. Minimum possible score = 12.

Table 12

Severity x Type x Gender x Grade Simple Interaction Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 2, Boys | | | | |
| Severity x Type | 13.65 | 2 | .52 | .52 |
| Error | 26.09 | 18 | | |
| Grade 2, Girls | | | | |
| Severity x Type | 5.79 | 2 | .42 | .67 |
| Error | 13.87 | 12 | | |
| Grade 4, Boys | | | | |
| Severity x Type | 39.24 | 2 | 1.80 | .19 |
| Error | 21.85 | 28 | | |
| Grade 4, Girls | | | | |
| Severity x Type | 4.65 | 2 | .25 | .78 |
| Error | 18.41 | 18 | | |
| Grade 6, Boys | | | | |
| Severity x Type | 127.46 | 2 | 3.63 | .05 |
| Error | 35.15 | 16 | | |
| Grade 6, Girls | | | | |
| Severity x Type | 18.76 | 2 | .95 | .40 |
| Error | 19.73 | 22 | | |

Table 13

Severity x Type x Gender x Grade Simple Main Effect Means and Standard Deviations

| | Moderate | Severe | Emotional | Property | Physical |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 2, Boys | 110.80 | 102.40 | 76.50 | 71.30 | 65.40 |
| | (31.48) | (33.89) | (19.08) | (23.27) | (21.95) |
| Grade 2, Girls | 97.86 | 82.00* | 60.43 | 64.29 | 55.14 |
| | (22.68) | (24.92) | (17.52) | (14.12) | (16.92) |
| Grade 4, Boys | 104.40 | 90.87** | 67.93 | 68.60 | 58.73** |
| | (30.49) | (38.67) | (23.43) | (23.81) | (24.43) |
| Grade 4, Girls | 80.80 | 62.20** | 52.90 | 47.00 | 43.10 |
| | (19.22) | (16.13) | (14.15) | (13.61) | (11.57) |
| Grade 6, Boys | 100.00 | 84.44** | 63.33 | 59.22 | 61.89 |
| | (31.93) | (29.61) | (28.13) | (19.23) | (18.83) |
| Grade 6, Girls | 100.33 | 81.42*** | 62.42 | 60.00 | 59.33 |
| | (29.00) | (28.56) | (19.69) | (18.60) | (22.07) |

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 14

Severity x Type x Gender x Grade Simple Main Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 2, Boys, Severity | 117.60 | 1 | 1.21 | .30 |
| Error | 97.49 | 9 | | |
| Grade 2, Boys, Type | 209.00 | 2 | 3.96 | .06 |
| Error | 52.80 | 18 | | |
| Grade 2, Girls, Severity | 293.36 | 1 | 9.61 | .02 |
| Error | 30.52 | 6 | | |
| Grade 2, Girls, Type | 73.74 | 2 | 3.06 | .08 |
| Error | 24.10 | 12 | | |
| Grade 4, Boys, Severity | 457.88 | 1 | 11.71 | .004 |
| Error | 39.09 | 14 | | |
| Grade 4, Boys, Type | 228.04 | 2 | 5.22 | .01 |
| Error | 43.65 | 28 | | |
| Grade 4, Girls, Severity | 576.60 | 1 | 9.41 | .01 |
| Error | 61.30 | 9 | | |
| Grade 4, Girls, Type | 121.72 | 2 | 2.19 | .14 |
| Error | 55.59 | 18 | | |
| Grade 6, Boys, Severity | 362.96 | 1 | 10.27 | .01 |
| Error | 35.34 | 8 | | |
| Grade 6, Boys, Type | 19.57 | 2 | .24 | .79 |
| Error | 80.68 | 16 | | |

Table 14 (Continued)

Severity x Type x Gender x Grade Simple Main Effects

| Source | MS | df | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 6, Girls, Severity | 715.68 | 1 | 22.68 | .001 |
| Error | 31.56 | 11 | | |
| Grade 6, Girls, Type | 15.79 | 2 | .35 | .71 |
| Error | 44.82 | 22 | | |

moderate property damage (M = 35.11), t(8) = -6.410, p<.0005 or moderate emotional damage (M = 33.67), t(8) = -4.603, p<.002. All other comparisons were nonsignificant. The main effect of type of transgression failed to reach significance for all other groups.

Apology x Intention. A simple effects analysis for the significant Apology x Intention interaction showed significant simple main effects of apology and intention (apology, F(1, 62) = 147.17, p <.001 and intention, F(1, 62) = 85.66, p<.001). The means associated with the apology by intention interaction are presented in Table 15. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons of the means indicated that the children in this sample were significantly more willing to forgive an accidental transgression when an apology was given (M = 59.79) versus not given (M = 42.57), t(62) = 11.42, p<.0005 as well as a deliberate transgression when an apology was given (M = 46.52) versus not given (M = 35.10), t(62) = 9.317, p<.0005. Conversely, the children were significantly more willing to forgive an accidental transgression in comparison to a deliberate transgression when an apology was given in both situations (accidental, M = 59.79 and deliberate, M = 46.52, t(62) = 9.352, p <.0005) and significantly more willing to forgive an accidental transgression in comparison to a deliberate transgression when an apology was not given in either situation (accidental, M = 42.57 and deliberate, M = 35.10, t(62) = 6.127, p<.0005). The children were also more willing to forgive a deliberate transgression when an apology was given (M = 46.52) in comparison to an accidental transgression without an apology (M = 42.57, t(62) = 3.123, p<.003) (see Figure 4).

Table 15

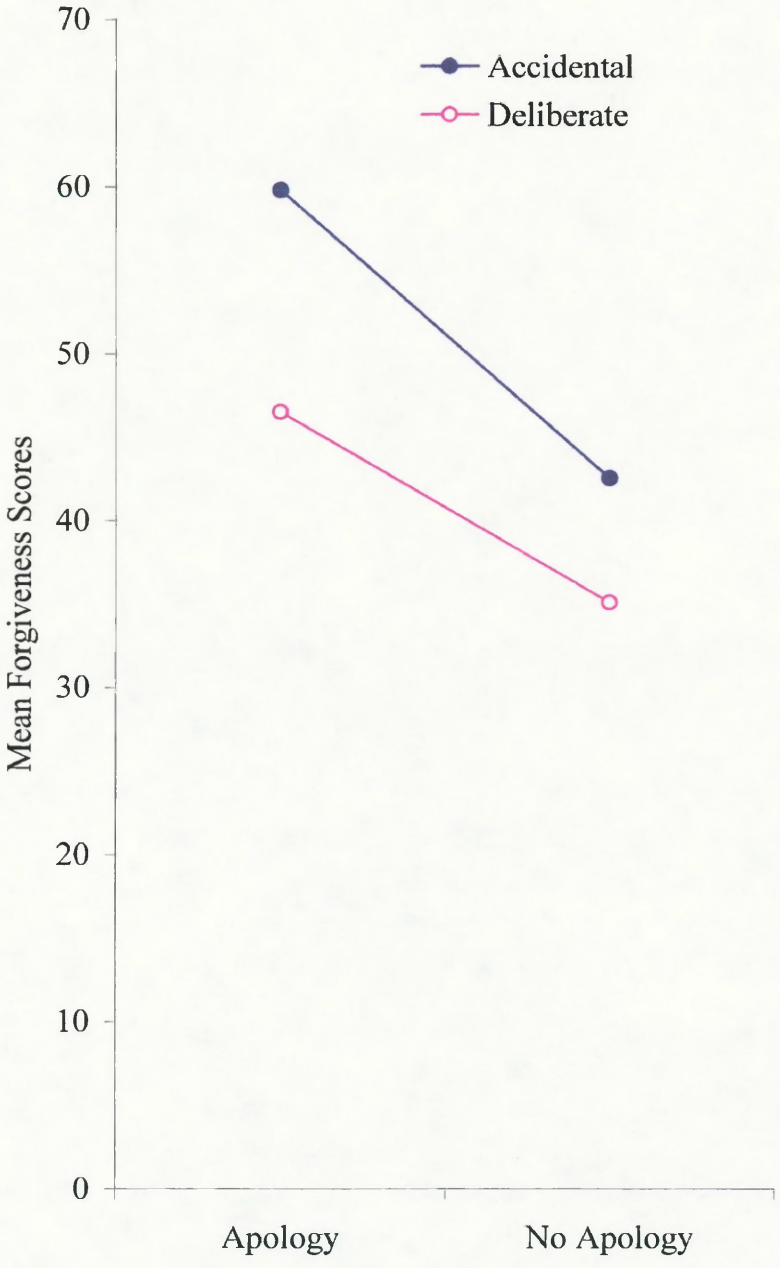
Interaction Means for Apology x Intention

| | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Accidental w/Apology | 59.79 | 15.55 |
| Deliberate w/Apology | 46.52 | 16.81 |
| Accidental No Apology | 42.57 | 16.58 |
| Deliberate No Apology | 35.10 | 15.53 |

Note. N = 63. Maximum possible score = 90. Minimum possible score = 18.

Figure 4

Apology x Intention Interaction



Intention x Type. A simple effects analysis for the significant Intention x Type interaction showed significant simple main effects of intention ($F(1, 62) = 85.66$, $p < .001$) and type of transgression ($F(2, 124) = 8.13$, $p < .001$). The means associated with the Intention x Type interaction are presented in Table 16. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons for type of transgression for accidental acts showed that the children in this sample were less willing to forgive accidental transgressions that involved physical damage ($M = 31.71$) in comparison to transgressions resulting in property damage ($M = 35.48$), $t(62) = -3.474$, $p < .001$. The comparison between willingness to forgive accidental transgressions that resulted in emotional damage ($M = 35.18$) and property damage ($M = 35.48$) was not significant, $t(62) = -.301$, $p > .76$. The comparison between willingness to forgive accidental transgressions that resulted in emotional damage and physical damage was also not significant, $t(62) = 2.931$, $p > .005$. Bonferroni pairwise comparisons for type of transgression for deliberate acts showed that the children in this study were more willing to forgive transgressions that resulted in emotional damage ($M = 29.19$) in comparison to transgressions that resulted in physical damage ($M = 25.76$), $t(62) = 5.40$, $p < .001$. The comparison between willingness to forgive deliberate transgressions that resulted in emotional damage ($M = 29.19$) and property damage ($M = 26.67$) was not significant, $t(62) = 2.957$, $p > .004$. The comparison between willingness to forgive deliberate transgressions that resulted in property damage and physical damage was also not significant, $t(62) = -1.063$, $p > .29$. The children in this study were more willing to forgive accidental emotional transgressions than deliberate emotional

Table 16

Interaction Means for Intention x Type of Transgression

| | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Accidental Emotional | 35.17 | 11.54 |
| Deliberate Emotional | 29.19 | 11.21 |
| Accidental Physical | 31.71 | 11.05 |
| Deliberate Physical | 25.76 | 11.17 |
| Accidental Property | 35.48 | 10.79 |
| Deliberate Property | 26.67 | 10.86 |

Note. N = 63. Maximum possible score = 60. Minimum possible score = 12.

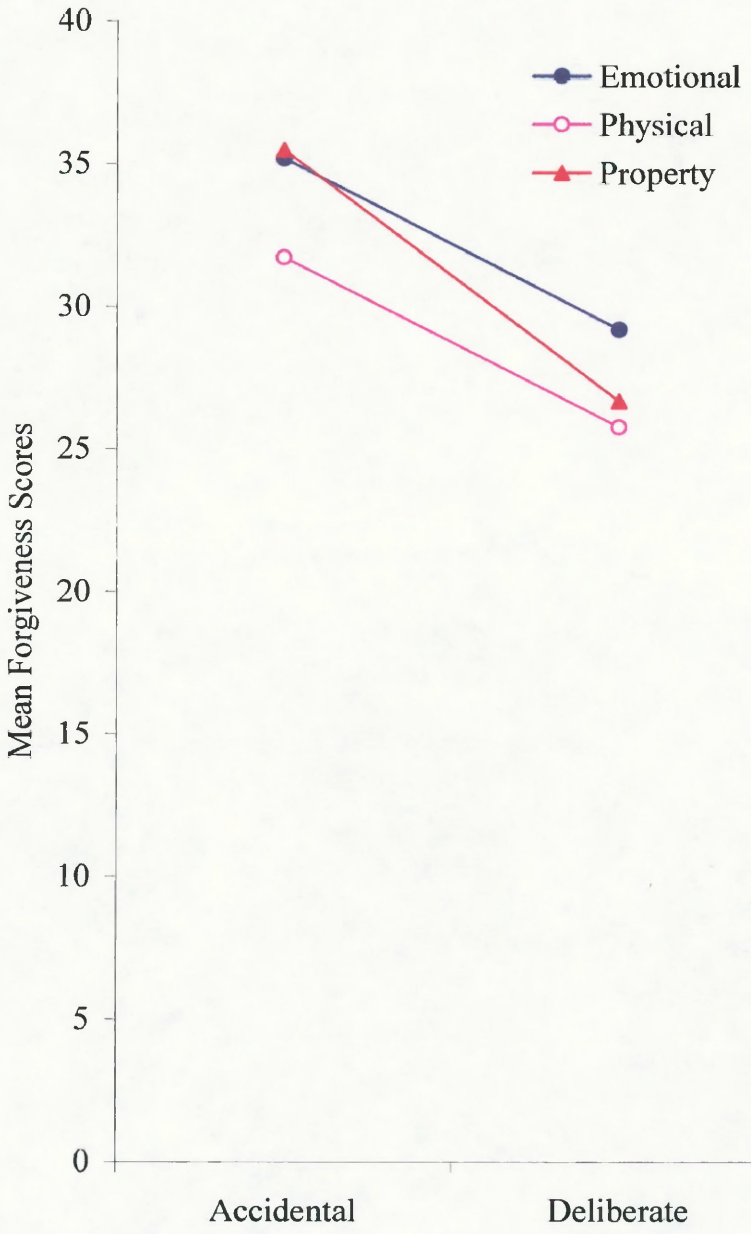
transgressions, $t(62) = 6.097$, $p<.0005$, deliberate physical transgressions, $t(62) = 7.239$, $p = <.0005$, or deliberate property transgressions, $t(62) = 6.894$, $p<.0005$ as well as more willing to forgive accidental property transgressions than deliberate property transgressions, $t(62) = 10.589$, $p<.0005$, deliberate emotional transgressions, $t(62) = 5.866$, $p<.0005$, or deliberate physical transgressions, $t(62) = 8.20$, $p = <.0005$. The children were also more willing to forgive accidental physical transgressions than deliberate physical transgressions, $t(62) = 6.02$, $p = <.0005$ or deliberate property transgressions, $t(62) = 4.61$, $p = <.0005$. The children did not differ in their willingness to forgive accidental physical transgressions and deliberate emotional transgressions, $t(62) = 2.12$, $p>.04$ (see Figure 5).

Exploratory Analyses of Categories of Forgiveness

The forgiveness vignettes used in this study allowed an exploration of Baumeister, Exline, and Sommer's (1998) four categories of forgiveness (no forgiveness, hollow forgiveness, silent forgiveness, total forgiveness) as a viable model of types of forgiveness. The use of these four categories was analyzed by performing two chi square goodness of fit tests. The chi square is used to assess differences between groups when the data consist of frequencies measured using a nominal scale, and was therefore, an appropriate test for examining differences in the types of forgiveness exhibited between the boys and girls in different grades. The first analysis was a 3 (grade) x 4 (type of forgiveness) chi square, which was significant ($\chi^2$ (6) = 22.66, $p <.001$). Analysis of residuals revealed that for second grade children the observed frequencies of no forgiveness and hollow forgiveness

Figure 5

Intention x Type of Transgression Interaction



were significantly lower than the expected frequencies, while the observed frequency of total forgiveness was significantly higher than the expected frequency. In the fourth grade group, the expected frequencies for no forgiveness and hollow forgiveness were higher than the expected frequencies, whereas the observed frequency for total forgiveness was lower than the expected frequency. None of the observed frequencies in the sixth grade group differed significantly from the expected frequencies. Further analysis of the forgiveness categories included gender, and revealed that the observed frequencies differed significantly by gender and grade ($\chi^2$ (15) = 37.70, $p$ <.001). A summary of the chi square results are presented in Table 17 (silent forgiveness was removed from the analysis because the expected frequencies were all less than one). As can be seen in Table 17, fourth grade girls were observed using no forgiveness and hollow forgiveness to a greater extent than would be expected, and conversely total forgiveness was used less often than would be expected. The second grade boys were observed using no forgiveness less often than would be expected, and sixth grade boys were observed using hollow forgiveness less often than would be expected.

A second 4 (type of forgiveness) x 24 (situation) chi square goodness of fit analysis was performed to investigate the distributions of type of forgiveness associated with each of the combinations of situational variables (moderate vs. severe, apology vs. no apology, accidental vs. deliberate, and emotional vs. physical vs. property). The overall chi square was significant ($\chi^2$ (69) = 161.86, $p$ <.001). Table 18 summarizes all the observed frequencies that differed significantly from the

Table 17

Summary of Analysis of Residuals for Grade x Gender x Type of Forgiveness

| | No Forgiveness | | | Hollow Forgiveness | | | Total Forgiveness | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source | *ef* | *of* | $\chi^2$ | *ef* | *of* | $\chi^2$ | *ef* | *of* | $\chi^2$ |
| 2nd Grade | | | | | | | | | |
| Boys | 63.63 | 41 | -2.71** | 26.13 | 22 | -.830 | 172.24 | 199 | 1.36 |
| Girls | 34.73 | 24 | -1.65 | 14.26 | 6 | -2.176* | 94 | 113 | 1.24 |
| 4th Grade | | | | | | | | | |
| Boys | 86.22 | 94 | .81 | 35.40 | 23 | 1.7 | 233.38 | 238 | .17 |
| Girls | 57.80 | 84 | 3.23** | 23.74 | 53 | 6.20*** | 156.46 | 101 | -2.9** |
| 6th Grade | | | | | | | | | |
| Boys | 47.12 | 48 | .12 | 19.35 | 8 | -2.62** | 127.53 | 138 | .59 |
| Girls | 68.49 | 67 | -.15 | 28.12 | 35 | 1.39 | 185.39 | 180 | .23 |

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

Table 18

Summary of Analysis of Residuals for Type of Forgiveness x Situational Variables

| | No Forgiveness | | | Total Forgiveness | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source | *ef* | *of* | $\chi^2$ | *ef* | *of* | $\chi^2$ |
| Moderate | | | | | | |
| Emot., Acc., With Apology | 15.13 | 1 | -4.14** | 37.20 | 51 | .69** |
| Phy., Acc.,With Apology | 15.13 | 4 | -3.26** | 37.20 | 50 | 3.43** |
| Prop., Acc., With Apology | 15.13 | 1 | -4.14** | 37.20 | 54 | 4.49** |
| Emot., Del., With Apology | 15.13 | 6 | -2.67* | 37.20 | 45 | 2.09* |
| Phy., Del., With Apology | 15.13 | 8 | -2.09* | 37.20 | 44 | ns |
| Prop., Del., With Apology | 15.13 | 8 | -2.09* | 37.20 | 44 | ns |
| Phy., Del., No Apology | 15.13 | 27 | 3.47** | 37.20 | 24 | -3.53** |
| Severe | | | | | | |
| Emot., Acc., With Apology | 15.13 | 6 | -2.67* | 37.20 | 51 | 3.69** |
| Prop., Acc., With Apology | 15.13 | 8 | -2.09* | 37.20 | 45 | 2.09* |
| Emot., Del., No Apology | 15.13 | 24 | 2.60* | 37.20 | 29 | -2.20* |
| Phy., Del., No Apology | 15.13 | 32 | 4.94** | 37.20 | 19 | -4.87** |
| Prop., Del., No Apology | 15.13 | 34 | 5.52** | 37.20 | 18 | -5.14** |

*$p$ <.05. **$p$ <.01.

expected frequencies for no forgiveness and total forgiveness only. Silent forgiveness was removed from the analysis because the expected frequencies were all less than one. None of the observed frequencies for hollow forgiveness differed significantly from the expected frequencies. As can be seen in Table 18, the extent to which the observed use of no forgiveness and total forgiveness differed from the expected fit the pattern that one might expect. For transgressions that are moderate and involve an apology (both accidental and deliberate), the observed use of no forgiveness was significantly less than the expected use, and conversely the observed use of total forgiveness was significantly higher than the expected use. The opposite pattern holds true for the severe transgressions that were deliberate and did not involve an apology (the observed use of no forgiveness was significantly higher than expected, and conversely the use of total forgiveness was significantly lower than expected).

# Chapter IV

## Discussion

While a number of variables have been found to be significantly related to forgiveness in the adult and adolescent research, the same relationships were not found in the current sample with 7- to 12-year-old children. Namely, empathy and religiosity were not significantly predictive of willingness to forgive. Prosocial behavior was expected to have a significant predictive relationship with willingness to forgive, but this effect was not found. The major findings of this study indicate that elementary school-aged children are, in general, very willing to forgive even quite severe transgressions. They seemed to be aware of the circumstances underlying a transgression (i.e., degree of damage or severity and the intention of the act), and to recognize the importance of a forthcoming apology from the transgressor. Therefore, when children have experienced a transgression the circumstances are salient and influence the child's willingness to forgive.

### Developmental Progression of Forgiveness—Age Differences

The first hypothesis that willingness to forgive would display a linear pattern across the age groups was not supported. Analysis of the means show that willingness to forgive decreased across the age ranges indicating a linear decrease in boys, and increased thereafter in the 11-12 year old girls depicting a more cubic relationship. The lack of a linear progression in willingness to forgive may be understood in terms of Enright and the Human Development Study Group's (1994) stage model of forgiveness and Kohlberg's theory of moral development. The

youngest children in the current sample reported higher levels of forgiveness than the older children. If, as Enright et al. suggest, reasoning underlying forgiveness is similar to moral reasoning, and the reasoning underlying the decision to forgive in the youngest participants was externally based in reinforcement or punishment (as Kohlberg suggests reasoning at the preconventional level is), one might expect the younger participants to be highly forgiving because adults generally encourage, approve of, and reinforce forgiving behavior. By forgiving a friend for committing a transgression, the child is also afforded the opportunity to recommence playing with that individual, an act that is to the benefit of the forgiver.

The greater willingness to forgive found in the youngest age group (7- and 8-years-olds) may also reflect Darby and Schlenker's (1982) findings that children in first grade (6- and 7-year-olds) perceived wrongdoers as sorry regardless of whether they had apologized or not. Darby and Schlenker suggest that children in this age range may attribute to the wrongdoer how they would feel if they had committed the transgression, and project their own feelings of remorse. The 7- and 8-year-olds in this study, therefore, may have been more willing to forgive because they were focused on how they would feel in a similar situation.

The children in the middle age ranges may be expected to be less forgiving because their decision to forgive may be based on the reasoning that a transgression is always wrong. The lower willingness to forgive found in the oldest participants may be a reflection of their ability to take into account the intention behind the transgression, which led to lower scores for the deliberate transgressions. This

explanation for the age pattern is supported by the finding that age significantly predicted the forgiveness difference scores based on intention of the transgression. The twelve-year-olds had the largest forgiveness difference scores between accidental and deliberate transgressions indicating that their willingness to forgive was influenced to a greater extent by the intention of the act in comparison to the other age groups. This finding fits the moral development literature.

The pattern of differences in willingness to forgive in the children sampled seemed to suggest lower levels of forgiveness in the fourth grade children (9- and 10-year-olds) in comparison to the second (7- and 8-year-olds) and sixth grade children (11- and 12-year-olds), although the age factor was not significant. This pattern may be understood in terms of the changing views of children regarding their friendships. According to Damon (as cited by Buhrmester, 1996), children's views of their friends change through three stages. Children aged 4-7 view their friends as someone to share activities with and generally do not think about their friends in terms of personal characteristics. Violations of the friendship are often easily reconciled by playing nicely after the conflict. Children at this age may place less importance on transgressions, and forgive so that they can continue playing.

During the ages of 8 to 10, children's concepts of friends become more psychologically based, and their friendships involve a sense of mutual trust and acts of kindness. Violations of the friendship are not easily reconciled, and children at this age very often require apologies and explanations regarding the transgression before the friendship can continue. Children at this age may consider a transgression

as a reflection of their friend's internal characteristics, and realize that this friend has characteristics that make a friendship unrewarding; therefore, their willingness to forgive and continue the friendship decreases. The idea that transgressions are recognized as a reflection of an individual's disposition is supported by the findings of Barenboim (1981) and Rotenberg (1982). Barenboim found that the percentage of psychological characteristics used to describe individuals increased in children from the age of seven onwards. Rotenberg's research suggests that by age nine children appreciate the consistency and stability of an individual's character.

Children's friendships by age 11 into adolescence are often characterized by intimacy and loyalty. The focus on intimacy at this age adds an increasing depth to the friendship, and children in this age range view the development of friendships as a period of "getting to know someone." Consequently, older children understand better that friendships are a long-term venture and that effort is required to maintain friendships. Friendships during this time period are unlikely to dissolve unless an extreme transgression has transpired. The increases in willingness to forgive seen in the 11- and 12-year-olds in comparison to the 9- and 10-year-olds may be a reflection of an increased commitment to the friendship and increased desire to maintain the relationship. According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, by age 11 children are making the transition to conventional morality. This stage of moral development involves making moral decisions based on enhancement of relationships and social approval. Individuals in this stage are able to evaluate acts based on the motives behind them and to take into account mitigating circumstances.

At this stage reasoning involves a greater social concern within the individual and an adherence to duty and what should be done in order to maintain the social order. The increases in willingness to forgive in the 11- and 12-year-olds may be a reflection of this greater social concern.

Empathy

Empathy has been found significantly related to the decision to forgive in adolescents and adults; however, this same relationship was not found in the current sample of children. The hypothesis that empathy and prosocial behavior would significantly predict total forgiveness scores was not supported. The artificial nature of the data collection procedure may provide an explanation for this dissociation. It is unlikely that the paper and pencil measure produced empathic feelings towards an imaginary transgressor in the same manner that may be experienced if the transgressions had actually occurred. An alternative explanation is that the ability to empathize does not influence willingness to forgive in children. This alternative explanation is supported by the results of two t-tests performed on the total forgiveness and empathy scores for boys and girls. The boys in this sample were significantly more willing to forgive than the girls, $t(61) = 2.081$, $p < .04$; however, the girls were significantly more empathic than the boys, $t(61) = 1.991$, $p < .05$. If empathy were related to willingness to forgive then the girls should have been more willing to forgive than the boys.

Prosocial Behavior

The nonsignificant relationship between willingness to forgive and prosocial behavior may also be a function of the data collection procedure as explained above, or conversely the hypothesized relationship may simply not exist. Boys and girls were found to be equally prosocial. Unlike empathy, there is currently no evidence in the adult or adolescent forgiveness literature to suggest that prosocial behavior is related to forgiveness at any age. However, the information regarding prosocial behavior was collected from parents reporting the frequency at which they had observed their children performing a number of prosocial behaviors. The relationship between willingness to forgive and prosocial behavior should be re-examined using a prosocial measure completed by the children.

Gender Differences

Gender was found to predict willingness to forgive, with gender accounting for 6.6% of the variance. Boys were more willing to forgive than girls. This gender difference in willingness to forgive may be a function of the differences between the types of friendships that boys and girls experience. Buhrmester (1996) discusses the fact that girls' friendships tend to be directed toward the fulfillment of communal needs (the need for intimacy, support, and companionship), whereas boys' friendships tend to focus on the fulfillment of agentic needs (the need for achievement, recognition, and acceptance). Perhaps for girls a transgression is more damaging to the relationship and perceived as less forgivable than for boys because the violation of expectations of how friends behave is more severe for girls than it is for boys. The

gender differences found in the current sample are consistent with Gonzales, Haugen, and Manning's (1994) research with adults, which showed females had more extreme responses to different types of offenses than males. Females also reported more anger and relationship damage in response to transgressions than males did, and males seemed to be less sensitive to interpersonal transgressions.

Erdley and Asher's (1998) study of 9- to 11-year-old children's responses to provocation suggests boys endorse physically and verbally aggressive responses when provoked rather than prosocial or withdrawal tactics. The opposite pattern was found for girls who were more likely to endorse prosocial and withdrawal behaviors in response to provocation. According to Laursen, Hartup, and Koplas (1994), relationship interdependence and closeness occur when the positive outcomes for the individuals are equitable. Continuation of a friendship is based, in part, on the perception of equitable past and future interactions. Conflict arising from a transgression may lead to the perception of inequity making the relationship less rewarding. When a transgression has occurred between boys, it seems likely (based on Erdley and Asher's findings) that boys respond in a manner that "evens the score" and allows the friendship to continue relatively uninterrupted. When a transgression has occurred between girls, the greater use of prosocial or withdrawal responses may produce an inequitable resolution to the transgression. Although the friendship continues, the girls report that they would stay angry and their feelings would be hurt for a longer period of time than the boys, indicating that the issue may not be fully resolved.

Religiosity

A significant relationship between forgiveness and religiosity has been reported in the adolescent and adult literature; however, this relationship was not found in the sample of children used in the current study. The lack of a significant relationship between forgiveness and religiosity may be indicative of a lack of saliency of the "forgiveness message" that is taught through many religions--a message that becomes more salient during adolescence and adulthood thereby having a stronger influence on forgiveness. The correlation in the current sample nearly reached significance ($r = .25$, $p > .06$), and this nonsignificant correlation could be attributable to the small sample size.

Situational Variables of Apology, Severity, Type of Transgression, and Intention

The significant effects for apology, severity, type of transgression, and intention indicate that even in the youngest participants these factors influenced their willingness to forgive.

Apology. Apology appears to be the strongest variable, accounting for 71% of the variance in willingness to forgive (when variance due to severity, intention, and type of transgression were not considered). This effect is indicative of an understanding in the children studied of the social norm of apologizing when one has committed a transgression, and of the importance they place on a forthcoming apology as a sign of remorse in the transgressor. Takaku (2001) suggests that an apology is a powerful act in facilitating the process of forgiveness because it severs the connection between the transgressor and the negative cognitions and emotions.

That is, the association between the act and the actor's disposition is weakened or suppressed.

Intent. Intent accounted for 59% of the variance in willingness to forgive (when variance due to severity, apology, and type of transgression were not considered). This effect indicates that the children in the current study were able to take into account the circumstances underlying a transgression, and were more forgiving when a transgression was accidental rather than deliberate. According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, children in the preconventional reasoning stage (younger than 10) generally consider the size of the consequences rather than the intention of the wrongdoer when making moral decisions about whether a behavior is right or wrong. However, no age differences in the willingness to forgive an accidental transgression in comparison to a deliberate transgression were found. The children across the age groups were more willing to forgive an accidental act in comparison to a deliberate act, indicting that they considered the intention behind the behavior. The fact that all of the children, regardless of age, took the intention of the act into consideration may be a function of the way in which the vignettes were presented. In each of the vignettes representing a deliberate act, it was clearly stated that the behavior was intentional. It may be that children in the stage of preconventional reasoning recognize that deliberate acts are more morally wrong than accidental acts and are, therefore, less willing to forgive them, but that they fail to recognize the intentionality behind situations when it is not specifically pointed out to them. Because the intentionality behind the behaviors in the vignettes was

clearly stated, all the children were able to focus on the deliberate nature of the act when considering how they would respond to the vignettes. This explanation gains support from Berndt and Berndt's (1975) research which examined the understanding of motives and intentionality in children aged 4 to 11. Berndt and Berndt concluded that children as young as five understand the distinction between accidental and deliberate acts, but that learning to apply this distinction in various situations continues to develop throughout middle childhood.

The interaction between apology and intention shows that a forthcoming apology had a greater impact on the willingness to forgive when a transgression was accidental. When the transgression was deliberate the effect of an apology on the willingness to forgive was decreased. When an apology was not forthcoming the willingness to forgive decreased for both accidental and deliberate transgressions, highlighting the fact that even when an act is accidental there is an expectation that a friend should apologize, and that the fulfillment of this expectation becomes more important when the act is deliberate. As suggested by Darby and Schlenker (1989), an apology may be important because it is indicative of the transgressor's character and suggests that the transgressor acknowledges the fact that they have broken the rules, but are remorseful and will not repeat the offense. This acknowledgement would be more important when an act was deliberately perpetrated, and is an indication of potential future behavior. The children in this study were more willing to forgive a deliberate transgression when their friend apologized than an accidental act without an apology. It seems that the lack of an apology had a greater impact on

the children's willingness to forgive than the fact that their friend had intentionally done something hurtful towards them.

Severity. Severity accounted for 45% of the variance in willingness to forgive (when variance due to apology, intent, and type of transgression were not considered). This effect indicates that the children in this study were aware of the amount of damage caused by a transgression, and that they considered the amount of damage caused when deciding how willing they would be to forgive. The severity by apology interaction suggests that a forthcoming apology had a greater influence on willingness to forgive when the transgression was moderate. When the transgression was severe, an apology led to an increased likelihood of forgiveness, but to a lesser degree. An apology had a great influence on the willingness to forgive, but the degree of severity of the transgression affected the impact of the apology. This result is consistent with Bennett and Earwaker's (1994) research in adults, which showed that an apology decreased anger in response to a transgression to a greater extent when the transgression was of low severity in comparison to high severity.

Interactions. The interaction between severity, apology, type of transgression, and gender suggests a more complex pattern. Post hoc comparisons between boys' and girls' willingness to forgive different types of transgressions, with differing severity levels, and with or without an apology show that girls are less willing to forgive than boys when the transgression is severe and no apology is given, for all types of transgressions. This finding suggests that girls perceive deliberate

transgressions with a lack of remorse as a serious violation of friendship norms, which negatively influences their willingness to forgive.

When a transgression is severe and results in physical damage the influence of an apology on the willingness to forgive for girls decreases significantly. Not only are girls much less willing to forgive a severe physical transgression with an apology in comparison to a moderate transgression with an apology, but they also make no distinction between the moderate and severe physical transgressions when an apology is not forthcoming. The girls were equally unwilling to forgive a moderate or severe physical transgression when their friend did not apologize. This finding not only highlights further the need for an apology before forgiveness will be granted by girls, but also indicates that for some transgressions (in this case physical) the lack of an apology adds to the perceived severity of the transgression and makes the transgression less forgivable. This finding is consistent with Ohbuchi, Kameda, and Agarie's (1989) research in adults, which found that an apology was less effective in reducing negative affect and verbal aggression in a situation involving severe physical harm rather than moderate physical harm.

This forgiveness pattern was not present for boys, indicating that the boys did not perceive a physical transgression to be as aversive or unforgivable as girls. This gender difference in perceived severity of physical transgressions may again be a reflection of different expectations that girls and boys have within their friendships. If, as Buhrmester (1996) suggests, boys' friendships are characterized by the fulfillment of agentic needs such as achievement and dominance, physical aggression

may not be perceived as a violation of the friendship, but rather as something that occurs because of the types of interactions boys engage in. On the other hand, if girls' friendships are characterized by the fulfillment of communal needs such as intimacy, support, and companionship, then physical aggression violates the expectations of girls.

Transgression Type. Type of transgression accounted for 11% of the variance in willingness to forgive (when apology, intent, and severity were not considered). The children studied were more willing to forgive transgressions that resulted in emotional damage than transgressions that resulted in property damage or physical damage. The interaction between type of transgression and intention seems to suggest that the 7- to 12-year-old children were less willing to forgive any type of transgression that was deliberate rather than accidental. Interestingly, they were more willing to forgive transgressions that resulted in both emotional and property damage than physical damage when the transgression was accidental, but equally less willing to forgive transgressions resulting in property and physical damage than emotional damage when the transgression was deliberate. Perhaps the 7- to 12-year-old children in this study perceived accidental transgressions resulting in emotional and property damage to be beyond the control of their friend and, therefore, they were willing to forgive accordingly, but they perceived a physical damage transgression (i.e., when the child's friend knocks them off a bike) as something that their friend could control if he/she would just "play nicer." The larger decrease in willingness to forgive deliberate transgressions resulting in both property and

physical than emotional damage may indicate that the children perceived the deliberate destruction of a possession as aggressive in nature, and therefore considered the transgression to be unforgivable because an overt act of aggression was involved. The children may not have been aware that a deliberate emotional transgression could also be considered an act of aggression, and were therefore more willing to forgive in that situation.

Alternatively, the greater willingness to forgive both accidental and deliberate emotional transgressions than property and physical transgressions may be a reflection that property or physical damage is more salient or a more important consideration for 7-12 year old children than hurt feelings. The focus of children in the preconventional and conventional stages of morality (younger than 13) when making decisions regarding the wrongness of a behavior is generally on the size of the consequences or amount of damage. It is likely, therefore, that the children in the current sample focused on the observable damage caused in the physical and property transgressions when deciding how they would respond to the vignettes. The amount of damage caused by an emotional transgression is not easy to assess. The children may not have perceived the damage caused by an emotional transgression as negatively as the transgressions with more measurable damage.

The severity by type of transgression simple interaction for sixth grade boys (11- and 12-year-olds) was mainly attributable to a large decrease in the willingness to forgive transgressions resulting in severe property damage in comparison to moderate property or emotional damage. The comparisons between severe property,

physical, and emotional damage transgressions, as well as the moderate physical transgression did not differ significantly. Williams and Bybee (1994) report that 11- to 16-year-old boys are more likely than girls to feel guilt over externalizing events, such as property damage or fighting. The experience of guilt over these types of events may reflect the fact that boys in this age range perceive these types of transgressions to be particularly severe, and when experienced, less forgivable. The simple main effect of type of transgression found for fourth grade boys (9- and 10-year-olds) may be similarly explained. Fourth grade boys were less willing to forgive a severe physical transgression than either the severe emotional or property transgression.

Alternatively, the large decrease in willingness to forgive a severe rather than moderate property transgression found in the sixth grade boys may reflect a confound in the vignette. The severe property transgression involved the loss of an expensive watch given by the father. Perhaps the 11- and 12-year-old boys were more perturbed by the loss of the watch because it was a gift given by the father with the expectation of responsibility, a fact that did not influence the girls or younger boys.

Forgiveness Categories

The forgiveness vignettes used in this study permitted an exploration of Baumeister, Exline, and Sommer's (1998) four categories of forgiveness (no forgiveness, hollow forgiveness, silent forgiveness, total forgiveness) as a viable model of types of forgiveness. The prevalence of these four categories in the children sampled was analyzed using two chi square goodness of fit tests.

The chi square exploring the patterns of type of forgiveness within each of the grades and genders showed fourth grade girls reported no forgiveness or hollow forgiveness more frequently than either boys or girls at the other grade levels. Apparently, fourth grade girls are more likely to end a friendship (no forgiveness) or remain in a friendship but hold a grudge (hollow forgiveness) than they are to forgive totally after experiencing some form of wrongdoing. Although the sixth grade girls were not observed reporting hollow forgiveness more frequently than expected, the observed use of hollow forgiveness in sixth grade boys was significantly less than expected. The differences found between the fourth and sixth grade boys and girls indicate a pattern of greater use of hollow forgiveness for girls in comparison to boys.

The chi square exploring the patterns of type of forgiveness associated with each of the combinations of transgressions showed that the children in this sample were more likely to forgive a friend completely when a transgression was accidental or deliberate and their friend apologized. However, the children were more likely to end a friendship (no forgiveness) when the transgressions were the most severe (i.e., when the transgressions were of a severe nature, deliberate, and an apology was not forthcoming) regardless of the type of damage caused.

These results suggest that elementary school children of different ages and gender differ in their forgiving behavior enough that the use of Baumeister, Exline, and Sommer's four categories of forgiveness can be measured and the children categorized as using one type of forgiveness to a greater degree than the other types

of forgiveness. The findings of the chi square analyses also provide support for the idea that forgiveness is not a unitary construct, but involves at least two dimensions, i.e., intra- and interpsychic dimensions, along which the forgiving individual may simultaneously differ. The children reported using the "less forgiving" types of forgiveness (no forgiveness and hollow forgiveness) in response to the transgressions that intuitively were the least forgivable, i.e., the transgressions that were deliberately perpetrated, which involved severe damage, and for which their friend did not apologize. The correspondence between the type of forgiveness reported and the degree of transgression forgivability provides some validation of Baumeister et al.'s types of forgiveness. Future research should include a direct measure of the intra- and interpersonal dimensions of forgiveness and investigate the relationship between types of forgiveness and these two dimensions.

Limitations of the Study

While every possible effort was made to recruit participants for this study, the ability to obtain data was severely restricted. Consequently, the children who participated constitute only a very small sample. A significant problem introduced by the small sample size is the number of interactions performed within the repeated ANOVA. The four repeated factors and the number of interactions considered may have produced Type I errors. However, the main effects and interactions were so strong that this error seems unlikely. With a larger sample size one can assume that the significant results would remain strong and possibly additional interactions would have been found.

The generalizablility of the results is questionable. The children who did complete the measures represent a convenience sample of children whose parents gave permission for their children to participate in a psychological study. The measures used in this study contained many questions that took between 45 minutes to one hour to complete. The participants may have become bored and/or tired during the procedure, and therefore, they may have not been particularly motivated to think carefully about their responses. Furthermore, the vignettes used in this study were created from information collected during a pilot study. While every effort was made to create vignettes that were representative of children's everyday experiences, this effort was not necessarily successfully accomplished. In order to decrease the number of measures completed by the participants, the prosocial behavior and religiosity measures were completed by each participant's mother. While it is quite likely that the mothers' perceptions of their child(ren)'s prosocial behavior and religious involvement are accurate, this assumption may be false.

Future Research

The next logical step in the process of studying forgiveness in children should be a replication of this study with a larger, more representative sample. The replication of this study should ask children to name and think about a specific friend while completing the vignettes, so that the children are focused on how willing they would be to forgive that friend rather than in general. Data regarding prosocial behavior or reasoning and religiosity should also be collected from the participants, rather than from a second party.

An extension of this study might involve investigating willingness to forgive transgressions involving a "best friend" in comparison to "any friend" and nonfriends, and include additional variables such as length of and commitment to the relationship. A study investigating the progression of forgiveness through transgressions actually experienced by children could be performed by having children recount their experiences using either an interview format or, depending on the age of the children studied, a narrative format. The sociometric status of the children being study should also be considered, so that the question of how the number of alternative friends influences the willingness to forgive can be addressed. If a child has no other friends, perhaps forgiveness is a necessity rather than something that is done for other reasons. If a child is forgiving in order to maintain their only friendship, we may expect the satisfaction with that relationship to be low (and possibly a greater degree of hollow forgiveness reported).

The current research gives some insight into the external variables that influence children's willingness to forgive. Additional external variables that could be considered are: how children's attributions regarding the transgressor's motives or level of responsibility for the transgression influences the willingness to forgive. Although empathy was not related to forgiveness in children as expected, the relationship between empathy and forgiveness in adults has been found in several studies. Therefore, the relationship between empathy and forgiveness in children should be re-examined. Other internal variables could also be considered. For

example, McCullough (2001) discusses the fact that adults who are more agreeable and emotionally stable are more inclined to forgive. These same traits could be examined in children to determine the extent to which they are a factor in children's willingness to forgive.

Familial influences on children's willingness to forgive have not been explored. An important area of investigation is the relationship between a child's willingness to forgive and parental forgiveness, both forgiveness by the parents towards the child and the observation of parents' forgiveness of others. The influence of siblings could also be investigated.

Further research investigating the reasons why children choose to forgive needs to be conducted. Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1994) suggest that forgiveness reasoning develops through six stages, and in accordance with reasoning underlying moral decisions. This is a testable hypothesis, which has currently not been investigated. The child's level of moral reasoning needs to be assessed.

Conclusions

The act of forgiveness in children's relations with friends has been shown to be operative among the 7-12 year old children in this study. These children seemed to be aware of the various contingencies associated with forgiveness of a transgression and they recognized the importance of an apology. This pattern of results is similar to that reported in the literature on adolescents and adults. However, other expected variables from the adolescent and adult literature were not

found to predict forgiveness in these 7-12 year old children. So, the developmental path of forgiveness continues to change with age. The data in the current study do not tell us the minimum age at which children understand something about forgiveness and its correlates. We only know that 7-year-olds are already quite knowledgeable about interpersonal forgiveness.

Further, the data on intention of the act, severity, and type of transgression show interesting developmental patterns which fit with the data on children's moral development. The 7-12 year olds did consider intentions and severity of the act, and these conditions affected their willingness to forgive. Helwig and Jasiobedzka (2001) found that 6 to 10 year olds considered various moral factors of justice, rights, and harm when they reasoned about specified laws and whether to comply. These confirmatory data further support the contention that children in the 7-12 year old age range are able to reason across a broad spectrum of moral issues.

The current study represents a small step forward in our understanding of the influences involved in children's willingness to forgive. This study extends the adolescent and adult forgiveness research, and shows that children aged 7-12 consider a number of factors after experiencing a transgression that influence their willingness to forgive. This study is the first direct investigation of the influence of a number of situational variables on children's willingness to forgive. While the influences of empathy and religiosity on willingness to forgive were in the expected direction (positively related), the relationships between empathy and religiosity and forgiveness (respectively) in children do not appear to be as strong as the

relationships found between these variables in the adolescent and adult research. The exploratory analyses involving types of forgiveness suggest a pattern of greater hollow forgiveness in girls. The implications of this greater use of hollow forgiveness in girls for their relationships and friendships needs to be studied, and the continued use of hollow forgiveness by females into adulthood investigated.

# References

Barenboim, C. (1981). The development of person perception in childhood and adolescence: From behavioral comparisons to psychological constructs to psychological comparisons. Child Development, 52, 129-144.

Batson, C. D., Fultz, J., & Shoenrade, P. A. (1987). Distress and empathy: Two qualitatively distinct vicarious emotions with different motivational consequences. Journal of Personality, 55, 10-38.

Batson, C. D. (1995). Prosocial Motivation: Why Do We Help Others? In Abraham Tesser (Ed.), Advanced Social Psychology (pp. 350-353). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Baumeister, R. F., Exline, J. J., & Sommer, K. L. (1998). The victim role, grudge theory, and two dimensions of forgiveness. In Everett L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), Dimensions of Forgiveness: Psychological Research & Theological Perspectives (pp.79-104). Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.

Bennett, M. & Earwaker, D. (1994). Victims' responses to apologies: The effects of offender responsibility and offense severity. Journal of Social Psychology, 134, 457-464.

Berg-Cross, L. G. (1975). Intentionality, degree of damage, and moral judgements. Child Development, 46, 970-974.

Berndt, T.J. & Berndt, E.G. (1975). Children's use of motives and intentionality in person perception and moral judgement. Child Development, 46, 904-912.

Berry, J.W., Worthington, E.L. Jr., Parrott III, L. O'Connor, L.E., & Wade, N.G. (2001). Dispositional Forgivingness: Development and Construct Validity of the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness (TNTF). Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27, 1277-1290.

Buhrmester, D. (1996). Contexts of Friendship. In William M. Bukowski, Andrew F. Newcomb, and Willard W. Hartup (Eds.), The Company They Keep (pp. 159-172). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Davis, M. H. (1983). The effects of dispositional empathy on emotional reactions and helping: A multidimensional approach. Journal of Personality, 51, 167-184.

Darby, B. W. & Schlenker, B. R. (1982). Children's reactions to apologies. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43, 742-753.

Darby, B. W. & Schlenker, B. R. (1989). Children's reactions to transgressions: Effects of the actor's apology, reputation and remorse. British Journal of Social Psychology, 28, 353-364.

Dekovic, M. & Gerris, J. R. M. (1994). Developmental analysis of social cognitive and behavioral differences between popular and rejected children. Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 15, 367-386.

Enright, R. D. and the Human Development Study Group. (1991). The moral development of forgiveness. In W. Kurtines and J. Gewirtz (Eds.), Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development, vol. 1: Theory (pp. 123-152). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Enright, R. D. and the Human Development Study Group. (1994). Piaget on the moral development of forgiveness: identity or reciprocity? Human Development, 37, 63-80.

Enright, R. D. & Coyle, C. T. (1998). Researching the process model of forgiveness within psychological interventions. In Everett L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), Dimensions of Forgiveness: Psychological Research & Theological Perspectives (pp.166-167). Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.

Enright, R. D., Freedman, S., & Rique J. (1998). The psychology of interpersonal forgiveness. In R. D. Enright & J. North (Eds.), Exploring Forgiveness (pp. 46-62). Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Enright, R. D., Gassin, E. A., & Wu, C. (1992). Forgiveness: a developmental view. Journal of Moral Education, 21, 99-114.

Enright, R. D., Santos, M. J. D., & Al-Mabuk, R. (1989). The adolescent as forgiver. Journal of Adolescence, 12, 95-110.

Erdley, C.A. & Asher, S.R. (1998). Linkages between children's beliefs about the legitimacy of aggression and their behavior. Social Development, 7, 321-339.

Gonzales, M.H., Haugen, J.A., & Manning, D.J. (1994). Victims as "narrative critics": factors influencing rejoinders and evaluative responses to offenders' accounts. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 20, 691-704.

Gorsuch, R. L. & Hao, J. Y. (1993). Forgiveness: An exploratory factor analysis and its relationships to religious variables. Review of Religious Research, 34, 333-347.

Hay, D. F. (1994). Prosocial development. Journal of child Psychology and Psychiatry, 35, 29-72.

Helwig, C.C. & Jasiobedzka, U. (2001). The relation between law and morality: Children's reasoning about socially beneficial and unjust laws. Child Development, 72, 1382-1393.

Hoffman, M. L. (1975). Developmental synthesis of affect and cognition and its implications for altruistic motivation. Developmental Psychology, 11, 607-622.

Iannotti, R. J. (1985). Naturalistic and structured assessments of prosocial behavior in preschool children: The influence of empathy and perspective taking. Developmental Psychology, 21, 46-55.

Kohlberg, L. (1976). Moral stages and moralization: The cognitive-developmental approach. In T. Lickona (Ed.), Moral development and behavior: Theory, research, and social issues (pp. 31-53). New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Knudson, K. H. M. & Kagan, S. (1982). Differential development of empathy and prosocial behavior. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 140, 249-251.

Laursen, B., Hartup, W.W., & Koplas, A.L. (1994). Towards understanding peer conflict. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 42, 76-102.

Litvack-Miller, W., McDougall, D., & Romney, D. M. (1997). The structure of empathy during middle childhood and its relationship to prosocial behavior. Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs, 123, 303-324.

McCullough, M. E., Worthington, E. L., & Rachal, K. C. (1997). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73, 321-336.

McCullough, M. E., Rachal, K. C., Sandage, S. J., Worthington, E. L., Brown, S. W., & Hight, T. L. (1998). Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships: II. Theoretical elaboration and measurement. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75, 1586-1603.

McCullough, M.E. (2001). Forgiveness: Who does it and how do they do it? Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10, 194-197.

North, J. (1998). The "ideal" of forgiveness: A philosopher's exploration. In R. D. Enright & J. North (Eds.), Exploring Forgiveness (pp. 19-20). Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

North, J. (1987). Wrongdoing and forgiveness. Philosophy, 62, 499-508.

O'Connor, M. & Cuevas, J. (1982). The relationship of children's prosocial behavior to social responsibility, prosocial reasoning, and personality. The Journal of Genetic Psychology, 140, 33-45.

Ohbuchi, K., Kameda, M., & Agarie, N. (1989). Apology as aggression control: its role in mediating appraisal of and response to harm. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56, 219-227.

Park, Y. O. & Enright, R. D. (1997). The development of forgiveness in the context of adolescent friendship conflict in Korea. Journal of Adolescence, 20, 393-402.

Poresky, R.H. (1990). The young children's empathy measure: Reliability, validity and effects of companion animal bonding. Psychological Reports, 66, 931-936.

Roberts, W. & Strayer, J. (1996). Empathy, emotional expressiveness, and prosocial behavior. Child Development, 67, 449-470.

Rotenberg, K. J. (1991). The trust-value basis of children's friendship. In K. J. Rotenberg (Ed.), Children's interpersonal trust (pp.160-172). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Rotenberg, K.J. (1982). Development of character constancy of self and other. Child Development, 53, 505-515.

Selman, R. (1976). Social-cognitive understanding: A guide to educational and clinical practice. In T. Lickona (Ed.), Moral development and behavior. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Shultz, T. R., Wright, K., & Schleifer, M. (1986). Assignment of moral responsibility and punishment. Child Development, 57, 177-184.

Subkoviak, M. J., Enright, R. D., Wu, C., Gassin, E. A., Freedman, S., Olson, L. M., & Sarinopoulos, I. (1995). Measuring interpersonal forgiveness in late adolescence and middle adulthood. Journal of Adolescence, 18, 641-655.

Takaku, S. (2001). The effects of apology and perspective taking on interpersonal forgiveness: A dissonance-attribution model of interpersonal forgiveness. Journal of Social Psychology, 141, 494-508.

Wellman, H. M., Larkey, C., & Somerville, S. C. (1979). The early development of moral criteria. Child Development, 50, 869-873.

Williams, C. & Bybee, J. (1994). What do children feel guilty about? Developmental and gender differences. Developmental Psychology, 30, 617-623.

Witvliet, C., Ludwig, T.E., & Vander Laan, K.L. (2001). Granting forgiveness or harboring grudges: Implications for emotion, physiology, and health. Psychological Science, 121, 117-123.

Zahn-Waxler, C., Radke-Yarrow, M., Wagner, E., & Chapman, M. (1992). Development of concern for others. Developmental Psychology, 28, 126-136.

Zahn-Waxler, C., Radke-Yarrow, M., & Brady-Smith, J. (1977). Perspective-taking and prosocial behavior. Developmental Psychology, 13, 87-88.

Appendix A

Interpersonal Reactivity Index
(Adapted by Litvack-Miller, McDougall, and Romney, 1997)

**Directions: Please mark each sentence in the following way:**

If the sentence describes how you feel or act EXACTLY, put a circle around the face next to "yes, exactly like me"

If the sentence describes how you feel or act A LOT, put a circle around the face next to "yes, a lot like me"

If the sentence describes how you feel or act MORE THAN IT DOES NOT, put a circle around the face next to "yes, a little like me"

If the sentence does not describe how you feel or act A LITTLE, put a circle around the face next to "no, not really like me"

If the sentence does not describe how you feel or act AT ALL, put a circle around the face next to "no, at all like me"

**How true do you think the following statements are about you:**

1. I feel sorry for other kids whose lives are not as good as mine.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

2. I feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems or feeling bad about something.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

3. It seems like I feel the feelings of the people in stories I read or hear.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

4. When someone is hurt or in bad trouble, I feel afraid and uncomfortable.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

5. When I watch a movie or a TV show, I don't imagine that I'm in it.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

6. When my friends are having a disagreement or an argument, I try to listen to everybody before I decide who is right.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

7. When I see another kid being picked on or teased, I feel like I want to help them.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

8. I try to understand my friends better by imagining what things are like for them.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

9. When I read a book or watch a movie, I get so interested in it that I don't notice anything else.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

10. When my friends or people in my family have problems, it bothers me a lot.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

11. After seeing a TV show or watching a movie, I feel like I am one of the people in the story.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

12. I usually do the right thing when there is an emergency, like when someone else is hurt and needs help.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

13. Things that I see happen make me feel sad or happy.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

14. I think that when people disagree, it is important to listen to both of them because they could both be right.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

15. It is easy for me to feel sorry for other people.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

16. When I watch a good movie or video, it is easy for me to pretend that I am one of the people in the show.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

17. When I'm mad at someone, I try to imagine how they feel for a while.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

18. When someone needs help in an emergency, like when they are badly hurt, I get too upset to do anything.

☺ yes, exactly like me

☺ yes, a lot like me

😐 yes, a little like me

☹ no, not really like me

☹ no, not at all like me

Appendix B

The Prosocial Behavior Questionnaire (PBQ)
Parent's Questionnaire (Revised Teacher Questionnaire)
(Weir, Stevenson, & Graham, 1980)

Below is a list of behaviors which may be shown by your child during a typical day at home. Based on your observations of your child over the last two months could you place a cross in the appropriate box. If your child definitely shows the behavior described by the statement, place the cross in the box under "certainly applies." If your child shows the behavior but to a lesser degree or less often, place the cross under "applies somewhat." If you have never observed your child show the behavior, place the cross in the box under "does not apply." Place ONE cross against EACH statement.

| | Does not Apply | Applies Somewhat | Certainly Applies |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. If there is a fight or a quarrel, between friends or siblings will try to stop it. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Will invite bystanders to join in a game. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Goes to the help of someone who has been hurt. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Helps to keep siblings or other children quiet if needed (e.g. if someone is using the phone) | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Is considerate of parent's feelings. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. Shares out sweets or extra food. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Tries to be fair in games. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Takes the opportunity to praise the work of less able siblings or friends. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 9. When choosing siblings or friends for an activity often chooses someone who might otherwise be left out. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Is generous in contributions toward gifts and charities. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 11. Will offer to play with a new child in the neighborhood. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 12. Offers to help siblings or friends who are having difficulty with a task. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 13. Shows concern for the welfare of younger siblings or friends when an adult is not present (e.g. playing outside) | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 14. Offers to help siblings or parents who are feeling sick. | _____ | _____ | _____ |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15. Can work or play easily in a small group. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 16. Does not need reminding if asked to carry out a regular task, such as feeding a pet. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 17. Settles down to homework or does chores easily. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 18. Looks embarrassed if someone else makes a mistake. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 19. Will clap or smile if someone does something well. | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 20. Volunteers to help clear up a mess someone else has made. | _____ | _____ | _____ |

# Appendix C
## Measure of Religiosity (Parent Report)

1. How often does your child attend a place of worship?

1 every week
2 quite often, but not every week
3 only for religious holidays
4 never

2. How often does your child attend Sunday School or other places where religion is taught?

1 every week
2 quite often, but not every week
3 only for religious holidays
4 never

3. How great is your child's belief in a supreme being (such as God)?

1 very strong
2 not very strong
3 does not really believe
4 does not believe

4. How often do you and your child pray together?

1 every day
2 quite often, but not every day
3 not very often
4 never

5. How great is your child's belief in a hereafter (such as heaven)?

1 very strong
2 not very strong
3 does not really believe
4 does not believe

# Appendix D
## Forgiveness Vignettes

You tell your friend a secret, which he/she promises to keep. Instead of keeping your secret, your friend goes to all the other kids in your class and tells everyone your secret on purpose, and when he/she sees you are angry and upset acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry for telling your secret?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend went to the other kids in your class and told everyone else your secret on purpose, but when he/she sees you are angry and upset he/she says sorry for telling your secret?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if other kids accidentally overheard your secret, but when your friend sees you are angry and upset acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry because other kids heard your secret?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if when you are talking with your friend later, he/she talks really loud to you about your secret and some other kids accidentally overhear what he/she says. When he/she sees you are angry and upset, he/she says sorry because the other kids heard about your secret.

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

You are painting a picture at school to put in to an art competition. Your teacher tells you it is a great picture and you will probably win a prize. Your friend is jealous and takes the water jug and pours water on your picture to ruin your picture on purpose, and acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry when they see you are angry and upset?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend took the water jug and poured the water on your picture to ruin your picture on purpose, but says sorry when he/she sees you are angry and upset?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend accidentally knocked the water over, but acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry when he/she sees you are angry and upset?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if when your friend reaches for the water jug he/she accidentally knocks the water over and ruins your picture. When he/she sees you are angry and upset, he/she says sorry for ruining your picture.

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

You are riding your bike with your friend. Your friend knocks you off your bike on purpose because you are winning a race. You get a bad cut on your head and have to get stitches at the hospital. When he/she sees that you are upset and angry they act like they do not care and he/she does not say sorry when he/she sees you are angry and upset?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend knocked you off your bike on purpose because you were winning a race, but said sorry when he/she sees you are angry and upset?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend accidentally knocked you off your bike, but when he/she sees you are angry and upset acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry for knocking you off your bike?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend accidentally makes a wrong turn and knocks you off your bike. When he/she sees you are angry and upset, he/she says I am sorry for knocking you off your bike.

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

Your friend sees $5 on your teacher's desk at school, and takes it. Later, your teacher asks the class who stole the $5 from her desk. Your friend asks you not to say anything to the teacher. Your friend tells the teacher you stole the money because they wanted to get you in trouble on purpose, and he/she acts like they do not care and does not say sorry when he/she sees you are angry and upset because you are in trouble?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend told the teacher you stole the money because they wanted to get you in trouble on purpose, but says sorry when he/she sees you are angry and upset because you are in trouble?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend accidentally got you in trouble for stealing the money, but when he/she sees you are angry and upset acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry because you are in trouble?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if when your teacher sees the two of you talking she accidentally thinks you stole the money. Your teacher thinks you are a liar and a thief and calls your parents. Later, when your friend sees you are angry and upset your friend says I am sorry for accidentally getting you in trouble.

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

Your dad gives you a very expensive watch which used to be your grandmothers. The watch can not be replaced and he tells you to take very good care of it. Later when you are showing your friend the watch your friend throws the watch into the sewer on purpose because they want the watch and you will not let them have it. You can not get the watch out of the sewer drain. When he/she sees you are angry and upset because you lost the watch he/she acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend threw the watch into the sewer on purpose because they want the watch and you will not let them have it, but says sorry when he/she sees you are angry and upset because you lost the watch?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend accidentally knocked the watch into the sewer, but when he/she see you are angry and upset because you lost the watch acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if they accidentally knock it out of your hands and it falls into the sewer drain. When your friend sees you are angry and upset they say I am sorry because you lost the watch.

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

You ask your friend to feed your cats while you are away on vacation for 2 weeks. Your friend promises to feed them, but your friend does not like your cats so does not feed them on purpose so that they would die. When you get back from vacation both your cats have died. When your friend sees you are angry and upset because your cats have died acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend did not like your cats so did not feed them on purpose so that they would die, but says he/she is sorry when he/she sees you are angry and upset because your cats have died?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend accidentally forgot to feed the cats, but when he/she sees you are angry and upset because your cats have died acts like he/she does not care and does not say sorry?

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

How would you feel if your friend accidentally forgets to feed your cats, but when your friend sees you are angry and upset he/she says I am sorry for forgetting to feed your cats.

| I would stay angry at my friend: | I would not play with my friend: | My feelings would be hurt: |
|---|---|---|
| ① forever | ① ever again | ① forever |
| ② at least a few days | ② for at least a few days | ② at least a few days |
| ③ about a day | ③ for about a day | ③ about a day |
| ④ a few minutes | ④ for a few minutes | ④ a few minutes |
| ⑤ I wouldn't be mad | ⑤ I would play right away | ⑤ I wouldn't be mad |

Appendix E
Letter to Parents and Informed Consent Forms

Dear Parents of 2nd, 4th, and 6th Graders,

My name is Sue Goss, and I am a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I am currently completing my degree in Developmental Psychology. Part of my program involves studying an aspect of development in children, and I am hoping to study how children's understanding of forgiveness develops.

The importance of the ability to forgive in the development and maintenance of social relationships has been recognized since human beings have existed; however, little research designed to promote our understanding of this important skill in young children has been performed. Consequently, our understanding of how children learn to forgive, as well as how other skills such as empathy influence forgiveness, is severely limited. It is my goal to remedy our lack of knowledge regarding children's development and understanding of forgiveness through this study. The results obtained in this study will contribute to the already growing body of knowledge designed to improve the social relationships of our children. As parents, I am sure we can all agree that with the increase of tragedies such as the shooting occurring at Columbine High School, the question of how we can foster and enhance a more caring and forgiving disposition in our children can no longer be neglected.

In the following paragraphs I will explain in more detail the measures that the children in this study will be completing, so that you as a parent can make a more informed decision regarding your child's participation.

The children participating in this study will complete three measures. Brief descriptions of each measure, along with a sample item from each measure are as follows:

(1) An 18-item empathy measure. This measure is designed to assess empathy in children (how much they feel the feelings of other people). An example item from this measure is: "I feel sorry for other kids whose lives are not as good as mine." Responses: a lot, a little, not at all.

(2) A 6-item measure with scenerios involving forgiveness. These scenerios are designed to assess children's responses to various wrongdoings. An example scenerio from this measure is: "You tell your friend a secret, which he/she promises to keep. Later on you find out your friend has been telling everyone your secret. When he/she finds out that you know they told others your secret,

he/she says sorry for telling your secret." Responses: I would be mad at my friend (forever, for a while), I would not play with my friend (ever again, for a while), my feelings would be hurt (forever, for a while).

(3) A 12-item children's forgiveness scale. This scale is designed to assess children's understanding of forgiveness. An example item from this measure is: "I think that if someone breaks something of mine, they should fix it before I forgive them." Responses: completely agree, agree a lot, agree a little, do not really agree, completely disagree.

In addition to the measures completed by the children, two measures will be completed by parents:

(1) A 20-item prosocial behavior questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed to assess the extent of children's caring, sharing, and cooperative behaviors. An example item from this questionnaire is: "Will invite bystanders to join in a game." Responses: does not apply, applies somewhat, certainly applies.

(2) A 5-item religiosity measure. This measure is designed to assess the extent of children's religious experiences. An example item from this measure is: "How often does your child attend a place of worship." Responses: at least every Sunday, quite often but not every Sunday, only for religious holidays, never.

Studies involving children are a very sensitive issue, and as a parent myself I understand that you may have some reservations regarding your child's participation. I would like to assure you that all of the measures will be completed anonymously—each child will be assigned a number (rather than using names) so that all of the collected information can be organized as a complete package. Also, no individual information will be analyzed. The focus of this study is children's understanding of forgiveness as a group rather than on an individual basis.

Finally, I hope to make the data collection as enjoyable for the children as possible. The entire study time will be approximately 45 minutes. I would like to have children complete the measures as a group during after school hours, to avoid interfering with learning during the school day. Because children are often hungry after a long day at school, I will provide a snack before the measures are completed. The children will also receive a goody bag containing candy and a few small items as a "thank-you" for their participation. Please indicate on the return form if your child will be able to complete measures immediately after school has finished. Parents who indicate an interest in their child's participation will receive informed consent forms and the parent measures at a later date.

I hope you will seriously consider allowing your child to participate in this study. As I am sure you are aware, this study can not take place without the participation of as many children as possible. A better understanding of how children develop the ability to forgive can only serve to improve our knowledge of this process, and the application of this knowledge will lead to an improvement in children's social relationships both at home and at school. If you would like more information before you make a final decision regarding your child's participation, please contact me via telephone: 293-7976 or e-mail: susan_goss@unomaha.edu.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and consider my request.

Sincerely Yours,

Susan Goss

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

I.D.#: _____

Homeroom Teacher: _____

Age: _____

Please Circle One: Boy Girl

Parent(s) Occupation(s): _____

_____

# of Brothers & Sisters and: 1.
their ages 2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

_____

**IRB#: 146-01-FB** **Page 1 of 3**

## PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

## INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

### INVITATION

You and your child are invited to participate in this research study. The information in this consent form is provided to help you decide whether to allow your child to participate. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

### ELIGIBILITY

Your child is eligible to participate in this research project because he/she is in second, fourth, or sixth grade, because he/she is a speaker of English, and because he/she is free of cognitive developmental delays.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore children's willingness to forgive wrongdoings committed in an interpersonal relationship (by a friend), and how empathy, prosocial behavior, and religious involvement influences forgiveness in children.

### PROCEDURE

Your child will complete three simple measures that are designed to assess his/her forgiving choices in a number of situations, empathy, and reasons for forgiving. All measures will be completed at the after-school program. Parents will be asked to complete a prosocial and a religiosity measure at home.

### POSSIBLE RISKS

There are no known risks of participation in this research project.

### POSSIBLE BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits to you or your child for participation in this research project.

### POSSIBLE INDIRECT BENEFITS

The societal benefits of this research are an increased understanding of children's willingness to forgive. This information may be used in programs designed to enhance interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution in children.

Parent's Initials _____

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

In the unlikely event that your child is injured while participating in this research, study personnel will immediately contact the person responsible for emergencies occurring at your child's after-school program.

**STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

The only persons who will have access to your child's research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person or agency required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

**RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

You and your child have rights as research participants. These rights are explained in *The Rights of Research Participants*, which you have been given. If you have any questions concerning your rights, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB), telephone (402) 559-6463.

**DECIDING NOT TO PARTICIPATE**

You can decide not to consent to your child's participation in this study or you can withdraw your child from this study at any time. Your decision will not affect you or your child's care or your relationship with the investigator(s), the University of Nebraska Medical Center, the Nebraska Health System (NHS) hospitals, or the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you or your child are entitled.

If any new information develops during the course of this study that may affect your willingness to continue your child's participation, you will be informed immediately.

**DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT**

**YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH. YOUR SIGNATURE MEANS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED AND DECIDED TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE ALSO MEANS THAT THE INFORMATION ON THIS CONSENT FORM HAS BEEN FULLY EXPLAINED TO YOU AND ALL YOUR QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED TO YOUR SATISFACTION. IF YOU THINK OF ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS DURING THE STUDY, YOU SHOULD**

**CONTACT THE INVESTIGATOR. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.**

SIGNATURE OF PARENT DATE

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT (AT TIME OF STUDY) DATE

**I CERTIFY THAT ALL THE ELEMENTS OF INFORMED CONSENT DESCRIBED ON THIS CONSENT FORM HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED FULLY TO THE PARTICIPANT. IN MY JUDGEMENT, THE PARTICIPANT IS VOLUNTARILY AND KNOWINGLY GIVING INFORMED CONSENT AND POSSESSES THE LEGAL CAPACITY TO GIVE INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH.**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR DATE

AUTHORIZED STUDY PERSONNEL

Principal Investigator: Susan M. Goss, 554-2592, susan_goss@unomaha.edu

**IRB#: 146-01-FB** **Page 1 of 1**

## CHILDREN'S ASSENT FORM

## INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN

1. We would like to invite you to take part in this study. We are asking you because we are interested in what children your age understand about forgiveness.

2. In this study we will try to learn more about how children react when someone has done something to upset them or make them angry. We would also like to learn more about how children feel when someone else is upset which may effect the decision to forgive someone or not.

3. To find out how children react when someone has done something to upset them we will give you a number of questions to answer. These questions do not have a right or a wrong answer, they are to find out how you would think and feel about a number of situations.

4. Your parents will also be asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study. Please talk this over with your parents before you decided whether or not to participate.

5. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to participate in the study, you can choose to stop at any time.

6. If you have any questions at any time, please ask the researcher.

**IF YOU SIGN THIS FORM IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE READ EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.**

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____

Signature of Investigator Date

INVESTIGATOR: Sue Goss, 554-2592, susan_goss@mail.unomaha.edu.