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INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS IN ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIPS

A Thesis Presented to the

Department of Psychology

and the

Faculty of the Graduate College

University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

University of Nebraska at Omaha

by

Molly A. Wernli

August, 2001

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts,
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INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS IN ADOLESCENT FRIENDSHIPS

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University of Nebraska, 2001

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The purpose of the present study was to investigate interpersonal forgiveness in the context of adolescent friendships. The following factors were examined in relation to an adolescent's forgiveness of a transgressing friend: a) religiosity, b) commitment, c) relationship closeness, d) empathy, e) apologies, and f) transgression severity. A total of 161 students (66 males, 95 females) from grades 7, 9, and 11 (12- to 18-years of age) participated.

Transgression severity was found to have the most influence on forgiveness, accounting for 70% of the variance. Adolescents were more forgiving after low-severity transgressions than high-severity transgressions. The presence of apology had a significant influence on forgiveness in high-severity transgressions only. After being severely hurt by a friend, adolescents were more forgiving when an apology was given than when no apology was given by the friend.

Relationship quality factors were found to affect forgiveness. Commitment in the friendship was a significant predictor of forgiveness regardless of transgression severity. The more committed the adolescents were to their friend, the more forgiving they were after a transgression. Relationship closeness was a significant predictor of forgiveness in low-severity transgressions, but not in the expected direction. This result

was most likely due to the low internal consistency in the measure used to assess relationship closeness.

Individual difference factors were found to have a minimal role in adolescents' forgiveness. Adolescents' level of religiosity predicted forgiveness, but only in low-severity transgressions. Empathy was not a significant predictor, and no sex or age differences were found.

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CHAPTER 1

Statement of the Problem

Peer relationships become increasingly important during adolescence because less time is spent with family members and more time is spent with peers (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984). According to Csikszentmihalyi and Larsen, adolescents spend only 19% of their time with family members, compared to 52% of their time spent with peers (i.e., classmates and friends). The remaining portion of teenagers' time is spent alone (27%) or with other adults, such as employers (2%).

One important type of peer relationship is friendship. Friendships are voluntary relationships between two individuals (Krappmann, 1996). Friendships are characterized by reciprocity, commitment, and equality (Hartup, 1993). Because adolescents spend a large amount of their time with friends, there are many opportunities for transgressions or betrayals to occur (e.g., violations of commitment, loyalty, trust, and confidence) (Jones, Cohn, & Miller, 1991). As Jones et al. (1991) state, "To enjoy the many advantages of close personal relationships, one must endure the risks that they entail, specifically, betrayal and rejection." (p. 132). Jones et al. interviewed 9- to 12-year old boys about situations when they were the victims of betrayal. Half of the boys lived in a residential facility for delinquent and neglected children. The other half of the boys lived with their biological parents. Common types of betrayals mentioned by the boys were disappointment or broken promises, crime/delinquency, abandonment, teasing, lies and false accusations, and betrayed confidence. Other betrayals or relational transgressions may be forgetting special

occasions, nonreciprocal expressivity, physical abuse, unfaithfulness, and not being there during a time of need (Metts, 1994). Frequently, the termination of a friendship is due to a betrayal, such as the examples mentioned above (Hartup, 1993; Jones et al., 1991). One way in which to repair the relationship after a betrayal is for the hurt individual to forgive the betrayer (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998).

Forgiveness has been studied in a variety of fields, such as religion, philosophy, therapy, and psychology. The type of forgiveness that occurs between two individuals is called interpersonal forgiveness. Interpersonal forgiveness involves getting past negative behavior (e.g., revenge-seeking behavior), cognitions (e.g., judgements, holding a grudge), and affect (e.g., resentment) (Al-Mabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995; Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992), in addition to the forgiver showing positive behaviors (e.g., helpfulness) (Subkoviak, Enright, Wu, Gassin, Freedman, Olson, & Sarinopoulos, 1995) cognitions (e.g., respect) (Enright et al., 1998) and affect (e.g., compassion) (Enright et al., 1992) toward the betrayer. Enright et al. (1992) point out that interpersonal forgiveness is not the same as forgetting or a pardon. That is, if one forgives another person, the forgiver does not erase the betrayal and/or the hurt from memory. Forgiveness does not mean that the betrayer has been excused or let off the hook (Enright et al., 1992), and forgiveness does not necessarily lead to reconciliation (i.e., resuming the relationship) (Enright et al., 1992). However, if the forgiveness is accepted by the betrayer, communication and trust (Enright et al., 1992) may be restored, resulting in the first step toward reconciliation (North, 1987).

There is a lack of research on forgiveness, especially with regard to forgiveness within adolescent peer relationships. The purpose of the present study was to investigate some possible factors that may be related to forgiveness in adolescent friendships. The following factors were examined: religiosity, commitment and closeness to the friend, empathy, apologies, and transgression severity. The selection of factors to be examined was based on extant forgiveness literature.

Review of the Literature

Forgiveness and Religion

The topic of forgiveness appears frequently in the field of religion. Marty (1998) describes forgiveness as the ethos (i.e., fundamental value) of Christianity. Forgiveness is emphasized in one of the most widely used Christian creeds, The Apostles' Creed: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins." (Marty, 1998, p. 22). According to the Christian faith, interpersonal forgiveness should be like divine forgiveness (Enright et al., 1992). Divine forgiveness refers to the idea that God casts away sins and draws the sinner in love (Enright et al., 1992). We are to forgive others as we are forgiven by God (Enright et al., 1992; Lauritzen, 1987). God provides a model of forgiveness for humans (Lauritzen, 1987). In Judaism, forgiveness is seen as a duty (Dorff, 1998; Newman, 1987). Forgiveness refers to a duty to repair the relationship with the individual who offended you (Newman, 1987). By seeking forgiveness and forgiving, one restores the relationship with the other individual, and also with God (Newman, 1987). Like Christianity, the Jewish tradition provides the individual with a model on how to

respond to a transgression (Newman, 1987). Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1991) note that forgiveness is also discussed in the Islamic religion. "Forgiveness in Islam is to give up resentment, blame, and punishment." (Sch-he-rie, 1984, abstract 12901, p. 370, as cited in Enright et al., 1991, p. 126). Interestingly, Enright et al. (1991) note that forgiveness is not mentioned in religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.

Gorsuch and Hao (1993) examined the relationship between religion and forgiveness. In addition to a forgiveness interview, Gorsuch and Hao asked the adult participants about their religious preference (e.g., Jewish, Catholic), the importance of religion in their life, church/synagogue attendance, intrinsic religiousness, external-personal religiousness, and closeness to God. Gorsuch and Hao found that Protestants were more forgiving than Catholic, Jewish, and no/other religious preferences. In addition, the results showed that importance of religion, intrinsic religiousness, and closeness to God were highly correlated with forgiveness. Gorsuch and Hao concluded that these religious factors, or personal religiousness might promote forgiveness.

Enright, Santos, and Al-Mabuk (1989) found that an individual's understanding of forgiveness is related to religiosity. Enright et al. (1989; 1998) state that the development of forgiveness parallels Kohlberg's justice stages. Participants, ranging in age from 9-years to 36-years, were given an objective test of Kohlberg's moral development construct, revised to yield a forgiveness score, and a modified version of Allport, Gillespie and Young's (1953) Religious Belief Scale. This scale included issues such as church attendance, Bible reading, conviction and consistency of the person's

religious life, and religious discussions with peers (Enright et al., 1989). Enright et al. (1989) found that religiosity was significantly related to one's understanding of forgiveness ($r = .33$).

These studies suggest that forgiveness is related to religiosity. In the aftermath of a transgression in an adolescent friendship, or any relationship for that matter, an individual may be more likely to forgive the transgressor if he or she is very religious. This relationship was examined in the present study.

Forgiveness and Moral Development

Enright et al. (1989) believe that one's understanding of forgiveness parallels Kohlberg's moral development stages. Kohlberg (1976) stated that individuals progress through six stages of moral development, grouped into three levels: Preconventional morality, Conventional morality, and Postconventional morality. Stages 1 and 2 fall under Preconventional morality. Individuals' moral reasoning in Stage 1, Punishment and Obedience Orientation, is based on a fear of punishment. Moral reasoning in Stage 2, Individualism and Instrumental Orientation, is based on a sense of reciprocity. For example, "If you help me, I must help you." (Enright et al., 1991, p. 138). The Conventional morality level is comprised of Stages 3 and 4. In Stage 3, Good Boy/Nice Girl Justice, moral reasoning is based on doing what is expected by other people, such as family and friends. In Stage 4, Law and Order Justice, moral reasoning is guided by the laws of society. Stages 5 and 6 are in the Postconventional morality level. In Stage 5, Social Contract Orientation, individuals realize that there are some unjust laws, but they must be upheld for the good of the society. In Stage 6, Universal Ethical Principles

Orientation, moral reasoning is based on conscience and self-chosen ethical principles. At this stage, an individual must abide by his or her principles when laws conflict with these principles.

Enright et al. (1989) proposed a model of forgiveness that is related, but still distinct from Kohlberg's (1976) stage model. Enright et al. (1989) proposed 6 stages or styles of forgiveness. For Style 1, Revengeful Forgiveness, forgiveness is given only if one can punish the transgressor to a similar degree (Enright et al., 1991). For Style 2, Restitutional or Compensational Forgiveness, forgiveness is given if the victim can get back what is taken away, or if it relieves guilt (Enright et al., 1991). Kohlberg's Stages 1 and 2 were prejudice stages; therefore, Enright et al.'s (1989) Styles 1 and 2 are pre-forgiveness styles. That is, true forgiveness is not given. The individual confuses forgiveness and justice problem-solving strategies (Enright et al., 1991). In Enright et al.'s (1989) Style 3, Expectational Forgiveness, forgiveness is given if there is enough social pressure from other people, or when it is expected from other people (Enright et al., 1991). In Style 4, Lawful Expectational Forgiveness, individuals forgive when an authority or their religion expects it (Enright et al., 1991). In Style 5, Forgiveness as Social Harmony, forgiveness is given if it restores or maintains harmony in the society (Enright et al., 1991). In Style 6, Forgiveness as Love, forgiveness is given unconditionally (Enright et al., 1991). Forgiveness is given because the transgression does not alter the love and caring in the relationship (Enright et al., 1991). As both Kohlberg's and Enright et al.'s (1989) stages increase, there is a higher demand for social perspective-taking or role-taking.

Due to the similarities in Kohlberg's model of moral development and Enright et al.'s (1989) model of forgiveness, Enright et al. (1989) hypothesized that the two models would be related, and that there would be a positive correlation between the stages of forgiveness and age. Enright et al. (1989) tested these hypotheses with two studies. Participants were administered Rest's (1974) Defining Issues Test (DIT) to measure moral development, and a forgiveness measure (revised dilemmas from the DIT) aimed at measuring the six forgiveness stages. The researchers found a large, significant positive correlation ($r = .72$) between age and forgiveness stages. Participants in the fourth- and seventh-grades both had lower forgiveness scores than college students and adults, and tenth-graders had lower forgiveness scores than adults. In addition, modest correlations were found between moral development and forgiveness ($r = .40$ to $.54$), indicating that there is some parallel between the moral development stages and the forgiveness stages. No significant gender differences in moral development or forgiveness were found.

Park and Enright (1997) also proposed a model of forgiveness that is similar to Kohlberg's (1976) model. Like Kohlberg and Piaget's theories, Park and Enright's model progresses from concrete and external thinking to abstract and internal thinking, and consists of three patterns of forgiveness. Pattern 1, Revengeful Forgiveness, is characterized by strategies aimed at getting back at the transgressor, and the occurrence of revenge before forgiveness is given. In Pattern 2, External Forgiveness, forgiveness is given when there is pressure from social groups. In Pattern 3, Internal Forgiveness, the victim seeks to understand the perspective of others, and forgives because of an

unconditional principle of love. Park and Enright's participants included seventh- and eighth-graders, as well as juniors and seniors in college. The participants were chosen if they had experienced a personal, unfair, and deep injury from a friend during the previous 5 to 6 months. The participants were given the Understanding Forgiveness Interview, which includes questions about a moral dilemma and a friendship dilemma. The responses were coded with respect to the three patterns of forgiveness in the model. In addition, the participants were given the Restoring Friendship Strategy Scale (which assesses the degree to which the individual attempted to reconcile with the friend after the actual transgression) and the Degree of Forgiveness Scale (which assesses how much the individual actually forgave his or her friend). Park and Enright found that age was moderately related to forgiveness ($r = .51$). College students had higher forgiveness scores than the seventh- and eighth-grade students. The adolescents were in the Revengeful or External patterns of forgiveness, while the adults showed an Internal pattern of forgiveness. No gender differences were found for level of forgiveness. Park and Enright also found that the higher patterns of forgiveness were directly related to proactive restorative strategies used after an actual transgression. Patterns of forgiveness and degree of actual forgiveness after a real life transgression were not significantly correlated. Park and Enright suggest that one factor that might affect the actual forgiving of a transgressor is the quality of the relationship prior to the offense. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent section.

Bukowski and Sippola (1996) proposed that friendship and morality are related, and that morality is learned in the context of a friendship. Individuals learn the

importance of moral values, such as honesty and justice, in a friendship (Bukowski & Sippola, 1996). Transgressions are likely to occur in friendships. These transgressions may help individuals learn about moral values. Also, the transgressions will lead to the possibility of forgiveness, which follows a similar progression as moral development. Moral development appears to be related to an individual's stage of forgiveness, but it does not seem likely that it is simply related to the likelihood that an individual will or will not forgive. Therefore, moral development was not examined in the present study.

Forgiveness and Commitment

Park and Enright (1997) suggested that forgiveness might be affected by the quality of the relationship. Commitment and closeness to a friend could be considered to reflect the quality of a relationship. Rusbult and Buunk (1993) state that commitment refers to a "...long-term orientation, including feelings of attachment to a partner and desire to maintain a relationship, for better or worse." (p. 180). Commitment may, in fact, affect the likelihood that an individual will forgive a transgressor. Some support for this idea can be found in a study by Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, and Lipkus (1991) that examined accommodation processes. Accommodation is a process that occurs after a transgression, when an individual inhibits destructive behaviors, such as treating the transgressor poorly or separating from the transgressor, and instead behaves in a constructive manner, such as discussing the problem, or supporting the transgressor (Rusbult et al., 1991). Accommodation appears to be similar to the process of forgiveness (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Rusbult et al. found higher accommodation for individuals who were more committed to the relationship. The more

committed they were to the relationship, the more likely they were to act constructively to maintain the relationship.

Relationship closeness is another factor that reflects the quality of a relationship. Berscheid, Snyder, and Omoto (1989) state that relationship closeness can be characterized by: a) the frequency of impact that the two individuals have on each other (assessed by amount of time the individuals spend alone together), b) the diversity of activities the individuals engage in together, and c) the strength of the impact the individuals have on each other. Berscheid et al. constructed a measure of closeness, called the Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI), that assesses these three components of closeness. They found that the break ups of romantic relationships were related to relationship closeness. Early break ups were characteristic of participants with low closeness scores, and relationships that were still together after a 9-month follow-up had high closeness scores.

Relationship maintenance is clearly related to the level of commitment and closeness in the relationship. Worthington (1998) suggests that pre-existing relationship factors, such as commitment and relationship closeness, probably have an effect on whether someone forgives a transgressor. These issues were investigated in the present study.

Forgiveness and Empathy

Mehrabian and Epstein (1972) define empathy as a vicarious emotional reaction to the perceived emotional experiences of others. Empathy has been found to facilitate prosocial behaviors, such as helping behaviors (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972), and

increase with age (Davis & Franzoi, 1991). For example, Davis and Franzoi administered the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) to students in grades 9 and 12. The IRI measures four aspects of empathy: a) perspective-taking (i.e., the tendency to adopt the point of view of others), b) fantasy (i.e., the tendency to get deeply involved in books, movies, and plays), c) empathetic concern (i.e., feelings of sympathy and concern for others), and d) personal distress (i.e., feelings of anxiety in tense interpersonal situations) (Davis, 1983). Davis and Franzoi found that perspective-taking and empathetic concern both increased with age. Sex differences have also been found with regard to empathy (e.g., Davis & Franzoi, 1991; Karniol, R., Gabay, Ochion, & Harari, 1998). Davis and Franzoi found that females scored higher on all four aspects of empathy, as measured by the IRI. The largest differences were found for fantasy, empathetic concern, and personal distress, the three aspects that involve affect (Davis & Franzoi, 1991). Karniol et al. (1998) also found sex differences in the empathy of adolescents, as well as gender-role orientation differences in empathy. Karniol et al., state that gender-role orientation (i.e., masculinity and femininity) may have a larger effect on psychological functioning than sex. Adolescents in grades 8 and 11 were administered the IRI and the Bem Sex Role Inventory. The data showed that both sex and gender-role orientation affected empathy levels. Consistent with Davis and Franzoi's findings, girls scored higher on the IRI than boys. In addition, adolescents who scored high on femininity had higher IRI scores than those adolescents who scored low on femininity.

The literature on empathy and forgiveness is very sparse. McCullough et al. (1997) state that empathy may cause the victim of a transgression to care that the transgressor is distressed or feels guilty. In addition, empathy may lead to the victim wanting to restore the relationship (McCullough, et al., 1997). McCullough et al. proposed that the salience of the empathy for the transgressor will override the transgression, and will lead to forgiveness. In their study with college students, McCullough et al. found that empathy mediated the relationship between apology and forgiveness. When the transgressor apologizes, empathy for the transgressor increases (McCullough et al., 1997). The increased empathy reduces the victim's motivation for revenge and increases the motivation to reconcile (McCullough et al., 1997). In a second study, McCullough et al. further investigated the apology-empathy-forgiveness sequence by comparing an empathy intervention with an intervention that encouraged forgiveness, not empathy, and a waiting-list control group. The researchers found that the empathy intervention was more effective in encouraging affective empathy and forgiveness than the forgiveness intervention. The forgiveness intervention was no more successful than the waiting-list control condition in promoting forgiveness.

Apologies and Forgiveness

An apology following a transgression is an indication that the transgressor is regretful of committing the transgression, and fully recognizes that a harmful event has occurred (Darby & Schlenker, 1982). Darby and Schlenker have examined the effects of apologies on forgiveness in children (kindergarten through seventh grade). Using vignettes, Darby and Schlenker found that more elaborate apologies led to the

participants forgiving the actor in the vignette more than when less elaborate apologies were given. In addition, Darby and Schlenker found that the seventh-graders reacted more harshly toward the actors than the younger children did when no apology was given. However, Enright et al. (1992) state that forgiveness does not always depend on an apology from the transgressor. If forgiveness did depend on the occurrence of an apology, then the forgiveness would depend on the transgressor's regret (Enright et al., 1992). In some cases, such as the death of the transgressor, the transgressor is not able to make an apology, yet, the victim may still forgive him or her. Enright et al. (1992) state that forgiveness does not rely on the prior response from the transgressor. The present study examined the effect of an apology on adolescents' reactions to a transgression.

Transgression Severity and Forgiveness

Severity of the transgression also influences interpersonal forgiveness. Boon and Sulsky (1997) examined the effect of severity on forgiveness using hypothetical vignettes that had occurred in the adult participants' romantic relationships. Boon and Sulsky found that an increase in transgression severity predicted an increase in blame and a decrease in willingness to forgive. When deciding whether or not to forgive, the participants in this study weighted intent and transgression severity more heavily than avoidability. The present study examined the influence of transgression severity on adolescents' reactions to transgressions.

Developmental Aspects of Forgiveness

Adolescence is an ideal age in which to study forgiveness. According to Piaget, adolescents are in the cognitive development period of formal operations. Adolescents are able to think more abstractly, and they are capable of thinking about hypothetical situations. In addition, adolescents' social perspective-taking or role-taking abilities are continuing to improve (Selman, 1976). These abilities enable them to consider a transgression from the point of view of the transgressor, which is likely to facilitate true forgiveness.

Three studies (Enright et al., 1989; Park & Enright, 1997; Subkoviak et al., 1995) have found that forgiveness follows a developmental path. While different methods for measuring forgiveness were used, forgiveness increased with age. Enright et al.'s (1989) study included participants in grades 4, 7, and 10, college students, and adults. The forgiveness measure in this study was a modified version of Rest's (1974) DIT. This measure assesses the participants' stage of forgiveness according to Enright et al.'s (1989) model (see the moral development section for a detailed description of this model). As mentioned in an earlier section, there was a high, positive correlation between age and forgiveness, with the older participants in a higher forgiveness stage than the younger participants. Specifically, the fourth graders were primary in Stage 2 (Restitutional Forgiveness) and adolescents were primarily in Stage 3 (Expectational Forgiveness). Enright et al. (1989) state that adolescents' forgiveness appears to be aided by the expectations and help from other individuals, especially friends. College students and adults were found to be in Stage 4 (Lawful Expectational Forgiveness).

The forgiveness of these participants was mainly contingent on expectations from religion. (Enright et al., 1989).

Park and Enright (1997), using an interview to measure forgiveness in Korean junior high school and college students, found that college students had a higher understanding of forgiveness than the junior high students. According to Park and Enright, forgiveness in adolescence is consistent with three patterns: revengeful, external, and internal forgiveness. The condition of revengeful forgiveness is that revenge, physical or psychological, must occur before forgiveness is given (Park & Enright, 1997). The condition of external forgiveness is pressure from social groups to forgive (Park & Enright, 1997). The internal forgiveness pattern is characterized by forgiveness that is given unconditionally, out of love (Park & Enright, 1997). The early adolescents in this study showed revengeful and external forgiveness patterns. This data is consistent with the data from Enright et al.'s (1989) study. In both studies, adolescents' forgiveness was due to the pressure from other individuals, such as peers. The college students in Park and Enright's study showed both external and internal patterns of forgiveness. In Enright et al.'s (1989) study, only a few adult participants reached the stage where forgiveness is given unconditionally.

Subkoviak et al. (1995) developed a scale called the Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI) to assess interpersonal forgiveness. The EFI consists of 60 items that assess six areas of forgiveness: absence of negative affect, presence of positive affect, absence of negative cognitions, presence of positive cognitions, absence of negative behavior, and presence of positive behavior toward a transgressor. When answering the measure,

participants are asked to think of the most recent situation in which they were hurt deeply by someone. Subkoviak et al. administered the EFI to late adolescent college students and to their same-sex parents. The analyses focused on transgressions within developmentally normative relationships (i.e., male-female relationships for late adolescents and family relationships for middle-aged adults) (Subkoviak et al., 1995). Age differences were found. The college students showed more negative affect and less positive affect than their parents (Subkoviak et al., 1995). In addition, Subkoviak et al. found that the college students had higher anxiety ratings than their parents. Subkoviak et al. concluded that late adolescents have a more difficult time forgiving a transgressor than middle-aged adults. There is an obvious lack of research on the developmental path of forgiveness in children and adolescents.

Aim of the Present Study

The review of the literature has revealed that while much has been written about the topic of forgiveness, little research has been conducted on the topic, especially interpersonal forgiveness in childhood and adolescent relationships. While other studies have focused on an individual's understanding or stage of forgiveness, the present study focused on the actual likelihood of forgiveness following a transgression. Examining the likelihood of forgiveness is the first step to understanding the process more completely.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate forgiveness in the context of adolescent friendships. Because of the increased time spent with peers in adolescence, friendships provide an excellent context in which to study forgiveness, due to the

increased opportunities for transgressions to occur. The following factors were examined in relation to an adolescent's forgiveness of a transgressing friend: a) religiosity, b) commitment, c) relationship closeness, d) empathy, e) apologies, and f) transgression severity. The following hypotheses were proposed.

Hypothesis One

Adolescents with higher levels of religiosity will be more forgiving of a friend after a transgression. This hypothesis is based on Gorsuch and Hao's (1993) and Enright et al.'s (1989) findings that religiosity is significantly related to forgiveness.

Hypothesis Two

Consistent with Rusbult et al.'s (1991) finding that higher accommodation is found in more committed relationships, it is hypothesized that commitment will predict adolescents' forgiveness in a friendship.

Hypothesis Three

Based on Rusbult et al.'s (1991) finding that accommodation and commitment are related, it is hypothesized that relationship closeness, which appears to be similar to commitment, will predict adolescents' forgiveness.

Hypothesis Four

Based on McCullough et al.'s (1997) findings that empathy mediated the relationship between apology and forgiveness, and that an empathy intervention was effective in encouraging forgiveness, it is hypothesized that empathy will predict adolescents' forgiveness in a friendship.

Hypothesis Five

Consistent with Enright et al.'s (1989) and Park and Enright's (1997) findings that sex differences are not present in forgiveness, no differences between males' and females' forgiveness are expected.

Hypothesis Six

Enright et al. (1989), Park and Enright (1997), and Subkoviak et al. (1995) found a positive relationship between age and forgiveness. Therefore, adolescents in higher grades are expected to have higher forgiveness scores than adolescents in lower grades.

Hypothesis Seven

Based on Darby and Schlenker's (1982) finding that apologies lead to an increase in forgiveness in children, it is expected that forgiveness scores will be higher for the transgressions that include an apology than for when an apology does not occur for both high- and low-severity transgressions.

Hypothesis Eight

Based on Boon and Sulsky's (1997) finding that an increase in transgression severity is related to a decrease in forgiveness, it is expected that forgiveness scores will be lower for high-severity transgressions than for the low-severity transgressions, regardless of whether an apology was given.

CHAPTER 2

Method

Participants

A total of 161 students (66 males, 95 females) from junior and senior high schools in Omaha, Nebraska participated in the present study. The 12- to 18-year old participants were selected from grades 7 ($n = 55$), 9 ($n = 43$), and 11 ($n = 63$). This age range was chosen for three reasons. First, adolescents have the cognitive capabilities of social perspective-taking and hypothetical thinking. Second, adolescence is an appropriate age in which to study friendships because of the extensive amount of time that friends occupy in adolescents' lives. Third, grades 7, 9, and 11 span a time period when same-sex relationships are still more important to adolescents than romantic relationships (Laursen, 1996). The sample was predominantly Caucasian (approximately 99%).

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire. Participants were given a questionnaire that asked them to provide their age, grade, gender, information on grades received, and the first initial of a same-sex friend (see Appendix A). Participants were asked write the first initial of their friend so they would consistently be thinking of one particular friend while completing the measures.

Religiosity Scale. Religiosity was measured using the Intrinsic Religious Motivation Scale (IRM) (Hoge, 1972). The IRM is a 10-item scale that uses a 5-point Likert response format. Many religiosity scales (e.g., Allport et al., 1953) focus on

items that assess the frequency of religious behaviors. The IRM was chosen because it does not contain frequency items. Instead, the IRM assesses depth of religiosity (Hoge, 1972). Another benefit of using this scale is that a factor analysis has found the scale to be unidimensional, and the IRM is appropriate for different religious traditions, not just Christianity (Thorson & Powell, 1990). The reliability (coefficient alpha) has been reported to be .90 (Hoge, 1972). The reliability for the current sample was .85. Two minor changes were made to items 4 and 10. These items originally read, “Although I am a religious person, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs,” and, “Although I believe in my religion, I feel there are many more important things in life.” The first part of both items was deleted for this study. Thorson and Powell (1990) suggested these revisions because participants could agree with one part of the statement and disagree with the other part. The scores from all 10 items were summed to yield a religiosity score (items 4 and 10 were reversed scored). The range of scores is from 10 (low religiosity) to 50 (high religiosity). Due to time constraints, only participants in the eleventh-grade were given this measure.

Commitment Scale. Relationship commitment was assessed with Rusbult’s (1980) five-item commitment scale, with one modification. The statement, “For what length of time do you think this friendship will last” has been changed to “How long do you think this relationship will last compared to the average relationship”. The reliability of this measure has been reported to be .80 (Rusbult, 1980). The coefficient alpha for the current sample was .74. The commitment scale has been found to be significantly related to satisfaction, alternatives to the relationship, and investments in the

relationship (Rusbult, 1980). After reverse scoring item 1, the scores from all five items were summed to yield a commitment score. The range of scores is from 5 (low commitment) to 25 (high commitment).

Relationship Closeness Inventory (RCI). Relationship closeness was measured using Berscheid et al.'s (1989) RCI, modified to fit adolescent situations. The RCI consists of three subscales: frequency (minutes spent together per day), diversity (number of activities done together during the past week), and strength of impact of the relationship (the degree of influence the friend has on the participant's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors). Items 1, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18, 22, and 24 on the strength of impact scale were reverse scored. The scores from each subscale were summed and converted to scale scores. The internal consistency (coefficient alpha) for the frequency subscale is .56, for the diversity subscale is .87, and for the strength subscale is .90 (Berscheid et al., 1989). The overall reliability for the RCI is .62. Test-retest reliability at 3- to 5-weeks for the total RCI score was found to be .82 (Berscheid et al., 1989). A modification of the instructions of the original RCI was made. The participants were asked to respond to the questions with respect to the friend they chose at the beginning of the study (rather than choosing any relationship). The reliability of the RCI, modified for use with adolescents, has been reported to be .87 (Ringle, 1997). The overall reliability (coefficient alpha) for the current sample was .58.

Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents. Empathy was assessed with Bryant's (1982) empathy scale. This scale, created for use with children and adolescents, is based on Mehrabian and Epstein's (1972) empathy scale for adults. The

scale contains 22 items, and uses a 9-point Likert format, ranging from – 4, very strong disagreement, to + 4, very strong agreement. Internal consistency of the scale with seventh graders was .79 (Bryant, 1982). The coefficient alpha for the current sample was .77. The test-retest reliability with seventh-graders was found to be .83 (Bryant, 1982). Items 2, 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 22 were reverse scored. All items were summed to yield an empathy score. The range of scores is from –88 (low empathy) to 88 (high empathy).

Forgiveness Vignettes. The likelihood that an adolescent will forgive a friend who has betrayed him or her was assessed with six hypothetical vignettes (see Appendix B; the labels for each vignette were not included on the participants' copies). The vignettes include the following issues: a) violation of trust, b) backstabbing, c) deceit, d) missed appointment, e) irresponsibility, and f) broken promise. Three of the vignettes, violation of trust, backstabbing, and deceit, are considered to be high-severity transgressions. The other three vignettes, missed appointment, irresponsibility, and broken promise, are considered to be low-severity transgressions. In order to assess the severity manipulation, the participants were asked to rate, on a 5-point scale, the severity of the transgression and how angry they would feel if the transgression happened to them, with higher ratings indicating higher severity and anger. For the severity rating, the high-severity vignettes ($\underline{M} = 3.76$, $\underline{SD} = .66$) were rated as significantly more severe than the low-severity vignettes ($\underline{M} = 2.48$, $\underline{SD} = .70$), $t(160) = 21.77$, $p < .001$. The severity manipulation was further supported by the finding that the participants rated their anger as significantly higher for the high-severity vignettes ($\underline{M} =$

4.02, $SD = .73$) than for the low-severity vignettes ($M = 2.83$, $SD = .69$), $t(160) = 21.40$, $p < .001$. In addition, the severity rating and anger rating were significantly correlated for both low- ($r = .72$, $p < .01$) and high-severity ($r = .70$, $p < .01$) transgressions. In an attempt to examine how relevant the vignettes were for adolescents, the participants were asked to rate, on a 5-point scale, "How realistic is this situation?". The mean ratings ranged from 2.99 (deceit) to 3.54 (backstabbing). The lower than expected realistic rating may be attributable to a misinterpretation of the question. Participants may have interpreted the item as asking them how realistic is it that *their* friend would behave in that way, not how realistic is the situation in general. Overall, the vignettes were rated as moderately realistic.

The vignettes were presented to the participants in a random order. All participants in each grade were administered the same basic vignettes. However, for half of the participants in each grade, the vignettes all ended with the friend apologizing for the transgression. The last sentence in the apology vignettes was, "Your friend comes to you and freely offers an apology for hurting you. Your friend says 'I am so sorry for hurting you. I feel terrible about it. I should not have done that to you.'" For the other half of the participants in each grade, the vignettes did not include an apology. The participants were instructed to assume that their friend had betrayed them as stated in each vignette, and asked how they would react to the transgression using a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix B), with higher scores indicating that the participant is more forgiving. The answers to the first three questions for each vignette were summed (item 1 was reverse scored) to yield a forgiveness score for that vignette (range = 3 to 15).

The forgiveness scores from the three high-severity vignettes were averaged for each participant to yield a high-severity forgiveness score. The forgiveness scores from the three low-severity vignettes were averaged for each participant to yield a low-severity forgiveness score. The coefficient alpha for the forgiveness items for each vignette were as follows: trust = .77, backstabbing = .88, deceit = .80, missed appointment = .71, broken promise = .77, and irresponsibility = .82. The last three questions for each vignette were used as a manipulation check for transgression severity and relevance to adolescents.

Forgiveness Understanding. Participants' understanding of the concept of forgiveness was measured using narratives (see Appendix C). Participants were asked to define/explain interpersonal forgiveness in their own words. The narratives were content analyzed with a scoring scheme based on the basic definition of forgiveness given in the literature review. The definitions were coded for the mention of terminating negative behaviors (e.g., revenge-seeking behaviors), negative cognitions (e.g., holding a grudge), negative affect (e.g., resentment), and the presence of positive behaviors (e.g., helpfulness), positive cognitions (e.g., respect), and positive affect (e.g., compassion). Participants received a score of 0, 1, 2, or 3 based on their responses. A score of 0 was given if the participant did not write about any of the six components of forgiveness listed above. This score indicates that the participant does not understand what forgiveness is. A score of 1 was given if the participant mentioned only negative or only positive aspects of forgiveness. This score indicates that the participant has some understanding of what forgiveness is. A score of 2 was given if the participant

mentioned one negative and one positive component of forgiveness. This score indicates that the participant has a moderate understanding of forgiveness. A score of 3 was given if the participant mentioned two or more negative components and two or more positive components of forgiveness. This score indicates that the participant has a good understanding of forgiveness. If the participant mentioned two negative and one positive component, or two positive and one negative component, a score of 3 was given. In addition, the narratives were scored for the presence or absence of the necessity of an apology for forgiveness to occur. The primary investigator and one undergraduate student scored the same 20% of the narratives to provide inter-rater reliability. The initial inter-rater reliability was 69%. The agreement was rather low due to the fact that the primary investigator scored the phrase “move on” as a 1, while the undergraduate rater scored it as a 2. After discussing the differences with the undergraduate rater, the primary investigator decided to score that phrase as a 1 because it appears to suggest either the termination of negative components or the presence of positive components, but it cannot be known whether it signifies both. In addition, the primary investigator scored the phrase “forgive and forget” as a 0 and the undergraduate rater scored it as a 1. According to Enright et. al. (1992), forgiveness is not the same as forgetting. Therefore, phrases that included the idea of forgetting were ultimately scored as a 0. With these issues in mind, the primary investigator scored the remaining narratives.

Procedure

Informed consent forms were given to the parents of all of the students in each grade. The participants were given a youth assent form. Data was collected in large groups. The data collection sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes. The participants were told that the study is concerned with adolescent friendships, transgressions that occur in those friendships, and forgiveness. The participants were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers. The participants were given a packet containing all the measures, and instructions about completing each measure. The demographic questionnaire was the first page of the each packet, and was followed by the hypothetical vignettes in a random order. Next, the packets contained the empathy index, the commitment scale, and the RCI, in random order. The forgiveness narrative was the last page for the seventh- and ninth-grade participants. For the eleventh-grade participants the forgiveness narrative was followed by the IRM. After data collection, students were be thanked for their participation and entered into a drawing for movie passes.

Independent and Dependent Variables

A cross-sectional, correlational design was used in the present study. The independent variables were: grade/age, sex, religiosity scores, commitment scores, RCI scores, empathy scores, apology, and transgression severity. The dependent variable was forgiveness vignette scores.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Analyses

The data, consisting of forgiveness scores, were analyzed with simple regression, multiple regression, and mixed-design analyses of variance (ANOVA), to test the various hypotheses.

Religiosity

Hypothesis one predicted that adolescents with higher levels of religiosity would be more forgiving of a friend after a transgression than adolescents with lower levels of religiosity. Two simple regression analyses were performed, with only grade 11 scores, in order to test this hypothesis. Due to time constraints with grades 7 and 9, only students in grade 11 were given this measure. Table I presents the means and standard deviations for the variables in both equations. Table II presents the regression summaries. The first regression used the Intrinsic Religious Motivation scale (IRM) total score as the predictor variable and the low-severity forgiveness score for the dependent variable. Religiosity was a significant predictor of forgiveness in low-severity transgressions ($R = .25$, $R^2 = .063$, $\beta = .25$), accounting for 6.3% of the variance. The second regression used the IRM total score as the predictor variable and the high-severity forgiveness score for the dependent variable. Religiosity was not a significant predictor of forgiveness in high-severity transgressions. Hypothesis one was partially supported.

Table I

Means and Standard Deviations for Religiosity and Forgiveness in Low- and High-Severity Transgressions (Grade 11 Sample Only).

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Intrinsic Religious Motivation (IRM) total	32.19	9.23
Forgiveness Score		
High-Severity Transgressions	8.48	2.48
Low-Severity Transgressions	12.12	1.79

Note. SD (standard deviation). N = 63.

Table II

Regression Summary for Religiosity as a Predictor of Forgiveness in Low- and High-Severity Transgressions (Grade 11 Sample Only).

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Low-Severity Transgressions	4.86	.02	.25	2.02	.05
High-Severity Transgressions	4.66	.03	.17	1.37	.18

Note. N = 63.

Commitment, Relationship Closeness, and Empathy

Hypothesis two predicted that commitment in a friendship would predict adolescents' forgiveness in both low- and high-severity transgressions. Hypothesis three predicted that relationship closeness would predict adolescents' forgiveness in both low- and high-severity transgressions. Hypothesis four predicted that empathy would predict adolescents' forgiveness in both low- and high-severity transgressions. These hypotheses were tested using two multiple regression analyses with commitment scores, RCI total scores, and empathy scores as the predictor variables (see Table III for means and standard deviations). Table IV presents the regression summary. The first multiple regression used low-severity forgiveness scores as the dependent variable. This analysis found commitment (beta = .30) and relationship closeness (beta = -.22) to be significant predictors of forgiveness in low-severity transgressions, $R = .37$ and $R^2 = .137$, accounting for 13.7% of the variance. Empathy was not a significant predictor of forgiveness. As commitment in a friendship increased, forgiveness increased as well. However, as relationship closeness decreased, forgiveness increased. The issue of collinearity was addressed in this analysis because commitment and relationship closeness ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), commitment and empathy ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), and relationship closeness and empathy ($r = .17$, $p < .04$) were all significantly correlated. The variance inflation factors (VIF) were all found to be very low (1.07-1.09) (see Table IV), indicating that the regression coefficients were not adversely affected by the presence of correlated independent variables.

Table III

Means and Standard Deviations for Commitment, Relationship Closeness, Empathy, and Low- and High-Severity Forgiveness Scores.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Low-Severity Forgiveness	11.87	2.00
High-Severity Forgiveness	8.83	2.50
Commitment	20.99	3.38
RCI total	15.01	4.81
Empathy	27.22	20.97

Note. SD (standard deviation).

Table IV

Regression Summary for Commitment, Relationship Closeness, and Empathy as Predictors of Forgiveness in Low-Severity Transgressions.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>VIF</u>
Commitment	.18	.05	.30	3.89	.000	1.09
RCI total	-9.22	.03	-.22	-2.87	.004	1.07
Empathy	1.31	.01	.14	1.79	.075	1.07

Note. VIF (variance inflation factor).

The second multiple regression used high-severity forgiveness scores as the dependent variable (see Table V). This analysis revealed that the only significant predictor was commitment ($R = .23$, $R^2 = .053$, $\beta = .24$), accounting for 5.3% of the variance. Again, collinearity was a concern. However, the VIFs were very low (1.07-1.09), indicating that the regression coefficients were not adversely affected by the correlations among the predictor variables.

Hypothesis two was supported. Commitment in a friendship significantly predicted adolescents' forgiveness in both low- and high-severity transgressions. Hypothesis three was not supported. Relationship closeness significantly predicted forgiveness in low-severity transgressions, but not high-severity transgressions. However, the relationship was not in the expected direction. This finding may, in part, be due to the low reliability of the RCI for the current sample. Hypothesis four was not supported. Empathy did not predict forgiveness in either low- or high-severity transgressions.

Sex Differences

Hypothesis five predicted that no sex differences would be found in adolescents' forgiveness. This hypothesis was tested with a 2 (sex) x 2 (transgression severity) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA), with transgression severity as the within-subjects variable and sex as the between-subjects variable. The dependent variable was the total forgiveness scores from the vignettes. Table VI presents the means and standard deviations for the variables in this analysis. Table VII presents the ANOVA summary. No differences were found between the forgiveness scores of males and females, $F(1, 159) = .16$, $p > .05$. Hypothesis five was supported.

Table V

Regression Summary for Commitment, Relationship Closeness, and Empathy as Predictors of Forgiveness in High-Severity Transgressions.

<u>Variable</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>VIF</u>
Commitment	.17	.06	.24	2.91	.004	1.09
RCI total	-4.53	.04	-.09	-1.09	.279	1.07
Empathy	-2.24	.01	-.02	-0.24	.815	1.0

Note. VIF (variance inflation factor).

Table VI

Mean Forgiveness Scores for Males and Females.

Transgression Severity	Males		Females	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Low	11.80	2.21	11.92	1.84
High	9.05	2.65	8.68	2.65

Note. SD (standard deviation).

Table VII

Analysis of Variance Summary for Sex by Transgression Severity

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Between subjects			
Sex (S)	1	.16	.694
<u>S</u> within-group error	159	(8.18)	
Within subjects			
Transgression Severity (TS)	1	338.50	.000
S x TS	1	2.28	.133
TS x <u>S</u> within-group error	159	(2.06)	

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors. S = subjects.

Age Differences

Hypothesis six predicted that adolescents in higher grades would have higher forgiveness scores than adolescents in lower grades. That is, older adolescents would have higher forgiveness scores than younger adolescents. This hypothesis was tested together in a 3 (grade) x 2 (apology) x 2 (transgression severity) mixed ANOVA with forgiveness vignette scores as the dependent variable. The within-subjects variable was transgression severity. The between-subjects variables were grade and apology (see Table VIII for means and standard deviations). Table IX presents the ANOVA summary. Grade was used instead of age so that age differences could be examined through the use of ANOVA. Grade 7 represents adolescents who are 12- to 13-years of age; grade 9 represents adolescents who are 14- to 15-years of age; grade 11 represents adolescents who are 16- to 18-years of age. The ANOVA revealed that hypothesis six was not supported. A significant main effect of grade was not found, $F(2, 155) = .77, p > .05$. Adolescents in higher grades did not have higher forgiveness scores than adolescents in lower grades. This finding was partially supported by two simple regression analyses with age as the predictor variable and forgiveness scores as the dependent variable. Table X presents the regression summaries. The first simple regression used the forgiveness scores from low-severity transgressions as the dependent variable. The second simple regression used the forgiveness scores from the high-severity transgressions as the dependent variable. These analyses revealed that age was a significant predictor of forgiveness in low-severity transgressions ($R = .156, R^2 = .024, \beta = .16$), but not high-severity transgressions.

Table VIII

Mean Forgiveness Scores for Grade, Transgression Severity, and Apology.

Group	Transgression Severity			
	Low		High	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Overall	11.86 _a	2.00	8.83 _b	2.50
Apology	12.03	2.05	9.38	2.39
No Apology	11.71	1.95	8.28	2.49
Grade 7	11.47	2.17	8.88	2.61
Apology	11.92	2.00	9.39	2.47
No Apology	11.00	2.27	8.35	2.69
Grade 9	12.01	2.02	9.28	2.34
Apology	11.80	2.18	9.93	2.07
No Apology	12.19	1.91	8.71	2.46
Grade 11	12.12	1.79	8.48	2.48
Apology	12.27	2.04	9.03	2.51
No Apology	11.96	1.51	7.91	2.36

Note. SD (standard deviation). Different subscripts in a row indicate a significant difference, $p < .05$.

Table IX

Analysis of Variance Summary for Grade, Apology, and Transgression Severity.

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Between subjects			
Grade (G)	2	.77	.467
Apology (A)	1	4.82	.030
G x A	2	.24	.787
<u>S</u> within-group error	155	(8.03)	
Within subjects			
Transgression Severity (TS)	1	364.02	.000
TS x G	2	5.28	.006
TS x A	1	7.49	.007
TS x A x G	2	1.74	.179
TS x <u>S</u> within-group error	155	(1.90)	

Note. Values enclosed in parentheses represent mean square errors. S = subjects.

Table X

Regression Summary for Age as a Predictor of Forgiveness in Low- and High-Severity Transgressions.

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>SE B</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Low-Severity Transgressions	.189	.10	.16	1.99	.048
High-Severity Transgressions	-4.42	.12	-.03	-.37	.713

Transgression Severity and Apology

Hypothesis seven predicted that forgiveness scores would be higher for the transgressions that included an apology than for the transgressions that did not include an apology for both low- and high-severity transgressions. Hypothesis eight predicted that forgiveness scores would be lower for the high-severity transgressions than for the low-severity transgressions, regardless of whether an apology was given. These hypotheses were tested with the mixed ANOVA described above (see Table VIII for means and standard deviations and Table IX for the ANOVA summary). Hypothesis seven was supported by a significant apology main effect, $F(1, 155) = 4.82, p < .05$ ($\eta^2 = .03$). The forgiveness scores were higher ($M = 10.72$) for participants who responded to transgressions that included an apology than for participants in the no apology group ($M = 10.02$). Hypothesis eight was supported by a significant transgression severity main effect, $F(1, 155) = 364.02, p < .001$ ($\eta^2 = .70$). As expected, forgiveness scores were higher for the low-severity transgressions than for the high-severity transgressions. However, these findings are qualified by two significant interactions. A significant transgression severity by apology interaction, $F(1, 155) = 7.49, p < .01$ ($\eta^2 = .05$), was found (see Figure 1).

Simple effects analyses of the transgression severity by apology interaction showed that there was a significant difference between low- and high-severity forgiveness scores in both the no apology, $F(1, 80) = 267.06, p < .001$, and apology, $F(1, 79) = 124.25, p < .001$, groups. For both the apology and no apology groups, forgiveness

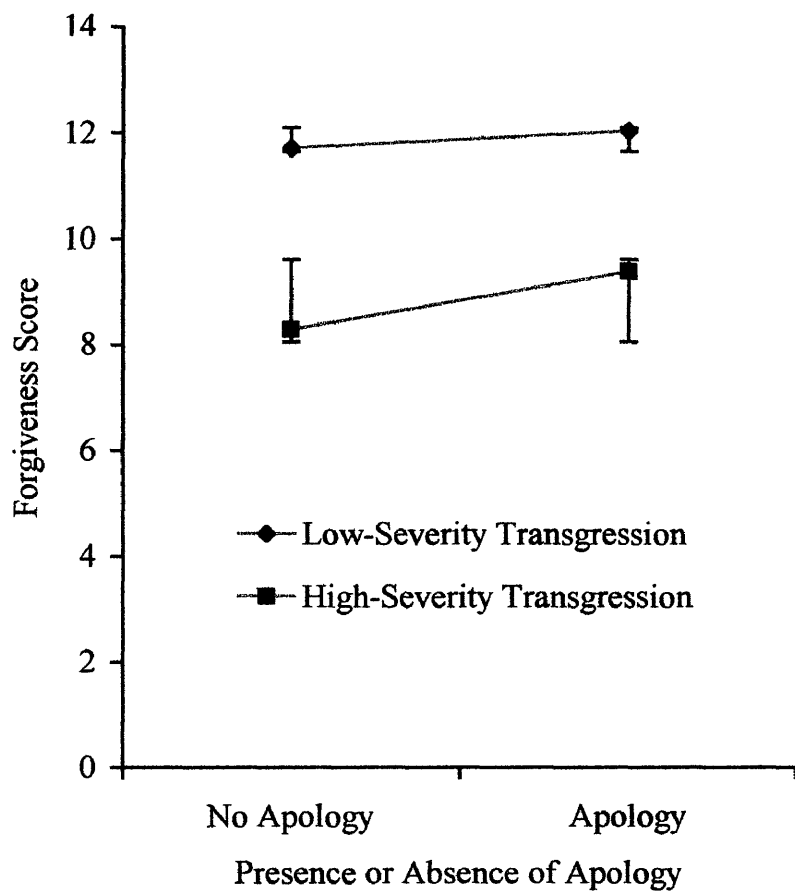


Figure 1. Transgression Severity by Apology Interaction. Error bars represent standard deviation.

scores were significantly higher for the low-severity transgressions than the high-severity transgressions. Additional simple effects analyses for this interaction revealed that there was a significant difference between forgiveness in the no apology and apology groups for high-severity transgressions, $F(1, 159) = 8.16, p < .006$. For high-severity transgressions, forgiveness scores were significantly higher when an apology was given than when no apology was given. However, no difference was found between the no apology and apology groups for low-severity transgressions, $F(1, 159) = 1.04, p > .05$.

The transgression severity by grade interaction was also significant, $F(2, 155) = 5.28, p < .01$ ($\eta^2 = .06$) (see Figure 2). Simple effects analyses revealed that low-severity forgiveness scores were significantly higher than high-severity forgiveness scores in grade 7, $F(1, 54) = 108.89, p < .001$, grade 9, $F(1, 42) = 78.76, p < .001$, and grade 11, $F(1, 62) = 189.32, p < .001$. Additional simple effects analyses revealed that there were no grade differences in forgiveness scores for low-severity, $F(2, 158) = 1.74, p > .05$, or high-severity, $F(2, 158) = 1.33, p > .05$, transgressions.

Forgiveness Understanding

The forgiveness narratives were content analyzed. Table XI presents the percentages for each score by grade. The majority of participants (90.68%) received a score of 0 or 1, indicating no or some understanding of forgiveness (see Appendix D for a representative narrative). To be given a score of 1, the narrative needed to include one negative or one positive aspect of forgiveness. Most of the participants did not include any of the components of forgiveness or wrote one negative (e.g., not holding hard

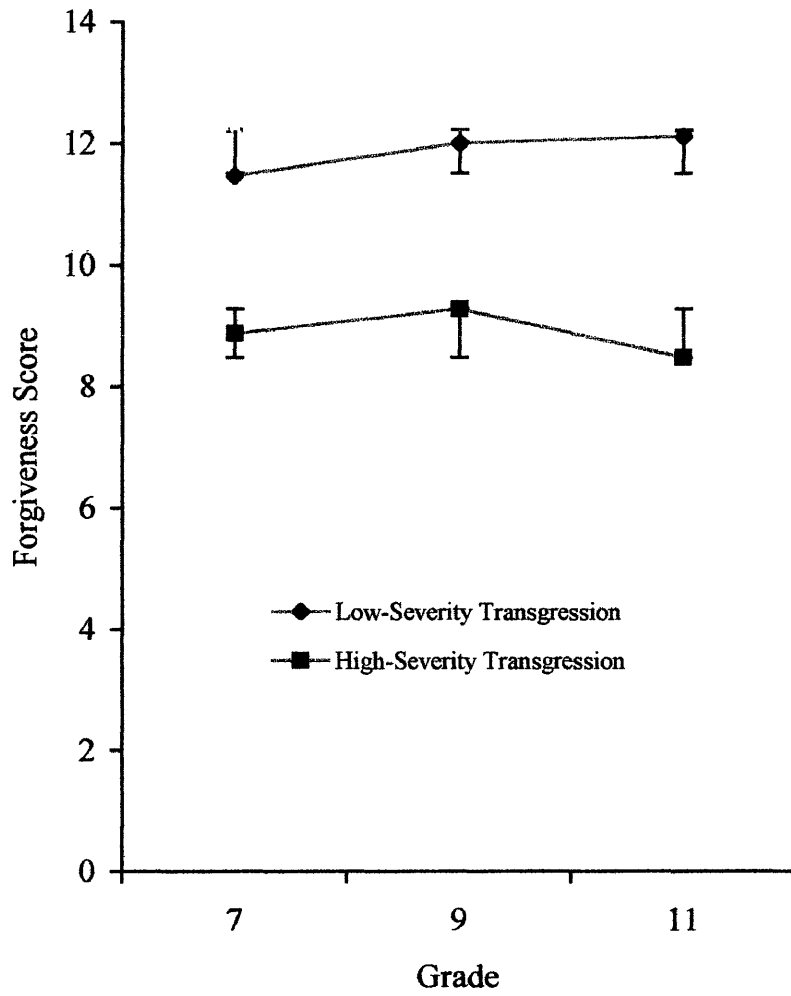


Figure 2. Transgression Severity by Grade Interaction. Error bars represent standard deviation.

Table XI

Percentage of Forgiveness Understanding Scores by Grade.

Grade	Score				Presence of Apology
	0	1	2	3	
Seventh	60.71	37.50	1.79	0.00	25.00
Ninth	40.48	42.86	14.28	2.38	23.81
Eleventh	34.92	53.97	4.76	6.35	11.11
Total	45.34	45.34	6.21	3.11	19.25

Note. Scores: 0 = no understanding, 1 = some understanding, 2 = moderate understanding, 3 = good understanding. Seventh-grade \underline{n} = 56, ninth-grade \underline{n} = 42, eleventh-grade \underline{n} = 63.

feelings) or one positive component (e.g., continuing the relationship). A score of 2 (i.e., moderate understanding) was given if the narrative included one negative and one positive component of forgiveness. A total of 6.21% of the participants received a score of 2. Only 3.11% ($n = 5$) of all participants were given a score of 3, indicating an acceptable understanding of forgiveness. To be given a score of 3, the narrative had to contain two negative and two positive aspects of forgiveness. The majority of the narratives with a 3 score (80.00%) were given to participants in the eleventh grade; the remaining scores of a 3 were assigned to ninth grade participants.

The narratives were also coded for the presence or absence of an apology in the definition of forgiveness. Only 31 of all 161 participants (19.25%) stated that an apology was necessary in order for forgiveness to be granted. The number of participants who included an apology in their narratives decreased with age.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

The data analyses revealed that characteristics of the transgression appeared to have the most influence on interpersonal forgiveness in adolescent friendships. The factor exerting the greatest effect was transgression severity, accounting for 70% of the variation in forgiveness scores. Presence or absence of an apology also contributed to the variance accounted for. Overall, adolescents were more forgiving when the transgressor gave an apology. However, further analyses revealed that presence of an apology had a significant influence on forgiveness in high-severity transgressions only.

Relationship quality factors were found to affect forgiveness as well. Commitment to the friend was a significant predictor of forgiveness regardless of transgression severity. Relationship closeness was found to be a significant predictor of forgiveness in low-severity transgressions, but not in the expected direction.

Finally, individual-difference factors were found to have a minimal role in adolescents' forgiveness. Adolescents' level of religiosity influenced forgiveness, but only in low-severity transgressions. No sex differences were found, and interpersonal forgiveness does not appear to differ by age of the transgression recipient. In addition, empathy was not significantly related to interpersonal forgiveness.

Transgression Severity

Adolescents' forgiveness was significantly influenced by transgression severity at each grade level. Across the age span, adolescents were more forgiving after low-severity transgressions (e.g., missed appointment) than after high-severity

transgressions (e.g., violation of trust). Adolescents were more willing to terminate negative cognitions about their friend (e.g., hold a grudge) and exhibit positive thoughts (e.g., wanting to continue the relationship) when the transgression was less severe. According to Laursen's (1995) data, adolescents are engaged in approximately one conflict per day with friends and romantic partners. With conflicts occurring daily, it is reasonable to assume that many or most of these situations would be considered low-severity conflicts. Because adolescents participate in conflicts so frequently and are sensitive to the costs of conflicts (Laursen, 1996), they must utilize some conflict resolution strategies in order to sustain their relationships. Laursen (1993) found that adolescents prefer to use negotiation (i.e., "talking things out") to resolve conflicts with close peers. Similarly, Youniss and Smollar (1985) found that, for females, the major strategy used to solve conflicts was to "talk over the problem." Forgiveness appears to fit into this strategy. When a friend breaks a promise or misses an appointment, adolescents seem to be willing to forgive. However, when the transgression is more severe (i.e., violation of trust, deceit, backstabbing), forgiveness is not given as easily. Boon and Sulsky (1997) found similar results in their study of adult romantic relationships. They examined the role of offense-severity, avoidability, and intent in participants' willingness to forgive a romantic partner and the level of blame they would attribute to their partner. With respect to willingness to forgive, intent and offense-severity were weighted more heavily than whether the offense was avoidable. Offense-severity accounted for 18% of the variance in forgiveness scores. Clearly, transgression severity plays a role in interpersonal forgiveness. With higher severity, it

may be more difficult for adolescents to overlook all the negative feelings and thoughts that they have toward their friend, and focus on the positive aspects unless an apology is given. Therefore, they are less forgiving when they are severely hurt by a friend, without some explanation for the act.

Bukowski and Sippola (1996) contend that friendships impose specific expectations on each friend to act toward the other in a fair, just, and empathetic way when a transgression occurs. That is, there is an “ought quality” in a true friendship, which has moral underpinnings. Therefore, forgiveness is expected in a friendship, which may explain the low-severity finding. Bukowski and Sippola further maintain that there is a moral quality associated with friendship, and this moral quality involving fairness, honesty, and respect may impede forgiveness when transgressions are highly severe. The interdependence fostered in the relationship has been violated, and forgiveness may not be sufficient to counteract this violation.

Apologies

As expected, the presence of an apology following a transgression influenced adolescents’ forgiveness. Adolescents were more forgiving of a friend if that friend apologized for the transgression than if they did not apologize. This finding was further supported by the narrative data. Almost 20% of the participants wrote that an apology was necessary in order for forgiveness to be granted. Similar to Darby and Schlenker’s (1982) finding with children, apologies played a role in adolescents’ level of forgiveness. In their study, participants were more forgiving when apologies were elaborate than when the transgressor simply said, “I’m sorry.” In addition, more

elaborate apologies were related to the transgressor being punished less, rated as more favorable, and rated as less blameworthy for the incident. Fourth- through seventh-graders viewed the transgressor as more genuinely sorry for the incident when more elaborate apologies were given.

Adolescents seem to appreciate the notion that an apology indicates that the transgressor has feelings of remorse for the transgression, and therefore is truly sorry for the act. Perceiving their friend as remorseful may lead adolescents to be more forgiving than when no apology is given. Apologies might also influence forgiveness because of their effect on empathy. McCullough et al. (1997) found data that supported the idea that apologies facilitate increased levels of empathy for the transgressor, and that empathy reduces the individual's desire to engage in negative behaviors toward the transgressor. However, the data in the current study showed no empathy effect.

The significant transgression severity by apology interaction showed that regardless of whether an apology was given, adolescents were more forgiving when the transgressions were less severe. In addition, apologies were found to play a significant role in high-severity transgressions, but not low-severity transgressions. This finding suggests that when the hurt is minor, adolescents' forgiveness does not depend on whether or not the friend apologizes. However, when severely hurt by a friend, adolescents appear to need to know that the friend feels remorse about the incident before forgiveness is granted. The moral quality in the friendship (e.g., fairness, honesty, and respect) identified by Bukowski and Sippola (1996) may be restored by an apology. However, apologies are not the most common relationship repair technique

according to Youniss and Smollar (1985). In their study, only 17% of females and 15% of males used an apology. Talking it out was most commonly used, although the adolescents' description of "talking it out" seemed very similar to an apology.

Relationship Quality

The analyses revealed that commitment in a friendship influenced forgiveness. Commitment predicted forgiveness after both low- and high-severity transgressions. The more committed the participants were to their friend, the more forgiving they were. This finding supports Rusbult et al.'s (1991) study, which showed that individuals who were more committed were more likely to try to maintain their relationship. According to Rusbult and Buunk (1993), commitment in a relationship enhances continuity and promotes behaviors (e.g., accommodation) that are helpful in maintaining the relationship. The long-term orientation that commitment implies should increase the desire to maintain the relationship and should encourage pro-relationship behaviors (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). The present data supports this idea. The participants who were more committed were more forgiving. Commitment implies loyalty and trust in a relationship and fosters interdependence between the relationship partners which exerts a strong influence and desire to continue the relationship (Laursen, 1996). Forgiveness of a relationship violation is a necessary expectation in a committed relationship. Forgiveness may be part of the relationship repair process after a transgression has occurred.

Relationship closeness was also related to forgiveness, but only for low-severity transgressions. The negative beta shows that as relationship closeness increases, the

need for forgiveness decreases. Apparently, the 13- to 18-year olds in this study felt that forgiveness was not necessary in a close relationship when the transgression was minor. Laursen (1993) reported that adolescents in their study who were romantically involved moved quickly to repair the relationship when a transgression occurred and their anger level was relatively low. Minor transgressions in close relationships probably do not generate much anger, so forgiveness may not be required. Relationship closeness also seems to change with age in a curvilinear pattern, which reaches its high point at mid-adolescence (Laursen, 1996). Thus Laursen notes that friends are less influential than assumed, and some friendships are closer than others. The low reliability of the scale used to measure relationship closeness may also have been a factor. The internal consistency (coefficient alpha) of the relationship closeness measure was similar to that found by Berscheid et al. (1989), the creators of the measure. The coefficient alpha found in both instances is quite low, indicating that the subscales that comprise the overall score may have differed somewhat (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The low internal consistency ($\alpha = .58$) for the present sample may imply that the strength of impact subscale of the RCI does not measure the same construct as the frequency and diversity subscales. Additional reliability analyses showed that if the strength of impact subscale is deleted, the coefficient alpha increases to .71. The strength of impact subscale may not be as relevant to adolescents in grades 7, 9, and 11 as it is to adults, even after the revisions. The items in this scale ask the participant to rate the amount of influence their friend has on their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. For example, participants are asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements, “X

does not influence my career choice.” and “X influences the way I feel about the future.” In addition, participants are asked to rate how much their friend affects things like future marriage plans, and future financial plans. Some of the items do seem relevant to the lives of teenagers (e.g., impact on watching TV or how to spend free time), but many of the items may not be measuring closeness as it applies to adolescents.

Religiosity

The present data support Gorsuch and Hao (1993) and Enright et al.’s (1989) findings that religiosity and forgiveness are related. This finding applies to the grade 11 sample because only this age group completed the religiosity measure. Religiosity was found to predict adolescents’ forgiveness only in low-severity transgressions. For low-severity transgressions as religiosity increased, adolescents were more forgiving of their friends. When a friend commits a minor transgression, one’s religious underpinnings can help the individual who was hurt move forward. When a friend commits a highly severe transgression, religiosity does not seem to play a role. Religiosity was not significantly related to forgiveness in high-severity transgressions. While an adolescent’s religion may promote forgiveness (Gorsuch & Hao, 1993), religious beliefs are not enough to warrant forgiving a friend after being severely hurt.

Sex

Consistent with Enright et al.’s (1989) and Park and Enright’s (1997) findings, no sex differences were found in forgiveness. Male and female adolescents are equally forgiving after low- and high-severity transgressions. Park and Enright stated that sex

differences in forgiveness are not expected because forgiveness is not related to traditional male and female values, and because no sex differences have been found in social-cognitive issues related to forgiveness, such as moral judgement. However, when examining forgiveness in the context of friendships, the absence of sex differences is somewhat surprising. According to Maccoby (1990), developing interpersonal connections are important in same-sex friendships for females, but for males, same-sex friendships are more focused on developing individual status. Forgiveness seems to be an act that would enhance interpersonal connections.

Age

Forgiveness did not vary by grade in the present study. That is, no significant differences were present when grade represented age groups in the analyses. Participants in grades 7, 9, and 11 were equally forgiving. However, when submitted to a regression analysis, age did significantly predict forgiveness in low-severity transgressions, but only accounted for 2.4% of the variance. With increased age, adolescents were more forgiving when the transgressions were low in severity.

Enright et al. (1989), using grade 4, 7, 10, college, and adult participants, Park and Enright (1997), using grade 7, 8, and college participants, and Subkoviak et al. (1995), using late adolescents and adults, all found a positive relationship between age and forgiveness. The failure to replicate these findings might be a function of the measures used in previous studies, which assessed different aspects of forgiveness. Enright et al.'s measure of forgiveness was based on measures of moral development. Park and Enright focused on the development of three different types of forgiveness (i.e., revengeful,

external, or internal). Subkoviak et al. used a measure based on the definition of forgiveness used by the present author. The present study utilized hypothetical vignettes, whereas Subkoviak et al. asked participants to think of a recent experience when someone hurt them or treated them unfairly. Perhaps age differences are not present or are limited when adolescents are not responding to transgressions that have actually occurred. A manipulation check of the vignettes showed that the participants in the present study rated the vignettes as moderately realistic ($M = 2.99$ to 3.52 , on a 1 to 5 scale). Age differences may have emerged if the hypothetical situations used to measure forgiveness had been more realistic for adolescents.

Empathy

Adolescents' level of empathy did not predict forgiveness regardless of severity. This finding is counter to McCullough et al.'s (1997) data, which showed that increased empathy increases an individual's motivation to repair the relationship. According to McCullough et al., experiencing vicarious emotions similar to those of the transgressor reduces the victim's motivation to retaliate or maintain estrangement. While empathy did not significantly predict forgiveness when included in a model with commitment and relationship closeness, it was significantly correlated with forgiveness in low-severity transgressions. McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, & Hight (1998) suggest that empathy is the largest determinant of forgiveness. The data from the present study suggest that the influence of transgression severity and relationship quality negate the influence of empathy in adolescents' forgiveness in friendships.

Forgiveness Understanding

The written narratives from the present sample indicate that adolescents do not fully understand the term forgiveness when a standard criteria for forgiveness is applied. Very few participants received a score that indicated they had a moderate or a good understanding. However, the narratives were scored with the basic research definition of forgiveness in mind. Understanding forgiveness and verbalizing this understanding are quite different domains. Many participants did not clearly indicate that forgiveness means that negative behaviors, cognitions, and affect are abandoned, or that positive behaviors, cognitions, and affect are exhibited. The following statement, from a grade 9 narrative, is representative of many responses and shows that the term forgiveness may simply be a difficult word for adolescents to define: “Forgiveness – accept what someone did to you and move on.” Narratives from adults need to be examined in order to find out whether adolescents just do not have the ability to articulate their understanding of forgiveness, or whether forgiveness is a term too abstract to verbalize.

Limitations

Reading ability may have been a limitation in the present study. Most of the questionnaires used were not developed with young adolescents in mind. The seventh-grade participants may have been at a disadvantage due to their reading ability. In addition, the situations in the hypothetical vignettes may not have been as age-appropriate as they were for the older participants. The younger participants may also have had more difficulty expressing their thoughts in the Forgiveness Narrative. The

majority of seventh-grade participants (60.71%) received a narrative score that indicated they had no understanding of forgiveness according to the definition in the literature. The abundance of scores indicating no or only some understanding of forgiveness for the younger participants may be attributed to their lower writing abilities. Finally, the RCI had a low reliability index. While this questionnaire was modified for use with adolescents, some of the items still may not be appropriate for this age group. In addition, the frequency and diversity subscales ask the participants to think about the past week when answering the questions. Many of the participants indicated that they were describing a week that was not typical or representative of the time they usually spend with their friend. For example, the ninth-grade participants had their spring break the week before data was collected. Some participants in grades 7 and 11 also noted, for various reasons, that the past week was not typical. The participants may have spent either much more time or very little time with their friend compared to an average week. This fact may have affected their answers, thus leading to a closeness index that did not influence forgiveness in the expected direction.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should further examine the role that transgression severity plays in forgiveness. Specifically, researchers should investigate why adolescents are less forgiving after high-severity transgressions. What are the factors that facilitate forgiveness in those situations? Future research should also examine the role of relationship quality. Intimacy, level of self-disclosure, and length of time in the relationship are examples of relationship quality factors that may have an effect.

Researchers should examine the determinants of forgiveness in romantic and non-romantic cross-sex friendships in adolescence. Finally, all forgiveness research should include a measure of forgiveness understanding. Narrative and questionnaire data should be collected.

Conclusions

The overall pattern found in this study shows that characteristics of the transgression (i.e., severity and apology) and relationship quality exert more influence on adolescents' forgiveness in a same-sex friendship than individual-difference factors, such as empathy, religiosity, sex, or age. When transgressions were low in severity, relationship commitment, and religiosity were related to forgiveness of the transgressor. Only commitment and presence of apology played a role when the transgressions were severe. The loyalty and trust associated with commitment, and the expression of remorse and restitution inherent in an apology help to restore the moral qualities of fairness and kindness in the relationship, as well as a recognition of how one "ought" to act in an interdependent relationship involving same-sex individuals. These dynamics may or may not be present in a cross-sex relationship.

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Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

Age: _____

Grade: _____

Sex: M F

Are your grades _____ mostly A's
_____ mostly B's
_____ mostly C's
_____ mostly D's

First initial of a same-sex friend: _____

****Please think of this friend when completing the questionnaires.**

Appendix B

Hypothetical Vignettes

Please read each hypothetical situation and imagine that your friend has betrayed you in the way stated in each situation. After reading each situation, respond to the following questions by circling your answers. Please try to imagine that this situation really happened to you and respond accordingly. Make sure that you think of the same friend (the one you listed on the first page of this packet) throughout the whole questionnaire.

Violation of Trust

1. Last week you told your friend, (insert first initial) _____, a personal secret about yourself that would be very damaging if others found out. You specifically asked your friend not to tell anyone this secret and your friend agreed. You find out that your friend told some of your classmates this secret.
 - a. How likely would you be to hold a grudge against your friend?

1	2	3	4	5
not likely		somewhat likely		very likely
 - b. How likely would you be to forgive your friend in this situation?

1	2	3	4	5
not likely		somewhat likely		very likely
 - c. I would still want to be friends with this person.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree		maybe		strongly agree
 - d. How would you rate the severity (how serious it is) of this transgression?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all severe		moderately severe		extremely severe
 - e. How angry would you be if your friend did this to you?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all angry		moderately angry		extremely angry
 - f. How realistic is this situation?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all realistic		moderately realistic		extremely realistic

Backstabbing

2. You find out that your friend, (insert first initial) _____, has been gossiping about you behind your back. Your friend has been saying mean things about you and has been telling extremely hurtful lies about you to other classmates.

a. How likely would you be to hold a grudge against your friend?

1	2	3	4	5
not likely		somewhat likely		very likely

b. How likely would you be to forgive your friend in this situation?

1	2	3	4	5
not likely		somewhat likely		very likely

c. I would still want to be friends with this person.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree		maybe		strongly agree

d. How would you rate the severity (how serious it is) of this transgression?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all severe		moderately severe		extremely severe

e. How angry would you be if your friend did this to you?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all angry		moderately angry		extremely angry

f. How realistic is this situation?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all realistic		moderately realistic		extremely realistic

Deceit

3. You and your friend, (insert first initial) _____, go to a school basketball game together one night. During halftime, your friend leaves the game to go to a party with a group of people. You are left at the basketball game with no transportation to get home. The next day you find out that your friend had been planning on doing this all along.

a. How likely would you be to hold a grudge against your friend?

1	2	3	4	5
not likely		somewhat likely		very likely

b. How likely would you be to forgive your friend in this situation?

1 2 3 4 5
not likely somewhat likely very likely

c. I would still want to be friends with this person.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree maybe strongly agree

d. How would you rate the severity (how serious it is) of this transgression?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all severe moderately severe extremely severe

e. How angry would you be if your friend did this to you?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all angry moderately angry extremely angry

f. How realistic is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all realistic moderately realistic extremely realistic

Missed Appointment

4. Your friend, (insert first initial) _____, made plans with you to work on homework for a class you both have. On the day you are supposed to get together your friend does not show up to work on the homework.

a. How likely would you be to hold a grudge against your friend?

1 2 3 4 5
not likely somewhat likely very likely

b. How likely would you be to forgive your friend in this situation?

1 2 3 4 5
not likely somewhat likely very likely

c. I would still want to be friends with this person.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree maybe strongly agree

d. How would you rate the severity (how serious it is) of this transgression?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all severe moderately severe extremely severe

e. How angry would you be if your friend did this to you?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all angry moderately angry extremely angry

f. How realistic is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all realistic moderately realistic extremely realistic

Irresponsibility

5. You loaned your friend, (insert first initial) _____, your CD player. You specifically told your friend to be very careful with it and not to let anyone else use it because it was expensive. Your friend loaned the CD player to his or her brother. When your friend returns the CD player to you, it is broken.

a. How likely would you be to hold a grudge against your friend?

1 2 3 4 5
not likely somewhat likely very likely

b. How likely would you be to forgive your friend in this situation?

1 2 3 4 5
not likely somewhat likely very likely

c. I would still want to be friends with this person.

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree maybe strongly agree

d. How would you rate the severity (how serious it is) of this transgression?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all severe moderately severe extremely severe

e. How angry would you be if your friend did this to you?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all angry moderately angry extremely angry

f. How realistic is this situation?

1 2 3 4 5
not at all realistic moderately realistic extremely realistic

Broken Promise

6. You and your friend, (insert first initial) _____, have been talking for weeks about going to see the new horror movie. You and your friend promise each other that you will see the movie together. One day you ask your friend to go see the movie with

you, but your friend tells you that he or she went to see it already with someone else.

a. How likely would you be to hold a grudge against your friend?

1	2	3	4	5
not likely		somewhat likely		very likely

b. How likely would you be to forgive your friend in this situation?

1	2	3	4	5
not likely		somewhat likely		very likely

c. I would still want to be friends with this person.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree		maybe		strongly agree

d. How would you rate the severity (how serious it is) of this transgression?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all severe		moderately severe		extremely severe

e. How angry would you be if your friend did this to you?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all angry		moderately angry		extremely angry

f. How realistic is this situation?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all realistic		moderately realistic		extremely realistic

Appendix C

Forgiveness Narrative

Please use the space below to define forgiveness within a friendship in your own words. After you have defined forgiveness, describe a situation from your own life in which a friend hurt you and you forgave him or her. There are no right or wrong answers.

Appendix D

Sample Narrative (Seventh-grade female)

Forgiveness Narrative

Please use the space below to define forgiveness within a friendship in your own words. After you have defined forgiveness, describe a situation from your own life in which a friend hurt you and you forgave him or her. There are no right or wrong answers.

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Forgiveness is when a friend has done something wrong that has affected you, but you don't hold a grudge against them.

When one of my friends didn't want to hang out with me because she wanted to hang out with somebody else I forgave her because

I knew I couldn't be the only person she hung out with.