APOLOGY AND FORGIVENESS IN COUPLES

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Following a transgression, interpersonal forgiveness is one strategy used to restore harmony between the victim and offender. Research also suggests that forgiveness can promote psychological and physical health. Research has shown that an apology from the offender may facilitate the forgiveness process. The majority of studies suggest that when a victim receives an apology, they experience higher levels of forgiveness toward their offender. The purpose of this thesis was to explore the association between apology and forgiveness in a sample of adults and undergraduate students ($N = 803$). The results are organized in three sections. First, I found a positive relationship between apology and forgiveness, replicating prior research. Second, I created a new measure of transgression severity, and provided evidence of internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion-related validity for this measure. Third, I tested two variables hypothesized to moderate the association between apology and forgiveness. First, there was some evidence that perceived offender humility moderated the association between simple apology and forgiveness. Offenders who were perceived as being more humble when providing a simple apology were granted more forgiveness than their less humble counterparts. Second, there was some evidence that transgression severity moderated the association between a complete apology and forgiveness, but the effect was in the opposite direction as hypothesized. For individuals who reported a transgression of high severity, there was a stronger association between the completeness of an apology and forgiveness than for individuals who reported a transgression of low severity. I conclude by discussing limitations, areas for future research, and implications for counseling.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Transgressions occur frequently and affect the lives of both victims and offenders. Forgiveness is one pathway in which the offense can be addressed and overcome. Psychological research on forgiveness has increased in the past 20 years (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Evidence suggests that forgiveness has a number of psychological and physical benefits. Thus, research has begun to investigate several factors that may facilitate the process of forgiveness. One component that may facilitate the forgiveness process is an apology by the offender to the victim.

The apology-forgiveness relationship has received some scientific attention, with the majority of studies finding that victims who receive an apology have higher levels of forgiveness toward their transgressor. At this point, no comprehensive review of the literature exists looking at the relationship between interpersonal forgiveness and apology from the victim’s perspective when recalling a real transgression.

This thesis focuses on the link between apology and forgiveness within the context of romantic relationships. In Chapter 2, I present a review of the literature on the relationship between apology and forgiveness. Specifically, I review all empirical studies that examine the apology-forgiveness link, as well as possible mediating and moderating variables of this relationship. In Chapters 3, 4, 5, I present an empirical study that explores the relationship between apology and forgiveness in romantic relationships, specifically focusing on humility and transgression severity as possible moderators of this relationship. In Chapter 6, I discuss the findings from my empirical study in the context of the extant literature.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Forgiveness is a construct that has been researched more heavily by the psychological sciences in the past 20 years (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Evidence suggests that more forgiving individuals may have better physical and psychological health benefits. For example, forgiveness, as opposed to unforgiveness, elicits positive and prosocial emotion for victims (Witvliet et al., 2001) and offenders (Witvliet et al. 2002), reducing physiological indicators of negative and aroused emotion (e.g., beneficial effects of systolic and diastolic blood pressure, as well as mean arterial pressure). Research also suggests that forgiveness reduces victims’ unforgiveness, which is linked to prolonged physical activation, and theoretically to more cardiovascular health implications than short-term stress reactivity (Brosschot & Thayer, 2003). Regarding psychological health benefits, Toussaint et al. (2001) found that forgiveness was negatively correlated with psychological distress and positively related to life satisfaction.

There are many types of forgiveness and forgiveness has been defined in different ways. For example, researchers have examined group forgiveness (e.g., Gregoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009; McLernon, Cairns, Hewstone, & Smith, 2004), third-party forgiveness (Green, Burnette, & Davis, 2008), intrapersonal forgiveness (Hall & Fincham, 2005; Tangney, Boone, & Dearling, 2005), and trait forgiveness (Berry et al., 2001; Brown, 2003). For the purpose of the current study I focus on interpersonal forgiveness (i.e., forgiveness directly occurring between two individuals).

To define forgiveness it is important to understand what most researchers agree that it is not. Forgiveness is theorized to be distinct from excusing, justifying, condoning, exonerating,
accepting, moving on, seeing justice served, forbearing, forgetting, and reconciliation (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Rather, forgiveness involves a prosocial change in one’s thoughts, emotions, motivations, and behaviors (McCullough et al., 2000). For the purpose of the thesis, I choose to use the definition of forgiveness from Worthington (2003), which distinguishes forgiveness into two types: decisional and emotional. Decisional forgiveness involves a behavioral intention to act toward the offender in ways that are more positive and less negative. However, a person can make a sincere decision to forgive and still be emotionally angry or upset toward the offender. Emotional forgiveness, in contrast, involves the replacement of negative emotions (e.g., such as anger and hurt) with positive other-oriented emotions (e.g., empathy and love).

Forgiveness and Apology

Several factors can help facilitate forgiveness. For example, relationship commitment (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002), victim agreeableness (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002), and the presence of an apology (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Frantz & Bennigson, 2005) are just a few of the dispositional and situational variables that have been found to affect forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010). In the present literature review, I focus on the role of apology in the forgiveness process. Receiving an apology from the transgressor is one of the most heavily researched contributors to the forgiveness process. It is theorized that apologies interrupt the victim’s thoughts concerning the transgressor’s actions and how those actions pertain to the transgressor’s character (i.e., disrupting the development of the fundamental attribution error; Weiner et al., 1991). In a meta-analysis conducted by Fehr et al. (2010), among 23 studies ($n = 4009$) a positive relationship between apology on forgiveness was found, with a weighted mean correlation of $r = .42$. 
Mediators of the Apology-Forgiveness Relationship

There are several mechanisms that might help explain the relationship between apology and forgiveness. One possible mechanism is empathy. Empathy is the ability to experience the emotional response of another person, or to have a vicarious emotional arousal in response to the other person’s distress (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978). McCullough et al. (1997) posit that empathy affects forgiveness motivations (e.g., reduced avoidance). They further suggest that empathy allows the victim to understand the offender’s (a) guilt or distress over his or her actions, (b) feelings of isolation or loneliness related to the impaired relationship, and (c) hope to restore or repair the relationship (McCullough et al., 2003). The empathy-forgiveness model states that receiving a sincere apology from a transgressor increases victim’s empathy for the offender, which in turn increases the victim’s level of forgiveness toward the offender (McCullough et al., 1997). This model suggests that apologizing leads to empathy by causing the hurt individual to view the offender as experiencing guilt and distress over the offense committed (Baumeister et al., 1994). The identification of distress likely leads to empathy in a similar manner to other situations in which empathy is evoked (Batson, 1990). Indeed, previous research has found that empathy is positively correlated with forgiveness (Fincham et al., 2002; McCullough et al., 1997, 1998;).

A second mechanism that might explain the relationship between apology and forgiveness is post-transgression relationship closeness. Relationships closeness is a person’s sense of being interconnected with another individual (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Apology has been found to moderately correlate with relationship closeness (McCullough et al., 1998), and relationship closeness in interpersonal relationships has been found to be associated with forgiveness (Exline et al., 2004; Finkel et al., 2002; McCullough et al., 1998; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). When an apology is received by the victim, it may indicate that interconnectedness...
is important to the offender thereby increasing relationship closeness and forgiveness. In other words, when an offender apologizes, the victim may feel closer to the offender, which may increase the likelihood that the victim will forgive the offender.

A third mechanism that might explain the relationship between apology and forgiveness is making positively-valenced attributions of the offender. Attributions refer to the cognitive meaning individuals make for an event (Manusov, 2006). Forgiveness has been found to be less likely amongst individuals who perceive the attributions of their offender to be conflict-promoting (Fincham, 2000). It has also been suggested that when the transgressor discusses the hurtful event with the victim in a concerned and apologetic way, victims may find it easier to make positively valenced attributions for the event (Rusbult et al., 2005). Darby and Schlenker (1982) found that children’s reactions to apologies from actors that were more elaborate reduced negative repercussions for the offending actor’s transgression. The apologies, however, were meant to compensate or help the children and produce less blame, greater forgiveness, more positive evaluations, greater liking, and greater attributions of remorse or empathy. The use of elaborate apologies was viewed as less punishable than those actors that used simple, standard apologies.

A fourth mechanism that might explain the relationship between apology and forgiveness is the victim’s impression of the offender (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Eaton & Struthers, 2006; Struthers et al., 2008; Weiner et al., 1991). When transgressors apologize, they explicitly convey a number of aspects regarding the situation (e.g., how sorry they are) that place the blame on the offender and not on the situation or victim. An apology also implicitly illustrates that the victim is worthy of apologizing to and thus transforms the victim’s impression of the transgressor to a more benevolent one (Gilbert, 1998; Leary, 1995; Schlenker, 1980; Weiner, 1995, 2006). This
shift to a more positive impression allows victims to more easily forgive offenders (Hodgins & Liebeskind, 2003; Ohbuchi et al., 1989; Schmitt et al., 2004).

Moderators of the Apology-Forgiveness Relationship

In addition to exploring possible mechanisms that might explain the relationship between apology and forgiveness, there may also be variables that might moderate the relationship between apology and forgiveness.

One possible moderator variable of the relationship between apology and forgiveness is the victim’s attributions of the intentionality of the offense (Fincham & Jaspars, 1980; Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Malle & Knobe, 1997; Shaver, 1985; Weiner, 1993). Individuals who intend to commit an action are attempting to achieve a desired goal (Gollwitzer, 1999). Intentional transgressions are less likely to be explained by situational attributes, and therefore are more likely to lead to the formation of dispositional inferences about the offender’s behavior and motive (Fein, 2001; Gilbert, 1998; Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones & Davis, 1965; Reeder, Vonk, Ronk, Ham, & Lawrence, 2004). The development of harsh dispositional inferences and protective strategies (i.e., retaliation, avoidance; Reeder, 1993; Skowronski & Carlston, 1989), can reduce the likelihood victims will forgive transgressors for an interpersonal offense.

Offenders who apologize after a deliberate transgression may be perceived suspiciously, as self-interested, untrustworthy, and with an ulterior motive (Fein, 1996; Schul, Mayo, & Burnstein, 2004) as opposed to empathic, genuine, and trustworthy. This, in turn, may reduce the possibility of forgiveness as the transgressed fails to adjust their harsh impression to a more favorable one and instead changed to a pejorative one (Fein, 1996, 2001; Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Reeder et
al., 2004; Roese & Morris, 1999; Vonk, 1998). Therefore, intent attribution may moderate the relationship between forgiveness and apology.

A second possible moderator variable between apology and forgiveness is transgression severity. Findings in forgiveness research vary depending on the intensity of the transgressions recalled. Forgiveness might be exceptionally difficult when transgressions are more severe in nature. Several findings suggest that there is a negative relationship between offense severity and forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010; Fincham et al., 2005). Apologies help restore the relationship between victim and transgressor; however, this is likely moderated by level of transgression severity. Researchers have found that more complete and intense repair efforts are needed following severe transgressions (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006; Bottom et al., 2002), with complete apologies (i.e., consisting of several apologetic elements) being positively related to forgiveness for high and low severity transgressions (Kirchhoff et al., 2012). Simple apologies, on the other hand, may not be adequate to promote forgiveness following severe transgressions. Thus, transgression severity may moderate the apology-forgiveness relationship.

A third possible moderator variable of the relationship between apology and forgiveness is sample demographic. Demographic characteristics can include a number of identifying variables (e.g., ethnicity, gender). The process of interpersonal forgiveness is a prosocial motivation, therefore, it can be inferred that the development of forgiveness is based largely on one’s social environmental characteristics (e.g., culture, economic status). Results comparing forgiveness cross-culturally (i.e., across six countries) suggest that collectivistic cultures are more likely to forgive regardless of relationship closeness between the victim and transgressor than individualistic cultures, which suggest that norms to maintain social harmony affect the forgiveness process (Karremans et al., 2011). In a U.S. sample, evidence suggests that there are
ethnic differences in forgiveness (Turnage et al., 2012). On the contrary, there is also research suggesting that there is no relationship between demographic characteristics and forgiveness. Oliner (2005) found no ethnic differences in forgiveness (i.e., ethnic minority vs. ethnic majority), and Fehr et al. (2010) concluded that forgiveness did not differ based on gender. Thus, the findings on demographic characteristics and forgiveness are mixed. Demographic characteristics (e.g., culture) are thought to affect apologies. For example, an individual’s attitude toward and propensity to use an apology varied across the United States, China, and Korea (Guan et al., 2009). Additionally, Maddux et al. (2011) found that the function and meaning of apologies differed cross-culturally (i.e., U.S. vs. Japan). Therefore, if apologies are used to repair a relationship after a transgression and demographic characteristics alter the perception and attitude surrounding it, then forgiveness is likely affected as well. It may be that demographic variables moderate the apology-forgiveness relationship.

Prior Reviews of the Literature

There have been no published literature reviews that have focused solely on the relationship between apology and forgiveness. Fehr and colleagues (2010) conducted a meta-analysis that explored several predictors of forgiveness. Apology was one of the predictors that were discussed. The studies included in the Fehr et al. analysis contained a quantitative measure of forgiveness and apology, sufficient information to compute a bivariate relationship between the two, adult samples, were published in English, and only included one set of published data (e.g., if a dataset was utilized multiple times). The resulting data found a medium effect size in which the weighted population correlation was positive, $r = .42$. They included methods in which participants were asked to recall a personal incident in which they forgave an individual (i.e.,
“Recall”; \( n = 15 \) as well as scenarios in which the participants read about a hypothetical transgression and were asked to think about how they would forgive the offender in that situation (i.e., “Scenario”; \( n = 8 \)). The findings in this study were consistent with previous literature; however, due to the scope of the project they did not look at possible mediators and moderators of the apology-forgiveness and apology relationship.

**Purpose of Current Review**

The purpose of the current literature review is to (a) summarize the results from empirical studies that examine the relationship between forgiveness and apology, (b) emphasize developing trends in this area of research, and (c) explore possible mediators and moderators for this relationship. This review (a) focused on studies measuring interpersonal forgiveness, (b) described the methodology of these studies, and (c) explored ways in which future research might address limitations in the current research. Based on previous findings, I hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between apology and forgiveness (i.e., an apology received by the victim would be associated with higher levels of forgiveness toward the transgressor). I hypothesized that several variables would mediate this relationship, specifically: empathy, post-transgression relationship closeness, attribution valence, and impression of the offender. Lastly, I hypothesized that intent attribution of the offender, transgression severity, and the demographic of the sample would moderate the relationship between apology and forgiveness. Specifically, for participants who have low intent attributions, low transgression severity, or for samples that have low demographic diversity, the relationship between apology and forgiveness would be strong and positive. However, for participants who have high intent attributions, high
transgression severity, or high demographic diversity, the relationship between apology and forgiveness would be either negative or non-significant.

Method

I conducted a literature search of empirical journal articles, dissertations, and theses that examined the association between forgiveness and apology. The inclusion criteria for this literature search included several aspects. First, the included studies had a measure of interpersonal forgiveness. Second, the included studies had a measure of whether or not an apology had occurred. Third, the transgression addressed in the included studies was a real situation that the study participants recalled. Studies that utilized a lab scenario or hypothetical vignette were not included in the review. Fourth, the included studies examined forgiveness and apology from the perspective of the victim. Studies that solely examined forgiveness from the perspective of the transgressor or a third party were not included. Fifth, only one effect size per data set was included in the present review. If there were multiple papers from one data set (e.g., published journal article and dissertation), I gave preference to peer-reviewed journal articles over dissertations. Sixth, the studies included in the present review reported the association between apology and forgiveness.

I conducted the literature search through November 2, 2013, and the search had two main components. First, I searched three online databases: Psycinfo, Pubmed, and Proquest Dissertations and Theses. I used the search terms “forgiv*” and “apolog*” in all three databases yielding in 320 results (Psycinfo – 200; Pubmed – 37; Proquest Dissertations and Theses – 83). Of these manuscripts, 24 met inclusion criteria for the literature review. Second, I reviewed the discussion and reference sections of each of these studies and found 1 additional study that met
inclusion criteria. Thus, I found a total of 25 studies that addressed the association between apology and forgiveness. The studies considered in the present review are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

Results

The review of the literature on the association between apology and forgiveness is organized into two sections. First, I review the methods used in the primary studies. Second, I review the empirical findings on the association between these variables.

Methods Used in Primary Studies

Participants

The total number of participants from the 25 studies was $N = 5587$. The mean age across sample was $M = 27.58$. The studies were primarily composed of undergraduate samples (48%; $n = 12$). There were, however, several studies that sampled different populations, including adults, adolescents, couples, South Africans, African Americans, Asians, former political prisoners in the Czech Republic, victims of property or violent crimes in London, correctional facility inmates, and Australian or New Zealanders. The ethnic breakdown was predominantly Caucasian/White ($n = 2134; 38.20\%$), with a smaller number of African American/Black ($n = 512; 9.16\%$), Asian/Asian American ($n = 271; 4.85\%$), Hispanic ($n = 115; 2.06\%$), other ($n = 157; 2.81\%$), mixed ($n = 24; 0.43\%$), not specified by the participant ($n = 30; 0.54\%$), or not reported by study ($n = 2344; 41.95\%$). With respect to gender, women ($n = 2746, 49.15\%$) comprised the majority of the participants in the studies compared to men ($35.62\%; n = 1990$), as well as those who were not reported ($15.23\%; n = 851$).
Design

The type of research design most frequently utilized was the cross-sectional correlational design \((n = 17)\). Other studies utilized research designs such as longitudinal \((n = 6)\) or experimental \((n = 2)\) designs.

Measures

The studies examined in this literature review primarily used self-report rating scales to measure forgiveness and apology. To assess forgiveness, there were several validated measures that were used, including the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM – 11 studies; McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002), Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI – 3 studies; Subkoviak et al., 1995), Acts of Forgiveness Scale (AFS – 2 studies; Drinnon, 2001), the Communicative Forgiveness Granting Tactics measure (CFGT – 2 studies; Waldron & Kelley, 2005), the State Forgiveness Scale (SFS – 1 study; Brown & Phillips, 2005), and a composite of Wade’s Freedom from Obsession Scale (FOS – 1 study; Wade, 1989) and Conciliation Scale (WCS – 2 studies; Wade, 1989). Additionally, nine total studies implemented a self-report measure of forgiveness that was created by the author(s). In total, 14 studies measured forgiveness with solely a validated measure, 5 studies measured forgiveness with an author-created self-report, and 6 studies used both a validated measure of forgiveness and a self-report measure of forgiveness created by the author(s).

To measure apology, most of the studies created their own set of items to measure apology. A few studies had participants complete items that were either developed based on a theory of apology, or attempted to use apology items that were used in previous studies. Specifically, one study determined apology based on a checklist of behaviors the transgressor
exhibited toward the participant (Davila, 2004). This scale was developed based on the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP; Blum-Kulka et al., 1984), a project that aimed to develop a comprehensive theory of apology. Thorson (2009) measured apology using three items from Bachman and Guerrero (2006) and an additional nine items from Hareli and Eisikovits (2006). McCullough (1998) assessed participant’s perception that the offender apologized with two items from a previous study (McCullough et al., 1997). Merolla (2013) used a four-item measure of apology similar to the one used by Wade and Worthington (2003). It evidenced good reliability and validity, and gauges components of apology thought to influence forgiveness (Hareli and Eisikovits, 2006).

Of the studies included in the present reviews, 16 simply asked whether or not a participant received an apology (i.e., yes/no), and did not examine any other issue pertaining to apology (e.g., apology sincerity). Two studies measured apology within the framework of assessing positive offender actions (Eaton, 2006; Koutsos, 2008). Five studies examined apology in relation to time. Four measured apology longitudinally (Bono, 2008; May & Jones, 2007; McCullough et al., 2010), whereas the other assessed how apology timing related to forgiveness (Squires, 2009). The lone study that focused on apology timing was unique in that it both subjectively and objectively measured timing. They achieved this by manipulating the condition in which the participant received an apology and/or the apology timing (i.e., no apology, immediately after, shortly after, or well after the transgression), and by also asking participants how they viewed the timing of the apology (i.e., on a Likert scale anchored at 1 (too early), 4 (just right), and 7 (too late)). As mentioned earlier, apology sincerity was measured by several studies. There were 6 studies (Davila, 2004; Rivard, 2005; Volkmann, 2010; Basford, 2012; Merolla, 2013; Schumann, 2012) that measured apology sincerity as either their primary source
of apology assessment, or in conjunction with other apology items. While these studies assessed for apology sincerity, two did not examine how apology sincerity related to forgiveness (Davila, 2004; Rivard, 2005).

Five studies utilized a single item assessing whether or not the participant had received an apology from their transgressor (i.e, yes/agree or no/disagree format). Seventeen studies implemented a single item or series of items that evaluated the degree to which participants believed they received an apology. In some cases, these likert type items were within a larger measure that measured variables related to apology (e.g., positive offender actions, repentance, remorse, guilt, amends, apology sincerity, apology timing). Most often, these items were summed for a total score, although there were some studies that took an average of the items (Bachman, 2006; Bono, 2008). Three studies contained both a single item (i.e., yes or no) assessing whether or not the participant had received an apology from their transgressor and a single likert-type item that evaluated the degree to which participants believed they received an apology sincerely. One study reported findings for apology and apology sincerity in relation to forgiveness (Basford, 2012). Another study only reported the findings of the direct apology item with respect to forgiveness (Rivard, 2005). The third study was unclear in reporting as to whether or not apology or apology sincerity was related to forgiveness (Schumann, 2012).

**Empirical Findings on the Association between Apology and Forgiveness**

The results for the empirical findings on the association between apology and forgiveness are organized in three areas. First, I report the results for the overall association between apology and forgiveness. Second, I report the results for variables that are hypothesized to mediate the
association between apology and forgiveness. Third, I report the results for variables that are hypothothesized to moderate the association between apology and forgiveness.

Overall association between apology and forgiveness. Of the 25 studies included in the present review that assessed the association between apology and forgiveness, 19 (76%) reported a significant positive relationship between these two variables. For these studies, the Pearson’s product moment correlation ranged from $r = .16$ to $r = .48$. For example, Exline et al. (2004) instructed undergraduate students to recall a past transgression that had hurt them, and were then asked to complete a number of measures pertaining to the event. They were given a variety of measures assessing forgiveness which included the TRIM-18 (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002), a measure of forgiveness motivations (i.e. avoidance, revenge, and benevolence), as well as Likert type items measuring private and communicated forgiveness, personal costs and benefits of forgiveness, and forgiveness as a right or deserved. Participants then indicated to what extent the transgressor had offered an apology or made amends based on a scale of 1 (no, not at all) to 10 (yes, totally). They found that the composite forgiveness index was positively associated with the presence of an apology $r = .42, p < .001$.

Although the majority of studies reported a significant, positive association between apology and forgiveness, six studies did not. Specifically, two studies reported that the association between apology and forgiveness was not significant. For example, apology extensiveness (behaviors) was not significantly related to forgiveness at two separate time points ($r = .13; r = .02$) (Davila, 2004). Also, four studies reported mixed findings, which indicate that they found both positive and nonsignificant associations between apology and forgiveness. This is exemplified by Bono (2008), in which it was found that there were statistically significant relationships between apology and forgiveness in a predicted direction. However, the
components of forgiveness as measured by the TRIM differed across two separate studies. For example, revenge motivations were negatively associated with apology in a study in which data was gathered 5 times across ten weeks, but had a nonsignificant relationship in a follow up study in which data was gathered daily across three weeks. The same type of mixed relationship across the two studies was found for the other constructs of the TRIM (i.e., avoidance and benevolence). There were no studies, within the literature review, that reported a significant negative relationship between apology and forgiveness.

Mediators

Several studies examined possible mediators of the association between apology and forgiveness. Empathy was the most common construct found to mediate the relationship between apology and forgiveness, which was reported in 5 of the 25 studies. Three studies reported that empathy fully mediated the association between apology and forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1998; Squires, 2009; Volkmann, 2010), whereas the other studies found that empathy partially mediated the relationship between apology and forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1997) or the data yielded partial evidence in support of complete mediation (Rivard, 2005). This final study examined the mediating role of empathy specific to three sources of relationship transgression: parent/caregiver, lover/spouse, and friend. Apology was found to be associated with TRIM-benevolence scores for all three relationship types, with TRIM-avoidance for the lover/spouse relationship, and with TRIM-revenge for a friendship. When empathy was accounted for in the apology-forgiveness relationship, the effects were either eliminated (parent/caregiver) or diminished in size. Empathy was consistently and significantly associated with TRIM scores, regardless of relationship. Although the data was analyzed by forgiveness component (i.e.,
avoidance, benevolence, and revenge) and not a total TRIM score, the authors found sufficient evidence to conclude that empathy mediated the relationship between apology and forgiveness.

A second variable found to mediate the relationship between apology and forgiveness was post-transgression relationship closeness (Squires, 2009). Researchers conducted multiple mediation analyses and found that perceived post-transgression closeness mediated the relationship between apology timing (e.g., just right) and forgiveness. First, apology timing was significantly positively associated with forgiveness. Second, apology timing was significantly positively associated with post-transgression closeness. Third, controlling for apology timing, perceived post-transgression closeness was positively associated with forgiveness. In the final model, apology timing was not significantly associated with forgiveness, indicating full mediation. Specifically, when participants perceived the timing of the apology just right, they reported higher levels of post-transgression closeness, which in turn predicted higher levels of forgiveness.

A third variable found to mediate the relationship between apology and forgiveness was attribution valence, which refers the cognitive meaning behind an event (e.g., stability, causal locus, and controllability). Attribution valence was found to fully mediate the relationship between a parent’s use of apology for an infidelity and the adult child’s level of forgiveness (Thorson, 2009). Specifically, structural equation modeling was utilized to identify an indirect effect of attribution valence between apology and forgiveness (standardized indirect coefficient = .26, p < .05). Their results suggested that the more participants (i.e., adult children) believed their parents apology for engaging in infidelity, the more they made positively-valenced attributions, which in turn were related to higher levels of forgiveness.
A fourth variable found to mediate the relationship between apology and forgiveness was the impression of the transgressor. Struthers et al. (2008) identified a significantly positive relationship between apology and forgiveness (Beta = .59, p < .05) in an initial structural equation model. This relationship, however, changed in significance and/or valence (Beta = .03) when impression of the transgressor was included in the model. This suggests that impression of the transgressor, as measured by participant’s impression of some of their coworkers characteristics (e.g., dependability, fairness, trustworthiness), fully mediated the effects of apology on forgiveness. Therefore, the presence an apology was related to having more positive impressions of the transgressor, which in turn was related to higher levels of forgiveness.

Moderators

Intent attribution (Struthers, 2008) was the only construct explicitly examined within the studies reviewed to moderate the relationship between apology and forgiveness. A moderator effect occurs when the direction or strength of the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable change as a result of a moderating variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The relationship between apology and forgiveness was moderated by intent attribution. When intent attribution for the offense was low, the relationship between apology and forgiveness was positive. However, when intent attribution for the offense was high, the relationship between apology and forgiveness was negative. Thus, it appears that apologies may not be as effective when an offender commits an intentional transgression. It may be that in these situations, apologies appear to be trite or insincere, and more complete reparative attempts may be necessary.
In addition to assessing moderators that were directly tested in the empirical studies, I examined the patterns of results across studies to identify additional potential moderator variables. One of these factors, a second potential moderator in the apology-forgiveness relationship, appears to be transgression severity. Specifically, three studies examined the apology-forgiveness relationship among participants who likely reported high levels of transgression severity: female correctional facility inmates (Rivard, 2005), former political prisoners (David & Choi, 2006), and human rights victims (Allan et al., 2006). These studies are different from the rest of the studies as most of the self-reported transgressions were more severe in nature. Two of these studies (Allan et al., 2006; Rivard, 2005) had mixed or nonsignificant findings, indicating that the relationship between apology and forgiveness may be moderated by transgression severity. Similar to the conclusion about the intentionality of the offense, offenses with high levels of transgression severity may require more in-depth repair attempts than a simple apology.

A third and final moderator of the relationship between apology and forgiveness may be sample demographic. The majority of the samples in the literature review consisted of Caucasians who were either undergraduates or adults gathered from a community sample. However, six studies consisted of samples that were demographically incongruent with the rest of the studies (e.g., human rights victims, ethnic differences, gaps in gender). The majority of these samples ($n = 4$) exhibited mixed or nonsignificant relationships between apology and forgiveness. This may be an important finding considering that only 6 studies in the literature review yielded mixed or nonsignificant results. It is likely that these populations are affected by other factors that may moderate the relationship between apology and forgiveness. Two studies consisted of primarily individuals who identified as Black: human rights victims (100% Black...
Africans – Allen et al., 2006) and government employees (90% African Americans - Bradfield, 2000). This is notable considering that both of these studies yielded nonsignificant findings, and no other study had a sample consisting of Black/African Americans above 18.5%. Overall, these findings indicate that particular sample demographics may moderate the relationship between apology and forgiveness.

Discussion

The study of the relationship between apology and forgiveness is a growing field of research. The purpose of this literature review was to organize and describe the outcomes of studies conducted on the relationship between apology and forgiveness, note possible explanations for these findings, and to inform future research that might advance research on apology and forgiveness.

It is important to examine the apology-forgiveness link. Forgiveness has been linked to individual physical and psychological health benefits for victims (Brosschot & Thayer, 2003; Toussaint et al., 2001; Witvliet et al., 2001) and offenders (Witvliet et al. 2002). Apologies are thought to disrupt the victim’s impression of the transgressor’s transgression (Weiner et al., 1991) and have been shown to be positively associated with forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to further clarify this relationship between apology and forgiveness so that future research can focus on addressing the pathways or mechanisms that facilitate the achievement of forgiveness and physical and psychological well-being.

The majority of the studies reviewed found that when victims received an apology or elements that contributed to apology related behavior, they were more likely to forgive their transgressors. A few studies found a nonsignificant relationship between apology and
forgiveness or mixed findings (i.e., both nonsignificant and positive links between apology and forgiveness). However, no studies reported a negative relationship between apology and forgiveness. Overall, these results support previous findings that apology and forgiveness have a positive association. The data also indicate that several variables mediate the apology-forgiveness relationship, specifically: empathy, post-transgression closeness, attribution valence, and impression of the transgressor. The literature also suggests that the apology and forgiveness relationship is moderated by intent attribution. Transgression severity and demographic characteristics may also moderate the relationship between apology and forgiveness, but more research is needed in order to make strong conclusions about these moderators.

**Limitations**

There are methodological limitations found in the manner in which the reviewed studies collected their data. One prominent limitation was the lack of diversity amongst the samples. The majority of participants were undergraduates who identified as Caucasian. Most of the studies that had more diversity in regard to ethnicity found mixed or nonsignificant findings; however, these studies were also different in other ways (e.g., human rights victims from Africa). Thus, it is uncertain whether the findings in the present review will replicate to more demographically diverse samples.

A second limitation is that the type of relationship between the victim and the transgressor was not controlled for most of the studies. Thus, the type of relationship between the victim and transgressor were not consistent across the studies in this literature review. Controlling for relationship type would control for possible confounding variables that may affect the forgiveness-apology relationship such as relationship closeness, relationship
commitment, authority orientation, etc. It may further advance our knowledge of the relationship between apology and forgiveness if results were specific to particular types of relationships (e.g., romantic relationships).

A third limitation is that the majority of studies included in the present review were cross-sectional in nature. Thus, there is little longitudinal or experimental research to support the conclusions drawn about the apology and forgiveness relationship. The four studies that implemented a longitudinal design did so in a different manner and only for a short period of time (e.g., three weeks). Despite most researchers describing forgiveness as a change in motivations, emotions, and behaviors (McCullough et al., 1997; Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998; Enright & Coyle, 1998), most tend not to examine this change in forgiveness over time. McCullough et al. (2003) advocate for research of forgiveness as a trend analysis. This design would be able to identify findings that cross-sectional designs may miss. For example, individuals who report high levels of forgiveness cross-sectionally may have reduced forgiveness slowly over time, or they may have reported high levels of forgiveness initially and essentially reported little change over time. Future experimental research could also clarify the relationship between apology and forgiveness by providing evidence that changes in apology actually cause changes in forgiveness. For example, Carlisle et al. (2012) utilized an experimental approach and randomly assigned participants to receive a written apology or no apology following a manipulated interpersonal transgression. Participants who received the written apology were more likely to report forgiveness.

A fourth limitation is the measurement of apology and forgiveness. To begin with, the measurement of apology, forgiveness, and the constructs that mediate and moderate the apology-forgiveness relationship rely primarily on self-report. While this method of assessment has its
strengths, self-report data can be confounded by social desirability, response bias (e.g., yea-saying), and difficulty with remembering the past. Additionally, the measures utilized to assess forgiveness varied greatly. Although most studies used validated measures of forgiveness, this variability could make it difficult to compare findings across studies. Also, the measures of apology were empirically weak. The measures used were primarily single-item measures of apology and lacked evidence supporting their reliability and validity.

Areas for Future Research

Research about the relationship between apology and forgiveness continues to grow, and there are several areas of future research to be explored. Most importantly, more research needs to be conducted that (a) develops more stringent methodology which make the resulting data more representative, (b) utilizes measures that better explain the constructs of apology and forgiveness, (c) examines additional variables that might help further explain the relationship between apology and forgiveness, and (d) replicates previous research. Specifically, there is a need for:

1. Studies that gather a more demographically diverse sample that is representative of the population.
2. More studies that longitudinally assess the apology-forgiveness relationship in a more structured manner over a longer period of time.
3. Studies that focus on a transgression occurring as part of a single, identified relationship (e.g., dating relationship).
4. Studies that assess apology, forgiveness, and constructs that may explain the apology-forgiveness relationship with measures that are valid and reliable.
5. More studies that assess how multiple facets of apology associate with forgiveness.
6. Studies that utilize methods and measures which use more experimental control and are rely less upon self-report.
7. More studies that explore variables that may further explain the relationship between apology and forgiveness.

Transgressions are inevitable occurrences that affect the lives of both the victims and offenders. Forgiveness is a mechanism by which a transgression can be overcome by working to restore the relationship between the individuals involved or allowing the victim to move past hurt feelings caused by the offense. There is sufficient evidence that forgiveness in the course of psychotherapy can improve psychological functioning (Coyle & Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hebl & Enright, 1993; McCullough & Worthington, 1994, 1995; Subkoviak et al., 1995). Furthermore, it is theorized that encouraging clients to forgive as a psychological intervention can yield cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal benefits (McCullough & Worthington, 1994). From a therapeutic perspective, it is important to understand what facilitates the course of forgiveness if one is to be benefitted by the forgiveness process (Allan et al., 2006). As previously mentioned, apology can be a key component for forgiveness to occur, and like forgiveness, it too has also drawn the interest of mental health professionals (e.g. Lazare, 1995; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; Scher & Darley, 1997; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Wagatsuma & Rosett, 1986). The structures for researching the relationship between apology and forgiveness, as well as the variables that mediate or moderate the relationship continue to be developed. Further research is required to bolster previously drawn conclusions and to continue expanding our knowledge of how apology and forgiveness are associated, how that relationship is explained, and how individuals are affected by it.
CHAPTER 3
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Transgressions are inevitable occurrences that affect the lives of both victims and offenders. For individuals affected by transgressions, forgiveness is one pathway in which the offense can be addressed and overcome. Forgiveness is associated with individual physical and psychological health benefits for victims (Brosschot & Thayer, 2003; Toussaint et al., 2001; Witvliet et al., 2001) and offenders (Witvliet et al. 2002). It is theorized that apologies disrupt the thought process by which the victim makes attributions to the transgressor’s actions and how those actions relate to the transgressor’s character (Weiner et al., 1991). In a meta-analysis conducted by Fehr et al. (2010), apology has been shown to be positively associated with forgiveness.

The findings of the literature review (see Chapter 2) supported prior theory and research findings about the overall relationship between apology and forgiveness. Specifically, I found that apology was positively associated with forgiveness. Although some studies in the literature review found mixed (i.e., positive and nonsignificant) or nonsignificant findings between apology and forgiveness, the majority of studies reported a positive relationship, and no studies found evidence suggesting a negative relationship. The data also revealed that the apology-forgiveness relationship is mediated and moderated by several variables. Variables that mediated the link between apology and forgiveness included empathy, relationship closeness, attribution valence, and impression of the transgressor. Variables that moderated the relationship between apology and forgiveness included intent attribution, transgression severity, and demographic characteristics. The literature review suggested that further research be conducted with more stringent methodology, utilize valid and reliable measures of apology and forgiveness, examine
additional mediators and moderators of the apology-forgiveness link, and further replicate existing research.

The present study seeks to research some of the specific areas of limitation highlighted in the literature review. Specifically, it aims to look at the relationship between apology and forgiveness in the specific context of romantic relationships. Romantic relationships are important to examine because transgressions are likely to occur frequently in this setting, and because of the high level of commitment present in romantic relationships, partners are likely to want to deal with transgression with forgiveness. Additionally, the present study aims to explore humility, a potential new moderator of the apology-forgiveness relationship. This study will also examine whether the relationship between apology and forgiveness differs when transgression severity is controlled for experimentally (e.g., mild transgression, severe transgression). Finally, I will improve the methodological rigor in which the apology-forgiveness relationship is studied by utilizing valid measures of apology and sampling from a more diverse population.

Apology and Forgiveness in Romantic Relationships

At some point during a romantic relationship, individuals will do something to hurt or offend the other person (Rusbult et al., 2005). Following an interpersonal transgression, one way that romantic relationships can be restored toward harmony and trust is via forgiveness (Exline & Baumeister, 2000), which has been shown to occur more often in committed closed relationship compared to other relationships (McCullough et al., 1998) Given the high likelihood of offenses occurring between romantic partners, it is important to examine how apologies affect forgiveness in couples.

Despite the nature of transgressions in couples, being romantically involved with another
person can be beneficial, especially for individual well-being (Proulx et al., 2007). Relationship status is related to well-being with married couples experiencing the highest levels of well-being, followed by couples in cohabitating relationships, steady relationships, casual relationships, and those without partners (Dush & Amato, 2005). Romantic relationships can also influence lifespan and health. Married people have greater life expectancies than unmarried individuals and are less prone to serious illnesses (Kaplan & Kronick, 2006), although this benefit primarily affects men (Eaker et al., 2007; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001).

The importance of romantic relationships can also be examined when they experience distress and dissolution. Marital distress can lead to unwanted social and economic consequences through divorce and/or family disruption (Crane, 1996). Romantic relationship dissolution has been shown to increase adult illness as measured by mortality, physical and mental illness, health-damaging behaviors, and recovery from illness (Coleman & Glenn, 2009). Married individuals whose relationship dissolve, 43% to 46% of married individuals in the United States (Schoen & Canudas-Romo, 2006), could also face financial distress as the average cost of divorce is $30,000 (Schramm, 2006). Couples who attempt to alleviate their relationship distress through marital or family therapy experience a drop in healthcare costs by 21.5%, compared to those who do not (Law & Crane, 2000). Forgiveness can relieve the distress experienced in romantic relationships, and has been shown to improve problems and prevent them from happening in the future (Worthington & DiBlasio, 1990).

The forgiveness process can be facilitated by a number of variables (e.g., relationship commitment, victim agreeableness). Apology is one variable that is thought to affect forgiveness (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Frantz & Bennigson, 2005) and has exhibited a significant positive relationship with forgiveness across studies (Fehr, 2010). Cumulatively, these findings provide
evidence for the importance of investigating the apology-forgiveness relationship in couples. Understanding the relationship between apology and forgiveness and the variables that mediate and moderate this relationship may allow couples to better handle the distress that occurs as a result of transgressions, which are common occurrences in romantic relationships. Sampling from a population of romantic relationships would fill a necessary void in the literature as only three studies from the previous literature review looked specifically at apology and forgiveness in romantic relationships. Additionally, by examining one type of relationship, instead of generalizing our findings to a variety of relationship transgressions, I will be able to make more definitive conclusions specific to romantic relationships.

Moderators of the Apology-Forgiveness Link

Although apology has been found to be positively related to forgiveness, there may be aspects or characteristics of the apology or offender that may influence the effectiveness of an apology. In the present study, I examine two possible moderators: humility and transgression severity. One offender characteristic that may play an important role in the apology-forgiveness relationship is the humility of the offender. Humility has been defined as having (a) an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented rather than self-focused and (b) an accurate view of self (Davis et al., 2011). Findings indicate that there is a strong relationship between humility and forgiveness, and suggest that humility may increase forgiving behaviors (Powers et al., 2007). It has been theorized that promoting humility will facilitate forgiveness as part of the empathy-humility-commitment model of forgiveness (Worthington, 1998). The findings between humility and forgiveness are limited, however, and there has yet to be research conducted on how humility might be related to apology or the apology-forgiveness relationship. Humility may
moderate the apology-forgiveness association because it may influence the manner in which the apology is perceived, thereby influencing level of forgiveness. This is thought to happen because humility helps individuals develop, maintain, strengthen, and repair social bonds (Davis et al., 2013). Humility involves being other-oriented rather than self-focused, and judgments of humility help a person predict how their partners will behave in the relationship. For example, if a victim interprets their offender’s apology is meant for the benefit of the victim or relationship, as opposed to being a self-serving apology, it may lead to increased forgiveness because it is interpreted as self-sacrificing. Additionally, having an accurate self-view, another aspect of humility, might allow an individual to identify that they are culpable in wrongdoing, and thus may be more likely to offer a more effective apology, leading to increased forgiveness. However, individuals who have an inaccurate view of self may not be able to give an effective apology because they can’t see their error, which impedes the forgiveness process. Therefore, perceptions of humility may allow individuals to better evaluate the multifaceted nature of apologies (e.g., sincerity, intent), and ultimately promote forgiveness.

A second characteristic that may play an important role in the apology-forgiveness relationship is the severity of the transgression. Transgressions in romantic relationships can vary in severity, the level of which can fluctuate between minor (e.g., forgetting to call) and major (e.g., infidelity). Apologies can reduce the relational damage caused by transgressions and facilitate the repair process via forgiveness. Apologies may not be effective at restoring the relationship; however, when the severity of the transgression is severe. Victims may expect more elaborate or in-depth repair attempts for these types of transgressions, and simple apologies may not be effective for these severe offenses. Indeed, some research evidence suggests that more severe transgressions necessitate more complete and intense repair efforts (Bachman & Guerrero,
Of particular relevance is evidence suggesting that complete apologies (i.e., consisting of several apologetic elements) are positively related to forgiveness for high and low severity transgressions (Kirchhoff et al., 2012).

Methodological Issues

The present study addresses several methodological concerns that were noted as limitations in the literature review on the relationship between apology and forgiveness. First, the majority of participants sampled from previous studies were Caucasian undergraduates. The present study will gather a more diverse sample from the population, specifically, a sample that is more representative of the 2010 Census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Second, with respect to measurement, previous research relied heavily on self-report measures, and these measures varied in the amount of evidence supporting their reliability and validity. This problem was most evident in the measures of apology. For the most part, the apology measures used in previous studies simply measured the presence (or not) of an apology but failed to measure different aspects of apology. The measures were typically “yes” or “no” single item measures assessing whether or not their offender apologized for the transgression. In the present study, I will utilize an apology measure that assesses multiple characteristics of the apology. Third, some previous studies accounted for transgression severity; however, much of the extant research addressed transgressions of minor severity. This study will utilize an experimental design to control the level of transgression severity being recalled by assigning participants to recall specific conditions of transgression severity (i.e., low, high, & free recall).
Purpose of the Current Study

The present study has five primary aims. First, it will seek to replicate previous findings regarding the relationship between apology and forgiveness. Second, it will focus on the apology-forgiveness link specific to romantic relationships. Third, it will evaluate whether humility moderates the relationship between apology and forgiveness. Fourth, it will determine whether transgression severity moderates the relationship between apology and forgiveness. Fifth, it will attempt to improve methodology by using measures that have evidence supporting their reliability and validity, as well as utilizing a more stringent sampling approach in order to gather a sample that is more diverse and representative of the population.
CHAPTER 4

METHOD

Participants

The initial sample consisted of 814 individuals recruited from a community sample and undergraduates courses. Participants were removed who submitted multiple responses; therefore, the final sample consisted of 803 participants (540 females, 252 males, 7 other, 4 missing). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 72 ($M = 29.53, SD = 10.35$). The racial/ethnic breakdown of the sample was similar to the most recent Census data (2010). For race, participants identified as 59.3% White/Caucasian, 11.2% Hispanic/Latino, 11.2% African Americans, 9.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.0% Native American, and 7.5% multiracial/other. For ethnicity, 84.6% identified as not Hispanic/Latino and 15.1% identified as Hispanic/Latino. Participants identified as 86.9% heterosexual, 1.7% gay, 2.9% lesbian, 6.1% bisexual, and 1.9% other. All participants reported being currently involved in a romantic relationship. Additional demographic information can be found in Table 3.

Design

This study utilized a cross-sectional, correlational design.

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

A 14-item questionnaire was used to collect demographic information from participants. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, race, and level of education, among others, both in multiple choice and short answer format.
Measures of Apology

Single-item Measure of Apology

Participants were instructed to answer “yes” or “no” to a single item regarding whether their romantic partner apologized or not for the transgression reported.

Completeness of Apology (Kirchhoff et al., 2009)

A 10-item measure designed to measure the completeness of apologies was given to participants. Participants answered the items on two separate 5-point Likert scales: one assessing the extent to which the apology component was present (1 = not at all present to 5 = very present) and one assessing the importance of the apology component (1 = not at all important to 5 = very important). The measure was the outcome of a qualitative analysis regarding aspects of apology, resulting in 10 apology components: statement of the apology, naming the offense, taking responsibility, attempting to explain the offense, conveying emotions, addressing emotions and/or damage of the other, admitting fault, promising forbearance, offering reparation, and acceptance request. For the current study, I analyzed the extent to which the apology component was present for the reported transgression. For the current sample, the Chronbach’s alpha coefficient was .93 (95% CI = .92 - .94).

Measures of Forgiveness

Transgression Recall and Severity

Participants were instructed to recall a hurtful transgression that occurred at some point in their current romantic relationship. They were asked to describe a transgression based on one of three levels of transgression severity: low, high, or free recall. From their description,
participants were asked to rate the degree of severity on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = not at all severe to 6 = extremely severe). Participants used the 7-point Likert scale to rate 12 items describing, for example, how “painful,” “serious,” “severe,” and “harmful” the experience was for them. Additionally, participants estimated the time since the offense, the duration of the offense, and the number of times it happened prior to the last offense.

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998)

The TRIM is an 18-item measure of a victim’s motivations toward an offender. Participants reported motivations toward their romantic partner based on the transgression recalled. They indicated their agreement with each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Higher scores indicated higher motivations. The TRIM consists of three subscales of motivations: avoidance (e.g., I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible), revenge (e.g., I’ll make him/her pay), and benevolence (e.g., Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her). The TRIM has strong estimated internal consistency, with Chronbach’s alphas ranging from .84 to .93 for the avoidance and revenge subscales (McCullough et al., 1998) and .86 to .96 for the benevolence subscale (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). Estimated test-retest reliability for the avoidance and revenge subscales was adequate in a sample of people who have difficulty forgiving, with scores ranging from .64-.86 (McCullough et al., 1998). The scale shows evidence of construct validity, and was positively correlated with other measures of forgiveness, relationship satisfaction, and commitment (McCullough et al., 1998). In the present study, I used the total scale score. For the current sample, the Chronbach’s alpha coefficient was .92 (95% CI = .92 - .93).
Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS; Berry et al., 2005)

The TFS is a 10-item measure of dispositional forgiveness, which is the tendency to forgive across times and situations. Participants rated their agreement with each item (e.g., I am a forgiving person) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The Cronbach’s alphas for the TFS ranged from .74 to .80 (Berry, et al., 2005). The scale exhibits evidence of construct validity, and was positively correlated with agreeableness, empathic concern, and perspective taking, and negatively correlated with anger, rumination, and hostility (Berry et al., 2005). For the current sample, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .81 (95% CI = .79 - .83).

Communicated Forgiveness Granting Tactics (CFGT; Kelley, 1998; Waldron & Kelly, 2005)

The CFGT is a 13-item measure of communicated forgiveness-granting behaviors a victim demonstrates toward their offender. The measure assesses four factors of forgiveness-granting strategies: conditional (e.g., I told them I would forgive them, if the transgression never happened again.), nonverbal displays (e.g., I touched them in a way that communicated forgiveness.), discussion (e.g., I discussed the transgression with them.), and minimize (e.g., I told them it was no big deal.). The measure includes one explicit, global factor of communicated forgiveness behavior (i.e., I told them I forgave them.). Participants rated the extent to which they performed each behavior on an 8-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 7 and anchored at 3 points (0 = not used at all, 4 = used moderately, 7 = used extensively). The CFGT has demonstrated evidence of internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .72 to .90 for the overall measure, the conditional subscale, the nonverbal displays subscale, the discussion subscale, and the minimize subscale (Waldron & Kelley, 2005). In the present study, I used the total scale score. For the current sample, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .82 (95% CI = .80 - .84).
Decisional Forgiveness Scale (DFS; Worthington et al., 2008)

The DFS is a measure of decisional forgiveness of a person for a specific offense. It consists of 8 items assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The DFS has 2 subscales measuring behavioral intentions to forgive: prosocial intentions (e.g., “If I see him or her, I will act friendly”) and inhibition of harmful intentions (e.g., “I will try to get back at him or her”). The DFS has demonstrated evidence of internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .78 to .86 on the full scale, the prosocial intention subscale, and the harmful intentions subscale (Worthington, Hook, et al., 2007). It has also shown evidence of construct validity, having positive correlations with other measures of state forgiveness, trait forgivingness, forgiveness-related constructs such as empathy and anger, and a behavioral measure of forgiveness (Worthington, Hook, et al., 2007). In the present study, I used the total scale score. For the current sample, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .76 (95% CI = .74 - .79).

Emotional Forgiveness Scale (EFS; Worthington et al., 2008)

The EFS is a measure of emotional forgiveness of a person for a specific offense. It contains 8 items assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The EFS has 2 subscales measuring the level to which someone has experienced emotional forgiveness and peace for a specific offense: presence of positive emotion (e.g., “I feel sympathy toward him or her”) and reduction of negative emotion (e.g., “I no longer feel upset when I think of him or her”). The EFS has demonstrated evidence of internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging from .69 to .85 on the full scale, the presence of positive emotion subscale, and the reduction of negative emotion subscale (Worthington, Hook, et al., 2007). It has also shown evidence of construct validity, having positive correlations with other measures of state forgiveness, trait forgivingness, forgiveness-related constructs such as empathy, rumination, and anger, and a behavioral measure of forgiveness.
In the present study, I used the total scale score. For the current sample, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .82 (95% CI = .79 - .83).

**Measure of Humility**

Relational Humility Scale (RHS; Davis et al., 2011)

The RHS is a 16-item measure that assesses an observer’s judgment of a target person’s level of relational humility. Specifically, participants rated whether the target person is (a) interpersonally other-oriented rather than self-focused, marked by a lack of superiority, and (b) has an accurate self-view – not too inflated or too low. Participants indicated their agreement with 16 statements about their romantic partner’s level of relational humility on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). The measure contains three subscales: global humility (e.g., He/she has a humble character), superiority (e.g., He/she thinks of him/herself too highly), and accurate view of self (e.g., He/she knows him/herself well). The RHS shows evidence of construct validity, and was positively correlated to measures of empathy, forgiveness, and other virtues (Davis et al., 2011). The RHS also displayed evidence of discriminant and incremental validity when compared to the Honesty-Humility subscale of the HEXACO-PI (Lee & Ashton, 2004). In the present study, I used the total scale score. For the current sample, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .92 (95% CI = .91 - .93).

**Procedure**

Participants were recruited from (a) an online research marketplace (i.e., Mechanical Turk) and (b) undergraduate courses. First, participants read an informed consent form that discussed the procedures of the study and their rights as participants. Once enlisted for the study, they were redirected to fill out measures online via Survey Monkey where they were divided into three conditions of transgression severity (i.e., low, high, free recall). After their completion of
the measures, they were compensated for their participation. Participants recruited via Mechanical Turk were given a small monetary compensation for their participation, and participants recruited through undergraduate courses were given a small amount of course credit for their participation.

Hypotheses and Planned Analyses

Hypothesis 1

Statement

Forgiveness will be positively correlated with (a) the presence of an apology and (b) the completeness of the apology.

Justification

Forgiveness is thought to restore relational harmony and trust after a transgression (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Apologies facilitate the remediation of relationship distress between the victim and transgressor. Complete apologies (i.e., more thorough) are expected to be more satisfactorily received by the victim, especially when transgression severity is increased (Kirchhoff et al., 2012). Previous studies have found a positive relationship between apology and forgiveness (Fehr, 2010).

Planned Analysis

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient will be calculated between (a) self-report measures of apology and (b) self-report measures of forgiveness.
Hypothesis 2

Statement

The 12 items measuring transgression severity will show evidence of internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion-related validity. Specifically, the items will (a) have a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient above .80, (b) be negatively associated with forgiveness, and (c) show group differences based on recall condition (i.e., hi/low transgression severity).

Justification

All items are thought to reflect the severity of the transgression, and are expected to be explained by one underlying factor. Evidence suggests that there is a negative relationship between transgression severity and forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010; Fincham et al., 2005). Participants will be instructed to recall and write about a transgression in one of two conditions: low severity or high severity. To the extent that the 12 items actually measure transgression severity, participants in each of these conditions should show group differences on this measure.

Planned Analysis

To determine internal consistency, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient will be computed for the scale under investigation. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient will be calculated between (a) self-report measure of transgression severity and (b) self-report measures of forgiveness. An independent samples t-test will be run to determine group differences in forgiveness based on level of transgression severity (i.e., low severity vs. high severity).
Hypothesis 3

Statement

Humility will moderate the relationship between apology and forgiveness. At high levels of humility, there will be a strong, positive association between apology and forgiveness. However, at low levels of humility, the relationship between apology and forgiveness will not be significant.

Justification

Findings indicate that humility is positively related to forgiveness (Powers et al., 2007). Humility helps individuals develop, maintain, strengthen, and repair social bonds (Davis et al., 2013). Although there has yet to be research conducted on how humility might be related to apology or the apology-forgiveness relationship, it will likely increase the effectiveness of repair attempts because the transgressor will have an accurate self-view and their apology will be other-oriented. Therefore, perceptions of humility may allow victims to better evaluate the multifaceted nature of apologies (e.g., sincerity, intent), and ultimately lead to higher levels of forgiveness.

Planned Analysis

This hypothesis will be tested using the steps for moderation outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). First, I will center the continuous predictor (i.e., apology) and moderator (i.e., humility) variables to reduce multicollinearity. Second, I will create a product term by multiplying the predictor and moderator variable. Third, I will conduct a hierarchical regression analysis with the predictor variable (apology) and moderator variable (humility) entered into the
first block, followed by the interaction term (apology X humility) in the second block. If the interaction is significant, I will graph the interaction and conduct a simple slopes analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) to interpret the interaction.

Hypothesis 4

Statement

Transgression severity will moderate the relationship between apology and forgiveness. At low levels of transgression severity, there will be a strong, positive relationship between apology and forgiveness. However, at high levels of transgression severity, there will be a weak, positive relationship between apology and forgiveness.

Justification

Several findings suggest that there is a negative relationship between offense severity and forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010; Fincham et al., 2005). High transgression severity requires more complete and intense repair efforts (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006; Bottom et al., 2002), and complete apologies are positively related to forgiveness for high and low severity transgressions (Kirchhoff et al., 2012). Low transgression severity likely does not disrupt the natural apology-forgiveness relationship; however, at higher levels of severity simple apologies may do little to reduce the harm caused by the offender. Additionally, findings from the literature review (see Chapter 2) support the moderation hypothesis.

Planned Analysis

This hypothesis will be tested using two strategies. The first strategy will use the
transgression severity scale as a moderator, and the second will use the transgression severity conditions (hi vs. low) as a moderator. In both cases, I will test this hypothesis using the steps for moderation outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). First, I will center the continuous predictor variable (i.e., apology) to reduce multicollinearity. Second, I will create a product term by multiplying the predictor and moderator variable. Third, I will conduct a hierarchical regression analysis with the predictor variable (apology) and moderator variable (transgression severity) entered into the first block, followed by the interaction term (apology X transgression severity) in the second block. If the interaction is significant, I will graph the interaction and conduct a simple slopes analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) to interpret the interaction.
CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Testing for Assumptions

Before conducting the primary analyses, I checked for missing data, outliers, and normality. The data set had no missing data with the exception of a minimal amount of missing demographic data (less than 0.5%), which I did not include in the analyses. There were a small number of outliers (less than 1% per variable). Outliers were recoded to 3 standard deviations above or below the mean. I checked normality of the data by investigating skewness and kurtosis for each variable. The data did not display evidence of non-normality, so no data transformations were required. Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables can be found in Tables 4 and 5.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 was that self-reported offender apologies and more complete offender apologies would be positively correlated with levels of self-reported forgiveness. This hypothesis was assessed using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between (a) a single measure of apology and a measure of apology completeness (Kirchhoff et al., 2011) and (b) measures of interpersonal forgiveness. The single measure of apology is dichotomous (i.e., present vs. not present), and higher scores on the measure of apology completeness indicate higher levels of apology behavior by the offender. Positive correlations between the single measure of apology and the measure of a complete apology with measures of interpersonal forgiveness would indicate a positive relationship between apology and forgiveness.
This hypothesis was supported (see Table 5). A simple offender apology was significantly positively correlated with a victim’s motivation to forgive ($r = .14, p < .001$), emotional forgiveness ($r = .18, p < .001$), decisional forgiveness ($r = .08, p = .020$), and forgiveness granting behaviors ($r = .47, p < .001$). A simple offender apology was not significantly correlated with a victim’s trait forgiveness ($r = .03, p = .373$).

A complete offender apology was significantly positively correlated with a victim’s motivation to forgive ($r = .27, p < .001$), emotional forgiveness ($r = .27, p < .001$), decisional forgiveness ($r = .16, p < .001$), trait forgiveness ($r = .09, p < .009$), and forgiveness granting behaviors ($r = .56, p < .001$). Therefore, the results indicate a small to medium positive correlation between apology and forgiveness (Cohen, 1988).

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 was that the 12 items measuring transgression severity would show evidence of internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion-related validity. Specifically, I hypothesized that the items would (a) have a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient above .80 (i.e., internal consistency), (b) be negatively associated with forgiveness (i.e., construct validity), and (c) show group differences based on recall condition (i.e., hi/low transgression severity; criterion-related validity). I tested Hypothesis 2a by analyzing the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to determine internal consistency. I tested Hypothesis 2b by calculating the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between (a) self-reported transgression severity and (b) self-report forgiveness to assess for construct validity. The forgiveness variable used for this hypothesis was the TRIM. I tested Hypothesis 2c by conducting an independent samples t-test to
determine group differences in self-reported transgression severity based on condition of transgression severity (i.e., low severity vs. high severity).

This hypothesis was supported. An exploratory factor analysis using varimax rotation suggested that 2 of the items (i.e., distressing, undesirable) had low factor loadings and were inconsistent with the rest of the items on the scale. The remaining 10 items were best represented by a single factor with an eigenvalue of 6.42. Those 10 items yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .94, demonstrating evidence of internal consistency. Self-reported transgression severity was significantly negatively correlated with levels of self-reported forgiveness ($r = -.32, p < .001$), indicating construct validity. An independent samples t-test was used to assess criterion-related validity by testing group differences in transgression severity based on condition (i.e., low severity vs. high severity). Levene’s test for equality of variances suggested equal variances for both groups ($F = 1.14, p = .287$). There was a significant difference in transgression severity scores between groups. The low severity group, ($M = 31.50, SD = 14.70$) reported lower levels of transgression severity than the high severity group, ($M = 48.09, SD = 13.82$), $t(399) = 11.64, p < .001$. The effect size for this analysis ($d = 1.16$) was found to exceed Cohen’s (1988) guidelines for a large effect size ($d = .80$).

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 was that perceived offender humility would moderate the relationship between apology (i.e., simple and complete) and forgiveness. Specifically, I hypothesized that the association between apology and forgiveness would be stronger in situations in which perceived offender humility was higher. I tested this hypothesis on the free recall portion of the sample ($n = 402$) using the steps for moderation outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). First, I
centered the continuous predictor (i.e., apology) and moderator (i.e., humility) variables to reduce multicollinearity. Second, I created a product term by multiplying the centered predictor and moderator variable. Third, I conducted a hierarchical regression analysis with the predictor variable (apology) and moderator variable (humility) entered into the first block, followed by the interaction term (apology X humility) in the second block. The forgiveness variable used for this hypothesis was the TRIM.

This hypothesis was partially supported. Results indicated that greater humility ($B = .32$, $SE B = .10$, $β = .33$, $p = .001$) was significantly associated with increased levels of self-reported forgiveness, but a simple apology ($B = 1.34$, $SE B = 1.44$, $β = .04$, $p = .353$) was not significantly associated with self-reported forgiveness. In the second step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between simple and humility was significant, $ΔR^2 = .01$, $F(1, 398) = 3.97$, $p = .047$ (see Table 6). This was a small effect based on Cohen’s (1988) criteria. The moderator effects are represented in Figure 1. A simple slopes analysis indicated that the relationship between simple apology and forgiveness was stronger at high levels of humility (+1 SD, $β = .13$, $p = .069$) relative to low levels of humility (–1 SD, $β = -.04$, $p = .429$).

Results also indicated that a more complete apology ($B = .16$, $SE B = .05$, $β = .14$, $p = .003$) and greater humility ($B = .46$, $SE B = .04$, $β = .46$, $p < .001$) were both associated with increased levels of self-reported forgiveness. However, in the second step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between complete apology and humility was non-significant, $ΔR^2 = .001$, $F(1, 398) = .61$, $p = .436$. Thus, humility did not moderate the relationship between the completeness of apology and forgiveness. Overall, there is partial evidence to suggest that humility moderates the relationship between apology (i.e., simple) and forgiveness.
Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 was that offense severity would moderate the relationship between apology (i.e., simple and complete) and forgiveness. Specifically, I hypothesized that the association between apology and forgiveness would be stronger in situations in which the offense was less severe. I tested this hypothesis using Baron and Kenny’s (1986) steps for moderation described in Hypothesis 3. This moderation hypothesis was analyzed in two manners, one which examined how offense severity (i.e., offense severity scale) moderates the apology-forgiveness relationship amongst free recall participants and another approach that examined how offense severity (i.e., high vs. low condition) moderates the relationship between apology and forgiveness within participants in that condition. The forgiveness variable used for this hypothesis was the TRIM.

For those in the free-recall condition (\(n = 402\)), this hypothesis was not supported. Results indicated that greater offense severity (\(B = -.36, SE B = .09, \beta = -.45, p < .001\)) was significantly associated with decreased levels of self-reported forgiveness, and a simple apology (\(B = -.04, SE B = 2.95, \beta = -.001, p = .991\)) was not significantly associated with self-reported forgiveness. In the second step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between simple apology and offense severity was non-significant, \(\Delta R^2 = .01, F(1, 398) = 2.43, p = .120\). Thus, the offense severity scale did not moderate the relationship between simple apology and forgiveness.

Results also indicated that a more complete apology (\(B = .33, SE B = .10, \beta = .29, p = .001\)) was significantly associated with increased levels of self-reported forgiveness, and greater offense severity (\(B = -.25, SE B = .04, \beta = -.31, p < .001\)) was significantly associated with decreased levels of self-reported forgiveness. In the second step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between complete apology and offense severity was non-significant, \(\Delta R^2 = .000\),...
For those participants placed in manipulated offense severity conditions (n = 401; high vs. low), there was one significant interaction, but the direction of the effect was different than hypothesized. Results indicated that greater offense severity (B = -4.55, SE B = 2.38, β = -.19, p = .056) was not significantly associated with decreased levels of self-reported forgiveness, and a simple apology (B = 3.43, SE B = 1.85, β = .12, p = .065) was not significantly associated with self-reported forgiveness. In the second step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between simple apology and offense severity was non-significant, ΔR² = .001, F(1, 397) = .52, p = .472.

Results also indicated that a more complete apology (B = .19, SE B = .07, β = .18, p = .008) was significantly associated with increased levels of self-reported forgiveness, and greater offense severity (B = -3.46, SE B = 1.18, β = -.14, p = .004) was significantly associated with decreased levels of self-reported forgiveness. In the second step of the regression analysis, the interaction term between complete apology and offense severity was significant, ΔR² = .01, F(1, 397) = 4.20, p = .041 (see Table 7). This represents a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). The moderator effects are illustrated in Figure 2. A test of simple slopes suggested that the apology-forgiveness relationship was stronger at high levels of offense severity (+1 SD, β = .28, p < .001) compared to low levels of offense severity (−1 SD, β = .08, p = .454). Overall, there is partial evidence to suggest that offense severity moderates the relationship between apology (i.e., complete) and forgiveness. However, the findings were different than hypothesized. For participants who experienced a severe transgression, a complete apology was more important than for participants who experienced a less severe transgression.
CHAPTER 6
DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between apology and forgiveness. I tested hypotheses related to (a) the overall relationship between apology and forgiveness, (b) evidence of internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion-related validity for a measure of transgression severity, and (c) variables that may act as moderators of the relationship between apology and forgiveness.

Overall Relationship between Apology and Forgiveness

The present study demonstrated evidence that the presence of a simple apology or a more complete apology is associated with increased forgiveness. Forgiveness scores as measured by the Transgression-related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM), a measure of victim’s motivations toward their offender, the Emotional Forgiveness Scale (EFS), a measure of emotional forgiveness, the Decisional Forgiveness Scale (DFS), a measure of decisional forgiveness, and the Forgiveness-Granting Tactics (FGT), a measure of forgiveness-granting behaviors a victim demonstrates toward their offender, were positively correlated with the presence of a simple apology (i.e., I’m sorry). Scores measuring apology completeness (Kirchhoff et al., 2009) were positively correlated with scores on the TRIM, EFS, DFS, FGT, and the Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS), a measure of dispositional forgiveness.

These results are congruent with previous research findings (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Fehr, 2010; Frantz & Bennigson, 2005), suggesting there is a significant positive relationship between apology and forgiveness. A meta-analysis on the relationship between apology and forgiveness yields a medium effect size (mean $r = .37$; weighted mean $r = .39$) for recalled
transgressions (Fehr, 2010), which is similar to the present study’s findings of small to medium effect sizes for the apology-forgiveness relationship. However, it does appear that the variability in apology-forgiveness correlations for the present study may imply that the relationship is affected by apology type (i.e., simple vs. complete) and type of forgiveness measure used (e.g., behavioral, motivations, etc.).

Overall, the present study found greater correlations between apology and forgiveness for complete apologies as opposed to simple apologies. These findings may suggest that complete apologies are a better predictor or forgiveness compared to a simple measure of apology. It may be that there are several aspects of apology (i.e., naming the offense, taking responsibility, attempting to explain the offense, etc.) that are important to forgiveness. A simple apology may not be as effective in helping the victim to forgive, because it may lack sincerity, be given in poor timing, or be deficient of attributes that the victim desires from the offender (e.g., admitting fault, promising forbearance, offering reparation).

The association between apology and forgiveness was strongest when forgiveness was measured behaviorally (i.e., FGT). This may indicate that since an apology is a behavioral gesture, it is more likely to elicit a behavioral response of forgiveness from the victim. These findings corroborate the findings that complete apologies have a stronger relationship with forgiveness relative to a simple apology. Complete apologies are an assortment of behavioral gestures intended to convey an apology, and the correlations of complete apologies and behavioral forgiveness were the highest of any apology-forgiveness relationship measured.

Evidence for Reliability and Validity of Offense Severity Scale

Previous research on forgiveness has generally not used a reliable and valid measure of
transgression severity. Most studies measured transgression severity with one item measured on a Likert-scale. The present study found evidence to support the reliability and validity of a 10-item measure of transgression severity. A factor analysis revealed that 10 of the items, from the original 12-items that were posited, loaded onto a single factor, and those items had evidence of internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion-related validity. Specifically, the items had a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient above .80 (i.e., internal consistency), were negatively associated with forgiveness (i.e., construct validity), and showed group differences based on recall condition (i.e., hi/low transgression severity; criterion-related validity). The current study also demonstrated results consistent with previous research that suggest there is a negative relationship between transgression severity and forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010; Fincham et al., 2005). A meta-analysis on the relationship between harm severity and forgiveness yielded a medium effect size (mean $r = .23$; weighted mean $r = .24$) for recalled transgressions (Fehr, 2010), which is similar to the present study’s findings of medium effect sizes for the transgression severity-forgiveness relationship.

Possible Moderators of the Relationship between Apology and Forgiveness

The current study examined perceived humility of the offender and transgression severity as potential moderators of the relationship between apology and forgiveness. I hypothesized that for offenders who were more humble, the association between apology and forgiveness would be stronger than for offenders who were less humble. Also, I hypothesized that for transgressions that were more severe, the association between apology and forgiveness would be weaker than for transgressions that were less severe. Partial evidence was found to support perceived offender
humility as a moderator. Partial evidence was also found to support transgression severity as a moderator; however, the direction of the moderator effect was different than hypothesized.

Humility helps individuals develop, maintain, strengthen, and repair social bonds (Davis et al., 2013). Evidence indicates that humility is positively related to forgiveness (Powers et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2013). The findings of the present study are consistent with this previous research in finding a significant positive main effect between humility and forgiveness.

No previous research has been conducted on how humility might be related to apology or the apology-forgiveness relationship. It was thought that perceived offender humility would moderate the apology-forgiveness relationship by increasing the effectiveness of repair attempts because the transgressor will have an accurate self-view and their apology will be other-oriented. This perception of offender humility would allow victims to better evaluate an offender’s repair attempts and lead to increased forgiveness. The results of the studies suggest that perceived humility of the offender is also positively correlated with an offender apology (i.e., simple and complete). These findings may suggest that offenders who are perceived as more humble are also more likely to apologize or apologize in complete manners, or those apologizing individuals are perceived as having more humility.

Evidence was found to suggest that perceptions of offender humility moderated the association between a simple apology and forgiveness; however, not for a complete apology and forgiveness. The findings suggest that individuals who are perceived as being more humble are given more forgiveness than their counterparts. When a simple apology is present, there is a near-significant increase in levels of forgiveness toward the offender when they are viewed as being humble. When an individual is viewed as having low humility, the administration of a simple apology is not related to forgiveness. One interpretation of this finding may be that when
an offender gives a simple apology, the act of the apology itself does not provide much information about the offender’s thoughts, feelings, or intentions. It may be that the victim must utilize other information (e.g., perceptions of humility) to determine whether to accept the simple apology and forgive. However, a more complete apology may provide more information by itself, which might explain its positive effect on forgiveness irrespective of the level of perceived humility of the offender. Both perceptions of humility and apologies seem to be important determinants of forgiveness; however, humility appears to have an especially significant effect on forgiveness when the offender provides a simple apology.

Previous research suggested that there was a negative relationship between offense severity and forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010; Fincham et al., 2005). The findings of the present study are consistent with this past research in finding a significant negative relationship between transgression severity and forgiveness. Past research has also shown that higher severity incidents are associated with more complete and intense repair efforts (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006; Bottom et al., 2002; Kirchhoff et al., 2012). I reasoned that for transgressions that have a high level of severity, apologies may be viewed as insufficient to make up for the harm done, and thus the relationship between apology and forgiveness would be weaker for transgressions with a high level of severity. Findings from the literature review (see Chapter 2) supported the possible moderation of the apology-forgiveness relationship by transgression severity. Studies that had samples who had experienced higher levels of transgression severity were more likely to have a nonsignificant relationship between apology and forgiveness, compared to samples that had low transgression severity.

However, the results of the present study found no evidence that transgression severity moderated the relationship between simple apologies and forgiveness. At least in my study, it
appears that simple apologies were similarly ineffective regardless of whether the severe was of high or low severity. Evidence was found to suggest that transgression severity moderated the association between a complete apology and forgiveness; however, the direction of the effect was different than hypothesized. Namely, when offense severity was high, there was a stronger relationship between a complete apology and forgiveness relative to when offense severity was low. This provides evidence that when offense severity is high, a more complete apology may be necessary in order to help forgiveness. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has found that transgressions that are more severe may require more intense repair efforts such as complete apologies (e.g., Bachman & Guerrero, 2006; Bottom et al., 2002).

Also, I found different results when I analyzed the data using the transgression severity scale vs. using the manipulated samples (i.e., low vs. high severity). The significant moderation between complete apology and forgiveness was found in the analysis using the manipulated samples (i.e., low vs. high) but not for the free-recall condition. It may be that the manipulated samples provided a more extreme contrast between high and low severity transgressions, which allowed for more power to detect the moderation effect. The findings suggest that victims who experience a high severity transgression are more likely to forgive when a complete apology is received. Individuals who experience a low transgression severity also exhibit an increase in forgiveness when a complete apology is administered; however, the effect is significantly greater for those who experience a high severity transgression. Transgression severity and apology appear to be important predictors of forgiveness; however, transgression severity seems to have an important effect when the offender administers a complete apology.
Limitations

There are several limitations of the present study. First, the study used a cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal design. While much of forgiveness research uses cross-sectional designs, there are some who have argued that forgiveness is better studied as a change over time (McCullough et al., 2003). For example, if an individual reports high levels of forgiveness, this may indicate that the person felt high levels of forgiveness immediately after the offense, or it may indicate that the person felt high levels of unforgiveness immediately after the offense and slowly increased in forgiveness over time. Forgiveness may also fluctuate depending on situational factors. There are likely important differences in these experiences that are unable to be examined using a cross-sectional research design. The use of a cross-sectional design also failed to control for time since the offense, which may have influenced participant’s level of forgiveness. The use of a cross-sectional research design also makes it impossible to make causal conclusions about the relationships found between variables.

Second, the measures used in the study were self-report. Self-report data is convenient and is often important because researchers are interested in the subjective experience of the individual, but it can be confounded by social desirability and response bias (e.g., yea-saying), and difficulty with remembering the past (e.g., memory bias). Since participants in the present study were still in relationships with their romantic partners, their self-reported levels of forgiveness may have been influenced by a desire to present their transgression in a less harmful manner. Participants may have also had difficulty remembering the transgression accurately due to time since offense, or because recalling the incident would arouse negative feelings about the relationship.
Third, participants completed the self-report measures online rather than in a controlled laboratory setting. The responses of participants may have been influenced by the setting in which they completed the study. For example, if participants completed the study at home when their romantic partner was around, they may have been less willing to report negative thoughts and feelings toward their romantic partner. Participants may also have completed measures haphazardly, which may have affected the results of this study.

Fourth, the present study focused on the experiences of participants in romantic relationships. Although this focus provided important information about how apology and forgiveness operates in this setting, the particular setting may also have influenced the results of the study. For example, these relationships may be more conducive to apologies and/or forgiveness because individuals are more committed and focused on maintaining relational harmony. Also, because participants in the present study were still together with their romantic partner, there may have been a restricted range in situations or transgressions that were reported. For example, very severe transgressions that may be likely to end a romantic relationship may not have been likely to occur in our sample since the participants were still involved in the romantic relationship. Restriction of range on the transgression severity variable may have attenuated the associations between transgression severity and forgiveness.

Areas for Future Research

There are several exciting areas of research on the topic of apology and forgiveness. First, there is a need to explore how apologies affect forgiveness over time. Forgiveness is a construct that may fluctuate over time, and the use of a longitudinal approach may allow for a greater understanding for how apologies influence the process of forgiveness over time.
Second, future studies may benefit from using behavioral/physiological measures of forgiveness (Dorn et al., 2014). Utilizing behavioral or physiological measures in addition to self-report measures would allay some of the concerns about the biases inherit in self-report measurement (e.g., social desirability, response bias, memory bias). The use of behavioral/physiological measures with self-report measures may also allow future researchers to determine whether there is under- or over-reporting of perceived forgiveness versus actual forgiveness.

Third, the use of an experimental methodology or greater experimental control could provide a more clear understanding of the relationship between apology and forgiveness. For example, although my theoretical model focused on apology as leading to forgiveness, there may be other theoretical models that fit the data as well (e.g., perhaps more forgiving relationships lead to higher levels of apologies between partners). More experimental designs like Carlisle et al. (2012), for example, could randomize assigned participants to receive apology or no apology following a manipulated interpersonal transgression. Additionally, the use of both the victim and the offender perspective, or the use of a third person report of perceived forgiveness, may give a more accurate portrayal of the forgiveness administered and received.

Fourth, while relationship type was specified for this particular study, future studies may benefit from broadening the type of relationships sampled. It may benefit future researchers to compare how the apology-forgiveness relationship changes across relationship context (e.g., parent-child relationship vs. supervisor-supervisee relationship), and control for relationship factors such as relationship closeness, longevity, and satisfaction. This would increase experimental control, and it would also expand the literature by illustrating the differences and similarities between how apology and forgiveness operate in specific relationship contexts.
Fifth, further study is needed to examine possible mediators and moderators of the relationship between apology and forgiveness. While this study found partial evidence to support the moderation of apology and forgiveness by humility and transgression severity, these results were specific to couples in current romantic relationships and there may have been a ceiling effect in the severity of the reported transgressions. There has been a plethora of research that has supported a positive link between apology and forgiveness, but more research must be conducted that explains how and why apology and forgiveness are linked. Other possible mediators or moderators of the apology-forgiveness relationship include personality variables, attachment style, amount of responsibility/attribution of blame for the transgression (e.g., offender, victim, third party, situational), and additional relationship variables (e.g., commitment, satisfaction, closeness).

Implications for Counseling

The findings of the present study have several implications for counseling. The findings of this study provide information regarding the types of communication that may facilitate forgiveness in romantic partners, with the ultimate goals of restoring relational harmony.

First, it may be helpful to recommend clients struggling with issues of forgiveness to seek or administer a more complete apology. Given that the current findings indicate that forgiveness was higher for individuals who received a complete apology compared to a simple apology, it would likely be beneficial to provide psychoeducation about how complete apologizing (e.g., taking responsibility, offering reparation) can be conveyed and/or interpreted in order to increase forgiveness more so than a simple apology. With couples, it may be helpful for each partner to practice and model complete apologies with the counselor in session, and reinforce the more
complete apologizing as a means to improve presenting concerns and improve relationship communication. Integrating the moderating effect of transgression severity between a complete apology and forgiveness, it is especially important to reinforce complete apologizing in the instance of a transgression of high severity.

The transgression severity scale might allow counselors to better understand how severe a specific incident may be perceived by their client. It also may provide an opportunity for clients to better verbalize how a situation may have been perceived, thereby allowing the client and clinician to discuss the transgression, gain insight, and/or provide further reflection. This might be particularly helpful with clients who have recently dealt with a trauma, to monitor trauma perceptions (e.g., current functioning related to changing perception of trauma), and to help assess whether a transgression requires more time, trust, rapport, etc. to work through the event in counseling. This tool might be helpful for couples dealing with conflict as it may illuminate perceived transgression severity, thereby influencing the amount of time spent focusing on work related to complete apologizing and forgiveness.

Third, the present findings indicate that perceptions of humility are positively linked with forgiveness. Therefore, it might be important to assess how partners view each other in terms of humility. If a person views their partner as more self-focused, this might make forgiveness more difficult. Some research has shown that humility can be worked on and improved (Lavelock et al., in press). When considering that humility moderated the relationship between a simple apology and forgiveness, it may be important for counselors and clients to be aware that the more humble a partner or client appears, the more forgiveness their simple apology will produce. Humility, having an accurate view of self or being other-oriented, may be an important factor to consider when working to improve forgiveness.
Conclusion

Limited research has been conducted to date examining the relationship between apology and forgiveness amongst those in romantic relationships, despite the common occurrence of transgressions and necessity for re-establishment of relational harmony. The current study investigated the overall apology-forgiveness relationship, the construction of a valid and reliable measure of transgression severity, and possible moderators of the relationship between apology and forgiveness. In general, apology (i.e., simple and complete) was associated with higher levels of self-reported forgiveness levels. I developed a 10-item measure of transgression severity that had evidence of internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion-related validity. There was some evidence to support the assertion that humility and transgression severity moderated the relationship between apology and forgiveness. Further research in this area of study will better help us better understand the factors that facilitate or mitigate the apology-forgiveness relationship in romantic relationships and inform potential interventions.
<table>
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<td>(age M = 29 yrs)</td>
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*Note. EFI = Enright Forgiveness Inventory; TRIM-18 = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (Avoidance, Benevolence, & Revenge); TRIM-12 = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (Avoidance & Revenge); AFS = Acts of Forgiveness Scale*
Table 2

Forgiveness and Apology: Theses or Dissertations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Forgiveness Measure</th>
<th>Apology Measure</th>
<th>General Findings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Basford (2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bradfield (2000)</td>
<td>61 m, 194 f</td>
<td>Government Employees (U.S.)</td>
<td>FOS; WCS</td>
<td>Self-report item(s)</td>
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<td>(age M = 38)</td>
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<td>Davila (2004)</td>
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<td>Drinnon (2001)</td>
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<td>Lukasik (2001)</td>
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<td>Rivard (2005)</td>
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<td>Correctional Facility Inmates</td>
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<td>Squires (2009)</td>
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<td>State Forgiveness Scale</td>
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<td>Thorson (2009)</td>
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<td>TRIM-18; FGT</td>
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<td>Volkmann (2010)</td>
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Note. EFI = Enright Forgiveness Inventory; TRIM-18 = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (Avoidance, Benevolence, & Revenge); TRIM-13 = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (Avoidance & Benevolence); TRIM-12 = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (Avoidance & Revenge); AFS = Acts of Forgiveness Scale; FOS = Freedom from Obsession Scale
Table 3

Demographic Statistics

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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Descriptive Statistics

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Table 5

Correlations

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<th>OSS</th>
<th>TRIM</th>
<th>EFS</th>
<th>DFS</th>
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Note. * p < .05. ** p < .01. SA = Simple Apology; CA = Complete Apology; OSS = Offense Severity Scale; TRIM = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory; EFS = Emotional Forgiveness Scale; DFS = Decisional Forgiveness Scale; FGT = Forgiveness Granting Tactics; TFS = Trait Forgiveness Scale; RHS = Relational Humility Scale.
Table 6

Moderator Effects of Humility on the Relationship between Simple Apology and Interpersonal Forgiveness

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<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>R-squared</th>
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<td>[.41, .58]</td>
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<td>.33</td>
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<td>.11</td>
<td>[.00, .42]</td>
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Note. CI = Confidence interval, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 7

Moderator Effects of Transgression Severity on the Relationship between Complex Apology and Interpersonal Forgiveness

<table>
<thead>
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<th>SE B</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>R-squared</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete apology</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>[.19, .39]</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgression Severity</td>
<td>-3.67</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>[-6.00, -1.35]</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete apology</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>[.05, .33]</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgression Severity</td>
<td>-3.46</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>[-5.78, -1.13]</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete apology X Severity</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>[.01, .41]</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. CI = Confidence interval, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Figure 1. Moderator effect of humility on the relationship between simple apology and forgiveness.

Figure 2. Moderator effect of transgression severity on the relationship between complete apology and forgiveness.
APPENDIX

INFORMED CONSENT AND MEASURES
University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

INFORMED CONSENT

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: A Study of Relationship Processes in Couples

Principal Investigator: Joshua Hook, PhD, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Psychology.

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study which involves the examination of one’s experiences in a romantic relationship. To participate in this study, you must currently be in a committed romantic relationship.

Study Procedures: You will be asked to fill out a survey with various questionnaires that will take about 60 minutes of your time.

Foreseeable Risks: There are no foreseeable risks of this study except for possible feelings of discomfort due to answering survey questions regarding attitudes, feelings, and experiences. If you do experience feelings of discomfort, you may contact the principal investigator who can refer you to services for counseling. You may also choose to stop participation at any point.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you but may contribute to the growing body of knowledge about relationship processes in committed romantic relationships.

Compensation for Participants: If you are participating in this study through the web-based human subject pool management software for UNT, SONA (https://unt.sona-systems.com), for participation in research, you will receive 2 research credits for your participation in this research study.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: Your participation in this study will be confidential. Identifying information will be collected only for compensation purposes only. The confidentiality of your individual data will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Joshua Hook at telephone number 940.369.8076.

Research Participants' Rights:

[Signature]

[Date: 1/15/14]

[Date: 1/14/15]
You have read or have had read to you all of the above and you confirm all of the following:

- You understand the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.
- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits.
- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

☐ Ycs, I agree to participate

☐ Click here to exit the study
University of North Texas Institutional Review Board

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Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

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Benefits to the Subjects or Others: This study is not expected to be of any direct benefit to you but may contribute to the growing body of knowledge about relationship processes in committed romantic relationships.

Compensation for Participants: If you are participating in this study through Mechanical Turk, you will receive $1 (U.S.) as compensation for your participation in this study.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: Your participation in this study will be confidential. Identifying information will be collected only for compensation purposes only. The confidentiality of your individual data will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Joshua Hook at telephone number 940.369.8076.
Research Participants' Rights:

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- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.
- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

☐ Yes, I agree to participate

☐ Click here to exit the study
Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Transgender Male
   d. Transgender Female
   e. Gender Queer
   f. Other __________

2. What is your age? __________

3. What is your current marital status?
   a. Single
   b. Married
   c. Separated
   d. Divorced
   e. Widowed
   f. Other _________

4. If single, how would you describe your current romantic relationship?
   a. Engaged
   b. Committed
   c. Steady
   d. Casual
   e. Not applicable

5. Are you currently cohabitating with your partner?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. How long have you continuously been with your partner? _______

7. What is your ethnicity?
   a. Hispanic or Latino
   b. Not Hispanic or Latino

8. What is your race?
   a. White/Caucasian
   b. Black/African-American
   c. Asian/Pacific Islander
   d. Latino/Hispanic
   e. Native American
   f. Multiracial __________
   g. Other _________

9. What is your sexual orientation?
a. Heterosexual
b. Gay
c. Lesbian
d. Bisexual
e. Queer
f. Other __________

10. What is your religious affiliation
   a. Christian – Catholic
   b. Christian – Evangelical Protestant
   c. Christian – Mainline Protestant
   d. Christian - Black Protestant
   e. Latter-day Saints
   f. Muslim
   g. Buddhist
   h. Hindu
   i. Jewish
   j. Atheist
   k. Agnostic
   l. None
   m. Other __________

11. What is your highest level of education?
   a. Less than HS diploma or GED
   b. HS diploma or GED
   c. Some college
   d. Associate’s degree
   e. Bachelor’s degree
   f. Master’s degree
   g. Professional degree
   h. Doctoral degree

12. What is your current occupation? (If none, type unemployed) __________

13. Please estimate your current family annual income? __________
14. Use one of the following numbers to indicate your political views in the accompanying categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very liberal</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Slightly liberal</th>
<th>Middle of the road</th>
<th>Slightly conservative</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Very conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Foreign policy issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Economic issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Social issues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transgression Recall and Offense Severity

Please identify an offense or transgression committed by your CURRENT romantic partner that you would consider of LOW/HIGH severity. Keep this particular offense in mind throughout the survey and answer questions accordingly. Write at least two sentences to a paragraph describing the offense, particularly what made it of LOW/HIGH severity to you.

Using the following scale to rate how severe you would consider the offense:

0 = Not at all severe
1 = Low severity
2 = Slightly severe
3 = Neutral
4 = Moderately severe
5 = Very severe
6 = Extremely severe

Using the following scale, how would you attribute the cause of the transgression?

1 = Completely due to personal characteristics of the offender
2 = Mostly due to the personal characteristics of the offender
3 = Equally due to the personal characteristics of the offender and to the context of the situation
4 = Mostly due to the context of the situation
5 = Completely due to the context of the situation

How much responsibility do you place on your romantic partner for the transgression? (0-100%)

How much responsibility do you place on yourself for the transgression? (0-100%)

How much responsibility do you place on other factors for the transgression? (0-100%)

How long ago did the offense occur? (Estimate using days, months, or years) _________

What was the duration of the offense? (e.g., minutes, hours, days, etc.) _________

How many times has this same offense occurred? _________
Please think about the transgression that occurred. On the following scale, please rate how each of these items describes the transgression for you:

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Somewhat disagree
4 = Unsure
5 = Somewhat agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly agree

I found the transgression to be…

1. Painful
2. Distressing
3. Traumatic
4. Harmful
5. Damaging
6. Unhealthy
7. Serious
8. Dangerous
9. Critical
10. Severe
11. Undesirable
12. Intense
Apology Measure

Think about your interactions with the offender after the transgression. Please indicate the extent to which each of the following things occurred.

1. Did your partner apologize for the transgression you recalled?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. Did your partner acknowledge that what he/she did was wrong?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. Did your partner accept responsibility for his/her action?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. Did the person make attempts to make up, or atone, for the wrong committed?
   a. Yes
   b. No

5. Did the person give you any assurances that it would not happen again?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Overall, how sincere did you perceive their apology to be?
   1 = Not sincere
   2 = Somewhat insincere
   3 = Unsure
   4 = Somewhat sincere
   5 = Sincere
Again, continue to think about your interactions with the offender after the transgression.

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following things occurred.

On a scale from:

1 = Not at all Present to 5 = Very Present

1. He/she regretted what happened.
2. He/she realized that he/she caused unpleasant feelings in you.
3. He/she realized that what he/she did was a mistake.
4. He/she provided you a reparation offer.
5. He/she said that what happened would not be repeated.
6. He/she gave an explanation for his/her behavior.
7. He/she said that he/she apologizes.
8. He/she named what he/she was apologizing for.
9. He/she took responsibility for what happened.
10. He/she asked you to accept the apology.

Now, please rate how important you view each of the following items.

On a scale from:

1 = Not at all Important” to 5 = Very Important

1. He/she regrets what happened.
2. He/she realizes that he/she caused unpleasant feelings in you.
3. He/she realizes that what he/she did was a mistake.
4. He/she provides you a reparation offer.
5. He/she says that what happened will not be repeated.
6. He/she gives an explanation for his/her behavior.
7. He/she says you that he/she apologizes.
8. He/she names what he/she is apologizing for.
9. He/she takes responsibility for what happened.
10. He/she asks you to accept the apology.

You missed something about this apology not in the list, then write down here:
TRIM-18 - Avoidance, Revenge, & Benevolence

**Introductory section text:** With the specific offense you have just recalled, please describe how you feel about the offender now by rating the following statements. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement for you now.

1 = strongly disagree  
2 = disagree  
3 = neutral  
4 = agree  
5 = strongly agree

1. I’ll make him/her pay.  
2. I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible.  
3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her.  
4. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.  
5. I am living as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around.  
6. I want us to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship.  
7. I don’t trust him/her.  
8. Despite what he/she did, I want us to have a positive relationship again.  
9. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.  
10. I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.  
11. I am avoiding him/her.  
12. Although he/she hurt me, I am putting the hurts aside so we could resume our relationship.  
13. I’m going to get even.  
14. I forgive him/her for what he/she did to me.  
15. I cut off the relationship with him/her.  
16. I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health.  
17. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.  
18. I withdraw from him/her.

**Avoidance Subscale:** 2, 5, 7, 10, 11, 15, 18.  
**Revenge subscale:** 1, 4, 9, 13, 17.  
**Benevolence subscale:** 3, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16.
DFS

Think of your current intentions toward the person who hurt you. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (SD)</th>
<th>Disagree (D)</th>
<th>Neutral (N)</th>
<th>Agree (A)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (SA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I intend to try to hurt him or her in the same way he or she hurt me.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I will not try to help him or her if he or she needs something.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I see him or her, I will act friendly.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I will try to get back at him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I will try to act toward him or her in the same way I did before he or she hurt me.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. If there is an opportunity to get back at him or her, I will take it.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I will not talk with him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I will not seek revenge upon him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reverse score items 1, 2, 4, 6, 7.

EFS

Think of your current emotions toward the person who hurt you. Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (SD)</th>
<th>Disagree (D)</th>
<th>Neutral (N)</th>
<th>Agree (A)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (SA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I care about him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I no longer feel upset when I think of him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I’m bitter about what he or she did to me.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I feel sympathy toward him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I’m mad about what happened.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I like him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I resent what he or she did to me.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel love toward him or her.</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reverse score items 3, 5, 7.
TFS

DIRECTIONS: Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement below by using the following scale:

5 = Strongly Agree
4 = Mildly Agree
3 = Agree and Disagree Equally
2 = Mildly Disagree
1 = Strongly Disagree

1. People close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long.
2. I can forgive a friend for almost anything.
3. If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.
4. I try to forgive others even when they don’t feel guilty for what they did.
5. I can usually forgive and forget an insult.
6. I feel bitter about many of my relationships.
7. Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent.
8. There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.
9. I have always forgiven those who have hurt me.
10. I am a forgiving person.

Forgiveness Granting Tactics

Think about the interactions you have had with your romantic partner. Specifically, think about how you communicated to them that you forgave them for engaging in infidelity. Using the following scale to determine which strategies you used the most:

0 = Not used at all, 4 = Used Moderately, 7 = Used extensively.

1. I gave them a look that communicated forgiveness.
2. I told them I had forgiven them, but I really didn’t forgive them until later.
3. I joked about it so they would know they were forgiven.
4. I initiated discussion about the transgression.
5. I told them I forgave them.
6. I gave them a hug.
7. I told them not to worry about it.
8. I discussed the transgression with them.
9. The expression on my face said, “I forgive you.”
10. I told them I would forgive them only if things changed.
11. I told them it was no big deal.
12. I touched them in a way that communicated forgiveness.
13. I told them I would forgive them, if the transgression never happened again.
DIRECTIONS: Please think about your romantic partner, whom you identified hurt you. Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your romantic partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Mildly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Mildly Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. He/she has a humble character.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. He or she is truly a humble person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Most people would consider him/her a humble person.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. His or her close friends would consider him/her humble.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Even strangers would consider him/her humble.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. He/she thinks of him/herself too highly.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. He/she has a big ego.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. He/she thinks of him/herself as overly important.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Certain tasks are beneath him/her.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I feel inferior when I am with him/her.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. He/she strikes me as self-righteous.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. He/she does not like doing menial tasks for others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. He/she knows him/herself well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. He/she knows his/her strengths.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. He/she knows his/her weaknesses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. He/she is self-aware</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Lazare, A. (1995). Go ahead, say you're sorry: We view apologies as a sign of weak character. But, in fact, they require great strength. And we better learn how to do 'em right because we'll be needing them more. The complete primer on how to apologize. *Psychology Today – New York*, 40.


