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Forgive Them, Forgive Them Not: The Role of Remorse and Empathy in Interpersonal Forgiveness

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FORGIVE THEM, FORGIVE THEM NOT: THE ROLE OF REMORSE AND EMPATHY IN INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS

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by

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ABSTRACT

FORGIVE THEM, FORGIVE THEM NOT: THE ROLE OF REMORSE AND EMPATHY IN INTERPERSONAL FORGIVENESS

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Forgiveness research has suggested that the reduction of negative thoughts and emotions between a victim and perceived transgressor (forgiveness) may be beneficial for close, personal relationships. The current study aimed to examine the influence of perceived remorse and elicited empathy on forgiveness following the occurrence of a hypothetical transgression. It was hypothesized that (a) participants would demonstrate the greatest levels of Forgiveness in the condition of Remorse and Empathy compared to all other conditions, (b) Empathy would increase Forgiveness only when combined with Remorse, and (c) Remorse would be more critically to increasing Forgiveness than Empathy. Participants from Central Washington University were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (1-Remorse and Empathy, 2-Remorse and No Empathy, 3-No Remorse and Empathy, and 4-No Remorse and No Empathy) and prompted to complete a measure of forgiveness (TRIM) following the presentation of a hypothetical transgression scenario. Results of a 2x2x2 (Remorse, Empathy, gender) between-subjects analysis of variance indicated a main effect of Remorse, but no interaction effect between Remorse and Empathy on Forgiveness. There was no main effect of Empathy, Remorse, or interaction of gender, Remorse, and Empathy. Overall, the results suggest that while Empathy

and gender appeared to have little to no effect on Forgiveness, Remorse was found to significantly increase Forgiveness following an interpersonal transgression.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The 20th century marked a significant increase in the intensity of exploration of forgiveness in psychological research. Though there is no single recognized definition within the field of social psychology, forgiveness is understood as a prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor following an offense. This change includes the reduction of negative emotions, motivations, and thoughts (i.e. avoidance and revenge) toward the transgressor (McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, & Hight, 1998).

Methods of assessing forgiveness may include observations of behavior and physiological measures, but most commonly consists of self-report ratings in responses to a presented (hypothetical) or recent (real life) situation (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). This type of measure, referred to as state forgiveness, is often used when investigating the various factors that may inhibit or facilitate forgiveness in response to a particular offense (Fehr et al., 2010). In the current study, researchers used self-report ratings and responses to measure levels of state forgiveness following an interpersonal transgression.

Before detailing the specifics of prior and current research regarding forgiveness, one may wonder why scientists bother to research forgiveness in the first place. After all, forgiveness is a seemingly abstract, vague mental process. Thanks to the curiosity of social scientists, there is an abundance of research confirming the social and personal benefits of forgiveness which provides a solid justification for research in this field.

Forgiveness is often included with other positively viewed attributes such as kindness, maturity, intimacy, understanding, mercy, and many others. If society chooses to so strongly promote forgiveness, it is important that we understand how and when we can encourage forgiveness in our own lives. There is a need to understand what factors or aspects of situation

and actions are most likely to foster forgiveness between individuals and toward oneself. If we truly care about ourselves and our relationships with one another, we will be passionate about pursing knowledge about positive social processes (like forgiveness) that reflect obvious and real benefits in our lives. It is difficult to promote or implement forgiveness within our own relationships if we do not understand the processes, outcomes, and consequences. The variety of "help books" suggested by therapists, teachers, parents, pastors, and family are based on research regarding forgiveness. Without this drive to understand the foundations of why and when individuals experience or choose forgiveness, we would lack the knowledge needed to teach and encourage forgiveness in our community. Hence, forgiveness research is essential to experiencing the benefits of expressing love and care to each other and to ourselves through the process of forgiveness.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of Forgiveness

Forgiveness has gained attention specifically regarding the benefits it may provide for mental health and as a means of maintaining relationships after an offense. It is understood that the restoration of positive emotions and behaviors toward others demonstrates the importance of forgiveness in mental health and relationships.

As a form of therapy, forgiveness has been explored as a method of reducing anger, resentment, bitterness, and negative emotions in targeted groups. Lin, Mack, Enright, Krahn, and Baskin (2004) used Forgiveness Therapy (FT) as a means of addressing these issues. FT maintains that the anger and other negative feelings experienced by individuals are often justified responses to wrongs committed against them. However, the point of FT, and of forgiveness in general, is to acknowledge that these negative emotions are a barrier in the healing process and can interfere with everyday life, as well as inhibit growth in personal relationships. Individuals are encouraged to work through these negative feelings and move toward forgiveness in four phases (i.e., uncovering, decision, work, and discovery).

Lin et al. (2004) implemented FT in a treatment study of individuals recruited from a drug rehabilitation center. Participants (seven men and seven women) were randomly assigned to either the FT condition or to routine drug and alcohol therapy. The purpose of using FT in this study was to promote increases from baselines measures of depression, anger, anxiety, self-esteem, and substance abuse. These baseline measures were completed by all participants and administered in random order. Participants in the FT condition then received the 12 sessions of routine forgiveness therapy provided by the same therapist. This forgiveness therapy was guided

by the idea that forgiveness is a choice and included strategies such as reframing and contrasting. Affective exercises included in this therapy centered on encouraging empathy, and participants were encouraged to learn from hurtful experiences. At the end of six weeks (12 sessions), the individuals in the FT condition showed significantly greater positive changes in anxiety, anger, depression, self-esteem, and drug use than the individuals in the routine therapy condition. Even at a four-month follow up, the FT groups continued to show significant differences in improvement in those same measures.

In addition to improvements in mental health, forgiveness has been shown to foster positive changes in interpersonal relationships. Allemand, Amberg, Zimprich, and Fincham (2007) hypothesized that state forgiveness was strongly correlated with relationship satisfaction in couples. One hundred and eighty participants in romantic heterosexual relationships participated in a study examining the relationship between state forgiveness and relationship satisfaction (in response to a recollection of a single past occurrence). Participants completed measures of relationship satisfaction and state forgiveness and then were asked to recall the most serious transgression committed by their partner. Afterwards, partners were assessed on state forgiveness regarding the recalled offense through measures of emotional status, cognitions, and behaviors surrounding the event. Researchers found that, as hypothesized, state forgiveness was positively correlated with relationship satisfaction in couples.

Karremans et al. (2019) predicted that interpersonal forgiveness (forgiveness between a victim and a transgressor) is positively related to mindfulness, an indicator of personal and relational well-being. Participants completed a four-item measure of their tendency to forgive (e.g., “I tend to get over it quickly when someone hurts my feelings”) as well as measures of mindfulness includes observing (“I notice the smells and aromas of things”), acting-with-

awareness (“I find myself doing things without paying attention”), nonjudging (“I think some of my emotions are in inappropriate and I should not feel them”), describing (“I am good at finding words to describe my feelings”) and nonreactivity (“I perceive my feelings and emotions without having to react to them”). The results demonstrated that individuals with higher levels of trait mindfulness demonstrated a greater tendency to forgive, suggesting that mindfulness is yet another positive quality associated with forgiveness.

Hindrances and Costs of Forgiveness

In addition to demonstrating the benefits of interpersonal forgiveness, researchers have investigated the potential hindrances and costs. Specifically, the act of forgiving may increase the likelihood that the offense will be repeated through the reduction of negative consequences. The receiving of forgiveness may reduce the shame and guilt experienced by the transgressor and unintentionally communicate that the offense was not serious enough to permanently damage the relationship. Without this consequence of potential shame and guilt, individuals may be prone to continue to engage in negative behavior.

McNulty (2010) examined transgression patterns over a short period of time by using a diary study to investigate forgiveness in newlyweds. Newlywed couples were instructed to keep a seven-day diary to track occurrences of forgiveness and transgressions. Researchers were interested in the relationship between occurrences of forgiveness and subsequent patterns of transgressions. They hypothesized that partners would transgress against their partners more often when they had previously been forgiven for an offense. Self-report measures revealed that individuals were indeed more likely to transgress toward their partner on days that they had been forgiven by that partner.

A later study by McNulty (2011) employed a longitudinal method to examine the relationship between aggression and forgiveness in couples. Participants completed questionnaires at six-month intervals measuring psychological and physical aggression after completing baseline measures of forgiveness and individual differences. After four years, individuals that maintained a lesser tendency to forgive reported decreased acts of aggression from their partners, whereas aggression by partners of individuals who had a greater tendency to forgive reported no decrease in acts of psychological and physical aggression. This suggests that a greater tendency to forgive is linked to negative behaviors and subsequent offending in partners.

Given the research, forgiveness may present a danger when it allows opportunity for transgressors to continue to transgress in the absence of consequences. One of the possible direct consequences of a transgression is the use of regulating behaviors between partners. Partner regulation behavior includes actions such as calling to attention a partner's responsibility for an offense or explicitly demanding change. This has been shown to be an effective way of reducing further transgressions (Russell, Baker, McNulty & Overall, 2018). For example, an individual who has been lied to might tell a partner explicitly how the lie had hurt them and that they no longer trust their partner.

Russell, Baker, McNulty and Overall (2018) were interested in how forgiveness and regulating behaviors interact to predict transgressions. To help understand this relationship, individuals were asked to report their perception of their partner's tendency to use explicit forms of partner regulation. Researchers then manipulated individuals' perceptions of their partners' likeliness to forgive by giving false feedback about scores on a forgiveness test (participants were told that their partners were either very forgiving or not very forgiving). Participants were

presented with an opportunity to commit an offense against their partner by choosing either an uncomfortably loud sound directed at either their partner or themselves. Participants who were led to believe that their partner was more forgiving were more likely to transgress against their partner (i.e. choose to direct the loud sound against their partner instead of at themselves). This experiment demonstrated a moderating effect of partner-regulation behaviors (e.g., explicitly communicating responsibility and demanding change) on the relationship between forgiveness and transgression. Meaning, the use of regulating behaviors in addition to forgiveness helps increase reciprocity and decrease continued transgressions after receiving forgiveness (Russell et al., 2018).

McNulty and Russell (2016) revealed an interesting effect of personality in a series of studies on the relationship between forgiveness and subsequent offending. In a longitudinal study of inter-partner forgiveness, researchers used diary-entry data to understand the mediating effect of agreeableness on the relationship between partner forgiveness and subsequent offending. Analysis of the diary data revealed that the characteristic of agreeableness interacted with forgiveness between partners when measuring subsequent offending. Disagreeable individuals produced more transgressions against forgiving partners, whereas agreeable individuals produced fewer transgressions against forgiving partners. Disagreeable individuals behaved in a way that supports the theory of operant learning, while agreeable individuals behaved in a way that supports the theory of reciprocity.

Fincham and Beach (2002) investigated the link between forgiveness and increased likelihood to transgress in newlywed couples. Couples were instructed to respond to imagined acts of psychological aggression from their partners and researchers assessed their likelihood to forgive based on responses to questions about retaliation or forgiveness. Participants also

responded to self-measures of psychological aggression (behaviors of nonphysical abuse) and measures of marital satisfaction. The results revealed that the forgiveness of a hypothetical act was predictive of psychological aggression in partners, suggesting that forgiveness does not always lessen occurrences of offending.

It appears that in some cases, forgiveness is linked with fewer transgressions, as individuals may be less likely to transgress against more forgiving individuals. However, in other contexts forgiveness is also linked to an increase in subsequent offending after a transgression. Given this dynamic, even factors such as personality may impact the likelihood of future transgressions following an act of forgiveness.

Gender Differences

Research within heterosexual couples raises another set of questions and concerns regarding differences in forgiveness between genders. Previous research has indicated the existence of a gender-forgiveness effect that suggests that women may be more forgiving than men across situations and circumstance (though this is not without controversy) (Fehr et al., 2010). Some of the controversy surrounding this trend stems from the idea that women may be more driven to self-report greater forgiveness. However, past research does indicate that women appear more relational and empathetic than men, which makes room for the possibility that women may also demonstrate other prosocial qualities (such as a greater tendency to forgive) (Hoffman, 1977).

Hoffman (1977) assessed a variety of measurements of empathy in females ranging in age from newborns to 22 years of age. Regardless of the type of measure used to assess empathy in participants, the results indicated that females scored higher in empathy than males. Though researchers are still uncertain of the extent to which this gender difference is significant in

various settings, there is support for the idea that females may demonstrate greater forgiveness overall than males.

Many people may automatically assume that women are generally more forgiving than men based on social stereotypes which paint women as kind and nurturing. Miller, Worthington, and McDaniel (2008) conducted a meta-analysis in search of the previously neglected scientific evidence supporting this idea. The results from the 70 studies reviewed supported the presence of a small to moderate gender-forgiveness effect, indicating that females are indeed more forgiving than males.

However, this gender-forgiveness effect is not without scientific controversy. Toussaint and Webb (2005) previously analyzed self-report measures of empathy and forgiveness from 127 community residents. In stark contrast to popular belief, no straightforward gender difference in forgiveness was found. Instead, there appeared to be a gender difference in empathy. Women demonstrated significantly higher levels of empathy than men. In fact, the relationship between forgiveness and empathy was moderated by gender in this case, and no bivariate relationship between the two was present for women.

Of course, gender differences in forgiveness may exist in some cases due to factors apart from gender. Differences may appear as a result of issues in methodology, or the approach researchers use when studying forgiveness in males versus females. Miller et al. (2008) examined data from experimental, questionnaire, and survey research which may have yielded different results than a study limited to self-report measures. For example, the tendency for women to engage in group interventions involving forgiveness more often than men may suggest that women are more motivated to forgive. It may be hard to ignore the popular bias in favor of women as the more forgiving gender, and this mindset may impact the results of research.

This disparity may also be the result of a variety of factors that influence human behavior and decision making. Since forgiveness may be influenced by situational factors, individual differences, affective traits, methodology, or commitment to specific virtues, it is hard to state with confidence the presence of differences in forgiveness based on gender alone. It is more likely that gender differences regarding forgiveness are an indirect result of differences in other aspects of human behavior (perhaps more general in nature). For example, men and women may differ in how they experience and react to stressors, conduct moral reasoning, implement religious values, reappraise situations, or interpret causal factors and social roles following a transgression (Miller et al., 2008). Differences in any of these areas may impact measures of forgiveness and create the appearance of gender differences in forgiveness.

Commitment and Intimacy

Though forgiveness may have potential costs in some circumstances, recall that it is not always bad news. Forgiveness is found most often in relationships that are high in intimacy and commitment. When the removal or the destruction of those relationship ties would require a sizeable sacrifice, there is a greater motivation to forgive and maintain the existing relationship.

Burnette, McCullough, Van Tongeren, and Davis (2012) examined the cognitive mechanisms involved in producing or reducing forgiveness which they referred to as forgiveness systems. Variables assessed included the extent to which participants felt the relationship was important and meaningful to them (Relationship Value) and the extent to which they were concerned or threatened by the possibility of future transgressions from that individual (Exploit Risk). After responding to measures of Relationship Value and Exploit Risk, participants were asked to respond to a set of scenarios that included avoidant, vengeful, or forgiveness-oriented

responses. Researchers found that forgiveness was most likely when the value of relationship was high and risk of further harm from the transgressor (exploitation risk) was low.

The nature of a relationship may greatly influence the forgiveness pattern in individuals. Tsang, McCullough, and Fincham (2006) conducted a study investigating the relationship between forgiveness and positive relationship qualities (closeness and commitment). The authors recruited participants who had experienced serious personal transgressions within the last 18 days prior to participation. Initial measures of severity (regarding the experienced personal transgressions) were completed in addition to a baseline measure of forgiveness using the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations scale (TRIM) (McCullough et al., 1998). Closeness, and commitment (i.e. indicate how committed you are to the person who hurt you right now, ranging from 0 (*Not at all committed*) to 6 (*Extremely committed*)) and measures of forgiveness (TRIM) were taken at two-week intervals following the initial assessment. Analysis demonstrated that avoidance and revenge (as measured within the two subscales of the TRIM) were negatively correlated with closeness and commitment to the transgressor. Given this, researchers suggest that forgiveness (that is, the reduction of negative thoughts and emotions such as avoidance and revenge) may promote closeness and commitment.

Likewise, a study on forgiveness in relationships by Karremans and Lange (2004), found evidence that suggests forgiveness is positively correlated with cooperation and a willingness to sacrifice, both accepted as pro-relationship responses. To understand the effect of past transgressions on an individual's intentions toward the transgressor, researchers assigned participants to conditions to recall a time when they either forgave or did not forgive another for a transgression. Further, the participants were asked to bring to mind someone to whom they either felt strongly or weakly committed toward. Researchers found that when forgiveness was

present, partners were more likely to see increases in pro-relationship responses. In addition, forgiveness was correlated with highly committed relationships. Even considering the potential costs of forgiveness in inviting subsequent offending by partners, commitment, closeness, intimacy, and value may be viewed as predictors of forgiveness in relationships.

Remorse and Empathetic Understanding

In strongly committed relationships, individuals often proceed through a series of actions that either further diminish or seek to repair a relationship after a transgression. Commonly, this progression involves an act of confession or expression of remorse from the transgressor. When the transgressor confesses, this communicates acknowledgement for responsibility for their actions.

Gold and Weiner (2000) investigated the influence of remorse and confession in instances of transgressions through imagined scenarios. Remorse consists of a deep regret and guilt for a wrong committed, insinuating that the transgressor has suffered or experienced negative emotions due to the actions he or she has exhibited. Communication (or more specifically, confession) which includes an expression of remorse is hypothesized to be a critical component influencing subsequent judgements by the victim.

Participants were presented with an imagined scenario where the transgressor either confessed with remorse ("she felt absolutely terrible about her behavior") or confessed without remorse. Following this imagined scenario, participants completed measures of Stability ("How likely is it that Catherine would do this crime again?") , Morality ("How moral a person is Catherine?"), Sympathy ("How much sympathy do you feel toward Catherine?"), Forgiveness ("Will you forgive Catherine for what she did?"), Punishment ("What kind of punishment should be given to Catherine?"), Anger ("How angry are you at Catherine?"), and Remorse ("How

much remorse does Catherine feel?") regarding the transgressor. The researchers uncovered a significant main effect of remorse, suggesting that confessions of remorse may lead to more favorable moral judgements by the victim. Specifically, the presence of remorse had a significant effect on measures of Stability, Morality, Sympathy, Forgiveness, Punishment, and perceived Remorse of the transgressor. From this, one may infer that the presence of remorse leads to fewer negative perceptions and emotions of the transgressor by the victim. Communication of remorse, in this case, predicted more favorable views and thoughts regarding the transgressor. One reason behind this trend may be that the communication of guilt and regret (remorse) helps bridge the gap in understanding between a transgressor and the victim. An increase in communication and understanding surrounding the transgression may lead to an decrease in negative thoughts and behaviors toward a transgressor. For example, if the victim and transgressor both come to a verbal agreement that the behavior was wrong, hurtful, and should not be repeated, the victim is less likely to maintain highly negative views regarding the transgressor.

Victims of transgressions tend to underestimate the transgressor's guilt and desire for forgiveness, especially in the absence of confessions or communications that might inform them of a transgressor's emotional experience. Adams and Inesi (2016) randomly assigned participants to recall transgressions from the perspective of either the transgressor or the victim. Participants were asked to write about a time when they did something to harm another (transgressor condition) or someone harmed them (victim condition). The researchers then conducted self-report measurements of Intentionality, Guilt, and Desire for forgiveness. It was found that those in the victim condition were more likely to view an offense as intentional (attributing behavior to motives) even if it was not. This is comparable to the theory of attribution, which holds that individuals are more likely to attribute failures in others to internal characteristics (such as

motives or personality) while attributing their own failures to outside, uncontrollable circumstances (Harvey, Town, & Yarkin, 1981).

In addition to intentionality, Adams and Inesi (2016) reported that victims also underestimated the guilt experienced by transgressors; again, this may be an impediment to forgiveness. The individuals in the victim condition reported that transgressors experience significantly less guilt than transgressor actually reported experiencing. The researchers found support for the hypothesis that there is asymmetry in the cognitive and emotional experience of a transgression between a victim and the transgressor. Lack of understanding between the victim and transgressor may inhibit the forgiveness process and allow for negative thoughts and emotions regarding the transgressor. The growth of understanding between a victim and their transgressor may be a key factor in promoting forgiveness.

Empathy necessitates understanding and sharing the feelings of another, which is a powerful tool in relationships. In victim-transgressor relationships, forgiveness may be more likely when offended individuals or victims develop feelings of empathy toward the transgressor. In a foundational series of research, McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) tested the hypothesis that individuals tend to forgive to the degree that they experience thoughts and emotions of empathy. The researchers asked 239 participants to recall an interpersonal offense and complete measures of perceived apology, affective empathy, forgiveness, conciliatory behaviors, and avoidance behaviors. Analysis of these variables revealed support for an empathy model that suggests the relationship between apology and forgiveness is mediated by empathy. Researchers inferred that receiving an apology may foster feelings of empathy. This in turn fosters forgiveness through the reduction of negative thoughts and emotions towards the transgressor.

This promoting effect of empathy was tested again through a series of studies that included hypothetical scenarios, true recalled offenses, and experimental and correlational research designs (Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet, 2008). In one study, participants were instructed to recall a situation where they either had or had not forgiven the transgressor. Afterwards, participants completed measures that included forgiveness and the perceived personal capability for committing a similar offense (the extent to which participants could see themselves committing a similar transgression). Individuals in this study were more likely to exhibit signs of forgiveness when they could see themselves committing an offense of a similar nature to that which was committed against them.

In another study by Exline et al. (2008), researchers instructed participants to recall a past offense and complete measures regarding the severity of the offense, prior relationship closeness, apology/amends, the extent of forgiveness, their own capability for committing a similar offense, similarity to the transgressor, empathetic understanding, and expressed emotion. The authors found that forgiveness was most prominently linked to empathic perception/understanding and viewing themselves in a similar manner to the transgressor. This personal capability effect was shown to be effective in identifying situations that predict forgiveness. This is similar to perspective taking, which involves taking on the point of view of another to alter your perception of a situation. Exline et al. (2008) demonstrated that individuals who perceive themselves as more capable of committing a similar offense are more likely to show signs of forgiveness. This show of empathy from victims supports the positive relationship between forgiveness and empathetic understanding.

Given the research, both empathy and remorse are shown to individually predict forgiveness and more favorable judgements following a transgression. However, it may be that

lack of communicated remorse may impede the forgiveness process following a transgression even in the presence of empathetic influences.

Current Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of Remorse and Empathy on levels of interpersonal Forgiveness following a transgression. Specifically, the author sought to better understand the influence of communicated Remorse (guilt, regret, and overall negative feelings regarding an individual's previous actions) and elicited perspective-based Empathy on Forgiveness in close, committed relationships through experimental methods. It was hypothesized that: (a) Remorse would be more critical (stronger main effect) to promoting Forgiveness than Empathy, (b) participants would demonstrate the greatest levels of Forgiveness in the condition 1 (Remorse and Empathy) compared to all other conditions, and (c) while Empathy may indeed increase levels of forgiveness following a transgression, this would only occur when combined with Remorse (such as in condition 1- Remorse and Empathy).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Design

This research utilized a 2 (Empathy vs No Empathy) x 2 (Remorse vs No Remorse) between-subjects design with one dependent variable (Forgiveness). The independent variables of Empathy and Remorse were presented to participants through four hypothetical transgression scenarios (four conditions) in an online survey format. The dependent variable, interpersonal Forgiveness, was measured using the TRIM-scale (McCullough et al., 1998), one of the most widely utilized measures in forgiveness research (Davis et al., 2015).

Participants

Participants consisted of 422 (103 males, 319 females) students attending Central Washington University (CWU) in Ellensburg, Washington. Sample size (minimum 180 required) was estimated based on the number of conditions (four) with the power set at .80 and an alpha of .05 (Cohen, 1992). To be eligible for participation in this study, students were required to be enrolled in at least one psychology course at the time of their participation and, for consent purposes, be over the age of 18. Participants volunteered to participate in this study through the Department of Psychology's Sona system. The Sona system is an on-line based participant management software program that provides a way for individuals to volunteer in research conducted by faculty and students in the Psychology Department at Central Washington University. Psychology students at CWU were eligible to earn extra credit points in their courses by participating in the Sona system. Demographic questions for this study were presented at the end of the survey to avoid priming participants and include information such as age, class standing, ethnicity, marital status, and gender (See Table 1 for a summary of the demographic

information). This research was reviewed and authorized by the Central Washington University Human Subjects Review Council on October 20, 2019 (2019-117).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Frequency and Percentages by Age, Class, and Condition (N = 422)

	Condition							
	Remorse & Empathy		Remorse & No Empathy		No Remorse & Empathy		No Remorse & No Empathy	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age								
18-24	96	22.7	101	23.9	96	22.7	101	23.9
25-34	9	2.1	1	0.2	7	1.7	3	0.7
35-44	1	0.2	3	0.7	0	0	1	0.2
45-54	1	0.2	0	0	1	0.2	0	0
55-64	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2
Class								
Freshmen	39	9.2	50	11.8	54	12.8	48	11.4
Sophomore	21	5	18	4.3	13	3.1	18	4.3
Junior	26	6.2	25	6	17	4	26	6.2
Senior	21	5	12	2.8	17	4	14	3.3
Graduate	0	0	0	0	2	0.5	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	1	0.2	0	0
Ethnicity								
White	75	17.8	64	15.2	64	15.2	64	15.2
Hispanic/Latino	14	3.3	13	3.1	24	5.7	23	5.5
Black/AA	9	2.1	6	1.4	4	1	4	1
Native American	3	1	4	1	1	0.2	1	0.2
Asian	4	1	9	2.1	5	1.2	4	1
Pacific Islander	0	0	2	0.5	1	0.2	6	1.4
Other	2	0.5	7	1.7	5	1.2	4	1

Marital Status								
Never Married	97	23	96	22.7	96	22.7	99	22.7
Married	5	1.2	4	0.1	3	0.7	3	0.7
Divorced	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2
Other	5	1.2	5	1.2	5	1.2	5	1.2

Materials/ Measures

Qualtrics survey. A survey was constructed using the online Qualtrics survey program and presented to participants recruited through CWU's Sona system. Once students selected the proposed study on Sona, they were redirected to the Qualtrics site to begin participation. The topic and purpose of the research was presented in general terms ("Interpersonal Prosocial Behaviors of College Aged Individuals") to participants at the beginning of the survey. The use of deception was implemented here in order to prevent potential bias in responding to measures of forgiveness, since forgiveness is often highly encouraged within relationships, community, and one's social life. Participants were presented with the detailed purpose of the research in a debriefing statement at the end of the survey.

Transgression scenarios. Each participant was presented with a prompt, a short hypothetical scenario, and one of four possible outcomes (conditions) relating to the proposed hypothetical scenario. All participants across each of the four conditions were presented with the same prompt and hypothetical scenario before being randomly assigned to one of the four outcomes (conditions). Each outcome included the presence or absence of each of the independent variables (Remorse and Empathy).

Prompt. All participants were instructed to select an individual from their own life to use as a basis for a hypothetical scenario with the following prompt:

Of the individuals in your life, think of one with whom you share a close, committed relationship. This is someone you trust and frequently confide in and may be a close friend, family member, or romantic partner.

To encourage a greater focus on this individual, participants were then instructed to briefly write about this chosen individual (minimum of 250 characters required).

Tell us about this individual (e.g. where you met, how long you have known one another, etc.).

***Hypothetical scenario*.** Subsequently, participants in all conditions then received the same hypothetical scenario, which depicts a betrayal of trusted information that leads to humiliation as the information is spread beyond the trustee.

Imagine that individual discloses personal, trusted information about you to a mutual friend which you find extremely embarrassing and hurtful. The information becomes public, and you quickly become the subject of open ridicule and humiliation in your social circle.

The goal of the hypothetical scenario was to encourage participants to ruminate on how they would feel toward a transgressor following a transgression (in this case, a betrayal of trust). This specific type of transgression was selected for this study due to its generalizability to college students who, by this time in their life, have most likely experienced a betrayal of trust of some variety from a friend, romantic partner, or family member. The intent of this transgression scenario is to present a situation of personal hurt to which most college students would be able to relate.

To encourage rumination over this hypothetical scenario, participants were instructed to write about how this situation would lead them to feel about the transgressor (their chosen individual).

Describe how your friend's actions would make you feel. What emotions do you think you would experience?

***Outcome*.** Following this description of the transgression (hypothetical scenario), participants were then presented with an outcome describing both the victim (the participant) and the transgressor's reactions to the situation, corresponding to their assigned condition (1-Remorse and Empathy, 2-Remorse and No Empathy, 3-No Remorse and Empathy, and 4-No Remorse and No Empathy). The outcome for condition 1 was as follows:

After several days, the individual apologizes and states that he/she feels bad about what they did. Though you are angry and hurt by this betrayal of trust, given the same circumstances, you can understand how you might have done the same.

Empathy. Studies have suggested positive relationships between empathy and forgiveness following a transgression (Fincham et al., 2002; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; McCullough et al., 1997, 1998; Adams & Inesi, 2016). Exline et al. (2008) explored this relationship further and found that perceived similarity to the transgressor predicts greater levels of forgiveness, referred to as personal capability. Meaning, the more closely a victim relates to his transgressor (could imagine themselves committing a similar wrongdoing) the more likely the victim would be to express forgiveness. In the proposed study, statements of personal capability and similarity are presented to the participants to encourage empathic thoughts toward their transgressor. Although Exline et al. (2008) explicitly asked if participants in their study could see themselves committing a similar offense, participants in the proposed study are more subtly encouraged to empathize.

Participants in the Empathy conditions were presented with a situation in which they are encouraged to empathize with the transgressor. Following a description of the transgression

(betrayal of trust), participants were presented with a statement suggesting the presence of personal capability (*Though you are angry and hurt by this betrayal of trust, given the same circumstances, you can understand how you might have done the same.)* (Exline et al., 2008). Participants in the No Empathy conditions were presented with a statement of similar length and detail, but which communicates a lack of empathy and understanding toward the transgressor (*You are angry and hurt by this betrayal of trust. Given the same circumstances, you believe that you would have never betrayed someone in that way.).* The four complete hypothetical transgression scenarios for all four conditions are included in Appendix B.

Remorse. Following a transgression, victims tend to overestimate intent yet underestimate guilt experienced by a transgressor (Adams & Inesi, 2016). Research has indicated that apologies expressing remorse (which communicate feelings of guilt) may be predictors of forgiveness. Gold and Weiner (2000) demonstrated this relationship and found more favorable judgements by victims toward transgressors in situations where there were confessions of guilt with remorse. This suggests that expression of remorse by a transgressor has an effect on the evaluation of the situation from a victim's perspective. Specifically, expressions of remorse lead to more favorable moral judgements toward a transgressor.

In this study, remorse was presented in the form of expression of guilt, regret, and negative emotions regarding the transgressor's actions. Participants in the Remorse conditions were presented with a statement communicating remorse from the transgressor (*After several days, the individual apologizes and states that he/she feels bad about what they did*) (Gold & Weiner, 2000). Participants in the No Remorse conditions were presented with a descriptive statement of similar length but lacking a communication of remorse from the transgressor (*After*

several days, it appears that he/she does not intend to apologize and does not appear to feel bad about his/her actions).

Dependent variable. Forgiveness was measured using the 12-item TRIM scale developed by McCullough et al. (1998) which is designed to measure the reduction of negative emotions, motivations, and thoughts of an individual following a transgression. The TRIM scale consists of an Avoidance subscale (seven items) and a Revenge subscale (five items). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was.86 for the Avoidance subscale and .90 for the Revenge subscale (McCullough, 1998). For this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .93 for the Avoidance subscale and .84 for the Revenge subscale.

In this study, the TRIM was used to measure Forgiveness following the presentation of a hypothetical scenario and one of the four Empathy/Remorse outcomes. Items on the TRIM-scale were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Seven of the items on the scale measure Avoidance Motivations, and the other five measure Revenge Motivations, resulting in two subscale scores. A total score TRIM score was calculated by combining all items. Traditionally, a lower score on the TRIM scale represents lower levels of Avoidance and Revenge and therefore indicates greater levels of forgiveness. Conversely, a higher score on the TRIM scale represents lower levels of forgiveness.

For this study, total Forgiveness scores were reverse coded in the analysis, meaning that the numerical value of responses on the Likert scale would run in the opposite direction as originally indicated on the traditional TRIM. This was done to increase the readability and understanding of the results and visual representations of the data. After reverse coding, a greater Forgiveness score indicated greater levels of Forgiveness (and vice versa).

Demographic variables. Participants answered questions regarding age, class standing, ethnicity, marital status, and gender. These demographic questions were included to better understand how participants fit into the general population. Specifically, this allowed for a secondary analysis of the influence of gender on the relationship between Remorse, Empathy, and Forgiveness suggested by previous research.

Procedure

Participants completed a survey through an online research program (SONA Systems). Following informed consent, participants were prompted to think of an individual in their life with whom they share a close, committed relationship (this could be a friend, family member, or romantic partner). In order to encourage the participants to fully engage in the hypothetical scenario design on the survey, they were asked to describe their chosen individual. With this individual in mind, participants were given a hypothetical scenario involving a betrayal of trust from that individual and asked to describe the emotions they predict they would experience.

Participants were then randomly assigned to one of four outcome conditions: (1) Remorse and Empathy, (2) Remorse and No Empathy, (3) No Remorse and Empathy, or (4) No Remorse and No Empathy. Each condition consisted of a different "outcome" or ending to the hypothetical scenario matching the conditions one through four. Immediately following the hypothetical outcome, participants in each condition responded to two short multiple-choice questions. These questions were designed as an attention check to encourage participants to reread (or read carefully) the outcome of the hypothetical scenario previously presented. Participants must answer both multiple choice questions correctly in order to move forward in the survey. The first question addressed the Remorse/No Remorse aspect of the scenario (*How does your friend feel about his/her actions?*), and the second addressed the Empathy/No

Empathy aspect with a fill-in-the-blank style format (*Please select the option that is most correct (according the scenario). Given the same circumstances...*).

All participants then responded to measures of Forgiveness through the completion of the TRIM-12 Scale (McCullough et al., 1998). Demographic measures (i.e. age, class standing, ethnicity, marital status, and gender) were completed. Participants were also provided with contact information allowing for communication with researchers or available counseling regarding any questions or concerns.

Statistical Analyses

A 2 (Empathy, No Empathy) x 2 (Remorse, No Remorse) between-subjects ANOVA was used to compare the mean Forgiveness (TRIM) scores for the four conditions (Remorse and Empathy, Remorse and No Empathy, No Remorse and Empathy, and No Remorse and No Empathy). It was hypothesized that participants would demonstrate greater levels of Forgiveness in the first condition (1- Remorse with Empathy) compared to all other conditions, followed by the second condition of Remorse but No Empathy (2- Remorse with No Empathy), third condition (3- No Remorse with Empathy), with the fourth condition (4- No Remorse with No Empathy) resulting in the lowest levels of forgiveness.

An additional analysis was done to examine the relationship between Remorse, Empathy, and gender on Forgiveness. A 2 (Empathy, No Empathy) x 2 (Remorse, No Remorse) x 2 (male and female) x between-subjects ANOVA was used to examine the data for potential gender differences in Forgiveness suggested by previous research. It may be that factors such as Remorse and Empathy interact with gender to result in greater or lower levels of forgiveness depending on the gender of the participant (in the victim role).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Four hundred thirty-four participants completed the entire survey. As part of the data cleaning process, several outliers were excluded from the analysis (n = 6). Additionally, because the focus of the gender analysis included only those who identified as male (n = 103) or female (n = 319), participants who indicated "prefer not to answer" (n = 3) or "other" (n = 3) were excluded from the analysis. In total, data from 12 participants were excluded, creating a final sample size of 422 participants (See Table 2 for descriptive statistics).

Prior to analysis, descriptive statistics were assessed for assumptions of normality (Q-Q plotting and assumed given the large sample size) and homogeneity for a two-way (Levene's Test, $F(3, 418) = 1.77$, $p > .05$) and three-way (Levene's Test, $F(7, 414) = 1.68$, $p > .05$) analysis of variance. Evaluating all assumptions as met, fundamental data analysis was then conducted using a two-way (Remorse and Empathy) and three-way (Remorse, Empathy, and gender) analysis of variance.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: Forgiveness Scores by Condition and Gender (N = 422)

Condition	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Remorse & Empathy			
Male	30.64	11.25	28
Female	28.67	8.57	79
Total	29.19	9.33	107
Remorse & No Empathy			
Male	31.88	7.98	26
Female	30.57	8.05	79
Total	30.90	8.01	105
No Remorse & Empathy			
Male	27.50	9.30	28
Female	28.59	7.33	76
Total	28.30	7.87	104
No Remorse & No Empathy			
Male	25.76	8.57	21
Female	27.27	8.39	85
Total	26.97	8.41	106

Remorse, Empathy, and Forgiveness

A two-way analysis of variance yielded a significant main effect of Remorse on Forgiveness ($F(1, 418) = 8.59$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .02$), indicating that participants in conditions of Remorse ($M = 30.06$, $SD = 8.71$) demonstrated greater levels of Forgiveness compared to participants in conditions of No Remorse ($M = 27.59$, $SD = 8.26$) (see Figure 1). The main effect of Empathy on Forgiveness was non-significant ($F(1, 418) = 0.05$, $p = .809$, $\eta^2 = .00$), indicating that participants in the Empathy conditions ($M = 28.75$, $SD = 8.63$) demonstrated similar levels of Forgiveness compared to participants in conditions of No Empathy ($M = 28.92$, $SD = 8.43$) (see Figure 2). The interaction effect of Remorse and Empathy on Forgiveness was non-significant, ($F(1, 418) = 3.42$, $p = .065$, $\eta^2 = .01$) (see Figure 3).

While the interaction of Remorse and Empathy was not significant, a comparison of means revealed a significant difference in Forgiveness between condition 2 (Remorse and No Empathy) (M = 30.90, SD = 8.01) and condition 4 (No Remorse and No Empathy) (M = 26.97, SD = 8.41), (t(104, 105) = 3.92, p = .004) (no other pairwise comparisons were significant). Though it was hypothesized that participants in condition 1 (Remorse and Empathy) would demonstrate the greatest levels of Forgiveness, the data did not support this hypothesis. Overall, the highest levels of Forgiveness were found in condition 2 (Remorse and No Empathy , M = 30.90, SD = 8.01), followed by condition 1 (Remorse and Empathy, M = 29.19, SD = 9.33), and condition 3 (No Remorse and Empathy) (M = 28.30, SD = 7.87), with condition 4 (No Remorse and No Empathy) resulting in the lowest levels of Forgiveness (M = 26.97, SD = 8.41) (see Figure 4).

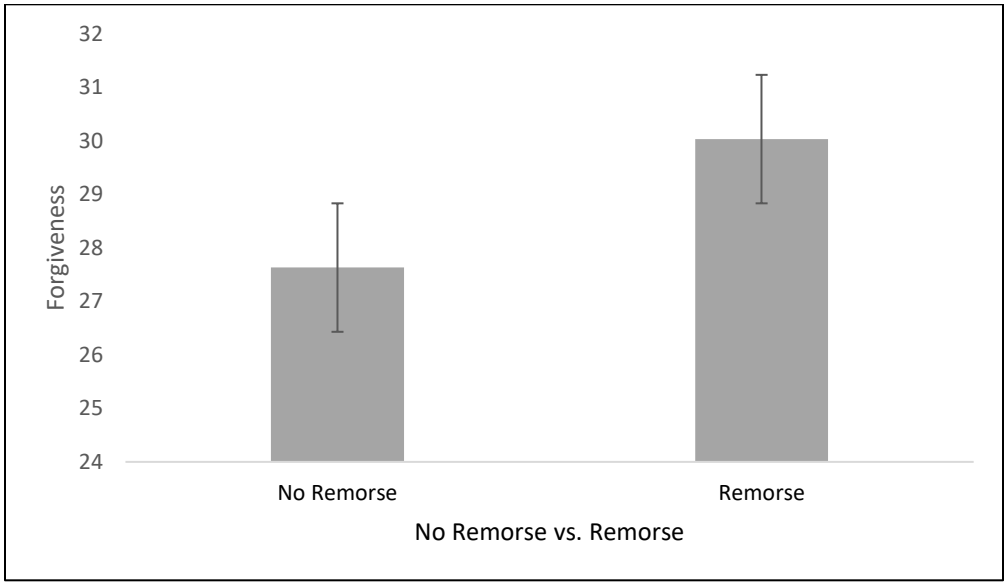

Figure 1. Main effect of Remorse.

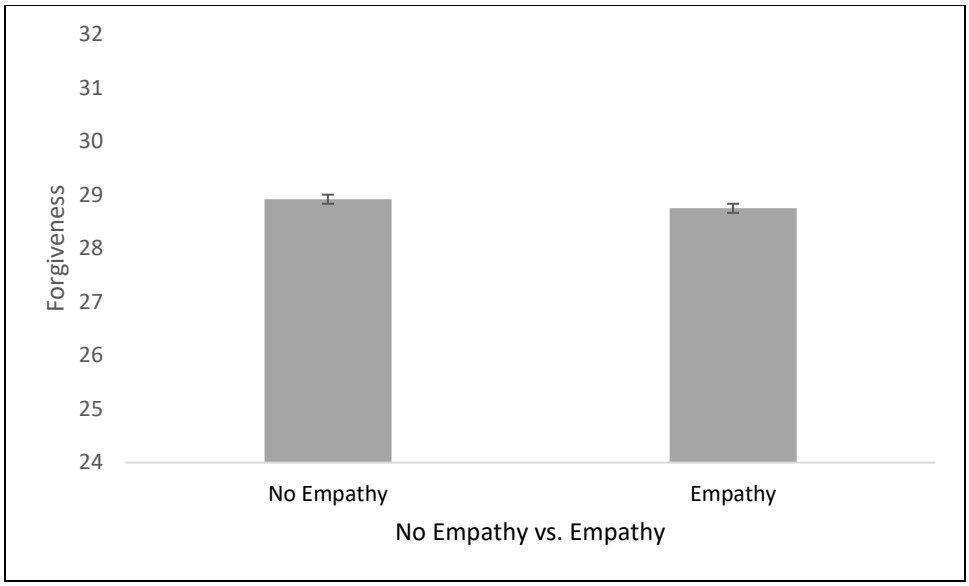

Figure 2. Main effect of Empathy

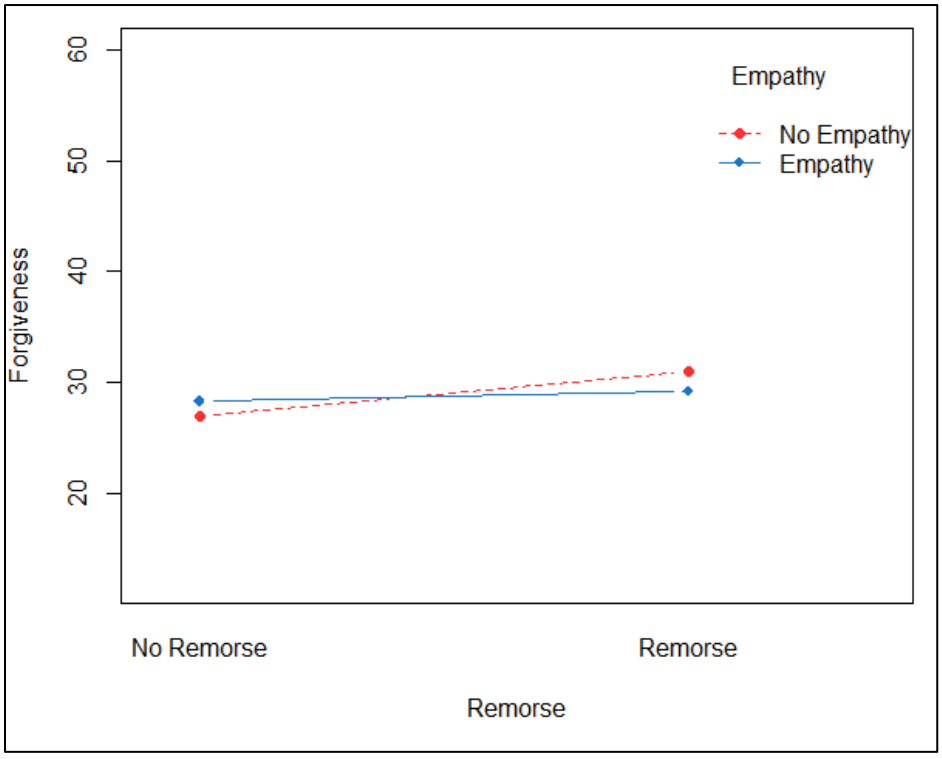

Figure 3. Interaction plot of Remorse and Empathy.

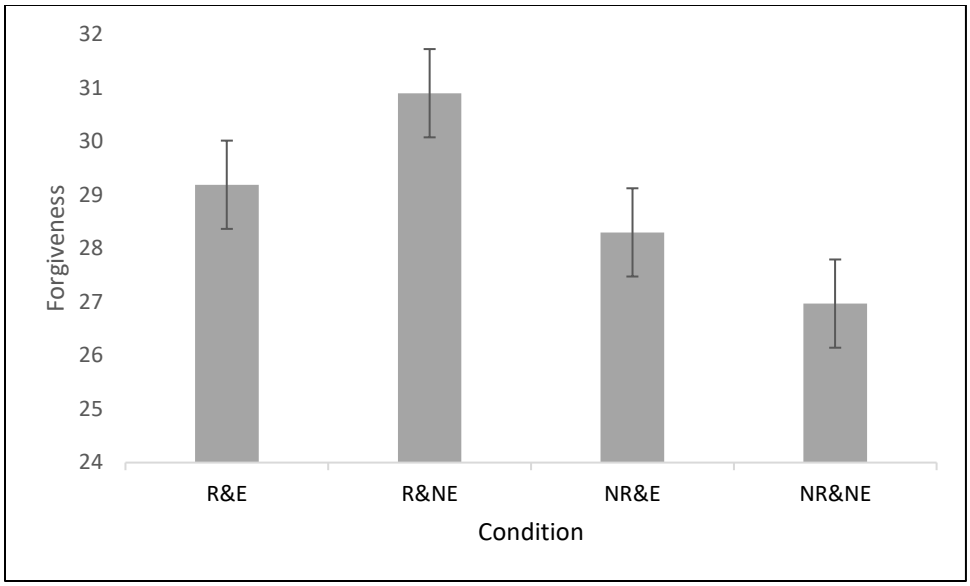

Figure 4. Forgiveness means by condition.

Gender

A three-way ANOVA revealed the main effect of gender was non-significant ($F(1, 414) = 0.03$, $p = .859$ $\eta^2 = .00$). Across conditions, males ($M = 29.11$, $SD = 9.59$) demonstrated similar levels of Forgiveness compared with females ($M = 28.75$, $SD = 8.16$) (see Figure 5).

The interaction of gender and Remorse was non-significant, $F(1, 414) = 2.34$, $p = .127$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (see Figure 5). In conditions of Remorse, males ($M = 31.24$, $SD = 9.74$) demonstrated slightly greater levels of Forgiveness than female participants ($M = 29.62$, $SD = 8.34$). In conditions of No Remorse, however, females ($M = 27.89$, $SD = 7.91$) demonstrated slightly greater Forgiveness than males ($M = 26.76$, $SD = 8.94$) (see Figure 6).

The interaction of gender and Empathy was non-significant, $F(1, 414) = 0.08$, $p = .780$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (see Figure 6). In conditions of Empathy, females ($M = 28.63$, $SD = 7.96$) demonstrated similar levels of Forgiveness to male participants ($M = 29.07$, $SD = 10.34$). In conditions of No Empathy, females ($M = 28.86$, $SD = 8.37$) demonstrated similar levels of Forgiveness compared

to males (M = 29.15, SD = 8.72) (see Figure 7) . The interaction of Remorse, Empathy, and gender was also non-significant ($F(1, 414) = .004$, $p = .950$, $\eta^2 = .00$).

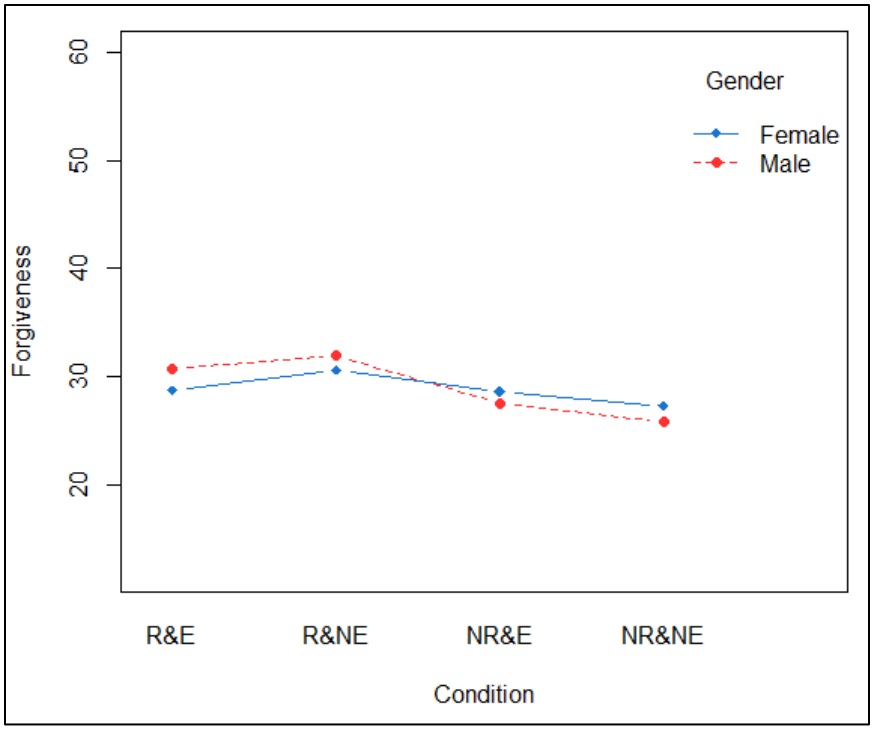

Figure 5. Interaction plot of Condition and Gender.

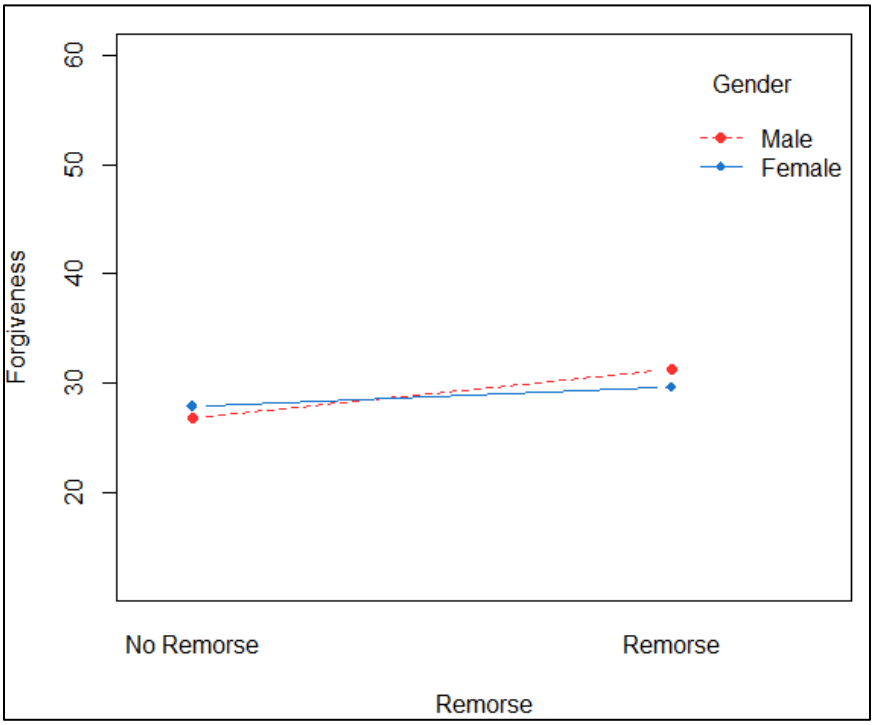

Figure 6. Interaction plot of Remorse and Gender

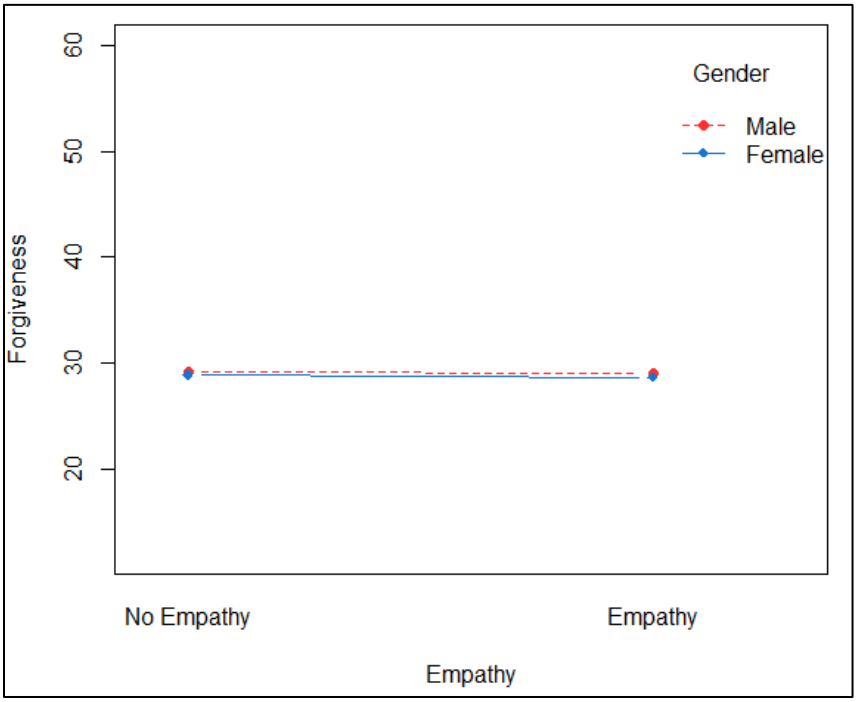

Figure 7. Interaction plot of Empathy and Gender.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Remorse, Empathy, and Forgiveness

Remorse vs. Empathy. Results suggest that communicated Remorse is indeed more critical to promoting forgiveness than Empathy (or personal capability, as presented in this study). It was hypothesized that Empathy would increase levels of Forgiveness, but that this effect would only be significant (it was not) when combined with Remorse, as in condition 1. This hypothesis was not supported, and the results indicate that Empathy was not necessary for increasing levels of Forgiveness following a transgression. Interestingly, the conditions with the highest (condition 1) and *lowest* (condition 4) levels of Forgiveness were conditions of No Empathy. In fact, Remorse seemed to be slightly more influential in promoting Forgiveness in the *absence* of Empathy (condition 2 and 4) rather than when Empathy was present.

When Empathy was present, Remorse had less of an influence on Forgiveness scores of participants (though it was hypothesized that Empathy would *increase* levels of Forgiveness only when combined with Remorse). Not only was there no significant effect of Empathy on Forgiveness, the presence of Empathy slightly reduced the promoting effect of Remorse on Forgiveness. In conditions of No Empathy, the presence of Remorse versus No Remorse resulted in a 3.93 average increase in Forgiveness scores. In conditions of Empathy, however, the influence of Remorse versus No Remorse resulted in an average increase of only 0.89 in Forgiveness scores.

When provided with little “inside” information as to a transgressor’s motive, an expression of remorse may play an important role when contemplating feelings of forgiveness. This may help to explain why a statement of personal capability (“given the same circumstances,

you can understand how you might have done the same") might lessen the effect of Remorse on Forgiveness.

In conditions of Empathy, participants were provided with arguably contradicting information about their own feelings: "*though* you are angry and hurt…you can understand how *you might have done the same*". This particular phrasing may have communicated to participants that their own feelings of anger and hurt are less important than their own personal capability of committing a similar offense. It is almost as if one is saying, "I know this person hurt your feelings, but you've hurt other people too". This may be in direct contrast to the emotions and thoughts experienced by the participants (and the desire for their feelings to be affirmed), resulting in lower scores of Forgiveness.

In conditions of No Empathy, the slight change of phrasing and emphasis to a more solid affirmation of one's feelings ("You *are* angry and hurt…") may align more accurately with the experienced emotions of the participant. Further affirming desirable thoughts, the No Empathy conditions communicate that "you believe you would have never betrayed someone in that way". Supporters of the fundamental attribution error might agree that when it comes to the actions of others, individuals are more likely to explain their negative behavior with intrinsic motivations or flaws in personal character (Harvey, Town, & Yarkin, 1981). When it comes to one's own actions, they may be more likely to attribute their failures to uncontrollable, situational factors instead. Research suggests that victims are less likely to forgive when they view the transgression as intentional. Not only this, but rumination over the transgression is also associated with lower levels of forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010). The affirmative phrasing of the No Empathy statement may have encouraged such rumination on the transgression, whereas the phrasing of the Empathy statement may have been perceived as more dismissive of one's hurt

feelings. Therefore, a statement of personal capability in the Empathy conditions may indeed have lessened the promoting effect of Remorse by creating a hostile environment for participants' emotional reactions to a betrayal. Participants may find the statements in the No Empathy conditions to be both more affirmative of their feelings, in turn leading them to feel more agreeable (another characteristic associated with increased forgiveness) toward the transgressor.

It has also been suggested that agreeableness may mediate the effect of apology/compensation on forgiveness, and that gestures of conciliation may facilitate increased forgiveness toward transgressors (Tabak, McCullough, Luna, Bono, & Berry, 2012). Meaning, conciliatory gestures are more effective when the transgressor is perceived as highly agreeable. If the statements in the No Empathy condition promote feelings of agreeableness, it may make sense as to why Remorse is more effective in those conditions.

Perhaps instead of contributing to positive feelings towards the transgressor, the statement meant to elicit empathy created a disagreeable affinity between the participant and the transgressor. Meaning, the participants may prefer to be disassociated from the transgressor and their crimes, as opposed to being encouraged to empathize with them. Individuals may find it easier to let go of motivations of avoidance and revenge toward someone they could not relate with, rather than someone they easily empathize with. Especially when a betrayal comes from a person with whom one shares a close relationship with, individuals may prefer to disassociate themselves from the transgressor and their actions. This may be essential, as the level of closeness and commitment a victim feels toward the transgressor may influence forgiveness (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002). Encouraging participants to consider their own personal capability (as was done in the Empathy conditions) may have prompted negative self-

focused feelings, perhaps reminding them of their own shame and shortcomings (Exline & Fisher, 2005). Reminding participants of their own capability to commit wrongdoings may have simply had the opposite of the desired effect, and instead made them harsher in their judgements due to a motivation to distance themselves from transgressive behavior. In a series of studies by Exline et al. (2008), researchers found that participants had great difficulty generating perceptions of personal capability, and that their sense of personal capability failed to predict forgiving attitudes.

Another possible explanation is that the statement of personal capability in conditions of Empathy merely distracts from the expression of Remorse. The expression of Remorse was presented first, followed by the Empathy statement. It may be that the thoughts or emotions elicited by the Empathy statement lessened the amount of rumination or time spent ruminating on the Remorse of the transgressor. Instead, participants may have been more concerned with the Empathy statement and its implications for their own behavior.

An apology or expression of remorse may play a more important role in the decision to forgive (or not) when there is no other information on which to base their evaluation. Thus, when Remorse is presented as the only sensible reason for forgiveness (such as when there is No Empathy), it may be that Remorse is more heavily weighed (than other social-cognitive factors) as an important motivation for Forgiveness to the victim. In this case, this is reflected by a significant difference between the Remorse and No Empathy condition and the No Remorse and No Empathy condition and the main effect of Remorse.

Remorse when combined with Empathy only results in a small (non-significant) increase in Forgiveness. When there is No Empathy, the promoting effect of Remorse on Forgiveness is significantly greater (it is between conditions of No Empathy where the data indicates the

greatest difference in scores of Forgiveness across all conditions, due to the variable of Remorse). It is possible that Empathy has a slight moderating effect on the strength of the relationship between Remorse and Forgiveness. Though it was hypothesized that the effect of Empathy would only be significant in the presence of Remorse, it is possible that a variation of the opposite is likely: the effect of Remorse is only significant in the *absence* of Empathy.

Though there is support in Forgiveness research to suggest a positive correlation with empathy, this relationship is not firmly established. Forgiveness may be partly mediated by empathy (Exline et al., 2008), but this does not always reflect a direct relationship. Even when thought to be more prominent in women, empathy has been known to predict forgiveness in men but not in women (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). The results reflect the "women" aspect of this pattern, as there was no significant effect of either gender or Empathy on Forgiveness. The greatest increase in Forgiveness is seen between the conditions of Remorse and No Remorse when both are combined with No Empathy (see Figure 4).

Remorse vs Apology. While remorse is understood as a deep guilt or regret for an action committed, an apology may be considered the outcome of expressing that regret and ultimately acknowledging one's guilt. Commonly, the latter is expressed as some form of "I am sorry". While some may consider the two interchangeable, this is not necessarily the case. Remorse is the experience of true emotions regarding an event and does not necessarily include an explicit apology (Gold & Weiner, 2000). Likewise, one may employ an apology with no presence of true remorse. Essentially, one can experience or perform one without the other.

For the purposes of this study, it was decided that remorse could not be assumed by the presence of an apology. Therefore, as presented in the hypothetical scenarios used, remorse would be the variable of interest and indeed the label for the information communicated in the

scenario outcome due to the term's more frequent use within forgiveness research (Gold & Weiner, 2000). This was done in order to more clearly attribute potential results to the expression of remorse rather than the presence of an apology (or the combination of the two).

Though there is an established difference between the two, there is also great overlap which makes it difficult to differentiate between which one is truly contributing toward forgiveness. In other words, is it more important that one obviously *feels* sorry, or that they *say* they are sorry? The presence of an apology (or an "I'm sorry" statement) may communicate somewhat different intentions and experienced emotions than an explicit description of feelings of regret and guilt (remorse) as presented in the hypothetical scenarios used.

Gender

Though the effect of gender on Forgiveness did not reach significance at the .05 level, the potential implication of an interaction between Remorse and gender is intriguing (see Figure 5). There is some research to suggest that females are generally more forgiving than males (trait forgiveness) (Fehr et al., 2010; Hoffman, 1977; Miller et al., 2008) and that females may be more empathetic than males (Toussaint & Webb, 2005), also contributing to greater forgiveness. While the results were non-significant, it was noted that in conditions of Remorse, males demonstrated greater forgiveness. Yet, in conditions of No Remorse (no indication that the transgressor felt bad about what they did), females demonstrated greater forgiveness. Further research may be needed to examine the importance of remorse (or an apology, as there is a great amount of overlap) to males versus the importance of remorse to females.

It is possible that females are more consistent in ratings of forgiveness despite the presence or absence of remorse due to societal pressures to forgive. In fact, some of the controversy over the suggested gender difference in forgiveness research stems from the idea

that females may feel more pressured to be forgiving in all situations due to the stereotype of being the more kind and nurturing gender (Miller et al., 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). In other words, an explanation may be that females are simply more motivated (or encouraged) to forgive, rather than being more forgiving by nature. Overall, there is little research that suggests a relationship between demographics and forgiveness, and this study bolsters the theory that gender does not correlate with forgiveness.

Limitations

Participants. This study utilized an available pool of college students taking psychology courses at CWU. There are several limitations associated with using college students as participants in research studies.

The demographics of a college campus do not reflect that of demographics off campus, resulting in low generalizability to other demographics. Simply, college students are not representative of the general population. College students participating in research studies are often freshmen taking introductory psychology courses. Most are young (See Table 1) and still developing their sense of identity, often exhibiting characteristics of late adolescents (high schoolers) and may not necessarily represent an adult population accurately. In this study, almost half of the participants were freshmen (45.2%). This same issue of low generalizability due to lack of equal representation applies to diversity in culture and ethnicity as well. Even generalization across gender is often made difficult due to the disproportionate ratio of female participants (N = 319) to male participants (N = 103). Participants from undergraduate psychology courses are often overwhelmingly White, female, freshmen. Demographic variables such as age is suggested to have a significant yet small effect on forgiveness, indicating that

individuals may become more forgiving as they age but this is not strongly supported by research (Fehr et al., 2010).

Hypothetical design. A challenging aspect of forgiveness research is the availability and accessibility of "real life data". Due to the lack of control when gathering data in the field, forgiveness researchers often resort to the use of hypothetical scenarios in a laboratory or online research settings. This allows for greater consistency and control over the severity of transgressions, time elapsed, and limits potential extraneous variables. Despite the popularity of this method, there are obvious drawbacks.

Most importantly, transgressions in hypothetical scenarios are unlikely to elicit the same level of emotion and involvement (and thus, accuracy of data) as real-life transgressions. The current study included measures to counteract this concern, such as an emphasis on rumination over the hypothetical scenario. Recall that participants were instructed to write about their chosen individual (and eventual transgressor) as well as how the imagined betrayal would make them feel. Without control over the nature of the transgression scenario presented to participants, the experience of the transgression may have varied a great deal in category and severity. In other words, if there is little or no specification of the nature of the hypothetical transgression (in this case, a betrayal of trusted information), the elicitation of a transgression experienced by participants would lack control and consistency among participants. Fortunately, there is evidence that results can be generalized from hypothetical to "real life" transgressions and can be replicated across both contexts (Tabak et al., 2012) and there has been great success using hypothetical design in forgiveness research.

Ordering of independent variables. Within the hypothetical transgression scenario presented, participants were presented with statements of Remorse (or No Remorse) followed by

the statement of Empathy (or No Empathy). It is important to note that the ordering of the two independent variables remained the same for all participants – Remorse, and then Empathy – which may be another potential limitation of methodology. To address this concern, counterbalancing within conditions should be implemented when presenting Remorse and Empathy, with a randomized half of participants in each condition presented with Remorse (or No Remorse) *before* Empathy (or No Empathy) and vice versa. Randomizing the order in which the independent variables are presented may help to counter potential ordering effects within the hypothetical scenario method.

Future Directions

It is of vital importance that future research addresses the apparent holes in our understanding of human forgiveness. It is strongly established that forgiveness is not a result of a single, powerful factor, but is instead a network of many influences.

Trait versus situation. Forgiveness may be measured as a personality trait (this is referred to as trait forgiveness, which measures the degree to which an individual tends to forgive across situations, time, and relationships) or as state forgiveness (the extent to which a person forgives in response to a specific transgression or situation (Fehr et al., 2010). To measure trait forgiveness, psychologists evaluate participants' responses to questions and scenarios regarding forgiveness. The dimension of state forgiveness is most often measured by recalling a specific past offense and rating participants' responses to the particular situation. This type of measure is common when investigating the various factors that could inhibit or predict forgiveness, as state forgiveness varies to a greater degree than trait forgiveness.

This study did not include a measure of trait forgiveness, hence it is difficult to determine if baseline measures of trait forgiveness influenced participants' state forgiveness following the transgression scenario.

Does trait forgiveness mitigate the influence of situational factors? Likely not, but this theory has yet to be solidly established. It appears that traits and personality may be used to predict levels of forgiveness, but that situational factors result in stronger, more accurate prognosis (Blatt & Wertheim, 2015, Fehr et al., 2010). A more precise distinction regarding the extent to which both trait and situational factors contribute to (or conflict with) forgiveness *together* would be instrumental in expanding our current understanding of how these two types of measurements may interact. Blatt and Wertheim (2015) would argue that a multifactorial approach to predicting forgiveness is far more reliable and accurate than using measures of trait forgiveness. However, it is unclear to what extent an individual's trait forgiveness (their tendency to forgive across situations, time, and relationships) may influence one's forgiveness in response to a specific transgression. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of Empathy and Remorse on state (or situational) forgiveness; however, trait forgiveness should be considered in future research.

The timeline. Practically, there is interest in the inquiry of when, why, and how individuals forgive. One can consider forgiveness to be a transformation of sorts, the migration from a state of one set of emotions to another. In this considering this view, it may be debated whether the "when" dictates the extent of forgiveness. Consider two individuals who are victims of an offense. While one may take weeks or even months to experience a reduction in avoidant and revengeful feelings toward the transgressor, the other may experience this transition or process of forgiveness in only a few days. Does the difference in the timeline of transition define

the extent to which both individuals are considered forgiving? We might assume that it is obvious that a shorter transition reflects greater forgiveness. However, it may be that our long-term grudge holder experiences the greatest reduction in malevolent emotions compared with the quick forgiver, only that this transition takes more time. Logically, a longer time in transition may result in greater end forgiveness. An analysis of popular correlates of forgiveness revealed no effect of time (Fehr et al., 2010), yet McCullough et al. (2007) would argue that forgiveness increases over time due to decreases in rumination.

In this study, all participants were required to respond to measures of forgiveness immediately following the presentation of a hypothetical transgression committed against them with little time to ruminate. Considering the potential influence of time elapsed from the transgression, it may important to compare forgiveness measures between participants who were allowed a greater rumination period and those whose forgiveness measures were taken immediately.

It is not well understood if forgiveness improves as transition time increases and is a difficult facet to investigate for several reasons. First and foremost, it would be challenging to measure (let alone manipulate) the rate at which an individual experiences the transition to forgiveness. Logically, one might employ a longitudinal design to address this challenge but would likely find that it would be difficult to control outside influences that may occur over the course of the transition (additional offenses, relationships maintenance or neglect, etc.) and thus establish a direct relationship. To complicate matters further, recall that rumination may inhibit forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010). From this perspective, a quick transition might be more beneficial for both the victim and transgressor, but may be complicated by the variable severity of the offense committed. Transgressions studies often examine offenses that are minor in severity,

though real-life harms are likely more painful. In the context of forgiveness research, individuals who experience a longer rumination time between the occurrence of the offense and the measurement of forgiveness might be more forgiving if the transgression is of minor severity. Similarly, increased rumination time might result in less forgiveness in the aftermath of a more severe transgression (McCullough et al., 2007).

Deciding to forgive. Forgiveness in research is considered to be a process rather than a single action. After all, it appears that ingredients of forgiveness are many and far more complicated than is generally understood. Despite this, forgiveness is often treated as a decision that is made, implying that there is a point to which the scales tip in one direction or another. After all, it is more common to ask one other "do you forgive me?" rather than ask "how much do you forgive me?". Realistically, we are more often asked if we *have* forgiven someone rather than *how much* we have forgiven them. Though research has made leaps and bounds of progress in identifying contributing and inhibiting factors, there is a lack of clarity in understanding whether forgiveness is experienced as an action that is taken or not taken, or whether forgiveness is always given but measured in variable amounts.

This study utilized the TRIM scale McCullough, 1998) which measures motivations of avoidance and revenge. Essentially, this measurement addresses the extent to which one feels forgiving but did not address whether participants made a cognitive decision to forgive (or not). Simply, the measure of forgiveness did not explicitly ask participants whether they would forgive this individual. While this study explored levels of forgiveness in response to a hypothetical transgression, it did not examine the decision to forgive (or not). This distinction may be important when considering the potential differences between the emotional experience

of forgiveness (as measured by an instrument such as the TRIM scale) and the more explicit cognitive "decision" to forgive versus emotional.

Additional research is needed to gain understanding of when forgiveness (the reduction of negative emotions toward a transgressor) truly becomes more or less complete forgiveness ("I forgive them"). There are likely cases in which a victim may make a great effort to grant a transgressor forgiveness, yet still harbor a grudge or experience malevolent feelings even when they may not wish to. Davis et al. (2015) point out the weak research base surrounding making a decision to forgive, which was the motivation behind the development of the Decision to Forgive Scale (DTFS). Within forgiveness, there may be an important distinction between the emotional experience of forgiveness and the cognitive decision to forgive (Lichtenfeld, Buechner, Maier, & Fernandez-Capo, 2015). Essentially, there is a lack of research regarding forgiveness as a cognitive decision versus forgiveness as a variable emotional state.

Conclusion

Although the nature of forgiveness as a more abstract concept makes it difficult to make confident assessments regarding contributing factors and components, the research has yielded notable results. The current study supports the theory that remorse is a significant contributing factor in promoting forgiveness, though further research is needed to understand the mechanics behind this relationship. While empathy is a recurring interest within forgiveness research, it is inconclusive whether empathy does indeed promote forgiveness as suggested in existing literature. Gender played no notable role in in overall forgiveness across conditions, but this was not surprising giving the lack of support for the theory of demographic influence. Despite having many facets yet to be fully understood, forgiveness is perceived to have great benefits within interpersonal relationships and social networks. Forgiveness remains a desirable object of

investigation and resides in a growing pool of scholarly attention as an essential social-cognitive process.

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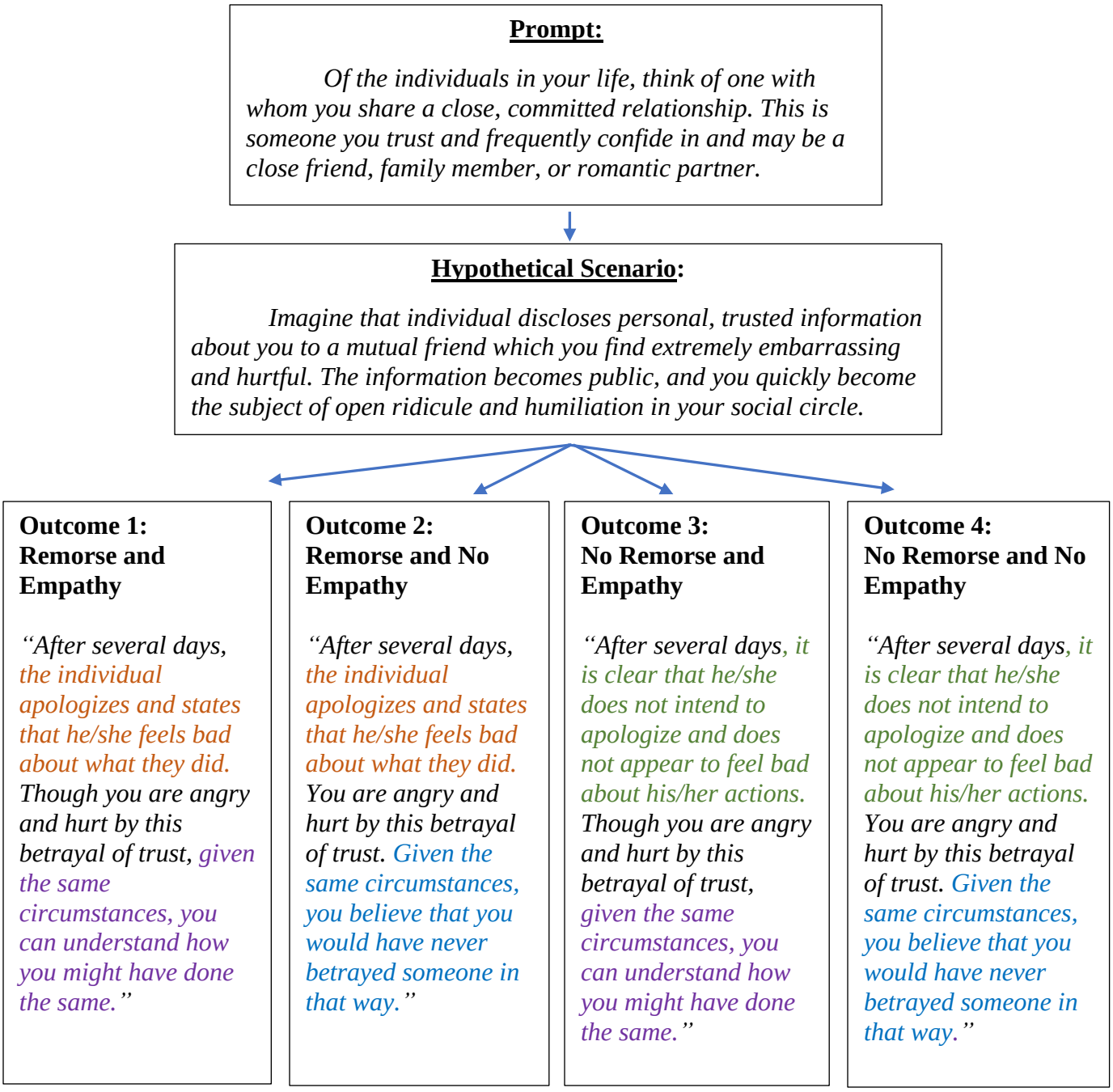
APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Qualtrics Survey Flowchart



APPENDIX B

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale 12-Item Form (TRIM-12)

For the following questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.

1= Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I'll make him/her pay. (R)
2. I keep as much distance between us as possible. (A)
3. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her. (R)
4. I live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around. (A)
5. I don't trust him/her. (A)
6. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves. (R)
7. I find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her. (A)
8. I avoid him/her. (A)
9. I'm going to get even. (R)
10. I cut off the relationship with him/her. (A)
11. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable. (R)
12. I withdraw from him/her. (A)

Note: Items on the Avoidance and Revenge Subscales are denoted with (A) and (R), respectively.

APPENDIX C

Qualtrics Survey

Start of Block: Consent statement

Q25
Welcome! You are currently participating in the "Interpersonal Prosocial Behaviors of College Aged Individuals" survey.

Please read the following information about this research study and click the “I accept” button at the bottom of your screen if you are interested in participating.

What you should know about this study:

- You are being asked to join a research study.
- This consent form explains the research study and your part in the study.
- Please read it carefully and take as much time as you need.
- Ask questions about anything you do not understand now, or when you think of them later.
- You are a volunteer. If you do join the study and change your mind later, you may quit before, during, or right after testing without fear of penalty or loss of benefits.

Why is this research being done?
The primary purpose of this research is to add to existing knowledge on interpersonal prosocial behaviors of college aged individuals and their peers. Authors are interested in examining what factors may contribute to specific prosocial behaviors in the face of challenging hypothetical situations.

Who can take part in this study?
If you are a student at Central Washington University and at least 18 years old, you qualify for this study.

What will happen if you join this study?
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete one computer-based survey in a single session (this can be done on campus or on a personal device at your convenience).

What are the risks or discomforts of the study?
You may choose not to answer certain questions in the survey. The information provided may cause some emotional discomfort due to the personal nature of the questions and hypothetical scenarios presented. If at any point you feel uncomfortable and wish to leave the study, you may do so at any time without fear of penalty or loss of benefits. There may be discomforts that are not yet known. You are encouraged to contact the investigators with any questions and concerns regarding this study.

Are there benefits to being in the study?

Since the purpose of this research is to add to existing knowledge on interpersonal prosocial behaviors, taking this study has potential societal benefits. Your participation in this study may help others in the future. For example, this study may help university professionals and researchers better understand socially related behaviors of college aged students.

What are your options if you do not want to be in the study?
You do not have to join this study. If you do not join, it will not affect your grade in any class or any of your privileges as a CWU student.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
The study procedures will be provided at no cost to you.

Will you be paid if you join this study?
You will not be paid for joining this study.

Can you leave the study early?
You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later. If you wish to stop at any time, please tell us right away. Leaving this study early will not affect your standing at CWU in any way, nor it result in any penalty or loss of benefits.
If you leave the study early, the investigator may use information already collected from you.

What information about you will be kept private and what information may be given out?
Reasonable and appropriate safeguards have been used in the creation of the web-based surveys to maximize the confidentiality and security of your responses; however, when using information technology, it is never possible to guarantee complete privacy.

What other things should you know about this research study?
a. What is the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and how does it protect you?
This study has been reviewed by the CWU Human Subject Review Council. HSRC is made up of faculty from many different departments, ethicists, nurses, scientists, non-scientists and people from the local community. The HSRC's purpose is to review human research studies and to protect the rights and welfare of the people participating in those studies. You may contact the HSRC if you have questions about your rights as a participant or if you think you have not been treated fairly. The HSRC office number is (509) 963-3115.

b. What do you do if you have questions about the study?

Email the principal investigator, Molly Mortensen, at MortensenMo@cwu.edu or faculty advisor, Dr. Mary Radeke, at Mary.Radeke@cwu.edu.

c. What should you do if you are injured, ill or emotionally upset as a result of being in this study?

If you have an urgent problem related to your participation in this study, call the Student Medical and Counseling Clinic at 963-1391 (counseling).
This study is not able to offer financial compensation nor to absorb the costs of medical treatment should you be injured as a result of participating in this research. However, the services at the Student Medical and Counseling Clinic will be open to you as they are to all students.

What does your agreement on this consent form mean?
By clicking "I agree" to this consent form, you are not giving up any legal rights. Your agreement means that you understand the study plan, have been able to ask questions about the information given to you in this form, and you are willing to participate under the conditions we have described.

You can ask questions about the research by contacting the primary investigator (MortensenMo@cwu.edu) and assisting faculty (Mary.Radeke@cwu.edu). You may also contact the CWU Human Protections Administrator if you have questions about your rights as a participant or if you think you have not been treated fairly. The HSRC office number is (509) 963-3115.

Click the "I accept" button at the bottom of your screen if you are interested in participating.

☐ I agree (1)

☐ I do not agree (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Please read the following information about this research study and click the "I accept" button a... = I do not agree

End of Block: Consent statement

Start of Block: Prompt/Hypothetical Scenario

Q1 *Of the individuals in your life, think of one with whom you share a close, committed relationship. This is someone you trust and frequently confide in. For example, this may be a close friend, family member, or romantic partner.*

Q28 Tell us about this individual (e.g. where you met, how long you have known one another, etc.).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q2 *Imagine this individual discloses personal, trusted information about you to a mutual friend which you find extremely embarrassing and hurtful. The information becomes public, and you quickly become the subject of ridicule and humiliation in your social circle.*

Q29 Describe how your friend's actions would make you feel. What emotions do you think you would experience?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Block: Prompt/Hypothetical Scenario

Start of Block: Outcome R&E

Q3 *After several days, the individual apologizes and states that he/she feels bad about what they did. Though you are angry and hurt by this betrayal of trust, given the same circumstances, you can understand how you might have done the same.*

Q31 Regarding the outcome you just read, how does your friend feel about his/her actions?

- He/she feels neutral (1)
- He/she does not appear to feel bad about his/her actions (2)
- He/she feels like you overreacted (3)
- He/she feels bad about what they did (4)

Q35 Regarding the outcome you just read, select the option that is most correct.

Given the same circumstances...

- ...you cannot believe that someone could be so mean. (1)
- ...you believe that you would have never have betrayed someone in that way. (2)
- ...you can understand how you might have done the same. (3)
- ...you would have definitely acted in the same way. (4)

End of Block: Outcome R&E

Start of Block: Outcome R&NE

Q4 *After several days, the individual apologizes and states that he/she feels bad about what they did. You are angry and hurt by this betrayal of trust. Given the same circumstances, you believe that you would have never betrayed someone in that way.*

Q32 Regarding the outcome you just read, how does your friend feel about his/her actions?

- He/she feels neutral (1)
- He/she does not appear to feel bad about his/her actions (2)
- He/she feels like you overreacted (3)
- He/she feels bad about what they did (4)

Q38 Regarding the outcome you just read, select the option that is most correct.

Given the same circumstances...

- ...you cannot believe that someone could be so mean. (1)
- ...you believe that you would have never betrayed someone in that way. (2)
- ...you can understand how you might have done the same. (3)
- ...you would have definitely acted in the same way. (4)

End of Block: Outcome R&NE

Start of Block: Outcome NR&E

Q5 *After several days, it is clear that he/she does not intend to apologize and does not appear to feel bad about his/her actions. Though you are angry and hurt by this betrayal of trust, given the same circumstances, you can understand how you might have done the same.*

Q33 Regarding the outcome you just read, how does your friend feel about his/her actions?

- He/she feels neutral (1)
- He/she does not appear to feel bad about his/her actions (2)
- He/she feels like you overreacted (3)
- He/she feels bad about what they did (4)

Q39 Regarding the outcome you just read, select the option that is most correct.

Given the same circumstances...

- ...you cannot believe that someone could be so mean. (1)
- ...you believe that you would have never betrayed someone in that way. (2)
- ...you can understand how you might have done the same. (3)
- ...you would have definitely acted in the same way. (4)

End of Block: Outcome NR&E

Start of Block: Outcome NR&NE

Q26 *After several days, it is clear that he/she does not intend to apologize and does not appear to feel bad about his/her actions. You are angry and hurt by this betrayal of trust. Given the same circumstances, you believe that you would have never betrayed someone in that way.*

Q34 How does your friend feel about his/her actions?

- He/she feels neutral (1)
- He/she does not appear to feel bad about his/her actions (2)
- He/she feels like you overreacted (3)
- He/she feels bad about what they did (4)

Q40 Regarding the outcome you just read, select the option that is most correct.

Given the same circumstances...

- ...you cannot believe that someone could be so mean. (1)
- ...you believe that you would have never betrayed someone in that way. (2)
- ...you can understand how you might have done the same. (3)
- ...you would have definitely acted in the same way. (4)

End of Block: Outcome NR&NE

Start of Block: Forgiveness: TRIM

Q6
For the following questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.
1= Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Q7 I'll make him/her pay.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q8 I keep as much distance between us as possible.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q9 I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q10 I live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q11 I don’t trust him/her.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q12 I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q13 I find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q14 I avoid him/her.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q15 I’m going to get even.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q17 I cut off the relationship with him/her.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q18 I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

Q19 I withdraw from him/her.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree (1)
- 2 = Disagree (2)
- 3 = Neutral (3)
- 4 = Agree (4)
- 5 = Strongly Agree (5)

End of Block: Forgiveness: TRIM

Start of Block: General Demographics

Q22 What is your age?

- 18-24 years (1)
- 25-34 years (2)
- 35-44 years (3)
- 45-54 years (4)
- 55-64 years (5)
- 65+ years (6)

Q20 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- I prefer not to answer (3)
- Other (4)

Q23 What is your ethnicity?

Please choose the option that best describes you.

- ○ White. (1)
- ○ Hispanic or Latino. (2)
- ○ Black or African American. (3)
- ○ Native American (4)
- ○ Asian (5)
- ○ Pacific Islander (6)
- ○ Other. (7)

Q41 What is your marital status? Choose the option that best describes you.

- ○ Never married (1)
- ○ Married (2)
- ○ Divorced (3)
- ○ Other (4)

Display This Question:

If What is your ethnicity? Please choose the option that best describes you. = Other.

Q25 Please describe the ethnicity that best describes you:

_____

Q42 What is your class standing? Please choose the option that best describes you.

- Freshman (1)
- Sophomore (2)
- Junior (3)
- Senior (4)
- Graduate (5)
- Other (6)

End of Block: General Demographics

Start of Block: Debriefing Block

Q26 Thank you for participating in this survey. Your participation in this study may help others to better understand the social behaviors of college aged students.

The information provided by this survey will allow researchers to examine how social and situational factors may affect interpersonal forgiveness between peers following a transgression or offense (such as a betrayal of trust). The research gathered during this study may help researchers, university faculty, and professionals in the field of psychology better understand the factors that may promote or inhibit forgiveness.

You may have chosen not to answer certain questions in the survey. The information provided may cause some emotional discomfort due to the personal nature of the questions and hypothetical scenarios presented. You are encouraged to contact the investigators with any questions and concerns regarding this study. If you have an urgent problem related to your participation in this study, call the Student Medical and Counseling Clinic at 963-1391 (counseling).

If you have any questions regarding this survey, please contact Dr. Mary Radeke (mary.radeke@cwu.edu) or Molly Mortensen (MortensenMo@cwu.edu). You may also contact the CWU Human Protections Administrator if you have questions about your rights as a

participant or if you think you have not been treated fairly. The HSRC office number is (509) 963-3115.

If you are interested in receiving the results of this study, you may contact the primary investigator at MortensenMo@cwu.edu.

Please close the browser window after exiting the Qualtrics survey.

End of Block: Debriefing Block

End of survey

APPENDIX D

Sona Description

The primary purpose of this research is to add to existing knowledge on interpersonal prosocial behaviors of college aged individuals and their peers. Authors are interested in examining what factors may contribute to specific prosocial behaviors in the face of challenging hypothetical situations. This study will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. You must be 18 years or older to participate.