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Interpersonal Forgiving in Close Relationships

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Forgiving is a motivational transformation that inclines people to inhibit relationship-destructive responses and to behave constructively toward someone who has behaved destructively toward them. The authors describe a model of forgiveness based on the hypothesis that people forgive others to the extent that they experience empathy for them. Two studies investigated the empathy model of forgiveness. In Study 1, the authors developed measures of empathy and forgiveness. The authors found evidence consistent with the hypotheses that (a) the relationship between receiving an apology from and forgiving one's offender is a function of increased empathy for the offender and (b) that forgiving is uniquely related to conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior toward the offending partner. In Study 2, the authors conducted an intervention in which empathy was manipulated to examine the empathy–forgiving relationship more closely. Results generally supported the conceptualization of forgiving as a motivational phenomenon and the empathy–forgiving link.

Although the concept of forgiving has a rich history in philosophy (Butler, 1726/1964; Downie, 1965; Martin, 1953; Murphy & Hampton, 1988; Nietzsche, 1887; Rashdall, 1900) and Judeo-Christian theology (e.g., Dorff, 1992; Newman, 1987; C. Williams, 1984), psychological treatments of forgiving have been rare until recently (for reviews, see McCullough, Sandage, & Worthington, 1997; McCullough & Worthington, 1994a). Psychology's benign neglect of forgiving is quaint, especially in light of survey research that indicates that mental health professionals (Bergin & Jensen, 1990, Cole & Barone, 1992; DiBlasio, 1992; DiBlasio & Benda, 1991; DiBlasio & Proctor, 1993; Jensen & Bergin, 1988; Kelly, 1995; Richards & Potts, 1995) and the American population at large (Gorsuch & Hao, 1993) have positive attitudes toward forgiving.

Psychological scholarship on forgiving has increased during the past 10 years, though, especially from developmental and clinical perspectives (see Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992; Enright & Human Development Study Group, 1996; McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough & Worthington, 1994a, 1994b). Some evidence suggests that forgiving may promote marital adjustment (Nelson, 1992; Woodman, 1991) and may reduce depression, anxiety, and the hostile anger of the Type A behavior pattern (Gassin, 1994; Kaplan, 1992; Strasser, 1984; R. Williams, 1989; R. Williams & Williams, 1993). Further, empirical validation of interventions for promoting forgiving has recently begun (Al-Mabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hebl & Enright, 1993; McCullough & Worthington, 1995). Social psychologists have also addressed interpersonal forgiving from time to time (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Gahagan & Tedeschi, 1968; Heider, 1958; Horai, Lindskold, Gahagan, & Tedeschi, 1969; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991). Despite diverse attempts to account for forgiving, no comprehensive social-psychological framework for interpersonal forgiving currently exists.

The goals of the present article are to (a) present a social-psychological analysis of interpersonal forgiving and (b) adduce evidence from two studies about the determinants, structure, and consequences of forgiving. Although our account of forgiving attempts to explain how forgiving occurs in close relationships (e.g., marriage and family relations, friendships), we did not examine instances of forgiving when the restoration of a positive interpersonal relationship is not possible (e.g., when someone claims to forgive a parent who has died), even though the term forgiving is frequently used to describe such instances. We begin our analysis by placing the concept of forgiving within the larger body of social-psychological research.

Forgiving as an Empathy-Facilitated Set of Motivational Changes

We define *interpersonal forgiving* as the set of motivational changes whereby one becomes (a) decreasingly motivated to retaliate against an offending relationship partner, (b) decreas-

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ingly motivated to maintain estrangement from the offender, and (c) increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender, despite the offender's hurtful actions. Forgiving is not motivation per se; rather, forgiving is the lay concept that people invoke to describe the transformation that occurs when their motivations to seek revenge and to maintain estrangement from an offending relationship partner diminish, and their motivation to pursue conciliatory courses of action increases.

Our definition of forgiving as a set of changes in one's interpersonal motivations is similar to Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, and Lipkus's (1991) conceptualization of accommodation in close relationships. Rusbult et al. defined accommodation as the willingness to inhibit impulses to act destructively and the willingness to act constructively in response to the hurtful actions of a close relationship partner. Their concept of accommodation appears to be quite similar to our understanding of the concept of forgiving. Rusbult et al. adduced evidence from several studies to demonstrate that accommodation is related to a variety of relationship factors, including partners' relationship satisfaction, overall relational functioning, and commitment to the relationship. Although relational commitment and overall relational functioning appear to be important determinants of accommodation (and thus, perhaps, forgiving), it might also be productive to enquire into the nature of the more proximal social-psychological factors that lead to this set of prosocial changes in one's motivations toward an offending relationship partner.

We hypothesized that empathy for the offending partner is the central facilitative condition that leads to forgiving. A variety of prosocial phenomena, such as cooperation, altruism, and the inhibition of aggression appear to be facilitated by empathy for the other person (Batson, 1990, 1991; Batson & Oleson, 1991; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Hoffman, 1981, 1990; Moore, 1990; Rusbult et al., 1991; Tangney, 1991). We believe that forgiving is similar to these other prosocial phenomena in that it is also facilitated by empathy. Empathy can be defined as a vicarious emotion that is congruent with but not necessarily identical to the emotion of another person (Batson & Shaw, 1991). Empathy incorporates concepts such as sympathy, compassion, and tenderness (Batson, 1991; Batson & Shaw, 1991). Although empathy is primarily an affective phenomenon, the ability to take the cognitive perspective of another person (i.e., *perspective taking*) appears to be an important cognitive analogue to empathic affect that may be relevant for understanding how empathic affect develops (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978). Thus we also consider perspective taking as an important, if secondary, element of empathy.

An Analysis of Forgiving Based on Batson's Empathy–Altruism Hypothesis

It is useful to think of the relationship among empathy, forgiving, and resulting behavioral responses toward an offending relationship partner as genotypically similar to the sequence of events by which empathy leads to the motivation to care for others (i.e., altruism) when no such motivation existed prior to the experience of empathy and how that altruistic motivation can produce behavioral outcomes (e.g., helping, allocating resources in a social dilemma, cooperating). When people acquire a measure of empathy for another person's welfare, they are more likely to help that person when he or she is in need (Batson & Oleson, 1991). Although empathy may create many potential motives for helping another person (some of which are thoroughly egoistic), in some cases, as Batson and his colleagues (e.g., Batson, 1990, 1991; Batson et al., 1995; Batson & Oleson, 1991) have posited, empathy motivates people to help others, including total strangers, by activating the human capacity for altruism. A similar analysis can be used to clarify our model of the process by which forgiving occurs. However, the interpersonal context in which forgiving occurs is more complex than the typical situation in which one acquires altruistic motivation to help a stranger.

The interpersonal relationship in which the forgiving becomes relevant, whether a family relationship, a romantic relationship, or a friendship, is usually characterized by a shared history and is often strengthened by a considerable base of positive attachment. Against this backdrop of shared history and (perhaps) positive attachment, both relationship partners typically experience a sense of well-being in the relationship and are generally motivated to behave positively toward each other. However, the occurrence of a destructive, harmful, or offensive action by one relationship partner can upset this state of relational well-being (Gottman, 1994).

Because of the perceptual salience of a painful interpersonal offense, the offended partner's immediate disposition can change from a feeling of well-being, comfort, and the inclination to behave constructively toward the relationship partner to an inclination to retaliate against the offending partner, to avoid interpersonal or psychological contact with the offending partner, or both. These negative motivational changes might be in direct proportion to the perceived hurtfulness of the offense (Rusbult et al., 1991). If the offense is sufficiently salient, these motivational changes are likely to occur even in relationships that were close and well-adjusted prior to the offense.

The primacy of the tendencies toward revenge and avoidance in response to interpersonal offenses can be illustrated by using the results of Gottman's (1994) research on close relationships. Gottman found that people's affective responses to their spouses' hurtful actions take two forms: righteous indignation (e.g., sadness, anger, and contempt) and hurt and perceived attack (e.g., internal whining, innocent victimhood, fear, and worry). We posit that these two affective reactions—righteous indignation and hurt–perceived attack—motivate revenge or estrangement behaviors that are intended to protect the self or to keep the offender at a safe interpersonal or psychological distance from the offending relationship partner (Rusbult et al., 1991). These revenge and estrangement behaviors potentially lead to the further deterioration of the relationship.

Obviously, the typical close relationship in which forgiving occurs is quite different than the typical interpersonal situation that has been used to conceptualize altruism. Nevertheless, the empathy–altruism analysis can shed light on the more complex interpersonal situation that occasions forgiving. In this emotional climate of the damaged close relationship, where the offended relationship partner is motivated to enact relationship-destructive responses to the offending partner's hurtful actions, the offended partner might, through any of a variety of personal-

ity or situational factors, acquire empathy for the offending relationship partner.

At this point in our analysis, we invoke Batson's (1990, 1991) analysis of the empathy–altruism link to conceptualize how forgiving occurs. In the same way that empathy can facilitate caring for a person in need who was previously unknown to the actor, the emergence of empathy for an offending relationship partner can elicit the offended partner's capacity to care for the needs of the offending partner. In the context of a close relationship that has been damaged by the hurtful actions of one relationship partner, this empathy-elicited caring may be directed at three foci. First, empathy may cause the offended partner to care that the offending partner is experiencing guilt and distress over how his or her actions hurt the offended partner and damaged their relationship (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). Second, empathy may cause the offended partner to care that the offending partner feels isolated or lonely because of their estranged relationship. Third, and perhaps most directly, empathy for the offending relationship partner may simply lead the offended relationship partner to care for restoring the breached relationship with the offending partner. In other words, empathy may lead to a yearning for restored positive contact with the offender.

Increases in these three forms of empathy-elicited caring for the offender reduce the relative salience of the offending partner's hurtful actions, thereby reducing the power of the offender's hurtful actions to elicit motivations toward revenge and the maintenance of estrangement. In place of these motivations for revenge and the maintenance of estrangement, the increase in caring for the offending partner increases the offended partner's motivation to pursue conciliatory courses of action toward the offending relationship partner that will relieve the partner's distress and perhaps contribute to the restoration of the relationship (McCullough et al., 1997).

Personality, situational, and relationship factors might influence the timing with which empathy develops and perhaps whether empathy for the offending partner develops at all. For example, the offended partner's dispositional empathy (e.g., Davis, 1980) appears be weakly related to the degree to which people forgive relationship partners who have hurt them (Rhode, 1990). However, global personality factors such as dispositional empathy might be weak determinants of forgiving (cf. Rusbult et al., 1991), because they must be translated into empathy for a specific person in a specific situation. Thus situational and relationship factors could be more important determinants of whether and how empathy develops. The severity of the offense and the degree to which the offender apologizes for his or her behavior, for example, might be crucial (Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidinas, 1991; Rusbult et al., 1991). In addition, relationship factors, such as those identified by Rusbult et al. as important determinants of accommodation, might influence the capacity to develop empathy for the offending relationship partner. Regardless of the pathways by which empathy for the offending partner develops, we posit that once it has exceeded a certain level, the perceptual salience of the empathy for the offender overshadows the perceptual salience of the offending partner's hurtful actions, leading to the set of motivational changes that we have defined as forgiving.

Summary and Hypotheses

On the basis of this conceptual analysis, we posit that forgiving and altruism have similar deep structures, despite their surface dissimilarities. We conceptualize forgiving as a motivational transformation that inhibits an injured relationship partner from seeking revenge or maintaining estrangement from an offending relationship partner and inclines them to behave in conciliatory ways instead. Empathy is conceptualized as a crucial facilitative condition for overcoming the primary tendency toward destructive responding following a significant interpersonal offense. On the basis of this conceptual analysis, we propose three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Empathy mediates relationships between dispositional or environmental variables and their causal effects on forgiving. We expected to find high positive correlations between a wronged person's empathy for an offender and reported forgiving for the offender. We also expected to find variables that increase the likelihood of forgiving to be mediated by empathy. For example, we expected that the apology–forgiving relationship identified by Darby and Schlenker (1982) and Weiner et al. (1991) would be mediated by the effects of apologies on the offended partner's empathy for the offender.

Hypothesis 2: Forgiving promotes constructive actions toward the offender and inhibits destructive actions toward the offender following an interpersonal offense. We hypothesized that when people forgive, they become more inclined to respond constructively, and their inclinations to respond destructively are reduced. Moreover, because forgiving is mediated by empathy, forgiving is causally more proximal (and thus more strongly related) to these behavioral outcomes than is empathy.

Hypothesis 3: Clinical efforts to influence clients' capacity to forgive will succeed insofar as they induce empathy for the offender. We expected that clinical interventions that produce change on measures of forgiving would also encourage change on measures of empathy (regardless of whether the intervention targeted empathy). Further, interventions that seek to promote forgiving by increasing people's empathy for their offenders were expected to be successful to the extent that they actually promote increased empathy. The relationship of empathy and forgiving in such intervention studies should be consistent with the hypothesis that change in forgiving over time is mediated by changes in empathy for the offender over time.

To test these hypotheses, we conducted two studies. Our goals were to (a) develop measures of forgiving and empathy that were empirically and conceptually distinct; (b) assess whether empathy exerts a mediational influence on self-reported forgiving; and (c) examine whether the relations among empathy, forgiving, conciliatory behavior, and avoidance behavior were consistent with a motivational conceptualization of forgiving.

Study 1

It is well established that receiving an apology from one's offender encourages forgiving (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Davidson & Jurkovic, 1993; Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989; Huang, 1990; Weiner et al., 1991), particularly when apologies are elaborate and include admissions of guilt (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Weiner et al., 1991). Weiner et al. suggested

that apologies facilitate forgiving by interrupting the offended partner's inference that an offender's acts correspond to and derive from the offender's character (i.e., they interrupt the operation of the fundamental attribution error). However, on the basis of the empathy model of forgiving, we hypothesized that the relationship between apology and forgiving can also be explained as a function of increased empathy for the offender.

The expression of an apology may lead to the perception that the offending partner is experiencing guilt and emotional distress due to his or her awareness of how the hurtful actions harmed the offended partner (Baumeister et al., 1994). The offended partner's recognition of the offender's guilt and emotional distress over his or her hurtful actions promotes empathy for the offender. To the extent that the offended partner experiences empathy for the offending partner, the offended partner is expected to experience reduced motivations toward revenge and the maintenance of estrangement and, instead, to experience increased motivations to pursue a conciliatory course of action (i.e., to forgive), much as empathy leads to an increased motivation to care for others and thus to prosocial behavior in other social situations (cf. Batson, 1990, 1991).

In Study 1, we examined whether the well-established link between apology and forgiving was mediated by empathy for the offending partner and whether forgiving leads to increased conciliatory behavior and decreased avoidance behavior following the offense. As a prelude to examining the apology–forgiving link, we developed empirically and conceptually distinct measures of empathy and forgiving.

Method

Participants

Participants (N = 239) were 131 female and 108 male university undergraduates (mean age = 19) representing several ethnic groups (83% White, 14% Black, 3% other). Participants received a small amount of extra course credit for their participation.

Measures

Demographic and offense-related information. Participants indicated their age, gender, relationship with the person who had hurt them, the amount of time since the offense occurred, and a brief description of the offense. Most of the offenders whom participants described were romantic partners (48%), relatives (18%), or friends of the same gender (18%).

By using a 5-point Likert-type item, participants indicated the degree to which the offense had hurt them (M = 4.0 [i.e., *much hurt*], SD = 1.1). By using a 6-point Likert-type item that ranged from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), participants indicated their degree of agreement with the statement, "The person was not wrong in what he/she did to me" (M = 0.87, SD = 1.2). Thus participants experienced the typical offense as both hurtful and wrong.

Perceived degree of apology. The extent to which participants perceived that the offender apologized for the offense was measured with a scale consisting of two 5-point Likert-type items that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Items elicited the degree to which participants perceived that their offenders apologized and attempted to explain their hurtful behavior. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .79.

Affective empathy. Batson's eight-item empathy scale (Archer, Diaz-Loving, Gollwitzer, Davis, & Foushee, 1981; Batson, Bolen, Cross, & Neuringer-Benefiel, 1986; Batson, O'Quin, Fultz, Vanderplas, & Isen, 1983; Coke et al., 1978; Fultz, Batson, Fortenbach, McCarthy, & Varney, 1986; Toi & Batson, 1982) consists of eight affects that participants rated on a 6-point scale that ranged from 0 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) to indicate the degree to which they felt each affect (sympathetic, empathic, concerned, moved, compassionate, warm, softhearted, and tender) for their offender at the time of the rating.

Factor analytic investigations (Batson et al., 1983; Coke et al., 1978; Toi & Batson, 1982) have found these adjectives to load on a single factor that is orthogonal to a factor measuring personal distress. Internal consistency estimates have ranged from .79 to .95. The scale was found to be moderately correlated with measures of dispositional empathy, perspective taking, and helping behavior (Batson et al., 1986; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Some subset of these items has been used in nearly every study of the empathy–altruism hypothesis in the past 20 years to adduce evidence that empathy manipulations did in fact manipulate empathy (e.g., Batson, Turk, Shaw, & Klein, 1995; Coke et al., 1978; Toi & Batson, 1982). Thus the construct validity of this empathy measure is generally assumed to be very good.

Forgiving. A five-item measure of forgiving assessed the degree to which the respondent experienced a constructive disposition and the absence of a destructive disposition in light of the offending partner's hurtful actions. These five items were as follows: "I wish him/her well", "I disapprove of him/her", "I think favorably of him/her", "I condemn the person", and "I have forgiven the person". The first four items were endorsed on a 6-point scale that ranged from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The forgiving item was endorsed on a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 (*I have not at all forgiven*) to 5 (*I have completely forgiven*). Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was estimated at .87. The sample mean on this scale was 16.8 (SD = 6.7) based on a range from 1 to 25.

Forgiveness-related items. Twenty items from Wade's (1989) Forgiveness Scale were used to examine the discriminant validity of the empathy measure and forgiving measure. In an initial effort to develop operational definitions of forgiving, Wade conducted interviews with 20 academic psychologists, clinical psychologists, and pastors about the nature of forgiving. On the basis of these interviews, Wade generated 600 items that captured elements of how the experts defined forgiving. Wade (1989) reduced this set of 600 items to a smaller set, which she administered to 282 college students who were instructed to complete the items as they thought about a relationship partner who had offended them in the past. Half the students were instructed to think of an offending partner whom they had forgiven, and half were instructed to think of an offending partner whom they had not forgiven. Eighty-three items significantly distinguished between the students who completed the items under the forgiveness set and the students who completed the items under the nonforgiveness set. Thus, the resulting items were both reflective of psychologists' and pastors' understandings of forgiving and empirically distinguished between forgiving and nonforgiving. We reasoned that if our five-item forgiving measure indeed measured forgiving, then it should be related to Wade's items even after partialing out variance that can be attributed to the empathy measure, whereas the empathy measure should have very small relationships with these 20 items after partialing out variance that can be attributed to the five-item forgiving measure.

Conciliatory behaviors toward the offender. This measure consisted of two items that measured the degree to which respondents had engaged in two behaviors that indicated attempts at reconciliation with the offender ("I tried to make amends" and "I took steps toward reconciliation: Wrote them, called them, expressed love, showed concern, etc."). Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was estimated as .74. The sample mean on this scale was 6.7 (SD = 2.5) based on a range from 2 to 10. For this scale and the avoidance behaviors subscale described below,

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Internal Consistency Reliabilities, and Intercorrelations (Study 1)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	α	1	2	3	4	5
1. Degree of apology	5.63	2.84	.79	—				
2. Empathy	13.22	5.95	.88	.36**	—			
3. Forgiving	16.82	6.73	.87	.43**	.67**	—		
4. Conciliatory behavior	6.74	2.50	.74	.44**	.63**	.70**	—	
5. Avoidance behavior	10.11	3.89	.90	−.47**	−.58**	−.73**	−.56**	—

Note. Apology scores ranged from 2 to 10. Empathy scores ranged from 0 to 20. Forgiving Scale scores ranged from 5 to 25. Conciliatory behavior scores ranged from 2 to 10. Avoidance behavior scores ranged from 3 to 15.
** $p < .01$.

items were endorsed on a 5-point Likert-type format that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Avoidance behaviors toward the offender. This measure consisted of three items that measured the degree to which respondents engaged in behaviors to avoid contact with the offender ("I keep as much distance between us as possible", "I avoid them", and "I withdraw from them"). Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was estimated as .90. The sample mean on this scale was 10.1 (*SD* = 3.9) based on a range from 3 to 15.

Procedure

Participants completed packets that contained consent forms and the questionnaire measures described above. After providing demographic information, participants read the following instructions:

> We ask you now to think of one person whom you experienced as treating you unfairly and hurting you at some point in the past. For a moment, visualize in your mind the events and the interactions you may have had with the person who offended you. Try to visualize the person and recall what happened. Below is a set of questions about the person who hurt you. It is possible that you have experienced this type of hurt from more than one person, but please answer the questions that follow as you focus on a single person who hurt you.

After reading the instructions, participants described the interpersonal injury they had received and then completed the empathy, forgiving, and behavioral self-report measures.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliabilities, and correlations of all variables in Study 1 appear in Table 1.

Refinement of the Forgiving and Empathy Measures

Measurement model. Although a preliminary principal-components factor analysis of the eight items from Batson's empathy measure and the five items from the forgiving measure indicated that two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were present, three items on the empathy measure loaded on both factors. After removing these three items, a fourth item was removed from the empathy measure to boost internal consistency. The resulting empathy measure consisted of four adjectives (empathic, concerned, moved, and softhearted) and had an internal consistency of .88. All five items on the forgiving measure appeared to load only on one factor, thus all five items were retained. The five-item forgiving measure had an internal consistency of .87.

We tested two competing models of the structural relations among the four items retained for the empathy measure and the five items on the forgiving measure by using the EQS (Version 5) statistical program (Bentler & Wu, 1995). The correlated factors model posited that the five forgiving items and the four empathy items were indicators for two distinct but correlated factors (i.e., Forgiving and Empathy). The single-factor model posited that only one factor underlied the relations among the forgiving items and the empathy items.

The fit of these measurement models was assessed with the chi-square goodness-of-fit test and the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990). A significant chi-square statistic may suggest that the hypothesized model does not adequately fit the observed data. However, because the chi-square statistic is sensitive to sample size, alternative fit indexes are generally used. The CFI compares the fit of a hypothesized model to a null reference model that assumes that no variables are related. CFI values can range from 0 (indicating extremely poor fit) to 1 (indicating a perfect fit). CFI values greater than .90 are generally considered acceptable for plausible models.[1]

The correlated factors model fit the data well, $\chi^2(26, N = 239) = 75.44$, $p < .001$, CFI = .96. The single-factor model did not fit the data adequately, $\chi^2(27, N = 239) = 223.04$, $p < .001$, CFI = .85. Thus it appears that the correlated factors model better represented the factor structure underlying the forgiving and empathy items than does a single-factor model.

Relation of empathy and forgiving measures to items from Wade's (1989) Forgiveness Scale. To investigate the construct validity of the four-item empathy measure and the five-item forgiving measure, we computed two sets of squared partial

[1] Because of suspected problems with multivariate kurtosis, we also conducted these and all other structural equations models with robust estimation (Hu, Bentler, & Kano, 1992). In every case, robust statistics led to slightly lower chi-square (using the Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square statistic) and slightly higher values for the robust CFI. Thus it did not appear that the use of maximum likelihood estimation led to spuriously well fitting models. Therefore, we reported only the results obtained by using maximum likelihood estimation.

correlations. In the first set, we calculated the squared partial correlation of each of the 20 forgiving-related items from Wade's (1989) scale (and their composites) with the empathy measure after controlling for the five-item forgiving measure. In the second set, we examined the squared partial correlation of each of the 20 forgiving-related items (and their composite) with the five-item forgiving measure after controlling for the four-item empathy measure. We reasoned that if the forgiving measure had substantially higher squared partial correlations with the forgiving-related items than did the empathy measure, then the forgiving measure was measuring the concept that we purport it to measure (forgiving), despite its substantial zero-order correlation with the empathy measure ($r = .67$).

As can be seen in Table 2, the squared partial correlations of the empathy measure with the items from Wade's (1989) Forgiveness Scale were consistently smaller (median squared partial $r = .01$) than the squared partial correlations of the forgiving measure with the forgiving-related items (median squared partial $r = .20$). We computed a composite of the 20 items from Wade's (1989) Forgiveness Scale, which had an internal consistency reliability (alpha) of .94. After partialing out scores on the five-item forgiving scale, the empathy scale had a squared partial correlation of .00 with this composite index of 20 items from Wade's Forgiveness Scale. After partialing out scores on the empathy scale, the five-item forgiving scale had a squared partial correlation of .23 with this composite index of 20 items from Wade's Forgiveness Scale ($p < .0001$). Thus, it appears that only the five-item forgiving measure (and not the four-item empathy measure) uniquely measured the concept of interpersonal forgiving after the correlation of the empathy measure and the forgiving measure was statistically controlled.

Table 2
Percent of Variance Predicted in 20 Forgiving-Related Items (Wade, 1989) and Their Composite by Empathy (Net Forgiving) and Forgiving (Net Empathy)

Forgiving-related item	Partial r^2 with empathy measure (net forgiving)	Partial r^2 with forgiving measure (net empathy)
I harbor a grudge.	.00	.23****
I'll make them pay.	.01	.25****
Wish something bad would happen to them.	.01	.29****
I blame them.	.00	.20****
I think about them without anger.	.00	.11****
I'm suspicious of them.	.00	.26****
I accept their humanness, flaws, failures.	.01	.14****
I find it difficult to act warmly toward them.	.01	.21****
I continue to think about how much I hate them.	.00	.24****
I want to see them hurt and miserable.	.01	.26****
I'm going to get even.	.00	.14****
I accept them.	.02****	.23****
I'm not letting go of the offense.	.02	.17****
I was willing to forget the past and concentrate on the present.	.02	.05****
I made an effort to be more friendly and concerned.	.02	.12****
I gave them back a new start, a new relationship.	.03****	.15****
I cut off the relationship.	.03	.11****
I'm holding on to the hurt and anger.	.04****	.21****
I don't trust them.	.01	.17****
I live as if they don't exist, aren't around.	.04****	.11****
Composite of all 20 items[a]	.00	.23****

Note. Forgiving-related items are from Wade's (1989) Forgiveness Scale. Reprinted with permission.
[a] Alpha for the composite of all 20 items was .94.
**** $p < .001$.

Structural Relations Among Apology, Empathy, Forgiving, and Interpersonal Behavior

According to the empathy model, forgiving is an empathy-facilitated motivational change that leads to reductions in the motivation to behave in relationship-destructive ways and to increases in the motivation to behave in relationship-constructive ways toward an offending partner. In addition, the empathy model suggests that the relationship between apology and forgiving is largely mediated by empathy. Thus, according to the empathy model, apology has an indirect effect on forgiving by facilitating empathy, and forgiving has direct effects on an offended partner's conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior toward the offending partner. This basic version of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis appears in Figure 1.

To test whether these theoretical relationships accurately described the observed data, we conducted two series of three nested structural equations models. The first series of structural equations models evaluated three versions of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis. The model in Figure 1 (strong mediational empathy–forgiving model), was calculated and then compared to a second model that included a direct path from apology to forgiving (the weak mediational empathy–forgiving model). A third model that included a direct path from apology to forgiving and from empathy to conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior (the weak mediational empathy–forgiving model with dual paths to behavior) was also calculated and compared to the weak mediational empathy–forgiving model.

These three models are called nested models because only the number of estimated path coefficients varies between any two models, not the number of observed indicators or latent variables. The differences in the goodness of fit among nested models can be evaluated statistically by using the chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi^2$), which is the difference in the chi-square values obtained between two nested models (Byrne, 1994; Hoyle & Panter, 1995). The value obtained for $\Delta\chi^2$ is evaluated by using the chi-square distribution with degrees of freedom equal to the difference in the degrees of freedom between the two nested models.

Along with the three nested models of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis, we also tested three versions of a model that posited that empathy and forgiving have a reversed causal ordering, that is, that forgiving is a mediator of empathy. A strong mediational

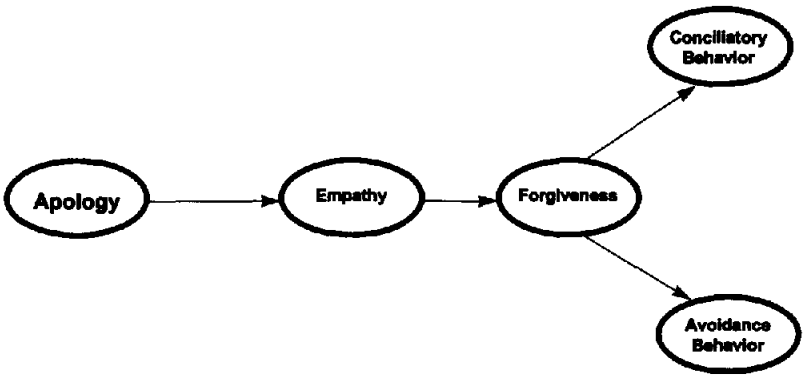

Figure 1. Basic model of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis.

version of this forgiving–empathy model was compared to a model that also included a direct path from apology to empathy (the weak mediational forgiving–empathy model). We then compared the weak mediational forgiving–empathy model with a third model that included direct paths from apology to empathy and from forgiving to conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior (the weak mediational forgiving–empathy model with dual paths to behavior). In addition to the $\Delta\chi^2$ test to compare nested models, the goodness of fit for each model was evaluated with the chi-square statistic and the CFI.

Tests of models of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis. As can be seen in the top portion of Table 3, the weak mediational empathy–forgiving model with dual paths to behavior (Model 3) was the best fitting of the three models of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis, $\chi^2(93, N = 239) = 189.64, p < .001$, CFI = .96. This third model, which included direct paths from empathy (the putative mediator of forgiving) to conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior, led to a small but significant improvement in fit over the previous model, which did not include direct paths from empathy to conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 8.87, p < .01$. In this third model, the direct path from empathy to forgiving was significant ($\beta = .64, p < .001$), as was the direct path from apology to forgiving ($\beta = .28, p < .001$). Although the direct path from empathy to conciliatory behavior was significant ($\beta = .28, p < .001$), the direct path from empathy to avoidance behavior was not significant ($\beta = .03, p > .05$), suggesting that the effects of empathy on avoidance behavior were completely mediated through forgiving. The standardized path coefficients for all the paths included in this third version of the empathy–forgiving model appear in Figure 2.

Tests of models of the forgiving–empathy hypothesis. As can be seen in the bottom portion of Table 3, the weak mediational forgiving–empathy model with dual paths to behavior (Model 3) was the best fitting of the three models of the forgiving–empathy hypothesis, $\chi^2(93, N = 239) = 189.64, p < .001$, CFI = .96. This model, which included direct paths from forgiving (the putative mediator of empathy) to conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior, led to a large and significant improvement in fit over the previous model, which did not include direct paths from forgiving to conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 86.78, p < .001$. In this model, the direct path from apology to empathy was not significant ($\beta = .04, p > .05$), although the direct path from forgiving to empathy was significant ($\beta = .75, p < .001$). The direct path from forgiving to conciliatory behavior was significant ($\beta = .66, p < .001$), as was the direct path from forgiving to avoidance behavior ($\beta = -.70, p < .001$). In this third model, the direct effect of empathy on conciliatory behavior was reduced by the inclusion of the direct path from forgiving to conciliatory behavior ($\beta = .28, p < .001$). In addition, the inclusion of the direct path from forgiving to avoidance behavior led to the nonsignificance of the path from empathy to avoidance behavior ($\beta = .03, p > .05$). The standardized path coefficients of all the paths included in this third version of the forgiving–empathy model appear in Figure 3.

Discussion

In Study 1, we developed measures of empathy and forgiving that were semantically and factorially distinct. The empathy measure consisted of four adjectives that tapped participants' empathic feelings toward their partners (i.e., whether they felt empathic, concerned, moved, and softhearted). The forgiving measure tapped into participants' attitudes and dispositions regarding the offender in light of the interpersonal injury (e.g., whether they wished the offender well, disapproved of the offender, thought favorably of the offender, condemned the offender, and forgave the offender). The measure of forgiving had consistently stronger correlations with forgiving-related items than did the empathy measure. Thus it appears that despite the correlation of the empathy and forgiving measures ($r = .67$), these measures are indeed measuring different constructs.

By using these measures of empathy and forgiving in a series of structural equation models, we found evidence that the well-established relationship between apology and forgiving (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Davidson & Jurkovic, 1993; Enright et al., 1989; Huang, 1990; Weiner et al., 1991) could be explained with a model positing the role of empathy in partially mediating the apology–forgiving relationship. The data were consistent with the following theoretical account: When an offending partner apologizes to the offended person for his or her hurtful actions, the apology facilitates increased empathy for the offender, perhaps by causing the offended partner to recog-

Table 3
Results of Three Structural Equations Models of the Empathy–Forgiving Hypothesis and Three Structural Equations Models of the Forgiving–Empathy Hypothesis

Path/statistic	Model 1: Strong mediational empathy–forgiving model	Model 2: Weak mediational empathy–forgiving model	Model 3: Weak mediational empathy–forgiving model with dual paths to behavior
Structural equations models of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis			
β Apology–Empathy	.51****	.47****	.47****
β Empathy–Forgiving	.80****	.66****	.64****
β Forgiving–Conciliation	.89****	.89****	.66****
β Forgiving–Avoidance	−.67****	−.69****	−.70****
β Apology–Forgiving	—	.28****	.28****
β Empathy–Conciliation	—	—	.28****
β Empathy–Avoidance	—	—	.03
χ^2	219.39	198.51	189.64
df	96	95	93
CFI	.95	.96	.96
$\Delta\chi^2$	—	20.88***	8.87**

Path/statistic	Model 1: Strong mediational forgiving–empathy model	Model 2: Weak mediational forgiving–empathy model	Model 3: Weak mediational forgiving–empathy model with dual paths to behavior
Structural equations models of the forgiving–empathy hypothesis			
β Apology–Forgiving	.88****	.86****	.58****
β Forgiving–Empathy	.85****	.79****	.75****
β Empathy–Conciliation	1.02****	.84****	.28****
β Empathy–Avoidance	−.49	−.50****	.03
β Apology–Empathy	—	.12	.04
β Forgiving–Conciliation	—	—	.66****
β Forgiving–Avoidance	—	—	−.70****
χ^2	277.78	276.42	189.64
df	96	95	93
CFI	.93	.93	.96
$\Delta\chi^2$	—	1.36	86.78***

Note. Dashes indicate parameter was not estimated. CFI = comparative fit index.
** $p < .01$. *** $p < .005$. **** $p < .001$.

nize that the offender is experiencing guilt and distress over the harm that his or her actions created (Baumeister et al., 1994). The recognition of the offending partner's distress may lead to empathy in much the same way that recognition of the distress of a person in need may facilitate empathy in other social situations (Batson, 1990, 1991). On the basis of this empathy for the offending partner, the offended partner experiences reduced motivation to retaliate against the offender or to maintain estrangement from the offending partner and instead experiences an increased conciliatory motivation. On the basis of our empirical support for this theoretical account, then, it appears reasonable to conceptualize forgiving as an empathy-motivated set of motivational changes for an offending relationship partner that lead to greater probability of prosocial actions toward that offender, in spite of the offender's hurtful actions.

Consistent with this conceptualization, forgiving appeared to be more proximally related to interpersonal behavior toward the offending partner than did empathy. The relations among forgiving, conciliatory behavior, and avoidance behavior remained strong (βs = .66 and −.70, respectively) even when the effects of empathy on conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior were controlled. Conversely, when the effects of forgiving on conciliatory behavior were controlled, the relationship between empathy and conciliatory behavior was much reduced (β = .28), and the relationship between empathy and avoidance behavior disappeared entirely (β = .03). These findings lend support to our conceptualization of forgiving as a motivational phenomenon and lend further evidence to the discriminant validity of our measures of empathy and forgiving.

Along with testing three models of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis, we tested three models that posited that the relationship between apology and empathy was mediated by forgiving. Although we did find some support for the viability of these causal models, the differential relationship of empathy and forgiving to measures of self-reported avoidance and conciliatory behavior suggests that forgiving is causally more proximal to conciliatory behavior and avoidance behavior than is empathy. By inference, then, we conclude that empathy is causally prior to forgiving. Taken in total, then, these results lend support to the superior validity of the apology–empathy–forgiving

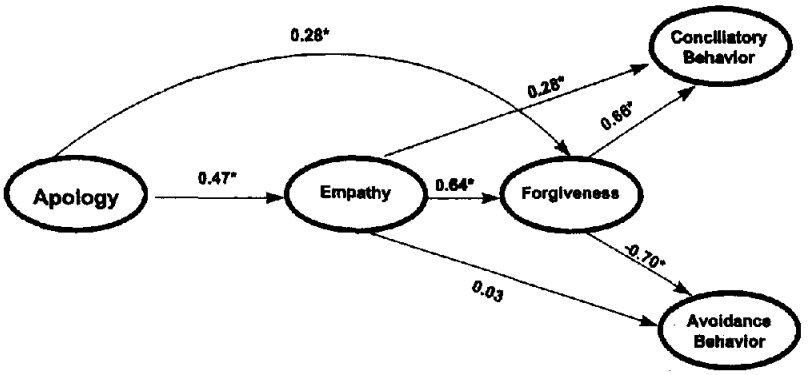

Figure 2. Standardized path coefficients for all paths included in the third version of the empathy–forgiving model. $*p < .05$.

causal sequence over the apology–forgiving–empathy causal sequence.

Although these initial results appeared to support the validity of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis, the nonexperimental nature of the data prohibited more direct statements about the relationship between empathy and forgiving. It seemed important to explore the nature of the empathy–forgiving relationship by using experimental data to acquire stronger support for the validity of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis. A second potential weakness with Study 1 was our reliance on a measure of empathy that measured only empathic affect, not the cognitive perspective taking that also is an important component of empathy. In Study 2, we gathered experimental evidence to help us to explore further the validity of the empathy–forgiving model by using measures of forgiving, affective empathy, and cognitive empathy.

Study 2

We investigated the empathy–forgiving model by comparing the efficacy of an intervention for promoting empathy as a precursor to forgiving (empathy seminar) with a control intervention that encouraged forgiving but did not encourage empathy (comparison seminar). Both seminars were evaluated against a waiting-list control condition. We expected to find that the empathy seminar promoted greater increases in affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and forgiving than did the comparison seminar and that changes in affective and cognitive empathy could account for changes in seminar participants' forgiving of their offenders, regardless of which seminar they attended.

Method

Participants

Seminar participants. Volunteers for participation were ($N = 134$) students in introductory psychology courses at a different university than the participants in Study 1. The sample was multiethnic (52% White, 35% Black, 7% Asian American, 4% Latino/Latina) and predominantly female (80%). The mean age was 22 years ($SD = 7$ years). Participants (a) wished to learn information and skills that might help them to forgive a specific person that they wanted, but had been previously unable, to forgive; (b) were not taking psychotropic medications or receiving counseling; (c) did not manifest substance abuse problems, psychotic behavior, or personality disorders that might disrupt the groups; and (d) agreed to being randomly assigned to either a seminar or a waiting list.

Descriptions of offenders and offenses. One third (34%) of partici-

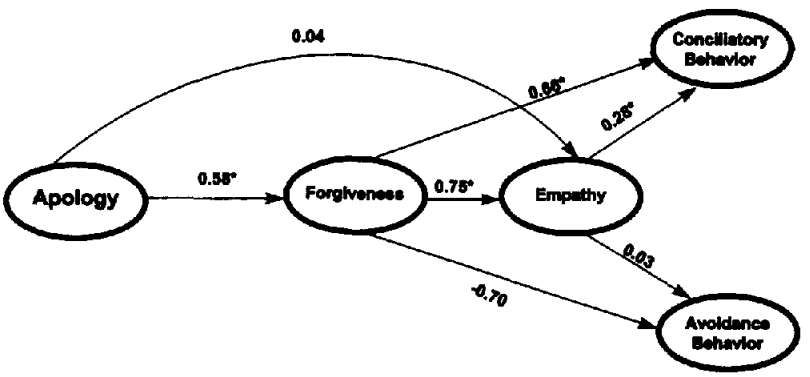

Figure 3. Standardized path coefficients for all paths included in the third version of the forgiving–empathy model. $*p < .05$.

pants reported that they wanted to forgive a boyfriend or girlfriend; 21%, a close friend; 17%, a parent; and 28%, someone else. Offenses occurred an average of 1.6 years prior to the study. Volunteers used three 9-point scales to rate the intensity of the pain originally caused by the offense (1 = *very little pain;* 9 = *the most pain I have ever felt*), the quality of current communication with the offender (1 = *could not be worse;* 9 = *could not be better*), and the quality of their current overall relationship with the offender (1 = *could not be worse;* 9 = *could not be better*). The mean amount of pain caused by the offenses was 7.2. The mean quality of communication and relationship with the offender were 4.7 and 5.0, respectively.

Participants wrote short descriptions of the offenses that they desired to forgive. The following are some examples:

> My ex got me pregnant on purpose, and then decided that it was too much responsibility.
>
> My father abuses drugs. He abandoned me and my mother when I was a child.
>
> When my father died, my 'best friend' was not there at all for me. She was very selfish and betrayed my trust in her when I needed her.
>
> My mother told me that I was not wanted in the family, and that I was an evil person.

Seminar leaders. Seminars were conducted by four trainees (two men, two women) in an American Psychological Association-approved psychology program. Trainees were naïve to the experimental hypotheses. Leaders were assigned to experimental conditions randomly, with blocking on gender so that one man and one woman led an empathy seminar and a comparison seminar. Leaders received 4 hrs of training before leading the groups and used a manual during the interventions.

Design

We used a 3 (Condition) × 3 (Time) randomized block design with repeated measures. There were three conditions: empathy seminar, comparison seminar, and waiting-list control. Measurement was conducted before the seminar, after the seminar, and at a 6-week follow-up. Participants were blocked on gender, with approximately equal proportions of men and women assigned to each condition.

We used a seminar format for delivering interventions to increase the cost efficiency of the experiment. Seminars consisted of eight 1-hr sessions conducted over one weekend. Each seminar consisted of between 5 and 8 participants.

The empathy seminar encouraged forgiving by means of affective and cognitive empathy. Sessions 1–3 focused on building rapport and on discussing the particular interpersonal hurts that each participant had incurred. Sessions 4–8 specifically encouraged empathy. These sessions opened with a brief vignette or quote that captured some feature of how empathy can promote forgiving. In Session 4, leaders summarized the empathy model of forgiving and facilitated discussion of how empathy promotes forgiving. Participants completed exercises that taught them to view forgiving as a prosocial, potentially relationship-restoring behavior. Session 5 included written and verbal exercises to encourage empathy for the offender. These exercises encouraged participants to infer the offender's psychological state and general life situation before and during the offense. Participants then recalled times in the past when they had needed to be forgiven. Participants were encouraged to develop empathy by thinking about their own past needs to be forgiven and to imagine that their current offenders were experiencing similar psychological states. In Session 6, leaders discussed the fundamental attribution error and encouraged participants to develop attributions for their offenders' transgressions that considered the situational determinants of behavior. In Session 7, participants completed an exercise that encouraged them to consider their offenders' state of need and how they would like for the offenders' well-being to change as a result of receiving forgiving. In Session 8, leaders taught strategies to maintain and generalize treatment gains, distinguished between forgiving, repentance, and reconciliation, helped participants assess their progress throughout the seminar, and ended the seminars.

The comparison seminar was designed to be a strong control condition that would include all of the nonspecific curative features of the empathy seminar but none of its explicitly empathy-enhancing components. Sessions 1–3 were similar to Sessions 1–3 of the empathy seminar. Sessions 4–7 addressed how forgiving would be beneficial to participants' social, emotional, relational, and physical well-being. Typical resistances to the concept of forgiving were explored and discussed. Participants were encouraged to forgive by hearing others discuss the efficacy of forgiving. They also discussed their difficulties in forgiving and offered support and encouragement to one another. The intent of these sessions was to commend forgiving as a health-promotive behavior without explicitly enhancing empathy for the offender. In Session 8, leaders focused on the maintenance and generalization of gains experienced through the seminar. Forgiving was encouraged as a style of dealing with interpersonal conflicts.

The waiting-list condition was a weak control condition. Participants in this condition received no treatment but were told that they would be assigned to a seminar that would commence following completion of the experiment.

Instruments

Demographic survey. The demographic survey consisted of items taken from research by McCullough and Worthington (1995), including items to measure length of time since the offense occurred, gender, ethnicity, and perceived severity of the interpersonal offense.

Affective empathy. We used the four-item version of Batson's empathy adjectives (Coke et al., 1978) that we developed in Study 1 as our measure of affective empathy. At preseminar, this index had an internal consistency (alpha) of .85.

Cognitive empathy. We used the Self-Dyadic Perspective-Taking Scale (Long, 1990) to assess participants' cognitive empathy for their offenders. Long's scale was developed to measure cognitive empathy between spouses, so items were altered slightly (e.g., *partner* was changed to *offender*). The scale consists of 13 items, such as "I sometimes try to understand [the offender] better by imagining how things look from his/her perspective." Each item was rated on a 5-point scale that ranged from 0 (*does not describe me very well*) to 4 (*does describe me very well*). Long (1990) reported an estimate of internal consistency of .87 for the scale. Dyadic perspective taking between spouses was correlated with dispositional perspective taking and marital adjustment (Long, 1990, 1993; Long & Andrews, 1990). At preseminar, this index had an internal consistency (alpha) reliability of .90.

Forgiving. We assessed forgiving with the same five-item measure used in Study 1. At preseminar, its internal consistency (alpha) was estimated at .82.

Procedure

Solicitation, initial screening, and assignment to condition. Participants were solicited through introductory psychology classes. Participants completed consent forms and the questionnaires described above. Participants were screened to rule out those meeting exclusion criteria. Of the 134 students who initially volunteered, most were eligible, but only 70 were also available to participate during the weekend that the seminar was offered. Ineligible volunteers were referred to university counseling services.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two seminars or the waiting list, and we blocked on gender. Thirteen participants were

assigned to the empathy seminar, 17 to the comparison seminar, and 40 to the waiting list. The inequivalence of the three groups was intended to accommodate several supplemental analyses not reported in the present article.

Conduct of the seminars. Two weeks after assignment, weekend seminars were conducted. On a Friday evening, participants registered and met in groups for 3 hrs. The next morning, groups met for 3 hrs. After lunch, groups met for an additional 2 hrs.

Postseminar assessment. At the end of the seminars, participants completed measures of forgiving, affective empathy, and cognitive empathy. Participants were also informed of the follow-up assessment and debriefing that would occur 6 weeks later.

Follow-up assessment. Participants completed measures of forgiving, affective empathy, and cognitive empathy. At follow-up, complete data were available on 12 empathy seminar participants, 15 comparison seminar participants, and 39 control group participants. Thus, across the three time points, 1 participant was lost from the empathy seminar condition, 2 participants were lost from the comparison seminar condition, and 1 participant was lost from the control condition.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and alphas appear in Table 4. At preseminar, affective empathy was substantially correlated with forgiving ($r = .59$). The measure of cognitive empathy was moderately correlated with affective empathy ($r = .48$) and had a smaller correlation with forgiving ($r = .27$), lending some additional evidence to support the discriminant validity of the measures of empathy and forgiving.

Check for Treatment Fidelity

The seminars were audiotaped. Two independent judges who were naïve to the hypotheses listened to the recordings and judged whether the elements of each seminar that were described in the manual were executed. Interjudge agreement was 93%. Problems with interjudge agreement were largely due to poor quality in the audiotaping of one seminar. Because these discrepancies could not be arbitrated by a third judge, treatment elements that elicited discrepant judgments were not included in the denominator to determine interjudge agreement. Judges concluded that 92% of the treatment elements listed in the manual for the empathy seminar were executed and that 94% of the treatment elements listed in the manual for the comparison seminar were executed. A 2 × 2 contingency table was set up, with rows representing the two seminar conditions and columns representing the number of treatment elements that were completed and not completed (that is, treatment elements, and not participants, were the unit of analysis). Analysis of this contingency table confirmed that there was no difference between the empathy and comparison conditions on the percentage of treatment elements completed, $\chi^2(1, N = 160) = 0.01$, *ns*.

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations for Dependent Variables in Study 2

	Condition					
	Empathy		Comparison		Control	
Measure	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Affective empathy						
Preseminar	6.75	3.64	9.00	5.16	7.43	5.37
Postseminar	11.83	5.38	9.67	4.94	7.03	4.81
Follow-up	10.25	4.75	8.80	4.84	7.02	5.39
Cognitive empathy						
Preseminar	25.17	8.85	27.40	12.89	25.13	9.35
Postseminar	27.50	9.99	28.07	11.53	21.97	9.57
Follow-up	25.50	12.52	32.13	11.62	21.49	10.62
Forgiving						
Preseminar	13.42	4.70	13.80	6.77	15.32	5.43
Postseminar	18.25	5.55	12.27	8.01	15.21	5.62
Follow-up	19.17	3.79	17.80	5.52	15.29	6.80

Manipulation Checks

Check for the equivalence of groups within conditions. Because we tested two small groups within each of the two seminar conditions, it was important to ensure that the groups within each seminar condition had equivalent effects on the dependent variables before we analyzed data by using participants within conditions as the error term (Anderson & Ager, 1978). Thus we conducted a series of six analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with forgiving, affective empathy, and cognitive empathy at postseminar and follow-up as the dependent variables. We evaluated the significance of the groups-nested-within-condition effect at $p = .25$, as recommended by Anderson and Ager (1978) and Hoyle and Crawford (1994). For only one of six dependent variables (forgiving at postseminar) was the effect for groups nested within condition significant at $p < .25$. Thus the effect of difference between the groups nested within each of the two seminar conditions appeared to be relatively slight and unsystematic. Therefore, we used participants, rather than groups, as the unit of analysis for the remaining analyses.

Check for baseline differences across conditions. To ensure that participants in our three experimental conditions were equivalent relative to the variables of theoretical interest before the experimental manipulation, we conducted a series of one-way (condition: empathy seminar, comparison seminar, waiting-list control) ANOVAs with forgiving, affective empathy, and cognitive empathy as the dependent variables. The groups did not differ significantly on any of the dependent variables at pretest (all $ps > .25$).

Major Analysis of Seminar Effects

We analyzed the effects of the seminars by using a series of 3 (condition: empathy seminar, comparison seminar, waiting-list control) × 2 (time: postseminar, follow-up) analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) in which postseminar and follow-up scores were adjusted for pretest scores. Significant effects for condition were explored with two contrasts (see Table 5). The first contrast compared the empathy seminar group with the comparison seminar group. The second contrast compared the comparison seminar group with the waiting-list control group.

Affective empathy. On affective empathy, there was a main effect for condition, multivariate $F(2, 62) = 9.40$, $p < .0001$. Contrasts indicated that the empathy seminar encouraged greater empathy than did the comparison seminar ($p < .01$) but that the comparison seminar did not encourage more empa-

Table 5
Analyses of Covariance and Linear Contrasts for Affective Empathy, Cognitive Empathy, Forgiving, and Residualized Forgiving Scores (Study 2)

Measure	Condition	Time	Condition × Time
Affective empathy	$F(2, 62) = 9.40$****	$F(1, 63) = 2.12$	$F(2, 63) = 0.67$
	C1: $t(25) = 2.68$**		
	C2: $t(52) = 1.25$		
Cognitive empathy	$F(2, 62) = 8.56$****	$F(1, 63) = 0.24$	$F(2, 63) = 2.59$
	C1: $t(25) = -0.81$		
	C2: $t(52) = 3.80$****		
Forgiving	$F(2, 61) = 5.10$**	$F(1, 62) = 8.76$**	$F(2, 62) = 5.88$**
	C1: $t(25) = 2.30$*	T3 > T2	Postseminar: $F(2, 62) = 4.82$*
	C2: $t(52) = 0.56$		C1: $t(25) = 3.05$**
			C2: $t(52) = -1.23$
			Follow-up: $F(2, 62) = 5.95$**
			C1: $t(25) = 0.84$
			C2: $t(52) = 2.30$*
Residualized forgiveness scores	$F(1, 24) = 1.70$	$F(1, 25) = 1.76$	$F(1, 25) = 1.92$

Note. C1 = contrast of the empathy seminar and the comparison seminar; C2 = contrast of the comparison seminar and the waiting-list control; T2 = score at postseminar; T3 = score at follow-up.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. **** $p < .001$.

thy than did the waiting-list control condition ($p = .21$). There was no effect for time, multivariate $F(1, 63) = 2.12$, $p > .15$, or the interaction of condition and time, multivariate $F(2, 63) = 0.67$, *ns*.

Cognitive empathy. On cognitive empathy, there was a main effect for condition, multivariate $F(2, 62) = 8.56$, $p < .0001$. Contrasts indicated that the empathy seminar did not encourage greater cognitive empathy than did the comparison seminar ($p = .42$), but did show that the comparison seminar encouraged more cognitive empathy than did the waiting-list control ($p < .001$). There was no effect for time, multivariate $F(1, 63) = 0.24$, *ns*. The interaction of condition and time barely missed significance, multivariate $F(2, 63) = 2.59$, $p = .08$.

Forgiving. On forgiving, there was a main effect for condition, multivariate $F(2, 61) = 5.10$, $p < .01$. Contrasts indicated that the empathy seminar encouraged greater forgiving than did the comparison seminar ($p < .05$). The comparison seminar did not encourage more forgiving than did the waiting-list control condition ($p = .58$). There was a main effect for time, multivariate $F(1, 62) = 8.76$, $p < .01$, indicating that forgiving scores increased from postseminar to follow-up. The interaction of condition and time was also significant, multivariate $F(2, 62) = 5.88$, $p < .01$.

The interaction of condition and time was followed up with two one-way (condition: empathy seminar, comparison seminar, waiting-list control) univariate ANCOVAs with postseminar and follow-up scores on forgiving, respectively, as the dependent variables, and preseminar scores on forgiving as the covariate. In the first ANCOVA, the main effect of condition was significant, $F(2, 63) = 4.82$, $p < .01$. Linear contrasts indicated that at postseminar, the empathy seminar had higher forgiving scores than the comparison seminar ($p < .01$) and that the comparison seminar did not differ from the waiting-list control condition ($p = .22$). In the second ANCOVA, which examined follow-up scores, the main effect of condition was significant, $F(2, 62) = 5.95$, $p < .01$. Linear contrasts indicated that the empathy and comparison seminars were not significantly different on forgiving at follow-up ($p = .40$) and that participants in the comparison seminar had higher forgiving scores than did participants in the waiting-list control group ($p = .02$).

Mediational Influence of Affective Empathy on Forgiving

The above analyses demonstrate that the empathy seminar was generally more effective in encouraging both forgiving and affective empathy than was the comparison seminar (and that the empathy seminar and comparison seminar were not differentially effective in enhancing cognitive empathy). In addition, it appeared that the comparison seminar was not significantly better than the waiting-list control condition in promoting forgiving or affective empathy (at least at the postseminar assessment). Although these results were generally consistent with the hypothesis that their differential effectiveness in encouraging forgiving was due to their differential effectiveness in promoting affective empathy, a more precise examination of the empathy–forgiving hypothesis was conducted by creating residualized forgiving scores by removing the variance in forgiving at preseminar, postseminar, and follow-up that could be explained by affective empathy at each respective time point.

The resulting residuals were analyzed in a 2 (condition: empathy seminar, comparison seminar, waiting-list control) × 2 (time: postseminar, follow-up) ANCOVA, with preseminar scores as the covariate. After removing variance that could be attributed to affective empathy, there was no effect for condition, multivariate $F(1, 24) = 1.70$, $p = .20$, for time, multivariate $F(1, 25) = 1.76$, $p = .19$, or the interaction of condition and time, multivariate $F(1, 25) = 1.92$, $p = .18$.

Discussion

As other studies (Al-Mabuk et al., 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hebl & Enright, 1993; McCullough & Worthington,

1995) have found, we found in Study 2 that forgiving can be promoted through clinical intervention. The empathy seminar promoted more change in forgiving than did the comparison seminar or the waiting-list control group, which did not differ from one another (at least at postseminar). The empathy seminar produced changes in affective empathy relative to the comparison and waiting-list conditions but was not significantly superior to the comparison group in encouraging cognitive empathy. It appears that both seminars encouraged cognitive empathy, perhaps because of factors common to both seminars (e.g., psychoeducation, discussion, support, encouragement, and social influence; Yalom, 1970). Thus results of Study 2 support the importance of affective empathy for promoting forgiving, but the role of cognitive empathy in promoting forgiving seems less clear.

By using analysis of partial variance, we found that the differential efficacy of the empathy seminar and comparison seminar in promoting forgiving could be explained in terms of their differential efficacy in increasing participants' affective empathy for their offenders. Because the promotion of empathy was the only variable that was systematically varied between the two seminar conditions, these findings are consistent with a mediational interpretation of the empathy–forgiving relationship. These findings lend support to our notion that dispositional, relationship, and situational factors (including clinical intervention) influence forgiving by facilitating empathy for the offending relationship partner.

It is interesting to note that although the empathy seminar created an overall improvement in participants' forgiving relative to participants in the comparison seminar and the no-treatment control condition, this main effect was qualified by a Condition × Time interaction (which disappeared when variance attributable to affective empathy was removed from forgiving scores). Examination of this interaction revealed that by follow-up, participants in the comparison seminar had made substantial improvements in their forgiving scores. This gain in forgiving from postseminar to follow-up, although not corresponding to any apparent gain in affective empathy, did appear to correspond to a small gain in cognitive empathy from postseminar to follow-up. It seems possible that comparison seminar participants' increased cognitive empathy from postseminar to follow-up somehow compensated for the lack of improvement in their affective empathy for their offenders. Although it would probably be unwarranted to make too much of these findings at this time, they suggest that empathic affect and empathic cognition might both be important determinants of forgiving, although they appear to be related to forgiving in different ways. The relationships among affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and forgiving may be an important area in which the empathy–forgiving relationship could be explored in future theory and research.

The experimental methodology used in Study 2 allowed us to explore the causal dimensions of the empathy–forgiving relationship more definitively than we were able to do in Study 1. Despite the use of an experimental design, two alternative explanations could be offered to account for the findings. One alternative explanation is that the measures of forgiving and affective empathy are not measuring distinct constructs, so any empirical relationship between the two measures does not correspond to a relationship between the concepts that the measures are intended to represent. However, our measures of affective empathy and forgiving were demonstrated to be distinct in Study 1: (a) their relationship was better described by a two-factor measurement model than a one-factor model, (b) a large amount of forgiving-related variance remained in the forgiving measure after variance that could be attributed to affective empathy was removed (but not vice versa), and (c) they had different relationships with measures of apology, conciliatory behavior, and avoidance behavior. In addition, the forgiving measure was not as strongly correlated with the measure of cognitive empathy ($r = .27$) as was the measure of affective empathy ($r = .48$) in Study 2. This series of discriminant validity tests suggests that although forgiving and affective empathy are related constructs, their relationship may actually be a functional (i.e., mediational) one, not simply a methodological artifact.

A second potential methodological explanation for the findings is that the empathy–forgiving relationship was a function of demand characteristics introduced through our explicit attempts to enhance forgiving by promoting empathy in the empathy seminar. Although this argument may be an important consideration, the power of the argument is weakened somewhat by the convergence of our experimental evidence with the nonexperimental evidence gathered in Study 1. In addition, although demand characteristics might account for the superiority of the empathy seminar in promoting empathy, they do not account for the superiority of the empathy seminar in promoting forgiving or the apparent mediational relationship between empathy and forgiving. Nevertheless, the feasibility of more traditional experimental designs for the study of interpersonal forgiving could and should be explored, perhaps by using traditional laboratory procedures for enhancing empathy (e.g., Batson, Turk et al., 1995), which might be less susceptible to the introduction of demand characteristics.

General Discussion

The present work provides a preliminary theoretical and empirical base for conceptualizing interpersonal forgiving as an empathy-facilitated set of motivational changes that is structurally and functionally similar to the relationship between empathy and altruistic motivation to help people who are in need (e.g., Batson, 1990, 1991; Batson & Oleson, 1991; McCullough et al., 1997). When people forgive, they become motivated to pursue relationship-constructive, rather than relationship-destructive, actions toward an offending relationship partner. This set of motivational changes is facilitated by the development of empathy for the offender, which leads to an increased caring for the offending partner that overshadows the salience of the offender's hurtful actions. Forgiving disinclines offended people from pursuing self-protective but relationship-destructive responses to interpersonal hurts (i.e., vengeance and maintenance of estrangement) and inclines them instead to pursue relationship-constructive responses (e.g., attempts at conciliation). Invoking Rusbult et al.'s (1991) terminology, forgiving might be viewed as a motivational and relational turning point: When people forgive, they inhibit their normal destructive responses that would increase the probability of further relational disintegra-

tion and instead become more likely to enact constructive responses that would help to restore the damaged relationship to health.

Although we have relied primarily on Batson's theory and research on the empathy–altruism hypothesis to explore the social psychology of forgiving, the empathy–forgiving relationship could potentially be explored from other perspectives as well. For example, the empathy–forgiving relationship might be examined in relation to attributional change. In previous research, Weiner (1993; see also Weiner et al., 1991) suggested that both empathy and forgiving are products of attributional change. When observers change their causal attributions regarding the hurtful or damaging behavior of another person, Weiner argued, the observers become both more empathic and more forgiving toward the offending person. Thus attribution theory might lead to the hypothesis that empathy and forgiving are related not because empathy causes forgiving but because they are both caused by attributional change regarding the offender. Future explorations of the relationships among empathy, attributions, and forgiving would be mutually fructifying for understandings of forgiving and attribution theory alike.

Exploring the empathy–forgiving link from other perspectives on close relationships might also be productive. For example, Rusbult et al. (1991) found that the positive effect of cognitive perspective taking (which we have called cognitive empathy) on accommodative behavior was mediated by commitment to the relationship. In a related line of inquiry, Aron, Aron, Tudor, and Nelson (1991) proposed that close relationships involve three unique phenomena that could be integrated with our conceptualization of forgiving. First, people allocate relatively higher proportions of their resources to close relationship partners and are more inclined to try to satisfy the needs of close relationship partners. Second, people differentiate less between their perspective and the perspectives of close relationship partners. Third, people vicariously share the characteristics of close relationship partners. If relational closeness facilitates these phenomena (which would seem to involve empathy), then relational closeness might be an important condition that facilitates the empathy–forgiving link.

Finally, the development of improved measures of forgiving would greatly facilitate research on the social psychology of forgiving. Our simple, five-item measure of forgiving was equal to the task of the present inquiry but is probably not broad enough to capture important individual differences in forgiving. Although other instruments that purportedly measure forgiving have been advanced in the past 10 years (e.g., Hargrave & Sells, 1997; Mauger et al., 1992; Subkoviak et al., 1992; Wade, 1989), their utility for research on forgiving in close relationships remains to be investigated. New tools for the measurement of forgiving should also be closely tied to theorizing about the structure of interpersonal forgiving. As theory and measurement tools develop for studying the psychology of forgiving, psychologists can look forward to more detailed examinations of this important, though understudied, social-psychological phenomenon.

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