

# Forgive Again? Testing the Remorse / Forgiveness Model after Repeated Transgressions

Edwin J. Vazquez, Vy Nguyen, & Gregg J. Gold  
Humboldt State University

## Overview

- Examined the role of attributions of behavioral stability, and empathy toward a transgressor on the remorse-forgiveness relationship.
- Examined me remorse-forgiveness model in the context of a repeated transgression.
- Together, attributions of stability mediated the relationship between perceived remorse and forgiveness on first transgression.
- There was no evidence of mediation for second transgression.

## Background

### The apology-forgiveness model

- Empathy and perceived attributions of stability (Gold & Davis, 2005) are known mediators between apology and forgiveness.
- Perceived empathy can increase the likelihood of forgiveness, while perceived remorse can relate to decreased attributions of stability.
- If an individual experiences decreased attributions of behavioral stability, and increased empathy, then they are more likely to forgive their transgressor).
- Most research has focused on single transgressions, and in the context of romantic relationships (e.g., Davis & Gold, 2011).

### The Present Study

- Examined the mediation effect of perceived stability and empathy in the remorse-forgiveness model between people who have never met.
- We expand on previous research by examining this mechanism in the context of a repeated transgression.

### Hypotheses and Research Questions

- Attributions of stability and empathy mediate the relationship between perceptions of stability and forgiveness .
- Remorse mediates the relationship between remorse and empathy.
- Empathy mediates the relationship between stability and forgiveness.
- Does the mediation model hold in the context of a repeated transgression?

## Method

### Participants

- 38 Undergraduates (66% female, *M* age = 21.7)

### Procedure

- Participants played a fixed-outcome, word-completion computer game against a confederate acting as another player.
- The ‘player’ cheated during the game.
- After, participants received a remorseful apology and completed a battery of measures.
- Participants were told they had another chance to play the game in order to receive double extra credit points for participation.
- During the second trial, the ‘partner’ cheated again. Participants then completed another set of measures.

### Instrumentation

#### 24-item Response to Transgression Scale (RTS)

- 5 subscales: remorse ( $\alpha = .83$ ), empathy ( $\alpha = .76$ ), forgiveness ( $\alpha = .71$  ), and transgressors perceived behavioral stability ( $\alpha = .77$ ), anger (not included in study:  $\alpha = .71$  ).

#### 60-item Enright Forgiveness Inventory (EFI)

- 6 subscales that examine negative and positive affect, behavior, and cognition (total scale:  $\alpha = .77$ )

### Analysis

- Two sets of mediation analyses examining the remorse-forgiveness model at both trial times using the PROCESS script for SPSS (Preacher & Hayes, 2013).
- Time 2 models included Time 1 measures as covariates to account for initial effects.

**Model 1** - Specified perceptions of stability and empathy as mediators operating in serial.

**Model 2 and 3** – Were specified as simple mediation models

Table 1 Direct and Indirect effects for Multiple and Simple Mediation Models at Time 1 and Time 2

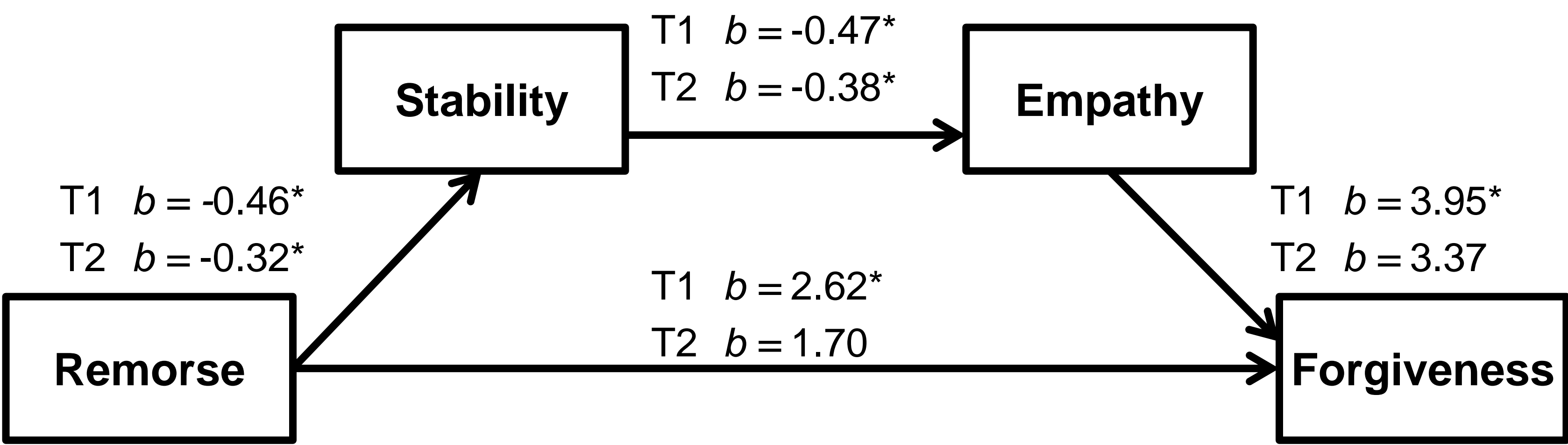
		Time 1			Time 2		
		Predictor	<i>b</i>	95% CI	<i>b</i>	95% CI	
Model 1	c' path	Remorse	-0.70	[-0.27, 5.51]	0.36	[-0.58, 3.97]	
	Indirect	Remorse	0.85	[0.18, 2.37]	0.42	[-0.01, 1.64]	
Model 2	c' path	Stability	-5.14	[-7.20, -3.08]	-1.10	[-2.94, 0.74]	
	Indirect	Stability	-1.63	[-3.15, -0.72]	-1.63	[-2.76, -0.81]	
Model 3	c' path	Remorse	0.16	[-0.03, 0.35]	0.22	[0.07, 0.37]	
	Indirect	Remorse	0.21	[0.12, 0.35]	0.15	[0.06, 0.29]	

c' = Direct Effects: predictive power of predictor with covariates and mediators included. Indirect = mediation effect tests.

## Results & Discussion

### Stability & empathy as mediators of the remorse-forgiveness relationship.

- Stability and remorse mediated the relationship between remorse and forgiveness at Time 1
- However, there was no evidence for mediation for second transgression (Time 2).

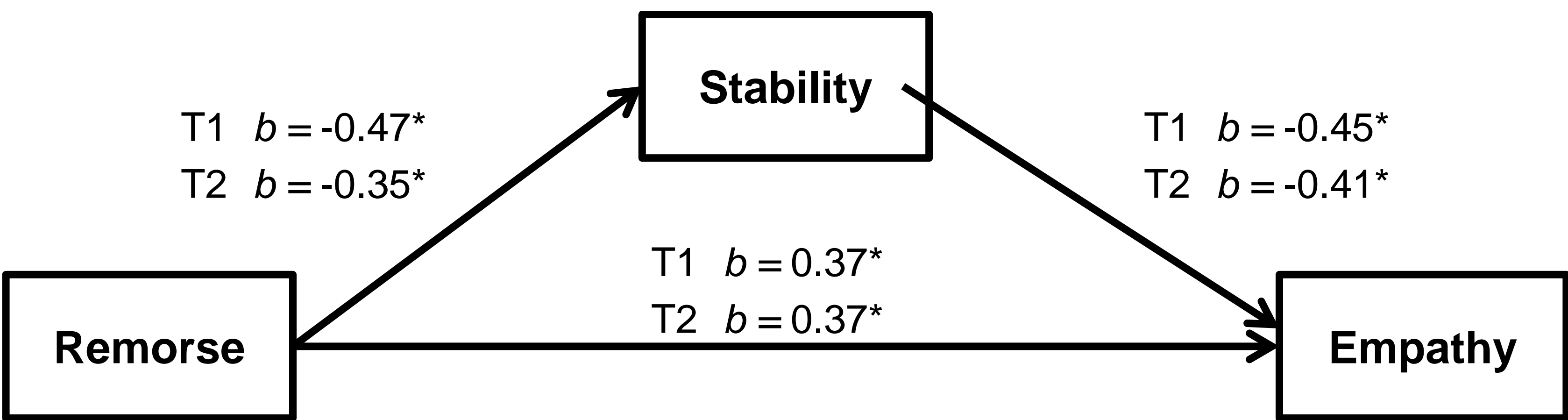


T1 = Time 1. T2 = Time 2.

*b* = Total effect coefficients (c-path): predictor effect with covariates included.

### Attributions of Stability as Mediator of the Remorse-Empathy Relationship

- For first and second transgressions, attributions of stability mediated the remorse-empathy relationship.



### Empathy as Mediator of the Perceptions of Stability – Forgiveness Relationship

- For first and second transgressions, empathy mediated the perceptions of stability – forgiveness relationship. .

