

Analyzing the use of Bargaining and Forgiveness after a Conflict in *Glee*

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Within all interpersonal relationships, conflict is something that is always bound to arise and is a necessary part of communication. Everybody argues and everybody cannot agree on everything. However, conflict is something that can either be taken one of two ways: in a positive, constructive manner, or with a negative, dishabilitating course of action. Rather, it is how we resolve these conflicts that can make or break a relationship. Will we negotiate or bargain with our partner in order to appease needs? Forgive them or turn them away? These are questions that we must deal with when we handle conflict and relational repair within our own interpersonal relationships.

In the television series *Glee*, relational conflict is something that the characters are constantly trying to manage and overcome. Being teenagers in a high school glee club in Ohio, the main characters are persistently trying to manage conflict with other students at their school, and with each other. The glee kids are constantly competing for solos, lead roles, and a sense of popularity. However, tensions skyrocket after members from the main glee club stray and create a separate glee club at school, which they called “The Troubletones. The leaders of their respective clubs, Santana and Finn, begin to engage in conflicts like never before as they will compete against each other in an upcoming show choir competition, and this leads to their conflict spiraling out of control from insults to a public outing, and then a harsh slap across the face. For this research paper, I will be analyzing the scene where Finn and Santana discuss why he lied for her after she slapped him, in which both characters express both verbal and nonverbal cues of wanting to manage their conflict and repair their relationship, by using the bargaining strategy and forgiveness.

After a conflict, there are multiple ways in which communication can be addressed in order to ease the tension and satisfy those involved. One of the ways in which to do so is through bargaining. The bargaining strategy is agreeing to do something for someone as long as the other person does something in return (Guerrero et. al, 2018). Even though the bargaining strategy is often seen as something done within a workplace or in a professional manner, it is often used more so informally than not, due to “an ongoing mechanism of influence and dispute resolution between individuals” (Lewicki, 1981). However, there are mixed motives when it comes to the bargaining strategy since there is an appeal to settle both the conflict and the bargainer’s needs and wants (Lawler, 1992). Therefore, it is difficult to use bargaining in a manner that directly appeases both sides because one person is usually at a disadvantage, as bargaining can be seen as a power move by one individual, even when trying to appease a conflict.

Furthermore, multiple steps need to be overcome in order for the bargaining strategy to fully allow a conflict resolution. The first obstacle is that conflicts are usually socially-structured, and therefore, conflicts are interpreted differently. This leads to individuals wanting to save face and not wanting to agree to do something that they may think is not worth doing because of their belief that they did nothing wrong. The second obstacle is that neither individual is entirely sure that they are both getting an equal amount of gain out of the situation, as individuals always want the benefits to outweigh the losses. Moreover, there needs to be a sense of trust established for both parties, especially the agreeer to the bargaining strategy, in order to understand that both will be gaining for the situation (Boyle & Lawler, 1991). When these obstacles are overcome, the bargaining strategy can be used strategically and can appease conflict and tension that has arisen within the relationship.

Bargaining is a tactic used within the episode of *Glee* entitled “I Kissed a Girl.” The beginning of the episode takes the viewer to the principal's office, where Santana's punishment for slapping Finn is discussed. However, Finn decides to state that Santana only “stage slapped” him, ultimately claiming that the slap was not real, and therefore, she should not get in trouble. After the discussion in the principal's office, Santana confronts Finn about why he let her off the hook, especially with sectionals coming up so soon, and Finn decides to bargain with Santana, creating an “I'll do this for you if you do this for me” situation. Finn wants Santana to be acquitted for her actions, but he also needs something in return. He bargains with her claiming that if she gets the Troubletones to come back to his glee club for the week, he will continue to lie about the slap, letting her off the hook and allowing for her to compete in sectionals. Santana ultimately ends up agreeing to Finn's bargaining, and they both gain something from this situation.

Finn bargains with Santana and overcomes the two obstacles that block bargaining users from successfully overcoming the conflict. When Santana expresses her confusion as to why Finn saved her from suspension, he levels with her and presents his bargain in a way that displays how both of them had “been at each other,” but how his bargain would help both of them (Boyle & Lawler, 1991). Santana does not want to be suspended and Finn wants her to come back to glee club, to ultimately try to help her come out. This leads to the second obstacle that Finn overcomes to successfully bargain with Santana, regaining her trust to prove that he is not trying to screw her over (Boyle & Lawler, 1991). Finn compliments Santana and worries that she hides part of her “awesomeness” when she hides her identity and coming back to glee club would help her embrace her true self. Finn wants to help Santana embrace all her “awesomeness” and, in essence, his bargain, within itself, is a way to regain her trust. She is saved from

suspension, and he is able to help her with the damage that he ultimately caused, while also trying to bring the glee clubs back together, and they both gain from this situation allowing them to ease the tension between them.

Forgiveness is also something that eases conflict and is a necessary part of repairing a relationship after wrongdoing occurs and is “an acknowledgment that someone is owed a social debt but they make a conscious decision to absolve the debtor” (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). However, forgiveness does not always mean a simple snap of the fingers and everything in the relationship is fixed. Forgiveness is an active process that can be seen as the first step of an attempt to repair a relationship. The goal of forgiveness is to allow relationships to have the opportunity to restore the relationship quality to pre-offense levels, transcend the offense, and hopefully even strengthen the relationship. (Merolla & Zhang, 2011). This means that forgiveness can take time and is not something that can be faked. It is important to note that forgiveness still holds whoever was in the wrong responsible for the transgression, and does not involve merely denying, ignoring, minimizing, tolerating, condoning, excusing, or forgetting the offense (Morses & Metts, 2011).

Furthermore, there are multiple ways in which forgiveness is shown, it is not always a simple “I forgive you” statement, and the timeline differs from person to person. Some people may forgive as soon as the apology or transgression takes place, while others take a long time to even begin the forgiveness process, depending on the situation (Ramdani, 2017). Moreover, forgiveness can be shown through different types of communication strategies. These strategies include explicit forgiveness, indirect or nonverbal display, minimization, discussion, and conditional forgiveness. Explicit forgiveness is directly saying “I forgive you,” while indirect and nonverbal displays of forgiveness would include smiling, other words of gratitude, hugging, etc.

Minimization is making the offense out to be no big deal, discussion is a mutual discussion about the offense and how to move forward, and conditional forgiveness is implying that the offender will forgive the transgressor only if they do something in exchange (Waldron and Kelly). Even though some forgiveness tactics are better used in some situations than others, there is no best way to begin the forgiveness process and it ultimately depends on the situation and the forgiver's personality as well (Ramdani, 2017).

Forgiveness is used within the discussion between Santana and Finn, as they seemingly forgive each other for the other's prior actions. Finn gives Santana a way out of trouble because he forgives her for slapping him, and even shows this forgiveness prior to their discussion when he says it was a stage slap in the principal's office, leaving her confused at his actions and intentions. He further expresses his forgiveness for Santana when he expresses that she is "awesome" and does not like it when "she hides herself and hides part of that awesomeness with it," expressing no malice towards her. Furthermore, Santana forgives Finn for the aftermath of the things he said about her, such as her being outed, when she agrees to his terms with no further complaint, especially since Santana is a very strong and stubborn character if she had no intention of wanting to mend her friendship with Finn she would have found her own way out of the situation. Through this mutual forgiveness, the first step to repairing the relationship, their friendship is able to be preserved because there was a mutual intention to preserve it.

Santana expresses forgiveness for Finn nonverbally by giving him softening looks after he expresses he wants to help her and by appearing grateful for helping her save face. Santana is grateful for Finn's actions and later in the episode hugs him, implying a larger nonverbal display of forgiveness for Finn, as hugs are often used to indicate a type of forgiveness nonverbally (Waldron and Kelly). Santana is not ignoring the emotional damage Finn's actions have caused

her, rather she is simply making a nonverbal forgiveness statement that implies that she appreciates Finn's actions and sees Finn's remorse. She has simply begun the process of forgiving Finn and would like for their friendship to be able to transcend this transgression.

Finn offers Santana an indirect display of forgiveness as well. He implies that she is "awesome" and continuously compliments her throughout their conversation, indicating that he wants to repair his relationship with her without explicitly saying "Hey Santana I forgive you for slapping me." He acknowledges the fact that he and Santana have been continuously going at each other but emphasizes how important she is to him. Furthermore, Finn displays nonverbal indirect forgiveness towards Santana as he smiles at her throughout the conversation, and shrugs his shoulders when she first asks him about why he saved her from suspension, indicating that he deems the slap as no big deal (Waldron and Kelly). By doing so, Finn shows how he holds no malice towards Santana and would also like to repair their friendship.

Overall, Finn and Santana are able to repair their relationship, marking the end of their previous ongoing conflict. Finn is able to effectively bargain with Santana, in order for them to both positively gain something from the situation and ease the conflict they had been experiencing. In this situation, Finn and Santana also show nonverbal signs of forgiveness, beginning the process of not just stopping their conflict, but also the process of repairing their friendship. Both played parts engaging in their conflict, and, through bargaining and forgiveness that took place within the scene, both were able to play parts managing their conflict and repairing their relationship.

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