The tendency to forgive in dating and married couples: The role of attachment and relationship satisfaction

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Abstract

Given the positive benefits associated with interpersonal forgiveness, the current investigation examined the tendency to forgive in romantic relationships. Two studies tested the hypothesis that the tendency to forgive mediates the association between attachment models of self and other and relationship satisfaction in dating ($n = 184$) and marital relationships ($n = 96$). In addition, the extent to which the tendency to forgive predicts forgiveness of an actual transgression was examined among married couples. The tendency to forgive partially mediated the relation between model of other (relationship partner) and satisfaction for those in dating relationships and for husbands. For those in marital relationships, the tendency to forgive partially mediated the relation between model of self and satisfaction. In addition, for wives, endorsing a greater tendency to forgive was related to forgiveness of an actual transgression, regardless of the severity of that transgression. For husbands, endorsing a greater tendency to forgive was related to forgiveness of an actual transgression, but only for more severe transgressions. Results are discussed in terms of who is more likely to forgive and the role that the tendency to forgive plays in romantic relationships.

Interpersonal forgiveness is gaining increased attention (Emmons, 2000; McCullough, 2000; Worthington, 1998a), as it is thought to promote long-term physical and mental health benefits (Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Connor, & Wade, 2001; McCullough et al., 1998). Consistent with this viewpoint, interventions to promote forgiveness have shown increases in self-esteem, hope, and positive feelings toward the offender and decreases in depression, anxiety, anger, grief, and revenge against the offender (Hebl & Enright, 1993; Al-aMabuk, Enright, & Cardis, 1995; McCullough & Worthington, 1995; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Coyle & Enright, 1997). Forgiving thoughts have also been shown to lead to lower physiological stress responses (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Lann, 2001).

Most of this forgiveness research, however, has focused on forgiveness of a single, specific transgression and has not examined forgiveness in the context of intimate relationships. This is important as multiple transgressions are likely to occur in the course of a relationship and many of the transgressions will have the potential to disrupt the relationship (Fincham, 2000). The tendency to forgive is likely to be particularly important in relationships, and we therefore, as a result, investigate the tendency to forgive in this context.

Defining Forgiveness

Despite the lack of a consensual definition, most researchers agree that forgiveness concerns a decrease in negative feelings and an

increase in positive feelings toward the transgressor. For example, McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) define forgiveness as "a set of motivational changes, whereby one becomes decreasingly motivated to retaliate against and maintain estrangement from an offending relationship partner and increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender, despite the offender's hurtful actions" (p. 321–322).

Researchers have distinguished the tendency to forgive from specific acts of forgiveness. For example, Berry et al. (2001) refer to "forgivingness" as a general disposition to forgive across time and across situations. In this investigation, the tendency to forgive is examined specifically within romantic relationships and is therefore defined as the tendency to forgive partner transgressions over time and across situations. Although related to forgivingness, the tendency to forgive is not equivalent to this dispositional construct, as it most likely reflects the history with this particular partner as well as any general disposition to forgive.

Forgiveness can be distinguished from constructs such as denial (which involves an unwillingness to perceive the injury), condoning (which removes the offence and hence the need for forgiveness), pardon (which can only be granted by a representative of society such as a judge), forgetting (which removes awareness of the offence from consciousness; to forgive is more than never thinking about the offence), and reconciliation (which restores a relationship and is therefore a dyadic process) (Enright, 1991; Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; Freedman, 1998).

Forgiveness and Romantic Relationships

Forgiveness is believed to be an important step in restoring a relationship "toward harmony and trust" (Exline & Baumeister, 2000: p. 138). Researchers examining forgiveness in romantic relationships have posited that, within these relationships, forgiveness can ameliorate existing pro-

blems and prevent future problems before they begin (Worthington & DiBlasio, 1990). Forgiveness may also promote marital adjustment (Woodman, 1991; Nelson, 1992) and may have an effect on overall relationship satisfaction (McCullough, 1997). Not surprisingly, Fenell (1993) found that spouses believe that the willingness to forgive and be forgiven is one of the most important characteristics for marital satisfaction and longevity. Consistent with this report is the recently documented positive association between forgiveness and marital satisfaction (McCullough et al., 1998; Fincham, 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2001; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002). McCullough et al. (1998) also found that forgiving occurs more frequently in committed close relationships and that forgiveness is associated with restored relational closeness following an interpersonal transgression. Again, however, much of this research has focused on forgiveness in specific situations where a transgression has been committed.

Some researchers, however, have begun to investigate personological and relational variables that are related to the dispositional tendency to forgive (e.g., McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001). For example, it has been hypothesized that the dispositional tendency to forgive is related to trait empathy, agreeableness, and humility (McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998). Empirical evidence supports these hypotheses. For example, John (1990) found that the trait adjective "forgiving" is associated with agreeableness. Ashton, Paunonen, Helmes, and Jackson (1998) found that agreeableness correlated positively with both empathy and forgiveness. At the relationship level, it has been hypothesized that those who are accommodating in their relationships (willing to inhibit impulses to act destructively and instead act constructively toward relationship partners when they have transgressed, Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991) may be more likely to forgive partners when they have committed transgressions (McCullough et al., 1997). It is

important to note, however, that although forgiveness may be similar to accommodation, it is not exactly the same, as accommodation can occur when certain conditions necessary for forgiveness are not met (Fincham, 2000).

Although extant research identifies several factors that make individuals more or less likely to forgive partner transgressions, knowledge in this area is limited. In this study, we explore attachment security as a potential factor related to an individual's capacity to forgive. Attachment security reflects important aspects of self-knowledge and relational knowledge that are likely to drive interpersonal behavior, and we therefore propose that the representational models underlying an individual's attachment security make them more or less likely to forgive partner transgressions.

Attachment and Forgiveness

Attachment concerns the propensity of individuals to form affectional bonds to particular others and characterizes humans "from the cradle to the grave" (Bowlby, 1977: p. 201). Hazan and Shaver (1987) first examined attachment within the context of adult romantic relationships and since then investigators have explored attachment security and various aspects of adult close relationships. For example, attachment security is related to the provision of more beneficial care to romantic partners (Kunce & Shaver, 1994; Carnelley, Pietromonaco, & Jaffe, 1996; Feeney, 1996). In terms of communication patterns, secure individuals show more reciprocity in discussing topics raised by their partners, in addition to showing more flexibility in the range of self-disclosure across social situations (Keelan, Dion, & Dion, 1998; Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991). Pistole (1989) found secure individuals are more likely to use an integrating (or problem-solving) strategy than those who are insecure. She also found that secure individuals are more compromising. In addition, Scharfe and Bartholomew (1995) found that attachment security is related to constructive accommodation strategies in response to partner destructive behavior (actively and constructively attempting to improve conditions and passively but optimistically waiting for conditions to improve; Rusbult et al., 1991). These findings highlight some of the positive aspects of relationship functioning that are associated with increased attachment security.

Underlying attachment security are working models of self and other (e.g., relationship partners). These models are the mental representations that an individual holds about the world, others, and the self that have been built up through prior experiences (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). Internal working models are important in the attachment system because they guide not only appraisals of experience but behavior as well (Bowlby, 1973).

Adult attachment researchers have construed models of self and other as continuous dimensions ranging from positive to negative. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), people who have a positive model of self view themselves as worthy of love and support; one's model of self is related to the extent to which one experiences anxiety about being rejected or abandoned. Those who have a positive model of self experience little or no anxiety about being abandoned, because they feel they are worthy of love and support. An individual who has a positive model of others (e.g., their romantic partners) desires intimacy and closeness with others and tends to view partners as available and trustworthy. Therefore, an individual's model of others is related to the extent to which individuals will seek out or avoid closeness in relationships. Those who have a positive model of others will actively seek out intimacy, support, and closeness in relationships.

One's model of self and other may have implications for the tendency to forgive partner transgressions. For example, people with more positive models of others may be more forgiving, because they are likely to make more benign attributions about partner behavior and to behave in ways that foster and/or maintain closeness and intimacy. To the extent that people trust in

the availability and dependability of the partner, people may view a transgression as more minor and circumscribed and may be willing to assume the best in the partner. For example, they may reason that, because the partner is generally trustworthy and dependable, the particular transgression does not represent typical behavior and may be willing to forgive the partner. In contrast, people with negative models of others may view a transgression as more evidence that the partner is unavailable and untrustworthy and, as such, may be less willing to forgive.

Models of self may also have implications for forgiving, although the manner in which they do so is less clear. On one hand, one could argue that individuals with a negative model of self (e.g., high in attachment anxiety) would be more likely to forgive due to their overwhelming fears of abandonment. In this case, forgiving would be a way to maintain the relationship and decrease the likelihood of abandonment. However, individuals who have a great deal of anxiety over being abandoned are prone to experience intense anger, have a hostile attributional bias, lack effective anger control strategies, and tend to ruminate on their angry feelings (e.g., Mikulincer, 1998; Rholes, Simpson, & Oriña, 1999), all of which may serve to impede the forgiveness process. Alternatively, an individual with a positive model of self (e.g., low attachment anxiety) may be more likely to forgive their partner, because they have internalized a sense of their own self-worth and do not expect rejection from their partner. Therefore, the transgression would be less likely to be viewed as a threat to the relationship and, as in the case of positive models of others, people with positive models of the self would therefore make more benign attributions about the transgression and be more likely to forgive the partner. Conversely, an individual with a negative model of self may be less likely to forgive their partner.

In addition to the possibility that models of self and others may each be associated with the tendency to forgive, it may also be the case that people with certain profiles on these dimensions may be the most likely to forgive. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) have shown that the dimensions map onto four prototypical attachment patterns. For example, individuals who are classified as secure have both a positive model of self and others; individuals who are preoccupied have a negative model of self but a positive model of others (in that they desire closeness and intimacy); individuals who are dismissing have a positive model of self but a negative model of others; and individuals who are fearful have both a negative model of self and others. It may be the case that people who have positive models of both self and others (i.e., securely attached) will show the greatest tendency to forgive because both are likely to lead an individual to make more benign attributions in the face of partner transgressions. This is consistent with the recent work by Tangney, Fee, and Lee (1999) who found that attachment security is related to the propensity to forgive others, such that those with more secure attachments are more likely to be forgiving.

Attachment and Relationship Satisfaction

The association between attachment models of self and other and relationship satisfaction has been examined by a number of researchers who have found that both positive models of self and of romantic partners are related to satisfaction in dating (Collins & Read, 1990) and marital relationships (Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Feeney, Noller, & Callan, 1994). Efforts are now being made to explain this association, specifically to identify the mechanisms by which security manifests in satisfaction. For example, research has shown that negative affectivity (Davila, Bradbury, & Fincham, 1998) and different communication patterns (Feeney, 1994) mediate the relation between attachment security and relationship satisfaction. These relational concepts have helped to shed light on the ways in which attachment security affects relationship satisfaction. In this study, it is hypothesized that the

tendency to forgive is an additional mediator between attachment security and relationship satisfaction. As forgiveness is seen as a relationship-enhancing process (McCullough et al., 1998), it is important to learn more about the role forgiveness plays in romantic relationships. One such role could be a mechanism linking attachment models of self and other to relationship satisfaction. It is predicted that those who have a positive model of self and others are more likely to forgive when their partners commit transgressions against them. This tendency toward forgiving is likely to be related to satisfaction with the relationship.

Current Studies and Hypotheses

The goal of the current studies was to increase our understanding of the tendency to forgive in intimate relationships (i.e., the tendency across situations to forgive one's current romantic partner when he or she commits transgressions) by examining how it is related to attachment security and relationship satisfaction. Two studies were conducted examining the role of forgiveness in romantic relationships of differing lengths. In Study 1, we explored the relations among the variables in a sample of individuals in dating relationships; in Study 2, we explored the relations in a sample of married couples.

Study One

We examined the extent to which positive models of self and others, and their interaction were associated with a greater tendency to forgive partner transgressions, and we predicted that indicators of greater security would be associated with greater forgiving. We also hypothesized that the tendency to forgive would be related to greater relationship satisfaction and that positive models of self and others also will be associated with greater satisfaction (again, we also examined whether models of self and others interact to predict relationship satisfaction). Finally, we hypothesized that the associ-

ation between security in attachment models and relationship satisfaction would be mediated by the tendency to forgive.

Method

Participants and procedure

Participants were 184 (130 female and 54 male) undergraduates at the University at Buffalo. These individuals were recruited through an introductory psychology course and screened to ensure current involvement in a dating relationship for at least 4 months. Individuals who met criteria were asked to participate in return for course credit. They completed several questionnaires, including those relevant to the current study.

The participants' mean age was 19.5 years ($SD = 2.4$). Seventy-two percent of the participants were Caucasian, 11% were Asian, 8% were African American, 4% were Latino/Latina, and 5% were from other ethnic backgrounds. The average length of relationship was 22.4 months ($SD = 15.4$).

Measures

Forgiveness. Forgiveness was assessed using the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) (McCullough et al., 1998). The TRIM is an 11-item self-report measure assessing an individual's reactions to a specific partner transgression. The TRIM was revised to assess the general tendency to forgive partner transgressions (e.g., "I forgave my partner pretty easily" was changed to "When my partner angers me or hurts my feelings, I can usually forgive him/her pretty easily"). Although other measures exist that assess the tendency to forgive, such as the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson & Snyder, 2000) and the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgiveness (Berry et al., 2001), these measures assess the tendency to forgive others in general and are not specific to current romantic partners. The revised TRIM consists of items reflecting three

dimensions: revenge (e.g., "When my partner wrongs or hurts my feelings, I hold a grudge for a long time"), avoidance (e.g., "When my partner angers me or hurts my feelings, I tend to keep my distance for a long time"), and forgiveness (e.g., "When my partner angers me or hurts my feelings, I can usually forgive him/her pretty easily"). Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with each of the items based on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Given that forgiveness is believed to encompass both a decrease in revenge and avoidance toward the transgressor as well as an increase in forgiveness toward the transgressor (McCullough et al., 1997) and because a principle components factor analysis did not support an underlying three-dimensional structure for the scale, responses to the items from the three dimensions were summed to form an overall forgiveness score. Higher scores indicated a greater tendency to forgive. The TRIM has good psychometric properties, including adequate validity and temporal stability (McCullough et al., 1998). In this study, the TRIM had Cronbach alphas of 0.89 for both males and females.

Attachment security. Attachment models of self and others were assessed with the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ) (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). The RQ consists of four short paragraphs, each describing a particular attachment pattern (secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful), as it applies to one's romantic relationship. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which each paragraph describes how they feel in their romantic relationship, based on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all like me and 7 = very much like me). As recommended by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994), model of self was computed by summing an individual's ratings on the preoccupied and fearful dimensions and subtracting that from the sum of an individual's ratings on the secure and dismissing dimensions. Model of other was computed by summing an individual's rating on the dismissing and

fearful dimensions and subtracting that from the sum of an individual's ratings on the secure and preoccupied dimensions. Higher scores indicated a more positive model of self (or low anxiety over abandonment) and a more positive model of other (or low avoidance of intimacy).

Relationship satisfaction. Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (PRQC) (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000). The PRQC is an 18-item self-report inventory assessing individual's relationship quality. The PRQC consists of six subscales: satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. Each of the items was summed together to form an overall measure of relationship satisfaction, where greater scores indicate greater relationship satisfaction. This measure has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure of relationship quality (Fletcher et al., 2000). Across all items, the PRQC in this study had Cronbach alphas of 0.90 for males and 0.94 for females.

Results

Means, *SD*s, and zero-order correlations for all variables are summarized in Table 1. All analyses were conducted using structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation. Arbuckle's (1997) AMOS program (version 4.0) was used.

A single model was tested that included models of self, other, and their interaction predicting forgiveness (covariances between models of self and other and their interaction were also included). The model adequately fits the data $[\chi^2(1) = 0.17, p = 0.68; \text{CFI} = 1.00; \text{RMSEA} = 0.00]$. In addition, although both models of self ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$) and other ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.001$) predicted the tendency to forgive, these associations were qualified by a significant interaction ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$). To probe this interaction, two additional models were tested: one predicting the tendency to forgive from models of other, high models of self (one *SD* above the

Table 1. *Means, SDs, and Zero-Order Correlations among Attachment Models of Self, Other, Forgiveness, and Relationship Satisfaction (Study 1)*

Variables	1	2	3	Mean	SD
Self				4.33	3.67
Other	0.03			3.93	2.81
TRIM	0.15*	0.31***		58.35	11.24
PRQC	0.32***	0.48***	0.44***	112.69	12.22

Note. Self = Relationship Questionnaire – model of Self; Other = Relationship Questionnaire – model of other; TRIM = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory; PRQC = Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory.
*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
***$p < 0.001$.

mean) and their interaction and another predicting the tendency to forgive from models of other, low models of self (one *SD* below the mean) and their interaction (Aiken & West, 1991). The first model (model of other, high model of self and their interaction predicting forgiveness) adequately fits the data [$\chi^2(1) = 0.17$, $p = 0.68$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.00]. In addition, model of other predicted the tendency to forgive ($\beta = 0.82$, $p < 0.001$). The second model (model of other, low model of self, and their interaction) also adequately fits the data [$\chi^2(1) = 0.17$, $p = 0.68$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.00]; however, model of other did not significantly predict the tendency to forgive ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.06$). Therefore, it appears that, for individuals with a more negative model of self, the association between models of other and the tendency to forgive was not significant. However, for those with a more positive model of self, more positive models of other were associated with a greater tendency to forgive partner transgressions. This suggests that it is the most secure people who show the greatest tendency to forgive.

We next examined the association between attachment security and relationship satisfaction. A single model was tested that included model of self, other, and their interaction predicting relationship satisfaction. The model adequately fits the data [$\chi^2(1) = 0.17$, $p = 0.68$; CFI = 1.00;

RMSEA = 0.00]. Model of self ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) and other ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$) independently predicted relationship satisfaction (their interaction was not significant; $\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.07$).

Given that models of self and other were independently related to relationship satisfaction, we proceeded with our test of forgiveness as a mediator, albeit a mediator of the relation between models of self and relationship satisfaction and between models of other and relationship satisfaction (rather than the interaction, as it was not significant). A model was tested that included model of self, other, the tendency to forgive, and relationship satisfaction (Figure 1). The tendency to forgive was related to relationship satisfaction ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the path from models of self to satisfaction was still significant ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$), even after taking into consideration the indirect path from model of self to satisfaction through forgiveness; thus full mediation was not supported. To test for partial mediation, we examined whether this path significantly decreased in size when taking into consideration forgiveness. It did not ($z = 1.86$, $p > 0.05$).

The path from model of other to satisfaction was also still significant ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), even after taking into consideration the indirect path from model of other to satisfaction through forgiveness; thus full mediation was not supported. To test for partial mediation, we examined whether
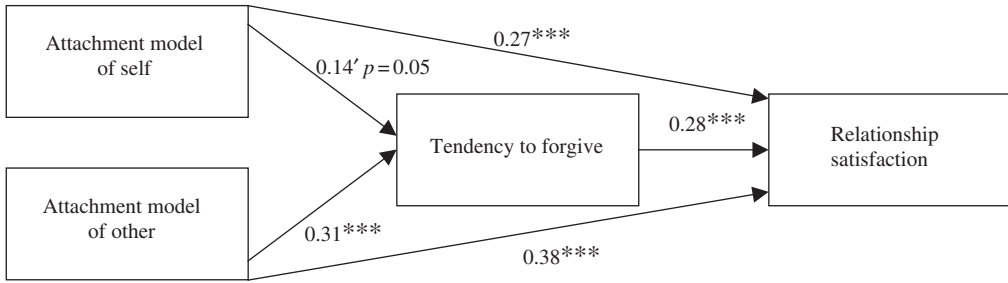
Figure 1. Relationship between attachment models of self and other, the tendency to forgive, and relationship satisfaction (Study 1). Given that models of self and other were not correlated, we excluded their association with each other in the model. Numbers are standardized β weights. $\chi^2(1) = 0.17$, $p = 0.68$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.00. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

this path significantly decreased in size when taking into consideration forgiveness. A significant decrement was found ($z = 3.21$, $p < 0.05$); therefore, forgiveness was found to be a partial mediator. Individuals in dating relationships who have a more positive model of their partners are more likely to forgive them when they commit transgressions. This in turn is related to increased relationship satisfaction.[1]

Discussion

Our results show that, for individuals in dating relationships with a more positive model of self, having a more positive

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1. To test for gender differences, three separate models were tested. The first model included model of self, other, gender, and their interaction predicting the tendency to forgive. The model adequately fit the data [$\chi^2(6) = 5.27$, $p = 0.51$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00]. The three-way interaction (between models of self, other, and gender) predicting forgiveness was not significant, however ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.28$). The second model included model of self, other, gender, and their interaction predicting relationship satisfaction. The model adequately fits the data [$\chi^2(3) = 5.27$, $p = 0.51$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.03]. The three-way interaction (between models of self, other, and gender) predicting relationship satisfaction was not significant ($\beta = -0.05$, $p = 0.49$). The last model included gender, forgiveness, and their interaction predicting relationship satisfaction. The model adequately fits the data [$\chi^2(1) = 0.07$, $p = 0.79$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00]. The interaction between the tendency to forgive and gender predicting relationship satisfaction was not significant ($\beta = -0.01$, $p = 0.91$).

model of their partners is related to a greater tendency to forgive partner transgressions. For individuals with a more negative model of self, there is no relationship between model of others and the tendency to forgive partner transgressions. Thus, it appears that only those individuals who are securely attached (have both a positive model of self and of their partner) are more likely to forgive when their partners commit transgressions.

Our results indicated that models of self and other predicted relationship satisfaction (albeit independently). In addition, consistent with prior research (McCullough et al., 1998; Fincham, 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2001; Fincham et al., 2002), we found that those with a greater tendency to forgive partner transgressions were also more satisfied in their relationships. Given these associations, we examined whether the tendency to forgive mediated the relationship between model of self and satisfaction and between model of other and satisfaction. Although the tendency to forgive was related to model of self and to relationship satisfaction, it did not mediate the relation between the two. It appears that the tendency to forgive does not play a role in the association between model of self and satisfaction. However, the tendency to forgive partially mediated the association between model of other and relationship satisfaction. Thus, the tendency to forgive acts as a mechanism partially linking an

individual's model of other to relationship satisfaction.

Given these findings, we sought to examine the tendency to forgive in more long-term relationships to see whether forgiveness plays the same kind of role as in dating relationships. If not, it may be an indication that forgiveness is important only in the early stages and not the later stages of a relationship. As such, Study 2 tested the same hypotheses in Study 1 in a sample of married couples (the tendency to forgive mediates the association between attachment and relationship satisfaction).

In addition, there were a number of limitations in Study 1 that we wished to address in Study 2. For example, relationship partners were not included in Study 1. As such, as both partners were included in Study 2, potential cross-partner effects could be examined. Study 2 also examined the extent to which individuals who indicate a greater tendency to forgive actually forgive partner transgressions when they occur. One could argue that, although individuals might endorse a greater tendency to forgive, they may not actually behave in a forgiving way when transgressions occur in real life. Their endorsements may come from wanting to appear in a more positive light, for example, because it may be socially desirable to indicate forgiveness of the romantic partner, however far from the truth this may be. In addition, Study 2 also examined whether or not the relationship between the tendency to forgive and actual forgiveness exists regardless of the severity of the transgression experienced. The severity of the event influences forgiveness (Girard & Mullet, 1997; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989), with more severe offenses being more difficult to forgive. As a result, those endorsing a greater tendency to forgive may actually forgive only minor transgressions as opposed to severe transgressions. Therefore, Study 2 examined event severity (i.e., how much hurt was experienced in response to the transgression), as it related to the tendency to forgive and actual forgiveness.

Study Two

Method

Participants and procedure. Participants were 96 married couples from the greater Buffalo area who were participating with their adolescent daughters in an ongoing study of family relationships. Families were recruited through a local middle school. Letters were mailed to families of 8th grade daughters at a local school. Families were instructed to return a postage paid postcard if they were interested in participating. Thirty-one families were recruited in this manner, and the remainder were recruited through advertisements in the local media. Interested families were asked to call the project. All interested families were screened to determine whether they met the eligibility criteria used for the study. Eligibility criteria included being an intact family with an 8th grade daughter, the ability to read and comprehend questionnaires, and to participate in computer tasks. Families whose members had severe learning disabilities that would impair their performance were excluded. Husbands were 43.1 years old on average ($SD = 4.46$) and predominantly Caucasian (97%). Forty-five percent reported graduating from high school and 51% reported a college or postgraduate education. Wives were 41.12 years old on average ($SD = 4.74$) and predominantly Caucasian (98%). Forty-two percent reported graduating high school and 57% reported a college or postgraduate education. Median family income was in the range of $51,000–60,000.

Participants were sent home packets of questionnaires, which included a measure assessing the tendency to forgive. About 2–3 weeks later, they attended a laboratory session at the University at Buffalo, The State University of New York. During this time, husbands and wives completed questionnaires assessing attachment security and marital satisfaction. In addition, each partner was interviewed to assess a time within the last 6 months when he or she felt upset, angry, or hurt because of

something their husband/wife did or did not do. After providing an open-ended account of the event, individuals completed measures assessing the amount of hurt they experienced when the event occurred (on a scale of 1–9, 1 indicating very little hurt and 9 indicating most hurt ever felt) and the extent to which they had forgiven their partner for the transgression. Families were paid $75 for their participation.

Measures

Forgiveness and attachment.   As part of the questionnaires were sent home, participants completed the revised version of the TRIM, which was scored in a manner similar to Study 1. Upon attending the lab session 2–3 weeks later, participants completed the Relationship Questionnaire (also scored in a manner similar to Study 1) as well as the original TRIM to assess the extent to which they forgave their partner for an actual transgression. Across all items, the revised TRIM had Cronbach alphas of 0.89 for husbands and 0.91 for wives, and the original TRIM (completed to assess forgiveness of the actual transgression) had Cronbach alphas of 0.87 for husbands and 0.75 for wives.

Relationship satisfaction.   During the lab session, participants also completed the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT) (Locke & Wallace, 1959). The MAT is a 15-item self-report questionnaire that asks individuals to evaluate several dimensions of their marital functioning, including the extent to which they confide in their partner, the amount of leisure time spent together, and the extent to which the individual and their partner agree on important issues in marriage, such as friends, sex relations, and family finances. This widely used measure of marital satisfaction has been shown to have adequate reliability and validity and to discriminate between distressed and non-distressed spouses (Locke & Wallace, 1959). Across all items, the MAT had Cronbach alphas of 0.79 for husbands and 0.71 for wives.

Results

Zero-order correlations, means, and *SD*s for all variables in the analyses for husbands and wives are summarized in Table 2. Structural equation modeling using Arbuckle's (1997) AMOS program (version 4.0) with maximum likelihood estimation was used to analyze the data. We first examined whether models of self and other predict the tendency to forgive by testing a model that included husbands' and wives' models of self and other and the tendency to forgive. Our model also included the interaction of models of self and other for husbands and wives (Figure 2). The model adequately fits the data [$\chi^2(10) = 6.14$, $p = 0.80$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.00]. In addition, although models of self and other predicted the tendency to forgive for husbands (self: $\beta = 0.34$, $p = 0.00$; other: $\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.00$) and wives (self: $\beta = 0.45$, $p = 0.00$; other: $\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$), these associations were qualified by a significant interaction for wives only ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$). A significant interaction was not found for husbands.

Two additional models were tested (one that included wives' model of other, high model of self [one *SD* above the mean], and their interaction, in addition to husbands' model of self, other and their interaction *predicting forgiveness* and one that included wives' model of other, low model of self [one *SD* below the mean], and their interaction, in addition to husbands model of self, other and their interaction *predicting forgiveness*) to probe the interaction (Aiken & West, 1991). Simple slope tests revealed that, for wives with a more negative model of self, the association between models of other and the tendency to forgive was not significant ($\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.72$). However, for those with a more positive model of self, more positive models of other were associated with a greater tendency to forgive partner transgressions ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, consistent with Study 1, wives who had both a positive model of self and other were more likely to forgive partner transgressions.

We next tested a model that included model of self, other, and their interaction

Table 2. *Zero-Order Correlations, Means, and SDs of all Variables in the Analyses for Husbands and Wives in Study 2*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
HSELF												
HOTHER	−0.04											
HTRIM	0.32**	0.40**										
HTRIMA	0.31**	0.38**	0.60**									
HEVSEV	−0.14	−0.08	−0.25*	−0.51**								
HMAT	0.29**	0.40**	0.47**	0.41**	−0.21							
WSELF	0.18	0.09	0.21*	0.19	−0.09	0.23*						
WOTHER	−0.10	0.22*	0.17	0.24*	0.02	0.22*	0.04					
WTRIM	0.03	0.03	0.19	0.25*	−0.09	0.24*	0.29**	0.21*				
WTRIMA	0.06	−0.03	0.07	0.15	−0.15	0.14	0.37**	0.07	0.55**			
WEVSEV	0.10	−0.04	0.05	−0.07	0.12	−0.03	−0.35**	−0.06	−0.27**	−0.52**		
WMAT	0.12	0.14	0.09	0.15	−0.08	0.40**	0.52**	0.28**	0.41**	0.29**	−0.22**	
Mean	3.40	4.45	58.57	56.53	4.71	115.83	3.13	5.60	57.59	55.44	5.82	119.10
SD	3.17	2.85	10.32	8.24	2.36	21.25	3.77	2.31	12.20	9.84	2.03	18.89

Note. H = Husbands, W = Wives; SELF = Relationship Questionnaire – Model of self; OTHER = Relationship Questionnaire – model of other; TRIM = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory; TRIMA = Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory for Actual Transgression; EVSEV = Severity of Transgression; MAT = Marital Adjustment Test.
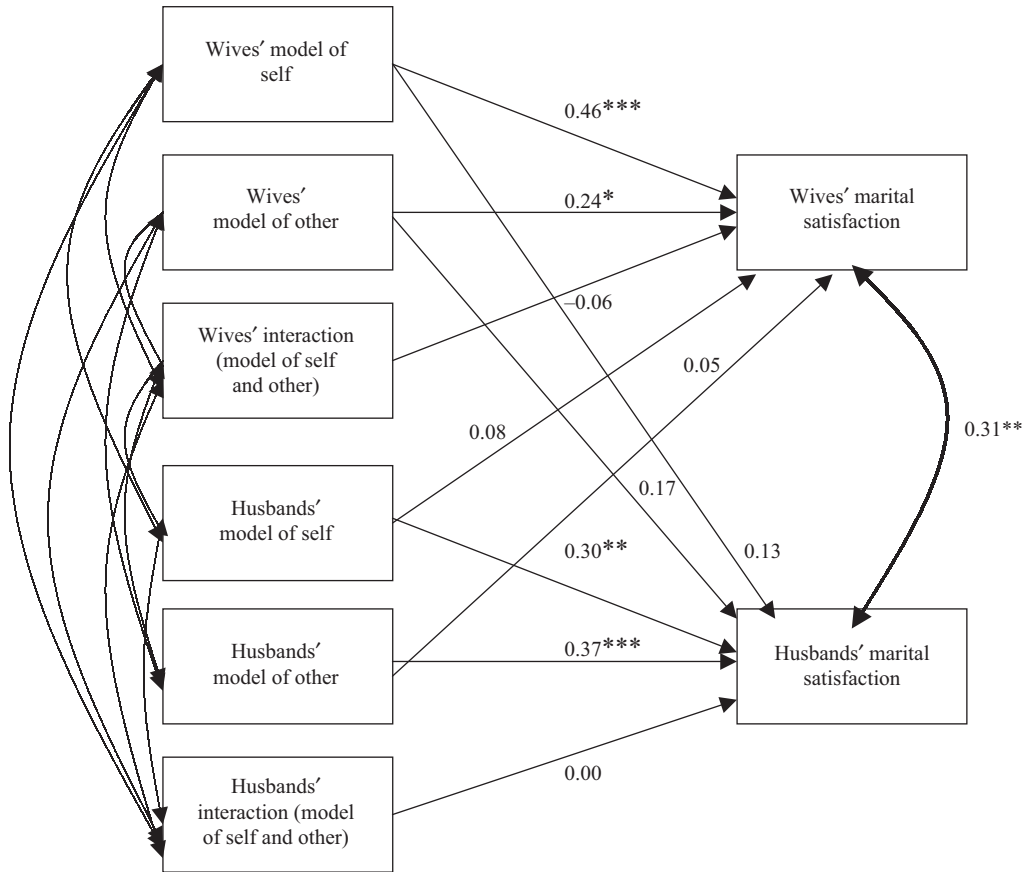*$p < 0.05$.
**$p < 0.01$.
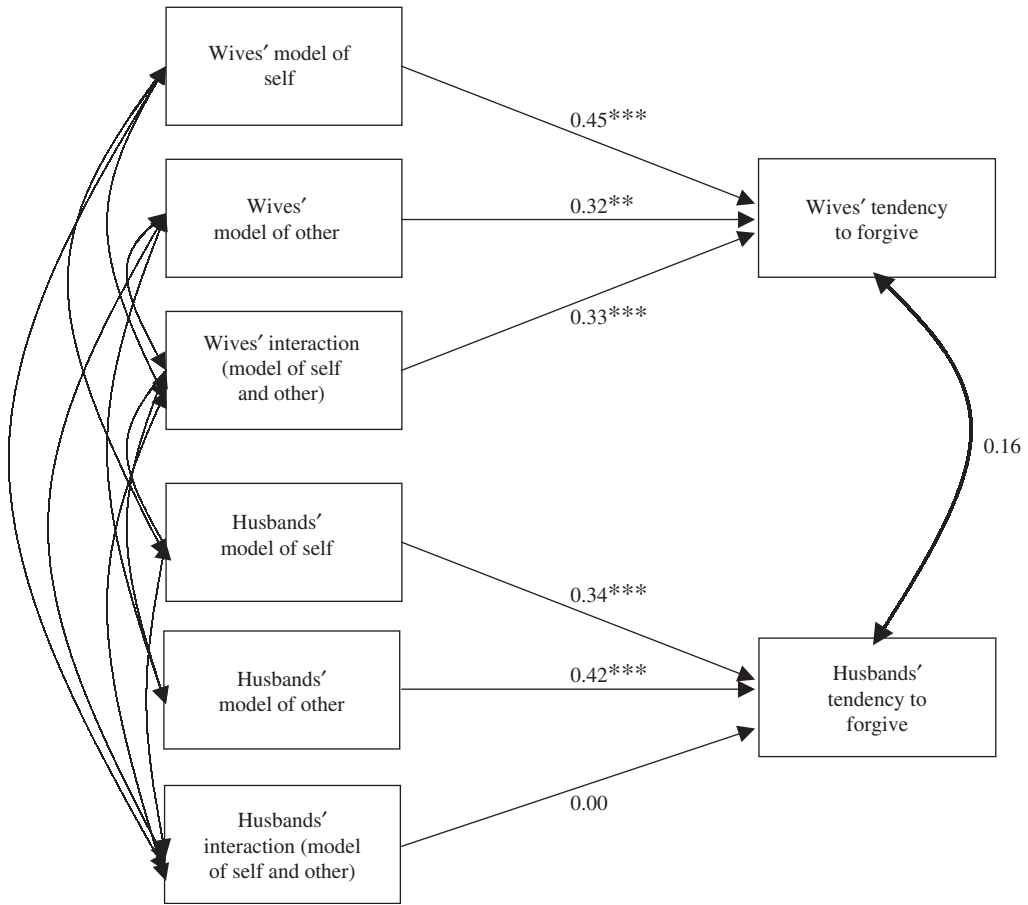
Figure 2. Relationship between attachment models of self and other and the tendency to forgive (Study 2). Numbers are standardized β weights. $\chi^2(10) = 6.14$, $p = 0.80$; CFI $= 1.00$; RMSEA $= 0.00$. $*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p < 0.001$.

predicting marital satisfaction for husbands and wives (Figure 3). As prior research (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Kobak & Hazan, 1991) has found associations between attachment models and satisfaction across spouses, paths from wives' models of self and other to husbands' marital satisfaction and from husbands' models of self and other to wives' marital satisfaction were also included. The model adequately fits the data [$\chi^2(6) = 7.08$, $p = 0.31$; CFI $= 0.99$; RMSEA $= 0.04$]. Replicating the results of Study 1, the interaction between models of self and others did not predict marital satisfaction for husbands ($\beta = 0.00$, $p = 0.60$) or wives ($\beta = -0.06$, $p = 0.69$). However, models of self and other each independently

predicted marital satisfaction for husbands (self: $\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$; other: $\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$) and wives (self: $\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$; other: $\beta = 0.24$, $p \leqslant 0.05$). No significant cross-spouse effects were obtained between models of self and other and marital satisfaction for both husbands (self: $\beta = 0.08$, $p = 0.34$; other: $\beta = 0.05$, $p = 0.56$) and wives (self: $\beta = 0.13$, $p = 0.16$; other: $\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.06$).

Given that models of self and other were independently related to marital satisfaction for husbands and wives, we proceeded with our test of forgiveness as a mediator, albeit a mediator of the relation between models of self and marital satisfaction and between models of other and marital
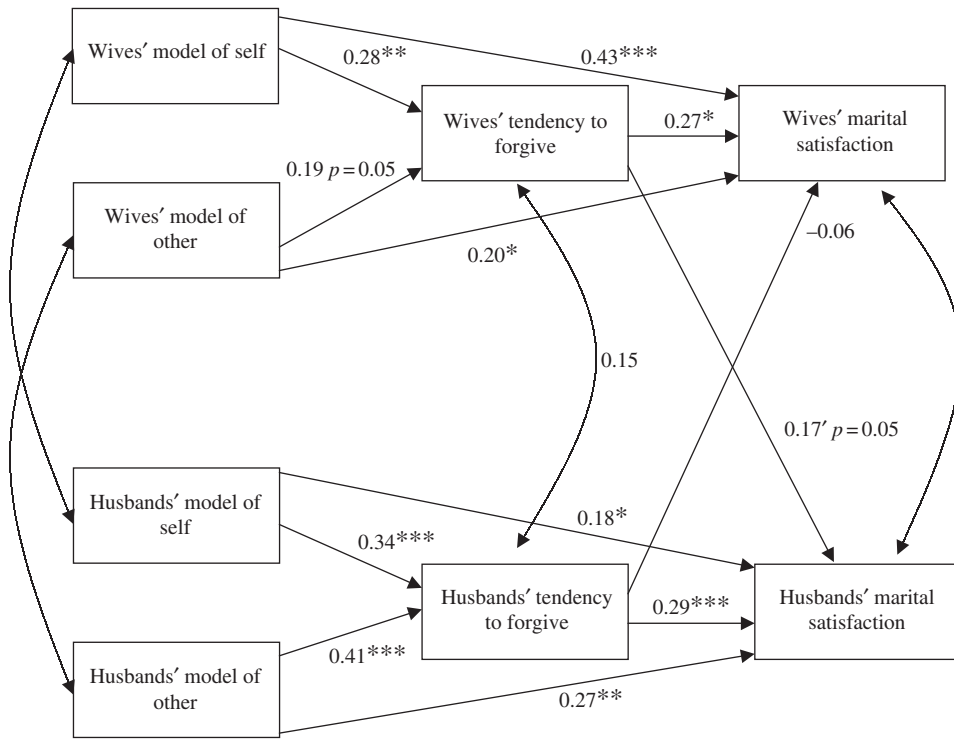
Figure 3. Relationship between attachment models of self and other and marital satisfaction (Study 2). Numbers are standardized β weights. $\chi^2(6) = 7.08$, $p = 0.31$; CFI $= 0.99$; RMSEA $= 0.04$. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

satisfaction. We tested a model that included husbands' and wives' models of self and other, forgiveness, and marital satisfaction. Given that the tendency to forgive could be related to increased relationship satisfaction not only within but also across spouses as well, direct paths were included from wives' tendency to forgive to husbands' satisfaction and from husbands' tendency to forgive to wives' satisfaction (Figure 4).[2] The model adequately fits the data [$\chi^2(12) = 10.693$, $p = 0.55$; CFI $= 1.00$; RMSEA $= 0.00$]. In addition, the tendency to forgive predicted

marital satisfaction for husbands ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$) and wives ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$). For wives, the direct path from model of self to satisfaction was still significant, after controlling forgiveness ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$), thus ruling out full mediation. However, we found that the tendency to forgive partially mediated the relation between model of self and marital satisfaction ($z = 2.14$, $p < 0.05$). The direct path from model of other to satisfaction was also still significant ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$), thus ruling out full mediation. Although the tendency to forgive was related to model of other and to satisfaction, it did not act as a mechanism linking the two ($z = 1.71$, $p > 0.05$).

For husbands, the direct paths from model of self to satisfaction and model of

2. As the cross spouse effects from wives' models to husbands' satisfaction and from husbands' models to wives' satisfaction were non-significant, we excluded them from the final model.

Figure 4. Relationship between attachment models of self and other, the tendency to forgive and marital satisfaction (Study 2). Numbers are standardized β weights. $\chi^2(12) = 10.693$, $p = 0.55$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.00. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.

other to satisfaction were still significant, after controlling forgiveness (self: $\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$; other: $\beta = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$), thus ruling out full mediation. However, we found that the tendency to forgive partially mediated the relation between model of self and marital satisfaction ($z = 2.41$, $p < 0.05$) and model of other and marital satisfaction ($z = 2.54$, $p < 0.05$).

Does the tendency to forgive predict actual forgiveness of a transgression?

We next explored the extent to which those who indicated a greater tendency to forgive their partners when they committed transgressions forgave their partners when they committed an actual transgression, regardless of how severe the transgression was. Husbands and wives described transgressions ranging from those that were more minor to those that were more severe (range = 8 for both husbands and wives,

on a 9-point scale indicating how much hurt they experienced as a result of the transgression). Multiple regression analyses were conducted that included the tendency to forgive and event severity as predictors and actual forgiveness of a transgression as the criterion, separately for husbands and wives.[3] In addition, we also included the interaction between the tendency to forgive and event severity. To the extent that this interaction is not significant, we can be confident that the tendency to forgive predicts actual forgiveness of a transgression regardless of how severe that transgression is. For wives, we found that the tendency to forgive and event severity independently predicted actual forgiveness (β weight = 0.43, $p < 0.01$

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3. Separate multiple regression analyses were conducted for husbands and wives, given the non-significant associations between husbands' and wives' tendency to forgive, transgression severity, and actual forgiveness.

for the tendency to forgive; β weight $= -0.38$, $p < 0.01$ for event severity). However, their interaction was not significant (β weight $= 0.12$, $p = 0.14$). Therefore, we can be fairly confident that the tendency to forgive predicts actual forgiveness of a transgression regardless of how severe that transgression is for wives.

For husbands, although the tendency to forgive and event severity independently predicted actual forgiveness (β weight $= 0.47$, $p < 0.01$ for the tendency to forgive; β weight $= -0.41$, $p = 0.01$ for event severity), these associations were qualified by a significant interaction (β weight $= 0.26$, $p < 0.01$). Simple slope tests (Aiken & West, 1991) were conducted to determine the nature of the interaction. For events that were low in severity, there was no association between the tendency to forgive and actual forgiveness of a transgression (β weight $= 0.21$, $p = 0.07$). However, for events that were high in severity, there was a significant association between the tendency to forgive and actual forgiveness, such that those who endorsed a greater tendency to forgive partner transgressions in general were more likely to forgive them for an actual transgression (β weight $= 0.73$, $p < 0.001$).[4]

Discussion

The results from Study 2 indicate that more positive models of self and other are related to an increased tendency to forgive partner transgressions, albeit slightly differently for husbands and wives. For husbands, models of self and others independently predicted the tendency to forgive, such that those who

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4. Actual forgiveness of a transgression was added to the model presented in Fig. 4 to see whether this addition would improve model fit. It did not [$\chi^2_{difference}(4) = 3.24$, $p > 0.05$]. It is interesting to note, however, that actual forgiveness of a transgression was no longer related to marital satisfaction for husbands and wives, once the tendency to forgive was accounted for. Husbands' models of self and other predicted both the tendency to forgive and actual forgiveness. Only wives' model of self predicted both the tendency to forgive and actual forgiveness. Model of other was not related to either the tendency to forgive or actual forgiveness for wives.

had a more positive model of self were more likely to forgive and those who had a more positive model of their relationship partners were more likely to forgive. For wives, models of self and other interact to predict forgiveness: for individuals who had a positive model of self, having a positive model of others was related to an increased tendency to forgive. For those with a negative model of self, there was no relation between model of others and the tendency to forgive. Therefore, among wives, only those who were most secure were more likely to forgive partner transgressions.

Consistent with Study 1, our results indicated that models of self and relationship partners independently predicted relationship satisfaction. In addition, consistent with prior research, a greater tendency to forgive was related to increased marital satisfaction (McCullough et al., 1998; Fincham, 2000; Fincham & Beach, 2001; Fincham et al., 2002). Given these associations, the tendency to forgive was tested as a mediator between model of self and satisfaction and between model of other and satisfaction for husbands and wives. Although the tendency to forgive partially mediated the relation between model of others and relationship satisfaction for husbands, it did not for wives. It appears that the tendency to forgive does not play a role in the association between model of other and satisfaction for wives. However, for husbands and wives, the tendency to forgive partially mediated the relation between model of self and relationship satisfaction.

Although not the focus of this study, no significant cross spouse effects were found for attachment models and relationship satisfaction. This is inconsistent with previous research (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Kobak & Hazan, 1991). Our lack of findings could be due to the fact that the couples used in the current study had been married significantly longer than in those studies finding support for cross-partner effects. For example, the couples used in Kobak and Hazan (1991) had been married an average of 7 years and the Collins and Read (1990) sample used dating couples.

The couples in this study had been married for an average of 17 years ($SD = 6.12$). Therefore, it could be that the effects of an individual's attachment models on their partner's relationship satisfaction are stronger in the early stages, but not the later stages of relationships. Further research would be necessary to examine this further.

In addition, no significant cross spouse effects were found for the tendency to forgive and marital satisfaction (although the path from wife's forgiveness to husband's marital satisfaction was marginally significant). It appears therefore that the tendency to forgive is directly related to one's own relationship satisfaction, but not to one's partner's satisfaction. One reason for this could be that the tendency to forgive plays a more distal role in one's partner's relationship satisfaction and that it is only through the events that follow forgiveness that the tendency to forgive is related to one's partner's marital satisfaction. It could also be that, while forgiveness is related to relationship enhancing behaviors, these behaviors may apply only to particular areas of relationship functioning, like conflict resolution, and therefore may not directly affect a partner's satisfaction, as satisfaction is a global assessment of one's relationship. Finally, it is interesting to note that there was no association between husbands' and wives' tendency to forgive. This suggests that the tendency to forgive one's partner is more a function of factors specific to the individual rather than a quality of the relationship.

We examined whether individuals who endorsed a greater tendency to forgive actually forgave their partners when they committed a transgression. In addition, we controlled for transgression severity (i.e., how much hurt was experienced), since this can have a strong impact on forgiveness. Our results showed that for wives, endorsing a greater tendency to forgive predicted forgiveness of an actual previous transgression regardless of how severe that transgression was. For husbands, we obtained slightly different results. The tendency to forgive predicted actual forgiveness of severe transgressions (e.g., more hurtful transgressions). For less severe hurts, the tendency to forgive was not related to forgiveness of an actual transgression.

General Discussion

The tendency to forgive has been defined as the propensity to forgive transgressions over time and across situations (Berry et al., 2001). Although not much is known about the tendency to forgive, especially in intimate relationships, it is believed that such a tendency could be beneficial both for the individual and the relationship. As such, it becomes important to understand who is more likely to forgive. The present studies examined one predictor of the tendency to forgive, attachment security.

A number of hypotheses have been proposed regarding personal attributes that would be related to the tendency to forgive. For example, agreeableness (Worthington, 1998b; McCullough, 2000), emotional stability (Ashton et al., 1998; McCullough & Hoyt, 1999), and religiosity (McCullough & Worthington, 1999) are believed to be related to an increased tendency to forgive, while narcissism (Emmons, 2000) and pride (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998) are hypothesized to be related to a decreased tendency to forgive. Based on the current results, we now have an additional answer to the question of who is more likely to forgive: those who have a positive model of self and of others (relational partners).

There are a number of reasons why individuals who have a positive model of self and others are more likely to forgive partner transgressions. As suggested earlier, it could be that having a positive model of self and of others leads one to make more benign attributions in light of partner transgressions, as such actions are inconsistent with the representational models one holds. Indeed, research has shown that insecurely attached individuals (e.g., individuals with either a negative model of self and/or others) are more likely to provide negative explanations for relationship events

compared to those who are securely attached (Collins, 1996; Gallo & Smith, 2001). In addition, research has shown that attributions play an important role in determining whether or not one will forgive a partner's transgressions (Fincham, 2000; Fincham et al., 2002). It could be that attributions therefore mediate the relationship between attachment and forgiveness. Future research is needed to test this possibility.

Alternatively, it is possible that individuals who have a positive model of self and others are more empathic toward others. Although research examining the empathy-attachment relationship in adulthood is sparse, research examining this relationship in childhood has found that those described as empathic have secure attachment histories (Kestenbaum, Farber, & Sroufe, 1989). In addition, several studies show that people forgive to the extent that they experience empathy toward the transgressor (e.g., McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998; Fincham et al., 2002). Therefore, empathy could also be a mechanism through which attachment and the tendency to forgive are related.

Finally, those who are securely attached could also be more forgiving because of the ways in which they deal with conflict. Compared to those who are insecurely attached, securely attached individuals handle conflict with romantic partners in a more constructive way (e.g., display low levels of withdrawal and verbal aggression and display high levels of assertion, support of partner, integrative behaviors during arguments, and are more compromising) compared to those who are insecurely attached (Feeney et al., 1994; Pistole, 1989; Senchak & Leonard, 1992). These constructive conflict resolution strategies may be more conducive to the act of forgiving than other sorts of strategies. The relationship between attachment and forgiveness may also be mediated by the constructive conflict resolution strategies used by securely attached individuals.

The current studies found that the tendency to forgive was related to relationship satisfaction. Although research examining the association between the tendency to forgive and relationship satisfaction is lacking, prior research has shown that individuals who forgive their partners for particular transgressions are more satisfied in their relationships (e.g., McCullough, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998; Fincham, 2000; Fincham et al., 2002). Thus, additional support was obtained for the forgiveness–relationship satisfaction link. There are a number of potential reasons why increased forgiveness is related to increased satisfaction. One reason, proposed by McCullough (1997), is that forgiveness reduces the effect of hurtful events on (1) the ratio of positive behaviors to negative behaviors, (2) the development of negative affective perceptions of the relationship, and (3) the physiological arousal of the spouse who experienced the transgression (McCullough, 1997).

The current investigations also found support for the positivity of attachment models and increased relationship satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous research (e.g., Collins & Read, 1990; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Feeney et al., 1994). Given this association, the tendency to forgive was tested as a mediator between models of self and others (relational partners) and relationship satisfaction in both dating and married couples.

For individuals in both dating and marital relationships (husbands), having a positive model of partners was both directly and indirectly associated with increased satisfaction via the tendency to forgive. In married couples, having a positive model of self (e.g., seeing the self as worthy of love and support) was both directly and indirectly associated with increased satisfaction via the tendency to forgive. These findings add to our understanding of the mechanisms through which attachment and relationship satisfaction are related. In addition, they suggest that the tendency to forgive is important for both dating and marital relationships.

Although participants in this study rated the extent to which they would forgive partner transgressions in general, it could be

argued that reporting a high tendency to forgive and actually forgiving when transgressions occur is not the same. One may report that they have a tendency to forgive partner transgressions, but that does not necessarily mean they will do so when transgressions actually occur. Therefore, Study 2 examined this question and found that for wives the general tendency to forgive predicted forgiveness of an actual previous transgression. This is consistent with prior research that has showed that spouses' tendency to forgive predicts conciliatory behavior in response to an actual partner transgression (Fincham, 2000).

It is important to note, however, that transgressions may be relatively minor and the relationship between the tendency to forgive and actually forgiving may not be found when one considers more severe hurts, as transgressions that are more severe are naturally more difficult to forgive. However, results indicated that the tendency to forgive predicts actual forgiveness regardless of how much hurt wives experienced.

For husbands, we found that the tendency to forgive predicted actual forgiveness, but only for severe transgressions. For more minor hurts, there was no relationship between the tendency to forgive and forgiveness of an actual transgression. This could be due to the fact that minor transgressions may not be considered transgressions at all, more simply minor irritations. Therefore, the main condition necessary for forgiveness to occur (that an individual acknowledges that they have been wronged or injured, Fincham, 2000) has not been met. Therefore, forgiveness would not be necessary. In such instances, it would not be the case that husbands would be less forgiving, more simply that they would not even consider the act of forgiveness, given such a trivial act.

The current findings are limited by several considerations. The cross-sectional nature of both studies limits causal inferences. Although it is tempting to conclude that more positive attachment models of self and other lead to increased forgiveness, which in turn, leads to increased relation-ship satisfaction, we are unable to assert this with confidence. It could very well be that relationship satisfaction leads one to be more forgiving, which in turn leads one to have more positive models of self and others. Longitudinal studies therefore need to be conducted to determine direction of effects. In addition, some have questioned the validity of assessing attachment security and the underlying representational models via self-report questionnaires (Crowell & Treboux, 1995), and research comparing questionnaires to interviews in the assessment of attachment shows that these two methods do not always yield comparable results (Crowell, Treboux, & Waters, 1999). However, a large body of research using self-report measures, including the one used in the present study, attests to their validity as consciously held beliefs about security in relationships. Whether other measures of attachment security (e.g., interviews) would yield similar results is an empiric question. Finally, it could be that traits such as empathy, agreeableness, and humility are what account for the attachment–satisfaction relationship, as these traits are related to the tendency to forgive (McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998). Unfortunately, we do not have data to address this issue. Future research should take into account the role of these traits in the attachment–satisfaction relationship.

Although the present studies show that forgiveness plays a similar role in married and dating couples, it might be argued that individuals involved in marital relationships might be more likely to forgive partner transgressions compared to individuals involved in dating relationships, given that there is typically more invested in marital than dating relationships. However, when examining individuals' scores on the TRIM, it is apparent that those in dating relationships scored just as high as those in marital relationships in terms of their tendency to forgive their partners for transgressions. Thus, it appears that the tendency to forgive does not depend on whether individuals are involved in dating or marital relationships.

Conclusion

As research on forgiveness continues to grow, investigators have become interested in learning more about dispositional forgiveness. The current investigation examines this tendency in romantic relationships. In light of individual and relational benefits that forgiveness has to offer, it becomes important to understand what interpersonally oriented dispositions are related to an increased tendency to forgive. As the current research reveals, those who have a positive model of self and of others (i.e., romantic partners) are more likely to forgive partner transgressions. The current research also shows that this is related to relationship satisfaction. Therefore, not only do we have a better idea of who is more likely to forgive, we also have a better idea of how this relates to relationship satisfaction. Future research should focus on examining not only what aspects of secure individuals make them more likely to forgive but also what other sorts of personal attributes are related to increased forgiveness. This knowledge (of who is more likely to forgive partner transgressions) will greatly assist mental health professionals working with individuals dealing with partner transgressions, regardless of whether the relationships are short-term or long-term ones.

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