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On the Dangers of Resolving Conflict via Unilateral Forgiveness

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### On the Dangers of Resolving Conflict via Unilateral Forgiveness

Given enough time, close relationship partners are bound to experience conflicts in which one person hurts, angers, or upsets the other. How can they resolve such conflicts? Scholars and clinicians have designed and implemented several interventions to bolster victims' forgiveness of interpersonal transgressions (e.g., Hebl & Enright, 1993; Rye & Pargament, 2002; Worthington et al, 2000; for a review, see Wade & Worthington, 2005). These interventions share the assumption that bolstering victims' forgiveness will benefit the victims. In other words, forgiveness interventions assume that victims have control over their own outcomes: If they forgive, they will experience better outcomes than if they do not forgive.

Past research shows some support for this assumption. Forgiveness has been linked to improved psychological health, physical health, and relational well-being. For example, those who forgive tend to experience psychological health benefits such as greater life satisfaction and fewer psychological distress symptoms (Bono, McCullough, & Root, 2008; Orcutt, 2006). They also tend to experience physical health benefits such as better cardiac functioning and less physiological stress (McCullough, Orsulak, Brandon, & Akers, 2007; Waltman, et al., 2009). Finally, they tend to experience relational benefits such as greater closeness and commitment to their perpetrators, as well as enhanced conflict resolution, which predicts subsequent relationship quality (Hannon, Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, in press; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006).

However, might perpetrators also have control over victims' outcomes? That is, might perpetrators' behavior, in tandem with victims' behavior, affect the quality of victims' outcomes following betrayals such as ostracism (Williams, this volume; Zadro, this volume), harm toward a loved-one (Kruglanski & Orehek, this volume), or nasty feedback (Denson & Fabiansson, this volume)? McCullough (2008) recently argued that forgiveness evolved to help people preserve their valuable relationships. We posit that, when forgiveness helps victims preserve a relationship

that is likely to be valuable to them in the future, it leads to positive outcomes for the victim, but when it preserves a relationship that is unlikely to be valuable, it leads to negative outcomes.

What determines whether a continued relationship between the victim and the perpetrator is likely to be valuable? The perpetrator's behavior. At a dispositional level, perpetrators can indicate that a continued relationship is likely to be valuable for their victims by behaving in an agreeable manner. At a conflict-specific level, one way perpetrators can indicate that a continued relationship is likely to be valuable for their victims is by "making up for" their offenses. Indeed, past research has shown that agreeableness predicts perpetrators' amend-making behavior: Highly agreeable individuals act in a prosocial, constructive manner during interpersonal conflicts (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001) and are more likely than their less agreeable counterparts to accept responsibility and make reparation after committing a betrayal (Chiaromello, Sastre, & Mullet, 2008). According to this analysis, scholars and practitioners who have, explicitly or implicitly, suggested that forgiveness is uniformly good for victims might have oversimplified the story because victims do not have complete control over their own outcomes. Rather, the consequences of victims' forgiveness hinge on their perpetrators' behavior.

#### Interdependence Theory: Three Types of Control over Outcomes

Interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Kelley et al., 2003; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) provides a framework for understanding the control two individuals have over their own and each others' outcomes, and this framework can be applied to the control victims and perpetrators have over victims' outcomes. Following a betrayal, perpetrators may or may not make amends and victims may or may not forgive. Victims' outcomes for each combination of their own and their perpetrators' behavior can be plotted in a  $2 \times 2$  table, as illustrated in Figure 1. (Perpetrators' outcomes can be included in the table as well, although we focus only on victims' outcomes because we seek to address the extant literature's focus on victims' outcomes).

In interdependence terminology (Kelley et al., 2003), *actor control* (formerly called “reflexive control”) is the amount of control one has over one’s own outcomes. The amount of actor control victims have over their own outcomes can be derived by calculating the average difference between the victims’ outcomes in the “Forgive” column and the victims’ outcomes in the “Do Not Forgive” column (i.e.,  $((A + C) - (B + D)) / 2$ ). Actor control is analogous to the main effect victim forgiveness has on victims’ outcomes. *Partner control* (formerly called “fate control”) is the amount of control one’s partner has over one’s outcomes. The amount of partner control perpetrators have over victims’ outcomes can be derived by calculating the average difference between the victims’ outcomes in the “Make Amends” row and the victims’ outcomes in the “Do Not Make Amends” row (i.e.,  $((A + B) - (C + D)) / 2$ ). Partner control is analogous to the main effect perpetrator amends has on victims’ outcomes. *Joint control* (formerly called “behavior control”) is the amount of control one’s self and one’s partner jointly have over one’s outcomes. The amount of joint control victims and perpetrators have over victims’ outcomes can be derived by calculating the average difference between the victims’ outcomes in the upper left and lower right cells and the victims’ outcomes in the upper right and lower left cells (i.e.,  $((A + D) - (B + C)) / 2$ ). Joint control is analogous to the interaction effect between victim forgiveness and perpetrator amends on victims’ outcomes. This framework can be used to determine the amount of actor, partner, and joint control victims and perpetrators have over victims’ outcomes, and can thereby shed light on the potential dangers of unilateral forgiveness interventions, which frequently assume that victims’ outcomes are determined primarily by actor control.

#### A Review of Recent Evidence of Joint Control over Victims’ Post-Conflict Outcomes

A series of four recent studies investigated the interactive effects of victims’ and perpetrators’ behavior on victims’ outcomes (Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, & Kumashiro, 2010); all four studies examined these conflict dynamics between partners in close, attachment-bonded

relationships (see Chartrand & Pontus, this volume; Fitzsimons & Anderson, this volume; Mikulincer & Shaver, this volume) rather than in negotiations between nonclose interactants (see Ames, this volume; Galinsky, this volume). We review this program of research, which includes two longitudinal studies (the first and fourth studies) and two experimental studies (the second and third studies) that examine the effects of victim forgiveness and perpetrator amends on victims' post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity. As explained above, forgiveness interventions assume that victims' outcomes are primarily subject to actor control. In contrast, we expect that victims and perpetrators share joint control over victims' outcomes. That is, we hypothesize that the effect of forgiving on one's self-respect and self-concept clarity depends on the perpetrator's behavior: When the perpetrator has made amends, we expect that forgiveness will bolster one's self-respect and self-concept clarity. But when the perpetrator has not made amends, we expect that forgiveness will diminish one's self-respect and self-concept clarity.

#### Forgiveness Tendencies and Partner Agreeableness

##### Jointly Predict Trajectories of Self-Respect

The first study was a longitudinal investigation in which both members of 72 recently married couples completed up to nine questionnaires over the first five years of marriage. At the beginning of the study, participants reported (a) their tendency to forgive their spouse by imagining themselves in five situations that described their spouse transgressing against them (e.g., snapping at and insulting the self, lying about inappropriate behaviors with someone of the opposite sex) and indicated the extent to which they would feel and express forgiveness in each situation; (b) their agreeableness (e.g., "I take time out for others," "I feel little concern for others" [reversed]); and (c) their self-respect ("I wish I could have more respect for myself" [reversed]). Every 6-8 months following the initial assessment, participants completed additional reports of their self-respect. Although the extent to which perpetrators act in an agreeable manner is not our

focal measure of perpetrator behavior, agreeableness has been linked with acting in a prosocial, constructive manner during interpersonal conflicts (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001) and with seeking forgiveness (Chiaramello et al., 2008), which includes accepting responsibility and making reparation after committing a betrayal (Sandage, Worthington, Hight, & Berry, 2000). Because agreeable individuals tend to make amends, we use agreeableness as a proxy for amends in this study.

We conducted growth curve analyses (cf. Singer & Willett, 2003) to assess the associations of forgiveness and partner agreeableness with linear self-respect trajectories. Specifically, we predicted changes in participants' self-respect over time from their tendency to forgive their spouse, their spouse's agreeableness, time, and the interaction terms among these variables. Looking first at the main effects of victims' and perpetrators' behavior, in turn, on victims' outcomes, there were no significant main effects of forgiveness or spouse agreeableness on trajectories of victims' self-respect. Thus, there was no evidence that victims have actor control or that perpetrators have partner control over changes in victims' self-respect over time.

Turning to the interaction effect of victims' behavior and perpetrators' behavior on victims' outcomes, the trajectory of self-respect for participants who reported a strong tendency to forgive their spouse depended on their spouse's agreeableness. Highly forgiving participants whose spouse reported high levels of agreeableness experienced increases in self-respect over time. In contrast, highly forgiving participants whose spouse reported low levels of agreeableness experienced decreases in self-respect over time. Thus, victims and perpetrators shared joint control over changes in victims' self-respect over time.

Although these findings are consistent with the idea that victims and perpetrators share joint control over victims' self-respect, this study did not provide the experimental evidence necessary to conclude that forgiveness and perpetrator behavior *caused* the observed changes in

self-respect over time. In addition, it did not examine whether victims' self-concept clarity follows the same pattern as their self-respect. Finally, it used an indirect measure of amends. We designed the next study to address these limitations.

### Experimentally Manipulated Perceptions of Forgiveness and Amends

#### Jointly Affect Self-Respect and Self-Concept Clarity

The second study was an experiment in which 49 undergraduates received false feedback (using a procedure we adapted from Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, 2003) regarding the extent to which they have forgiven and the extent to which their perpetrator has made amends for a specific, real-life betrayal. Participants were asked to recall a recent incident in which a close other hurt, angered, or upset them. After providing a description of the incident, participants typed in the first name of the perpetrator and answered questions about the extent to which the perpetrator had made amends.

Then, participants read about the bogus "forgiveness test," which they were told would assess the extent to which they had forgiven their perpetrator. The forgiveness test capitalized upon the experiential validity of the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), which was originally developed to assess people's implicit associations between categories by comparing their reaction times when categorizing words or images from target categories in different blocks of trials. The categories used in the forgiveness test were (a) the perpetrator's first name and other first names and (b) words with positive valence (e.g., love, acceptance) and words with negative valence (e.g., hate, rejection). In one block of trials, participants were instructed to press the same key when presented with positive words and the perpetrator's name. In another block, they were instructed to press the same key when presented with negative words and the perpetrator's name.

After completing this bogus forgiveness test, participants read that, when a person has forgiven a perpetrator, associations between positive words and the name of the perpetrator are stronger than associations between negative words and the name of the perpetrator. But when a person has not completely forgiven the perpetrator, associations between negative words and the name of the perpetrator are stronger. Then, they read that these associations can be measured through reaction times. Next, rather than scoring participants' actual performance on the forgiveness test, we instead gave them false feedback regarding their reaction times. Participants in the *low forgiveness condition* were told that they responded faster in the block of trials in which they responded with the same key to negative words and the name of the perpetrator than in the block of trials in which they responded with the same key to positive words and the name of the perpetrator, which indicates that they have not completely forgiven the perpetrator. Participants in the *high forgiveness condition* were told that they responded faster in the block of trials in which they responded with the same key to positive words and the name of the perpetrator than in the block of trials in which they responded with the same key to negative words and the name of the perpetrator, which indicates that they have largely forgiven the perpetrator.

Next, participants received false feedback regarding their responses to the questions they had answered earlier in the study about the extent to which their perpetrator had made amends. Participants in the *weak amends condition* were told that, compared to others who had previously participated in the study, their responses indicated that the extent to which their perpetrator had made amends was in the 17th percentile, which means that their perpetrator has made only weak amends. Participants in the *strong amends condition* were told that their responses indicated that the extent to which their perpetrator had made amends was in the 83rd percentile, which means that their perpetrator has made strong amends.



Following these manipulations, participants completed measures of self-respect and self-concept clarity (“I have a lot of respect for myself” and “I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am,” respectively). Next, participants completed manipulation checks assessing the extent to which (a) they had forgiven the perpetrator and (b) the perpetrator had made amends. Finally, they were probed for suspicion and debriefed. The manipulation checks indicated that the manipulations were successful: Participants in the high forgiveness condition reported having offered greater forgiveness than those in the low forgiveness condition, and participants in the strong amends condition reported having received greater amends than those in the weak amends condition.

We conducted two analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with forgiveness and amends feedback conditions as the between-subjects factors and with self-respect and self-concept clarity, in turn, as the dependent variable. Looking first at the main effects of victims’ and perpetrators’ behavior, in turn, on victims’ outcomes, there were no significant main effects of forgiveness or amends on self-respect or self-concept clarity. Thus, there was no evidence that victims have actor control or that perpetrators have partner control over victims’ post-conflict self-respect or self-concept clarity.

Turning to the interaction effect of victims’ behavior and perpetrators’ behavior on victims’ outcomes, although the descriptive patterns of self-respect were in the predicted directions, the forgiveness  $\times$  amends interaction effect on self-respect did not reach conventional levels of significance. However, the effect of forgiveness on self-concept clarity did depend on whether or not the perpetrator made amends. Descriptively speaking, participants who were led to believe they had forgiven a perpetrator who made strong amends reported higher self-concept clarity than those who were led to believe they had not forgiven a perpetrator who made strong amends. In contrast, participants who were led to believe they had forgiven a perpetrator who

made weak amends reported lower self-concept clarity than those who were led to believe they had not forgiven a perpetrator who made weak amends. Thus, to the extent that the effect of participants' experimentally manipulated perceptions of forgiveness and amends on their self-respect and self-concept clarity parallels the effect of actual levels of forgiveness and amends, victims and perpetrators shared joint control over victims' post-conflict self-concept clarity.

This study extended the first study by examining the effects of experimentally manipulating participants' perceptions of their own forgiveness of and perpetrator amends made for actual betrayals on both self-respect and self-concept clarity. We designed the following study to provide an additional test of the causal effects of forgiveness and amends on self-respect and self-concept clarity.

#### Well-Controlled Levels of Forgiveness and Amends

##### Jointly Affect Anticipated Self-Respect and Self-Concept Clarity

The third study was an experiment in which 247 undergraduates imagined themselves as the victim of a partner betrayal. Specifically, participants were asked to imagine themselves in a scenario (which we adapted from Boon & Sulsky, 1997) in which their romantic partner betrayed their trust by telling a mutual friend very private details about the participant's past. Participants in the *strong amends condition* read that their partner admitted his/her mistake, apologized, and tried very hard to make up for it, whereas those in the *weak amends condition* read that their partner did not admit his/her mistake, did not apologize, and did not try at all to make up for it. Next, participants in the *high forgiveness condition* read that they decided to forgive their partner, whereas those in the *low forgiveness condition* read that they decided not to forgive their partner. After imagining themselves in the scenario, participants completed measures assessing the levels of self-respect and self-concept clarity they anticipated they would have if they had just gone

through the described situation (“I would have a lot of respect for myself” and “I would have a clear sense of who I am and what I am,” respectively).

We conducted two analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with forgiveness and amends conditions as the between-subjects factors and with self-respect and self-concept clarity, in turn, as the dependent variable. Looking first at the main effects of victims’ and perpetrators’ behavior, in turn, on victims’ outcomes, there were marginally significant main effects of forgiveness, such that greater forgiveness caused lower anticipated self-respect and self-concept clarity. There were also significant main effects of amends, such that greater amends caused higher anticipated self-respect and self-concept clarity. Thus, there was some evidence that victims have actor control over their anticipated post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity—but that forgiving may have a *negative* effect on victims’ outcomes. And there was evidence that perpetrators have partner control over victims’ anticipated post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity.

Turning to the interaction effect of victims’ behavior and perpetrators’ behavior on victims’ outcomes, the effect of forgiveness on both self-respect and self-concept clarity depended on whether or not the perpetrator made amends. Descriptively speaking, participants who imagined offering forgiveness when their partner made amends reported they would experience higher self-respect and self-concept clarity than those who imagined withholding forgiveness when their partner made amends. In contrast, participants who imagined offering forgiveness when their partner did not make amends reported they would experience lower self-respect and self-concept clarity than those who imagined withholding forgiveness when their partner did not make amends. Thus, victims and perpetrators shared joint control over victims’ anticipated post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity.

Although these results established that forgiveness and amends *caused* the observed differences in anticipated levels of self-respect and self-concept clarity, hypothetical scenarios

may seem artificial and participants' anticipated self-respect and self-concept clarity scores may reflect their theories of how they *should* view themselves in the described situation rather than how they actually *would* view themselves. Therefore, it remains important to examine associations among forgiveness, amends, self-respect, and self-concept clarity as they naturally occur following actual betrayals. We designed the final study to examine these associations.

### Actual Levels of Forgiveness and Amends

#### Jointly Predict Self-Respect and Self-Concept Clarity

The fourth study was a longitudinal investigation in which 69 undergraduates involved in dating relationships completed 14 biweekly online questionnaires over six months. On each questionnaire, participants reported their self-respect and self-concept clarity ("I respect myself" and "In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am," respectively). Later in the questionnaire, participants answered "yes" or "no" to the following question: "Has your partner done anything over the past two weeks that was upsetting to you?" Participants who answered "no" moved on to an unrelated set of questions. Those who answered "yes" completed measures assessing forgiveness ("I have forgiven my partner for this behavior"), amends ("My partner tried to make amends to me for this upsetting behavior"), and betrayal severity ("This behavior was highly distressing to me").

We conducted two sets of multilevel regression analyses predicting self-respect and self-concept clarity, in turn, from forgiveness, amends, and betrayal severity. Looking first at the main effects of victims' and perpetrators' behavior, in turn, on victims' outcomes after severe betrayals, there were no significant main effects of forgiveness. But there were marginally significant main effects of amends, such that greater amends predicted higher self-respect and self-concept clarity. Thus, there was no evidence that victims have actor control over their post-conflict self-respect or

self-concept clarity. But there was some evidence that perpetrators have partner control over victims' post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity.

Turning to the interaction effect of victims' behavior and perpetrators' behavior on victims' outcomes after severe betrayals, the association of forgiveness with both self-respect and self-concept clarity depended on the extent to which the perpetrator made amends. Increasing levels of forgiveness predicted more self-respect and self-concept clarity when the partner made strong amends for highly distressing betrayals. In contrast, descriptively speaking, increasing levels of forgiveness predicted less self-respect and self-concept clarity when the partner made weak amends for severe betrayals. Thus, victims and perpetrators shared joint control over victims' post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity.

This study complemented the previous studies by examining prospective reports of forgiveness, amends, self-respect, and self-concept clarity following actual betrayals in ongoing relationships, and these results showed that the associations of forgiveness with self-respect and self-concept clarity depend on the extent to which the perpetrator has made amends. Across the four studies, our hypothesis that victim's behavior and perpetrators' behavior wield joint control over victims' self-respect and self-concept clarity was supported strongly and consistently. The first study demonstrated that the association of marital forgiveness with trajectories of self-respect depends on spouse agreeableness, which is associated with making amends. The three subsequent studies demonstrated that the effect of forgiveness on self-respect and self-concept clarity depends on perpetrator amends. In addition, our two sub-hypotheses were supported: Forgiving bolsters one's self-respect and self-concept clarity if the perpetrator tends to act in a generally agreeable manner or makes amends but diminishes one's self-respect and self-concept clarity if the perpetrator tends to act in a generally disagreeable manner or does not make amends. All 14 simple effects were in the predicted directions, but not all of them achieved statistical significance.

We conducted a meta-analysis to formally test whether the simple effects garnered reliable support across studies in this research program. (The first study was not included in the meta-analysis because change in self-respect over time, rather than absolute levels of self-respect, was the primary unit of analysis.)

### Meta-Analysis

We calculated meta-analytic (a) main effects of forgiveness on self-respect and self-concept clarity, (b) main effects of amends on self-respect and self-concept clarity, (c) interaction effects of forgiveness and amends on self-respect and self-concept clarity, (d) simple effects of forgiveness on self-respect and self-concept clarity when the perpetrator made strong amends, and (e) simple effects of forgiveness on self-respect and self-concept clarity when the perpetrator made weak amends. Because the meta-analytic effects combine the results of studies using experimentally manipulated perceptions of, hypothetical levels of, and actual levels of forgiveness and amends, and because these effects may differ from one another, they should be interpreted with caution. But because the pattern of results was similar for all three studies, the meta-analytic results likely reflect the effects of actual levels of forgiveness and amends on self-respect and self-concept clarity. Looking first at the main effects of victims' and perpetrators' behavior, in turn, on victims' outcomes, the meta-analysis revealed that, across studies, there were no significant main effects of forgiveness on self-respect or self-concept clarity. Thus, across studies, there was no evidence that victims have actor control over their post-conflict self-respect or self-concept clarity. This null result contrasts with the literature linking forgiveness to a variety of positive outcomes and fails to support the notion that forgiveness is a panacea. But there were significant main effects of amends, such that greater amends caused higher self-respect and self-concept clarity. Thus, across studies, there was evidence that perpetrators have partner control over victims' post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity.

Turning to the interaction effect of victims' behavior and perpetrators' behavior on victims' outcomes, the meta-analysis revealed that there were significant forgiveness  $\times$  amends interaction effects for both self-respect and self-concept clarity. The meta-analysis also provided strong support for both simple effects. Across Studies 2-4, forgiveness significantly bolstered self-respect and self-concept clarity when the perpetrator made strong amends, but forgiveness significantly diminished self-respect and self-concept clarity when the perpetrator made only weak amends. Thus, victims and perpetrators shared joint control over victims' post-conflict outcomes, such that, if the perpetrator has made amends, forgiving increases one's self-respect and self-concept clarity, but if the perpetrator has not made amends, forgiving decreases one's self-respect and self-concept clarity.

The predicted means from the meta-analysis for victims' self-respect and self-concept clarity are presented in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. Calculating the amount of actor control, partner control, and joint control using the formulas presented in the Introduction confirms that victims' do not have complete control over their own outcomes. Rather, victims have a small and non-significant amount of actor control ( $-.21$  and  $-.20$  for self-respect and self-concept clarity, respectively); collapsing across levels of perpetrator amends, victims who forgive report an average of two-tenths of a scale point less self-respect and self-concept clarity than those who do not forgive. In contrast, perpetrators have a significant amount of partner control ( $.49$  and  $.46$  for self-respect and self-concept clarity, respectively); collapsing across levels of victim amends, victims who receive strong amends report an average of four- to five-tenths of a scale point more self-respect and self-concept clarity than those who receive only weak amends. Importantly, victims and perpetrators also share a significant amount of joint control ( $.60$  and  $.65$  for self-respect and self-concept clarity, respectively); victims who either forgive a perpetrator who made strong amends or do not forgive a perpetrator who made only weak amends report an average of

six- to seven-tenths of a scale point more self-respect and self-concept clarity than those who either forgive a perpetrator who made only weak amends or do not forgive a perpetrator who made strong amends.

#### Additional Evidence of Joint Control over Victims' Post-Conflict Outcomes

Two experiments and two longitudinal studies provided consistent evidence that victims and perpetrators share joint control over victims' post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity. Is there evidence that victims and perpetrators share joint control not only over victims' psychological health outcomes, such as self-respect and self-concept clarity, but also over victims' relational well-being and physical health outcomes? The answer appears to be yes. In a longitudinal study of married couples, McNulty (2008) found that, although individuals whose spouses rarely behaved negatively experienced more stable marital satisfaction over the first two years of marriage to the extent they were more forgiving, individuals whose spouses frequently behaved negatively experienced steeper declines in marital satisfaction to the extent they were more forgiving. That is, whether greater marital forgiveness predicted greater stability or steeper declines in marital satisfaction depended on how frequently one's spouse behaved badly, indicating that perpetrators and victims share joint control over victims' relational well-being.

Another study indicated that perpetrators and victims also may share joint control over victims' physical health outcomes. In a study of women at a domestic violence shelter, Gordon, Burton, and Porter (2004) found that those who reported the greatest forgiveness of their abusive partner were the most likely to report they intended to return to their partner. Returning to an abusive partner may well heighten the risk of being abused again, but whether or not returning to a previously abusive partner leads to further abuse depends on the perpetrator's behavior.

The findings of the studies we reviewed above, together with the findings of McNulty (2008) and Gordon et al. (2004), suggest that victims and perpetrators share joint control over an



array of victims' outcomes, including their self-respect, self-concept clarity, marital satisfaction, and risk of being physically abused. Yet, another body of research suggests that victims have actor control over other outcomes, including their life satisfaction (Bono et al., 2008), commitment to their perpetrators (Tsang et al., 2006) and physiological stress (McCullough et al., 2007). It may be that some outcomes are subject primarily to joint control whereas other outcomes are subject primarily to actor control. For instance, a victim who forgives a perpetrator who has not made amends might experience decreased self-respect and self-concept clarity at the same time as increased commitment to the perpetrator. By examining multiple outcomes of forgiveness in the same study, future work could explore whether the costs of forgiving in the absence of amends outweigh the benefits of doing so.

### Concluding Remarks

Given that victims and perpetrators share joint control over victims' post-conflict outcomes, our data suggest that conflict resolution strategies designed to promote victims' forgiveness should aim to heighten victims' sensitivity to whether or not forgiveness is likely to be beneficial in their particular situation. Furthermore, forgiveness interventions should be supplemented with strategies designed to promote perpetrators' amend-making (e.g., the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program; see, for example, Green, 1984; Ristovski & Wertheim, 2005). Such "amends interventions" could adapt many of the methods used in forgiveness interventions, including helping perpetrators develop empathy for their victims, having perpetrators recall times they were hurt by others, and encouraging perpetrators to make a commitment to make amends for their misdeeds.

Moreover, because receiving amends facilitates forgiveness (e.g., McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997), interventions that successfully increase the extent to which perpetrators make amends may also increase the extent to which victims forgive. Past research has

shown that, when perpetrators not only apologize, but also offer to compensate their victims for their offenses, victims are especially likely to forgive (Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, & Murnighan, 2002; Darby & Schlenker, 1982). Moreover, in an analysis of videotaped conflict discussions, perpetrator amends expressed during one 2-min segment was positively associated with victim forgiveness expressed during the following segment, controlling for forgiveness expressed in the initial segment (Hannon et al., in press).

Conflict resolutions strategies that successfully promote both perpetrator amends and victim forgiveness are optimal because they are likely to yield the most favorable outcomes. In all four studies examining victims' post-conflict self-respect and self-concept clarity, victims' self-views were the most positive when they forgave perpetrators who had made amends. By recognizing that, just as two people are involved when a relationship ruptures, so, too, are two people involved in mending those ruptures, individuals who seek to heal their own or others' broken relationships might do so more successfully.

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*Figure 1.* How to calculate actor control, partner control, and joint control over victims' post-conflict outcomes.

		<b>Victim</b>	
		Forgive	Do Not Forgive
<b>Perpetrator</b>	Make Amends	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
	Do Not Make Amends	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>

$$\text{Actor Control} = ((A + C) - (B + D)) / 2$$

$$\text{Partner Control} = ((A + B) - (C + D)) / 2$$

$$\text{Joint Control} = ((A + D) - (B + C)) / 2$$

*Figure 2.* Actor control, partner control, and joint control over victims' meta-analyzed post-conflict self-respect. Table values in bold are raw scores on a 1-7 scale. Table values in parenthesis are standardized scores.

		<b>Victim</b>	
		Forgive	Do Not Forgive
<b>Perpetrator</b>	Make Amends	<b>4.63</b> (0.25)	<b>4.23</b> (0.03)
	Do Not Make Amends	<b>3.53</b> (-0.37)	<b>4.34</b> (0.09)

$$\text{Actor Control} = ((4.63 + 3.53) - (4.23 + 4.34)) / 2 = -.21$$

$$\text{Partner Control} = ((4.63 + 4.23) - (3.53 + 4.34)) / 2 = .49$$

$$\text{Joint Control} = ((4.63 + 4.34) - (4.23 + 3.53)) / 2 = .60$$



*Figure 3.* Actor control, partner control, and joint control over victims' meta-analyzed post-conflict self-concept clarity. Table values in bold are raw scores on a 1-7 scale. Table values in parenthesis are standardized scores.

		<b>Victim</b>	
		Forgive	Do Not Forgive
<b>Perpetrator</b>	Make Amends	<b>4.86</b> (0.29)	<b>4.40</b> (0.00)
	Do Not Make Amends	<b>3.74</b> (-0.42)	<b>4.59</b> (0.12)

$$\text{Actor Control} = ((4.86 + 3.74) - (4.40 + 4.59)) / 2 = -.20$$

$$\text{Partner Control} = ((4.86 + 4.40) - (3.74 + 4.59)) / 2 = .46$$

$$\text{Joint Control} = ((4.86 + 4.59) - (4.40 + 3.74)) / 2 = .65$$