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NEGOTIATED FORGIVENESS IN PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS:
INVESTIGATING LINKS TO POLITENESS, WELLNESS AND SICKNESS

By

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Bachelor of Arts, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 2005

Thesis

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Negotiated Forgiveness in Parent-Child Relationships: Investigating Links to Politeness and Wellness

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Upon experiencing conflict in a relationship, individuals have a variety of response options. While one can seek revenge or avoid that person, another option – forgiveness – can repair the relationship and foster health for both relationship partners. In coming together to confront the conflict and move beyond it, relational partners negotiate forgiveness in interpersonal interactions to accommodate face needs. In doing so, individuals must communicate by seeking forgiveness from and granting it to their relational partners. While much research has pointed to the health benefits associated with forgiving, little has explored the role communicating specifically plays in later received health. In an effort to expand upon previous research, this study was conducted to confirm the presence of forgiveness communication strategies found in romantic relationships by Kelley and Waldron (2005) and Waldron and Kelley (2005) in forgiveness interactions experienced between parents and children. One-hundred-forty-eight young adult-children completed self-report surveys measuring forgiveness communication behaviors used in forgiveness interactions with their parents. All of the strategies evident in previous research were present in the current study. However, the specific way of communicating forgiveness had little to no association with later health. Conclusions are drawn based on an evaluation of the forgiveness communication strategies and facework.

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INTRODUCTION

In close relationships, relational partners inevitably encounter conflict situations. Whether a mere incompatibility of goals, or a more serious relational transgression individuals in conflict draw upon a variety of strategies to respond to interpersonal offenses (McCullough, 2001). Researchers agree that two strategies used to cope with transgressions, avoidance and revenge, are typical responses to conflict in interpersonal relationships. However, these researchers also point to the negative consequences that come with avoiding conflict and seeking revenge for individuals and their relationships overall (Fincham, 2000; McCullough, 2001; McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). Fortunately, people have a more positive and productive response for coping with interpersonal transgressions: forgiveness.

Historically, philosophers and theologians studied, and continue to study, forgiveness (see McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997 for references). Indeed, in Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions alike, the idea that humans have been forgiven for their sins and trespasses by God and therefore they should forgive those who trespass against them, prevails (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). For instance, Fincham (2000) reflects that “only five [close relationship] studies on forgiveness were conducted prior to 1985” (p. 3). Since then, forgiveness received attention extensively in social psychology, finding forgiveness influences both physical and mental health (e.g., Berry & Worthington, 2001; Eaton & Struthers, 2002; Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Lawler, et al., 2003; McCullough, 2000; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick & Johnson, 2001; Murray, 2002; Thoresen, Harris & Luskin, 2000; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001).

Social psychologists conceptualize forgiveness as a motivational process (e.g. Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown & Hight, 1998). Specifically, these researchers define forgiveness as “a transformation in which motivation to seek revenge and to avoid contact with the transgressor is lessened and prosocial motivation toward the transgressor is increased” (Fincham, et al., 2002, p. 27). In addition to naming forgiveness as a motivation, Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro and Hannon (2002) argue people can enact forgiveness both intrapersonally, “as a within-victim mental phenomenon,” and interpersonally, “as a victim-perpetrator interaction phenomenon” (p. 958).

To further distinguish between intrapersonal and interpersonal forgiveness, Andrews (2000) suggests that intrapersonal forgiveness is unilateral, unconditional, and an individual experience independent of actions of the transgressor. In essence, individuals experiencing intrapersonal forgiveness need not interact with the transgressing relational partner for the motivational change to occur. Their forgiveness is one-sided as when a parent forgives a child who has committed suicide (Al-Mabuk & Downs, 1996). Different from unilateral forgiveness is what Andrews calls negotiated forgiveness. Negotiated forgiveness involves the coming together of two relational partners, the transgressor and the transgressed, “in a joint effort to confront the past, and in so doing, to move beyond it” (Andrews, 2000, p. 78); for example, when a child verbally forgives a parent after a divorce (Freedman & Knupp, 2003). Negotiated forgiveness speaks to the transactional nature of forgiveness. Moreover, the transactional nature of forgiveness highlights the importance of studying forgiveness from a communication perspective.

As forgiveness becomes a popular area of study in social psychological contexts, psychologists continually conceptualize forgiveness as a mental motivational change rather than a communicative process between two individuals. Yet, the transactional nature of forgiveness indicates a need for what has only recently begun: studying the communication of forgiveness in interpersonal interactions (Finkel, et al., 2002; Kelley, 1998; Kelley & Waldron, 2005; Kelley & Waldron, 2006; Waldron & Kelley, 2005). Communication researchers recognize “the mutual influence that forgiver and offender exert on one another, and emphasizes the potential of forgiveness to restore hurting relationships” (Kelley, 1998, p. 255). For this reason, and because of the potential health benefits found by researchers from the forgiveness process, further investigation of the communication of forgiveness is necessary. By examining the communication patterns of parents and children, it is my goal to answer this question.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What is forgiveness?

According to McCullough (2001), “forgiveness is a suite of prosocial motivational changes that occurs after a person has incurred a transgression” (p. 194). Social psychologists widely accept this conceptual definition of forgiveness, but also include the notion of decreasing motivations to avoid and seek revenge against transgressors as characteristics of forgiveness as well. Indeed, humans instinctually desire seeking retaliation against transgressors, but doing so is rarely equitable and is largely ineffective in restoring human relationships (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). Although avoiding a transgressor prevents revenge, it also prevents increases in prosocial behaviors towards the transgressor needed to forgive. Hence, forgiveness occurs when victims who do not avoid their transgressors “become less motivated to harm their transgressor (or their relationship with their transgressor) and, simultaneously, become more motivated to act in ways that will benefit the transgressor (or their relationship with the transgressor)” (McCullough, 2001, p. 194). More formally, this investigation adopts the definition of forgiveness offered by McCullough, et al. (1997):

We define *interpersonal forgiving* as the set of motivational changes whereby one becomes (a) decreasingly motivated to retaliate against an offending relationship partner, (b) decreasingly motivated to maintain estrangement from the offender, and (c) increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender, despite the offender’s hurtful actions (p. 321-322, italics in original).

McCullough, et al. (1997) supply their definition with contingency by stating that forgiveness is not a motivation by itself. Rather, forgiveness is a lay term used to describe the motivational changes that occur for laypersons experiencing forgiveness episodes.

In their study comparing lay conceptualizations of forgiveness to those found in academic literature, Mullet, Girard, and Bakhshi (2004) found that laypersons' definitions differ from those of scientific researchers. One thousand twenty-nine participants responded to a survey containing 93 items of differing forgiveness definitions. For each item, participants rated the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the definition on a 17-point scale. The results suggest laypersons understand forgiveness as a change of heart, a more-than-dyadic process, as encouraging repentance, and as an immoral behavior. As a change of heart, laypersons understand forgiveness as "expressing ideas of regained love, regained sympathy, regained affection, reconciliation, confidence, and cessation of anger" (Mullet, et al., 2004, p. 81). Laypersons also believe forgiveness to be a more-than-dyadic process, so that it can occur between institutions or larger groups, in the name of other people, between those we do not see, those who are unforthcoming, and between the living and the dead. Forgiveness, in the eyes of laypersons, also can encourage repentance by the expression of "regret and repentance in the offender" (p. 81). Finally, some individuals consider forgiveness immoral insofar as forgiveness may involve humiliation, "approval of the offense, and encouragement and de-responsibilization of the offender" (p. 81). Still, forgiveness is not reconciliation, it is not acceptance, it is not condoning or excusing, and it is not forgetting. For these reasons, researchers identified the ways in which individuals communicate forgiveness creating these layperson understandings of the construct.

Forgiveness communication

Communication after relational offenses between the transgressor and the transgressed is vital for movement past impasse, the initiation of forgiveness, and the facilitation of forgiveness after an interpersonal transgression. A number of scholars discuss the importance of this communication in their own research (e.g., Finkel, et al., 2000; Kelley, 1998; Kelley & Waldron, 2005; Kelley & Waldron, 2006; Waldron & Kelley, 2005). Even more valuable for this investigation; however, is the argument that offended parties are much more likely to engage in forgiveness granting behaviors when offenders act in repentant ways (Andrews, 2000; Eaton & Struthers, 2006; Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Indeed, the negotiated communication of forgiveness involves both seeking out forgiveness by the transgressor and granting forgiveness by the transgressed. Forgiveness communication refers to messages used by transgressors and their victims, which work to diminish motivations to seek revenge against and avoid transgressors, and move to increase motivations to act prosocially towards each other.

Individuals exchange signs and symbols to facilitate forgiveness in interactions following an episode of relational transgression, thus implying that the communication of forgiveness is a transaction necessarily involving two parties, the transgressed and the transgressor (Kelley, 1998). This transactional nature of forgiveness suggests it is a negotiated process. Indeed, communication researchers note “messages simultaneously influence, and are influenced by, those messages that precede and follow” (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006, p. 336). Furthermore, because the meanings of messages are inherently ambiguous, they are also a product of negotiation (Sillars & Vangelisti, 2006). As such, the negotiation of forgiveness involves the coming together of two individuals whose

messages interdependently influence one another in order to negotiate a meaning of forgiveness for the transgressor and the transgressed.

In his qualitative study designed to understand forgiveness communication messages, Kelley (1998) found that individuals communicate forgiveness seeking and granting messages in unique ways. Kelley found that both seeking and granting messages comprise three communication categories: conditional, direct, or indirect. For both forgiveness seekers and granters, conditional strategies for forgiveness involve stipulations imposed by the transgressed or offered by the transgressor. Direct strategies used by the seeker (offender) and granter (offended) also revealed closely related constructs. When used, these strategies involve (among other communication patterns): discussion of the transgression, explicit statements either seeking or granting forgiveness, along with the use of third party mediators (Kelley, 1998). Indirect strategies follow a similar pattern. When individuals use indirect strategies to grant and seek forgiveness, they involve (among other communication patterns): using humor, nonverbal displays, and treating each other normally (Kelley, 1998).

Waldron and Kelley (2005) highlight a current debate surrounding the specificity of the three forgiveness strategies (conditional, direct, and indirect) found in Kelley's (1998) previous investigation. They suggest that linguistic analyses demonstrate that these categories are too broad and need refinement. For instance, Kelley's (1998) direct category could include both *explicit* declarations of forgiveness such as "I forgive you," indicating finality, but also discussion-based approaches that do not finalize the negotiation of forgiveness but rather simply facilitate negotiation. This discussion-based approach "creates opportunities for the partners to reframe the offense, explore motives

and emotional reactions, and consider possible relational consequences” (Waldron & Kelley, 2005, p. 726). In essence, a discussion-based approach initiates a forgiveness conversation but does not finalize forgiveness. Waldron and Kelley also note a need to further distinguish Kelley’s (1998) indirect category, which “involved humor, nonverbal behaviors and displays of emotion, using the social network to communicated the offender’s feelings to the forgiver, and treating the injured party as he or she normally would” (p. 269). Here, the direct nature of some nonverbals should be contrasted with the minimizing nature of others. For example, the communicative meaning of a hug may be an indirect form of forgiveness while a shrug of the shoulders would minimize the offense.

Waldron and Kelley (2005) examined these suggested distinctions and confirmed a more specified taxonomy of forgiveness-*granting* communicative behaviors present in negotiated forgiveness. They found that individuals distinctively communicate forgiveness through nonverbal displays, by imposing conditions, by minimizing of the transgression, through discussion the offense, and by explicitly granting forgiveness with phrases such as “I forgive you.” Minimization (or what Exline and Baumeister [2000] call implicit forgiveness) includes nonverbal displays of shrugging the shoulders as if the offense were no big deal, verbally telling the offender not to worry about it, and the use of humor. Waldron and Kelley also found a nonverbal display category consisting of behaviors that indirectly convey forgiveness such as hugging and looking at the offender in ways that communicate forgiveness. Importantly, the nonverbal behaviors respondents reported in Waldron and Kelley’s study do not include nonverbals that minimize the offense. This is most likely because their data indicated individuals use minimizing

strategies rarely as a way to communicate forgiveness. Waldron and Kelley also confirmed the presence of discussion-based approaches, explicit forgiveness, and conditional forgiveness strategies characterized by the description explicated above.

In an additional study, Kelley and Waldron (2005) were also able to refine the forgiveness-*seeking* strategies presented by Kelley (1998). Kelley's direct strategies for seeking forgiveness include: a supplementary explanation for the infraction, directly requesting forgiveness, using a third party mediator, apologizing, assuming responsibility for the transgression, and displaying remorse. Kelley and Waldron (2005) found that these behaviors fell into two categories not just one. Explicit acknowledgement includes apologies, saying sorry, telling the offended they feel badly, taking responsibility for the offense, and directly asking for forgiveness. Explanation includes "explained reasons and circumstances for the offending behavior" (Kelley & Waldron, 2005, p. 348). Kelley (1998) found indirect strategies involving "humor, nonverbal behaviors and displays of emotion, using the social network to communicate the offender's feelings to the forgiver, and treating the injured party as he or she normally would" (p. 269). In the later study, Kelley and Waldron's (2005) analysis yielded new labels for the strategies composed of those behaviors: nonverbal assurance, compensation, and humor. Nonverbal assurances included behaviors that involve "eye contact, hugs, facial expressions, and being 'especially nice'" (p. 348). Compensation involves attempting to gain forgiveness multiple times, and changing behavior. Finally, humor involves behaviors that minimize the offense by joking about the situation. While finding high reliability in both of their studies refining forgiveness-granting and seeking strategies, Kelley and Waldron suggest examining these behaviors with additional samples outside of romantic relationships.

Indeed, behaviors that group well for romantic relationships may not for relationships between parents and their children.

Forgiveness in parent-child relationships

Because relational transgressions requiring forgiveness most often occur between “people who have close or regular contact with one another” (Exline & Baumeister, 2000, p. 134), it is no surprise that researchers studying forgiveness mainly focus their attention to romantic relationships (i.e., Fincham, et al., 2002; Finkel, et al., 2002; McCullough, et al., 1998; Waldron & Kelley, 2005). Yet, concentrating on this relationship limits the attention given to studying forgiveness communication in other relationships such as friendships, and other family relationships outside of the marital context such as the parent-child dyad. Indeed, studying forgiveness in the parent-child relationship is prudent as “there is near-universal agreement among marital and family psychologists about the significance of interpersonal conflict for the well-being of individuals and families” (Hoyt, Fincham, McCullough, Maio, & Davila, 2005, p. 375).

Conflict occurs in all close relationships, but especially within the family and within this group most often between parents and their children (Buss & Kendrick, 1998; Laursen & Collins, 2004). Indeed, relationships between parents and their children are not free from the threat of relationship transgressions and problematic episodes. Certainly, there are times when family members cannot live together without occasionally hurting one another. Before birth, mothers and their offspring compete for nutrients needed for survival. The addition of a stepparent can cause resentment in children towards their birth parents (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine, 2004). Furthermore, research indicates the stepparent-stepchild relationship can be highly volatile itself.

Given the potential for family transgressions, it is surprising that the parent-child relationship has not received more attention. One area of research, however, pursuing the study forgiveness between parents and children is family therapy. Therapists agree that forgiveness can be a useful tool in reestablishing relationships between parents and children after divorce (Freedman & Knupp, 2003), for coping with the trauma associated with incest (Freedman, 1999; Freedman & Enright, 1996), and to understand the death of a child (Al-Mabuk & Downs, 1996). In fact, forgiveness became so popular in this area of research that in 1998 the *Journal of Family Therapy* dedicated an entire issue to its study. While these researchers acknowledge the importance of forgiveness as an interpersonal phenomenon, they still lack focus on the communicative interaction involved in the forgiveness process.

Although most models applied to parent-child communication emphasize the stability of these relationships (see Laursen & Collins, 2004 for review), when children reach adolescence they realize that the rules governing their interactions with friends do not apply in the same way when interacting with parents. Thus, adolescents expend greater autonomy when communicating with their parents. It appears messages exchanged between parents and their children (of any age) reflect two features: closeness and conflict. Because of the persistence and inevitability of conflict “what differentiates troubled and untroubled family relationships is not the presence or absence of hurts but the willingness, even eagerness, to *confess* one’s hurts to the person whom one offended and to forgive the offender for the hurts he or she has inflicted” (Worthington, 1998, p. 59, emphasis added). In effect, the communication of forgiveness is essential for the maintenance of healthy family relationships. This argument points to the need to study

forgiveness communication in family relationships, and more specifically the parent-child dyad.

It seems that the communication of forgiveness in this relationship may be characteristically unique from other relationship types. First, the typical parent-child relationship is involuntary, at least for approximately the first 18 years of a person's life. Second, Kelley's (1998) research suggests forgiveness communication between parents and children is qualitatively different from friends or romantic partners. Third, in Kelley's (1998) study, respondents recounted forgiveness communication occurring within the parent-child relationship more than any other relationship type (26% for parent-child, 25% for friendships, and 23% for dating relationships). Yet, as most forgiveness research focuses on romantic relationships, researchers need to explicate the forgiveness communication occurring in the parent-young adult child relationship. For the aforementioned reasons, my hope in this investigation is to further research on forgiveness communication strategies (Kelley, 1998; Waldron & Kelley, 2005) by examining negotiated forgiveness behaviors, namely forgiveness seeking and granting strategies, of parents and their children. As such, I offer the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are forgiveness-granting communication practices evident in parent-child reports of events requiring forgiveness?

RQ2: To what extent are forgiveness-seeking communication practices evident in parent-child reports of events requiring forgiveness?

Forgiveness communication strategies as facework

Individuals may avoid using certain forgiveness communication strategies because they simply find them impolite (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Cupach and Metts' (1994) writings on facework and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory are useful theoretical tools to understand why individuals use the different strategies they use when negotiating forgiveness. Literature on facework derives from writings on face, which began with seminal work on identity management by Goffman (1959). In general, his writings suggest that individuals are playing characters in a theatrical performance in order to control the impressions that others have of them and the situation. Thus, people present their face (a conception of who they believe themselves to be) to others in a given interpersonal interaction. During so they hope to receive confirmation for their face from the other (Goffman, 1959; Cupach & Metts, 1994). Still, presenting a preferred face can become problematic for individuals when encountering situations characterized by "awkward or difficult communication" (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 3). These situations are those in which players have the greatest opportunity to lose face in front of others and are therefore face threatening. Given this, and that "any interaction is *potentially* face-threatening" (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 4, emphasis in original) the communication of forgiveness is potentially a face-threatening act for both the seeker and granter of forgiveness.

As described by Brown and Levinson (1987) a face-threat can affect a person's positive or negative face. Positive face refers to one's desire for respect and appreciation by others and to maintain the impression of competence in a given interaction. Thus, a communicative act threatens a person's positive face in interactions when messages sent

or received call into question those qualities that make the person likable. Negative face refers to one's desire to be independent and autonomous. Thus, a communicative act threatens a person's negative face in interactions when messages sent or received constrain or impose that person's actions.

Cross-culturally, individuals experience episodes involving difficult communication that characterizes face-threats. As Brown and Levinson (1987) report that politeness strategies are culturally-determined, the fact that all cultures have their own politeness strategies may speak to an evolutionary need to be polite and do facework. Indeed, researchers note "even though the types of social situation in which politeness is institutionally required fluctuate from one social group to another, from one culture to another, and from one period of time to another, it must still have some basis in a universal model of social interaction" (Watts, 2003, p. 31). It seems, then, that in order to foster the coalitions and hierarchies needed for survival during prehistory times, our ancestors used messages involving polite language as an adaptive mechanism to maintain social structure.

Coalitions, or a larger group of people unified for a common purpose, aided human survival in a number of ways. First, humans, like animals, used coalitions for group hunting. With greater numbers of individuals hunting, the odds of capturing prey rise exponentially. Second, human coalitions aided survival by providing protection. Whether the threat war from a rival group or something else, greater numbers of individuals joined for defense increases the chance for survival significantly. Certainly, survival and reproductive benefits come to those with strong and large coalitions.

While coalitions were an adaptive mechanism proven useful for survival against environmental circumstances, our ancestors created other mechanisms for the survival of the coalition itself. Outside of basic needs of food and protection noted above, individuals need affiliation and cohesion to maintain group survival. Furthermore, the processes that facilitate such needs are often psychological in nature. Thus, individuals must have created a mechanism to promote group harmony and get along. Reciprocal altruism is one such mechanism.

Reciprocal altruism involves cooperative exchanges (Buss & Kendrick, 1998) which served our ancestors in the creation of coalitions needed for survival. Without kindness and cooperation, coalitions would have disbanded and the chance for survival diminished. Still, conflict is an intrinsic part of social relationships (Canary, 2003) and “many of the most important adaptive problems that our human ancestors confronted were inherently social in nature” (Buss & Kendrick, 1998, p. 982). As such, our ancestors designed mechanisms to combat and overcome conflict situations and relational transgressions. Certainly, humans today “possess cognitive mechanisms designed to respond to competitiveness and hostility” (Buss & Kendrick, 1998, p. 1008).

Politeness is certainly a mechanism that serves this need to maintain coalitions. For instance, one way to promote group harmony is to convey positive politeness to other group members. By doing this, individuals can “claim common ground with the other person...by conveying the idea that the speaker and hearer are connected by virtue of having something in common (e.g., group membership, similarity of interests, values, attitudes)” (Holtgraves, 2002, p. 46). Furthermore, at the basis of politeness is “a consideration for others, often at the expense of one’s own interests, and an almost

instinctive feeling that the fabric of social relations relies on the reciprocal maintenance of those forms of behavior” (Watts, 2003, p. 31, emphasis added). In sum, the need to maintain social order compels individuals to be polite to maintain social order – a resource needed for human survival through coalitions since prehistoric times.

Today, individuals still meet the need to use politeness to support others’ positive and negative face. At the individual level, it appears that some messages, particularly Brown and Levinson’s (1987) conception of directives, threaten only one type of face for one person in an interaction. For instance, directives such as apologies and confessions threaten positive face for speakers, and criticisms and insults for hearers (Wilson, Aleman, & Leatham, 1998). On the other hand, promises and offers threaten negative face for speakers, and requests and recommendations for hearers (Wilson, et al., 1998). Yet, at the relational level, multiple face threats can arise by a given message (Cupach & Metts, 1994), particularly by those with influence goals (Wilson, et al., 1998). For instance, asking favors potentially threatens both the positive and negative face of the speaker and simultaneously both the positive and negative face of the target (Wilson, et al., 1998). Like the influence goals described by Wilson, et al., forgiveness communication messages, both those that seek forgiveness and grant forgiveness, are potentially face-threatening, and by their very nature threaten multiple types of face in a given interaction.

Individuals can employ facework to modulate the effect of face threat occurring during the forgiveness process. Indeed, research suggests that “when a relationship is traumatized by the occurrence of a serious transgression, the transgressor will attempt to restore both his or her loss of face and the loss of face for partner” (Cupach & Metts,

1994, p. 78-79). Corrective facework takes place in an attempt to repair the damage to face created by such injury. Naturally, then, corrective facework characterizes forgiveness communication episodes. The transgressor can employ corrective facework defensively and victims can do so protectively. Researchers report that individuals use the corrective facework strategies of avoidance, humor, apologies, accounts, or physical remediation (see Cupach & Metts, 1994 for a review). Indeed, these strategies appear similar to the forgiveness communication strategies outlined above; thus, lending to the validity of facework as an explanatory measure for forgiveness communication.

Still, the communication of forgiveness is itself face threatening. As a transgressor seeks forgiveness from the transgressed, he or she necessarily imposes on the victim by requesting forgiveness and therefore threatens the victim's negative face. Additionally, requesting forgiveness threatens the positive face of the transgressor as he or she necessarily assumes responsibility for the offense. Furthermore, if the victim does grant forgiveness, he or she is necessarily assuming that the transgressor did commit an injurious offense against him or her. Thus, the victim threatens the transgressor's face even in the midst of a potential challenge to his or her own positive and negative face. When the victim considers forgiving, he or she could potentially appear weak by granting forgiveness for a serious transgression, or appear cold by not forgiving a transgression that the offender apologized for. Thus, the communication of forgiveness creates multiple threats to face, but individuals can employ preventative facework to avoid or minimize a threat to face before it occurs.

In order to minimize the threat created by requesting forgiveness, forgiveness seekers may employ preventative facework of politeness strategies to assist them in

forgiveness communication interactions. Here, transgressors may displace their own need to maintain face to maintain the face of the victim. Essentially, transgressors may communicate their desire for forgiveness while sending messages that convey “Please recognize that I regard your face needs very highly and would not threaten them if it were not necessary to do so; I am not merely selfish and insensitive to your needs” (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 7). Furthermore, because seeking forgiveness threatens both positive and negative face, the transgressor has the option of using positive or negative politeness. Messages that specifically address face threats to the target’s positive face characterize positive politeness; therefore, these messages express appreciation for, value for, and affiliation with the victim (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Messages that specifically address face threats to the target’s negative face characterize negative politeness: therefore, these messages “offer assurances that the partner’s freedom will not be unnecessarily curtailed and that he or she has options” (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 8).

In order to minimize the threat created by granting forgiveness, forgiveness granters may use disclaimers to maintain their own face in forgiveness communication episodes. Cupach and Metts (1994) describe disclaimers as the “statements people use to minimize the negative attributions that might be ascribed to their motives or character because they are about to violate expectations for appropriate behavior” (p. 7). It seems forgiveness granters may use disclaimers when forgiving serious transgressions in an attempt to prevent themselves from looking weak; when, for instance, a child forgives his/her parent for severe alcohol abuse and neglect when cultural prescriptions suggest such behavior might brutally disrupt that relationship. Thus, victims save their own face by saying something that conveys “Please recognize that I am aware of social

appropriateness and I ask your indulgence while I act inappropriately; I am not merely rude or stupid” (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 7).

Forgiveness also appears to be an evolutionary based adaptive mechanism for human survival due to these links to politeness. As noted earlier, in light of a transgression individuals can either seek revenge against or avoid the transgressor. Neither of these options however, would aid the survival of a coalition, and in fact would hinder it. Thus, individuals were left with a third option, forgiveness. As both revenge and avoidance would inhibit group harmony, forgiveness evolved to adapt and resolve the problems associated with relationship transgressions that threaten relational existence. From this evolutionary perspective, forgiveness is a mechanism developed by our ancestors that became “included among the basic psychological processes with which all humans are innately endowed” (Reis & Gable, 2003, p. 135). Therefore, in light of transgressions that plague relationships of today, people are able to call upon the forgiveness processes used by their ancestors.

Given this discussion, it could be that individuals granting and seeking forgiveness may simply conceive of them ways to be polite in conversation. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) argument that positive or negative politeness can be used to mitigate positive or negative face-threats suggests forgiveness communication strategies may be rated as more or less polite insofar as they minimize threats to positive and negative face of both forgiveness communicators. For instance, a given forgiveness communication strategy may be rated as more polite in that the user takes concern for their conversational partner’s face, is positive towards that partner, and attempts to understand that partner. A

strategy may also be rated as more polite in that is minimally demanding, tentative, and unimposing on the conversing partner. As such, I offer the following research question:

RQ3: To what degree do individuals perceive forgiveness communication strategies as polite?

Forgiveness and health

Because forgiveness became a coping mechanism for destructive situations that also fostered and promoted coalitions, those who selected forgiveness as a strategy over avoiding and revenge seeking may have thrived throughout human history. As such, those who forgave in prehistoric times likely had better health and well-being than those who did not. Furthermore, just as forgiveness served an adaptive function in maintaining coalitions, human minds and bodies evolved in a way that responds favorably to forgiving. In their article synthesizing current forgiveness and health research, Thoresen, et al. (2000) provide a number of ways in which forgiveness influences physical and mental health. In fact, they suggest that,

Increased frequency of forgiving others, oneself, and of asking for and accepting forgiveness, might function to reduce the chronicity of distress (e.g., anger, blame, and vengeful thoughts and feelings) that has prospectively been shown to alter brain, coronary, and immune functioning (p. 259).

Other research corroborates this assertion. For instance, Witvliet, et al. (2001) found that when prompted to rehearse hurtful memories of injurious experiences with a real-life transgressor, individuals who experienced unforgiving versus forgiving thoughts had different physical reactions. Specifically, when an individual nursed a grudge they experienced “more aversive emotion, and significantly higher corrugator (brow) electromyogram (EMG), skin conductance, heart rate and blood pressure changes from baseline” (p. 117). In contrast, when individuals engaged in empathic perspective taking

and imagined granting forgiveness, they perceived greater control, and experienced “comparatively lower physiological stress responses” (p. 117). Moreover, in their study of the psychophysiological correlates of forgiveness in response to conflict episodes, Lawler, et al. (2003) found that both trait and state forgiveness were associated with lower levels of blood pressure.

Thoresen, et al. (2000) also suggest that “forgiveness experiences might enhance health by reducing the excessive psychological burden that comes with unresolved stressful experiences, such as the hurt and offense attributed to others” (p. 259). Other research also substantiates this claim. Broadly, Murray (2002) suggests counselors can teach individuals to use forgiveness as a therapeutic option in addressing interpersonal distress. Eaton and Struthers (2006) confirm that forgiveness reduces psychological aggression, mitigates negative emotions, and enhances positive emotions. Finally, McCullough, et al. (2001) also found that individuals who become more forgiving over time also become less ruminative and suppressive.

Already, links exist that highlight the importance of relationships and relative health. Individuals who have more diversified networks and who have more positively rated relationships fair better in resistance to disease (Cohen, Doyle, Skoner, Rabin, & Gwaltney, 1997; House, Landis & Umberson, 1988). More important, however, is that communication comprises close relationships and is essential for their development and maintenance. Indeed, McCullough (2000) also highlights the importance of forgiveness in maintaining positive relationships. He states, “forgiving one’s transgressor leads to the re-establishment and preservation of supportive, caring relationships between victim and offender” (p. 50). Certainly, one can assume that specific communication qualities of

relationships should be present or absent to promote health and buffer against aversive health states. Such hypotheses echo the main goal of the present investigation: the examination of how negotiated forgiveness behaviors, namely forgiveness seeking and granting strategies, relate to specific health outcomes. As such, I present the following research questions:

RQ4: To what degree do forgiveness seeking communication strategies (explanation, nonverbal assurance, compensation, explicit acknowledgement, and humor) predict wellness and sickness?

RQ5: To what degree do forgiveness granting communication strategies (explicit, discussion, nonverbal display, conditional, and minimizing) predict wellness and sickness?

Human mirror neuron processes also potentially shed light on how the communication of forgiveness relates to health. Mirror neurons are a group of brain cells that control action understanding and imitation (Gallese, Keysers, & Rizzolatti, 2004). Although initially thought to only control imitation of motor reflexes and language, new research suggests mirror neurons are “involved in our capacity to understand and experience the emotional states of others” (Gallese, et al., 2004, p. 397), thus providing a neurological context for studying the communication of forgiveness in dyads. Even more interesting is the involvement of mirror neurons in creating a bridge between others and ourselves (Gallese, et al., 2004). Indeed, “mirror neurons track the emotional flow, movement and even intentions of the person we are with, and replicate this sensed state in our own brain by stirring in our brain the same areas active in the other person” (Goleman, 2006, p. 1). During forgiveness communication interactions a multitude of

emotions activate, there is a great potential for emotional contagion (the process of “catching” feelings by transferring emotions from one person to another), and “emotional closeness allows the biology of one person to influence that of another” (Goleman, 2006, p. 2). Thus, it seems especially prudent to study how relational partners interpret and perceive the messages making up a forgiveness communication interaction. Furthermore, Kelley (1998) suggests it is “necessary for forgiveness researchers to study dyads, where partners’ perceptions of forgiveness can be compared and contrasted” (p. 269). As such, I propose the following research questions:

RQ6: To what degree do ratings of a partner’s forgiveness seeking communication strategies (explanation, nonverbal assurance, compensation, explicit acknowledgement, and humor) correspond with wellness and sickness?

RQ7: To what degree do ratings of a partner’s forgiveness granting communication strategies (explicit, discussion, nonverbal display, conditional, and minimizing) correspond with wellness and sickness?

The question remains as to whether health outcomes are a function forgiveness communication or more than that and a perception of politeness. Research suggests that individuals who maintain the face of self and of others tend to live longer (Langer, 1989). Recall that one gauges the politeness of a message by its ability to minimize positive and negative face threats to both the speaker and receiver. Thus, messages that allow individuals to feel as though they are autonomous and in control (preserving negative face) as well as messages that allow individuals to feel competent, liked, and appreciated

(preserving positive face) could lead to better health and well-being outcomes. Indeed, research substantiates this claim.

Researchers suggest maintaining negative face, or enhancing one's control and autonomy fosters enhanced health and well-being. Langer (1989) suggests when given the opportunity to make their own decisions, individuals in a nursing home were more likely to be happy, active and alert than those who were not given the same opportunity three weeks later. Moreover, 18 months later, the physical health of the group given more autonomy improved while the physical health of the group not given autonomy worsened. Finally, the group given autonomy had a lower mortality rate than the group that was not (15% versus 30%). Also studying elderly nursing home patients, Janoff-Bullman and Marshall (1982) note "higher well-being scores were likely to be reported by those with...higher perceptions of general control, and lower perceptions of change in control" (p. 694). Finally, Gibbs, Puzanchera, Hanrahan and Giever (1998) report that having control leads individuals to feel better emotionally. Specifically, they found the perception of control is negatively associated with emotions such as anxiety, depression and loneliness. As forgiveness communication episodes necessarily threaten the negative face of the victim and the transgressor, it could be that messages that provide the greatest amount of control and autonomy to both partners could lead to enhanced health and well-being. Kelley and Waldron (2005) confirm this idea suggesting that explicit acknowledgement seeking strategies grant autonomy to the offended partner. Furthermore, Waldron and Kelley (2005) also suggest that conditional granting strategies may be face-saving in that it prevents a forgiver from looking weak.

Researchers also acknowledge maintaining positive face, or fostering a sense of appreciation, respect and likeability, also enhances health and well-being. Recall that individuals with more positively rated relationships tend also to have better health (House, Landis & Umberson, 1988). Indeed, in order to maintain these relationships, individuals must feel liked, appreciated and respected (as opposed to disliked, worthless, and detested) by each other. Furthermore, researchers suggest that individuals in positively rated relationships also receive social support, which directly contributes to enhanced health and well-being and buffers against negative health states associated with stress (Burelson & MacGeorge, 2002). Furthermore, Jones and Wirtz (2006) note that person-centered emotional support provides physiological and emotional improvement. Indeed, because forgiveness communication episodes are laden with emotion, it could be that strategies that provide an opportunity for emotional support through the maintenance of positive face could also lead to better health outcomes. Again, Kelley and Waldron's (2005) research confirms this idea in that explicit acknowledgement and compensation seeking strategies relieve and redress positive face threats. Those individuals who reported using these strategies also tended to have more positively rated and intimate relationships. From these observations, I offer a final research question:

RQ8: To what degree do ratings of forgiveness communication strategies as polite associate with wellness and sickness?

METHOD

To learn more about the nature of forgiveness communication and to examine the relationships between forgiveness communication strategies, politeness, and wellness, two surveys were developed and administered to 179 young-adult children. One survey asked participants to describe a relational transgression requiring them to *grant forgiveness* to their parents, report their own forgiveness granting behaviors, and the perceived parent seeking behaviors. A second survey asked participants to describe a relational transgression requiring them to *request forgiveness* from their parent, report their own seeking behaviors, and the perceived parent granting behaviors. The surveys were designed to validate the forgiveness communication behaviors measured by Kelley and Waldron (2005), and Waldron and Kelley (2005).

Sample

The sample consisted of 179 young-adult children. The participants randomly received one of the two surveys. Ninety-three participants completed the first survey, which asked participants to describe a relational transgression that required them to forgive their parent. Sixteen of these participants responded in reference to a relationship other than one with a parent, and one participant failed to identify the relationship; these participants were subsequently not included in further analysis, resulting in 76 total participants (34 males, 42 females). Participants responding to this survey varied in age from 18 to 47 with an average age of 20.81 years ($SD = 4.17$). The large majority of these respondents (90.79%) identified themselves as white or Caucasian. Thirty-four participants reported on relationships with mothers, 37 with fathers, and five with both parents.

Eighty-six participants completed the second survey, which asked participants to describe a relational transgression that required them to ask for forgiveness from their parent. Fourteen of these participants responded to a relationship other than one with a parent; these participants were subsequently not included in further analysis, resulting 72 total participants (40 males, 31 females, 1 unreported). Participants responding to this survey ranged in age from 18 to 25 with an average age of 19.89 years ($SD = 1.78$). The large majority of these participants (87.5%) identified themselves as White or Caucasian. Forty-four participants described relationships with mothers, 21 with fathers, six with both parents, and one with a stepmother.

Procedure

I recruited participants via convenience sample procedures by offering undergraduate students enrolled in Communication Studies courses an opportunity to earn extra credit at the end of the Spring 2007 semester at a mid-sized university in the Northern Rockies. All participants completed the questionnaire on a volunteer basis and completed the survey at the end of their class period or by attending a research session at a specified time and location. Before receiving the survey, participants received a participant information and consent form (see Appendix A) to read and sign. After returning the signed consent form to the researcher, participants received one of the two surveys. To distribute the surveys as evenly as possible, only every other participant received the same survey. Responding to the items in the survey took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Upon completion, participants returned the survey to the researcher, signed their name to an extra credit sign up sheet, and offered a debriefing form. Once finished, participants were free to leave.

Measures

Respondents reported about a relationship transgression that had actually occurred between themselves and their parent and described the relational context of the forgiveness events. In the survey in which participants requested forgiveness, participants were asked, “Please think of a time when someone **forgave you**. Pick a very specific incident. It should be one that you remember clearly.” To capture the context of the event, participants responded to an open-ended question, “What did your parent forgive you for? Please describe what you said or did that created a need for forgiveness.” Participants responding to the survey in which they granted forgiveness were asked, “Please think of a time when you **forgave** someone. Pick a very specific incident. It should be one that you remember clearly.” They also answered an open-ended question, “What did you forgive your parent for? Please describe what your parent said or did that created a need for forgiveness.”

Next, participants answered a series of scale questions to prompt recall and identify their specific feelings about the action performed that created a need for forgiveness; these questions resulted in the composite variable measuring total severity of the transgression. These questions measure on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). Six items appeared in both surveys and included the following, “At the time they occurred, how severe were these actions?,” “At the time this event occurred, how damaging were the actions to your relationship with your parent?,” “At the time they occurred, how threatening to your relationship were these actions?,” “At the time this event occurred, how angry did you feel toward your parent about the incident?,” “At the time this event occurred, how disappointed were you

in your parent?,” and “At the time this event occurred, how hurt did you feel?”

Averaging these six items created a composite variable for total severity. These items were internally consistent both when participants granted forgiveness ($\alpha = .89$) and when they requested forgiveness ($\alpha = .81$).

Participants reported their forgiveness-granting communication strategies by rating items from Waldron and Kelley’s (2005) study of forgiveness-granting communication in romantic relationships. This scale consists of 20 items scored on an 8-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 0 (*no use*) to 7 (*extensive use*) and includes five categories of strategies. The discussion strategy includes two items that described actually talking about the offense (e.g., “I discussed the offense with them”). The nonverbal display strategy includes six items that described nonverbal behaviors that communicate granting forgiveness (e.g., “I gave them a hug” and “I did something special for them”). The conditional strategy includes four items that described granting forgiveness upon meeting conditions (e.g., “I told them I would forgive them, but only if the offense never happened again in the future”). The minimizing strategy consists of four items that described granting forgiveness by downplaying the relational consequences of the transgression (e.g., “I told them not to worry about it”). The explicit strategy includes only one item “I told them that I forgave them.” One item in the measure, “I had someone else tell them that I had forgiven them,” did not fit with any of the strategies and was subsequently dropped from the analysis. Furthermore, alpha reliabilities increased by deleting the item “I cried,” for the nonverbal display strategy and the item “I never said ‘I forgive you’ they ‘just understood’” for the minimizing strategy. Participants who responded to the survey that asked to describe an event where

they granted forgiveness responded to each item indicating the extent to which they granted forgiveness using each of the strategies. Reliabilities for these strategies in this survey were as follows: discussion ($\alpha = .81$), nonverbal ($\alpha = .76$), conditional ($\alpha = .81$), and minimizing ($\alpha = .80$). Participants who responded to the survey that asked to describe an event where they sought forgiveness responded to each item indicating the extent to which their parent granted forgiveness using each of the strategies. Reliabilities for these strategies in that survey were as follows: discussion ($\alpha = .69$), nonverbal ($\alpha = .71$), conditional ($\alpha = .79$), minimizing ($\alpha = .65$).

To gauge forgiveness-seeking communication strategies, participants completed survey items used by Kelley and Waldron (2005) to assess forgiveness-seeking communication in romantic relationships. This scale consists of 28 items scored using an 8-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 0 (*no use*) to 7 (*extensive use*) and includes five categories of strategies. The explanation strategy includes five items that describe discussing circumstances surrounding the event (e.g., “I discussed the offense with them” and “I explained the reason why I offended them”). The nonverbal assurance category includes six items that consist of behaviors that nonverbally communicate asking for forgiveness (e.g., “I could see in their face that they wanted the situation to be resolved” and “I gave them a hug”). The compensation strategy includes eight items that describe behaviors that atone for the transgression (e.g., “I bought them a gift or did something for them” and “I told them I would do whatever they wanted”). The explicit acknowledgement strategy consists of six items that describe openly accepting blame for the offense (e.g., “I told them I was sorry for what I had done” and “I asked directly for forgiveness”). Finally, the humor strategy includes two items that describe joking about

the event to downplay its severity (e.g., “I joked about the situation”). Participants, who responded to the survey that asked to describe an event where they requested forgiveness, responded to each item indicating the extent to which they asked for forgiveness using each of the strategies. Reliabilities for these strategies in this survey were as follows: explanation ($\alpha = .63$), nonverbal assurance ($\alpha = .70$), compensation ($\alpha = .65$), explicit acknowledgement ($\alpha = .71$), and humor ($\alpha = .94$). Participants, who responded to the survey that asked to describe an event where they granted forgiveness, responded to each item indicating the extent to which their parent asked for forgiveness using each of the strategies. Reliabilities for the strategies in that survey were as follows: explanation ($\alpha = .72$), nonverbal assurance ($\alpha = .74$), compensation ($\alpha = .88$), explicit acknowledgement ($\alpha = .80$), and humor ($\alpha = .96$).

Politeness was measured as a judgment of parent’s forgiveness communication strategies using a modified version of Trees and Manusov’s (1998) instrument developed to measure politeness in friendships. This scale consists of seven items, three to measure positive politeness (e.g., “How concerned was your parent for your feelings?”), three to measure negative politeness (e.g., “How demanding was your parent’s behavior?”), and one to measure general politeness (e.g., “How polite was your parent?”). The items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) and were combined into one general measure due to low reliability scores of the individual categories. With all items included, the scale was reliable both when parents granted forgiveness ($\alpha = .81$) and when parents sought forgiveness ($\alpha = .86$).

To verify forgiveness occurred following the transgression, participants completed a modified version of the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations

Inventory (TRIM) (McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, & Hight, 1998). This scale consisted of 12 items that describe the motivations assumed to underlie forgiving, five to measure the desire to seek revenge (e.g., “I wish that something bad would happen to him/her” and “I’m going to get even”), and seven to measure avoidance (e.g., “I keep as much distance between us as possible” and “I avoid him/her”). Four items were added to this scale to measure the motivation for conciliation and goodwill (e.g., “I act loving toward him/her” and “I say nice things about him/her”). These items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and were combined into one general scale for forgiveness. The scale was reliable both when children granted forgiveness ($\alpha = .95$) and when children sought forgiveness ($\alpha = .82$).

Participants rated relationship satisfaction using Sillars, Koerner, and Fitzpatrick’s (2005) instrument developed to measure satisfaction in parent-adolescent relationships. This scale consists of five items to gauge how satisfied the child is with their relationship with their parent (e.g., “My parent and I have fun together” and “I have a good relationship with my parent”). These items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). This scale was reliable both when children granted forgiveness ($\alpha = .92$) and when children requested forgiveness ($\alpha = .92$).

To measure sickness, participants completed the Cohen-Hoberman Physical Symptoms Checklist (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983) developed by psychology researchers to measure physical health as an outcome of life stressors. This scale contains 33 items, which describe physical symptoms an individual may have experienced in the past month, such as headaches, constant fatigue, stomach pains, acne, constipation, and stiff

joints. Participants rated items using a 5-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 4 (*very much a part of my life*). The sum of the participant's rating created a composite score for sickness.

To tap emotional wellness and sickness, participants completed Watson, Clark and Tellegen's (1988) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) developed to measure the two aspects of mood relating to social activity and stress. The PANAS consists of 10 positive affect and 10 negative affect adjectives, which participants responded to indicating the extent to which they generally experience each feeling over the last two weeks. This scale was scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly*) to 5 (*extremely*). Positive affect items (i.e., "interested," "enthusiastic," "inspired") were internally consistent both when children granted forgiveness ($\alpha = .87$) and when they sought forgiveness ($\alpha = .89$). Negative affect items (i.e., "irritable," "upset," "distressed") were also internally consistent when children granted ($\alpha = .85$) and when they sought forgiveness ($\alpha = .91$)

RESULTS

Individuals who described a forgiveness granting event reported that the event took place an average of approximately three years ago ($M = 36.97$ months, $SD = 42.77$). Participants were asked to rate how well remembered the incident on a scale of 1 (*not at all well*) to 5 (*extremely well*). On average, participants remembered the incident moderately well ($M = 3.95$, $SD = .91$) indicating that participants believed they had relatively strong recall. Furthermore, individuals granting forgiveness found the transgression moderately severe ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.01$), forgave their parent to a strong degree ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .78$), and have satisfying relationships with their parents ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 1.27$).

Individuals who described a forgiveness seeking event reported that the event took place an average of four years ago ($M = 48.71$ months, $SD = 47.08$). These participants were also asked to rate how well they remembered the incident on a scale of 1 (not at all well) to 5 (extremely well). On average, participants remembered the incident moderately well ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.14$) indicating that participants believed themselves to have moderately strong recall. On average, individuals seeking forgiveness found the transgression moderately severe ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .80$), experienced forgiveness to a substantial degree ($M = 4.31$, $SD = .44$), and have satisfying relationships with their parents ($M = 6.06$, $SD = 1.04$).

Use of forgiveness granting communication

To answer research question one, paired-sample *t*-tests, using a conservative level of significance ($p < .005$) to adjust for the number of unplanned, pair-wise comparisons (10) per family of tests, were run to examine the forgiveness granting strategies evident

in parent-child reports of forgiveness. This test showed that when children grant forgiveness to their parents, they tend to use the discussion-based strategy significantly more often than the minimizing strategy, conditional strategy, and nonverbal display strategy. For a summary of these results, see Table 1.

Table 1

Mean Comparisons for Child Forgiveness Granting Strategies

Message Type	Mean	Standard Deviation
Discussion	4.14 _a	2.02
Explicit	3.83 _a	2.37
Minimizing	2.73 _b	1.93
Conditional	2.66 _b	1.83
Nonverbal Display	2.61 _b	1.51

Note. Means that do not share the same subscript differ at $p < .005$.

A second paired-sample t -test, using the same level of significance ($p < .005$), demonstrated that when parents grant forgiveness to their children, they use the explicit strategy and discussion-based strategy the most often and to similar extents. Children rated their parents as using the nonverbal display strategy as often as the conditional strategy, and the minimizing strategy as often as the conditional strategy, but less than the nonverbal display strategy. For a summary of these results, see Table 2.

Table 2

Mean Comparisons for Parent Forgiveness Granting Strategies

Message Type	Mean	Standard Deviation
Discussion	5.05 _a	1.76
Explicit	4.51 _a	2.31
Nonverbal	2.86 _b	1.44
Conditional	2.62 _{b,c}	1.87
Minimizing	2.11 _c	1.53

Note. Means that do not share the same subscript differ at $p < .005$

Use of forgiveness seeking communication

To examine research question two, I completed paired-sample t -tests, using a conservative level of significance ($p < .005$) to adjust for the number of unplanned, pairwise comparisons (10) per family of tests, to determine the extent to which the forgiveness seeking strategies were evident in parent-child reports of forgiveness. This test demonstrated that when children seek forgiveness from their parents, they use the explicit acknowledgement strategy most often. Second, and to similar extents, children use the nonverbal assurance and explanation strategies. Finally, children report using (to similar extents) the humor and compensation strategies least often with their parents. For a summary of these results, see Table 3.

Table 3

Mean Comparisons for Child Forgiveness Seeking Strategies

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Explicit Acknowledgement	4.83 _a	1.30
Nonverbal Assurance	4.40 _b	1.33
Explanation	4.36 _b	1.30
Humor	2.40 _c	2.53
Compensation	1.80 _c	1.12

Note. Means that do not share the same subscript differ at $p < .005$.

Again, using a conservative level of significance ($p < .005$), a paired-sample t -test showed that when parents seek forgiveness from their children, they use the explanation strategy and explicit acknowledgement strategy most often. Children rate their parents as using the nonverbal assurance strategy as often as the explicit acknowledgment strategy, but not as often as the explanation strategy and more than both the humor and compensation strategies. For a summary of these results, see Table 4.

Table 4

Mean Comparisons for Parent Forgiveness Seeking Strategies

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Explanation	4.31 _a	1.46
Explicit Acknowledgement	3.94 _{a,b}	1.62
Nonverbal Assurance	3.80 _b	1.48
Humor	1.68 _c	2.08
Compensation	1.56 _c	1.50

Note. Means that do not share the same subscript differ at $p < .005$

Forgiveness communication strategies as polite

Bivariate correlations between the each type of forgiveness granting strategy exhibited by parents and the summative measure for perceived politeness as well as each type of seeking strategies exhibited by parents and the summative measure for perceived politeness examined research question three. Using the criteria proposed by Guilford (1956), correlations emerged between four of the five types of forgiveness granting strategies. Specifically, there were small, but significant positive correlations between the explicit strategy ($r = .36, p < .01$) and perceived politeness, as well as the nonverbal display strategy ($r = .30, p < .05$) and perceived politeness. A moderate, positive correlation emerged between perceived politeness and the minimizing strategy ($r = .43, p < .01$). The conditional strategy ($r = -.26, p < .05$) displayed a small, but significant negative correlation with perceived politeness. However, there was no correlation between the discussion-based strategy and perceived politeness.

Only three of the five forgiveness-seeking strategies correlated with perceived politeness. Specifically, small, positive correlations existed between perceived politeness and explanation ($r = .34, p < .01$), nonverbal assurance ($r = .39, p < .01$) and explicit acknowledgement ($r = .37, p < .01$). However, there were no significant correlations between perceived politeness and compensation or humor.

Forgiveness seeking strategies and wellness/sickness

To answer research questions four, multiple regressions were run with the five forgiveness seeking strategies by the child as the independent variables and four measures of wellness and sickness (child health, parent health, positive affect, and negative affect) as the dependent variables for four separate regression analyses. Regressions for reports of the child's seeking behaviors showed no multivariate association between child's use of seeking strategies on their own their own positive affect, their parent's health, their negative affect, or their own health. These results suggest there is no association between a child's own forgiveness seeking communication behaviors and their own wellness and sickness nor their parent's health.

Multiple regressions answered research question six by entering the five forgiveness-seeking strategies used by the parent as the independent variables and four measures of wellness and sickness (child health, parent health, positive affect, and negative affect) as the dependent variables for four separate regression analyses. Regression analysis demonstrated significant associations between parents' seeking forgiveness communication strategies and the child's positive affect ($F [5,69] = 3.66, p < .01, R^2 = .21$). Specifically, child's positive affect was predicted by parent's use of the explicit acknowledgement strategy ($\beta = .16, p < .05$). A regression analysis also showed

a significant association between parents' seeking forgiveness communication strategies use and the child's negative affect ($F [5,69] = 2.62, p < .05, R^2 = .16$). Specifically, negative affect was predicted by parent's use of compensation behaviors ($\beta = .22, p < .01$).

Additional analyses revealed that when parents use the nonverbal assurance seeking message type, children feel greater positive emotions. Specifically, there is a small but significant correlation between perceived parental use of nonverbal assurance and child's positive affect ($r = .37, p < .005$). Correlation analyses also confirmed the association found by regression analyses for parental use of explicit acknowledgement and positive emotions ($r = .41, p < .001$) and parental use of compensation and negative affect ($r = .36, p < .005$). No associations, however, existed between parent's use of seeking strategies and child's health or parent's health.

Despite limited findings in the exploration of forgiveness seeking strategies and wellness/sickness indicators, an additional analysis revealed a positive and moderate correlation between forgiveness and satisfaction when children seek forgiveness from their parents ($r = .52, p < .001$). In sum, a child's perception of their parent's use of forgiveness seeking communication behaviors are associated with that child's later emotional wellness and sickness, and relationship satisfaction, but not their physical health or their parent's physical health.

Forgiveness granting strategies and wellness/sickness

To answer research question five, multiple regression analyses were conducted on the five forgiveness granting communication strategies used by the child as the independent variables and two measures of wellness (positive affect and parent health)

and two of sickness (negative affect and child health) as the dependent variables resulting in four separate regression analyses. The analyses showed no significant associations between child's granting strategy use and parent's health, child health, positive affect or negative affect. These results suggest that a child's use of forgiveness granting communication behaviors has no association on their later wellness or sickness or their parent's health.

To answer research question seven, multiple regression analyses were conducted on the five forgiveness granting communication strategies used by the parent as the independent variables and two measures of wellness (positive affect and parent health) and two of sickness (negative affect and child health) as the dependent variables resulting in four separate regression analyses. These analyses demonstrated no significant associations between parent's use of granting strategies and parent's health, child health, positive affect or negative affect; therefore, suggesting that a child's perception of their parent's forgiveness granting communication behaviors has no association to that child's wellness and sickness nor their parent's health. Despite these limited findings, an additional analysis revealed a positive and moderate correlation between forgiveness and satisfaction when children grant forgiveness to their parents ($r = .59, p < .001$).

Polite strategies and wellness/sickness

Similar regression analyses were necessary to examine research question eight. However, because there was little to no connection between forgiveness message type and health, the test was moot. Such analysis would have created redundant results from the results of research questions three and six. Additional analyses testing the relationship between politeness and relationship satisfaction as well as politeness and

forgiveness, however, revealed that when parents grant forgiveness, there is a small but significant positive correlation between politeness and satisfaction ($r = .37, p < .005$) and politeness and forgiveness ($r = .34, p < .005$). When parents seek forgiveness, there is a moderate and significant correlation between politeness and satisfaction ($r = .55, p < .001$) and politeness and forgiveness ($r = .45, p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, the study investigated the use of forgiveness communication strategies outlined by Kelley and Waldron (2005) and Waldron and Kelley (2005) in parent-child relationships (research questions one and two). Second, the study examined the relationship between forgiveness communication strategies and politeness (research question three). Third, the study explored subsequent wellness and sickness felt by the child and parent after communicating forgiveness (research questions four through eight).

All five of the strategies used to communicate granting forgiveness outlined by Waldron and Kelley (2005) were present in the current study. Children reported themselves and their parents to use the discussion-based, nonverbal display, conditional, minimizing and explicit strategies when granting forgiveness to each other. More specifically, children reported using the discussion-based strategy and explicit strategy more often than the minimizing, conditional, or nonverbal display strategies when granting forgiveness to their parents. Similarly, children rate their parents as using the discussion-based strategy most often when parents grant forgiveness to their children.

The face concerns associated with the hierarchical nature of the parent-child relationship may help to explain these findings. Scholars agree that the parent-child relationship is hierarchical (Nock, 1998; Stone Fish, 2000). Nock (1988) explains that we learn about hierarchy in our families, that they are a prime example for teaching authority, and “there must exist in the family a hierarchy of roles distinguishing children from the other members (mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, other relatives) of the family in a subordinate-superordinate relationship” (p. 962). Moreover, Stone Fish

(2000) states, “although roles may be reverse later on in life, throughout childhood the parent takes care of the child and the child receives the care” (p. 504); thus, in this relationship the parent assumes more responsibility and *control*. Certainly, some messages exchanged in hierarchical relationships are more appropriate than others are, and control is a key factor determining the appropriateness of messages exchanged between subordinates and authority figures, including the parent-child relationship.

In interactions between parents and children where face concerns are present (as I argue forgiveness interactions are), messages involve politeness, paternalism, and autonomy (Morgan & Hummert, 2000). These three factors all begin to converge around the notion of control varying in terms of how much control is expressed in the message (Morgan & Hummert, 2000). Specifically, Morgan and Hummert (2000) argue that a message can express direct control by being “confrontational, patronizing and paternalistic,” express indirect control by being “more collaborative in nature, [and] affirming competence”, and express no control being “nonconfrontational and neutral” (p. 51). They also posit that young adults would consider receiving a direct control message from their parent as appropriate “given their earlier roles as children being supported by their parents” (p. 51), but inappropriate given their new status as adults. By establishing independence from their parents, children may experience a newfound power in their relationship and could consider using a direct control message with their parent as appropriate. These researchers also argue that because parents are accustomed to using direct control with their children messages receiving such messages from their children “might strike them as particularly inappropriate or unsatisfactory” (p. 51).

The explicit granting of forgiveness is a direct control message as it necessarily involves the assignment of blame to a relationship partner following a transgression. The discussion-based strategy, on the other hand, initiates a forgiveness conversation, but does not finalize forgiveness, characterizing it as an indirect control message. Perhaps children use these two strategies most often and to similar extents when granting forgiveness to their parents, because, in this hierarchical relationship, they wish to exert independence while recognizing that their parent might consider it inappropriate to forgive them explicitly without prior discussion. Appropriateness, however, does not explain why children report parents using the discussion-based strategy most often. Perhaps this finding is a result of parents using the forgiveness episode as an opportunity to teach their children a lesson. Furthermore, the words “I forgive you,” which characterize the explicit strategy, may not be enough for a child to feel forgiven. Instead, discussing the offense, which often explains why the child needs to be forgiven, seems to be a more important piece of the forgiveness process for children granted forgiveness by their parents.

All five of the strategies used to communicate requesting forgiveness outlined by Kelley and Waldron (2005) were also present in the current study. Both parents and children were reported to use the explanation, nonverbal assurance, compensation, explicit acknowledgement, and humor strategies when seeking forgiveness from each other. More specifically, children use the explicit acknowledgment strategy most often when requesting forgiveness from their parents, and considerably more often than both the humor and compensation strategies. In contrast, children rate their parents as using the explanation strategy most often when seeking forgiveness from their children.

The degree to which the strategies address face and the context of the parent-child relationship help to inform these findings. In their study of face in family conflicts, Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Chew-Sanchez, Harris, Wilcox, and Stumpf (2003) report that individuals use three types of facework in interpersonal conflicts: dominating facework, avoiding facework, and integrating facework. Dominating facework entails aggression and defense of the self, and “focuses on presenting a credible image and wanting to win the conflict” (Oetzel, et al., 2003, p. 71). Avoiding facework involves preserving “relational concerns by not directly addressing the conflict” (p. 71), where as integrating facework involves preserving the relationship and resolving the conflict and consists of behaviors such as “apologize, compromise, consider the other, private discussion, remain calm, and talk about the problem” (p. 71).

Indeed, the presence of integrating facework in family conflict studied by Oetzel, et al. (2003) informs the presence of explicit acknowledgement by children in forgiveness communication episodes reported here. The explicit acknowledgement strategy includes direct admission of guilt, asking for forgiveness, and apologies; therefore, it is integrating facework. Additionally, children may use this strategy most often because it is a respectful way to seek forgiveness from an authority figure like a parent. As in Oetzel, et al.’s (2003) study, young adult children in conflict with their parents “appear to view their parents with respect and engage in [more] integrative behaviors” (p. 88). Certainly, children view explicit acknowledgement as more respectful than the humor strategy, which minimizes the offense by joking about the transgression (considered avoiding facework by Oetzel, et al. [2003]). Furthermore, joking about a serious relational

transgression in this hierarchical relationship could go against the child's best interest, by simply creating more conflict between the parent and child.

The hierarchical nature of the parent-child relationships helps to explain why children rate their parents as using the explanation strategy most often when seeking forgiveness. This strategy includes only explaining the circumstances surrounding the offending behavior rather than taking responsibility for the event. Furthermore, this strategy also only initiates a forgiveness conversation and does not directly ask for forgiveness. Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested that the more power a person has, the less tactful he or she needs to be, and as Nock (1988) suggests, parents hold higher status than children do in family relationships. The results of this study imply that children perceive parents exercising their position of authority when seeking forgiveness, by simply giving a reason for the transgression. Children may not expect an overt request for forgiveness as often from a parent, and may even grant forgiveness without one.

Children rated only three of the five forgiveness granting communication strategies as polite. Specifically, the strongest correlation existed between children rate their parent's use of the minimizing strategy and politeness, followed by their use of the explicit and nonverbal strategies. There was no correlation between parent's use of the discussion-based strategy and politeness and children found the conditional strategy impolite. Likewise, children rated only three of the five forgiveness seeking communication strategies as polite. In particular, children rated their parent's use of the nonverbal assurance, explicit acknowledgment, and explanation strategies as slightly polite. There was no correlation between parent's use of the compensation or humor strategies and politeness.

The nature of the items comprising each forgiveness granting communication strategy may account for these findings. First, items comprising the minimizing strategy include phrases such as “They told me that ‘They understood’” and “They told me it was no big deal.” Messages such as these employ negative politeness in that they appear to assure the child that their “freedom will not be curtailed” (Cupach & Metts, 1994, p. 8). Indeed, minimizing behaviors protect autonomy in the same way no control directives do, which mothers reported using with their daughters in Morgan and Hummert’s (2000) study. Messages from this strategy also employ positive politeness in that they imply affiliation with the child. Second, nonverbal display messages include giving a hug and treating the child as they always had. These messages also employ positive politeness insofar as giving a hug is an expression of appreciation. Moreover, these messages are characterized by negative politeness in that treating someone like one always has maintains that person’s desire to be independent and autonomous. Third, the messages comprising the conditional strategy explain its rating as impolite. When forgiving with conditions, children hear their parents say things such as “They told me they would forgive me, but only if things changed” and “They told me they would forgive me, but only if the offense never happened again in the future.” Such messages impose upon the child and constrain their actions, which are threats to negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Furthermore, these messages implicate the hearer as incompetent, which threatens the hearer’s positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). What is interesting is that the nature of the explicit granting strategy, “They told me that they forgave me,” should not account for why children rated it as polite. This directive should actually threaten positive face in that it assigns blame to the child. Children may feel, however, that the

message ends any further need to repent, and therefore it sustains the child's desire to be autonomous and independent, supporting negative face.

The messages that comprise forgiveness seeking communication strategies may also help explain children rating them as polite. First, the nonverbal assurance strategy is comprised of items that include "They were especially nice to me" and "They treated me like they always had, so I could tell they wanted things to get back to normal." Such messages employ positive politeness in that they preserve the child's desire to be liked and appreciated (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and employ negative politeness in that they preserve the child's desire to be unconstrained (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Second, the explicit acknowledgement strategy includes items such as "They asked directly for forgiveness," "They told me they were sorry for what they had done," and "They apologized." By forfeiting the speaker's own desire to be liked and appreciated, these messages support the child's positive face by validating the child's assignment of guilt to the parent and therefore supporting the child's desire to be respected and appear competent (Brown & Levinson, 1987). A noteworthy point is that explicit acknowledgement behaviors threaten the negative face of the child in their direct request for forgiveness (Wilson, Aleman, & Leatham, 1998). This may account for why this strategy correlates with politeness to only a small degree. Finally, the explanation strategy consists of items such as "They explained the circumstances that surrounded the situation" and "They told me they felt badly about what happened." The child's rating of this strategy as polite is even more interesting. At first glance, such messages do not appear to directly support positive or negative face. Yet, admitting that one feels badly about their actions could be construed as a way to express appreciation for another

(preserving positive face), and the discussion the offense could potentially assure the child that he or she has options (preserving negative face).

A child's use of forgiveness seeking and forgiveness granting communication strategies did not predict that child's own wellness or sickness or his or her perceptions of parents' physical health. Furthermore, a child's perception of their parent's forgiveness granting communication strategies did not predict that child's wellness or sickness or his or her parent's physical health. While a child's perception of their parent's forgiveness seeking communication strategies did not predict that child's or the parent's health, it did predict that child's later felt positive and negative emotions. Specifically, perceived parental use of explicit acknowledgement and nonverbal assurance predicted the child's positive emotions while parental use of compensation predicted negative emotions.

Emotional wellness or sickness felt from these messages make intuitive sense. Giving hugs and being especially nice to someone should increase the positive emotions felt by that person. Furthermore, when accompanied by overt admissions of fault and apologies, victims may feel that the desire to be forgiven is sincere and therefore would feel greater positive emotions toward the offender (McCullough, et al., 1998). Indeed, Hareli and Eisikovits (2006) found that individuals who received genuine apologies were more likely to forgiveness and feel *better* about their relationships. While these messages do not play a direct role in physical health, feeling positive emotions can mitigate stress and increase resiliency (Fredrickson, 2005), resulting in better health overall. The compensation strategy, which includes messages that involve buying gifts and asking others to request forgiveness for them, lack an element of sincerity present in other messages, explaining the negative emotions felt from this message type on its own.

Although the results of this study do not demonstrate a direct link between forgiveness communication strategies and physical and emotional health, the association between overall forgiveness and relationship satisfaction implies a connection between communicating forgiveness and later received health that merits discussion. Researchers of relationships and physiology alike note the importance of positive relationships to enhance health (Canary & Dainton, 2006; House, et al., 1988; Reis & Gable, 2003). As noted earlier, a person with positive and satisfying relationships fairs better in resistance to disease (House, et al., 1988). Yet, in order to keep relationships satisfying, individuals must maintain them. Certainly, forgiveness is a relationship maintenance behavior designed to keep a relationship satisfying and the correlation between forgiveness and relationship satisfaction in this study confirms this assertion. When measured previously, relationship satisfaction (well-being) associates positively with physical health (Kumashiro, Finkel, & Rusbult, 2002). Kumashiro, et al. (2002) found that individuals enacting pro-relationship behaviors such as forgiveness not only directly enhanced their relationship well-being but also their personal well-being (life satisfaction, physical health, and psychological adjustment). Furthermore, relationship well-being mediates the association between partner pro-relationship behavior and personal well-being. For the current study, this means the relationship satisfaction experienced between parents and children, because of forgiveness, is the proximal indicator of overall wellness. Thus, while individual health may not be the primary result of forgiveness communication, relationship health is.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

As with any study, limitations in the method of data collection are important to the evaluation of results. A number of concerns arise with data collection in the form of a self-report survey. First, self-reports of relational behavior are subject to memory limitations (Metts, Sprecher & Cupach, 1991). Although most participants responded that they remembered transgression moderately well, they reported on events that occurred over three years ago, and recall of specific messages used in a single interaction during that time is undoubtedly limited. Second, self-reports are subject to perceptual biases, especially when participants are asked to recall distant and abstract relational occurrences (Metts, et al., 1991). Particularly subject to perceptual biases were participants' reports of their partner's behavior. Respondents may have fallen prey to social desirability in their reports of their parent's communication. By forcing participants to rate usage of different message types, participants may have been drawn to explicit messages that are most commonly associated with forgiveness (i.e., "I'm sorry, will you forgive me?" and "I forgive you"), or the explanation messages they expected their parent to use (i.e., "I only did this because I love you").

Despite efforts to present the concept of forgiveness communication in concrete terms, participants may not have fully grasped its meaning. In addition, the incident that participants reported had to involve a decision to forgive their parent. Although used specifically to capture forgiveness interactions, this requirement prevented participants from reporting on unresolved conflict with their parents. Investigating conflicts in which a relationship partner chooses not to forgive is equally important to understand the entire

forgiveness process. By tapping into the motivations of those who do not forgive, researchers are able to ask what is forgivable and what is not.

A limitation of the study also may account for the results suggesting the communicative act of forgiveness has little to no association to sickness and wellness. Both surveys asked participants to report on an actual transgression that occurred between themselves and their parents. However, participants were not constrained by a time frame in which the event must have occurred. Therefore, children reported on transgressions occurring at any point in their lifetime, and as a result, the average participant who granted forgiveness to their parent reported on an incident occurring over three years ago, and the average participant who requested forgiveness from their parent reported on an incident over four years ago. In measuring wellness and sickness, however, participants were asked to report on their physical and emotional well-being within the past two weeks. This extreme lapse of time may account for those forgiveness communication strategies that have no association to wellness and sickness. If the report on transgression was constrained by the two-week period as the measures for wellness and sickness were, the forgiveness communication that transpired between the parents and children may have accounted for health and well-being.

Although, in general, *experiencing* forgiveness has not demonstrated time constrained health benefits, and promotes better health in both the short-term (Witvliet, et al., 2001) and long-term (McCullough, et al., 2001), the results of this study suggest sickness or wellness experienced because of specific ways of *communicating* forgiveness may be more localized to the short term. An important caveat to this, however, is that research indicates forgiveness is a time taking process (McCullough, Fincham & Tsang,

2003) and “involves a series of interactions, interim outcomes, and psychological adjustments” (Waldron & Kelley, 2005, p. 740). A one-time, cross sectional measure of forgiveness interactions undoubtedly captures only a small portion of the big picture of forgiveness experienced between these children and their parents. Thus, a direction for future research could include a longitudinal study capturing a current conflict between parents and children and following their progression towards forgiveness at different points of time.

The time of year in which the research distributed the survey may also contribute to the results that indicate participants later feel positive or negative emotions when their parents used the explicit acknowledgement and compensation seeking strategies.

Because participants who completed the survey did so within the last two weeks of the spring semester, these findings may be the result of other life stressors. The negative emotions felt by participants may be better explained by stress that accompanies final exams at the end of a semester than a parent’s use of the compensation forgiveness seeking strategy three years ago. In contrast, relief that accompanies an ending semester and long awaited summer vacation may better explain the positive emotions felt by participants than the explicit acknowledgement seeking strategy used by a parent three years ago.

A final limitation of the study rests in the characteristics of the sample. As noted above, on average, participants had very satisfying relationships with their parents, resulting in limited variance of the sample. Because these children were already satisfied with their relationships with their parent, a biased report of forgiveness communication use may have contributed to the lack of direct association between forgiveness message

type and received health. Researchers able to tap into clinical samples that include children who have not always experienced as satisfying relationships with their parents may find very different results. Furthermore, the results of this study reflect responses of a predominantly White American sample. Cross-cultural communication researchers point out “that everyone has face concerns during conflict, but that members of different cultures negotiate face in different ways because of different levels of face concerns” (Oetzel, et al., 2003, p. 69). By using facework as the guiding framework for the study, investigating the forgiveness messages in a more culturally diverse group of people may have produced richer data.

The results of this study validate the assertions made by Wilson, Aleman and Leatham (1998) that one message has the capacity to influence multiple face threats, supporting the need for a more complex conceptualization of face threats than originally proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). To be sure, forgiveness communication strategies that moderated positive and negative face threats to the hearer (child) were rated as polite. By accounting for both positive and negative face needs simultaneously, these messages contradict Brown and Levinson’s (1987) original argument that directives threaten only one type of face for one person in an interaction.

These results also validate the use of forgiveness granting communication strategies outlined by Waldron and Kelley (2005) and use of forgiveness seeking communication strategies outlined by Kelley and Waldron (2005) in non-romantic relationship contexts. Specifically, children report use of all ten of the strategies developed by Kelley and Waldron by themselves and their parents. These results, however, do not support the idea that *specific* ways of communicating forgiveness

influence later wellness and sickness. Still, on average, participants forgave their parents and had satisfying relationships with their mothers or fathers. Thus, the use of specific forgiveness communication strategies appears to comprise satisfying relationships, echoing results found by Kelley and Waldron (2005) and Waldron and Kelley (2005).

The observations in this study suggest a challenge for researchers of forgiveness communication and health. Although negotiated forgiveness typically unfolds over time, and involves the coming together of two individuals to move past a transgression (Andrews, 2000), the effects of such interactions on wellness and sickness may only be visible in the short term. A somewhat complicated task for future researchers would involve capturing sickness and wellness indicators soon after forgiveness has been negotiated between two people experiencing conflict. Despite the limited observations, the current study brings forgiveness communication scholars closer to understanding the complex behaviors that characterize the negotiation of forgiveness. It suggests that children perceive the behaviors used by their parents to be an important part of the forgiveness experience. Moreover, these results highlight the specific types of communication that may be most polite in negotiating forgiveness effectively. Asking for and granting forgiveness can restore positive relationships otherwise damaged by interpersonal offenses, which in turn can lead to better health for both relationship partners. These are just a few of the many reasons for researchers to study how the communication of forgiveness relates to wellness and sickness more closely.

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Appendix A
University of Montana Consent Form

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE: Communication and Health

INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Geist (jennifer.geist@umontana.edu)
Department of Communication Studies
The University of Montana
Liberal Arts 301
Missoula, MT 59812
Phone: 406-243-6604

This consent form may contain words that are new to you. If you read any words that are not clear to you, please contact one of the investigators for clarification before continuing the study.

You are being asked to take part in a research study investigating communication and health. If you agree to respond to this survey, you will be asked to think about your thoughts and experiences concerning your communication styles and health, and your thoughts and experiences concerning your parent's communication styles. You will also be asked to respond to questions regarding communication with your parent in your relationship. Participation should take approximately 30 minutes.

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are normally entitled. Responding to some of the items might cause you to think about aspects of your relationship that may make you uncomfortable. Please do not continue if you feel you cannot do so. There is no promise that you will receive any benefit from taking part in this study; however, your participation will give personal relationship scholars an opportunity to better understand communication and health in family relationships. At the completion of the survey you will be given a debriefing sheet with contact information for local services if you have any concerns.

Your responses for this survey are confidential and anonymous, so please **do not** put your name nor any identifying markings anywhere on the survey. Only the investigator and other approved research members of this study will have access to the data files. The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and your signed consent form will be stored in a cabinet separate from the data. The results of this research will be compiled for my graduate thesis and may be submitted to be published, but your name will not be connected to the results. In any sort of report I might publish, all results will be aggregated, and I will not include any information that might make it possible to identify you personally.

Although we believe that the risk of taking part in this study is minimal, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms:

“In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University’s Claims representative or University Legal Counsel. (Reviewed by University Legal Counsel. July 6, 1993).”

If you have any questions concerning this research or wish to find out the results of this study, please contact Jennifer Geist at (406) 243-6604 or jennifer.geist@umontana.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Office at the University of Montana at 406-243-6670.

I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by a member of the research team. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Name

Date

Appendix B Forgiveness Granting Communication Survey

Thank you for participating in this study on the role of communication in forgiveness. This survey consists of five sections. Please read the directions carefully and answer the questions as completely and truthfully as possible. While responding to the survey, please remember that **forgiveness communication occurs when you talk with someone after they have hurt you or you have hurt them, and after talking with them, you or they not only feel better about each other, but also feel less like hurting or avoiding each other after the act.**

Please read instructions carefully!

Instructions: Please think of a time when you **forgave** someone. Pick a very specific incident. It should be one that you remember clearly.

If possible, I would like you to focus on a time when you forgave one of your parents (e.g., mother, father, step-mother, step-father). If you cannot recall forgiving your parent for anything, then pick a time when you gave forgiveness to someone in another type of relationship.

Before proceeding, please describe the role of the person you forgave (e.g., mother, father, step-mother, step-father) **at the time of this event:** _____

Now, take a minute to remember the details of the situation when you gave forgiveness. Clearly picture the other person.

I. What did you forgive your parent for?

In the section below, please describe what your parent said or did that created a need for forgiveness. Please use the back of this sheet if necessary.

At the time they occurred, how **severe** were these actions (circle one)?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all severe	slightly severe	moderately severe	severe	extremely severe

At the time they occurred, how **damaging** were the actions to your relationship with your parent?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all damaging	slightly damaging	moderately damaging	damaging	extremely damaging

At the time they occurred, how **threatening to your relationship** were these actions?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all threatening	slightly threatening	moderately threatening	threatening	extremely threatening

Had this type of action occurred before in your relationship with your parent (circle one)? **Yes No**

If yes, about how many times? _____

At the time this event occurred, how **angry** did you feel toward your parent about the incident?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all angry	slightly angry	moderately angry	angry	extremely angry

At the time this event occurred, how **disappointed** were you in your parent?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all disappointed	slightly disappointed	moderately disappointed	disappointed	extremely disappointed

At the time this event occurred, how **hurt** did you feel?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all hurt	slightly hurt	moderately hurt	hurt	extremely hurt

Overall, at the time this event occurred, what were your feelings toward you parent?

1	2	3	4	5
extremely negative	negative	neutral	positive	extremely positive

How long ago did this event occur? _____years _____months

How clearly do you remember this incident?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all well	slightly well	moderately well	well	extremely well

II. Granting Forgiveness

For the following items, think about your behavior generally. Using the scale that follows, rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	mildly disagree	agree and disagree equally	mildly agree	strongly agree

_____ People close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long.

_____ I can forgive a friend for almost anything.

_____ If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.

_____ I try to forgive others even when they don't feel guilty for what they did.

_____ I can usually forgive an insult.

_____ I feel bitter about many of my relationships.

- _____ Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent.
- _____ There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.
- _____ I have always forgiven those who have hurt me.
- _____ I am a forgiving person.

Below are listed some of the things people might say or do when they forgive someone. As you think about the situation you described above, please tell us what you said or did. Please rate the extent to which you used that action in your forgiveness. Use the following scale to give your response:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
did not	very			moderate			extensive
use	slight			use			use
	use						

- _____ I initiated discussion about the offense.
- _____ I gave them a hug.
- _____ I began treating them like I always had.
- _____ I told them that "I understood."
- _____ I told them that I forgave them.
- _____ I cried.
- _____ I waited awhile before I was ready to forgive them.
- _____ I had someone else tell them that I had forgiven them.
- _____ I joked about the offense so they knew they were forgiven.
- _____ I gave them "a look" that communicated that they were forgiven.
- _____ I told them I would forgive them, but only if things changed.
- _____ I told them it was no big deal.
- _____ I discussed the offense with them.
- _____ I touched them in such a way that they knew they were forgiven (for example, I put my hand on their arm).
- _____ The expression on my face said "I forgive you."
- _____ I never said "I forgive you," they "just understood."
- _____ I told them not to worry about it.
- _____ I did something special for them.
- _____ I told them I would forgive them, but only if the offense never happened again in the future.
- _____ I forgave them once, but it was not until later that I felt like I was able to completely forgive them.

III. Asking for Forgiveness

In this section, we would like to know how the other person asked for your forgiveness, if at all. For the following items, please rate the extent to which you saw the person use any of these behaviors to

seek your forgiveness. Use the following scale to give your response:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
did not use	very slight use			moderate use			extensive use

- _____ They initiated discussion about the offense.
- _____ They gave me a hug.
- _____ They explained the circumstances that surrounded the situation.
- _____ They were especially nice to me.
- _____ They asked directly for forgiveness.
- _____ They had someone else tell me they wanted to be forgiven.
- _____ They explained the reason why they had offended me.
- _____ They had someone else apologize for them.
- _____ They took responsibility for what they had done.
- _____ They told me that they were bothered by the fact that I had been hurt.
- _____ They told me they were sorry for what they had done.
- _____ They paid for or fixed whatever they had damaged.
- _____ I could just tell that they were ready to be forgiven.
- _____ They joked about the situation.
- _____ They tried to get me to see the humor of what had happened.
- _____ They cried.
- _____ They discussed the offense with me.
- _____ They told me they would do whatever I wanted.
- _____ They looked me straight in the eyes.
- _____ They apologized.
- _____ I could see in their face that they wanted the situation to be resolved.
- _____ They told mutual friends they were sorry and hoped it would get back to me.
- _____ They told me they felt badly about what had happened.
- _____ They treated me like they always had, so I could tell they wanted things to get back to normal.
- _____ They brought me a gift or did something for me.
- _____ They told me it would never happen again.
- _____ They tried more than once to get forgiveness from me.
- _____ They tried indirect attempts to get forgiveness and then progressively tried more direct strategies (For example, they tried acting normal with me, but then they had to gradually talk about the offense).

Now, as you think about how your parent asked for your forgiveness, please tell us how you felt about their actions. Use the following scale to indicate your response.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all			moderately			very much

- _____ How concerned was your parent for your feelings?
- _____ How positive was your parent towards you?
- _____ How understanding of you was your parent?
- _____ How demanding was your parent's behavior?
- _____ How tentative was your parent's behavior?
- _____ How much effort did your parent take to show that he/she did not want to impose on you?
- _____ How polite was your parent?
- _____ My parent communicated coldness rather than warmth.
- _____ My parent was interested in talking to me.
- _____ My parent did not want a deeper relationship between us.
- _____ My parent created a sense of distance between us.
- _____ My parent acted like we were good friends.
- _____ My parent seemed to desire further communication.
- _____ My parent acted very friendly.
- _____ My parent tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.
- _____ My parent made me feel he or she was very similar to me.
- _____ My parent was very honest in communicating with me.
- _____ My parent was willing to listen to me.
- _____ My parent was sincere.
- _____ My parent was open to my ideas.
- _____ My parent tried to persuade me.
- _____ My parent tried to dominate me.
- _____ My parent did NOT attempt to influence me.
- _____ My parent tried to control the interaction.
- _____ I felt better after talking with my parent.
- _____ I wish my parent had not mentioned the issue.
- _____ After talking with my parent, I felt less depressed.
- _____ The way my parent talked to me irritated me.
- _____ Talking with my parent helped me get my mind off the situation.
- _____ My parent made me feel better about myself.
- _____ I felt more optimistic after talking with my parent.
- _____ My parent doesn't seem to think I can handle my own problems.
- _____ It helped me understand the situation better to talk it over with my parent.

- _____ My parent seemed really concerned about me.
- _____ My parent's comments were appropriate.
- _____ I felt that my parent was putting me down.
- _____ I wish my parent's comments had been briefer.

For the following items, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the parent who hurt you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

- _____ I'll make him/her pay.
- _____ I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.
- _____ I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.
- _____ I'm going to get even.
- _____ I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.
- _____ I keep as much distance between us as possible.
- _____ I live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.
- _____ I don't trust him/her.
- _____ I find it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.
- _____ I avoid him/her.
- _____ I cut off the relationship with him/her.
- _____ I withdraw from him/her.
- _____ I act loving toward him/her.
- _____ I act kind toward him/her.
- _____ I spend more time with him/her than before.
- _____ I say nice things about him/her.

Now think about your relationship with you parent in general. Use the following scale to indicate your response:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all well		not too well		pretty well		very well

- _____ How well can you talk with your parent even when you relationship with them is tense?
- _____ How well can you talk with you parent about your personal problems?
- _____ How well can you handle your parent's intrusions into your privacy without getting irritated about it?
- _____ How well can you prevent differences of opinions with your parent from turning into arguments?
- _____ How well can you talk with your parent about your feelings toward them?

- _____ How well can you get your parent to understand your point of view on matters when it differs from theirs?
- _____ How well can you express your gratitude to your parent for their efforts on your behalf?
- _____ How well can you express your disagreement with your parent without getting angry?
- _____ How well can you get your parents to pay attention to your needs even when they are preoccupied with their own problems?
- _____ How well can you involve you parent in important decisions about your future?
- _____ How well can you take into account your parent’s suggestions when they differ from your preferences?
- _____ How well can you admit when you are wrong and change your opinion?
- _____ How well can you accept your parent’s criticism of you without feeling offended?
- _____ How well can you increase your parent’s trust and appreciation for you?
- _____ How well can you get your parent to trust your judgment and responsibilities?
- _____ How well can you avoid irritation when your parent doesn’t pay attention to you?

Again, think about your relationship with your parent in general. Use the following scale to indicate your response:

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|------------|---|---|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| not at
all | | | moderately | | | very
much |

- _____ My parent and I have fun together.
- _____ My parent and I enjoy doing things together.
- _____ My parent and I get along well.
- _____ I am happy with the way things are going with my parent.
- _____ I have a good relationship with my parent.

IV. Health and Well-being

How is your parent’s health?

- | | | | | |
|-----------|------|--------------------------|------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| very poor | poor | neither poor
nor good | good | very good |

Does your parent have any particular health issues that he or she is dealing with right now? If so, please list any you feel are important to him or her:

In this section, please tell us about how YOU have been feeling. Use the following scale to indicate how much each of the following items has been a “bother” to you in the last two weeks, including today. Mark only one number for each item.

- | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| no
bother | | | | extreme
bother |

How much were you bothered by:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep problems (can't fall asleep, wake up in middle of night or early in morning) | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor appetite |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weight change (gain or loss of 5 lbs. or more) | <input type="checkbox"/> Shortness of breath when not exercising or working hard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Back pain | <input type="checkbox"/> Numbness or tingling in parts of your body |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Constipation | <input type="checkbox"/> Felt weak all over |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dizziness | <input type="checkbox"/> Pains in heart or chest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diarrhea | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling low in energy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faintness | <input type="checkbox"/> Stuffy head or nose |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Constant fatigue | <input type="checkbox"/> Blurred vision |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headache | <input type="checkbox"/> Muscle tension or soreness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Migraine headache | <input type="checkbox"/> Muscle cramp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea and/or vomiting | <input type="checkbox"/> Severe aches and pains |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Acid stomach or indigestion | <input type="checkbox"/> Acne |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stomach pains (e.g., cramps) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bruises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hot or cold spells | <input type="checkbox"/> Nosebleed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hands trembling | <input type="checkbox"/> Pulled (strained) muscles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heart pounding or racing | <input type="checkbox"/> Pulled (strained) ligaments |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Cold or cough |

What types of emotions have you been feeling during the past two weeks? Use the following scale to describe how much you have felt of the emotions below:

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> interested | <input type="checkbox"/> irritable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> distressed | <input type="checkbox"/> alert |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excited | <input type="checkbox"/> ashamed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> upset | <input type="checkbox"/> inspired |
| <input type="checkbox"/> strong | <input type="checkbox"/> nervous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> guilty | <input type="checkbox"/> determined |
| <input type="checkbox"/> scared | <input type="checkbox"/> attentive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hostile | <input type="checkbox"/> jittery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> enthusiastic | <input type="checkbox"/> active |
| <input type="checkbox"/> proud | <input type="checkbox"/> afraid |

V. About you

Please take a minute to tell us about yourself.

How old are you (in years)? _____

What is your sex (please circle one)? Male Female

Please describe your ethnicity: _____

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for participating in this study. You may return this questionnaire to the person who gave it to you.

Appendix C

Forgiveness Seeking Communication Survey

Thank you for participating in this study on the role of communication in forgiveness. This survey consists of five sections. Please read the directions carefully and answer the questions as completely and truthfully as possible. While responding to the survey, please remember that **forgiveness communication occurs when you talk with someone after they have hurt you or you have hurt them, and after talking with them, you or they not only feel better about each other, but also feel less like hurting or avoiding each other after the act.**

Please read instructions carefully!

Instructions: Please think of a time when someone **forgave you**. Pick a very specific incident. It should be one that you remember clearly.

If possible, I would like you to focus on a time when one of your parents (e.g., mother, father, step-mother, step-father) forgave you. If you cannot recall anything your parent forgave you for, then pick a time when you were forgiven by someone in another type of relationship.

Before proceeding, please describe the role of the person who forgave you (e.g., mother, father, step-mother, step-father) **at the time of this event:** _____

Now, take a minute to remember the details of the situation when you were given forgiveness. Clearly picture the other person.

I. What did your parent forgive you for?

In the section below, please describe what you said or did that created a need for forgiveness. Please use the back of this sheet if necessary.

At the time they occurred, how **severe** were these actions (circle one)?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all severe	slightly severe	moderately severe	severe	extremely severe

At the time they occurred, how **damaging** were these actions to your relationship with your parent?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all damaging	slightly damaging	moderately damaging	damaging	extremely damaging

At the time they occurred, how **threatening to your relationship** were these actions?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all	slightly	moderately	threatening	extremely

threatening threatening threatening threatening

Had this type of action occurred before in your relationship with this person (circle one)? **Yes No**

If yes, about how many times? _____

At the time this event occurred, how **angry** was your parent?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all angry	slightly angry	moderately angry	angry	extremely angry

At the time this event occurred, how **disappointed** was your parent?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all disappointed	slightly disappointed	moderately disappointed	disappointed	extremely disappointed

At the time this event occurred, how **hurt** was your parent?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all hurt	slightly hurt	moderately hurt	hurt	extremely hurt

Overall, at the time this event occurred, what were your feelings toward your parent?

1	2	3	4	5
extremely negative	negative	neutral	positive	extremely positive

How long ago did this event occur? _____years _____months

How clearly do you remember this incident?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all well	slightly well	moderately well	well	extremely well

II. Asking for forgiveness

For the following items, think about your behavior generally. Using the scale that follows, rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	mildly disagree	agree and disagree equally	mildly agree	strongly agree

_____ People close to me probably think I hold a grudge too long.

_____ I can forgive a friend for almost anything.

_____ If someone treats me badly, I treat him or her the same.

_____ I try to forgive others even when they don't feel guilty for what they did.

_____ I can usually forgive an insult.

- _____ I feel bitter about many of my relationships.
- _____ Even after I forgive someone, things often come back to me that I resent.
- _____ There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.
- _____ I have always forgiven those who have hurt me.
- _____ I am a forgiving person.

Below are listed some of the things people might say or do when they ask for forgiveness. As you think about the situation you described above, please tell us what you said or did. Please rate the extent to which you used that action when asking for forgiveness. Use the following scale to give your response:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
did not	very			moderate			extensive
use	slight			use			use
	use						

- _____ I initiated discussion about the offense.
- _____ I gave them a hug.
- _____ I explained the circumstances that surrounded the situation.
- _____ I was especially nice to them.
- _____ I asked directly for forgiveness.
- _____ I had someone else tell them I wanted to be forgiven.
- _____ I explained the reason why I had offended them.
- _____ I had someone else apologize for me.
- _____ I took responsibility for what I had done.
- _____ I told them that I was bothered by the fact that they had been hurt.
- _____ I told them I was sorry for what I had done.
- _____ I paid for or fixed whatever I had damaged.
- _____ They could just tell that I was ready to be forgiven.
- _____ I joked about the situation.
- _____ I tried to get them to see the humor of what had happened.
- _____ I cried.
- _____ I discussed the offense with them.
- _____ I told them I would do whatever they wanted.
- _____ I looked them straight in the eyes.
- _____ I apologized.
- _____ They could see in my face that I wanted the situation to be resolved.
- _____ I told mutual friends I was sorry and hoped it would get back to me.
- _____ I told them I felt badly about what had happened.
- _____ I treated them like I always had, so they could tell I wanted things to get back to normal.
- _____ I brought them a gift or did something for them.

- _____ I told them it would never happen again.
- _____ I tried more than once to get forgiveness from them.
- _____ I tried indirect attempts to get forgiveness and then progressively tried more direct strategies (For example, I tried acting normal with them, but then I had to gradually talk about the offense).

III. Granting Forgiveness

In this section, we would like to know how the other person granted you forgiveness, if at all. For the following items, please rate the extent to which you saw the person use any of these behaviors to grant you forgiveness. Use the following scale to give your response:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
did not use	very slight use			moderate use			extensive use

- _____ They initiated discussion about the offense.
- _____ They gave me a hug.
- _____ They began treating me like they always had.
- _____ They told me that "They understood."
- _____ They told me that they forgave me.
- _____ They cried.
- _____ They waited awhile before they were ready to forgive me.
- _____ They had someone else tell me that they had forgiven me.
- _____ They joked about the offense so I knew I was forgiven.
- _____ They gave me "a look" that communicated that I was forgiven.
- _____ They told me they would forgive me, but only if things changed.
- _____ They told me it was no big deal.
- _____ They discussed the offense with me.
- _____ They touched me in such a way that I knew I was forgiven (for example, they put their hand on my arm).
- _____ The expression on their face said "I forgive you."
- _____ They never said "I forgive you," I "just understood."
- _____ They told me not to worry about it.
- _____ They did something special for me.
- _____ They told me they would forgive me, but only if the offense never happened again in the future.
- _____ They forgave me once, but it was not until later that they felt like they were able to completely forgive me.

Now, as you think about how your parent granted you forgiveness, please tell us how you felt about their actions. Use the following scale to indicate your response.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all			moderately			very much

- _____ How concerned was your parent for your feelings?
- _____ How positive was your parent towards you?
- _____ How understanding of you was your parent?
- _____ How demanding was your parent's behavior?
- _____ How tentative was your parent's behavior?
- _____ How much effort did your parent take to show that he/she did not want to impose on you?
- _____ How polite was your parent?
- _____ My parent communicated coldness rather than warmth.
- _____ My parent was interested in talking to me.
- _____ My parent did not want a deeper relationship between us.
- _____ My parent created a sense of distance between us.
- _____ My parent acted like we were good friends.
- _____ My parent seemed to desire further communication.
- _____ My parent acted very friendly.
- _____ My parent tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.
- _____ My parent made me feel he or she was very similar to me.
- _____ My parent was very honest in communicating with me.
- _____ My parent was willing to listen to me.
- _____ My parent was sincere.
- _____ My parent was open to my ideas.
- _____ My parent tried to persuade me.
- _____ My parent tried to dominate me.
- _____ My parent did NOT attempt to influence me.
- _____ My parent tried to control the interaction.
- _____ I felt better after talking with my parent.
- _____ I wish my parent had not mentioned the issue.
- _____ After talking with my parent, I felt less depressed.
- _____ The way my parent talked to me irritated me.
- _____ Talking with my parent helped me get my mind off the situation.
- _____ My parent made me feel better about myself.
- _____ I felt more optimistic after talking with my parent.
- _____ My parent doesn't seem to think I can handle my own problems.

- _____ It helped me understand the situation better to talk it over with my parent.
- _____ My parent seemed really concerned about me.
- _____ My parent's comments were appropriate.
- _____ I felt that my parent was putting me down.
- _____ I wish my parent's comments had been briefer.

For the following items, please indicate your parent's current actions towards you. Use the following scale to indicate your agreement with each of the questions.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

- _____ He/she acts more aggressive towards me than previously.
- _____ He/she argues more with me than previously.
- _____ He/she says negative things about me.
- _____ He/she often hurts my feelings.
- _____ He/she keeps as much distance between us as possible.
- _____ He/she acts as if I don't exist, am not around.
- _____ He/she doesn't trust me.
- _____ He/she doesn't act warmly toward me.
- _____ He/she shies away from me.
- _____ He/she avoids me.
- _____ He/she cut off the relationship with me.
- _____ He/she seems awkward with me.
- _____ He/she acts more loving towards me than previously.
- _____ He/she acts kinder to me than previously.
- _____ He/she spends more time with me than previously.
- _____ He/she says nice things about me.

Now think about your relationship with you parent in general. Use the following scale to indicate your response:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all well		not too well		pretty well		very well

- _____ How well can you talk with your parent even when you relationship with them is tense?
- _____ How well can you talk with you parent about your personal problems?
- _____ How well can you handle your parent's intrusions into your privacy without getting irritated about it?
- _____ How well can you prevent differences of opinions with your parent from turning into arguments?

- _____ How well can you talk with your parent about your feelings toward them?
- _____ How well can you get your parent to understand your point of view on matters when it differs from theirs?
- _____ How well can you express your gratitude to your parent for their efforts on your behalf?
- _____ How well can you express your disagreement with your parent without getting angry?
- _____ How well can you get your parents to pay attention to your needs even when they are preoccupied with their own problems?
- _____ How well can you involve you parent in important decisions about your future?
- _____ How well can you take into account your parent’s suggestions when they differ from your preferences?
- _____ How well can you admit when you are wrong and change your opinion?
- _____ How well can you accept your parent’s criticism of you without feeling offended?
- _____ How well can you increase your parent’s trust and appreciation for you?
- _____ How well can you get your parent to trust your judgment and responsibilities?
- _____ How well can you avoid irritation when your parent doesn’t pay attention to you?

Again, think about your relationship with your parent in general. Use the following scale to indicate your response:

- | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|------------|---|---|--------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| not at
all | | | moderately | | | very
much |

- _____ My parent and I have fun together.
- _____ My parent and I enjoy doing things together.
- _____ My parent and I get along well.
- _____ I am happy with the way things are going with my parent.
- _____ I have a good relationship with my parent.

IV. Health and Well-being

How is your parent’s health?

- | | | | | |
|-----------|------|--------------------------|------|-----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| very poor | poor | neither poor
nor good | good | very good |

Does your parent have any particular health issues that he or she is dealing with right now? If so, please list any you feel are important to him or her:

In this section, please tell us about how YOU have been feeling. Use the following scale to indicate how much each of the following items has been a “bother” to you in the last two weeks, including today. Mark only one number for each item.

0	1	2	3	4
no bother				extreme bother

How much were you bothered by:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>_____ Sleep problems (can't fall asleep, wake up in middle of night or early in morning)</p> <p>_____ Weight change (gain or loss of 5 lbs. or more)</p> <p>_____ Back pain</p> <p>_____ Constipation</p> <p>_____ Dizziness</p> <p>_____ Diarrhea</p> <p>_____ Faintness</p> <p>_____ Constant fatigue</p> <p>_____ Headache</p> <p>_____ Migraine headache</p> <p>_____ Nausea and/or vomiting</p> <p>_____ Acid stomach or indigestion</p> <p>_____ Stomach pains (e.g., cramps)</p> <p>_____ Hot or cold spells</p> <p>_____ Hands trembling</p> <p>_____ Heart pounding or racing</p> | <p>_____ Poor appetite</p> <p>_____ Shortness of breath when not exercising or working hard</p> <p>_____ Numbness or tingling in parts of your body</p> <p>_____ Felt weak all over</p> <p>_____ Pains in heart or chest</p> <p>_____ Feeling low in energy</p> <p>_____ Stuffy head or nose</p> <p>_____ Blurred vision</p> <p>_____ Muscle tension or soreness</p> <p>_____ Muscle cramp</p> <p>_____ Severe aches and pains</p> <p>_____ Acne</p> <p>_____ Bruises</p> <p>_____ Nosebleed</p> <p>_____ Pulled (strained) muscles</p> <p>_____ Pulled (strained) ligaments</p> <p>_____ Cold or cough</p> |
|---|---|

What types of emotions have you been feeling during the past two weeks? Use the following scale to describe how much you have felt of the emotions below:

1	2	3	4	5
very slightly or not at all	a little	moderately	quite a bit	extremely

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>_____ interested</p> <p>_____ distressed</p> <p>_____ excited</p> <p>_____ upset</p> <p>_____ strong</p> <p>_____ guilty</p> <p>_____ scared</p> <p>_____ hostile</p> | <p>_____ irritable</p> <p>_____ alert</p> <p>_____ ashamed</p> <p>_____ inspired</p> <p>_____ nervous</p> <p>_____ determined</p> <p>_____ attentive</p> <p>_____ jittery</p> |
|--|---|

_____ enthusiastic

_____ active

_____ proud

_____ afraid

V. About you

Please take a minute to tell us about yourself.

How old are you (in years)? _____

What is your sex (please circle one)? Male Female

Please describe your ethnicity: _____

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much for participating in this study. You may return this questionnaire to the person who gave it to you.

Appendix D
Debriefing Form

Thank you for your participation!

Research finds that having happy and healthy relationships may lead to better health and well-being. The questionnaire you just completed measures how asking for and granting forgiveness in relationships relates to physical and emotional health. Your responses have helped relationship researchers better understand communication and health in family relationships. Thank you!

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us:

Jennifer Geist		Stephen Yoshimura, Ph.D.
Graduate Student	<i>or</i>	Faculty Supervisor
(406) 243-6604		(406) 243-4951

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Counseling and 24-hour Crisis Services:

UM Student Assault Recovery Services	(406) 243-6559
UM Counseling & Psychological Services	(406) 243-4711
Mental Health Center	(406) 728-6817
UM Clinical Psychology Center	(406) 243-4523
YWCA Crisis Line	(406) 542-1944
St. Patrick Hospital Emergency Room	(406) 329-5635