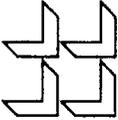


Replications and Refinements



Under this heading are brief reports of studies providing data that substantiate, disprove, or refine what we think we know. These Notes consist of a summary of the study's procedure and as many details about the results as space allows. Additional details concerning the results can be obtained by communicating directly with the author.

Forgiveness of Self and Others and Emotional Empathy

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ALTHOUGH THERE IS STILL CONSIDERABLE DEBATE about definitions of forgiveness (Worthington, 1998), some commonality regarding the psychological constituents of the process of forgiveness is emerging from intervention models designed to promote forgiveness. All of those models focus on the victim's development of empathy toward the perpetrator as a necessary step in forgiveness (Doyle, 1999; Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1996; Gartner, 1988; Hunter, 1978; McCullough & Worthington, 1995; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; Worthington, 1998). According to all models, individuals with higher levels of trait empathy find it easier to work toward forgiveness than do those with lower levels, and individuals incapable of empathy find it very difficult to forgive.

Two arguments merit further consideration. First, there has been no empirical examination, outside clinical samples, with standardized measures of the relationship between forgiveness and empathy (Worthington, 1998). Second, because of the lack of a consensual definition of forgiveness, consideration of correlates

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of forgiveness should operationalize different forgiveness constructs (Worthington). Our aim was to explore the relationship between forgiveness and empathy by using two aspects of forgiveness.

In the present study, 324 British undergraduate students (100 men, 224 women), aged between 18 and 51 years ($M = 22.03$, $SD = 6.10$), completed measures of forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others (Mauger et al., 1992), and emotional empathy (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). We used the Mauger et al. measures of forgiveness because the scales conceptualize two aspects of forgiving attitudes and behaviors—forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others. We used the measure of emotional empathy (Mehrabian & Epstein) because it encompasses two related theoretical approaches to empathy—(a) a tendency to recognize others' feelings and (b) the individual's attempts to share the emotion.

We found satisfactory Cronbach's alphas for all the measures: forgiveness of self ($\alpha = .73$), forgiveness of others ($\alpha = .75$), and emotional empathy ($\alpha = .81$). We found no significant Pearson correlations between age and forgiveness of self ($r = .03$, $p > .05$), forgiveness of others ($r = .02$, $p > .05$), and emotional empathy ($r = .07$, $p > .05$). We used independent group t tests to compare the mean scores for the men and the women on each of the measures. For both forgiveness measures—forgiveness of self, $t(322) = -.66$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .001$, and forgiveness of others, $t(322) = .46$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .002$ —no significant difference emerged between the scores of the men (for forgiveness of self, $M = 22.96$, $SD = 3.70$; for forgiveness of others, $M = 22.65$, $SD = 3.90$) and those of the women (for forgiveness of self, $M = 23.22$, $SD = 3.10$; for forgiveness of others, $M = 22.35$, $SD = 3.60$). However, the women ($M = 42.67$, $SD = 18.30$) scored significantly higher on the measure of emotional empathy, $t(322) = -4.62$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .061$, than did the men ($M = 33.00$, $SD = 15.20$).

We computed Pearson correlations (two-tailed) between all the measures for the men and the women separately. We found no significant correlation between the two measures of forgiveness for the men, $r(99) = -.03$, $p > .05$, or for the women, $r(223) = -.07$, $p > .05$, and between the measures of forgiveness of self and emotional empathy for the men, $r(99) = -.11$, $p > .05$, or for the women, $r(223) = -.07$, $p > .05$. However, a significant positive correlation emerged between forgiveness of others and emotional empathy for the men, $r(99) = .23$, $p < .05$, and the women, $r(223) = .33$, $p < .01$.

According to the present findings, the women scored higher overall than did the men on empathy, but there were no gender differences on overall forgiveness scores. Despite the difference in empathy scores, the findings suggest that, among both men and women, individuals with higher levels of empathy find it easier to work toward forgiveness of others, but not necessarily toward forgiveness of themselves. This distinction is, perhaps, somewhat obvious, given that empathy involves concern with others; nevertheless, the distinction is important because it allows researchers to continue to make theoretical distinctions between those two aspects of forgiveness. The present findings reflect the clinical literature that sug-

gests that individuals tend to make harsher judgments of themselves than of others (Beck, 1989; Walen, DiGiuseppe, & Wessler, 1980). Notwithstanding that speculation, our findings suggest that emotional empathy is positively correlated with forgiveness of others, but not with forgiveness of self.

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