

“If you don’t ‘get it’, it doesn’t count”:  
Conveying Responsiveness in Attempts to Seek Forgiveness Within Romantic  
Relationships

by

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### Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## Abstract

Although research has begun to examine the factors which facilitate forgiveness in romantic relationships, there is currently limited empirical research examining the partner behaviours which promote or alternatively thwart forgiveness in romantic relationships. I examined the role of perceived partner responsiveness (showing understanding and validation) in mediating the link between offers of amends and forgiveness for real-life hurtful events. Results showed that perceived partner responsiveness emerged as a key predictor of forgiveness and as an important mediator of the relationship between amends and forgiveness. This mediational model was further moderated by event severity and relationship satisfaction, such that at high levels of event severity and low levels of relationship satisfaction, both amends and responsiveness showed unique, positive direct effects on forgiveness. Finally, exploratory analyses indicated that not all forgiveness-seeking behaviours are “created equal”—verbal behaviours that directly address the hurtful event appear to convey sincere amends and responsiveness while those behaviours (verbal and non-verbal) which do not directly address the hurtful event undermine forgiveness.

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## Dedication

It is with much love that I dedicate my Master's project to my family—my mother, father, sister and brother. Your love, encouragement, and faith in me have "re-energized" me time after time and have truly been the cornerstone of my accomplishments. Mom and Dad, I deeply appreciate the sacrifices you have made for me so that I could get to where I am today. Thank you—this is for you.

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## Introduction

Conflict in romantic relationships is inevitable. However, how partners attempt to resolve their conflicts may, in part, “make or break” the relationship. Indeed, unresolved or poorly negotiated conflicts may seriously disrupt relationship functioning by eroding partners’ positive attitudes and feelings of good will toward one another, depleting motivation to seek constructive solutions to difficulties, and by increasing relational uncertainty (Holmes & Murray, 1996). In contrast, couples who navigate conflict more effectively (e.g., use more constructive communication, engage in less ineffective arguing and demonstrate less psychological aggression) show greater forgiveness after relationship transgressions (Fincham & Beach, 2002; Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004) and greater relationship happiness and satisfaction (Gottman, 1979, 1994).

Resolution of conflict can transform hurtful events into nurturing experiences and revitalize romantic relationships (Holmes & Murray, 1996). Indeed, greater forgiveness post-conflict has been related to partners’ greater use of pro-relationship behaviours post-conflict (e.g., accommodation, willingness to sacrifice, cooperation; Karremans & Van Lange, 2004), restored levels of relationship commitment and closeness (Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006), and enhanced perceptions of partner care and intimacy (Alvaro, 2001). Effective negotiation of conflict may also serve as a buffer for future conflict by building capacities for effective communication and problem-solving (e.g., optimism, self-efficacy) that will help partners persevere when confronted by new challenges or difficulties (Holmes & Murray, 1996). In addition to promoting pro-relationship behaviours and overall relationship quality, forgiveness also has been shown to enhance partners’ individual psychological well-being (Bono, McCullough, & Root, 2008;

Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, 2003), especially for those partners who report higher relationship commitment and closeness (Bono et al., 2008). Thus, forgiveness appears to be beneficial for both relationship and individual well-being.

Given that healthy relationships contribute to positive emotional and psychological adjustment (Reis, Collins, & Berscheid, 2000), it is important to explore the processes that underlie forgiveness by which conflict can be transformed into a constructive experience for both the relationship and the individual. To date, research has largely focused on understanding the factors that moderate the level of forgiveness after conflict, such as relationship quality (e.g., satisfaction, commitment), the victim's cognitive-affective processing of the event (e.g., responsibility and intent attributions, empathy), and the event's severity. However, despite the growing research in this area, there are important components of the forgiveness process that remain understudied. Specifically, the mechanism by which offers of amends by one partner facilitates forgiveness in the other partner is poorly understood. As such, the major focus of this study is to examine the relationship between offers of amends and forgiveness using the real-life transgressions occurring within romantic dyads. Furthermore, perceived partner responsiveness is examined as a mediator of this relationship. In the process, I also extend the current measurement and classification of forgiveness-seeking behaviours and I conduct exploratory analysis on how different types of forgiveness-seeking behaviours relate to forgiveness.

First, to provide the backdrop for the current study, I begin by describing how forgiveness has been defined and measured in the literature. Next, I review the literatures on amends and perceived partner responsiveness in relation to forgiveness.

## *Forgiveness*

Forgiveness involves the ability to acknowledge, process and “move forward” from negative feelings caused by a hurtful event with one’s partner such that these feelings no longer dominate one’s daily life or partner interactions (Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2005). Further, forgiveness involves the transformation of one’s negative feelings, thoughts, and behaviours towards the offender into more positive and pro-social ones (McCullough, Pargament & Thoresen, 2000). Accordingly, forgiveness has not only been indexed by decreases in negative feelings (e.g., Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Rye & Pargament, 2002) and in motivations to avoid one’s partner and to seek retribution (e.g., Fincham et al., 2004; McCullough et al., 1998), but also by increases in benevolent feelings and attitudes towards one’s partner (e.g., Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, Fincham et al., 2004, McCullough et al., 1998; Rye & Pargament, 2002) and motivations to behave in constructive or conciliatory ways towards one’s partner (e.g., Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000, Fincham et al., 2004).

The pro-social transformation which characterizes forgiveness in romantic relationships has been shown to be facilitated by a number of factors, including relationship quality, the event’s severity, and attributions of responsibility for the event. Specifically, people appear to be more forgiving of their partner when they feel more satisfied (Kachadourian, Fincham, & Davila, 2004; McCullough et al., 1998; Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2002) and committed to their relationship (Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002, Karremans & Van Lange, 2004), when the offense is less severe (Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Fincham, Jackson, & Beach, 2005; McCullough et al., 1997, McCullough et al., 1998), and when perceptions of their partners’

intentions and responsibility concerning the event are more benign (Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Fincham et al., 2002; Friesen, Fletcher, & Overall, 2005).

Although examining the role of these factors in facilitating forgiveness is important, these factors provide little understanding as to *how* partners might promote or even thwart forgiveness through their behavioural responses to negotiating resolution of the hurtful event. Indeed, there have been recent calls for research examining the impact of partner's offers of amends (Rusbult, Hannon, Stocker, & Finkel, 2005) and other forgiveness-seeking behaviours (Bono et al., 2008) in the facilitation of forgiveness.

### *Amends*

Amends, sometimes also referred to in the literature as repentance, broadly functions to repair the relational ruptures caused by conflicts and transgressions. In addition to offering a simple apology, offers of amends include the acceptance of responsibility, expression of remorse or regret, and genuine offers of compensation (Eaton & Struthers, 2006; Eaton, Struthers & Santelli, 2006; Rusbult et al., 2005). Research suggests that the aforementioned components of amends may be especially effective in facilitating forgiveness towards the transgressor (e.g., Eaton et al., 2006; Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Hodgins & Liebeskind, 2003; Scher & Darley, 1997; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Förster, & Montada, 2004; Zechmeister, Garcia, Romero, & Vas, 2004).

A large body of research conducted outside of the realm of romantic relationships has demonstrated the utility of offering amends for reducing negative feelings, attitudes, and behaviours towards the person who has offended. For example, when amends are offered by the offender, the victim evaluates the offender's character and intentions less

negatively and is less likely to hold the offender as wholly responsible for the transgression (Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Hodgins et al., 2003; Schmitt et al., 2004; Weiner, Graham, Peter, & Zmuidance, 1991). Offers of amends also appear to reduce the victim's negative emotional reactions (e.g., Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; anger; Schmitt et al., 2004;) and retaliatory behavior towards the offender (Ohbuchi et al., 1989), promote feelings of compassion and empathy towards the offender (McCullough et al., 1997, McCullough et al., 1998) and facilitate overall forgiveness (e.g., Eaton et al., 2006, Girard, Mullet, & Callahan, 2002; Zechmeister et al., 2004).

There have been relatively fewer studies examining the amends-forgiveness link in the specific context of romantic relationships; yet, the studies that do research this link support the findings from the broader literature. That is, across narrative (Exline, Yali, & Lobel, 1998; Kelley, 1998; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002), cross-sectional (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a; McCullough et al., 1997), and longitudinal studies (Bono et al., 2008), it has been demonstrated that the more people report having received amends from their romantic partner, the more forgiving they are of their romantic partner. Moreover, offers of amends appear to occur more frequently in relationships marked by strong levels of pre-transgression trust and commitment (Hannon, 2001).

Although amends have been shown to be an important predictor of forgiveness across relational contexts, the mechanisms by which offers of amends exert their influence remains unclear (Eaton et al., 2006), especially within the specific context of romantic relationships. In the broader literature on amends and forgiveness, one mechanism which has been identified to mediate the amends-forgiveness link is the victim's understanding of the offender and the offender's behaviour. For example, attributions of the offender's

intentions in the event have been proposed as an important mediator of the amends-forgiveness relationship. Specifically, amends prompt the victim to perceive the offender's behaviours to be less intentional and blameworthy thereby facilitating forgiveness (Ohbuchi et al., 1989; Weiner, 1995; Weiner et al., 1991). Other research has focused on emotional empathy as being a central mediator of the amends-forgiveness link, such that when amends are offered the victim comes to experience greater feelings of sympathy, compassion, tenderness and warmth for the offender, which in turn facilitate forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998).

In summary, much of our current understanding as to why amends facilitate forgiveness relates to its role in prompting positive changes in the way the victim emotionally relates to, understands, and evaluates the offender. However, offers of amends likely communicate information about how the *offender* relates to, understands and evaluates the *victim*'s personal experience of the hurtful event. This information too may importantly influence the victim's willingness to forgive their partner.

Some work has begun to explore the relationship between offers of amends and the victim's perceptions of how the offender has connected and responded to the victim's experience of the hurtful event. For example, some research has shown that the facilitating effect of amends on forgiveness may be affected by whether the victim perceives that the offender's offers are sincere. Indeed, research suggests that offers of amends which may be perceived to be insincere or manipulative thwart forgiveness (Exline et al., 1998) and prompt more spiteful or retaliatory reactions by the victim (Schmitt et al., 2004; Skarlicki et al., 2004; Zechmeister et al., 2004). Conversely, the more sincere amends appear to be, the more forgiving victims are of the offender (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a).

In addition to conveying sincerity, offers of amends may also convey the extent to which the victim perceives that the offender has interpreted the offense similarly to the victim's own account of the offense (referred to as "perceptual validation"). Eaton, Struthers, and Santelli (2006) examined the relationship between offers of amends, victim's feelings of perceptual validation, and forgiveness using hypothetical transgression-scenarios between co-workers as well as computer game-based transgressions. Results indicated a partial mediating effect of perceptual validation, such that offenders' amends worked to facilitate forgiveness, in part, because they conveyed validation of the victims' interpretation of the event.

The extent to which offers of amends are construed as sincere and indicate confirmation of, or agreement with, the victim's perspectives (i.e. perceptual validation) may be important to whether forgiveness is granted. However, offers of amends may need to communicate more than sincerity and mutual agreement on the event's interpretation if they are to promote forgiveness within romantic couples. Specifically, they may need to convey an understanding of the partner's core thoughts and feelings regarding the event as well as sincere valuing and respect of these experiences in order to facilitate forgiveness. Indeed, accurate understanding and sincere validation of the partner's experience of the hurtful event are ideas encompassed in perceived partner responsiveness, a construct central to the relationships literature. I now turn my attention to a discussion of this construct, which I propose to be a key mediator of the amends-forgiveness link.

### *Perceived Partner Responsiveness*

Perceived partner responsiveness encompasses the key concepts of understanding

and validation. Understanding refers to the ability to take on a partner's perspective and to elaborate the partner's point of view in a way that demonstrates accurate recognition and acknowledgment of the facets of his or her experience (i.e. "getting the facts straight" and "getting the crux of the matter") (Maisel, Gable, & Strachman, 2008; Reis & Patrick, 1996). Validation refers to the ability to convey genuine acceptance and appreciation of a partner's point of view as well as a respect and valuing of the partner's experience (Maisel et al., 2008; Reis & Patrick, 1996). Perceived partner responsiveness can refer to a global belief that one's partner understands and validates one's core needs, values and goals. Furthermore, in a specific situation it refers to the belief that one's partner understands and validates one's feelings, thoughts and perspectives in a given event or situation (e.g., an argument). In the current study, I focus on the perceptions of a partner's responsiveness (i.e. understanding and validation) in relation to an unresolved, specific hurtful event occurring within the couple.

Both basic and applied clinical research has demonstrated that partner responsiveness is a key aspect in the development of relationship intimacy and satisfaction. For example, daily diary studies have shown that across several weeks, the more people perceive that their partner has reacted with understanding and validation in response to their emotional disclosures, the more intimate and close they feel toward their partner (Laurenceau, Feldman Barrett, & Pietromonace, 1998; Laurenceau, Feldman Barrett, & Rovine, 2005). Further, a long line of research has shown that responsiveness also plays a key role in the resolution of conflict. For example, during conflict discussions, partners who are in "happier" relationships tend to show conflict de-escalating behaviours, such as non-defensive listening and expression of understanding and validation of their partner's

perspective (Gottman, 1979, 1994). In contrast, a defining feature of distressed couples is that their conflict discussions are characterized by invalidating and un-empathic responses to each other (e.g., attacking the partner's traits, criticizing their expressed feelings and thoughts) (e.g., Clements, Stanley, & Markman, 2004; Gottman, 1979; Rogge & Bradbury, 1999, Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002) which, in turn, escalate conflict and undermine the benefits of other positive interactions the couple might have in their relationship (Gottman, 1994).

The emphasis on partner responsiveness in facilitating relationship intimacy, satisfaction and constructive conflict engagement is ubiquitous across couples' therapies and is a crucial component of many interventions specifically designed to help couples work towards forgiveness following relationship transgressions (Gordon et al., 2005). In many of these interventions, partners are lead to develop and communicate deeper insight, understanding and value of each other's experience, including their respective motivations involved in the event, their emotional reactions to the event, and their underlying relationship issues or personal histories which may have contributed to the occurrence of the event (e.g., Di Blasio, 2000; Gordon et al., 2005; Hargrave, 1994; Worthington, 1998). There are good reasons why helping partners to communicate understanding and validation and to experience each other as responsive might facilitate forgiveness. Potentially one key reason includes the fact that responsiveness may attenuate or soothe the underlying threat communicated by relational transgressions. Generally, relationship transgressions are said to occur when people's expectations concerning their partner's behaviour within the relationship, or the relationship norms, are violated (Feeney, 2005; Finkel et al., 2002; Metts, 1994) and are experienced, at least to a certain extent, as a de-valuation and

rejection of the victim and the relationship (Bachman & Guerrero, 2006b; Feeney, 2005; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). As such, relationship transgressions are associated with a plethora of negative feelings, including hurt, anger, sadness and anxiety (Leary et al., 1998). In addition, violation of the rules and expectations once believed to have governed the relationship may contribute to uncertainty regarding the predictability of the offending partner's future behaviour and the overall stability and safety of the relationship (Afifi & Metts, 1998; Emmers-Sommer & Canary, 1996). As such, partner responsiveness may function to attenuate the threat messages of de-valuation, rejection, emotional disconnection, and uncertainty inherent in relationship transgressions. Specifically, coming to perceive that one's partner accurately understands one's core feelings and perspectives about the event, and genuinely values and respects these experiences, may facilitate forgiveness by restoring feelings of acceptance and valuing by the partner, by re-establishing a sense of a shared reality and emotional connectedness (i.e. intimacy), and by increasing feelings of assurance that a similar event will not reoccur. Notwithstanding the importance of responsiveness to couples' constructive conflict engagement, to overall relationship quality, and to forgiveness interventions for couples in distress no research has empirically investigated its relationship to amends and forgiveness.

### *The Current Study*

The central aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between offers of amends, perceived partner responsiveness and forgiveness within the context of real-life transgression occurring within romantic couples. I predict that offers of amends and perceived partner responsiveness will both correlate positively with forgiveness such that

the more partners are perceived to have offered amends to their partner, and the more they are believed to be responsive (i.e. understanding and validating), the more forgiving the partner will be. I also expect to find a positive correlation between amends and perceived partner responsiveness, and importantly, I also predict that perceived partner responsiveness will, at least in part, mediate the effects of amends on forgiveness. Specifically, I anticipate that when an offending partner accepts responsibility for his or her actions, conveys his/her remorse or regret, communicates an apology, and makes some genuine attempt at compensation for the hurt caused, these behaviours will communicate understanding and validation of the victim's experience and in turn facilitate forgiveness. In addition, I conduct a series of analyses to explore whether the proposed amends-responsiveness-forgiveness mediation model will be moderated by other robust predictors of forgiveness, including event-level predictors (responsibility attributions, intent attributions, event severity) and relationship quality predictors (satisfaction, commitment) which have been previously shown to be related to amends and forgiveness. Finally, I examine how different forms of forgiveness-seeking behaviours (verbal-direct, verbal-indirect, and non-verbal) relate to forgiveness and explore which of these behaviours are more likely to be perceived to reflect offers of amends and convey responsiveness.

## Method

### *Participants and Procedure*

Undergraduate students from the University of Waterloo were recruited through psychology credit and paid participant pools, and graduate students were recruited through mass email. In addition, advertisements were posted in various locations in the Kitchener-Waterloo area so that community members could be recruited. Participation in the study was restricted to heterosexual individuals who were either in casual or exclusive dating relationships for at least 6 months, in common-law relationships (i.e. living with a partner for at least 1 year), or who were engaged or married.

The sample consisted of 188 participants (151= women, 37= men) ranging in age from 18 to 45 years old ( $M = 23.2$  years;  $SD = 5.58$  years). The majority of participants ( $N = 139$ ; 73.9%) were in exclusive dating relationships (i.e. a committed dating relationship with one partner). The remaining participants identified as married ( $N = 20$ ; 10.6%), common law ( $N = 13$ ; 6.9%), engaged ( $N = 10$ ; 5.3%), or in a casual dating relationship ( $N = 6$ ; 3.2%). The average relationship length was 2.89 years ( $SD = 3.78$  years; range = 6 months to 24 years). Approximately half of the sample identified themselves as White ( $N = 93$ ; 49.5%) while the remainder identified themselves as Aboriginal ( $N = 2$ ; 1.1 %), Chinese ( $N = 43$ ; 22.9%), East Indian ( $N = 12$ ; 6.4%), Hispanic ( $N = 1$ ; 0.5%), Middle Eastern ( $N = 4$ ; 2.1%), Korean ( $N = 3$ ; 1.6%), of another unlisted Asian group ( $N = 14$ ; 7.7%), or of another unlisted group ( $N = 13$ ; 6.9% ). Three participants in our sample did not indicate their ethnic background ( $N = 3$ ; 1.6%).

Participants consented to completing an online survey aimed at exploring the ways in which individuals in romantic relationships respond to their partner's efforts to seek their

forgiveness. Participants were instructed to recall and give a description of a specific event in which their partner's attitudes, actions or words caused them personal distress (e.g., hurt, anger) and for which their partner had made an effort to seek their forgiveness. Specifically, participants were asked to describe an event which was, at least to a certain extent, still currently unresolved for them (i.e. to some degree they still had not "moved beyond" the negative feelings and/or thoughts associated with the event or with their partner's actions). We asked participants to describe an unresolved event so that the associations between sincere amends, perceived partner responsiveness and forgiveness-seeking behaviours could be examined with relation to different levels of forgiveness.

Similar to other researchers' efforts to increase the accuracy of their participants' reports of forgiveness-seeking (e.g., Kelley & Waldron, 2005) and forgiveness-granting behaviours (e.g., Waldron & Kelley, 2005), explicit instructions were given to participants in the current study to guide their selection and recollection of a hurtful event (Appendix A). First, participants were asked to choose a specific, unresolved event which had occurred within the last year instead of generalizing across their conflicts with their partner. To aid in their recollection of an event, participants were given a list of examples of potential hurtful events (e.g., he/she criticized me inappropriately or unfairly, he/she was dishonest with me about something, he/she did something that embarrassed me in public or in private). After having selected the event, participants were prompted to take a few minutes to think about the details of the event (e.g., "When and where did it occur?" "Who was present?" "What did you say and do?" "What did your partner say and do?"). If participants recalled more than one unresolved event, they were instructed to select the one they better recalled. Likewise, if they had difficulty in recalling the details of an event they

had chosen, they were instructed to choose another incident that they recalled better. Finally, participants were asked to give a brief written description of the event by answering 5 open-ended questions that queried when and where the event occurred, who was present at the time, what actually occurred (the details of the event), and the reason for which the event was hurtful (i.e. the event's meaning).

Participants then completed measures assessing perceptions of their relationship quality (satisfaction and commitment), their perceptions of the event's severity, perceptions of their partner's intentions and level of responsibility for the event, as well as an inventory of their partner's forgiveness-seeking behaviours and measures of amends, perceived partner responsiveness, and forgiveness.

All participants completed the approximately 90 minute online survey either in the privacy of their home or in our lab. Participants from the KW community, the UW student paid pool, and the graduate student recruitment completed the study in exchange for two movie ticket vouchers. Undergraduate students recruited from the credit participant pool completed the study for 2 course credits in a psychology course of their choice.

### *Measures*

*Relationship Satisfaction.* The six-item Quality of Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983) assesses overall relationship quality. The six items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). Sample items include, “I really feel like part of a team with my partner,” “We have a good relationship,” and “Everything considered, there could not be more happiness in our relationship.” The scale score is computed by taking the mean of the six items, with higher scores indicating higher relationship satisfaction. The QMI showed very good reliability in the current sample ( $\alpha =$

.92). On average, participants reported levels of relationship satisfaction that were quite high ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ).

*Commitment.* The Commitment Scale (Rusbult, 1980) assesses perceptions of relationship commitment. Five items are rated on a 7-point Likert scales ranging from “not at all” (1) to “extremely” (7). Sample items include, “To what extent are you committed to your relationship?” and “To what extent are you ‘attached’ to your partner?” The mean of the 5 items comprises the scaled score, with a higher score reflecting greater commitment. The Commitment Scale showed good internal consistency in the current sample ( $\alpha = .83$ ). On average, participants reported very high levels of relationship commitment ( $M = 6.16$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ).

*Event Severity.* Six items were used to measure participants’ perceptions of the event’s severity. Similar to assessments of perceived event severity in other forgiveness research, the items in the current study assessed the extent to which the event was considered distressful and hurtful to the partner, and the extent to which the event was seen as having a negative impact on the relationship’s functioning or future. Sample items include, “At the time the conflict occurred, how distressful did you consider this event to be?”; “At the time the conflict occurred, how hurtful were your partner’s actions?” and “At the time the conflict occurred, how threatening did you consider your partner’s words and actions to be to your relationship with him/her (i.e. your partner’s words and actions indicated that the relationship might not last or might end)?” All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale from “not at all” (1) to “extremely” (7). The mean of these items was used to create an overall score such that higher scores indicated higher perceived event severity. An analysis of these items showed good internal consistency

( $\alpha = .88$ ).

*Intent Attributions.* One item measuring the extent to which participants perceived their partner's actions to have been intentional ("To what extent do you think your partner's behaviour in this event was intentional?") was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "extremely" (7). Higher scores on this item indicated that the offender's actions in the event were perceived to be more intentional.

*Responsibility Attributions.* The extent to which participants held their partner responsible for the event was assessed using a single item ("To what extent do you feel that your partner is responsible for this conflict (i.e. it is his/her fault?")". This item was rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "extremely" (7), with a higher score on this item indicating that participants held their partner more responsible for the event.

*Forgiveness-Seeking Inventory.* To my knowledge, Kelley and Waldron's (2005) forgiveness-seeking measure is currently the only instrument that attempts to comprehensively assess forgiveness-seeking behaviours. However, this measure does not appear to completely capture the richness of the strategies reported by participants in qualitative research on forgiveness-seeking (Kelley, 1998) nor does it capture the diversity of reparative strategies suggested by the related literature on relational repair (e.g., Dindia & Baxter, 1987). Moreover, a number of the items in the Kelley and Waldron measure lack clarity and specificity (e.g., "They tried indirect attempts to get forgiveness and then more direct strategies.") and there is a limited number of items reflecting the more indirect forms of forgiveness-seeking (both verbal and non-verbal). In an effort to address these limitations and extend the measurement of forgiveness-seeking, I developed the

Forgiveness Seeking Inventory (Appendix B) for this study. This measure comprehensively assesses a wide variety of behaviours that people may use to seek forgiveness from their partner following a hurtful event. Participants indicated whether or not (“Yes” or “No”) their partner had enacted each of the behaviours in an effort to seek their forgiveness for the specific event they described.

Sixty-seven forgiveness-seeking behaviours were derived from the existing literature on strategies of forgiveness-seeking (Kelley, 1998; Kelley & Waldron, 2005) and granting (Waldron & Kelley, 2005) as well as the literatures on relationship repair (Dindia & Baxter, 1987) and uncertainty reduction strategies (Emmers-Sommer & Canary, 1996). The items were categorized according to 3 broad classes of behaviour: 1) verbal-direct, 2) verbal-indirect, and 3) non-verbal/actions, which reflect distinctions embodied in the literatures on relationship maintenance and repair strategies (e.g., Dindia & Baxter 1987; Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982), relational uncertainty reducing strategies (e.g., Emmers-Sommer & Canary, 1996) , conflict management styles (e.g., Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994) and forgiveness communication (e.g., Kelley, 1998; Kelley & Waldron, 2005; Waldron & Kelley, 2005).

The verbal-direct category is comprised of 24 forgiveness-seeking behaviours that are characterized by the use of spoken or written words which explicitly address the hurtful event. They include overt disclosures of one’s thoughts, feelings, intentions, or motivations pertaining to the event, aimed at reparation and reconnection with the partner. The verbal-direct behaviours include 1) admissions of responsibility (e.g., “Your partner acknowledged that he/she made a mistake or that his/her actions were wrong), 2) expressions of remorse (e.g., “Your partner used an explicit apology for his/her actions by

using phrases such as ‘I am sorry’, ‘I apologize’, or ‘Please accept my apology.’), 3) offers of compensation (e.g., “Your partner expressed a plan to work on certain things (e.g., behaviours, routines, attitude) in order to prevent the conflict from reoccurring”), 4) expressions of understanding and validation of the event’s impact (e.g., “Your partner expressed an understanding of your feelings and thoughts about the event.”), 5) reframing the event or helping the partner understand the event in a different way (e.g., “Your partner told you that it was not his/her intention to hurt you in any way, and that he/she loved you, cared for you and/or respected you.”), and 6) statements signaling the desire for empathy and understanding (e.g., “Your partner asked you to forgive his/her actions because he/she is ‘only human’ and ‘humans make mistakes.’”).

The verbal-indirect category is comprised of 12 forgiveness-seeking behaviours that are characterized by the use of spoken or written words attempting to “smooth over” the hurtful event and reconnect with the partner without discussing the conflict directly. Verbal-indirect behaviours include 1) expressions of affection or compliments (e.g., “Your partner gave you a compliment about your physical appearance in the hopes of appeasing you or smoothing things over.”), 2) assurances of the relationship’s value and the partner’s commitment (e.g., “Your partner expressed the importance he/she places on their relationship with you without directly talking about the conflict.”), and 3) efforts to returning to normal relationship routines (e.g., “Your partner made ‘small talk’ with you more than he/she usually does in the hopes of smoothing things over and reconnecting with you.”).

The third category, non-verbal behaviours, is characterized by actions and gestures that are used to seek forgiveness and reconnect with the partner. These behaviours can be

either overt or subtle actions but, nonetheless, address the event non-verbally or are avoidant of the event entirely. Behaviours in this category include 1) gestures signaling compromise, “backing down”, or “giving in” (e.g., “Your partner ‘backed down’ or ‘bit his/her tongue’ more than usual in other situations where he/she did not agree with you.”), 2) gestures signaling assurance of the partner’s devotion to and/or investment in the relationship (e.g., “Your partner tried to do better than he/she usually does at fulfilling his/her normal responsibilities to you and your relationship.”), 3) favours or helpful behaviour (e.g., “Your partner took over one or more of your responsibilities or chores.”), 4) spending time together (e.g., “Your partner asked you to do something with him/her that they usually prefer to do alone so as to repair the relationship or get close again.”), 5) relationship “reminiscing” (e.g., “Your partner did something which he or she hoped would remind you of the good times you have spent together as a couple.”), 6) gift-giving (e.g., “Your partner bought you a romantic gift.”), 7) physical affection (e.g., “Your partner gave you more physical affection than he/she usually does to smooth things over.”), and 8) participation in cultural or religious ritual (e.g., “Your partner asked you to participate with him/her in a cultural ritual or religious/spiritual activity that would facilitate the process of forgiveness and reconnection between the two if you (e.g., going to mass).

Because items were dichotomous (i.e. the person identified whether the partner did or did not do the behaviour), a separate score for each of the 3 categories (verbal-direct, verbal-indirect, non-verbal) was created based on the sum of the behaviours enacted within each category. An analysis of the items in each category showed good reliability for the verbal-direct ( $\alpha = .79$ ), verbal-indirect ( $\alpha = .73$ ), and non-verbal ( $\alpha = .86$ ) categories.

*Perceived Partner Responsiveness.* I created a new measure of the perceived partner responsiveness construct for this study by deriving a set of items based on the theoretical definitions and descriptions of understanding and validation which frequent the literature (e.g., Maisel et al., 2008; Reis, Holmes, & Clark, 2004). The new 10-item measure assesses the extent to which the participants perceived their partner to have shown understanding and validation (i.e. responsiveness) for their experience of the hurtful event (Appendix C). Sample items assessing understanding include, “To what extent do you think your partner understood the importance of this event as you see it?” and “To what extent do you think your partner ‘missed the key meaning’ of this event for you” (reverse scored). Sample items assessing validation include, “To what extent do you think your partner valued and appreciated your experience of this event?” and “To what extent do you think your partner respected and supported your thoughts and feelings about the event?” All items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from “not at all” (1) to “completely” (7). The factor structure and reliability of this measure are reviewed in the Results section.

*Amends.* In the current research on amends and forgiveness in romantic relationships, measures of amends have typically neglected the assessment of each of its specific components and, instead, have focussed on assessing global perceptions of having received an apology and/or amends (e.g., Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a; Bono et. al., 2008; McCullough et al., 1997, McCullough et al., 1998). Moreover, in some studies, measures of amends have included items tapping the extent to which the offender attempted to explain their behaviour (McCullough et al., 1997; McCullough et al., 1998) even though explanations are considered to be conceptually distinct from offers of amends and apology (Scher & Darley, 1997). In light of these measurement shortcomings, a new 4 item

measure was created for this study to assess the extent to which participants' perceived their partner to have demonstrated amends for their hurtful actions (Appendix D). Items were designed to tap acknowledgement of responsibility, expressions of remorse or regret, and offers of compensation and apology. Items included, "To what extent did your partner sincerely accept responsibility for this event?" (acknowledgement of responsibility), "To what extent was your partner sincerely remorseful for this incident?" (expression or remorse), "To what extent did your partner sincerely apologize to you for this event?" (apology) and "To what extent did you think your partner made a sincere effort to 'make-up' for their actions?" (offer of compensation). All items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "completely" (7). The factor structure and reliability of this measure are reviewed in the Results section.

*Forgiveness.* The Forgiveness Measure was developed for this study to assess participants' forgiveness of their partner for the specific hurtful event they described. An initial pool of 38 items was created to reflect a number of dimensions which have been typically used to operationalize forgiveness and which were reviewed earlier in this paper. These dimensions include: 1) avoidance motivation, 2) revenge or retribution motivation, 3) negative feelings/attitudes, 4) benevolent feelings/attitudes, 5) willingness to engage in conciliatory or constructive behaviour and 6) "letting go" and movement forward from the negative impact of the event. Participants were instructed to respond to all items within the context of the specific hurtful event they described. The factor structure of this new measure was assessed using principle components factor analysis, the results of which will be discussed along with scale refinement in the Results section. Examples of items from each of the 5 retained dimensions include, "To what extent might you hesitate to ask your

partner for assistance because of this incident?” (Avoidance factor), “To what extent would you like your partner to experience some, if not all, of the negative emotions you felt during and after the incident?” (Retribution factor), “To what extent is it easy for you to see your partner and his/her qualities positively?” (Benevolence factor), “To what extent would you feel enthusiastic about accepting your partner’s proposal to engaging in a joint activity?” (Conciliation factor) and “To what extent are you able to ‘let go’ of the negative feelings your partner has caused you in this incident?” (Inner Resolution Factor).

Participants responded to all items using a 7-point Likert-type scale.

## Results

### *Factor Structure of New Measures*

The factor structure of the new measures of perceived partner responsiveness, amends, and forgiveness were examined. First, for the measure of perceived partner responsiveness, all 10 items were entered into a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation and one factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 emerged. Each of the 10 items loaded highly on this factor (all loadings  $> .70$ ) and together the items showed excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha = .95$ ). The items and their respective factor loadings are shown in Table 1. An overall scale score for perceived partner responsiveness was calculated by taking the mean of the 10 items, such that higher scores on this measure indicate greater perceptions that one's partner has understood and validated one's experience of the hurtful event.

Next, for the measure of amends, the 4 items of the measure were entered into a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. As anticipated, all 4 items loaded highly on one factor (all loadings  $> .80$ ) and together showed excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Items and their respective loadings appear in Table 2. An overall scale score was calculated by taking the mean of the 4 items, such that higher scores on this measure indicate greater perceptions that one's partner had conveyed sincere amends (i.e. acceptance of responsibility, remorse, compensation, and apology).

Finally, the factor structure of the newly developed measure of forgiveness was examined using a principal components factor analysis with promax rotation (thereby allowing the factors to be correlated). Six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged. The first 5 factors were strong conceptually and items for each factor which attained the

chosen cut-off point of .60 had strong face validity. The 6<sup>th</sup> factor was limited to two items with loadings above .60, and these items did not appear to be conceptually distinct from the 1<sup>st</sup> factor. In order to better determine whether a 5 or 6 factor solution should be retained, the scree plot of the eigenvalues was examined. The scree plot clearly suggested a 5 factor structure solution and an examination of the eigenvalues revealed a large jump between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> factor from an eigenvalue of 1.29 for the 5<sup>th</sup> factor to 1.1 for the 6<sup>th</sup> factor. Given the conceptual strength of the first 5 factors, the indication of five clear factors from the scree plot and eigenvalues, and the lack of conceptual distinction of the 6<sup>th</sup> factor from the 1<sup>st</sup> factor, I conducted another principal components analysis with promax rotation specifying a forced 5 factor solution. As expected, this analysis revealed the same 5 factors and these factors retained their conceptual and structural strength (items loading at > .60 and eigenvalues greater than 1). The 2 items which had previously represented the 6<sup>th</sup> factor now loaded highly on the 1<sup>st</sup> factor where they had strong conceptual validity with the rest of the items. Thus, based on this second factor analysis, a total of 30 items were retained for the final forgiveness measure.

The first factor of the forgiveness scale taps the person's motivation to distance from or avoid his or her partner in light of the hurtful event (7-item "Avoidance" factor). The second factor taps the extent to which the person can relate benevolently, in feelings and in attitude, toward his or her partner despite the hurtful event (5-item "Benevolence" factor). The third factor measures the person's motivation to seek retribution for the hurtful event as reflected by a desire for compensation from his or her partner, and a desire for his or her partner to experience the same distress the person felt because of the event

(6-item “Retribution” factor). The fourth factor measures the person’s experience of having been able to “move forward” from the hurtful event by acknowledging, accepting and resolving his or her emotions related to the event (7-item “Inner Resolution” factor). The fifth factor measures the person’s motivation to engage in conciliatory or constructive behaviours towards his or her partner despite the hurtful event (5-item “Conciliation” factor). The items of these subscales and their respective factor loadings are shown in Table 3. Each of the factors of the Forgiveness Measure showed excellent reliability (Avoidance,  $\alpha = .91$ ; Benevolence,  $\alpha = .91$ ; Retribution,  $\alpha = .91$ , Inner Resolution,  $\alpha = .91$ , Conciliation,  $\alpha = .92$ ). Scores for each of the 5 subscales were calculated by taking the mean of the items in the respective scale. Pearson correlations between the subscales were computed and results showed that the subscales were associated in expected ways but remained distinctive, as indicated by their moderate correlations (Table 4).

To create a composite forgiveness measure, all subscales were entered into a principal components factor analysis with promax rotation. The subscales all loaded onto a single factor (all factor loadings  $> .65$ ), with Avoidance and Retribution scales loading negatively and Benevolence, Conciliation and Inner Resolution subscales loading positively on the factor. Thus, an overall forgiveness score was derived by standardizing each of the scale scores and taking the mean of the Avoidance and Retribution scales (reverse scored) as well as the Benevolence, Conciliation and Inner Resolution scales. Higher overall scores indicate greater forgiveness for the event.

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Participants reported on a wide variety of hurtful events, including deceptions (e.g., hiding drug use from partner, lying about past relationship history), sexual issues (e.g., pressure to have sex), inconsiderate behaviour (e.g., changing conversation in the middle of an important disclosure; ignoring the partner's presence), failure to respect personal autonomy (e.g., insisting that a partner divulges his or her email or instant messaging passwords) or relational commitment (e.g., making an important decision without consultation of the partner), threats of infidelity (e.g., flirtatious behavior, contact with ex-partner), criticism and insults (e.g., sarcastic comments made in public about person's weight, swearing at partner), broken promises (e.g., changing dinner plans with partner to go out with friends, going back on word to be supportive of pregnancy), and financial indiscretions. On average, participants indicated that the events they described were of moderate severity ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) and were only somewhat resolved ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 1.7$ ). Eighty percent of participants ( $N = 151$ ) reported that the hurtful even had occurred within the last 6 months [within the week, ( $N = 21$ , 11.2%); 1-2 weeks ( $N = 25$ , 13.3%); 2-3 weeks ( $N = 27$ , 14.4%); 1-2 months ( $N = 39$ , 20.7%); 3-6 months ( $N = 39$ , 20.7%)] with the remaining 20% of participants ( $N = 37$ ) reporting on a less recent event occurring between 6 and 12 months prior to the study. Overall, participant reported recalling the details of these events quite well ( $M = 5.45$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ).

In terms of the reported use of forgiveness-seeking behaviours in this sample, on average, offending partners were reported to have engaged in a total of 25 behaviours in response to the hurtful event ( $M = 25.23$ ,  $SD = 10.46$ ). Specifically, offending partners most often engaged in verbal-direct behaviours ( $M = 12.46$ ,  $SD = 4.50$ ), followed by non-

verbal, action behaviours ( $M = 8.29$ ,  $SD = 5.62$ ), and verbal-indirect behaviours ( $M = 4.47$ ,  $SD = 2.72$ ), respectively. Thus, offending partners appeared to have engaged in a fair number of forgiveness-seeking behaviours overall and seemed to have used a combination of different forgiveness-seeking strategies.

### *Preliminary Analyses*

First, t-tests were conducted to examine the potential for gender differences on all study variables. No significant differences between men and women were found for any of these variables. Overall means and the standard-deviations for all the variables investigated in this study are presented in Table 5 .

Next, I examined the relationship of relationship quality variables (satisfaction, commitment) and event-level variables (event severity, responsibility attribution, intent attribution) to perceived amends, perceived partner responsiveness and forgiveness (Table 6). Similar to previous research, relationship satisfaction and commitment were correlated significantly with level of forgiveness, such that the more people were satisfied with and committed to their relationship, the more forgiving they were of their partner (satisfaction:  $r = .45$ ,  $p < .001$ ; commitment:  $r = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Further supporting previous research, the more people were satisfied with and committed to their relationship, the more they perceived their partner to offer sincere amends (satisfaction:  $r = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ; commitment:  $r = .21$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the more they perceived their partner to have been responsive to their experience of the hurtful event (satisfaction:  $r = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ; commitment:  $r = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Severity of the event also mattered, such that the more severe the event, the less forgiving people were of their partner ( $r = -.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, event severity was not

significantly correlated with perceptions of having received sincere amends ( $r = .04$ , n.s.) or with perceived partner responsiveness ( $r = -.05$ , n.s.). Finally, consistent with previous research, the more participants held their partner responsible for the event and the more they perceived their partner's actions to have been intentional, the less forgiving they were of their partner (responsibility:  $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .01$ ; intent:  $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Notably, while attributions of partner responsibility were not correlated with sincere amends ( $r = .04$ , n.s.) or with perceived partner responsiveness ( $r = -.03$ , n.s.), attributions of intent were. Specifically, the more participants perceived that their partner's actions in the hurtful event were intentional, the less they were perceived as offering sincere amends ( $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and as being responsive ( $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

### *Main Analyses*

First, I calculated Pearson correlations to examine the relationship between amends and perceived partner responsiveness. Results showed that the more people perceived their partner to have offered sincere amends, the more they also perceived their partner to have understood and validated their experience of the hurtful event ( $r = .77$   $p < .001$ ).<sup>1</sup>

Next, I calculated Pearson correlations to examine the relationships between sincere amends and forgiveness as well as perceived partner responsiveness and forgiveness. Results showed that the more that people perceived their partner had offered sincere amends, the more forgiving they were of their partner ( $r = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Results

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<sup>1</sup> The large correlation between sincere amends and perceived partner responsiveness prompted me to examine whether these measures actually assessed separate constructs. I submitted all items from the two measures to a principal components factor extraction with promax rotation. Two eigenvalues greater than 1 emerged, thus suggesting the presence of two separate constructs. Examination of the item loadings showed that the individual items from each measure loaded strongly on their respective factors with no significant overlap. Thus, sincere amends and perceived responsiveness were shown to be separate constructs which are highly correlated.

also indicated that the more people perceived that their partner understood and validated their experience of the hurtful event, the more forgiving they were of their partner ( $r = .50$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Using linear multiple regression, I then tested whether perceived partner responsiveness would mediate the effects of sincere amends on forgiveness. To test this prediction, I used Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedure for testing mediation effects. As previously demonstrated, sincere amends predicted forgiveness [ $F(1, 186) = 36.22, \beta = .40, p < .001$ ] as well as perceived partner responsiveness [ $F(1, 186) = 261.67, \beta = .77, p < .001$ ] and perceived partner responsiveness predicted forgiveness [ $F(1, 186) = 62.43, \beta = .50, p < .001$ ]. The final step was to test the effects of perceived partner responsiveness in predicting forgiveness while controlling for the effects of sincere amends. Results of this analysis showed that perceived partner responsiveness exerted a unique effect on forgiveness [ $F(1, 185) = 22.09, \beta = .46, p < .001$ ], while sincere amends did not [ $F(1, 185) = .25, \beta = .05, \text{n.s.}$ ]. I then used the Sobel test to assess the statistical significance of the indirect effects of amends on forgiveness via responsiveness. Results indicated that perceived responsiveness strongly and significantly mediated the effects of amends on forgiveness ( $z = 4.49, p < .001$ ). As such, this data suggests that a large part of the reason for which amends promotes forgiveness is that they communicate that the offender understands and validates his or her partner's experience of the hurtful event.

#### *Testing Moderation of the Amends-Responsiveness-Forgiveness Mediation Model*

As found in prior research, my data demonstrated that relationship quality variables (satisfaction and commitment), and event-level factors (event severity, responsibility

attribution, intent attribution) were all significantly related to forgiveness. Given this set of associations, I wanted to test whether the mediation model would be moderated by relationship variables or event-level factors. I wondered, for example, if perceiving that one's partner understood and validated one's experience of the hurtful event would be as crucial in facilitating the positive effects of amends on forgiveness in low versus high severity events, or for individuals who experienced high versus low commitment to their partner. To test moderated mediation, I performed several analyses using multiple linear regression for each moderator variable (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). The first regression analysis examines whether the amends-responsiveness link is itself moderated by the variable in question (e.g., event severity). For example, to test severity as a moderator, I entered the main effects of amends and severity, and the interaction of amends and severity in predicting responsiveness [Equation 1: Responsiveness =  $B_0 + B_1(\text{Amends}) + B_2(\text{Severity}) + B_3(\text{Amends} \times \text{Severity}) + e$ ]. The second regression analysis examines whether the amends-forgiveness link and the responsiveness-forgiveness link are moderated by the variable in question (e.g., event severity). For example, I entered the main effects of responsiveness, amends and event severity as well as the interaction of responsiveness and severity and the interaction of amends and severity in the prediction of forgiveness [Equation 2: Forgiveness =  $B_0 + B_1(\text{Responsiveness}) + B_2(\text{Amends}) + B_3(\text{Severity}) + B_4(\text{Responsiveness} \times \text{Severity}) + B_5(\text{Amends} \times \text{Severity}) + e$ ]. Finally, if any of the moderating variable effects were significant, I used the Sobel test to determine whether perceived responsiveness would continue to mediate the effect of amends on forgiveness when controlling for the significant main and/or interaction effects of the moderating variables. The Sobel test was calculated using the unstandardized regression

coefficient and standard error estimate of the main effect of sincere amends on responsiveness from the first regression analysis and the unstandardized regression coefficient and standard error estimate of the main effect of perceived responsiveness on forgiveness from the second regression analysis.

First, results of the moderated mediation tests for attributions of intentions are shown in Table 7. Entering the main effects of amends, intent attributions, and their two-way interaction in the prediction of responsiveness, results showed a significant main effect of amends [ $F(1, 184) = 244.66$ ,  $B = .64$ ,  $p < .001$ ], however the main effect of intent attributions [ $F(1, 184) = .67$ ,  $B = -.03$ , n.s.] and the two-way interaction [ $F(1, 184) = 1.03$ ,  $B = .02$ , n.s.] were not significant. Next, testing the main effects of perceived responsiveness, amends and intent attributions, the interaction between responsiveness and intent, and the interaction between amends and intent in predicting forgiveness, results showed a significant main effect of perceived partner responsiveness [ $F(1, 182) = 19.18$ ,  $B = .26$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and intent attributions [ $F(1, 182) = 8.21$ ,  $B = -0.80$   $p < .01$ ]. The main effect of amends [ $F(1, 182) = .19$ ,  $B = .02$ , n.s], the interaction of responsiveness by intent [ $F(1, 182) = .59$ ,  $B = -.03$ , n.s.], and the interaction of amends by intent  $F(1, 182) = .22$ ,  $B = .01$ , n.s.] were not significant. Thus, because none of the interactions involving intent attributions were significant in either of the regression equations, I can conclude that moderated mediation did not occur in the case of intent attributions.

Second, results of the moderated mediation tests for responsibility attributions are shown in Table 8. First, entering the main effects of amends, responsibility attributions, and their interaction in the prediction of responsiveness, results showed a significant main effect for amends [ $F(1, 184) = 262.19$ ,  $B = .65$   $p < .001$ ]. Again, there was not a

significant main effect of responsibility attributions [ $F(1, 184) = 1.40$ ,  $B = -.05$ , n.s.] nor a significant interaction of responsibility attributions with amends [ $F(1, 184) = .06$ ,  $B = .01$ , n.s.]. Next, entering the main effects of perceived responsiveness, amends, and responsibility attributions, as well as the interaction of responsiveness by responsibility and the interaction of amends by responsibility in the prediction of forgiveness, results indicated significant main effects of perceived partner responsiveness [ $F(1, 182) = 16.89$ ,  $B = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and responsibility attributions [ $F(1, 182) = 8.35$ ,  $B = -0.09$ ,  $p < .01$ ] on forgiveness. The main effect of amends [ $F(1, 182) = 1.03$ ,  $B = .05$ , n.s.], the interaction of perceived responsiveness by responsibility attributions [ $F(1, 182) = 2.96$ ,  $B = .07$ , n.s.], and the interaction of amends by responsibility attributions [ $F(1, 182) = 1.28$ ,  $B = -.04$ , n.s.] were not significant. Because no significant interactions were found, the possibility of moderated mediation of by intent attributions was also eliminated.

Third, results of the moderated mediation tests for event severity are shown in Table 9. Testing the main effects of amends, severity and their interaction in the prediction of responsiveness, results indicated a significant main effect of amends on perceived responsiveness [ $F(1, 184) = 263.29$ ,  $B = .65$ ,  $p < .001$ ], but no significant main effect of event severity [ $F(1, 184) = 2.97$ ,  $B = -.08$ , n.s.] or interaction of event severity with amends [ $F(1, 184) = .83$ ,  $B = 0.03$ , n.s.]. Next, entering the main effects of perceived responsiveness, amends and event severity, as well as the interaction between responsiveness and the interaction between severity and amends, results indicated significant main effects of perceived partner responsiveness [ $F(1, 182) = 17.58$ ,  $B = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and event severity [ $F(1, 182) = 37.76$ ,  $B = -.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. No significant main effect for amends [ $F(1, 182) = 1.94$ ,  $B = .06$ , n.s.] or the interaction between

responsiveness and severity was found [ $F(1, 182) = .32$ ,  $B = -.02$ , n.s.]. However, results did indicate a significant interaction between amends and severity [ $F(1, 182) = 25.1$ ,  $B = .07$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. Further analysis of this interaction revealed a full mediational effect of responsiveness at low levels of event severity [Sobel test:  $z = 3.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ] but only a partial mediational effect of responsiveness at high levels of event severity [Sobel test:  $z = 2.66$ ,  $p < .01$ ]. Specifically, at low levels of event severity, offers of sincere amends did not exert any direct effect on forgiveness [ $F(1, 184) = .16$ ,  $B = -.03$ , n.s.] while perceived responsiveness did [ $F(1, 184) = 10.43$ ,  $B = .25$ ,  $p < .001$ ]. Conversely, at high levels of event severity, offers of sincere amends exerted its own direct effect on forgiveness [ $F(1, 182) = 5.79$ ,  $B = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ ], over and above the direct effects of perceived responsiveness [ $F(1, 182) = 7.56$ ,  $B = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ].<sup>2</sup> The more the offending partner offered sincere amends in highly severe situation, the more forgiving the victim was regardless of the extent to which the victim perceived the offender to have conveyed responsiveness. A representation of the moderating effects of event severity on the amends-responsiveness-forgiveness mediation model is depicted in Figure 1.

Fourth, I tested mediation moderated by relationship satisfaction (results shown in Table 10). Examining the main effects of amends, satisfaction and their interaction in predicting responsiveness, results indicated significant main effects of amends [ $F(1, 184) = 247.41$ ,  $B = .62$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and satisfaction [ $F(1, 184) = 8.95$ ,  $B = .16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ] on

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<sup>2</sup> To calculate the relationships between amends, responsiveness and forgiveness at high and low levels of event severity I calculated two separate event severity variables. High Event Severity was calculated by subtracting the standard deviation of event severity (1.34) from the centered event severity variable and Low Event Severity was calculated by adding the standard deviation of event severity (1.34) from the centered event severity variable. Then, I re-ran the regression analysis entering the appropriate event severity variable. For example, for high event severity, Equation 1 is calculated such that Responsiveness =  $B_0 + B_1(\text{Amends}) + B_2(\text{High Event Severity}) + B_3(\text{Amends} \times \text{High Severity}) + e$ , while Equation 2 is calculated such that Forgiveness =  $B_0 + B_1(\text{Responsiveness}) + B_2(\text{Amends}) + B_3(\text{High Event Severity}) + B_4(\text{Responsiveness} \times \text{High Severity}) + B_5(\text{Amends} \times \text{High Severity}) + e$ . In the case of low event severity, the same equations are applied, substituting low event severity estimates where appropriate.

perceived responsiveness but no significant interaction between amends and satisfaction [ $F(1, 184) = .03, B = -0.01, \text{n.s.}$ ]. Entering the main effects of perceived responsiveness, amends, and event satisfaction, as well as the interactions between responsiveness and satisfaction and amends and satisfaction in the prediction of forgiveness, results showed significant main effects of perceived partner responsiveness [ $F(1, 182) = 15.84, B = .23, p < .001$ ], and satisfaction [ $F(1, 182) = 32.77, B = .24, p < .001$ ]. The main effect of amends [ $F(1, 182) = .36, B = .03, \text{n.s.}$ ] and the interaction between responsiveness and satisfaction [ $F(1, 182) = 2.07, B = 0.06, \text{n.s.}$ ] were not significant. However, a significant interaction was found between amends and satisfaction [ $F(1, 182) = 4.53, B = -.09, p < .05$ ], revealing a full mediational effect of responsiveness at high levels of relationship satisfaction [Sobel test:  $z = 3.41, p < .001$ ] but only a partial mediational effect at low levels of relationship satisfaction [Sobel test:  $z = 2.21, p < .05$ ]. Specifically, when the victim reported high-level relationship satisfaction, the offender's offers of amends did not exert any direct effect on forgiveness [ $F(1, 184) = 1.14, B = -.08, \text{n.s.}$ ] while perceived partner responsiveness did [ $F(1, 184) = 12.82, B = .30, p < .001$ ]. Conversely, when the victim reported low-level relationship satisfaction, the offender's offers of sincere amends had its own direct effect on forgiveness [ $F(1, 182) = 4.42, B = .13, p < .05$ ], over and above the direct effects of perceived responsiveness [ $F(1, 182) = 5.14, B = .15, p < .05$ ].<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> To calculate the relationships between amends, responsiveness and forgiveness at high and low levels of relationship satisfaction I calculated two separate satisfaction variables. High Satisfaction was calculated by subtracting the standard deviation of satisfaction (1.12) from the centered satisfaction variable and Low Satisfaction was calculated by adding the standard deviation of satisfaction (1.12) from the centered satisfaction variable. Then, I re-ran the regression analysis entering the appropriate satisfaction variable. For example, for high satisfaction, Equation 1 is calculated such that Responsiveness =  $B_0 + B_1(\text{Amends}) + B_2(\text{High Satisfaction} + B_3(\text{Amends} \times \text{High Satisfaction})) + e$ , while Equation 2 is calculated such that Forgiveness =  $B_0 + B_1(\text{Responsiveness}) + B_2(\text{Amends}) + B_3(\text{High Satisfaction}) + B_4(\text{Responsiveness} \times \text{High Satisfaction}) + B_5(\text{Amends} \times \text{High Satisfaction}) + e$ . In the case of low satisfaction, the same equations are applied, substituting low satisfaction estimates where appropriate.

Thus, for individuals in relatively less satisfying relationships, receiving more offers of sincere amends appears to facilitate forgiveness regardless of the extent to which they believe their partner has conveyed responsiveness for the hurtful event. A representation of the moderating effects of relationship satisfaction on the amends-responsiveness-forgiveness mediation model is depicted in Figure 2.

Finally, I tested mediation moderated by relationship commitment (results shown in Table 11). First, entering the main effects of amends, commitment, and their interaction in the prediction of responsiveness, results indicated significant main effects of amends [ $F(1, 183) = 238.40$ ,  $B = .62$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and commitment [ $F(1, 183) = 5.67$ ,  $B = .14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ] on perceived responsiveness but no significant effect for the interaction between amends and commitment [ $F(1, 183) = .52$ ,  $B = 0.03$ , n.s.]. Next, entering the main effects of perceived responsiveness, amends, and commitment, and the interactions between responsiveness and commitment, and amends and commitment in the prediction of forgiveness, results showed significant main effects of perceived partner responsiveness [ $F(1, 181) = 16.18$ ,  $B = .23$ ,  $p < .001$ ] and commitment [ $F(1, 181) = 26.29$ ,  $B = .24$ ,  $p < .001$ ] on forgiveness. The main effect of amends [ $F(1, 181) = .19$ ,  $B = .02$ , n.s.], the interaction between responsiveness and commitment [ $F(1, 181) = .03$ ,  $B = 0.08$ , n.s.], and the interaction between amends and commitment [ $F(1, 181) = 0.01$ ,  $B = .00$ , n.s.] were not significant. Because no significant interactions were found, the possibility of moderated mediation by relationship commitment was eliminated.

*Relation of Forgiveness-Seeking Behaviours to Amends, Perceived Partner Responsiveness, and Forgiveness.*

The previous set of analyses highlighted the important roles of both offers of sincere amends and perceived partner responsiveness in facilitating forgiveness. Finally, I wanted to explore the extent to which specific categories of verbal-direct, verbal-indirect, and non-verbal forgiveness-seeking behaviours embodied sincere amends and responsiveness. Moreover, I also explored how these forms of forgiveness-seeking behaviours were associated directly with forgiveness.

Pearson correlations showed that the more the offending partner engaged in direct, verbal behaviours (e.g. expressed apology, requested empathy) when seeking forgiveness, the more they were perceived to have offered sincere amends ( $r = .52$   $p < .001$ ) and the more they were seen as responsive ( $r = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Further, a small but significant correlation indicated that that more the “offending partner” engaged in non-verbal forgiveness-seeking actions or gestures, the more they were seen as offering sincere amends ( $r = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, forgiveness-seeking actions were not significantly related to perceived responsiveness ( $r = .07$ , n.s.), and verbal-indirect behaviours were not significantly correlated with either perceptions of sincere amends ( $r = .02$ , n.s.) or responsiveness ( $r = -.07$ , n.s.).

In terms of direct relations to forgiveness, verbal-direct behaviours were not significantly correlated with forgiveness ( $r = .05$ , n.s.). In contrast, verbal-indirect behaviors and forgiveness-seeking actions were significantly and negatively correlated with forgiveness, such that the more the offending partner was perceived to have engaged in verbal-indirect behaviours (e.g., expressions of affection aimed at smoothing over the

hurtful event without directly addressing the event directly) or forgiveness-seeking actions and gestures (e.g., self-sacrificing, doing favors without addressing the hurtful event directly), the less forgiving their partner actually was of them (verbal-indirect:  $r = -.22, p < .01$ ; actions:  $r = -.22, p < .01$ ).

## Discussion

The central aim of the current study was to examine the roles of offers of amends and perceived partner responsiveness in facilitating forgiveness for real-life transgressions occurring within romantic partnerships. Consistent with my predictions, results demonstrated that offers of amends and perceived partner responsiveness were positively associated with each other and with forgiveness. Moreover, perceived partner responsiveness mediated the effects of amends on forgiveness.

Specifically, results from this study indicated that the more people perceived that their partner extended a sincere apology and offered compensation, as well as sincerely accepted responsibility and conveyed remorse and regret for their actions, the more forgiving they were of the partner. This finding is consistent with research on apology and amends in romantic relationships (e.g., Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a; Bono et al., 2008; McCullough, 1997) as well as with the broader literature on apology and amends (e.g., Darby & Schlenker, 1989; Hodgins & Liebeskind, 2003; Zechmeister, Garcia, Romero, & Vas, 2004), which suggests that offering amends facilitates forgiveness for hurtful events. These results also lend further support to work which suggests that amends must be perceived as sincere in order to facilitate forgiveness (e.g., Exline et al., 1998; Schmitt et al., 2004; Skarlicki et al., 2004; Zechmeister et al., 2004).

Importantly, a new contribution of the current study is that perceived partner responsiveness was found to fully mediate the association between amends and forgiveness. Specifically, an important reason why amends seems to facilitate forgiveness is because the offender has been perceived to have ultimately “seen the hurtful event through their partner’s eyes”—to have accurately understood and legitimized their

partner's thoughts and feelings and shown respect and valuation for their partner's experience of the hurtful event. Thus, even the most sincere offers of amends will have no significant impact on forgiveness if they do not convey understanding and validation of one's partner. These findings lend further support to the notion that forgiveness is partially dependent on perceptual validation (i.e. confirmation that the offender's interpretation of the event is similar to the victim's; Eaton et al., 2006). However, while Eaton and her colleagues' (2006) concept of perceptual validation (i.e. confirmation and agreement) may be quite appropriate in the assessment of conflict and forgiveness processes between strangers or acquaintances, such a concept may not fully capture the component processes necessary to resolve real-life hurtful events of romantic partners. Indeed, in the current study, the construct of perceived partner responsiveness emphasizes not only the importance of "confirming" the victim's experience and "getting the facts straight" (akin to Eaton and colleagues' construct of perpetual validation) but also places an emphasis on displays of understanding and validation—authentically valuing, appreciating, and respecting the victim's experience. Understanding and validation have been shown to be key to couples' overall positive relationship quality and healthy conflict engagement (e.g., Clements et al., 2004; Gottman, 1979, 1994).

Notably, this mediational model was moderated by event severity and relationship satisfaction, thus suggesting that the relative contributions of amends and perceived responsiveness on forgiveness are influenced, in part, by these two factors. First, in contrast to low severity situations, in high severity situations, amends came to exert its own direct effect on forgiveness. Specifically, the more the offender offered sincere amends in high severity situations, the more forgiving their partner was of them, above and beyond the

effects of responsiveness. Thus, in contrast to low severity situations where responsiveness appears to be the crucial ingredient for optimizing forgiveness, in severe relationship ruptures offers of amends also have their own role to play in promoting forgiveness.

Research suggests that more severe transgressions in which greater damage has been created tend to elicit more intense distress and negative feelings (e.g., sadness, anger, hurt, anxiety; Rusbult et. al., 2005) as well as greater uncertainty about the partner's intentions, their future behavior, and the safety of the relationship (Afifi & Metts, 1998; Bachman & Guerrero, 2006a). Accordingly, in such situations, offenders might need to engage in active and sustained offers of amends to reassure victims of their investment and commitment to the relationship, convince their partners of their trustworthiness, and promise that the event will not re-occur. Moreover, if transgressions are interpreted as violations of justice or equity in a relationship (Worthington, 2003), then the "injustice gap" (Worthington, 2003, p. 39) or "interpersonal debt" (Exline & Baumesiter, 2000, p.133) incurred in high severity situations is substantial and salient. As such, the offender may need to offer more sustained amends in an effort to compensate for the hurt incurred, restore a sense of justice and equity, and facilitate forgiveness.

In sum, the data suggests that in high severity events, sustained acts of reparation may be directly required to facilitate forgiveness in addition to conveying understanding and validation of the victim's experience. However, in low severity situations where there is low level damage or relational ruptures, offers of amends will simply work through communicating responsiveness.

In addition to being moderated by event severity, the effects of amends and perceived responsiveness on forgiveness were also found to be moderated by relationship

satisfaction. Specifically, at high levels of reported relationship satisfaction, offers of sincere amends had no direct effect on forgiveness, such that perceived partner responsiveness continued to fully mediate the amends-forgiveness link. However, at low levels of relationship satisfaction, perceived responsiveness only partially mediated the effects of amends on forgiveness. Specifically, amends came to exert its own direct effect on forgiveness such that the more offenders offered sincere amends, the more forgiving their partner was of them regardless of the how understanding and validating they appeared to be. One possibility is that people in less satisfying relationships need more reassurance of their partner's good intentions towards reparation and the relationship's overall integrity. This need for more reassurance may be potentially attributed to the fact that partners in less satisfying relationships tend to have a history of being rejected or invalidated by their partner during conflict resolution and face more frequent and continuous conflict within their relationship. Thus, they may generally attribute less good will to their partner and be more mistrustful of their partner's motivations (Holmes & Murray, 1996) thereby creating a need for sustained reparative gestures to mend the damage done by the hurtful event.

Conversely, highly satisfied couples may already have a solid foundation of trust and good will towards each other, and can draw upon this foundation in the context of conflicts. Indeed, happier and more satisfied couples are less likely to be invalidating and rejecting of each other in the context of conflicts and seem to readily use responsive behaviour to reconnect with each other and mend relational ruptures (Gottman, 1979, 1994). As such, it seems that responsive behaviour may be more potent in activating forgiveness because it serves to activate the strong, positive bonds that already exist within the couple.

In sum, results from the current study suggested that even when other robust predictors were controlled, perceived partner responsiveness emerged as key predictor of forgiveness and as an important mediator of the effects of amends on forgiveness. However, results also indicated that mediating effect of responsiveness and the relative contribution of amends were moderated by particular aspects of the event (i.e. severity) and the relationship's quality (i.e. satisfaction).

A secondary focus of this study was to create a more comprehensive measure of forgiveness-seeking behaviours and conduct exploratory analyses examining the extent to which these behaviours reflect offers of amends and perceived partner responsiveness, and directly predict forgiveness. Based on previous research, I derived a large item set of forgiveness-seeking behaviours and categorized these behaviours into 3 general classes of communicative behaviors—verbal-direct, verbal-indirect, and non-verbal behaviours. Participants in our study indicated that offending partners had engaged in a variety of behaviours to seek forgiveness but that offenders tended to engage in more verbal-direct behaviours overall. These results are consistent with previous research which demonstrates that people engage in a diverse array of behaviours to seek forgiveness (Kelley, 1998), but that they tend to engage in more verbal and direct forms overall (Kelley & Waldron, 2005).

Exploratory analyses further indicated that not all forgiveness-seeking behaviours are “created equal”. That is, the more offenders engaged in verbal-direct behaviours, the more they were perceived to have offered sincere amends and to have been responsive to their partner’s thoughts and feelings about the event. These results are consistent with the extant literature, showing that strategies which verbally and explicitly acknowledge the hurtful event are related to improved intimacy post-transgression (Kelley & Waldron,

2005). Verbal-direct forms of forgiveness-seeking behaviours might elicit the most beneficial responses from the victim (beneficial in terms of conveying amends and responsiveness) perhaps because they most clearly and explicitly acknowledge the offense and demonstrate acceptance of responsibility, understanding and validation of the partner's experience, and offers of reparation

In contrast, verbal-indirect behaviours were unrelated to both amends and responsiveness, but were significantly and negatively related to forgiveness. Specifically, the more verbal-indirect forgiveness-seeking behaviours the offender engaged in, the less forgiving their partner was of them. Verbal-indirect forms—which attempt to smooth over conflict but actively avoid directly addressing the hurtful event—appear to thwart forgiveness perhaps because they fail to acknowledge the offense and thereby undermine or dismiss the victim's experience (Kelley & Waldron, 2005) or because they fail to directly attempt to repair the damage incurred.

Finally, non-verbal forgiveness-seeking actions or gestures, such as gift-giving, helpful behaviour, or sacrificing may be interpreted more readily as an explicit demonstration of remorse or regret, a desire to compensate for hurts, and an implicit acknowledgment of responsibility (i.e. amends). Interestingly however, when partners engaged in more of these behaviours, less forgiveness was granted. One possibility is that the more that gestures or actions are employed when seeking forgiveness, the more the offender's behaviors may be interpreted as attempts to try to avoid responding to the thoughts and feelings of the partner, thereby exacerbating or deepening the offense. Indeed, when we look at the relation of these behaviors to responsiveness, results indicate

that gestures and actions do not seem to communicate that one understands and validates the victim's core thoughts and feelings in the event (i.e. responsiveness).

### *Limitations & Future Directions*

This study has several limitations. First, this study is cross-sectional and assesses only one partner's experience of an unresolved, hurtful event. Several concerns arise from such a design. First, forgiveness-seeking and forgiveness-granting are processes influenced by both partners' experiences as well as both partners' behaviours towards each other (Rusbult et al., 2005). Indeed, conflicts and transgressions are often mutual occurrences whereby each partner may at once occupy the victim and the offender role (Exline & Baumeister, 2000).

Similar to most research in the literature, in this study I assessed only the victim's experience of the event (e.g., event severity, responsibility attributions) and the victim's evaluations of the offender's behaviours (e.g., offers of amends, responsiveness, forgiveness-seeking behaviours). Because partners have been shown to diverge in their perceptions of the event (e.g., event severity, respective level of personal and partner responsibility; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002), perceptions of their partner's behaviours (e.g., sufficient offers of amends), and their motivation to make reparative attempts to appease the other (Rusbult et al., 2005), future work should focus on the perceptions of the hurtful event by both members of the couple.

Second, the assessment of experience at a single point in time does not allow an understanding of how the component processes of forgiveness unfold over time. Forgiveness is likely a process that develops over the course of interchanges between partners. Thus, to achieve a greater understanding of how each partner's experiences and

behaviours influence the forgiveness process, as well as how the examined component processes (e.g., amends, responsiveness, forgiveness-seeking) influence forgiveness over time, longitudinal daily-diary studies or narrative accounts of the negotiation of a hurtful event assessing both members of the dyad would be a particularly fruitful endeavor.

Participants in such studies could report on both their own perceptions about the hurtful event, (e.g., severity, attributions, meaning of the event), the relationship (e.g., satisfaction, commitment) and on their own and their partner's post-transgression behaviours (e.g., forgiveness-seeking behaviours, perceptions of having been offered sincere amends, partner's responsiveness). Thus, collecting data from both partners over time would generally allow for a better understanding of the dynamics and interactions occurring within the dyad which may either optimize, or impede, forgiveness.

Another limitation concerns the reliance on self-report. The current design does not allow for the examination of the offending partner's actual offers of amends and responsiveness, or their objective quality, but only assesses the victim's perceptions of these. Indeed, as I reviewed earlier, the victim's and the offender's perceptions of transgression-related events many not always converge (e.g., Zechmeister & Romero, 2002) and the "quality" of actual expressions of amends and responsiveness might importantly contribute to forgiveness (e.g., sincerity of amends; Exline et al., 1998; Skarlicki et al., 2004). Thus, observational data on partner expressions of amends and responsiveness which could be objectively coded for their "quality" would allow for the investigation of the role of "quality" of expression in facilitating forgiveness.

Finally, a limitation of conducting a survey study is that it does not allow me to make any assertions concerning the causal relationships between offers of amends, partner

responsiveness, and forgiveness. As such, designs in which an offer of amends and/or responsiveness is experimentally manipulated would be useful in elucidating the relative contributions of these components in predicting forgiveness.

Currently, I am conducting an elaborate lab-based paradigm which addresses many of these latter issues. In this paradigm, I examine the experience of negotiating an unresolved, hurtful relationship event for both members of a romantic relationship. In this experimental paradigm, I manipulate whether the partner who discloses feelings about an unresolved, hurtful relationship event (Partner A) receives a response from his/her partner (videotape obtained through structured interviews) in which the partner (Partner B) conveys 1) understanding and validation only, 2) amends only, 3) both understanding and validation *and* amends, or 4) neither understanding and validation nor amends. Using this kind of manipulation, I will be able to examine the unique and additive effects of expressions of responsiveness and amends on forgiveness. Additionally, trained coders will observe the video-taped expressions of amends and responsiveness and will assign overall “response quality” ratings to expressions of amends (e.g. inclusion of specific amends components, presence of justifications ad excuses, overall sincerity and sentimentality) and expressions of responsiveness (e.g. appropriate elaboration of partner’s sentiments, level of openness and acceptance, level of defensiveness and criticism). Ultimately, I will use these “quality” ratings to predict forgiveness by Partner A and can examine these results in comparison to Partner’s A own ratings of perceptions of sincere amends and of partner responsiveness. Another notable feature of this study is that I collect self-report data from both partners about their respective perceptions of the event (e.g., event severity, history, attributions of responsibility, emotional reactions), their relationship dynamics (e.g.,

satisfaction, commitment, communication patterns) and about their individual dispositions (e.g., agreeableness). Collecting such data will allow me to examine the interplay between such factors in influencing the expression and “receipt” of amends, understanding and validation and, ultimately, forgiveness.

Finally, research suggests that there may be cultural differences in the extent to which different forgiveness-seeking behaviours are employed. Specifically, some research has shown that in some collectivistic cultures, conflict resolution tends to be more passive and collaborative, in line with the highly valued goal of preserving social harmony (Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994). The way forgiveness is sought and expressed may vary such that forgiveness and reconciliation are sought and expressed through indirect exchanges or ritual and tend to involve family and other community members (Sandage, Hill, & Vandage, 2003). With the potential for cultural influences on forgiveness processes, the relation of amends, responsiveness, and forgiveness which I have examined in this study will need to be replicated across diverse cultures. While I do not expect that this mediational model will vary by culture, I do expect the modes by which people seek-forgiveness will differ. The new forgiveness seeking behaviors measures created in this study is an important step in tapping cross-cultural variations in forgiveness-seeking styles and will be validated across diverse cultures in future work.

### *Conclusions*

Hurtful events are inevitable in romantic partnerships and the negotiation of these events has important consequences for healthy individual and relationship functioning. In the current study, I showed that perceived partner responsiveness is a key predictor of

forgiveness and an important mediator of the effects of amends on forgiveness. However, I also showed that amends and responsiveness each have unique, direct effects on forgiveness when the severity of the event is high or satisfaction with the relationship is low. Finally, whereas some forgiveness-seeking behaviours may benefit forgiveness, others may thwart it. The practical applications of this research is that understanding the components which optimize forgiveness (and under which conditions) is necessary in order to offer the most effective, efficient, and ethically sound interventions. Therapists who understand such forgiveness processes might better develop strategies, with their clients, for constructively engaging partners given the couple's specific event, unique history and dynamics.

Table 1

*Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale ( $\alpha = .95$ ) with Item Loadings*

Item	Loadings
<b><u>Understanding</u></b>	
1. To what extent do you think your partner understood the importance of this event as you see it?	.831
2. To what extent do you think your partner understood the ways in which this event was distressful for you?	.839
3. To what extent do you think your partner “missed the key meaning” of this event for you? (reverse scored)	-.743
4. To what extent did your partner “get the facts straight” concerning your thoughts and feelings about this event?	.800
5. To what extent do you think your partner made an effort to understand your thoughts and feelings about the event (e.g., put him/herself in “your shoes”, tried to see the situation “through your eyes”)?	.826
6. To what extent do you think your partner accurately understood your thoughts and feelings about the event?	.872
<b><u>Validation</u></b>	
1. To what extent do you think your partner validated your experience of the event (e.g., the event’s impact, your feelings and thoughts)?	.879
2. To what extent do you think your partner acknowledged your experience of this event?	.849
3. To what extent do you think your partner respected and supported your experience of this event?	.896
4. To what extent do you think your partner valued and appreciated your experience of this event?	.864

Table 2

*Perceived Amends Scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ) with Item Loadings*

Item	Loadings
1. To what extent did your partner sincerely accept responsibility for this event?	.896
2. To what extent was your partner sincerely remorseful for this incident?	.910
3. To what extent do you think your partner made a sincere effort to “make up” for their actions?	.837
4. To what extent did your partner sincerely apologize?	.915

Table 3

*Forgiveness Measure Subscales with Item Loadings for Each Subscale*

Subscales and Items	Loadings
<b>Avoidance (<math>\alpha = .91</math>)</b>	
1. To what extent would you like to give your partner the cold shoulder?	.836
2. To what extent would you rather do an activity separate from your partner than with your partner?	.733
3. To what extent might you hesitate to ask your partner for assistance because of this incident?	.887
4. To what extent might you prefer to seek assistance from someone else (e.g., friend, other family member) rather than your partner if you needed assistance?	.969
5. If your partner requested assistance for something that they could really do on their own, to what extent might you hesitate to help them out?	.659
6. To what extent would you try to make up an excuse for not being able to assist your partner with something if they needed help?	.765
7. To what extent might you refrain from asking your partner to join in on some event or activity that you would normally ask them to join in on?	.783
<b>Benevolence (<math>\alpha = .91</math>)</b>	
1. To what extent is it easy to feel warm towards your partner?	.865
2. To what extent is it easy for you to see your partner and his/her qualities positively?	.846
3. To what extent do you feel accepting of your partner's weaknesses and shortcomings?	.851
4. To what extent do you feel a strong and deep connection to your partner?	.938
5. To what extent do you feel strong loving feelings towards your partner?	.951

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Subscales and Items	Loadings
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<u>Retribution</u> ( $\alpha = .91$ )	
1. To what extent would you like your partner to feel regret for this incident?	.850
2. To what extent would you like your partner to feel guilty for this incident?	.777
3. To what extent would you like your partner to feel as bad as you felt during and after the incident?	.947
4. To what extent would you like your partner to experience some, if not all, of the negative emotions you felt during and after the incident?	.871
5. To what extent do you think your partner should do something nice for you to help clear up the negative emotions they caused you?	.906
6. To what extent would you like your partner to make up in some way for the negative feelings this incident brought up in you?	.935
<u>Inner Resolution</u> ( $\alpha = .91$ )	
1. To what extent is it easy for you right now to move beyond the discomfort your partner has caused you from this event?	.669
2. To what extent is it easy for you to “absorb” and accept your negative feelings that have been brought out during this incident?	.881
3. To what extent are you able to let go of the negative feelings your partner has caused you in this incident?	.821
4. To what extent have you resolved this incident within yourself?	.837
5. To what extent are you personally “finished” with his event?	.779
6. To what extent can you put this incident behind you?	.756
7. To what extent do you forgive your partner for this incident?	.655

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Subscales and Items	Loadings
<b><u>Conciliation</u> (<math>\alpha = .92</math>)</b>	
1. To what extent would you feel enthusiastic about accepting your partner's proposal to engage in a joint activity?	.781
2. To what extent do you feel enthusiastic to participate in an activity that you and your partner usually do together?	.801
3. To what extent do you feel open to express concern or interest in your partner's thoughts and feelings?	.750
5. To what extent do you feel open to express your own thoughts and feelings with your partner?	.656
6. To what extent would you like to participate in an activity that your partner enjoys?	.761

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*Note:* A composite measure of forgiveness was derived by standardizing each of the subscale scores and taking the mean of the Avoidance and Retribution subscales (reverse scored) as well as the Benevolence, Conciliation and Inner Resolution subscales.

Table 4

*Intercorrelations Between Subscales of Forgiveness Measure*

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5
1. Avoidance		-.53***	.57***	-.40***	-.59***
2. Benevolence		---	-.40***	.64***	.56***
3. Retribution			---	-.39***	-.37***
4. Inner Resolution				---	.59***
5. Conciliation					---

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations for Main Study Variables*

Variable	Means	Standard Deviation
Amends	4.67	1.55
Perceived Partner Responsiveness	4.46	1.30
Relationship Satisfaction	5.82	1.12
Relationship Commitment	6.16	1.07
Event Severity	4.88	1.35
Responsibility Attributions	5.30	1.50
Intent Attributions	3.09	1.80

Table 6

*Pearson-Correlations Between Relationship Quality and Event-Level Variables with Perceived Amends, Perceived Partner Responsiveness and Forgiveness*

Variable	Perceived Amends	Perceived Partner Responsiveness	Forgiveness
<b><u>Relationship Quality Variables</u></b>			
Satisfaction			
Satisfaction	.17*	.27***	.45***
Commitment	.21***	.27***	.44***
<b><u>Event-Level Variables</u></b>			
Event Severity			
Event Severity	.04	-.05	-.39***
Responsibility Attributions			
Responsibility Attributions	.04	-.03	-.20**
Intent Attributions			
Intent Attributions	-.18*	-.18*	-.27***

Note: \*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 7

*Results of Regression Analysis Testing Moderation of Amends-Responsiveness-Forgiveness  
Mediation Model by Intent Attributions*

Predictor	B	SE B	F	p
Perceived Partner Responsiveness				
Amends	.64	.041	244.66	.000
Intent	-.03	.04	.67	.46
Amends x Intent	.02	.02	1.03	.311
Forgiveness				
Responsiveness	.26	.06	19.18	.000
Amends	.02	.05	.19	.660
Intent	-.08	.03	8.21	.005
Responsiveness x Intent	-.03	.03	.58	.448
Amends x Intent	.01	.03	.22	.643

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Perceived responsiveness fully mediates the effects of amends on forgiveness (Sobel test:  $z = 4.22, p < .001$ )

Table 8

*Results of Regression Analysis Testing Moderation of Amends-Responsiveness-Forgiveness  
Mediation Model by Responsibility Attributions*

<b>Predictor</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>p</b>
Perceived Partner Responsiveness				
Amends	.65	.04	262.19	.000
Responsibility	-.05	.04	1.40	.238
Amends x Responsibility	.01	.03	.06	.815
Forgiveness				
Responsiveness	.24	.06	16.89	.000
Amends	.05	.05	1.03	.312
Responsibility	-.09	.03	8.35	.004
Responsiveness x Responsibility	.07	.04	2.96	.087
Amends x Responsibility	-.04	.03	1.28	.259

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Perceived responsiveness fully mediates the effects of amends on forgiveness (Sobel test:  $z = 3.96, p < .001$ )

Table 9

*Results of Regression Analysis Testing Moderation of Amends-Responsiveness-Forgiveness Mediation Model by Event Severity.*

Predictor	B	SE B	F	p
Perceived Partner Responsiveness				
Amends	.65	.04	263.29	.000
Severity	-.08	.05	2.97	.087
Amends x Severity	.03	.03	.83	.364
Forgiveness				
Responsiveness	.23	.05	17.58	.000
Amends	.06	.05	1.94	.166
Severity	-.21	.03	37.76	.000
Responsiveness x Severity	-.02	.04	.32	.573
Amends x Severity	.07	.03	3.95	.048

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Mediating effect of perceived responsiveness at high and low levels of event severity reported in Figure 1.

Table 10

*Results of Regression Analysis Testing Moderation of Amends-Responsiveness-Forgiveness  
Mediation Model by Relationship Satisfaction*

Predictor	B	SE B	F	p
Perceived Partner Responsiveness				
Amends	.62	.04	247.41	.000
Satisfaction	.16	.06	8.95	.003
Amends x Satisfaction	-.01	.04	.03	.874
Forgiveness				
Responsiveness	.23	.06	15.84	.000
Amends	.03	.05	.36	.551
Satisfaction	.24	.04	32.77	.000
Responsiveness x Satisfaction	.06	.05	2.07	.152
Amends x Satisfaction	.09	.04	4.53	.035

*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Mediating effect of perceived responsiveness at high and low levels of relationship satisfaction reported in Figure 2.

Table 11

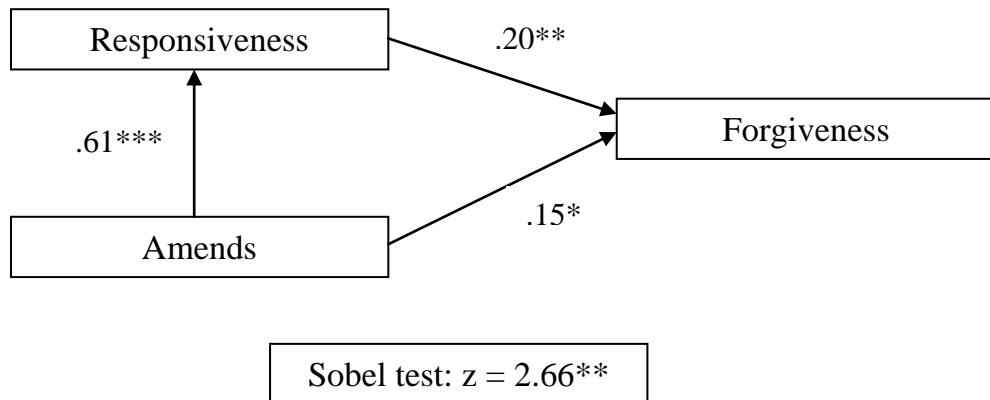
*Results of Regression Analysis Testing Moderation of Amends-Responsiveness-Forgiveness  
Mediation Model by Relationship Commitment*

Predictor	B	SE B	F	p
Perceived Partner Responsiveness				
Amends	.62	.04	238.40	.000
Commitment	.14	.06	5.67	.018
Amends x Commitment	.03	.04	.52	.473
Forgiveness				
Responsiveness	.23	.06	16.18	.000
Amends	.02	.05	.19	.662
Commitment	.24	.05	26.29	.000
Responsiveness x Commitment	.08	.05	.03	.923
Amends x Commitment	.00	.05	.01	.873

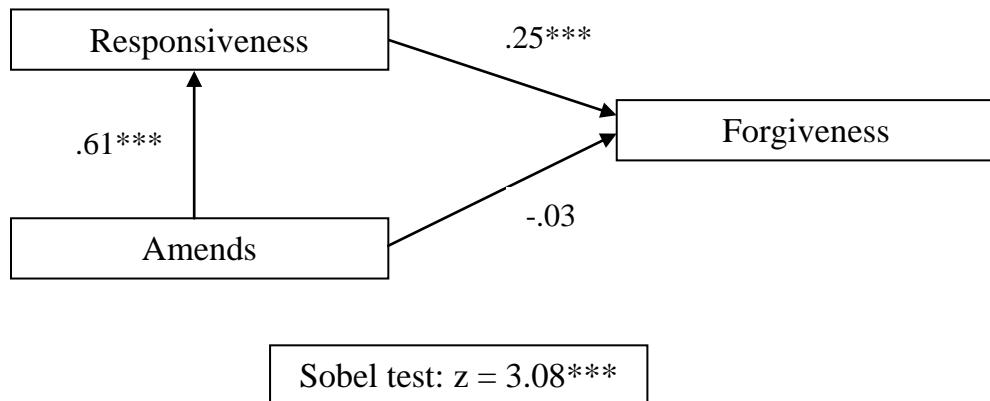
*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. Perceived responsiveness fully mediates the effects of amends on forgiveness (Sobel test:  $z = 3.92, p < .001$ )

*Figure 1.* Moderation of the Amends-Responsiveness-Forgiveness Mediation Model by Event Severity.

High Event Severity



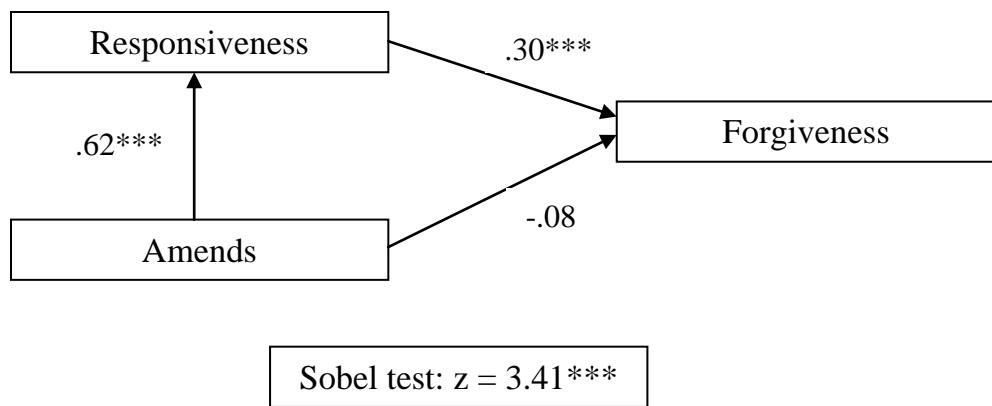
Low Event Severity



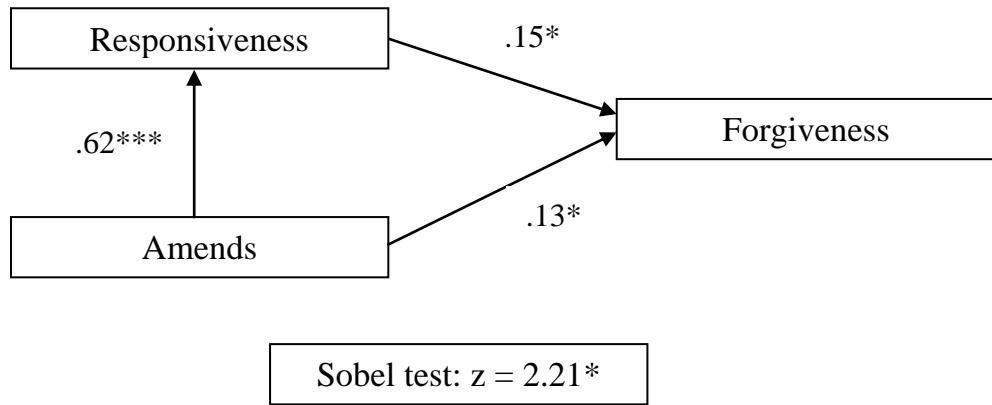
*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

*Figure 2.* Moderation of the Amends-Responsiveness-Forgiveness Mediation Model by Relationship Satisfaction.

High Relationship Satisfaction



Low Relationship Satisfaction



*Note:* Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Instructions for Description of Hurtful Event

In the following section, we will ask you to recall and describe an event in which your partner's attitudes, actions or words made you feel distressed in some way (e.g. caused sadness, hurt, embarrassment, anger, etc...) **and** for which he/she made an effort to seek your forgiveness for their actions. Please *carefully* read over the following instructions before choosing and describing an event.

#### Instructions

Most couples will experience conflict during the course of their relationship, in which one or both partners' words, actions or attitudes were distressful in some way (e.g., caused sadness, hurt, anger, embarrassment). In the aftermath of a conflict, partners will often make an effort to reconnect and make up for the distress that their actions, words, or attitudes may have caused their partner.

People may seek forgiveness from their romantic partners in many different ways. They may seek forgiveness through their words and actions, and these may be delivered directly or indirectly. Also, when seeking forgiveness, people may offer words and actions toward the person from whom they seek forgiveness or they may also direct their words and actions toward trusted others (e.g., immediate/extended family, friends, spiritual/religious leader, other respected member of their community).

We would like you to tell us about the ways in which your romantic partner sought forgiveness from you after he/she hurt you in some way. To begin, please think about an event in which your partner's attitudes, actions or words made you feel distressed in some way (e.g., caused sadness, hurt, anger, embarrassment) AND for which he/she made an effort to seek your forgiveness for their actions. The event should have occurred anytime **within the last year**, it should be **specific**, and you should feel that it is still somewhat **unresolved**. By unresolved we mean that you may still be experiencing lingering negative feelings and thoughts about this event and about your partner's actions —to a certain extent, you have not completely “let it go.”

[Note: It may be a major or a minor conflict, it may have occurred in a private and/or public setting, and it may have involved other people either directly and/or indirectly. Keep in mind that the event that we ask you to recall is one that must be, to a certain extent, unresolved (i.e., anywhere from not at all resolved to very much, but not completely, resolved). ]

Sometimes it may take a few minutes to think of an incident. The event could include the following or anything else you may think of...

- He/she criticized me inappropriately or unfairly.
- He/she did not fulfill a responsibility or obligation that was important to me or our relationship
- He/she did something that embarrassed me in public or in private
- He/she forgot a significant event
- He/she was insensitive towards me in some way
- He/she did not fulfill a promise he/she made to me or to someone that was close to me
- He/she did not support me when I needed him/her
- He/she did not share something of importance with me
- He/she was not attentive or responsive to my feelings and/or concerns
- He/she acted in a financially irresponsible way
- He/she did something that disrespected me or a close other (e.g. family member, friend) in some way
- He/she was dishonest with me about something
- He/she did something that undermined our relationship, or my relationship with others
- He/she did something that undermined my interests, values, and/or goals
- Other

If you recall more than one unresolved conflict, choose the one which you can recall with the most detail. That is, choose the event that you can best recall the details of the event, including when and where it occurred and what you and your partner said and did about the event.

Once you have a recent, unresolved event in mind take a few minutes to think about the details and circumstances of the incident. When and where did it occur? Who was present? What did you say and do? What did your partner say and do?

Please note: If you are having difficulty recalling the details of this event, please return to list above and choose another event that you are better able to recall.

Once you have chosen the event, write a brief description of this event below.

When did the event take place? \_\_\_\_\_

Where did the event take place? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was present during the event? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened? (in a few sentences explain what happened and what your partner said or did that was distressful) \_\_\_\_\_

In a few sentences, please explain WHY your partner's behaviours were distressful to you. That is, what did your words and actions mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Forgiveness-Seeking Inventory

Below is a list of specific messages that people might verbally communicate when they try to seek forgiveness from their partner. These verbal messages can be in the form of spoken words, written words or both.

To seek your forgiveness, did your partner do the following behaviours?

(Note: Remember that all of the items below refer to VREBAL behaviours, using SPOKEN or WRITTEN WORDS)

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Expressed his/her feelings of remorse (e.g., guilt, shame, embarrassment) and regret for this incident.  | Yes | No |
| 2. Expressed that he/she accepted some responsibility for his/her actions   | Yes | No |
| 3. Tried to get you to understand the circumstances that led to his/her actions (rationalized why they did what they did.)  | Yes | No |
| 4. Tried to justify his/her actions as a reasonable response to your behaviors and/or reactions.  | Yes | No |
| 5. Reminded you of a time when you made a similar mistake and he/she forgave you as a way to get you to show him/her some compassion and understanding.   | Yes | No |
| 6. Asked you to forgive his/her actions because he/she is “only human” and humans make mistakes.  | Yes | No |
| 7. Promised you that he/she would not repeat their actions in the future.   | Yes | No |
| 8. Promised you that he/she would “make it up to you” (e.g., would do something nice or extra for you)  | Yes | No |
| 9. Tried to gain your sympathy by telling you about the negative impact this incident may have had on him/her (e.g., they could not stop thinking about it, have had trouble working or socializing, feel less respect for himself/herself) | Yes | No |
| 10. Told you that he/she has learned from this incident (e.g., understands you better, understands his/her role in the relationship better).  | Yes | No |

11. Told you that this incident may have been a “good thing” because it can strengthen his/her relationship with you.	Yes	No
12. Told you to look on the “ bright side” of things so as to de-emphasize the negative consequences of the event (e.g., “it could have been worse”)	Yes	No
13. Acknowledged the impact that this conflict may have had on your emotional well-being (e.g., expressed recognition of how the conflict made you feel).	Yes	No
14. Acknowledged the impact that this conflict may have had on your work or social functioning (e.g., expressed recognition of how the conflict may have impacted you on a daily level)	Yes	No
15. Acknowledged the impact that this conflict may have had on your relationship with him/her	Yes	No
16. Expressed an understanding of your feelings and thoughts about the event.	Yes	No
17. Told you that it was not his/her intention to hurt you in any way, and that he/she loved you, cared for you and/or respected you.	Yes	No
18. Told you that he/she loved you and/or cared for you in the hopes of appeasing you or smoothing things over.	Yes	No
19. Took a critical view of him/herself or of his/her actions when discussing the event with you (e.g., “What I did was stupid, “What I did was shameful”, “I have dishonored myself”, “This shows that I can’t do things like this right”).	Yes	No
20. Gave you a compliment about a unique or special aspect of your personality in the hopes of appeasing you or smoothing things over.	Yes	No
21. Gave you a compliment about your physical appearance in the hopes of appeasing you or smoothing things over.	Yes	No
22. Praised you or expressed appreciation of something you did in the hopes of appeasing you or smoothing things over.	Yes	No
23. Made “small talk” with you more than he/she usually does in the hopes of smoothing things over and reconnecting with you.	Yes	No

24. Expressed a plan to “work on” certain things (e.g., behaviors, routines, attitude) in order to prevent the conflict from reoccurring.	Yes	No
25. Expressed affection for you by calling you a special name (e.g., personalized name or “honey,” “baby,” “sweetie,” or any other “special” name) to appease you or smooth things over.	Yes	No
26. Quoted or made references to a religious or cultural teaching (e.g. proverb) which contained themes of conflict and forgiveness	Yes	No
27. Acknowledged that he/she made a mistake or that his/her actions were wrong.	Yes	No
28. Reassured you that “things would be ok,” without directly talking about the conflict.	Yes	No
29. Expressed the importance he/she placed on their relationship with you, without talking directly about the conflict.	Yes	No
30. Asked you to help him/her understand where he/she had gone wrong and how to “fix” it.	Yes	No
31. Used an explicit apology for his/her actions by using phrases such as “I am sorry”, “I apologize”, or “Please accept my apology”.	Yes	No
32. Requested forgiveness directly from you by using phrases such as “Please forgive me”, “I hope you can forgive me”, “Can you forgive me?”	Yes	No
33. Requested your forgiveness by using phrases such as “I hope you can give me another chance,” “Can we go back to the way things were before?” “I hope you will understand,” “I hope we can work things out”.	Yes	No
34. Initiated or maintained a level of conversation with you to make things go back to “normal” again.	Yes	No
35. Used jokes or humor to make you laugh in the hopes of smoothing things over or reconnecting with you.	Yes	No

Some people will use their ACTIONS in an effort to seek forgiveness from their partner.

For each item below, indicate whether or not your partner engaged in the specified behavior to seek forgiveness for the conflict you described.

To seek forgiveness, did your partner do the following behaviors?

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Spent more time doing things with you than he/she usually does.   | Yes | No |
| 2. Distanced himself/herself from you more than he/she usually does in order to “give you your space.”   | Yes | No |
| 3. Spent more “alone” time with you than he/she usually does.  | Yes | No |
| 4. Bought you a romantic gift(s).  | Yes | No |
| 5. Gave or lent you something which was of great personal importance or sentimental value to him/her.  | Yes | No |
| 6. Did something which they hoped would remind you of the good times you have spent together as a couple (e.g., looking at pictures of a trip you took together, played a song you associate with your relationship) | Yes | No |
| 7. Took over one or more of your responsibilities or chores (e.g., getting the car washed, cleaning the dishes, taking out the garbage).   | Yes | No |
| 8. Bought you something which is practical that you can use for a job or other responsibility you have.  | Yes | No |
| 9. Did something for you that he/she normally dislikes doing.  | Yes | No |
| 10. Took initiative to help you with something that he/she usually would not do unless you asked him/her to help you.  | Yes | No |
| 11. Offered to do some activity that both of you normally enjoy doing together to remind you of the good times you can have as a couple.   | Yes | No |

12. Did something for you that he/she has usually never agreed to do in the past, even when you have asked him/her to.	Yes	No
13. Offered to do something for you so that you could have a break or a rest.	Yes	No
14. Asked you to do something with him/her that they usually prefer to do alone so as to repair the relationship or get close again.	Yes	No
15. “Backed down” or “bit his/her tongue” more than usual in other situations where he/she did not agree with you.	Yes	No
16. Showed restraint from doing or saying something which he/she thought might upset you.	Yes	No
17. Showed restraint from doing or saying something when he/she seemed upset with you.	Yes	No
18. Compromised more with you than he/she usually does.	Yes	No
19. Tried to do better than he/she usually does at fulfilling his/her normal responsibilities to you and/or your relationship.	Yes	No
20. Tried to work harder than he/she usually does at fulfilling normal responsibilities to others and in other areas of life (e.g. work).	Yes	No
21. Tried to do something that he/she knows would make you proud of him/her.	Yes	No
22. Sought your advice and guidance for things more than he/she usually does.	Yes	No
23. Respected your pace in wanting to resume normal interaction with you again, even though it is not the way he/she normally prefers to resolve conflict.	Yes	No
24. Tried to carry out your “normal” relationship routines and duties just as they existed before the conflict.	Yes	No

25. Gave you more physical affection than he/she usually does to smooth things over (e.g., hug, hold hands, squeeze shoulder, touch face, other light touch)	Yes	No
26. Tried to be sexually intimate with you.	Yes	No
27. Demonstrated in action that they were actively “working on,” trying to change, or trying to “fix” the behaviours/routines/attitudes that were linked to the conflict.	Yes	No
28. Prepared a special meal for you in order to smooth things over and show he/she cares.	Yes	No
29. Performed a specific ritual or series of actions that is typical of your culture when seeking forgiveness from others.	Yes	No
30. Performed a specific ritual or series of actions that is typical of your partner’s culture when seeking forgiveness from others.	Yes	No
31. Took part in a religious or spiritual ritual/ceremony (e.g. confession) in order to absolve themselves from his/her part in the conflict.	Yes	No
32. Asked you to participate with him/her in a cultural ritual or religious/spiritual activity that would facilitate the process of forgiveness and reconnection between the two of you (e.g. going to mass).	Yes	No

## Appendix C: Perceived Partner Responsiveness Scale

We are now interested in understanding how you interpreted your partner's forgiveness-seeking efforts. That is, we want to understand how you think your partner's efforts to seek your forgiveness relate to you and your relationship.

Please answer the questions below by using the rating scaled provided. Please remember to answer these questions when you think about how your partner tried to seek forgiveness from you for the conflict you described.

1 Not at all	2 Hardly at all	3 A little but all	4 Somewhat	5 Quite a bit	6 Very much	7 Completely
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1. To what extent do you think your partner understood the importance of this event as you see it?
2. To what extent do you think your partner understood the ways in which this event was distressful for you?
3. To what extent do you think your partner “missed the key meaning” of this event for you?
4. To what extent did your partner “get the facts straight” concerning your thoughts and feelings about this event?
5. To what extent do you think your partner made an effort to understand your thoughts and feelings about the event (e.g. put him/herself in “your shoes”, tried to see the situation “through your eyes”)?
6. To what extent do you think your partner accurately understood your thoughts and feelings about the event?
7. To what extent do you think your partner validated your experience of the event (e.g. the event’s impact, your feelings and thoughts)?
8. To what extent do you think your partner acknowledged your experience of this event?
9. To what extent do you think your partner respected and supported your experience of this event?
10. To what extent do you think your partner valued and appreciated your experience of this event?

## Appendix D: Perceived Amends Scale

Please answer the questions below by using the rating scaled provided. Please remember to answer these questions when you think about how your partner tried to seek forgiveness from you for the conflict you described.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all	Hardly at all	A little but	Somewhat	Quite a bit	Very much	Completely

1. To what extent did your partner sincerely apologize to you for this event?
2. To what extent was your partner sincerely remorseful for this incident?
3. To what extent did your partner sincerely accept responsibility for this event?
4. To what extent did your partner make a sincere effort to “make-up” for their actions?

## Appendix E: Forgiveness Measure

What follows is a list of thought and feelings that are common in individuals who have been hurt by their partner's attitudes, words, and/or actions. Below, please rate the extent to which these commonly held thoughts and feelings reflect your experience of the event you described.

Right now, when you think about this negative event with your partner...

1. To what extent is it easy to feel warm towards your partner?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the easiest it has ever been
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2. To what extent is it easy for you to see your partner and his/her qualities positively?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the easiest it has ever been
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3. To what extent do you feel accepting of your partner's weaknesses and shortcomings?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the easiest it has ever been
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4. To what extent would you like your partner to feel regret for this incident?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most he/she could possibly feel
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5. To what extent do you feel a strong and deep connection to your partner?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most I have ever felt
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6. To what extent do you feel strong loving feelings towards your partner?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most I have ever felt
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7. To what extent would you like your partner to feel guilty for this incident?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most he/she could possibly feel
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8. To what extent would you like your partner to feel as bad as you felt during and after the incident?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most possible
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9. To what extent would you like your partner to experience some, if not all, of the negative emotions you felt during and after the incident?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most possible
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10. To what extent do you think your partner should do something nice for you to help clear up the negative emotions they caused you?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most possible
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11. To what extent would you like your partner to make up in some way for the negative feelings this incident brought up in you?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most possible
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12. To what extent would you feel enthusiastic about accepting your partner's proposal to engage in a joint activity?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most I have ever felt with him/her after conflict
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13. To what extent do you feel enthusiastic to participate in an activity that you and your partner usually do together?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most I have ever felt with him/her after conflict
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14. To what extent do you feel open to express concern or interest in your partner's thoughts and feelings?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most I have ever felt with him/her after conflict
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15. To what extent do you feel open to express your own thoughts and feelings with your partner?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 the most possible
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16. To what extent would you like to give your partner the cold shoulder?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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17. To what extent would you like to participate in an activity that your partner enjoys?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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18. To what extent would you rather do an activity separate from your partner?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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19. To what extent might you hesitate to ask your partner for assistance because of this incident?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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20. To what extent might you prefer to seek assistance from someone else (e.g. friend, other family member) rather than your partner if you needed assistance?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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21. If your partner requested assistance for something that they could really do on their own, to what extent might you hesitate to help them out?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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22. To what extent would you try to make up an excuse for not being able to assist your partner with something if they needed help?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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23. To what extent might you refrain from asking your partner to join in on some event or activity that you would normally ask them to join?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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24. To what extent is it easy for you right now to move beyond the discomfort your partner has caused you from this event?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 The easiest it has ever been
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25. To what extent is it easy for you to “absorb” and accept your negative feelings that have been brought out during this incident?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 The easiest it has ever been
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26. To what extent are you able to let go of the negative feelings your partner has caused you in this incident?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 definitely
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27. To what extent have you resolved this incident within yourself?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 completely
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28. To what extent are you personally “finished” with this event?

1 not at all	2 hardly at all	3 a little bit	4 somewhat	5 quite a bit	6 very much	7 completely
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29. To what extent can you put this incident behind you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all	hardly at all	a little bit	somewhat	quite a bit	very much	completely

30. To what extent do you forgive your partner for this incident?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
not at all	hardly at all	a little bit	somewhat	quite a bit	very much	completely