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The Roles of Emotion Management and Perspective Taking in Individuals’ Conflict Management Styles and Disposition to Forgive

Rizkalla, L., Wertheim, E. H., & Hodgson, L.
Abstract

This study aimed to link two fields of research: conflict management and forgiveness. Adult participants ($n=122$) and a validating sample of significant others ($n=122$) completed measures of disposition to forgive, conflict style, emotion management, and perspective taking; and multi-dimensional models of their relationships were tested. Disposition to forgive was most consistently associated with problem solving and yielding conflict styles. Greater perspective taking was associated with greater forgiveness, and greater problem solving and yielding conflict styles, as well as with lesser fighting style; and perspective taking fully or partially mediated the relationship between ability to repair emotions and dispositions to forgive and problem solve during conflict. Significant other reports confirmed most of the findings based on self report.

Key words: forgiveness, conflict resolution, empathy, emotional intelligence, emotions, problem solving, relationships, interpersonal communication, communication, conflicts
Conflict is a normal part of human interactions; however, depending on how it is managed it can have constructive or destructive outcomes (Deutsch, 2006). Furthermore, individuals appear to have conflict management styles or dispositions that are relatively stable over time and across situations (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Sternberg & Soriano, 1984). Five conflict styles are usually discussed: fighting, yielding, avoiding, compromising and problem solving. These styles vary along dimensions of the individual’s motives (concern for self versus others; Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992), approach (competitive or cooperative; Deutsch, 2006), and outcome (who ‘wins’; Blake & Mouton, 1964; Wertheim, Love, Peck, & Littlefield, 2006).

Fighting (or forcing) involves endeavours to meet one’s own interests, even at the expense of another party, generally with a win-lose (or lose-lose) result (Spangle & Isenbart, 2003, Wertheim et al., 2006). A yielding style involves managing conflict by fulfilling the other party’s needs at the expense of self-interests. Avoiding involves withdrawing from disputes; which generally fails to resolve the dispute. However researchers disagree about whether avoidance reflects lack of concern for others or a concern for others with the aim of preventing open conflict (Gabrielidis et al., 1997). While compromising involves seeking a common solution in which both parties give up something to reach a mutual middle ground, a problem solving style aims to find solutions acceptable to all parties, through addressing everyone’s interests creatively (Weitzman & Weitzman, 2006; Wertheim et al.).

As these styles show, conflict can be resolved with varying degrees of satisfaction for each party. When conflict remains unresolved, a party ‘loses’, or a hurtful transgression takes place, grievances and resentment can form against the other party (Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004; Hall, 1993). One way to handle such past grievances is through forgiveness (Fincham et al.; Hill, 2001; Worthington & Diblasio, 1990). In the context of an interpersonal grievance, forgiveness involves transforming negative thoughts, affect, behavior or motivations towards the ‘offender’ to more positive ones (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003). While forgiveness depends partly on situational variables (e.g., relationship context, offence severity), a disposition to forgive has been identified with some individuals more prone to forgive than others (Emmons, 2000; Koutsos, Wertheim, & Kornblum, 2008).

**Conflict Management Styles and Forgiveness**

While conflict resolution styles have been approached from different perspectives (De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997; Jones & White, 1985; Kurdek, 1994), their relationship with the tendency to forgive has been neglected. Given that forgiveness involves setting aside
resentments, we proposed that a disposition to forgive would be related to greater yielding and lesser fighting styles, a hypothesis consistent with personality research linking forgiveness with agreeableness (Brose, Rye, Lutz-Zois, & Ross, 2005; Koutsos, et al., 2008). However, a proneness to forgive might also involve a conflict style involving use of constructive problem-solving, since one way to achieve forgiveness would be to find creative ways to address past hurts and meet one’s own (as well as others’) needs without harboring anger towards the offender. Finally, a less forgiving disposition might also be associated with distancing from ‘problematic’ relationships by avoiding confronting conflicts. The first aim of our study was, therefore, to explore these hypothesized relationships.

*A model of forgiveness, emotions and empathy*

A second aim of this study was to examine some key determinants of both forgiveness and conflict resolution styles. Malcolm and Greenberg (2000) proposed an emotion-centered model of forgiveness in which negative affect and behaviors were transformed into positive ones in five phases. The first proposed phase involves acceptance and awareness of strong emotions (e.g., anger, sadness). In phase two (decision), the injured party realizes the importance of letting go of unmet interpersonal needs. Phase three involves reframing, where the forgiving person’s view of the offender shifts. In phase four, the injured party develops empathy and compassion for the offender. Finally, the forgiver moves forward and constructs a new narrative of self and other.

A key element of this model includes the ability to manage emotions or what has sometimes been referred to as ‘emotional intelligence’ (EI; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). An awareness of one’s emotions is thought to lay the foundation for regulating or repairing one’s emotions (Mayer & Salovey) which enables forgiveness to eventuate. Self-report studies support this idea that greater levels of emotional intelligence are associated with greater agreeableness, cooperativeness (Schutte et al., 2001) and disposition to forgive (Emmons, 2000; Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007).

A second key component of Malcolm and Greenburg’s (2000) model is the role of perspective taking, a form of empathy involving "accurately perceiving the internal frame of reference of another" (Gold & Rogers, 1995, p. 79). McCullough, Worthington, and Rachal (1997) hypothesized that empathy interrupts people’s negative motivations regarding perceived transgressors and can elicit the offended party’s capacity to care for the needs of an offender. The important role of empathy for the transgressor in forgiveness has received
empirical support (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007; Konstam, Chernoff, & Deveney, 2001; McCullough, et al.).

A recent study suggested that dispositional empathy mediates the relationship between emotion management and forgiveness (Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007). Path modeling indicated that attention to and repair of emotions (but not clarity) added unique variance specifically to the perspective taking form of empathy, which was the sole direct predictor of forgiveness. The findings, supporting Macolm and Greenburg’s (2000) theorising, suggested that the ability to attend to and repair emotions enables individuals to take another’s perspective, which in turn fosters forgiving. Our second study aim was to replicate this model in a new sample.

Given possible associations between forgiveness and conflict styles, a final aim was to examine whether Hodgson and Wertheim’s (2007) model could be extended to predicting dispositions towards particular conflict management styles. In the few studies on this question, authors suggest that effective conflict management requires attending to emotions that can disrupt negotiations (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001; Rahim & Psenicka, 2002) such as anger or distress. In a study of workplace conflict, greater self-awareness was associated with better self-regulation, empathy and social skills; and self-regulation in turn was associated with empathy and social skills (Goleman, 2001). A further study (Smith, Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008) found that emotional intelligence was associated with reports of more constructive intra-couple conflict-related communication patterns. Whether individuals’ conflict management styles are related to different aspects of emotion management, empathy or both still needs to be studied. The present study examined that question.

In summary, we hypothesized (H1) that a disposition to forgive would be associated with greater problem solving and yielding, and lesser avoiding and fighting conflict management styles; (H2) that Hodgson and Wertheim’s (2007) findings would be replicated with attention to and repair of emotions predicting the perspective-taking form of empathy, which would predict disposition to forgive; and (H3) that conflict styles would be predicted by emotion management and perspective taking dispositions. Specifically, the prediction of problem solving style was expected to parallel the model predicting forgivingness. In contrast, individuals prone to yielding were expected to be low in attending to and repairing emotions, but high in perspective taking. Individuals prone to fighting were also expected to be low in managing emotions, but to report not taking others’ perspectives. Finally, while avoiding was hypothesized to relate to low regulation of emotions, empathy-related
predictions were not made, since avoiding might result from either too little or too much perspective taking.

Finally, most past studies have used university samples and self-report data. Self-reports are potentially influenced by factors such as social desirability or lack of subjective awareness; and people are often inaccurate reporters of their own abilities (Brackett & Mayer, 2003). Therefore, to minimize these effects and to strengthen the contribution to existing knowledge, the current study, examined whether relationships uncovered using self-report data from a community sample would be replicated using ‘significant other’ reporters who knew the participant well.

Method

Participants

Participants were gathered from the researcher’s social networks using a snowball approach. Family, friends and colleagues were invited to take part in the study and to inform other adults about the study. Of the 131 self-report respondents, 122 could be paired with a significant other (SO) questionnaire and were included in the final sample. Table 1 displays demographic information. Gender of participants was female=61.7%, male=39.3%; and of SOs female=61.8%, male=33.6%. Mean age was 31.25 years (11.3) for participants and 32.78 (12.43) for SOs. The SO sample comprised spouse/partners (38%), relatives (20%), friends (39%), and colleagues (4%).

Materials

Participant self-report questionnaires included demographic questions and the following measures.

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index Perspective Taking subscale (IRI-PT; Davis, Hull, Young, & Warren, 1983) assessed the empathy-related tendency to adopt another’s point of view. Participants rate how well seven items describe them from not well (0) to very well (4). Cronbach’s alphas from .69 to .82 and construct validity have been demonstrated (Davis et al.; Fox & Spector, 2000).

The 20-item short version Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH) assessed four conflict management styles: problem solving, yielding, avoiding, and forcing (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001). Participants rate the degree to which they display related behaviors during conflict; each item is rated from not at all (1) to very much (5).
Samples include, “I examine issues until I find a solution that really satisfies me and the other party” (problem solving), “I give in to the wishes of the other party” (yielding), “I avoid a confrontation about our differences” (avoiding) and “I fight for a good outcome for myself” (fighting). Good factor structure, subscale internal consistencies, and convergent validity with conflict opponent and observer ratings have been reported (De Dreu, et al.).

The Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS; Berry, Worthington, O’Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005) assessed disposition to forgive (ForgivingDisp). Ten items (half reversed) are rated from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), e.g., “I am a forgiving person”. It has demonstrated internal consistency, construct validity, and convergent validity with SO ratings (Berry et al.; Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007)

Two subscales of the Trait Meta Mood Scale (TMMS, Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey & Palfai, 1995) measured respondents’ attention to their feelings (Attention; 13 items) and ability to regulate and control negative moods and emotions (Repair; 9 items). Items are rated from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5); e.g., “I pay a lot of attention to how I feel” and “I try to think good thoughts no matter how bad I feel”. Good internal consistencies, construct validity and convergent validity with SO ratings have been reported (Davies, Stankov & Roberts, 1998; Hodgson & Wertheim, 2007; Salovey et al.)

**Significant Other Reports**

Significant others answered the demographic questions, and reported their relationship with the participant. They then completed the IRI, DUTCH, TFS, and TMMS subscales with each reworded to apply to the participant (not self). First-person pronouns were replaced with ‘your friend’, ‘he/she’ or ‘him/her’.

**Procedure**

Following university approval, participants were invited to participate in a study “exploring responses to interpersonal conflict.” Volunteers answered a questionnaire about themselves and invited a close adult who knew them well to answer the same questions in terms of their perception of the participant.

Questionnaire packs (270) were handed or mailed to participants (response rate was 48.5%). Questionnaires were anonymous and code numbered in pairs for matching purposes. Participants and SOs received separate questionnaires, instructions (requesting independent questionnaire completion) and reply-paid envelopes.

**Data analysis**

After examining that assumptions were met and exploring gender differences via correlations and t-tests, regression-based path analyses were conducted predicting the conflict
management styles and disposition to forgive. Baron and Kenny’s (1986) approach to mediation tested for mediation effects. Analyses based on participant self-report data were conducted first and confirmed using SO data.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Univariate outliers were trimmed and all assumptions (e.g., normality, homoscedasticity, linearity) were met. Table 2 displays descriptive information, internal consistency and inter-rater reliability of scales. Scales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency given small number of items (Kline, 1986), Cronbach’s \( \alpha > .70 \) for scales with \( \geq 6 \) items; and the four 4-item conflict management style subscales had satisfactory inter-item correlation averages (Pallant, 2001) \( (.25 \) to \( .43 \) for participants; \( .29 \) to \( .46 \) for SO). Participant-SO inter-rater \( r \)s were significant and generally moderate \( (.23-.55) \) for all scales except yielding.

To assess possible gender differences, correlations (two-tailed) were computed for males and females separately. The only significant difference between genders was perspective taking explaining more of the variance of avoidance for males than females, self-report \( z = 1.98, p<.05 \). Independent sample \( t \)-tests compared males and females on all variables. The only significant finding was females \( (M = 50.73, SD = 7.78) \) scoring higher than males \( (M =45.08 SD = 6.85) \) on self-reported ability to attend to emotions \( t(120) = -4.10, p< .01, \eta^2 = .12 \).

Intercorrelations among measures.

Table 3 displays inter-correlations among variables. In support of hypothesis one, both participant and SO data sets indicated that higher disposition to forgive was associated with greater problem solving and yielding conflict styles, however, in only partial support, a forgiving disposition was associated with less fighting and greater avoiding styles only in the SO data.

Emotion management, perspective taking and forgiveness of others.

To determine whether perspective taking mediated relationships between emotion management (attention and repair) and ForgivingDisp, Baron and Kenny’s (1986) causal steps method was used. In this method if B is proposed to mediate the relationship between A and C, then initially bivariate relationships among all three variables must be demonstrated, followed by a regression predicting C from A and B.

Regarding A-B relationships in self-report data (see Table 3), repair (but not attention) correlated significantly with perspective taking (proposed mediator). When repair and
perspective taking were then entered together to predict ForgivingDisp, $F(2, 119) = 10.96$, $R^2=.156, p<.0005$, both predictors contributed significantly, indicating perspective taking partially mediated the effect. In SO data, repair and perspective taking correlated significantly, and in regression analysis partial mediation was again found, $F(2, 119) = 14.42$, $R^2=.195, p<.0005$. See Figure 1. Sobel’s Product of Coefficients Approach (Sobel’s PCA) confirmed the indirect effect of repair on forgiveness: self-report data Sobel coefficient=2.18, $p=.03$; SO data=3.46, $p=.0005$.

The regressions were all repeated with attention (to avoid Type I errors) and gender (to eliminate potential contamination by gender) included as predictors. All significant findings were replicated.

Emotion management, perspective taking and conflict management styles.

Repeating Baron and Kenny’s (1986) approach, using self-report data, attention did not correlate with any conflict style (criterion variable), and repair correlated only with problem solving style, while perspective taking correlated significantly with repair, problem solving, yielding, and fighting. Thus the only possible mediation effect involved perspective taking mediating the repair and problem solving relationship. In that self-report-based regression, $F(2, 119) = 18.99$, $R^2=.242, p<.0005$, both repair and perspective taking contributed unique variance (see Figure 1). The significant correlations (Table 3) and regression were replicated with SO data, $F(2, 119) = 51.65$, $R^2=.465, p<.0005$, and an indirect effect of repair on forgiveness was confirmed: Sobel self-report PCA =2.40, $p=.02$; SO PCA=4.98, $p<.001$.

While a mediation model could not be supported for the three remaining conflict styles, to determine possible multi-dimensional effects, regression analyses were conducted entering attention, repair and perspective taking at once to predict each conflict style. See Figure 2 for significant beta weights (paths). When predicting yielding style, self data $F(3,118)=5.97, p<.001$ and SO data $F(3,118)= 6.90, p<.0005$. For fighting, self-report data $F(3,118)=5.84, p=.001$, and SO $F(3,118)=3.14, p = .028$. For avoiding, self-report data $F(3,118)= 2.58, p=.06$, and SO $F(3,118) =10.51, p<.0005$.

All significant regressions were repeated entering gender at step 1. Significant findings were all replicated at similar $p$ levels.

Discussion

Findings supported the hypotheses that individuals with a disposition to forgive are
more active conflict-related problem solvers and likely to see others’ perspectives and accommodate others’ interests, while also finding ways to meet their own interests. Those more prone to forgive also were seen by others, but not by themselves, as more likely to avoid conflict and less likely to force others to meet their needs (although these were not strong relationships). The link between forgiveness and constructive problem solving is particularly important, since forgiving others by simply yielding to an offender, or by giving up on finding ways to meet the needs that were possibly denied by an offender’s action, could potentially result in reduced personal well being and repeated transgressions by the offender. This point is consistent with conceptualizations of forgiveness as not engaging in retaliation, but also not involving condoning or excusing what the offender has done; forgiveness instead involves a transformation from negative to positive affect, thoughts, behaviours or motivations towards the offender (Enright & Coyle, 1998; McCullough et al., 2003) and, as demonstrated in our study, is consistent with ensuring one’s own needs are met in some way in the process.

Findings related to a proposed mediation model of determinants of forgiveness were consistent with an ability to repair one’s emotions predicting disposition to forgive, and perspective taking partially mediating that relationship (partially replicating Hodgson and Wertheim (2007) who found perspective taking fully mediated the relationship). This pattern could suggest that a general ability to repair one’s emotions aids a capacity to see another’s viewpoint and the two abilities or tendencies promote a forgiving disposition, although the correlational nature of the data precludes causal conclusions. The same pattern of significant predictors was also found when predicting a problem-solving conflict style and both the forgiveness and problem solving models were replicated with significant other data, strengthening support for the models. In sum, effective interpersonal problem solvers appear to be individuals who can avoid being swept away by negative emotions, and instead regulate their feelings to consider the perspective of others and look for solutions that meet the needs and interests of both parties; those who forgive shared similar characteristics.

In predicting the other styles of managing conflict, greater perspective taking consistently (across self report and SO data sets) predicted greater yielding style and lower fighting style scores, while evidence for the role of emotion repair was weaker. These findings suggest that yielding and fighting are not necessarily restricted to individuals with or without particular emotion management skills, but are more determined by whether the individual is willing and able to consider another person’s viewpoint, and attempts to address the other’s interests in a conflict. This conceptualization aligns with models of conflict in which motivation (concern for self or others) and approach (competitive versus cooperative)
determine conflict responses (e.g., Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Deutsch, 2006).

The avoiding conflict style did not receive consistent support in relation to predictors. While SO data suggested greater perspective taking was associated with more avoidance, the relationship based on self-report data was marginal. Similarly marginal relationships were found for emotion repair predicting avoidance based on self-report, with no support in SO data. These equivocal findings are consistent with prior conflict research which is unclear whether avoidance is a result of high versus low concern for others (Gabrielidis et al., 1997). Avoidance did not appear to be due to an inability to manage one’s emotions or poor problem solving abilities. Given that avoidant communication patterns in relationships appear to relate to lower relationship satisfaction (Smith, et al., 2008), future research would benefit from exploring other possible predictors or moderators related to avoidance, such as confidence in resolving conflict, beliefs in how controllable outcomes may be, fears of emotional expression in self and others, or repressor versus sensitizer defense styles.

The findings have important implications for educational and therapeutic approaches to handling interpersonal conflict and grievances. Different approaches to conflict appear to be associated with different abilities and motivational styles. While a fighting style might at first appear to result from difficulty managing negative emotions, findings suggested it was more related to a lack of perspective taking; with a yielding style reflecting the reverse, i.e., strong empathic tendencies. With both styles it may be most important initially to assist individuals in understanding that ‘win-win’ approaches are preferable and possible (Wertheim, et al., 2006).

The more productive conflict management style, problem solving, as well as forgiveness, appear to involve the combination of an ability to empathize and also to manage one’s own emotions positively (e.g., to regain positive affect and optimism following negative events). Thus therapeutic and educational interventions promoting constructive conflict resolution may need to target not only the abilities to view all sides’ perspectives and creatively find ways to address the interests, needs and concerns of the parties (e.g., through active listening and brainstorming options) but also methods for transforming negative emotions to more positive ones (e.g., through positive self-talk or mindfulness) in order to enable empathizing and option generating to take place.

This is the first study to the authors’ knowledge to examine the relationship between dispositional forgiveness and conflict management styles, and test a comparative model of predictors of these two aspects of difficult interpersonal relations. Important strengths of this study included using SO responses to replicate findings; and the use of a community sample
to extend generalisability of findings. However, the correlational nature of the study precludes inferring causal relationships so experimental and prospective research is needed. Furthermore, while SO reports increase confidence in findings, some variables, such as emotion repair, yielding or avoidance, may be difficult to observe or distinguish from similar constructs, so SO reports are not necessarily more valid than self reports. Both self- and other-reporters who retrospectively respond about an extended time period may make inaccurate, summary judgments. Observational approaches focusing on behavior samples in natural or experimental contexts and repeated self- or SO-monitoring are therefore recommended to strengthen confidence in findings. Finally, future research should examine moderators of relationships among variables (e.g., culture, beliefs and expectations about forgiveness and conflict) and explore further predictors such as context of the transgressions (intent attribution, offence severity), agreeableness or neuroticism which may also underlie conflict styles (Koutsos, et al., 2008).

In concluding, the findings suggested that conflict styles most associated with win-lose outcomes (fighting and yielding) were best predicted by how prone parties were to take on another’s perspective; those who empathized less were more likely to fight with others and not concede. While empathy also predicted the longer-lasting, constructive approaches of problem solving and forgiving, those forms of handling differences were additionally associated with an ability to manage emotions in general. Individuals who were more likely to forgive also were seen to be better problem solvers, suggesting the two styles may be linked. The present findings reinforce the importance of assisting conflicting parties to work through distressing or anger-related emotions and to support them in achieving understanding of others’ perspectives, concerns and grievances, without having to give up important self interests. The findings may have practical implications for managing conflict in a variety of relationship types including familial, intimate or other relationships.
References


Koutsos, P., Wertheim, E. H., & Kornblum, J. (2008). Paths to interpersonal forgiveness: The roles of personality, disposition to forgive and contextual factors in predicting
forgiveness following a specific offence. *Journal of Personality and Individual Differences, 44,* 337-348.


Table 1

*Age and National Background of Participants and Significant Others*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Significant Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Mean (SD)</td>
<td>31.25 (11.3)</td>
<td>32.78 (12.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>18 – 61</td>
<td>18 – 69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nationality (n/percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Significant Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Born</td>
<td>84 (68.9%)</td>
<td>86 (70.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia Born</td>
<td>6 (4.9%)</td>
<td>7 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Born</td>
<td>7 (5.7%)</td>
<td>10 (8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Born</td>
<td>14 (11.5%)</td>
<td>13 (10.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nationality</td>
<td>11 (9.1%)</td>
<td>6 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents nationality (n / %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Mother %</th>
<th>Father %</th>
<th>Mother %</th>
<th>Father %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Born</td>
<td>44 (36.1%)</td>
<td>36 (29.5%)</td>
<td>53 (43.4%)</td>
<td>48 (39.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Born</td>
<td>7 (5.7%)</td>
<td>7 (5.7%)</td>
<td>11 (9.0%)</td>
<td>10 (8.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Born</td>
<td>31 (25.4%)</td>
<td>42 (34.4%)</td>
<td>29 (23.8%)</td>
<td>35 (28.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Born</td>
<td>20 (16.4%)</td>
<td>21 (17.2%)</td>
<td>18 (14.8%)</td>
<td>18 (13.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nationality</td>
<td>20 (16.4%)</td>
<td>16 (13.1%)</td>
<td>11 (9.0%)</td>
<td>11 (9.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Descriptives and Reliability Estimates for Forgiveness, Emotion Management, Conflict Style, and Perspective Taking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Participants (n=122)</th>
<th>Significant Others (n=122)</th>
<th>Inter-Rater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>34.48</td>
<td>6.34</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion attention</td>
<td>48.51</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion repair</td>
<td>21.16</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solvinga</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidinga</td>
<td>12.52</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yieldinga</td>
<td>12.87</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fightinga</td>
<td>13.02</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective taking</td>
<td>17.29</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01; α=Cronbach’s alpha; a=Four-item scales
Table 3

*Participant and Significant Other (N = 122 each) Correlations Among Conflict Styles, Forgiveness, Emotion Management and Perspective Taking (Significant Other Data Displayed in **Bold** Upper Diagonal)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Forgiveness</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td>.36**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Emotion Attention</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Emotion Repair</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.54**</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.49**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Problem Solving</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.63**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Avoiding</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.39**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Yielding</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.46**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.38**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Fighting</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Perspective Taking</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-.32**</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01.
Figure 1.
Partial mediation models predicting forgiving disposition and problem solving style from emotion repair and perspective taking (significant other coefficients in parentheses).

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
Figure 2.

Path models predicting avoiding, fighting and yielding conflict styles from emotion management and perspective taking (significant other coefficients in parentheses).

- Consistent support across data sets
- weak support

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001, perspective taking does not act as mediator for these styles