Children's and Adolescents' Peer Relationships as Contexts for Forgiveness and Nonforgiveness

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigated how children and adolescents describe forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences within the context of their relationships with peers. Specifically, we examined (1) the types of relationships youth described in their narrative accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness, (2) how youth described changes in the nature of their relationships following forgiveness and nonforgiveness, and (3) the circumstances in which youth ultimately described forgiving or not forgiving their close friends for transgressions. A total of 100 children and adolescents (7-, 11- and 16-years-old) described two experiences in which they forgave or did not forgive a peer who had hurt them. At all ages, youth described friends more frequently in forgiveness narratives, and disliked peers more frequently in nonforgiveness narratives. Further, adolescents differentiated more between friends and good friends than 7-year-olds. Youth overall described more positive consequences in their relationships following forgiveness than nonforgiveness, but these effects were qualified by the manner in which youth described their experience of forgiveness. In particular, negative consequences for relationships were more often described following a lack of intrapersonal forgiveness (i.e., describing unresolved emotions persisting into the present). Last, a qualitative analysis of youths' forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences with good friends suggested that the type of harm, intentionality, and offender's response following the harm influenced youths' willingness to forgive a best friend. These findings provide new insight into the ways in which youth describe relationships as contexts for forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences and changes in their peer relationships following experiences.

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Children's and Adolescents' Peer Relationships as Contexts for Forgiveness and Nonforgiveness

Scholars largely agree that forgiveness in the aftermath of being hurt involves psychologically moving past a transgression; yet it may or may not also involve mending the relationship with the transgressor. In the field of forgiveness research, there is a debate surrounding whether forgiveness entails relationship restoration or not (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Research suggests that adults typically conceptualize forgiveness as including a psychological dimension, such as letting go of anger or empathizing with the offender. Yet it has become increasingly evident that forgiveness and relationships are intertwined (Finkel, Busbutt, Kimashino, & Hannon, 2002). Arguably, the relationships that victims share with offenders will influence the way that victims feel psychologically following a conflict. Thus, although forgiveness is a psychological process, the shared relationship with the offender will likely influence the way this process unfolds. Indeed, research on adults has implied that victims are more willing to forgive transgressors in the context of relationships with a positive history (Friesen, Fletcher, & Overall, 2005). In turn, forgiveness increases the chances that victims and transgressors will reconcile and potentially develop stronger bonds within their relationship (Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006).

Similar to other areas of forgiveness research, the influence of relationship history on forgiveness and the influence of forgiveness on the future of relationships have been less widely examined in children and adolescents (Johnson, Wernli, & LaVoie, 2013; Mullet & Girard, 2000; van der Wal, Karremans, & Cilessen, 2016). Consistent with trends in the adult literature, research has found that children and adolescents are more likely to express forgiveness towards a friend than a disliked peer (van der Wal et al., 2016). Further, children and adolescents have been found to place more blame on disliked peers than liked peers, and are also more likely to express wanting to avoid them following harm (Peets, Hodges, & Salmivalli, 2013); inasmuch as attributions of culpability and avoidant responses may interfere with forgiveness (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Peets et al., 2013), this suggests that children's experiences of forgiveness may indeed be situated in the context of specific relationships. Even so, children and adolescents may differ from adults in their forgiveness experiences; the nature of children's peer relationships evolves across childhood and adolescence, and the way that children think about their social worlds also changes across development (Selman, Jaquette, & Lavin, 1977). Thus, although

adolescents may describe intersections between relationships and forgiveness experiences in a similar way to adults (Jones & Dembo, 1989), patterns among younger children may be distinct.

The current study examined the way in which 7-, 11-, and 16-year-old youth describe forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences within the context of their relationships with peers who transgressed against them. Specifically, we examined how youths' descriptions of relationships were linked to their tendency to forgive or not forgive their peers. In turn, we examined youths' descriptions of how forgiveness and nonforgiveness influenced the course of their relationships following experiences of peer conflict.

Defining Forgiveness

Prior to the early 1980s, forgiveness was rarely addressed in fields outside of religion. Therefore, given that research on this topic is relatively recent, studies continue to incorporate varied definitions of forgiveness (McCullough et al., 2000). It continues to be debated whether forgiveness is predominantly interpersonal (focusing on reconciliation) or intrapersonal (focusing on emotional and psychological closure) in nature (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998). Specifically with respect to the issue of whether forgiveness involves an interpersonal dimension, scholars have questioned the role of reconciliation in forgiveness (Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992).

Some researchers argue that forgiveness and reconciliation go hand in hand. Therefore, when a victim forgives a transgressor, they are expected to continue a relationship with him/her (Freedman, 1998). On the other hand, others argue that reconciliation and forgiveness are distinct processes. Although reconciliation may follow from forgiveness, forgiveness does not necessarily entail reconciling relationships with transgressors (Enright et al., 1992); related to this, forgiveness does not require that victims will behave benevolently towards their transgressors (Enright & Coyle, 1998; Strelan, McKee, Calic, Cook, & Shaw, 2013).

In terms of intrapersonal dimensions, there is also recognition of the emotional and psychological aspects involved in forgiveness. In particular, it is argued that forgiveness involves the dissipation of the victim's negative emotions in regard to the transgressor and the harmful event. Additionally, forgiveness thus involves adopting more positive feelings towards the transgressor and the event (Lawler-Row, Scott, Raineus, Edlis-Malityahou, & Moore, 2007). This conceptualization of forgiveness emphasizes the victim's wellbeing rather than the wellbeing of the victim's relationship with the transgressor. In sum, according to this definition,

forgiveness involves the reduction of the victim's negative feelings, thus supporting their own physical and mental health (Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989).

In an effort to organize these interpersonal and intrapersonal components, researchers have begun to identify two dimensions of forgiveness: interpersonal and intrapersonal forgiveness (Baumeister et al., 1998). The interpersonal dimension involves the relationship between the victim and the offender in which the act of forgiveness is taking place whereas the intrapersonal dimension involves the victim's emotions and cognitions relevant to forgiveness. These two dimensions of forgiveness are understood to be orthogonal. Recent studies examining how adults perceive forgiveness have validated Baumeister's dimensions of forgiveness, inasmuch as they are reflective of adults' own experiences. Findings indicated that adults mainly define forgiveness as either interpersonal or intrapersonal, while a minority defined forgiveness as involving both. Moreover, research has shown that many adults believe that forgiveness does not necessarily involve reconciliation (Lawler-Row et al., 2007). Furthermore, Strelan and colleagues asked participants to explain why they forgave a transgressor and gave them various options that focused on either inter- or intrapersonal forgiveness reasoning. These findings have shown that when victims described their forgiveness experience as being intrapersonally motivated ("It seemed a way to stop myself hurting"), they were less likely to reconcile and more likely to avoid their transgressor. Conversely, and unsurprisingly, when victims described their forgiveness experience as interpersonally motivated ("I wanted to maintain a good relationship") they were more likely to have already reconciled with their transgressor. Research has also found that when victims simultaneously endorse both inter- and intrapersonal forms of forgiveness they are more likely to avoid harming their offender and to restore their relationship to its previous form (Strelan et al., 2013).

In sum, in response to transgressions, victims' experiences of forgiveness may take a variety of forms. The way in which victims forgive may depend on a number of factors, which will be discussed throughout this paper (Lawler-Row et al., 2007; Strelan et al., 2013). Overall, however, it is generally understood that forgiveness entails resolving the negative consequences of transgressions; these negative consequences can be either emotional, relational or both (Baumeister et al., 1998).

Regardless of the predominance of interpersonal vs. intrapersonal aspects of forgiveness, the relationship in which forgiveness takes place will arguably influence the victim's willingness

to forgive. A high quality relationship will likely make it easier for a victim to overcome emotional and psychological consequences of transgressions, as they may have more positive feelings towards the transgressor (Friesen et al., 2005; Tsang et al., 2006). Ultimately, the relationship is the context in which forgiveness takes place; this implies that the state of relationships prior to harm events will play a role in victims' willingness to forgive (Freedman, 1998; Friesen et al., 2005). Research addressing these issues is discussed in the following sections.

Relationships as Contexts for Forgiveness Among Adults

Relationship history influences forgiveness. Overall, research addressing intersections between relationships and forgiveness provides support for the proposition that relationship quality influences victims' willingness to forgive. More specifically, positive relationship quality prior to a transgression increases the likelihood that a victim will forgive their offender (Friesen et al., 2005). Victims sharing a high quality relationship with a transgressor are more likely to report achieving intrapersonal as well as interpersonal forgiveness (Friesen et al., 2005). Perhaps partially explaining this finding is the fact that when victims and offenders share a positive relationship, offenders engage in conciliatory gestures more frequently than when they share a lower quality relationship (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). Furthermore, in the context of high quality relationships, victims place less blame on their relationship partner than victims in negative relationships. Findings have also shown that when victims accept some of the blame for a transgression, they are less inclined to blame and are more willing to forgive the transgressor (Friesen et al., 2005).

Nevertheless, I posit that in some other ways, high quality relationships may be uniquely vulnerable to the negative effects of transgressions, although research has not typically addressed these issues. Findings have shown that transgressions involving a betrayal of relational expectations, such as trust and loyalty, may lead to a victim being unwilling to continue a relationship with the offender (Robinson, 1996). Therefore, when an important relationship partner betrays a victim's trust, the victim may feel the betrayal was more severe than if a similar transgression occurred in a less intimate relationship. This may in turn lead to the victims choosing not to reconcile with their relationship partner and not forgiving them (Finkel et al., 2002; Robinson, 1996).

Forgiveness and nonforgiveness influence relationships. In addition to the prospective effects that relationships may exert on forgiveness, in turn, forgiveness may precipitate changes in relationships. As previously discussed, forgiveness can lead to reconciliation of relationships between victims and transgressors. Research has found that forgiveness appears to facilitate victims' feelings of closeness with and commitment to the offender (Strelan et al., 2013). The same study indicated that increased levels of forgiveness are related to increased relationship satisfaction on follow up measures, and that relationships are likely to be restored to their previous state especially if victims express interpersonal forgiveness (Strelan et al., 2013). Additionally, the experience of overcoming a transgression and expressing forgiveness to the transgressor may actually lead to an increase in relationship quality between the victim and the transgressor (Tsang et al., 2006). When the victim expresses forgiveness towards the transgressor it begins the process of reconciling the relationship and may create a greater mutual understanding about how both parties wish to be treated.

On the other hand, as noted above, forgiveness does not necessarily imply that there will be reconciliation of the relationship between the victim and offender. Although some adults equate forgiveness and reconciliation, it is also possible for victims to consider that they have forgiven an offense but nevertheless choose not to re-enter into a relationship with the offender (Freedman, 1998). It is important to consider that transgressions may change the way that victims and offenders perceive and interact with each other. Specifically, victims may feel a loss of trust in transgressors and may fear that entering into a relationship with them again will lead to repeated offenses (Robinson, 1996). If victims no longer feel as though they can trust the transgressor, reconciliation will be impossible. Additionally, when victims and transgressors begin to interact differently with each other it can lead to a change in their relationship that may not be reversible (Finkel et al., 2002; Robinson, 1996; Tsang et al., 2006).

Evidently, based on findings suggesting that forgiveness has a positive influence on relationships, it is expected that nonforgiveness will have the opposite effect. Therefore, it is expected that when victims are unwilling to forgive their transgressors, their relationship will either deteriorate or completely end (Friesen et al., 2005; Tsang et al., 2006).

Developmental Perspectives on Forgiveness

Although most research on forgiveness has been based on adults, researchers have begun to investigate how forgiveness develops throughout childhood. Most directly germane to this

issue, Enright et al. (1989) created a model for the development of forgiveness based on Kohlberg's model of development in justice reasoning. Similar to Kohlberg's model, Enright's model of forgiveness development involves six stages. In the first two stages, revengeful and restitutional forgiveness, victims will require punishment or revenge before forgiveness can occur. In the third and fourth stages, expectational forgiveness and forgiveness as a result of social harmony, forgiveness depends on pressure from significant others who may or may not be directly involved in the transgression. In the last two stages, forgiveness as love, forgiveness becomes unconditional and is used to promote positive attitudes for both the victim and the transgressor and to benefit the relationship. In testing this model, Enright and colleagues used scenarios adapted from Kohlberg's work (e.g., the Heinz dilemma). Specifically, children, adolescents and adults were asked to respond to a scenario in which a man's wife is sick and requires a drug, which is too expensive for the man to purchase. The man asks the druggist for the drug, and the druggist does not give him the drug; instead, the druggist hides the drug and consequently the man's wife dies. The researchers narrated the scenario with different endings that fit the six developmental stages of forgiveness, and asked participants whether each ending would help the man forgive the druggist and to explain their reasoning (Enright et al., 1992; Enright et al., 1989). For example, the questions "If the man got even with the druggist would that make him less sad? Would it help him to forgive the druggist? Why or why not?" were intended to assess reasoning related to the first developmental stage of forgiveness.

In their study, Enright et al. (1989) found that children and adults differed in their stages of forgiveness, although age effects were relatively modest in size. The study involved participants aged 10, 12 and 16 years as well as college students and adults. They found that the youngest children (aged 10) were most likely to forgive at the second stage, requiring restitution, in which the transgressor provided the victim with restorative actions. By early adolescence, they were beginning to reach stage 3 or expectational forgiveness and by age 16, participants had fully acquired the skills to be in stage 3. Additionally, they found that college students and adults were mainly in stage 4, also known as forgiveness as a result of social harmony. Although they did find that some adults attained the two highest stages of forgiveness development, forgiveness in an unconditional form was quite rare. Thus, this research implies an increase in the sophistication of reasoning about forgiveness from childhood into adulthood, and also an increase in emphasis on some social dimension of forgiveness experiences, in that others'

opinions increase in importance and relationships become the main driving force behind forgiveness (Enright et al., 1992; Enright et al., 1989).

The robustness of these conclusions, however, is called into question by some limitations of this study. The scenarios used in this research may not have been ecologically valid for younger children and adolescents. Having a wife pass away because a drug was unavailable would not be something that children or adolescents would have experienced. Additionally, the questions and added endings to the scenarios, suggesting that the druggist apologized or the priest advocated forgiving, for example, may be considered leading. That is, the study was designed to test a proposed model, rather than capture the dimensions that children spontaneously describe as accounting for forgiveness or nonforgiveness.

More recent studies have also suggested that Enright's model of forgiveness development may indeed be misleading. Research has shown that willingness to forgive actually decreases as a function of age rather than increasing (Chiaramello, Mesnil, Sastre, & Mullet, 2008; Mullet & Girard, 2000). Based on Enright's perspective, willingness to forgive should increase as a function of age, in that as youth develop through the forgiveness stages, they should no longer rely on revenge or social pressure to forgive. According to Enright, when youth reach adolescence and young adulthood they should forgive because it is the moral thing to do, and by adulthood forgiveness should be unconditional (Enright et al., 1992; Enright et al., 1989). Current research has not supported this posited developmental progression. As older youth develop a greater ability to integrate varied social concerns into their forgiveness experiences, they are in fact more likely to describe feeling unwilling to forgive a perpetrator. Specifically, it has been found that in early adolescence, willingness to forgive transgressors is at its lowest, and may increase again in late adolescence and adulthood. This may be a result of the developmental difference in the way adolescents perceive relationships compared to children, in that adolescents perceive relationships as being more trust based than younger children (Selman et al., 1977). Therefore, adolescents may feel less willing to forgive following transgressions within relationships (Chiaramello et al., 2008; Mullet & Girard, 2000).

Even more, scholars have questioned this model based on the lack of inclusion of other factors that may influence victims' forgiveness (Girard & Mullet, 2012). That is, adult forgiveness depends on a variety of factors being integrated and leading to a victim's willingness to forgive their transgressor. These factors include apologies, cancellation of consequences,

intentions, motives, relationships and so on. Researchers have found that children and adolescents are capable of integrating these factors into their forgiveness process to varying degrees (Darby & Schlenker, 1982), implying that Enright's model may not accurately capture the breadth of children's experiences of forgiveness.

More specifically, research suggests that apologies and the offender's intentions become increasingly important to adolescents in making decisions about forgiveness (Girard & Mullet, 2012). Therefore, adolescents value an appropriate apology from a transgressor and describe feeling more willing to forgive when they receive an apology than when they do not receive an apology (Girard & Mullet, 2012). Similarly, when adolescents perceive the act of harm as accidental they are more willing to forgive the transgressor than when they believe the transgressor acted intentionally. Younger children were also found to consider social factors in their process of forgiveness, such as apologies, although they tended to expect that offenders were equally sorry regardless of the type of apology offered by the offender (e.g., "Excuse me", "I'm sorry I feel bad" vs. "I'm sorry I feel bad, let me help you"; Darby & Schlenker, 1982). As a result, younger children may reason about forgiveness in a different way than adolescents and adults do. Children's ability to integrate other factors into their forgiveness reasoning may play a significant role in the development of children's and adolescents' understandings of forgiveness (Chiaramello et al., 2008).

To date, these findings regarding the development of forgiveness have emerged from studies of youths' third-party responses to hypothetical scenarios (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Girard & Mullet, 2012; Peets et al., 2013). As such, there is a lack of research examining the ways in which children and adolescents describe their *own* experiences of forgiveness within the context of their ongoing relationships. It has been found that youths' constructions of meanings when discussing their own conflict experiences are more personally relevant and complex than their responses to hypothetical scenarios (e.g., Wainryb, Brehl, & Matwin, 2005). Additionally, when youth respond to hypothetical scenarios, they are less likely to consider events within the context of relationship histories that may influence their willingness to forgive. Therefore, a reliance on hypothetical scenarios limits our understanding of the ways in which children experience forgiveness and nonforgiveness in their day-to-day lives and as embedded in their own ongoing peer relationships.

Furthermore, the handful of studies that have examined forgiveness in younger samples

have tended to exclude children before early adolescence. In neglecting to include younger children in forgiveness research, this limits an understanding of the beginning stages of forgiveness development, as well as the ability to identify the factors that younger children describe as influencing their willingness to forgive. In sum, examining younger children as well as adolescents will increase an understanding of the ways in which youths' descriptions of intersections between forgiveness and relationships change with age. With this in mind, the next section describes how children's friendships evolve with age and differ between boys and girls, so as to provide a basis for examining how these relationships influence, and are influenced by forgiveness and nonforgiveness.

Age and Gender Differences in Children's Friendships

In the forgiveness literature, the majority of adult research examines forgiveness in the context of romantic relationships, which is not a relevant relationship context prior to adolescence. Even though friendships are sometimes examined in adult research, the features of children's friendships differ from those of adults.

Children's understandings of friendship. The meanings that children attribute to friendship change developmentally from childhood into adolescence. Specifically, children in the early school-aged years define friends as playmates, or those with whom they share interest and often choose to play with when they are accessible (Selman et al., 1977). In late childhood, friendships are understood to be mutual relationships in which both parties choose the other as a friend. Trust increases in importance as a feature of friendship during this stage. Additionally, at this stage friends are very responsive to each other's needs and desires (Brendgen, Markiewicz, Doyle, & Bukowski, 2001). During late childhood into early adolescence, a great importance is placed on having mutual friendships, and thus children and young adolescents in this stage are highly motivated to ensure they continue in their relationships with friends (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). In adolescence, friendships increase in intimacy. At this stage, adolescents begin to focus on mutual understanding, share increasing similarity in interests, and engage in increased levels of intimate self-disclosure. Adolescents perceive engaging in intimate self-disclosure as a core feature of high quality relationships (Selman et al., 1997). This increased intimacy also influences the expectations that adolescents have of their friends: adolescents expect their friends to be honest, loyal and trustworthy (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). Arguably, these expectations of friends may in turn lead to increased opportunity for relationship betrayal,

such that friends committing some types of transgressions (e.g., divulging personal information) may be viewed as failing to uphold their side of the relationship (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012; Selman et al., 1997).

As youths' perspectives on friendship change throughout development, youths' reasoning about conflict within close relationships also changes in corresponding ways. Komolova and Wainryb (2011) studied the ways in which children and adolescents respond to conflicts in hypothetical scenarios in which a protagonist's preferences are described as coming in conflict with a friend's preferences. The study involved three conditions, one in which both friends' preferences were of equal importance, one in which the friend's preferences were more important and one in which the protagonist's preferences were more important (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). The results indicated that both 5- and 10-year-old participants endorsed acquiescing to the friend across all three conditions. When asked why they chose to use this strategy, the 5-year-olds focused on the emotional consequences for their friend, whereas the 10-year-old participants frequently explained that if the narrators did what they wanted they may not have any friends left (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). The developmental stage of late childhood is one in which youth place great importance on relationship maintenance, and perhaps prioritize this goal over ensuring that their own needs are met. In this sense, the findings imply that during this stage, youth are willing to acquiesce to their friends to ensure they will not be left friendless (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011).

In this same study, 17-year-old participants responded differently, sometimes prioritizing the needs of their friends and sometimes prioritizing their own. They reasoned that in a good relationship, a friend should understand that it is important to do what you want to do (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). These findings suggest that adolescents have a greater level of comfort and security in asserting themselves in their friendships. In this sense, adolescents are less likely to give into their friends' desires just to ensure they will not be left friendless, as they believe their friends will and should respect their decisions (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011).

In sum, as intimacy increases, adolescents may have higher expectations for friends with whom they share a close friendship. Adolescents expect that close friends will be loyal, trustworthy and honor their relationship (Bowker, 2004; Jones & Dembo, 1989). This implies that once youth reach adolescence they may be more willing to endorse nonforgiveness and

evaluate nonforgiveness in a positive way when they feel a transgression betrays their friendship expectations (Komolova & Wainryb, 2011).

Friendship stability and selectivity. Friendship selectivity increases as a function of age. That is, younger children describe most of their peers as friends; in late childhood, children typically identify eight to nine friends who they value. In early adolescence, selectivity increases, and adolescents identify four to six important friendships. In late adolescence and early adulthood, the narrowing of friendship networks continues and adolescents identify one to two close friendships (Hardy, Bukowski, & Sippola, 2002).

Friendship stability also changes with age (Bowker, 2004). Specifically, researchers have found that stability in friendships increases between the ages of 5 and 10, declines somewhat in early adolescence, and then increases and remains stable following this period. It is possible that a variety of factors explain decreases in friendship stability in early adolescence; this period involves a great amount of change, which may result in difficulty continuing friendships (Bowker, 2004). Specifically, early adolescence corresponds with changes in schools from elementary school to middle school for many children, which may result in some friends being separated. Furthermore, early adolescence coincides with the onset of puberty, which adolescents will go through at different rates. This in turn will lead to their interests differing, as adolescents going through puberty may no longer be interested in the same things as friends who have yet to go through puberty. These factors may lead to differences between friends that drive them further apart (Hardy et al., 2002).

Gender differences. In addition to developmental differences, friendships differ across genders. Girls and boys differ in their style of friendships and as a result their reactions to transgressions are expected to differ. Despite some studies suggesting that boys have less intimate friendships than girls (Bowker, 2004; Markovits, Benenson, & Dolensky, 2001; Rose, Carlson, & Waller, 2007), other research has shown that both girls and boys value their friendships to the same extent (Jones & Dembo, 1989). Even so, girls more frequently engage in intimate self-disclosure with their close friends than boys do, whereas boys more frequently share close friendships based on similar interests (Brendgen et al., 2001; Rose et al, 2007). As a result of their increased engagement in self-disclosure, girls have a greater risk of being victims of relational aggression (Benenson & Christakos, 2003). Sharing intimate details about oneself with friends, as girls tend to do when they engage in intimate self-disclosure, leads to the

opportunity for friends to disclose that information with others. Even so, boys can also become victims of relational aggression and it is important to keep in mind that they are not immune to this type of aggression (Rose et al., 2007). Overall, boys' friendships have been found to be more stable and long lasting than girls' friendships, perhaps as a result of gender differences in reactions to transgressions (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012).

More specifically, although both girls and boys have similar conflict levels, a study by MacEvoy and Asher (2012) suggested that girls as compared to boys perceive conflict as being more problematic and perceive transgressions within close friendships to be more severe. More specifically, girls appear to have higher expectations for their friends, and girls are more likely than boys to judge their friends' transgressions as meaning their friend does not care about them, respect them, or is trying to push them around (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). Their findings indicated that girls are more likely to feel angry or sad as a result of friends' transgressions (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). Therefore, when friends violate girls' expectations of friendships, they have been found to react more angrily and this may therefore lead to greater consequences for the relationship. As a response to violations of friendship expectations, girls are more likely than boys to stop being friends with the transgressor, stop talking to them, and tell the transgressors' secrets to others (Benenson & Christakos, 2003; MacEvoy & Asher, 2012).

Youths' friendships differ across development and between genders in a variety of areas. It was expected based on the previously discussed findings that youths' perceptions of peer relationships would influence how they describe the relational contexts framing their own forgiveness and nonforgiveness. It was also expected that youths' perceptions of their relationships would influence their descriptions of relationship changes precipitated by forgiveness or nonforgiveness. However, before we describe these hypotheses in detail, we first summarize the handful of studies directly examining links between relationships and forgiveness in childhood and adolescence.

Research on Connections Between Youths' Relationships and Experiences of Forgiveness

Children's and adolescents' relationship histories as influences on forgiveness.

Similar to adults, relationship history is likely to influence the way children and adolescents react to transgressions. In a recent study, van der Wal and colleagues (2016) asked 9- to 13-year-old participants to describe a time when a friend or non-friend made them feel angry or sad. When asked about forgiveness, participants reported forgiving friends more often than non-friends.

Further, studies have shown that adolescents identify that transgressions are more likely to come from disliked peers than liked peers (Peets et al., 2013), and are more likely to avoid the transgressor and desire revenge when transgressors are disliked peers. In this sense, adolescents appear to hold disliked peers responsible for transgressions more than liked peers, also implying that youth may be less willing to forgive disliked peers. Similarly, studies have found that adolescents identify feeling more hurt as a result of transgressions by disliked peers than liked peers. These findings may be a result of youth more frequently attributing hostile intentions to disliked peers (Peets et al., 2013; Recchia, Rajput, & Peccia, 2015). Similar to adults, it may be possible that adolescents feel as though liked peers or friends are not intentionally hurting them and therefore may feel less hurt by the transgression and be more willing to forgive and reconcile (Peets et al., 2013; Robinson, 1996).

In contrast, it is also possible that transgressions in close friendships may lead to increased feelings of hurt. Adolescents' expectations of their close friends to meet the core friendship values creates a greater risk for betrayal, for example, as in situations when friends may share each others' secrets with third parties (Selman et al.,1977). It is likely that when such violations of core friendship expectations occur, this will lead to increased feelings of hurt and decreased willingness to forgive, especially in adolescents. In line with this, Johnson and Wernli (2015) found that when adolescents discussed transgressions in close relationships they expressed feeling more anger than in less intimate relationships. Furthermore, adolescents suggested they would be less likely to forgive close relationship partners if they felt angrier following a transgression. Therefore, it is likely that close relationships may be vulnerable to the negative effects of transgressions (Johnson & Wernli, 2015).

These findings imply paradoxical effects of close friendships on forgiveness. On the one hand, most studies have found that youth express more willingness to forgive a close friend; yet these findings suggest it may actually be more difficult to forgive transgressions within close friendships (Johnson & Wernli, 2015; Johnson et al., 2013). Therefore, close friendships may be both protected against negative consequences of transgressions and at a greater risk of these same consequences. It may thus be illuminating to identify what distinguishes between transgressions within close friendships that are more easily forgiven and those that are not forgiven.

Forgiveness and nonforgiveness as influences on children's and adolescents' relationships. Research has largely neglected to address the question of how children's experiences of forgiveness and nonforgiveness influence the subsequent course of their relationships. In the context of forgiveness experiences, we expect outcomes for relationships to be relatively similar across age, such that forgiveness will be described as leading to positive consequences for relationships. In contrast, based on research addressing children's and adolescents' evolving expectations for their friends, we hypothesized that younger children would describe fewer negative consequences for their relationships following a nonforgiveness experiences (Selman et al., 1977). In contrast, it was anticipated that adolescents' experiences of nonforgiveness would be more similar to those of adults as a result of the similar expectations in their relationships; this proposition is also supported by recent research with adolescents (Johnson et al., 2004; Robinson, 1996).

As adolescents' relationships are more similar to adult relationships, it is conceivable that they will experience similar consequences to their relationships following transgressions within their close relationships (Johnson et al., 2004; Johnson & Wernli, 2015). Adolescents have greater expectations for their friends to uphold and engage in increased levels of self-disclosure as compared to children (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). Therefore, similar to adults, violations of these expectations within adolescents' relationships may create a feeling of a severe breach of trust in close friendships. When trust is lost in a close friendship, similar to adults, adolescents express feeling unwilling to reconcile with their relationship partner (Johnson & Wernli, 2015; Robinson, 1996).

Adolescents, especially girls, are more frequently found to have experienced friendship dissolutions than younger children. Thus, adolescents may more often describe experiencing a complete end to their friendship or downgrade in their friendship, withholding the intimate aspects involved in close friendships following relationship betrayals. Both of these types of dissolutions are found in adolescence, although downgrade dissolutions are more frequent (Card, 2007; Card, 2010). This may be a result of the obligation to continue sharing similar environments and friend groups (Bowker, 2011). Complete dissolutions in close friendships may lead to the development of antipathetic relationships, in which both parties dislike each other (Card, 2010). Adolescents identify that 43% of their antipathetic relationships were formed out of previous friendships (Card, 2007). It has been suggested that violations of expectations in

intimate friendships may be the cause for the development of antipathetic relationships between former friends (Casper & Card, 2010). Both antipathetic relationships and friendship dissolution are more frequent in adolescents as compared to younger children, and younger children also have more difficulty maintaining antipathetic relationships than adolescents (Card, 2007). Overall then, this body of work suggests that discrete transgressions may have less impact on children's ongoing relationships than those of adolescents (Card, 2007; Card, 2010; Casper & Card, 2010).

It is evident that betrayals within close friendships may lead to dissolutions, but it is also important to remember that friendships may buffer against the negative effects of transgressions. Although victims of betrayal may feel more anger, adolescents also describe feeling more willing to forgive close friends than other peers. Therefore, there appears to be a paradox in which youths' close friendships may be defined as being at a greater risk for nonforgiveness and friendship dissolution, while simultaneously protective against negative consequences (Johnson & Wernli, 2015).

In sum, overall, it is expected that adolescents will be similar to adults in their descriptions of the relational consequences of forgiveness and nonforgiveness. Additionally, as previously mentioned, most research in the area of forgiveness and relationships continues to neglect children and early adolescents. Consequently, to gain an understanding of how children's experiences of forgiveness are related to developmental changes in their relationships, it is important to include younger participants in studies in this area.

Summary and Current Study

The current study examined narrative accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness events among 7-, 11-, and 16-year-old youth. I used youths' narrative accounts of actual events to gain a better understanding of the ways in which they described their experiences with transgressions in peer relationships. Within the context of the broader investigation on which my thesis was based, using narratives allowed us to examine the ways youth make sense of their own experiences. That is, using narratives allowed youth to provide their own accounts of relational contexts for forgiveness or nonforgiveness in a way that may not be possible with hypothetical scenarios. This methodology allowed us to examine how youth of different ages spontaneously discuss factors influencing their willingness to forgive or lack thereof as well as the consequences they perceive in their own relationships (Wainryb et al., 2005).

Based on the literature previously discussed, the current study examined three research questions. First, I examined the *types of relationships youth of different ages discussed in narrative accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness*. I did not expect that younger children would differentiate clearly between experiences with friends and close friends, as past research suggested that they usually have less intimate friendships and tend to have a greater number of friends than adolescents (Bowker, 2004; Jones & Dembo, 1989).

Further, I also expected that age would moderate associations between forgiveness and relationship types, such that youths' descriptions of relationships would differentiate forgiveness and nonforgiveness accounts more clearly in older children (e.g., referring more to friends in forgiveness events and disliked peers in nonforgiveness events); with age, youth become more selective with their friendships and differentiate more between friends, close friends and disliked peers than younger children (Bowker, 2004; Jones & Dembo, 1989; Tsang et al., 2006). Nevertheless, overall, I expected that youth would discuss disliked peers in nonforgiveness narratives more frequently, and friends more frequently in forgiveness narratives (Johnson et al., 2013; Peets et al., 2013; van der Wal et al., 2016).

Based on the close friendship paradox, I expected to find descriptions of close friends in both forgiveness and nonforgiveness narratives. Even so, I expected to find an interaction between age and relationship type in that I anticipated that adolescents would more frequently discuss close friends in nonforgiveness narratives as compared to younger children, given research implying that adolescents tend to have more intimate friendships than younger children and have higher expectations for their close friends than younger children (Bowker, 2004; Jones & Dembo, 1989).

Second, I examined *how youth described changes in the nature of their relationships following forgiveness and nonforgiveness events*. To examine this question in a more nuanced way, narratives were coded for the presence or absence of intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of forgiveness in Baumeister's typology (Baumeister et al., 1989). I expected that younger children would be more likely to describe interpersonal aspects of forgiveness, whereas adolescents would be more likely to reference both inter- and intrapersonal aspects of forgiveness. This is because past research suggests that younger children tend to focus on the actions and events occurring in a specific event, whereas older children and especially adolescents also elaborate on describing and evaluating their own and the offender's thoughts,

feelings, and motivations (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010); in other words, older children are more likely to reference intrapersonal aspects of events. I expected that the different types of forgiveness described in youths' accounts would influence the relational consequences that youth describe as following their experiences of harm (Baumeister et al., 1989). Overall, I expected that youth would describe improvements in their relationships or their relationships remaining the same as a consequence of forgiveness (Baumeister et al., 1998; Tsang et al., 2006). However, I expected that when youth described a lack of intra- or interpersonal dimensions of forgiveness, they would consequently describe deteriorations in relationships (Baumeister et al., 1998). In contrast, I expected nonforgiveness to lead to youths' descriptions of experiencing deteriorations or ending of relationships (Baumeister et al., 1998; Tsang et al., 2003). In terms of age-related change, I hypothesized that younger children would be less likely to refer to relationship changes than older youth, as it was expected that younger children would be less likely to consider broader long-term effects of the experiences. Consequently, overall, I expected that younger children would be more likely to refer to their relationship remaining the same in nonforgiveness narratives. This may be a result of younger children's more limited capacity to contemplate current events in the broader scheme of relationships and social experiences (Bowker, 2004; Fivush et al., 2011; Komolova & Wainryb, 2011).

Third, I examined the *circumstances in which youth ultimately described forgiving or not forgiving their close friends for transgressions*. Related to this, I examined whether and how youth described transgressions as violating psychological contracts within their relationship with transgressors. Based on previous research, I had some expectations for what the qualitative analysis would reveal, however, it was possible that this data would elucidate other factors that had yet to be considered. I expected that girls would more frequently describe not forgiving close friends following transgressions (Bowker, 2011; Card, 2007). Further, I expected that girls would refer to a breach in their friendship expectations more than boys, based on past research addressing how girls and boys perceive important friendships and respond to conflicts (Card, 2007; Casper & Card, 2010; MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). Contrarily, I expected that when good friends acted in an apologetic or remorseful manner following transgressions, participants would be more likely to express feeling willing to forgive (Darby & Schlenker, 1982). If the transgression was a repeated offense or there was a history of relationship betrayal within the friendship, I expected that participants would describe feeling less willing to forgive (MacEvoy

& Asher, 2012). Finally, I expected that adolescents would more frequently refer to a breach in their expectations within their relationships than younger children (Finkel et al., 2002; Peets et al., 2013).

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited in a mid-sized city in the US using flyers distributed in schools and summer camps and through word of mouth. The sample originally included 107 participants, but 7 participants were excluded from the analyses, as they were not able to provide an account of nonforgiveness (four 7-year-olds, two 11-year-olds, and one 16-year-old 2 girls and 5 boys). As such, 100 participants were divided into 3 age groups; 31 7-year-olds (*M* age = 7.5 years, range = 6.4 to 8.6), 35 11-year-olds (*M* age = 11.5 years, range = 10.8 to 12.5), and 34 16-year-olds (*M* age = 16.4 years, range = 15.3 to 17.9). Age groups also included approximately equal numbers of girls and boys (16:15, 17:18, and 17:17, respectively). Parents provided written informed consent, and children assented to all procedures.

Procedure

Participants were interviewed individually in a private room at school during school hours. Participants were taken out of class to complete their interviews; interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. In their interviews, participants were first asked to provide two narrative accounts of times when a friend, or a child they knew well, did or said something that made them feel very hurt or angry, and they were so angry they wanted to get back at them. Participants were asked to provide one narrative when they ultimately forgave and one when they ultimately did not forgive the perpetrator (order counterbalanced). Interviewers specifically asked participants to talk about events that were important to them and that they could remember well. If participants nominated a recurring event (e.g., Sally always calls me names), they were asked to provide an account of one specific episode. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on their narratives via general prompts (e.g., “mm hmm?” “is there anything else you remember about that time?”), so as to avoid prompting them to describe any specific types of narrative content or to structure their accounts in any particular way.

Following their narration of both forgiveness and nonforgiveness accounts, participants were asked a series of follow-up questions about each event. For the purpose of the current study, we focused on questions regarding the current state of their relationship, whether their

experiences of forgiveness and nonforgiveness precipitated changes in their relationships, and enduring emotional consequences of the harm. Specifically, for each event, participants were asked (a) “How do you feel about [the perpetrator] now?” (b) “How has your relationship with [the perpetrator] changed since the event?” (c) “When you think now about what happened then, do you still feel angry or hurt, or do you not feel angry or hurt anymore?”.

Quantitative Coding

Interrater reliability was established for all codes based on 20% of the data; one coder was blind to hypotheses. Cohen’s *kappa*s were computed for each code and are reported below.

Pre-existing relationship between the narrator and the transgressor. The first coding scheme captured the state of the relationship between the narrator and the transgressor prior to or at the time of the conflict event (k =.84). This coding specifically examined the participants’ spontaneous references to the context of their relationship with the transgressor in their narratives. However, when narratives were unclear, coders also looked at the relationship follow-up questions, described above, to clarify the state of their relationship prior to the event. This coding scheme was based on dimensions including both the valence of youths’ relationships (i.e., friends vs. disliked peers) and the levels of intimacy in their relationships (Jones & Dembo, 1989). This coding scheme is included in Appendix A with examples and descriptions.

Changes in relationships precipitated by the event. The second coding scheme was developed to examine how narrators described continuities or changes in their relationships following experiences of forgiveness and nonforgiveness (k = .76). This coding was developed based on the participants’ responses to two questions in the follow-up interview: (a) “How do you feel about him/her now?” (b) “How has your relationship with him/her changed since this event?”. This coding was developed based on previous research suggesting that relationships may be influenced in different ways following forgiveness and nonforgiveness (Tsang et al., 2006). This coding scheme is included in Appendix B with examples and descriptions.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of forgiveness. The third coding scheme was developed to examine the types of forgiveness described by participants. This coding was developed based on Baumeister’s forgiveness typology (Baumeister et al., 1998). In each event, coders identified whether each of the two dimensions of forgiveness (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal) was present, explicitly absent, or whether the response was unclear with respect to that dimension.

Specifically, intrapersonal forgiveness or lack thereof was coded using the follow-up question, “Do you still feel angry/upset?”. The coding examined if participants described not feeling upset anymore (i.e., intrapersonal forgiveness), still feeling upset (i.e., lack of intrapersonal forgiveness), or having mixed feelings, with the latter responses scored as unclear with respect to intrapersonal forgiveness (k = .82). The three codes were mutually exclusive. This coding scheme is included in Appendix C.

In turn, interpersonal forgiveness or lack thereof was scored using codes from another coding scheme used in a related investigation (Wainryb, Recchia, Faulconbridge & Pasupathi, in preparation). These codes included the participants’ spontaneous references to confrontation, mutual resolutions or lack thereof, reconciliation or lack thereof, and perpetrator’s reparation or remorse or lack thereof. Each of these codes was used as an indicator of interpersonal forgiveness as they pertained to either the narrator or the offender making attempts to resolve the relationships (or explicitly failing to do so). All of the *kappa*s for this coding exceeded .81. Based on these codes, participants’ narratives were ultimately scored as indicating interpersonal, lack of interpersonal, or unclear interpersonal forgiveness. These three codes were mutually exclusive. If participants described conflicting elements in the same narrative (e.g., attempts as well as failed or lack of attempts to resolve the conflict) these narratives were coded as a lack of interpersonal forgiveness. This coding scheme is included in Appendix C.

Qualitative Coding of Forgiveness and Nonforgiveness Experiences with Close Friends

To examine the paradox of forgiveness in close friendships, a qualitative coding process was developed. Only participants who had discussed a harm event with a close friend in both their forgiveness and their nonforgiveness narratives were included. This allowed me to compare forgiveness and nonforgiveness within participants in addition to across different participants. Therefore, I did a qualitative analysis of 11 participants, including five 11-year-olds and six 16-year-olds (5 males, 6 females). Each of the narratives was coded with initial coding, (which breaks data down into parts in order to closely examine them; Saldaña, 2013). The participants’ narratives were then coded with versus coding (which identifies dichotomous terms; such as an apology versus no apology; Saldaña, 2013) in which each of the participants forgiveness and nonforgiveness were coded together for differences. Following this all of the categories were generalized across participants. This coding was used to examine what differences could be found between narratives in which participants referred to transgressions committed by close

friendships that they ultimately forgave vs. did not forgive. Specifically, this coding aimed to explore the factors that influenced participants' descriptions of close friendships that have been betrayed irreconcilably compared to close friendships that survived transgressions. Thus, this coding was based on a subset of participants' narrative accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness events.

Triangulation was used to minimize the likelihood that the findings would be biased. Participants' interviews were used as one aspect of triangulation. Additionally, the primary researcher kept coding memos and created a coding manual throughout the coding process. As the interviews used in this study were not done by the primary investigator, the participants were not contacted for member checking. In order to ensure the validity of the study, a second coder was used for some of the interviews. The primary investigator and second coder separately coded four of the participants' narratives and discussed what they individually identified. The primary investigator took the second coder's opinions into consideration when arriving at the final coding of the narratives.

Results

Quantitative analyses for this study were based on Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs); although my study included dichotomous outcomes, past research has indicated that ANOVA tends to be robust under these circumstances (Lunney, 1970). An overall alpha level of $p < .05$ was used for all tests (two-tailed), and in the case of significant omnibus effects, the Bonferroni correction was applied when testing posthoc pairwise comparisons.

To address how youth of different ages discussed relationships as contexts for forgiveness and nonforgiveness, I conducted a mixed-model MANOVA with age (7-, 11-, or 16-years) and gender (male, female) as between-subjects factors and type of event (forgiveness, nonforgiveness) as a within-subjects variable; the types of relationships were examined as dependent variables. When multivariate effects were significant, univariate tests were conducted for individual dependent variables.

To explore patterns related to interpersonal and intrapersonal dimensions of forgiveness in more detail, I first used ANOVAs to examine the extent to which each of these dimensions were discussed in forgiveness and nonforgiveness accounts.

To address how forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences change relationships, I also conducted a similar mixed-model MANOVA, in this case with the relationship consequences as

dependent variables. Again univariate tests were conducted to follow up on significant multivariate effects. Subsequently, I used chi-square analyses to test whether the presence or absence of each of the dimensions (intra- and interpersonal) in forgiveness and nonforgiveness accounts was related to relationship outcomes.

To address the close friendship paradox I used a grounded theory approach for the qualitative coding. Specifically, I used initial coding followed by versus coding to identify how children describe forgiveness and nonforgiveness in close friendships (Saldaña, 2013).

What types of relationships do youth of different ages discuss in narrative accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness?

An Event Type x Age x Gender MANOVA with the four relationship types as dependent variables revealed significant multivariate effects for age, Wilk's $\lambda = .83$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, gender, Wilk's $\lambda = .88$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, and event type, Wilk's $\lambda = .90$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$. Follow-up ANOVAs revealed a univariate effect of age for good friends, $F(2, 91) = 3.62$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. Consistent with hypotheses, adolescents (16-year-olds) were more likely than 7-year olds to identify good friends as offenders in their narratives (see Table 1). An effect of gender was found for disliked peers, $F(1, 91) = 4.78$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Boys were more likely than girls overall to talk about disliked peers (see Table 1). Lastly, as expected, effects of event type were found for friends, $F(1, 91) = 4.2$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, and disliked peers, $F(1, 91) = 7.52$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. Friends were more frequently discussed in forgiveness narratives, while disliked peers were more frequently discussed in nonforgiveness narratives (see Table 1). Notably, consistent with hypotheses, there was no significant event effect for good friends (i.e., they were described to the same extent in forgiveness and nonforgiveness events); this was further explored in the qualitative analyses of close friendships within the context of forgiveness and nonforgiveness narratives.

Table 1

Types of Relationships Referenced in Youths' Accounts as a Function of Event Type, Gender and Age

	Forgiveness *M* (SE)	Nonforgiveness *M* (SE)	Female *M* (SE)	Male *M* (SE)	7-year-olds *M* (SE)	11-year-olds *M* (SE)	16-year-olds *M* (SE)
Good friends	.25 (.04)	.24 (.04)	.27 (.05)	.23 (.05)	.13 (.06)[a]	.24 (.06)	.37 (.06)[b]
Friends	.51 (.05)[a]	.39 (.05)[b]	.38 (.06)	.52 (.06)	.57 (.07)	.41 (.07)	.37 (.07)
Disliked Peers	.02 (.01)[a]	.11 (.03)[b]	.03 (.02)[a]	.11(.02)[b]	.02 (.03)	.07 (.03)	.10 (.03)
Acquaintances	.14 (.04)	.19 (.04)	.21 (.04)	.12 (.04)	.16 (.05)	.23 (.05)	.10 (.05)

Note. Means are reported as proportions of narrative accounts. Dissimilar alphabetic superscripts indicate differences between means within a row (i.e., as a function of event type, gender, or age) that were significant at $p < .05$ with a Bonferroni correction.

How do youth of different ages discuss various types of forgiveness in their narratives?

Interpersonal forgiveness. An Event Type x Age x Gender MANOVA with interpersonal forgiveness, lack of interpersonal forgiveness and unclear as dependent variables revealed significant multivariate effects for age, Wilk's $\lambda = .89$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, event type, Wilk's $\lambda = .58$, $\eta_p^2 = .42$, and an interaction of age x event type, Wilk's $\lambda = .88$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. Follow-up ANOVAs revealed a univariate effect of age for lack of interpersonal forgiveness, $F(2, 94) = 5.52$, $\eta_p^2 = .105$, such that 11-year-olds mentioned a lack of interpersonal forgiveness significantly more frequently than 7-year-olds (see Table 2). Effects of event type were revealed for interpersonal forgiveness, $F(1, 93) = 75.62$, $\eta_p^2 = .45$, lack of interpersonal forgiveness, $F(1, 93) = 80.62$, $\eta_p^2 = .46$, and unclear interpersonal forgiveness, $F(1, 93) = 185.66$, $\eta_p^2 = .66$. As expected, interpersonal forgiveness was mentioned more in forgiveness narratives, while lack of interpersonal forgiveness and unclear interpersonal forgiveness were mentioned more frequently in nonforgiveness narratives (see Table 2). The interaction of age x event type was significant for lack of interpersonal forgiveness, $F(2, 94) = 5.52$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, in that 11-year-olds and 16-year-olds were more likely than 7-year-olds to mention a lack of interpersonal forgiveness in nonforgiveness narratives than in forgiveness narratives, whereas 7-year-olds rarely mentioned a lack of interpersonal forgiveness in either event (see Figure 1.1).

Intrapersonal forgiveness. An Event Type x Age x Gender MANOVA with intrapersonal forgiveness, lack of intrapersonal forgiveness, and unclear as dependent variables revealed a significant multivariate effect for event type, Wilk's $\lambda = .76$, $\eta_p^2 = .24$. Follow-up ANOVAs revealed significant univariate effects for intrapersonal forgiveness, $F(1, 93) = 25.98$, $\eta_p^2 = .22$, lack of intrapersonal forgiveness, $F(1, 93) = 10.62$, $\eta_p^2 = .101$, and unclear intrapersonal forgiveness, $F(1, 93) = 7.24$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. Specifically, as expected, intrapersonal forgiveness was discussed more in forgiveness narratives, whereas lack of intrapersonal and unclear intrapersonal forgiveness were discussed more in nonforgiveness narratives (see Table 2).

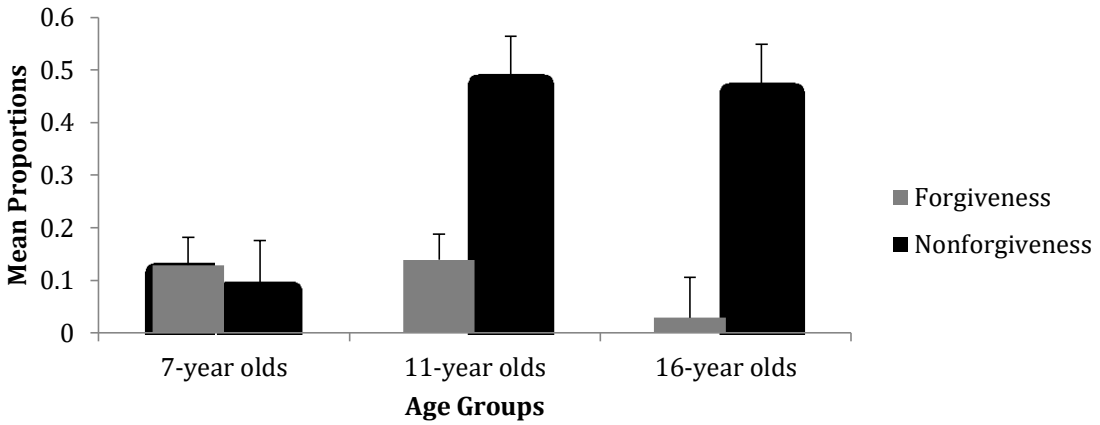

Figure 1.1 Interaction Effect of Age and Event Type for References to a Lack of Interpersonal Forgiveness

Table 2

Types of Forgiveness Referenced in Youths' Accounts as a Function of Event Type and Age

		Forgiveness *M* (SE)	Nonforgiveness *M* (SE)	7-year-olds *M* (SE)	11-year-olds *M* (SE)	16-year-olds *M* (SE)
Interpersonal forgiveness	Interpersonal forgiveness	.46 (.05)[a]	.05 (.02)[b]	.24 (.05)	.26 (.05)	.26 (.05)
	Unclear Interpersonal forgiveness	.44 (.05)[a]	.59 (.05)[b]	.65 (.07)	.43 (.06)	.48 (.06)
	Lack of Interpersonal forgiveness	.10 (.03)[a]	.35 (.05)[b]	.11 (.04)[a]	.31 (.04)[b]	.25 (.04)
Intrapersonal forgiveness	Intrapersonal forgiveness	.64 (.05)[a]	.33 (.05)[b]	.55 (.06)	.46 (06)	.44 (.06)
	Unclear Intrapersonal forgiveness	.03 (.02)[a]	.13 (.03)[b]	.03 (.03)	.07 (.03)	.13 (.03)
	Lack of Intrapersonal forgiveness	.33 (.05)[a]	.55 (.05)[b]	.42 (.06)	.47 (.06)	.43 (.06)

Note. Means are reported as proportions of narrative accounts. Dissimilar alphabetic superscripts indicate differences between means within a row (i.e., as a function of event type or age) that were significant at $p < .05$ with a Bonferroni correction.

How do youth describe changes in the nature of their relationships following forgiveness and nonforgiveness events?

For this analysis, an additional 12 participants were excluded because they either were not asked the follow-up questions necessary or failed to provide an answer to the question, as such the sample for these analyses was 88 participants. An Event Type x Age x Gender MANOVA with the four relationship changes as dependent variables revealed significant multivariate effects of age, Wilk's $\lambda = .83$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, and event type, Wilk's $\lambda = .9$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, as well as an interaction between age and sex, Wilk's $\lambda = .772$, $\eta_p^2 = .27$. Follow-up ANOVAs revealed significant univariate effects of age for relationship remains the same, $F(2, 82) = 4.94$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, and relationship ends, $F(2, 82) = 8.89$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$. Results showed that 16-year-olds were less likely than 7- and 11-year-olds to describe the relationship remaining the same. Contrarily, 16-year-olds were more likely to describe their relationship with the offender ending than 7- and 11-year-olds (see Table 3). In turn, there were univariate effects of event type for event improved relationship, $F(1, 82) = 8.26$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, event hindered the possibility of a relationship, $F(1, 82) = 9.76$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$ and relationship ended, $F(1, 82) = 6.54$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. Consistent with hypotheses, results showed that participants were more likely to describe the event leading to improvements in their relationship in forgiveness narratives. Conversely, participants were more likely to describe the event hindering the possibility of a relationship or ending the relationship with the offender in nonforgiveness narratives (see Table 3). Follow-up ANOVAs revealed that the univariate effects of age x sex were significant for event hindered the possibility of a relationship, $F(2, 82) = .59$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, and event ended relationship, $F(2, 82) = 5.26$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$. Results showed that adolescent males were more likely than any other participants to describe the event hindering the possibility of a relationship (see Figure 1.2). In contrast, adolescent females were more likely than any other participants to describe the event ending the relationship (see Figure 1.3).

Table 3

Relationship Changes Described in Youths' Accounts as a Function of Event Type and Age

	Forgiveness *M* (SE)	Nonforgiveness *M* (SE)	7-year-olds *M* (SE)	11-year-olds *M* (SE)	16-year-olds *M* (SE)
Relationship changed not as a result of the event	.13 (.04)	.20 (.04)	.23 (06)	.16 (.05)	.11 (.05)
Event did not changed the relationship	.46 (.05)	.35 (.05)	.52 (.08)[a]	.47 (.06)[a]	.23 (.06)[b]
Positive consequences for the relationship	.20 (.05)[a]	.05 (.02)[b]	.07 (.05)	.17 (.04)	.14 (.04)
Negative consequences for the relationship	.15 (.04)	.13 (.04)	.09 (.05)	.12 (.04)	.20 (.04)
Event hindered the possibility of a relationship	.00 (.00)[a]	.09 (.03)[b]	.04 (.03)	.03 (.02)	.07 (.03)
Event ended the relationship	.05 (.03)[a]	.17 (.04)[b]	.04 (.05)[a]	.04 (.04)[a]	.24 (.04)[b]

Note. Means are reported as proportions of narrative accounts. Dissimilar alphabetic superscripts indicate differences between means within a row (i.e., as a function of event type or age) that were significant at $p < .05$ with a Bonferroni correction.

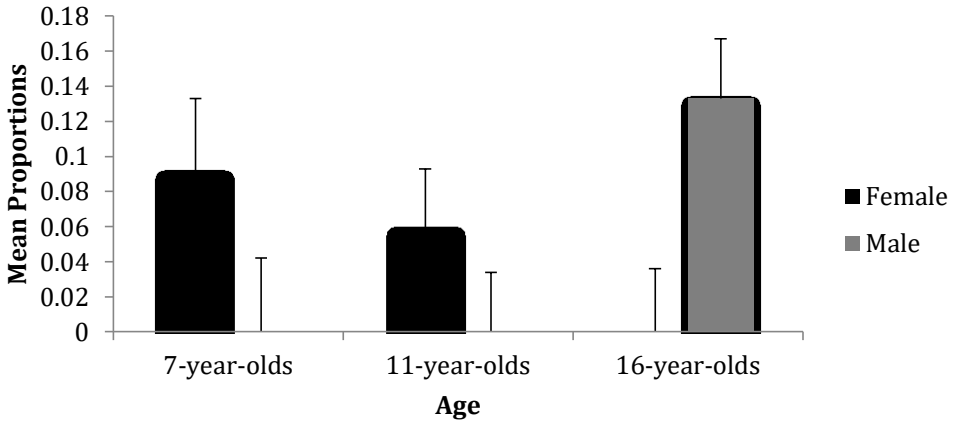

Figure 1.2 Interaction Effect of Age x Gender for Event Hindered the Possibility of a Relationship

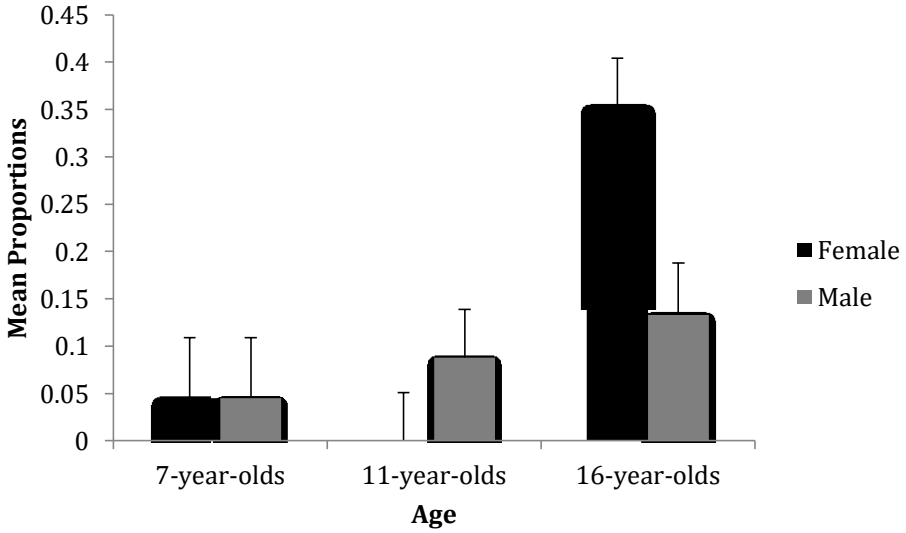

Figure 1.3 Interaction Effect of Age x Gender for Event Ended Relationship

How do changes in relationships relate to the types of forgiveness discussed in each narrative account?

Note that for these analyses, assumptions of chi-square were often violated because expected frequencies in cells were < 5; I tried to eliminate/collapse infrequent categories, but nevertheless, results should be interpreted with caution. Specifically, event deteriorated relationship and event ended relationship were collapsed as they both referred to negative consequences for the relationship; this combined category will be

referred to as *negative consequences for their relationship*. Further, positive consequences for relationships were omitted from the nonforgiveness analyses, as these very rarely occurred. Significant patterns as reported below are based on adjusted standardized residuals for individual cells (two-tailed, $p < .05$). These were interpreted even in the absence of a nonsignificant overall chi-square.

Forgiveness narratives.

Interpersonal forgiveness. When participants explicitly referenced a lack of interpersonal forgiveness in a forgiveness narrative, they were significantly more likely to describe their relationship remaining the same following the event than participants who did not make explicit reference to a lack of interpersonal forgiveness ($p < .05$). In turn, when participants did *not* make an explicit reference to a lack of interpersonal forgiveness in their forgiveness narratives they were marginally more likely to describe the event improving their relationship ($p < .10$) than when they made explicit reference to a lack of interpersonal forgiveness (see Table 4).

Table 4

Relationship Changes as They Relate to Presence and Absence of Interpersonal Forgiveness in Forgiveness Accounts

	Interpersonal Present	Interpersonal Absent	Lack of Interpersonal Present	Lack of Interpersonal Absent
Negative consequences for the relationship	24.4%	17.0%	11.1%	21.5%
Positive consequences for the relationship	26.8%	17.0%	0.0%[a(.10)]	24.1%[b(.10)]
Relationship remains the same	36.6%	53.2%	77.8%[a]	41.8%[b]
Relationship changes for other reasons	12.2%	12.8%	11.1%	12.7%

Note. Percentages are reported as proportions of narrative accounts. These percentages represent the percentage of relationship outcomes given a particular kind of interpersonal forgiveness reference. Dissimilar alphabetic superscripts indicate differences between percentages within a row (i.e., as a function of presence of absence of that type of forgiveness) that were significant at $p < .05$ based on adjusted standardized residuals.

Intrapersonal forgiveness. As expected, in the presence of intrapersonal forgiveness, participants were significantly less likely to refer to negative consequences for their relationship than in the absence of intrapersonal forgiveness. In contrast, in the presence of intrapersonal forgiveness, participants were significantly more likely ($p < .05$) to describe their relationship

remaining the same than in the absence of intrapersonal forgiveness. Therefore, when youth described achieving intrapersonal forgiveness they were less likely to describe the event causing their relationship to deteriorate or end and more likely to describe their relationship remaining the same. When participants did *not* discuss a lack of intrapersonal forgiveness, they were significantly more likely to describe negative consequences for their relationship than when they explicitly referenced a lack of intrapersonal forgiveness (see Table 5).

Table 5

Relationship Changes as They Relate to Presence and Absence of Intrapersonal Forgiveness in Forgiveness Accounts

	Intrapersonal Present	Intrapersonal Absent	Lack of Intrapersonal Present	Lack of Intrapersonal Absent
Negative consequences for the relationship	11.9%[a]	37.9%[b]	37.0%[a]	13.1%[b]
Positive consequences for the relationship	22.0%	20.7%	18.5%	23.0%
Relationship remains the same	52.5%[a]	31.0%[b]	33.3%	50.8%
Relationship changes for other reasons	13.6%	10.3%	11.1%	15.1%

Note. Percentages are reported as proportions of narrative accounts. These percentages represent the percentage of relationship outcomes given a particular kind of intrapersonal forgiveness reference. Dissimilar alphabetic superscripts indicate differences between percentages within a row (i.e., as a function of presence of absence of that type of forgiveness) that were significant at $p < .05$ based on adjusted standardized residuals.

Nonforgiveness Narratives.

Interpersonal forgiveness. In nonforgiveness narratives, when youth described interpersonal forgiveness, they were also more likely to indicate that their relationship remained the same than in the absence of interpersonal forgiveness (see Table 6). In contrast, when they did not describe interpersonal forgiveness in nonforgiveness narratives they were more likely to describe the event deteriorating or ending their relationship than when they did explicitly reference interpersonal forgiveness (see Table 6).

Table 6

Relationship Changes as They Relate to Presence and Absence of Interpersonal Forgiveness in Nonforgiveness Accounts

Variable	Interpersonal present	Interpersonal absent	Lack of Interpersonal Present	Lack of Interpersonal Absent
Relationship changed not because of event	0%	23.30%	33.3%	40.0%
Relationship remained the same	100%[a]	43.30%[b]	43.3%	37.8%
Negative consequences for the relationship	0%[a]	33.30%[b]	23.3%	22.2%

Note. Percentages are reported as proportions of narrative accounts. These percentages represent the percentage of relationship outcomes given a particular kind of interpersonal forgiveness reference. Dissimilar alphabetic superscripts indicate differences between percentages within a row (i.e., as a function of presence or absence of that type of forgiveness) that were significant at $p < .05$ based on adjusted standardized residuals.

Intrapersonal forgiveness. Similar to interpersonal forgiveness, when youth described achieving intrapersonal forgiveness in nonforgiveness narratives, they were more likely to describe their relationship remaining the same than when they did not describe any intrapersonal forgiveness (see Table 7). Further, when participants explicitly described a lack of intrapersonal forgiveness there was a trend ($p < .10$) that fewer participants described their relationship remaining the same than when participants did not explicitly describe a lack of intrapersonal forgiveness (see Table 7).

Table 7

Relationship Changes as They Relate to Presence and Absence of Intrapersonal Forgiveness in Nonforgiveness Accounts

	Intrapersonal Present	Intrapersonal Absent	Lack of Intrapersonal Present	Lack of Intrapersonal Absent
Negative consequences for the relationship	25.9%	43.8%	42.9%	30.3%
Relationship remains the same	55.6%[a]	31.3%[b]	31.0%[a(.10)]	51.5%[b(.10)]
Relationship changes for other reasons	18.5%	25.0%	26.2%	18.2%

Note. Percentages are reported as proportions of narrative accounts. These percentages represent the percentage of relationship outcomes given a particular kind of intrapersonal forgiveness reference. Dissimilar alphabetic superscripts indicate differences between percentages within a row (i.e., as a function of presence or absence of that type of forgiveness) that were significant at $p < .05$ based on adjusted standardized residuals.

Qualitative Findings

A qualitative analysis of the narratives was conducted to determine why participants forgave some best friends and did not forgive others. For the purpose of these analyses I only included narratives for participants who discussed a best friend in both forgiveness and nonforgiveness accounts so that I would be able to compare within participants as well as between participants. Therefore, in total eleven participants' narratives were qualitatively examined. The narratives I will discuss were exclusively from participants 11 and 16 years old (five 11-year-olds and six 16-year-olds). For the purpose of these analyses, I did not include the youngest age group as they did not provide enough detail in their narratives to be able to conduct an in-depth examination of their reasoning about forgiveness in close friendships. Further, narratives were evenly distributed across both genders (5 boys, 6 girls). The purpose of these analyses was to examine which aspects of friendships, the harm, or the actions taken following the harm caused participants to feel more willing to forgive or less willing to forgive a best friend.

As previously mentioned, narratives were coded using a grounded theory approach. I used initial coding followed by versus coding to capture the differences between narratives (Saldaña, 2013).

In reading the participants' narratives, I initially identified statements pertaining directly to experiencing harm with a best friend. Specifically, participants described why events were more significant because it was a best friend, for example, "that was more significant because she was my best friend" or "It just struck me as like why would a best friend do that?" Participants also described not wanting to harm the friendship, for example, "It's not worth it cause then I'm just going to ruin my friendship with him". These comments led to a deeper investigation into the differences between best friends who were ultimately forgiven for their actions and best friends who were not forgiven for their actions. In the following sections, I discuss observed differences between the forgiveness and nonforgiveness narratives that may play a role in explaining why participants were more or less willing to forgive a best friend, and provide illustrative examples to illustrate prototypical patterns. All of the names reported below are pseudonyms.

Types of Harm

The types of harm described in forgiveness and nonforgiveness narratives involving best friends appeared to differ in a few ways. Within nonforgiveness narratives, harmful actions were described as being done on purpose more than harmful actions in forgiveness narratives. Additionally, participants described harmful actions that were more targeted, character destroying or attacking, personal and more trust breaking in nonforgiveness accounts. Contrarily, harmful actions discussed in forgiveness narratives were less targeted, intentional and personal, and no trust issues were discussed.

Intentionality. Participants described the perpetrator as acting intentionally in nonforgiveness narratives more than they did in forgiveness narratives. Therefore, participants described being more forgiving when they viewed the harm as a misunderstanding or a miscommunication. One participant Erin (age 16), described two very different harms, perceived one as being a misunderstanding, while the other was not. In the nonforgiveness narrative, Erin described a friend telling her to stop talking and calling her stupid:

> *She overheard me, and she was like, "Stop talking, like you sound stupid, blah blah blah", and I was like," What? Like, you're not in this conversation." And she was like, "No, just stop talking, like you sound stupid." And I was, like, "Okay, like, don't say, you know if you're my best friend, like don't, like, degrade your friends like that and say that."... Um, well all my other friends got involved in it too, just 'cause, like, my other*

friend heard her say it, and was like, why did you say that? And I was telling her to like apologize, then she was like, no, like, it was necessary to say. And it was just stupid.

Contrarily, in her forgiveness narrative, Erin described a group of her friends forgetting to call her so she could meet them at a party. In describing the event, Erin explained that she understood it was a miscommunication and believed it was acceptable as a result:

My other two friends were like, "What happened to you last night?" And I was like, "What do you mean? You didn't call me." And they were like, "Oh Kimmy…", who I was talking to, "Kimmy said that you were with Steph." And I was like, "Yeah but, like I told you to call me." And they were like, "Ohh! Like we didn't know." So it was like a whole miscommunication, and so that's what it was, so I totally forgave them, and I was like, "OK, that's acceptable."

Evidently, when Erin perceived the harm event as being a misunderstanding she felt more comfortable forgiving the friends then when she believed the harm was done intentionally.

Participants were also more forgiving of friends when they identified external factors causing their actions than when their actions were described as intentional. One participant, Michael (age 16), described two events, one in which he felt a friend was acting intentionally and another in which a group of friends' actions were out of their control. In his nonforgiveness narrative, Michael, described his friend trying to steal his girlfriend from him:

Umm, I guess one time, umm, I had a girlfriend and my best friend was kind of uh… you know, I wouldn't say seeing her, but you know, talking to her, and I didn't know about it, you know? I was cool with them talking and stuff like that, but I think he was trying to, you know, integrate himself more than just a friend, you know, and I found out, and I guess that really made me angry, just 'cause he was like my best friend, and I like, ever since then we haven't been close at all, just 'cause, you know? I guess it was like a trust issue.

Contrarily, in his forgiveness narrative, Michael described a group of friends not inviting him to a hockey party that he wanted to attend. When discussing the event, Michael explained that he understood that it was not within his friends' control to invite him to the party:

There was this one time, a bunch of my friends here at school, they're still my really good friends, they uh… they all went to this party, that I guess it was a bunch of seniors, it was like when we were sophomores, and it was a big deal because they were hanging out with

> *seniors and stuff like that, and you know I kind of wanted to come hang out with them, join them and stuff like that, because I'd just come from practice, and I knew that if I was with them at the time I would have been able to hang out with them, but I guess they didn't want any more people coming, and especially, not someone younger you know? So I was really angry about that, I felt like they were just trying to… you know they were being kind of selfish, and so I didn't really… and that night I was kind of pissed off because I didn't have anything to do, because they were all over there, but I realized they really wanted me to come hang out with them. They just didn't have any control over it.*

In this example, it is evident that Michael was more understanding of his friends' actions in the forgiveness narrative than in the nonforgiveness narrative. This may not be a consequence of the friendship, as he defined both of them as best friends, however, he evidently felt more comfortable forgiving a group of best friends who had not intentionally harmed him than a best friend who had intentionally harmed him.

Overall, our data suggest that participants felt more comfortable forgiving a friend who was not acting intentionally. It appeared that participants perceived a best friend intentionally trying to hurt them as not acting as a best friend should. This will be a reoccurring theme in the findings I will discuss throughout this section.

Personal. In nonforgiveness narratives, participants described harm events that were more personal or character destroying than harm events in forgiveness narratives. When a participant described a friend doing something that felt like a more intimate attack, participants were less forgiving of their friend. Similarly, when the participants felt that the friends' actions had negative consequences on their character, they were less forgiving. One participant, Jessica (age 16), described one event in which a friend had been less responsive to her when they spoke than usual, and another event in which a friend had tried to control her. In her forgiveness narrative, she described the friend who was less responsive, and she appeared to be understanding of her friend's behavior:

> *He didn't talk to me that much, and he sort of blamed me for not talking to him when I was the one starting up the conversations. And I was mad at him for a little while and he didn't really get it that I was mad, and he didn't- I didn't tell him… he's not very good with words and stuff, so he gets in trouble a lot with his friends, so, and then with- I've been friends with him for 5 years, and, just one day he's- he just totally went off on me*

about how I never talk to him anymore. And he has to start up all the conversations or, as for my point of view, I was saying all the things, and I was prompting him, and I had to like probe at him to actually get like a yes or no. And he would just sort of answer me in little words, and phrases and like "well, okay. I'm gonna go now. See you later." And then (laugh) in your mind you're li- in my mind I was like "that's very hypocritical, it's not very fair for you to accuse me of that, and so I was very angry at him, but I don't express that to him, cause he doesn't really fully realize that he totally hurt me, but he did, but I was sort of- shoved it off because I know him too well for that, he wouldn't try to purposely hurt me, so yeah.

Contrarily, in her nonforgiveness narrative, Jessica described one of her good friends trying to control her. She appeared to take this event more personally because, as she explained, her friend should have known better than to control her:

He would just sort of order me around, and I don't like that; he'd be like "come with me now" and just drag me along even when I was like really hungry and wanting to go to lunch and be with my friends. And he- he sort of got to the point where I'm just like "no. Stop." So I had to completely ignore him and just sort of - not like yell at him- I don't wanna say yell at him cause that sounds harsh, but li- you know like "no Milan, go away. You're too, um, controlling, and you can't control me, I don't like that; go away." So, I mean it's still to that point now that sort of where I don't even talk to him at all. And he was- he was my best friend…So it's sort of- he sort of asked me what that was about and I just sort of- I told him that you-you can't do that to me, that's not fair for anybody to control-want to control somebody that much. It's not cool and you shouldn't do that at all, to anybody. And I know that we were like really close friends and we'd hang out after school, but. And you should know me well enough that you don't wanna try to even control me. I already have parents and stuff that control me too much and you know that. So it's sort of like a "How dare you" moment (laugh). Yeah. So, that's about it (laugh).

Similarly, recall that Erin (described above) experienced a group of friends forgetting to invite her to a party versus a friend who called her stupid and told her to stop talking. In her description of the nonforgiveness narrative, describing the friend who called her stupid and told her to stop talking, Erin explained " "Okay, like, don't say, you know if you're my best friend, like don't, like, degrade your friends like that and say that.…but that was significant just 'cause

she was like a really good friend of mine". Evidently, Erin felt that a best friend should not make her feel badly about herself, or put her down, and this was not something that should be forgiven.

Overall, these examples imply participants' views that a friend should not harm a friend in a personal way or attack a friend's character. Further examples found in the participants' narratives included judging them, spreading rumors about them, or destroying or stealing something important of theirs. Participants described these types of harm in a very negative light, and made it clear that a best friend should not treat them in that way. Consequently, when participants believed that the transgressor was not being a good friend, they were less willing to forgive them.

Trust. Lastly, there was a distinct difference between forgiveness and nonforgiveness narratives in that participants described trust issues uniquely in nonforgiveness narratives. Therefore, when a best friend broke their trust, participants described this as being unforgivable. One participant, Leslie (age 16), described a friend disclosing private information that she had trusted her with:

> *So I cut myself and stuff like that and, umm, I told my friend Alyssa, and she I don't know. I knew I could always trust her and everything, and like one of these things I realize now I'm glad she told somebody, but for the longest time I told her and I was like, "Please don't tell anyone" and all this stuff, and she told her mom, who called my mom, and it's this whole train effect, and then like a lot of people found out and school, and I really thought it was Alyssa who had told people, and umm, it was hard for me to forgive her, I don't know, it was a long time, and we didn't talk, we didn't like… it was a trust issues, it goes back to her telling everyone, and I just can't forgive that…we didn't communicate at all, and she was like one of my best friends from middle school… I don't think I can forgive Alyssa, but at the same time she was there for me, and umm, like I… have never been able to trust people since then, and that's hard, umm, but I haven't forgiven her.*

Despite Leslie acknowledging that Alyssa told her secret for the right reasons and that she eventually benefitted from her actions, the fact that her friend broke her trust was simply not something she would be able to forgive, and in the end this caused a drift in their relationship. Contrarily in Leslie's forgiveness narrative, she described her friend telling another friend bad things about her, to try to gain his favour:

I guess she has this crush on him or whatever, and she would go like… I don't know I was with my friend Matt, so it was like the four of us, and umm, she you know I was talking to Matt in the other room. We were making cookies, umm at Laura's house, and Laura and Paul were down there, and I guess Paul came upstairs, and he was like… he had this like anger look on his face, I want to say, and I don't know. It was weird, I've never seen that anger face before, and I was like, "OK, what's going on?" and I guess Laura had made up all this stuff about me to tell Paul, because she likes Paul, and I was like what are you doing? Like we've been friends longer, and Paul like… I guess believed her, and it was weird. Like he got mad at me for the longest time, and I was so angry at Laura, like why would you make this stuff up about me that isn't true? You're like my best friend, you shouldn't do that, especially for a guy, and so I was so angry.

This was described in a way that appeared to define Laura's actions as not being characteristic of a good best friend. However, Alyssa breaking her trust and sharing very intimate information about her was described as more unforgivable than what Laura did. It appears that even though personal harmful actions are not often forgivable by a friend, breaking trust is considered to be a worse act. The two participants that discussed a broken trust narrative detailed this leading to the end of their relationship. Therefore, our data suggest that youth have a difficult time accepting a best friend who has broken their trust. Participants clearly described trust as an important aspect of friendship and once trust was broken their friendships did not continue positively.

Number of Friends

Participants appeared to find it more difficult to forgive an individual friend versus a group of friends. Generally, when participants talked about a group of good friends in their narratives, they described the friends leaving them out by failing to invite them to a party or to hang out. Conversely, when participants described the harm from one individual they described them doing something more intentional and pointed. I will revisit Michael, who described a nonforgiveness event including an individual friend and a forgiveness event including a group of friends (see narratives on pages 41 above). Michael described understanding that the group of friends did not have control over inviting him. Contrarily, when he talked about the individual friend, he viewed this friend's actions as within his control. Therefore, the group of friends were described as having less control over the situation and their actions than the individual friend.

Similarly, other participants described harmful actions from a group of friends as misunderstandings or miscommunications, whereas individual friends' actions were described as being more intentional. Lastly, the participants' descriptions of harmful actions from a group of friends versus an individual friend appeared to include apologies from the group of friends more than the individual friends; this will be discussed further in the following sections. However, based on this example and the other participants' descriptions of an individual friend versus a group, it appeared to be easier to forgive a group of friends. Overall, it appeared to be a result of groups being characterized as engaging in less intentional forms of harm than individual friends, and being more remorseful than individual friends following the harmful act.

Perpetrator's Response

The greatest differences between forgiveness and nonforgiveness narratives were found in how the perpetrators responded or behaved following the harm.

Apologies versus no apologies. Participants placed a lot of importance on apologies from a best friend. Participants described being more willing to forgive a friend following an apology than a friend who did not apologize. One participant, Sarah (age 16), described a friend in her forgiveness narrative who did not help her with a group project, but who subsequently apologized:

> *I pointed out that she had been really annoying and caused me a lot of trouble, and she was sorry and I was still really mad at her and I kind of distanced myself till my anger sorted out, but I didn't end up telling anyone anything that was private of hers, or purposely trying to get back at her and it ended up working OK, and now she's still one of my really good friends, so it's probably one of the best examples I have.*

Contrarily, in Sarah's nonforgiveness narrative, her friend shared private information about her to someone else, and did not apologize:

> *I went to Andrea and I was like, "Why did you tell her that?" And she was like, "Oh I didn't think it was that important." And I'm like, "Well I told you not to tell anyone, and obviously because of the content it was really important." And she kind of waved it off like, oh whatever, it's not a big deal, and that just made me more angry and I'm like, "That's it." There's all sorts of stuff that I knew about her that, um, that was private about her and I just started telling other people about it.*

In both cases, Sarah brought up what she was angry at the perpetrator about, however in the forgiveness narrative, her friend was immediately apologetic for her actions, which allowed Sarah to begin to move on from the harm. Contrarily, in the nonforgiveness narrative, Sarah's friend did not apologize, and instead acted like she had not done anything wrong. This appeared to be extremely important for Sarah, as she had planned to take revenge on both friends, but chose only to take revenge on the friend who had not apologized to her. Further, in the nonforgiveness story, not only did Andrea not apologize, but she also brushed off Sarah's confrontation as though she had done nothing, which seemed to further anger Sarah.

Participants had a difficult time forgiving a friend who was not sorry for their actions, and this was seen as a behavior that worsened the harmful act. When a close friend was apologetic, this often led to both parties talking and resolving the issue and their friendship, (e.g., "I came back and said that I didn't like how she said that. And she said that she didn't like how she said it to me either, so I forgave her and she said sorry"). This was valuable because they could deal with the consequences of the harm together, and it meant the best friend was sorry for their actions and acknowledged their actions. On the other hand, participants described never speaking about the harmful act, just letting it go, or not coming to a mutual resolution more often in the context of nonforgiveness, (e.g., "well actually, no, we never really talked about it, we just let it go.").

Acknowledgement versus denial of actions. As we saw in Sarah's example, her friend in the nonforgiveness narrative not only did not apologize to her, but denied that she had done anything harmful to Sarah. Often, participants were less forgiving of best friends who denied their actions than friends who confronted the situation. This was evident in the narratives of a participant I have previously discussed, Erin. Once again, she described a group of best friends who forgot to invite her to a party compared to a friend who degraded her in front of other classmates. In the forgiveness narrative, Erin's friends were very apologetic, and confronted the situation themselves (see narrative on page 40 above). In the nonforgiveness narrative (see page 40 above), Erin's friend did not acknowledge that her actions were hurtful and required an apology to Erin. Similarly, another participant I have already discussed, Michael also had a group of friends apologize compared to a friend who denied his actions.

Forgiveness: I guess I went and hung out with them and they were all like apologetic, and I was pretty forgiving about it. Like it didn't really bug me the next day, it made me mad the night of.

Nonforgiveness: So I called him up and said, you know, Andrew that's not cool, you know, at least let me know these things, you know. I think that that's definitely a trust issue, and he was you know, kind of denying it at first.

Overall then, when the perpetrator or perpetrators were the first to confront the situation and showed they were apologetic, youth were more comfortable forgiving them. When youth had to confront the perpetrator, this made the action seem worse. Further, when youth confronted the perpetrator and they denied their actions, participants described feeling even more angry. Participants described that as a best friend it was not acceptable to deny their actions, and that they were not acting as a best friend should.

Revenge versus No Revenge

When participants described revenge ideations, or actually taking revenge against their best friends, they were more frequently describing nonforgiveness events. Revenge or wanting revenge may be associated with greater emotional reactions to the harmful events, therefore, participants may have been more angry or hurt by the event when they described wanting revenge or taking revenge. In turn, taking revenge may have further escalated the situation and made it difficult for friends to make up with each other. One participant that discussed revenge, Ryan (age 16), expressed a desire for revenge in both narratives. However, in his nonforgiveness narrative he took revenge on the friend, whereas in the forgiveness narrative he did not take revenge. In the forgiveness narrative, Ryan described a friend telling him to go to rehab, for bringing drugs to his house.

"Why don't you just go to rehab? Cause nobody wants you here." That put me down, and uh, like I really, there wasn't really a way to get back at him for it. I could have called him out on something, I could said something bad about him, in the general public, but I chose not to because we were bests friends for a long time, we both played music, we were both good with each other, and even though I got mad at what he said, it's like anyone can voice their opinion. I just chose not to do anything about it because friends are friends, and they might hurt you at one point, but in the end you're probably going to work it out.

In Ryan's nonforgiveness narrative, he described another friend getting angry with him for bringing drugs to his house, however this time the argument became physical and stretched over a few weeks, rather than resolving in a day. Additionally, during that period this friend made judgments about Ryan, and this was described as a very negative thing for a friend to do.

> *For about two weeks we weren't talking, but then he apologizes, and then I was like, "Alright, that's cool." And uh, so then we hung out again, but then a week later, for no apparent reason, he was just umm, all of the sudden he was just like you and Milan just waste your time getting high, and that's not cool, and I don't want to be around that, and I don't want to be around you guys. So he just kind of cut off all connections from me whatsoever, and I never forgived him for that… a couple of days ago, I was on Facebook, and I just flipped out on him. I was like "F-U, you're a horrible friend, you never like… you just did horrible things, and why don't you go overdose on Robitussin." Cause he overdosed so it was, it was just like… I used that against him, and that was kind of my way of getting even with him.*

In these two narratives, it is apparent that Ryan experienced more anger towards the friend in the nonforgiveness narrative. Despite describing both friendships as close, the magnitude of the nonforgiveness event and his resulting anger caused Ryan to take revenge on the friend and not feel willing to forgive him or continue a relationship with him. Contrarily, in the forgiveness narrative, Ryan described wanting to protect his friendship and not take revenge on that friend despite not liking what he said to him.

Distancing versus No Distancing

Participants' references to distancing themselves from the perpetrators also differentiated forgiveness from nonforgiveness events. Some of the participants described distancing themselves for a couple of days; this appeared to be less problematic and was described more frequently in forgiveness narratives (e.g., "I gave the silent treatment for like a day, and then I felt horrible and I was like, Daysi is one of my best friends, I can't do this, so I called her. We met up, and talked about it."). However, when participants distanced themselves from the perpetrator for weeks, they more frequently described nonforgiveness (e.g., "we kind of just parted, we're still friends but not best friends, we just kind of parted away."). This may be a result of the lack of communication between the two, which may have made it difficult to resolve the situation and overcome negative feelings.

Overall, participants appeared to be more forgiving of a best friend when they acted in the way that they considered appropriate for a best friend to act. It was important to participants that their friends treated them positively, in their harmful actions and in the events that followed. Therefore, when a friend intentionally tried to hurt them, did not acknowledge their harmful actions, did not apologize, or acted vengefully, participants did not describe being willing to forgive. However, when a friend's actions were out of their control or viewed as a mistake, and they acted positively following the events, participants described being more forgiving. As I expected, the participants' perspectives on the harmful event and the actions taken by the friend following the harm were the most influential on forgiving a best friend.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine how children and adolescents describe their experiences of forgiveness and nonforgiveness within the context of peer relationships. This study provided new insight into the ways in which youth experience forgiveness across development. Further, this study provides a deeper understanding of the way youths' peer relationships act as context for forgiveness and nonforgiveness across childhood and adolescence. I addressed three overarching questions: (1) what types of relationships do youth of different ages discuss in narrative accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness? (2) how do youth describe changes in the nature of their relationships following forgiveness and nonforgiveness events? and (3) in which circumstances will youth ultimately describe forgiving or not forgiving their close friends for transgressions? Each of these sets of results will be described in turn.

Types of Relationships

I hypothesized that younger children would be less likely to differentiate between good friends and friends in their narrative accounts. Consistent with this, our findings indicated that 7-year-olds were less likely than 16-year-olds to describe good friends as offenders. Previous research has found that adolescents are more likely to experience conflict with close friends, as their relationships tend to increase in intimacy compared to younger children (Card, 2007). More broadly, younger children tend to consider many people to be their friends, whereas adolescents tend to focus on a few important friends (Hardy et al., 2002; Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). Thus our results are in line with these previous findings, inasmuch as younger children were also less likely to identify good friends in their narrative accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness.

Further, I hypothesized that youth would be more likely to discuss friends in forgiveness events and disliked peers more often in nonforgiveness events. Our results supported this conclusion. At all ages, friends were more likely to be discussed in forgiveness events and disliked peers were more likely to be discussed in nonforgiveness events. These findings are consistent with previous research, which demonstrated that children and adolescents were more likely to forgive friends than non-friends (van der Wal at al., 2016). Similarly, adolescents were more likely to express a desire for avoidance and revenge towards disliked peers than liked peers or friends (Peets et al., 2013). Further, previous research has shown that both children and adolescents are more likely to assign negative intentionality and responsibility for transgressions to disliked peers (Peets et al., 2013; Recchia et al., 2015). Therefore, it appears that youth are more willing to respond positively by forgiving a friend or liked peer than a disliked peer. Further, these findings contribute to research by including 7- and 11-year-olds in the analysis. As such, our results confirm that school-aged children are as likely as adolescents to respond more positively to conflict from friends than disliked peers and may be as unwilling to forgive a disliked peers as adolescents. These findings also build on the existing body of research by examining these issues within the context of both forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences, rather than simply focusing on forgiveness experiences, as has been done in past research.

Interestingly, although not hypothesized, I found that boys discussed disliked peers significantly more than girls, but mostly in their nonforgiveness narratives. It is likely that boys are more likely to experience nonforgiveness particularly with disliked peers (as compared to friends), as they are less likely to express anger towards friends following a transgression than girls. Further, boys are more likely to move on from transgressions with friends without disturbance than girls (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). Thus, for these reasons, nonforgiveness among boys may more selectively occur in the aftermath of being harmed by a disliked peer.

Types of Forgiveness

As I hypothesized, participants described achieving both intra- and interpersonal forgiveness more frequently in forgiveness rather than nonforgiveness narratives. Similarly, participants described a lack of intra- and interpersonal forgiveness or unclear forgiveness in nonforgiveness narratives. Further, I found that 7-year-olds were overall less likely to describe a lack of interpersonal forgiveness than both 11- and 16-year-olds. Our results did not demonstrate any significant findings for age with respect to intrapersonal forgiveness.

These findings suggest that interpersonal forgiveness plays an increasing role in youths' experiences of forgiveness as they develop. Older children (11-year-olds) and adolescents were more likely to describe forgiving as involving interpersonal steps taken by the participant and the transgressor "And the next day, he kinda apologized about that, and I said 'I'm sorry, I shouldn't a done that', so… and we, yea, we're still friends, so…"". Furthermore, youth increasingly described a lack of interpersonal forgiveness with age, such as not attempting to resolve the conflict within their relationship following transgressions. Conversely, findings suggested that levels of intrapersonal forgiveness were similar across development. Therefore, 7-year-olds were equally as likely to describe dealing with the emotional consequences of a transgression as 11- and 16-year-olds. This is not in line with our hypotheses, and may be a result of the way intrapersonal forgiveness was measured. This dimension was coded using a follow-up question rather than using participants' narratives, and the vast majority of participants gave an unequivocal response to the follow-up question ("When you think now about what happened then, do you still feel angry or hurt, or do you not feel angry or hurt anymore?".) This methodological choice may explain why 7-year-olds were as likely as 11-and 16-year-olds to discuss intrapersonal dimensions of forgiveness.

Overall, these findings contribute to our understanding of how youth experience forgiveness across development. Specifically, these findings begin a conversation about whether Baumeister's typology can be fruitfully applied to forgiveness in children and adolescents. Currently, researchers have examined Baumeister's typology of forgiveness in adults (Friesen et al., 2005; Lawler-Row et al., 2007). However, researchers have yet to examine the way youth consider forgiveness as it relates to Baumeister's typology. As such, this is one of the first studies to examine the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of forgiveness in youth.

Changes in Relationships

My results demonstrated significant overall age differences. As compared to 7- and 11-year-olds, adolescents were more likely to describe their relationships ending and less likely to describe their relationships remaining the same following transgressions. These patterns held across both forgiveness and nonforgiveness events. These results are in line with previous research demonstrating that adolescents are more likely than younger children to identify antipathetic relationships that have resulted from either a downgrade or complete ending of a

friendship (Card, 2007). Similarly, adolescents are more likely than children to hold resentment towards friends (Chiaramello et al., 2008). Regardless of these consistencies, it is still surprising that adolescents would hold resentment following forgiveness. This finding may be explained by adolescents' increased expectations for friends paired with their increased willingness to express dissatisfaction towards friends who do not treat them properly (Bowker, 2004; Jones & Dembo, 1989; Komolova & Wainryb, 2011). As such, adolescents may be able to move past a transgression by forgiving, while choosing not to continue a friendship in which they are not treated properly. Lastly, I found that adolescent males were significantly more likely than all other participants to describe the event hindering the possibility of a relationship with the offender, whereas adolescent females were more likely than all other participants to describe their relationship ending. These findings are in line with previous research, which has described adolescent females as more likely than males to experience friendships ending, and negative repercussions for friendships following transgressions (Benenson & Christakos, 2003; Card, 2007).

More directly germane to our focus on event effects, and consistent with hypotheses, results revealed that participants were more likely to describe improvements in their relationship in forgiveness narratives than in nonforgiveness narratives. For instance, one participant noted that "[the relationship] kind of has changed but I think we've grown kind of closer together because we know that we should learn from our arguments and that we shouldn't really stay mad at people." This is in line with adult research suggesting that forgiveness leads to restored closeness and commitment in relationships as well as enhanced quality of relationships (Enright et al., 1992; Tsang et al., 2006).

Further, also consistent with hypotheses, I found that participants were significantly more likely to describe nonforgiveness events as leading to their relationship ending or as hindering the possibility of a relationship with the offender. These patterns were particularly evident when participants did not discuss interpersonal forgiveness. Similarly, when participants did not describe intrapersonal forgiveness in their forgiveness narratives they were more likely to describe negative consequences for their relationship. My findings oppose previous work with adults suggesting that interpersonal forgiveness is linked to positive relationship consequences whereas intrapersonal forgiveness is related to negative relational consequences (Strelan et al., 2013). That is, youth in this study expressed more positive consequences for their relationship

when they described intrapersonal forgiveness as well as interpersonal forgiveness. In part, this may be a consequence of the different operationalizations of intrapersonal forgiveness across the two studies. In Strelan's study, intrapersonal forgiveness was described as self-focused, such that participants described forgiving to make themselves feel better. In contrast, my study defined intrapersonal forgiveness as having successfully overcome the emotional consequences of the harm. In other words, the definition in Strelan's study related to participants motivation to forgive, compared to my focus on youths' emotional well-being (Strelan, et al., 2013). In any case, in my study, negative consequences for the relationship were associated with a lack of either intra- or interpersonal forgiveness.

Previous research has demonstrated that forgiveness leads to more positive consequences for relationships, such as reconciliation (Enright et al., 1992; Tsang et al., 2006). However, these findings elucidate potential negative consequences of nonforgiveness on relationships, which has been less widely examined than forgiveness. This study also extends previous research by examining the consequences of forgiveness and nonforgiveness in children and adolescents, which have been widely neglected in most research (Johnson et al., 2013). Including children in the analysis allowed us to map the developmental process whereby younger children are less likely to describe negative consequences for their relationships. This may speak to the varied understanding children and adolescents' have of conflict, in that adolescents may be more attuned to the long-term relationship-based consequences of transgressions than younger children.

Close Friendship Paradox

In my qualitative analysis of narrative accounts of transgressions by close friends, I identified key differences between narrators who forgave a best friend and did not forgive a best friend. Some types of harmful acts by best friends were apparently viewed as unforgivable. First, consistent with previous work on forgiveness among youth (Girard & Mullet, 1997), it was described as unacceptable when a best friend intentionally tried to hurt the narrator. Further, when participants described a best friend harming them in a personal, character destroying or intimate way this was also described as unforgivable. Intimacy is a key characteristic of adolescents' close friendships. When friends violate intimacy expectations it has been found to lead to feelings of vulnerability and more antipathetic relationships (Casper & Card, 2010). Further, youth expect their friends to contribute to their feelings of self-worth, self-esteem and

happiness (Jones & Dembo, 1989). Therefore, if a friend attacks a youth's character or hurts them personally, this is unsurprisingly viewed as not acting as a best friend should, and therefore leads to more nonforgiveness (Jones & Dembo, 1989). Lastly, when a friend broke a narrator's trust this was consistently viewed as unforgivable. This is in line with research on both adolescents and adults indicating that trust is one of the most valued traits of relationships, and once it is broken this most likely leads to the end of relationships or negative consequences for relationships (Enright et al., 1992; Robinson, 1996).

The number of friends or transgressors involved in the harmful act was also described as an influencing factor for participants' willingness to forgive. When participants were harmed by a group of friends, they were overall more forgiving than when they described being harmed by one friend. These findings may have been a consequence of perceived intentionality, in that groups were more frequently forgiven as a consequence of a miscommunication, in which participants described not having contact with the entire group, or the group not being aware of their desire to participate. Contrarily, an individual friend was often perceived as acting intentionally, such that participants more often described the friend as knowing what they were doing, or having a goal attached to their behavior. Therefore, groups were less likely to be described as acting with an intention compared to individual friends.

Participants' narratives also indicated that their friends' responses in the aftermath of the harm influenced their willingness to forgive. Specifically, when a best friend did not apologize or acknowledge their actions, this was described as unforgivable. These findings are consistent with research suggesting that apologies are one of the most influential factors for youth following transgressions (Darby & Schlenker, 1982). Researchers have identified that when adults and youth receive apologies or conciliatory gestures they are more willing to forgive an offender (Johnson et al., 2013; Tabak, McCullough, Luna, Bono, & Berry, 2012). Further, apologies may help to reduce consequences of intentional acts by perpetrators (Darby & Schlenker, 1982). Therefore, it is apparent that apologies and acknowledgment of actions may impact victims' willingness to forgive a transgressor. Specifically with respect to close friendships, research has demonstrated that relationship partners in more high quality relationships are more likely to apologize for their actions (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997). As such, this may be reflective of the quality of the relationship with the best friend. Similarly, adolescents may feel

more forgiving when a friend is apologetic as it demonstrates more positive relationship qualities (Tabak et al., 2012).

Last, when participants described either a desire for revenge or actually taking revenge on a best friend, this often coincided with a lack of forgiveness, as did participants' descriptions of distancing themselves from their friend for a long period of time. Previous research has found that revenge is a correlate of a lack of willingness to forgive a transgressor (Girard & Mullet, 2012). Arguably, both revenge and distancing reduce the chances of reconciliation in a relationship. Further, when a victim is willing to respond in these ways it may be an indicator of more intense anger towards the transgressor that may be more challenging to overcome.

Interestingly, although the sample chosen for the qualitative analysis included an equal number of boys and girls, there were no differences found between genders. This is despite the various differences described in previous research in the way boys and girls experience friendships (Bowker, 2004; Brendgen et al., 2001). Further, my analysis of the types of relationships youth identified did not suggest that girls discussed good friends more than boys. Therefore, my results contradict our hypotheses. Perhaps these findings speak to some prevailing similarities in best friendships across gender, as well as boys' and girls' experiences of transgressions within the context of best friendships.

Overall, the qualitative analysis focused on participants' descriptions of their best friends' behaviors within transgressions. These findings are not unique to my qualitative analyses, as many of these patterns were also identified in quantitative analyses of forgiveness reasoning in the broader sample (Wainryb et al., in preparation). However, in this qualitative analysis, I was able to look at these patterns in more detail as they relate to best friendships. Specifically, when a participant described a best friend failing to apologize, I was able to examine whether this was important because of the lack of apology or because it was a best friend not apologizing. Similarly, when participants described the types of harmful acts that they experienced, these were described as more important or more hurtful because the offender was their best friend (e.g., "it kind of struck me as like, like- I don't know. Why would a friend do that? Cause he knows me, and he… I thought he would trust me."). The particularly unique themes in the current analysis were the issues of trust (e.g., "I guess that really made me angry, just 'cause he was like my best friend, and I like, ever since then we haven't been close at all, just 'cause, you know? I guess it was like a trust issue") and denial of actions (e.g., "she kind of waved it off like,

oh whatever, it's not a big deal, and that just made me more angry"). Specifically, narrators described best friends breaking their trust exclusively in nonforgiveness narratives. This made it evident that youth do not feel it is acceptable to break a best friend's trust. Most importantly, participants described actions taken by a best friend as either meeting the expectations of a best friend or failing to do so. This appeared to be the most important characteristic of a narrative in which a best friend was forgiven. That is, youth have certain expectations for their best friends, in that a best friend is expected to contribute to their happiness, self-worth and self-esteem, and additionally, a close friendship is dependent on trust (Enright et al., 1992). Therefore, when participants described their best friends breaking their trust, or diminishing their self-worth, or challenging their character in front of others, this was perceived as failing to meet their expectations of a best friend.

Limitations

Overall, within the context of the larger study, the methodological decision to examine participants' narrative accounts of their own experiences supported my goal of understanding the ways in which youth perceive harm within the context of their own ongoing relationships, as well as how youth describe forgiveness and nonforgiveness events differently across development. Additionally, it allowed us to identify which factors youth spontaneously described as affecting their decisions to forgive or not forgive, as well as the outcomes associated with these decisions. Thus, our use of participants' narrative accounts of their own experiences affords some key advantages over the use of hypothetical scenarios. Nevertheless, this methodology also introduced a great deal of heterogeneity into the data. For instance, we were unable to ensure that all participants discussed a harmful event that was at the same level of severity and happened in the same time frame. This may affect how youth described the events, how much detail they were able to provide, and how important the events were for them. This heterogeneity also played a role in the choices I had to make regarding which participants to include in the qualitative analysis. As the younger participants did not give as much detail in their narratives, I was unable to include them in my analysis. Further, my analysis of the participants' intra-and interpersonal forgiveness may have benefitted from more detailed probing in some cases. Specifically, not all participants provided information about either form of forgiveness, which may have been because they did not think about forgiveness in this way, or because they did not consider it when discussing their narrative.

A major limitation in the examination of relationships within this study is that participants were specifically asked to discuss a friend or "kid you know well" This may play a role in the number of references to friends or good friends made by the participants. However, I did receive 11 references for disliked peers, as well as references to acquaintances or neighbors.

Another limitation is the relatively small sample size used for this study. In some cases, the small size reduced my power to examine some effects such as interactions between age and gender. In particular, this influenced my analysis of the types of forgiveness as they relate to changes in the relationships; the assumptions of chi-square were often violated because expected frequencies in cells were <5. Although I tried to collapse categories to mitigate this issue, it proved difficult to overcome. I chose to retain the analysis for the purpose of this paper, however the findings should be interpreted with caution. It would be beneficial to replicate this study with a larger sample in order to increase power to detect nuanced effects.

We used a convenience sample recruited from one mid-sized city in the US, and as a consequence our sample was not diverse and was largely taken from a middle class population. Therefore, these results may not be generalized to more diverse groups of youth, such as non-typically developing youth, or participants from other cultural or religious backgrounds.

Last, my qualitative analysis was taken from a larger interview. This caused a lack of detail that may have been possible had the interviews been done specifically for the purpose of a qualitative analysis. In that case, participants would have been asked more elaborative questions. Further, following the coding of the interviews, I would have been able to contact the participants regarding their interviews and the findings that I planned to discuss (i.e., member checking), which in my analysis was impossible. Using member-checking may have provided further insight into the way participants experienced the harm events and the forgiveness or nonforgiveness of their best friends, and would have ensured that participants agreed with my interpretations.

Implications

Despite these limitations, this study allowed the examination of how youth describe their own experiences with forgiveness and nonforgiveness. As was previously discussed, the majority of current research in the field of forgiveness and peer relationships either neglects youth or is based on their responses to hypothetical scenarios. This is one of the first studies to examine youths' understandings of forgiveness and nonforgiveness based on their own experiences.

Therefore, the research informs our understanding of the developmental changes in how youth describe their own forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences. I was able to identify how youth consider their relationships as context for forgiveness or nonforgiveness, and how this changes across development, where children were less likely to discuss their relationships in detail compared to 16-year-olds who described different forms of relationships. This may indicate that relationship history with the offender has less impact on younger children's forgiveness experiences. Further, this study is one of the first to examine Baumeister's intra-and interpersonal dimensions of forgiveness in youth. As such, I was able to examine how youth experience these forms of forgiveness and how this influenced youths' relationships.

This study also contributes specifically to our understanding of the ways in which youth experience forgiveness and nonforgiveness within the context of their peer relationships. Similar to adults, youth experience forgiveness in the context of positive relationships more than negative relationships. In turn, experiences of forgiveness and nonforgiveness play a role in the future of youths' relationships with offenders; youth are more likely to experience positive consequences in their relationships following forgiveness experiences, and especially when they describe forgiving intra-and interpersonally. Conversely, youth experience negative consequences for their relationships following nonforgiveness, again, particularly when they describe a lack of intra- and interpersonal forgiveness. Even so, youth experience positive consequences in nonforgiveness experiences when they describe achieving intrapersonal forgiveness. Therefore, as Baumeister suggested, it appears that dealing with the emotional consequences of a transgression is important for the future of youths' relationships (Baumeister et al., 1998).

These results may also aid in informing forgiveness interventions in youth, inasmuch as these interventions should take youths' own perspectives as a starting point. Most forgiveness intervention work has focused on adult victims, thus this work may aid in developing interventions aimed at promoting forgiveness in youth victims (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Further, experiencing tension in friendships following nonforgiveness has been found to lead to negative consequences for psychological well-being amongst youth (van der Wal et al., 2016). Therefore, it is important to aid youth in their forgiveness development and process (van der Wal et al., 2016). Additionally, in the area of forgiveness therapy, this research may help to integrate issues related to the relational contexts of forgiveness. For instance, it may be useful to

differentiate between instances in which forgiveness is perceived as beneficial to the victim and the relationship and instances in which interpersonal forgiveness is not understood to benefit the victim. Further, this research may inform forgiveness interventions with respect to what factors are most important to youths' willingness to forgive at different ages, and what children and adolescents actually understand forgiveness to mean (e.g., relationship reconciliation vs. remediation of emotional and psychological pain). Lastly, I hope this research will lead to more attention and work on research examining forgiveness developmentally across childhood and adolescence.

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Appendix A
State of Relationship Coding Scheme

Code	Description	Example
Good/Best friend	Participants specifically identify that the offender is a good or a best friend, or they describe a long positive relationship history with the offender	"we've been like best friends since preschool."
Friend	Participants identify that the offender is a friend, but do not specify how close they are or provide other details about their unique relationship history with the offender	"I was playing with a friend"
Acquaintance	Participants identify that the offender is a neighbor or a classmate but do not describe any relationship history with the offender	"these two girls in my class"
Disliked Peer	Participants describe the offender as someone they do not like, someone who treats them badly, or someone with whom they share a negative relationship history	"it was with one of… someone I knew since maybe kindergarten or second grade...he was a really bad bully"
Not reported	Participants specify their relationship with the offender	

Appendix B:
Relationship Follow-up Coding Scheme

Code	Description	Example
Relationship changed/ended for other reasons besides the event	Participant describes the relationship as changing or ending following the event but specifically explains that change or end was not a direct result of the event	"It changed when I came this year, he wasn't there. He went to this different school"
Event did not change relationship	Participant describes the relationship as the same or similar to how it was prior to the event; either still friends or still not friends, perpetrator still treating them the same way	"Not really, she's still my friend. She's still my best friend; I think she will be for a long time." "Mm, not really I've never liked her, at all."
Positive consequences for relationship	Participant describes an improvement in the relationship; event bringing them closer together, developing a better understanding of each other as a result of the argument	"Yeah, like before, um, like, before that she was always kinda just, like, she'd like give me looks and she'd talk about me and then after that she wouldn't do that anymore." "It kind of has changed but I think we've grown kind of closer together because we know that we should learn from our arguments and that we shouldn't really stay mad at people."
Negative consequences for relationship	Participant describes a change in the relationship, which may make it difficult for the relationship to continue, but do not describe an end to the relationship specifically	"Except we don't hang out together as much anymore. We don't do stuff together as much. Even we talk… we talk about things, we play together sometimes, but we don't do what we used to do. We don't go to each other's houses anymore, or not very often, and we just don't do things together very much. I mean it hasn't changed a lot, but it's just shifted a little bit to from best friend, to just regular friend"
Event ended relationship	Participant specifically describes an end to the relationship either as a direct result of the event or because of other circumstances	"We're not really friends anymore. Just because so many of these situations happened. Like if one happened, it would be like everyone makes mistakes, even like a few. But it was like so many that it just got tiring. I was just like I'm

		tired of this, I just deserve something better than your friendship."
Event hindered possibility of a relationship	Participant describes not having shared a relationship with the offender prior to the event and not feeling willing to start a relationship with the offender following the event	"She, um, when I first met her I thought she would be, um, she could be a friend but I just don't really think she would be a good friend anymore."
N/A	Participants do not respond to the question or do not talk about the relationship following the event	

Appendix C:
Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Dimensions of Forgiveness

Code		Description	Examples	Overlapping existing codes
Intrapersonal	Yes	Participants described they were no longer upset at the offender	"I'm not upset about it anymore, I let it go"	
	No	Narrator describes they are still upset at the offender, they can feel a little upset/hurt/angry, still feel this way now	"I'm still angry about what happened"	
	Unclear	Narrator describes they still feel upset and not upset, or get upset if they think about it a lot	"If I think about it I can upset, but usually, I'm fine"	
Interpersonal	Yes	Narrator describes taking steps towards resolving the conflict with the offender, or the offender taking steps towards resolving the conflict with them; apologizing, confronting, talking it out, receiving and accepting apologies or remorse	"so we forgave each other when we were outside jump roping." "I had to start talking to her again because I couldn't stand being mad at her and that's probably when I finally decided to forgive her."	Successful mutual resolution: Offender and victim discuss and come to a mutual understanding that helps them move on. Reconciliation: Action on the part of the victim directed towards resolving the situation or mending the relationship with the perpetrator Apology: Narrator notes that the offender apologized Offender's reparation: Reparations are described and are perceived by narrator to adequately restore relationships Confrontation: Articulating to perpetrator what the harm was or how they affected narrator (this was only included when it was paired with attempts to resolve the relationship)
	No	Narrator describes not taking steps towards resolving the conflict with the offender or the offender not taking steps towards resolving	"I haven't really totally forgiving him, like I don't- I just don't talk to him as much, I guess But that's the only	Unsuccessful mutual resolution: Offender and victim discuss the event but are unable to come to a mutual understanding Lack of mutual

		the conflict with them; not apologizing, not confronting, or confronting aggressively, not talking it out, or unsuccessfully talking it out, not receiving and accepting apologies or remorse	thing I can really think of. So it's not as close. like, we used to be really good friends, so."	resolution/lack of reconciliation: References to the fact that the offender and victim have not have not discussed the event or taken any action toward resolving the situation and as a result there is a lack of discussion or lack of resolution or closure. Lack of Apology: Narrator notes a lack of apology on the part of the offender. Lack of Offender's Reparation: Narrator describes offender as failing to repair or restore relationship, or continues doing harm after offense. Confrontation: Narrator describes confronting the offender in a hostile way or insulting the offender, or confronting with no response from the offender or further action to resolve the situation or relationship from the narrator
	Unclear	The narrator does not mention any of the above, or if they do, it is unclear whether it is successful/present, or unsuccessful absent		