

Running head: REVENGE AND FORGIVENESS

The Juxtaposition of Revenge and Forgiveness in Peer Conflict Experiences of Youth Exposed
to Violence

Published in: Journal of Research on Adolescence

Holly E. Recchia
Concordia University

Cecilia Wainryb
University of Utah

Roberto Posada
Universidad Nacional de Colombia

This project was supported by an Insight Development Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

We would like to thank Paola Acero, Rafael Cendales, and Lizette Pizza for their assistance with data collection, as well as Hector Aguirre, Melina Babin-Molina, Olga Lucia Gonzalez, Fatima Inigo, Angelica Restrepo, and Daysi Zentner for their help with the coding. We would also like to thank the schools who partnered with us in conducting this research, and especially the participating youth who shared their stories with us.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Holly E. Recchia, Department of Education, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve West, Montreal, QC, Canada, H3G 1M8. Email: holly.recchia@concordia.ca

Abstract

In a sample of 95 urban Colombian mid-adolescents, this mixed-method study examined how youths' retaliatory desires and actions were juxtaposed with forgiveness and nonforgiveness in their narrative accounts of peer conflict. Quantitative analyses examined how retaliatory desire and action were associated with variations in youths' lifetime exposure to violence and recent victimization by peers at school. These measures of violence exposure were related to revenge only in the context of unforgiven harms. Qualitative analyses explored aspects of youths' narrative accounts that may underlie the observed associations. Overall, findings suggest that exposure to violence may interfere with youths' capacity to reflect on revenge in ways that recognize their own fallibility and thus open the door to forgiveness.

The Juxtaposition of Revenge and Forgiveness in Peer Conflict Experiences of Youth Exposed to Violence

The experience of having been wronged or hurt by a peer can provoke youths' desire to seek revenge (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012). Indeed, tit-for-tat is a guiding principle for human behavior, driven by desires for justice and reciprocity (Bloom, 2001; Fry, 2006). Recent research with children and adolescents emphasizes that the capacity to forgive is crucial to developing healthy social relationships and psychological functioning (van der Wal, Karremans, & Cillessen, 2017). To date in the developmental literature, retaliation and forgiveness are overwhelmingly conceptualized as mutually exclusive responses to harm, inasmuch as forgiveness is understood to involve relinquishing retaliatory motives (Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992; Peets, Hodges, & Salmivalli, 2013). Yet theorists have noted that revenge and forgiveness are not simply two sides of the same coin (McCullough, Kurzban, & Tabak, 2013), and studies with adults suggest that the relationship between them may be more complex than is typically assumed (Strelan, Di Fiore, & Van Prooijen, 2017; Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Examining intersections between revenge and forgiveness among adolescents exposed to violence is particularly pressing, because violence-exposed youth are more likely to endorse the legitimacy of retributive responses to provocation, thereby contributing to escalating cycles of aggression (Guerra, Huesmann, & Spindler, 2003; McMahon, Felix, Halpert, & Petropoulos, 2009). Thus, efforts aimed at preventing violence among these youth by promoting the desirability and benefits of forgiveness (e.g., Gassin, Enright, & Knutson, 2005) may be improved by understanding their complex lived experiences of interpersonal conflict. With these issues in mind, the current study was based on an urban Colombian sample of youth who varied in their lifetime exposure to violence and recent victimization by peers at school. To capture

whether and how youths' retaliatory desires and actions were juxtaposed with their experiences of forgiveness and nonforgiveness, we asked each adolescent to narrate two past experiences of peer conflict: one in which they forgave a peer who harmed them, and one in which they did not. We used a mixed-method approach to the analysis of youths' narratives, to achieve two interrelated aims. Our first goal was to quantitatively examine how retaliatory desire and action in the context of forgiveness and nonforgiveness were associated with individual differences in measures of youths' exposure to violence. Our second goal, based on qualitative analyses of youths' narrative accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness, was to examine the broader constructions of meanings that may underlie the observed patterns.

Conceptualizing Revenge and Forgiveness

Both retaliation and forgiveness can be construed as active strategies that youth may employ to cope with peer injury, albeit in distinct ways (Flanagan, Vanden Hoek, Ranter, & Reich, 2012). Retaliatory action involves responding to harm *in kind*, typically driven by anger and revenge-related goals such as “wanting to get back at” the peer who caused harm (McDonald & Asher, 2018; McDonald & Lochman, 2012). Conversely, forgiveness is conceptualized as an intrapersonal process that involves relinquishing anger and retaliatory motives in favor of psychological and emotional closure and more positive dispositions towards the offender (van der Wal et al., 2017). In the context of ongoing relationships, forgiveness may also entail interpersonal processes of relationship restoration, and youth often view forgiveness as closely related to reconciliation (Wainryb, Recchia, Faulconbridge, & Pasupathi, 2020; López López et al., 2020). In either case, forgiveness is typically understood to be incompatible with revenge. And indeed, our own research with community samples in the US suggests that adolescents more often (although not exclusively) describe carrying out their desires for revenge in situations when

they ultimately did *not* forgive a peer for having hurt them (Wainryb et al., 2020; see also Flanagan et al., 2012).

Even so, process models of forgiveness emphasize that forgiving may take time, and that the decision to forgive involves a recognition that preoccupations with seeking revenge are not adaptive. That is, youth might first harbour anger, ruminate about an event, and even lash out at the offender, and only later achieve forgiveness (e.g., Worthington & Wade, 1999). In this respect, the prospect that youth might seek revenge prior to forgiving is not incompatible with theorizing about forgiveness, although this possibility is rarely considered in the literature.

Even further, some scholars have argued that getting revenge can sometimes facilitate forgiveness. Justice gap theory postulates that forgiveness is more difficult when there is a larger discrepancy between victims' perceptions of the treatment to which they are entitled and that which they actually received (e.g., when the harm was severe, or the offender had malicious intentions; see Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). Importantly, however, the theory also stipulates that the justice gap can be attenuated in the aftermath of harm in varied ways. Youths' desires for justice can be satisfied by restorative measures such as the perpetrator's attempts at reparation, or via psychological strategies such as reflecting on the legitimate reasons that explained the perpetrator's actions. Indeed, children and adolescents are more likely to forgive when peers apologize for transgressions and when they make benign attributions about the offender's motives (e.g., Girard & Mullet, 1997; Ohbuchi & Sato, 1994). Such benign attributions may be more common in the context of youths' positive relationships, such as friendships (Peets et al., 2013). Conversely, justice might also be achieved through more retributive means that hold peers accountable for their actions, and provide the victim with a restored sense of power and control. Indeed, there is some evidence that when victims are able to

punish offenders, this increases their likelihood of forgiving, and that perceived justice and empowerment mediate this association (Strelan & van Prooijen, 2013; Strelan et al., 2017).

But apart from the restoration of justice, revenge is also closely linked to other concerns that are less conducive to forgiveness. That is, although revenge might ostensibly aim to seek justice, it functionally does so by making another person suffer. In this sense, revenge may be accompanied by an absence or suppression of concern for the other's welfare, which is not consistent with the empathetic or relational orientation that often underlies forgiveness. And indeed, alongside desires to satisfy justice (e.g., "everybody got what they deserved"; from Funk, McGeer, & Gollwitzer, 2014), malicious goals can drive the desire to punish others (e.g., "I want to see him/her hurt and miserable"; from McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006). These more malicious goals underlying retaliation impede adults' tendency to forgive (Strelan & van Prooijen, 2013; Strelan et al., 2017). Similarly, among adolescents, revenge goals are linked to fewer conciliatory strategies and relationship-maintaining motivations, including desires to forgive (McDonald & Asher, 2018). Relatedly, retributive forms of justice are generally less effective in promoting forgiveness than restorative strategies (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2014).

Taken together, past theory and research imply that revenge goals and retaliatory actions might plausibly precede youths' forgiveness in response to peer harms, but that the varied moral concerns (i.e., achieving justice, harming others) underlying revenge may act in ways that can either facilitate or impede forgiveness. Next, we elaborate on how youths' experiences with violence and adversity may play a role in explaining how they understand and evaluate the moral concerns that are implicated in acts of revenge.

Revenge and Forgiveness in Youth Exposed to Violence and Victimization by Peers

It is well-established that children and adolescents who have been exposed to higher

levels of violence (either as victims or witnesses) are at increased risk of engaging in aggressive or violent behaviors (Huesmann, 2018). Specifically with respect to youths' experiences with their peers at school, there are prospective links between being victimized by peers and reactive aggression in response to perceived provocations (Cooley, Fite, & Pederson, 2018). Youths' interpretations of their peers' motives and their evaluations of the acceptability of retribution as a response to provocation can partially explain these findings. Exposure to violence is consistently related to a greater likelihood of making hostile attributions, which in turn predict youths' tendency to behave aggressively (Calvete & Orue, 2011; Perren, Ettekal, & Ladd, 2012). Histories of violence exposure are also linked to youths' positive evaluations of retributive responses to provocation (Ardila-Rey, Killen & Brenick, 2009; Posada & Wainryb, 2008), and such moral judgments of retaliation predict the extent to which victimized children will become aggressive themselves (Bettencourt & Farrell, 2013; Guerra et al., 2003).

These finding may hinge on how youth may make sense of morally-laden interactions when their exposure to violence is pervasive. Research examining adolescents' narrative accounts of their own experiences provides an important window into these meaning-making patterns. In community samples of youth exposed to low levels of violence, adolescents tend to construct narrative accounts of interpersonal conflict that are rich in psychological content, wherein their own and others' actions are explained by reference to their desires, thoughts, and emotions during the event (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010). In contrast, the narratives of violence-exposed adolescents tend to be sparse in psychological content, particularly in their representations of the internality of others; they also tend to underscore both negative reciprocity and vengeful themes (Pasupathi, Wainryb, Bourne, & Posada, 2017; Wainryb, Komolova & Florsheim, 2010). Youth who are victimized by peers also tend to report more anger and less

forgiveness in their narrative accounts (Bollmer, Harris & Milich, 2006). Overall, these patterns are in line with theory suggesting that youth growing up in environments characterized by coercion and inequality may come to prioritize concerns with power and tit-for-tat forms of reciprocity over more relationally-oriented approaches to interpersonal conflict that rely on empathy and concern for others (Arsenio & Gold, 2006). These patterns may be further amplified by honor norms that increase youths' sensitivity to disrespect from others, and the perceived necessity of defending oneself in the face of provocation, especially among youth who deem that authorities cannot or will not protect them from harm (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; McDonald & Asher, 2018).

The Current Study

This study examined the juxtaposition of revenge and forgiveness in Colombian adolescents' narrative accounts of peer conflict using a mixed-method narrative-based approach. The sample that formed the focus of this study was economically disadvantaged and drawn from a larger urban centre with high crime rates. Colombia is also characterized by a culture of honor defined by respect sensitivity and the importance of protecting oneself from perceived threats (Rojas, 2003; Uskul, Oyserman, & Schwarz, 2010). This might be especially the case among youth who perceive the systems that are supposed to protect them to be ineffective; indeed, Colombian adolescents' institutional and social trust have been declining over the past decade (Schulz et al., 2018). Against this backdrop, the adolescents in this study varied in their lifetime exposure to violence and recent victimization by peers at school, which allowed us to explore how these individual differences were related to youths' experiences of revenge in the context of forgiveness and nonforgiveness. Given research indicating that boys are more likely to report retaliatory desires than girls (see McDonald & Asher, 2018), we also considered associations

with gender.

We examined whether youth described seeking revenge against others in their accounts of past experiences when they ultimately forgave or did not forgive a peer for hurting them. Based on past research, we had competing hypotheses about how revenge may be differentially related to forgiveness among youth exposed to higher and lower levels of lifetime exposure to violence and recent victimization by peers at school. On the one hand, revenge in the context of youths' experiences when they ultimately forgive their peers may be indicative of altered understandings of the route to forgiveness that are informed by the challenging life circumstances of adolescents exposed to violence. Specifically, if revenge is described as often preceding forgiveness, this may imply a tit-for-tat model of justice that requires reciprocal harms to re-establish one's standing (Arsenio & Gold, 2006; McDonald & Asher, 2018). If this were the case, revenge in the context of *forgiveness* may be uniquely related to youths' exposure to violence. Alternatively, given that youth who are exposed to more violence may be *less* likely to recognize the problematic aspects of their own revenge and may be less other-oriented and relationally-motivated (McDonald & Asher, 2018; Pasupathi et al., 2017; Wainryb et al., 2010), they may experience less guilt in the aftermath of their own retaliation, and thus may not be able to shift towards the sort of empathic stance towards the offender that facilitates forgiveness. If this were the case, revenge in the context of *nonforgiveness* may be uniquely related to youths' exposure to violence.

Method

Participants

A final analytic sample of 95 mid-adolescents (M age = 15.9 years, range = 14.6 to 17.6; 48 girls) were recruited in four high schools located in and around Bogotá, Colombia. The

sampling for this study was guided by Colombia's six-level socioeconomic stratification system. Specifically, neighborhoods are rated on a scale from 1 (low) to 6 (high) based on diversity and quality of housing and neighbourhood characteristics. We selected four schools for this study serving students in estrato 2 to 4 areas. Schools were chosen to ensure variability in the sample in levels of community crime and violence, as well as violence and adversity in the schools themselves. Our goal was to maximize variability in exposure to violence and victimization within a sample that was representative of the local population (in Bogotá, over 85% of housing is classified as estrato 2 to 4; Secretaria Distrital de Planeación, 2017). Indicators of exposure to violence and victimization by peers were measured at the individual level due to substantial heterogeneity within schools. Parents provided written informed consent, and youth provided written assent to participate in the study. The study received human research ethics approval from Concordia University, the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, as well as local school administrations, and was conducted in accordance with Tri-Council ethical policies. Each adolescent received school supplies or a cafeteria voucher in appreciation for their participation.

Procedure

In a private location in their school (e.g., an empty classroom), participants were interviewed in Spanish by a well-trained graduate or senior undergraduate Colombian student. They were first asked to recount two events in which they were upset by the actions of a peer and were so hurt or angry that they "wanted to get back at them". Participants were asked to narrate one event in which they ended up forgiving their peer and another in which they did not (order counterbalanced within school and gender). Participants were asked to select events that were important to them and to recount everything they remembered about the time. The narratives of four additional adolescents (two boys, two girls) were excluded because of interviewer error or

the participant's inability to recollect experiences that met criteria. Narratives were transcribed verbatim by native Spanish speakers for analysis.

Following this interview, participants also completed measures of exposure to violence and victimization by peers as part of a larger battery of questionnaires. One additional participant did not complete the questionnaires, and was thus excluded from all analyses.

Measures

Lifetime exposure to violence (ETV). First, participants completed an adapted version of the MyETV interview, which was used to assess presence (1) or absence (0) of lifetime exposure to various forms of violence that increased in severity across the interview (Selner-O'Hagan, Kindlon, Buka, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1998). This scale measures the number of different forms of violence that youth have experienced. The overall score (see Brennan, Molner and Earls, 2007) includes the number of types of violence that youth have experienced as a witness (7 items; e.g., Have you ever seen someone else get attacked with a weapon?), a victim (6 items; e.g., Have you ever been slapped, punched, or beaten up?), as well as violence that they had experienced indirectly (3 items; e.g., Have you ever been told that someone you knew had been killed?). Past research provides evidence of the validity of this measure in predicting retaliatory beliefs, including in a Colombian context (Dusing et al., 2018; Posada, 2012).

Recent victimization by peers at school. As part of the larger study, participants completed the California School Climate and Safety Survey-Short Form (Furlong, Greif, Bates, Whipple, Jimenez, & Morrison, 2005), which has been used previously in a Colombian context (e.g., Higuaita-Gutierrez & Cardona-Arias, 2016). A subset of five items on this measure assessed participants' self-reports of victimization by peers at school over the past month (e.g., being punched, pushed, threatened), on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (a lot). The

internal consistency of the scale was adequate ($\alpha = .77$).

References to Retaliatory Desires and Actions in Youths' Narratives

We prompted youth to recount situations in which they were so hurt or angry that they wanted to get back at a peer for harming them. Based on past theory and research, we did not expect youth to describe actually carrying out all of their retaliatory desires, given that such desires are often contained or redirected (Recchia, Wainryb, & Pasupathi, 2019). As such, we coded youths' narratives for their references to retaliatory desires that were both carried out and not carried out. Youth could describe wanting to respond or responding to harm in varied ways, and we were deliberately conservative in our decision to categorize responses as retaliatory. Responses were deemed retaliatory when they involved responding to provocation in kind ("I wanted to insult him back"; "I pushed him back"), or in another way that was intrinsically harmful ("I punched him" in response to a verbal insult). Other forms of responding such as withdrawal/avoidance ("I stopped talking to her") or angry confrontation ("I yelled at him") were generally not categorized as retaliatory, except in a few cases when they were explicitly described as based on retaliatory intent ("to get back at her").

For the coding of retaliation, interrater reliability was established based on 20% of the data between two undergraduate or graduate student coders who were native Spanish speakers and who were blind to hypotheses. Disagreements were resolved via discussion and consensus. For retaliation, Cohen's *kappas* = 1.0 for both identifying retaliatory desires and categorizing whether response was carried out. All coding was conducted in Spanish; examples of responses are translated here for illustrative purposes only.

Results

Plan of Analysis

Our analyses of youths' retaliatory desires and actions in the context of forgiveness and nonforgiveness were based on a nested mixed-method design, with a priority on the quantitative component (Hays & Singh, 2012). Specifically, we used inferential statistical modelling to examine (a) the likelihood of references to retaliatory desire and action in youths' accounts of forgiveness and nonforgiveness and (b) how references to retaliatory desire and action were associated with measures of lifetime exposure to violence and recent victimization by peers, as well as gender. Preliminary analyses indicated that youths' ages were not significantly correlated with exposure to violence, victimization by peers, or narrative references to retaliatory desires or actions, and thus age differences were not considered further.

We complemented quantitative models with qualitative analyses of various features of youths' narratives across forgiveness and nonforgiveness events, with the aim of illuminating youths' narrative constructions of meaning that may underlie the patterns observed in the quantitative analysis. We used an informed grounded theory approach to capture key themes in the data, while also considering pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Thornberg, 2012).

Quantitative Analyses of Youths' Retaliatory Desires and Actions

Proportions of youth who referred to retaliatory desires and actions in their narratives are presented in Table 1. Youth were equally likely to describe a specific retaliatory desire in their narratives of forgiveness and nonforgiveness events, McNemar's $\chi^2(1) = .00, p = 1.0$. Unexpectedly, they were also equally likely to describe actually carrying out a retaliatory action in the context of events when they forgave and did not forgive a peer for having hurt them, $\chi^2(1) = .11, p = .74$.

We then examined whether retaliatory desires and actions across forgiveness and nonforgiveness events were related to variations in youths' lifetime ETV and recent

victimization by peers at school. Overall, youths' scores for lifetime ETV ranged from 1 to 13 types of violence exposure (out of a possible score of 16; $M = 6.29$, $SD = 2.82$). Most youth reported not experiencing victimization at school in the past month ($M = 1.4$ out of 5, $SD = .57$).

Regression models tested associations with gender, ETV, and victimization using nonlinear modeling with a logit-link function (using a Bernoulli distribution appropriate for dichotomous outcomes) in HLM7 (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2011). References to retaliation (scored as present or absent) were entered as dependent variables. Data for event type at L1 (forgiveness vs. nonforgiveness) were nested within participant at L2. We first entered main effects of gender at L2. We then added lifetime ETV to the model, and finally the more proximate measure of recent school-based victimization by peers, to examine whether they contributed significantly to the prediction of retaliatory desires. Subsequently, we used the same sequential approach to test cross-level interactions, which indicated whether associations with gender, ETV, and victimization varied across forgiveness and nonforgiveness events. We ran three sets of models: we initially examined predictors of retaliatory desires overall, then distinguished between retaliatory desires that youth described as carried out or not carried out. The final model for each of the three sets of analyses is depicted in Table 2. Effects are reported based on unit-specific models with robust standard errors.

With respect to the overall likelihood of describing retaliatory desires, boys (58%) were more likely to describe wanting to retaliate than girls (35%), $b = .99$, $SE = .30$, $OR = 2.69$, $p < .01$; this association did not differ significantly across forgiveness and nonforgiveness events (see Table 2). However, with gender and ETV controlled, there was a significant interaction between event type and victimization by peers in predicting retaliatory desires (see Table 2); the association between victimization by peers and the likelihood of describing retaliatory desires

was significant in nonforgiveness events (point biserial $r = .26$) but not in forgiveness events ($r = -.03$).

We then examined youths' descriptions of retaliatory actions in their narratives (i.e., the subset of their retaliatory desires that were carried out). The main effect of gender was not significant when data were collapsed across the two events ($OR = 1.90$, *ns*). The more complex model in Table 2 depicts a significant association between gender and retaliatory action only in the forgiveness events, nevertheless, the event type by gender interaction was not significant. With gender controlled, there was an interaction between event type and lifetime ETV in predicting the likelihood of retaliatory action, such that there was a significant association between ETV and the presence of retaliatory action in the nonforgiveness event ($r = .26$) but not the forgiveness event ($r = .00$). With gender and lifetime ETV controlled, recent victimization by peers at school did not add to the prediction of retaliatory action (nor did it interact with event type).

As depicted in Table 1, retaliatory desires that were not carried out were less common in youths' accounts than to those that were carried out. Analyses revealed only an interaction between gender and event type in predicting retaliatory desires that were not carried out (see Table 2). While descriptions of retaliatory desires that were not carried out were more common among boys (21%) than girls (4%) in forgiveness events, they did not differ significantly between boys (11%) and girls (15%) in nonforgiveness events. With gender controlled, neither lifetime ETV nor recent victimization by peers added to the prediction of retaliatory desires that were not carried out (nor did they interact with event type).

Qualitative Analyses of Retaliatory Actions within Narrative Accounts of Forgiveness and Nonforgiveness

In these analyses, we considered how events in which youth described retaliating differed from those in which they did not retaliate, and how these patterns varied across forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences. Given the findings that emerged from the quantitative analysis, our primary aim was to illuminate why retaliation in the context of nonforgiveness experiences was uniquely associated with exposure to violence.

We first explored several characteristics of forgiveness and nonforgiveness events that did and did not involve retaliatory action. These analyses were guided by past research examining youths' experiences of revenge and forgiveness (Wainryb et al., 2020; Girard & Mullet, 2012; López López et al., 2020; McDonald & Asher, 2018; Peets et al., 2013); specifically, we considered the recency of events, aspects of youths' relationship characteristics and histories, the nature of the provoking harm, the offenders' and victims' behaviors surrounding the harm, as well as youths' attributions about their own and others' psychological states. Second, to illuminate similarities and differences in youths' understandings and evaluations of retaliation in the context of forgiveness and nonforgiveness events, we also examined characteristics of the retaliation itself. Specifically, we considered youths' reasons for retaliating, their descriptions of the positive and negative impact of retaliation, and their evaluations of their retaliatory actions. Finally, when youth described seeking revenge in forgiveness events, we examined how revenge and forgiveness were juxtaposed within the broader experience.

For narrative features and characteristics of retaliation, interrater reliability was established based on 20% of the data between two Spanish speakers and who were blind to hypotheses; Cohen's kappas are reported in Supplementary Table 1 and below. For the coding of overall patterns of juxtaposition between forgiveness and revenge, a team of three Spanish

speaking coders discussed each narrative and came to consensus regarding the patterns evident in the account.

Characteristics of forgiveness and nonforgiveness events that did and did not involve retaliatory action. Patterns are summarized below, and details of the coding categories, frequencies of individual codes, and interrater reliabilities are included in Supplementary Table 1. It is worth noting briefly that, overall, the characteristics of youths' narrative accounts largely mirrored the key features of forgiveness noted in the literature (e.g., López López et al., 2020; van der Wal et al., 2017). Specifically, in contrast to nonforgiveness accounts, forgiveness narratives more often included implicit or explicit indicators of psychological closure, including an absence of enduring negative emotions or current preoccupation with the experience (“in the end, I was not resentful of him or anything”; “the past is in the past”), as well as references to reconciliation with the offender (“we became friends again”). Other aspects of events that have been shown to predict youths' forgiveness were also evident in this sample (e.g., Girard & Mullet, 2012; Peets et al., 2013). With respect to types of provocations, youth were less likely to refer to relationship-based harms (such as gossip and trust violations) in the context of forgiveness events. Youth also described forgiveness events as more commonly involving friends, whereas nonforgiveness events more often involved strangers or acquaintances. Finally, youth described perpetrators as more often apologizing (“the guy apologized to me”), making reparations (“a month later, he paid me the money he owed me”), and/or expressing remorse (e.g., “he asked for my forgiveness for bothering me”) in the context of forgiveness events.

More directly related to the questions that formed the focus of the present analysis, we explored distinctions between accounts in which youth did or did not describe engaging in retaliatory action. There were some commonalities across forgiveness and nonforgiveness

accounts, that were in line with existing scholarship on retaliation (e.g., McDonald & Asher, 2018). Across both forgiveness and nonforgiveness experiences, youth were particularly likely to describe retaliating when harms were reoccurrent (“there is this guy that I’ve had various problems with”) and when they described experiencing anger (“I was really mad at the time”). Across both events, they also described retaliating more often in response to physical harms (e.g., hitting, pushing) or offensive behaviors (e.g., rude comments, insults, teasing), likely because these types of transgressions more clearly lend themselves to a tit-for-tat response in the moment, in contrast to more indirect relationship-based harms such as trust violations.

However, we also noted a number of differences in the patterns of retaliatory action across forgiveness and nonforgiveness events. It was particularly in the context of nonforgiveness that youth described selectively retaliating against acquaintances rather than friends. Attributions of the perpetrator’s hostile or uncaring intent, such as Machiavellianism, untrustworthiness, the intent to harm, or callousness, were also uniquely associated with the presence of retaliation in the context of nonforgiveness (“he was looking for a way to get involved and hurt me”; “she’s trying to manipulate everyone”). Furthermore, it was only in nonforgiveness events that the presence of retaliation was related to an explicit lack of closure (“I still feel bitterness... how could she do that to me?”) and the absence of reconciliation with the offender (“I never talked to him again”). In contrast, in forgiveness events, youth were actually *more* likely to describe closure and reconciliation when they retaliated than when they did not.

Explanations, impacts, and evaluations of retaliatory action. We also explored youths’ references to their explanations for retaliating ($\kappa > .79$). Across both forgiveness and nonforgiveness, the most common reasons for retaliating expressed by youth were their desire to

command respect (21% and 31% of actions, respectively; “in order to be respected and not let others bother you, well, put boundaries”) and their experience of overwhelming emotions (45% and 36%, respectively; “I got really angry, so because of the anger I didn't control the situation umm and, well, I went crazy”). Some youth also described desires to hold the other person accountable for the harm caused (12% and 6%, respectively; “I had to hit her for messing with my best friend”).

Next, across forgiveness and nonforgiveness events, we examined whether youth described retaliation as having positive or negative impacts on themselves, others, and/or their relationships ($\kappa > .79$). In general, descriptions of positive impacts of retaliation were rare (6% of actions for each type of event). In contrast, reports of negative impacts of retaliation were common in both forgiveness (45%) and nonforgiveness events (56%). These negative impacts included punishment from authority figures (“our parents got called in because of that”), further victimization (“after that they were continuing to tease me and tease me”), escalation of the conflict (“that’s when more conflict started with his friends”), deteriorated relationships (“we never spoke again”), and the other’s negative emotional responses (“she started crying”).

Finally, we coded youths’ evaluations of their own retaliation ($\kappa = 1.0$). Narrators’ positive evaluations of their retaliation were rare across both forgiveness (3%) and nonforgiveness events (0%). Mixed evaluations suggesting ambivalence were also uncommon (6% and 0%, respectively). Interestingly, in the context of forgiveness experiences, youth were more likely to make negative judgments of their own retaliation (27%) than when they did not forgive (8%). These negative evaluations included explicit evaluative statements (“even though she’s the one who failed me, that’s no reason to make her feel bad anytime I want”), as well as implicit recognitions that their actions were blameworthy, typically indicated by the narrator’s

own requests to be forgiven for their retaliation (“after I reconsidered and I asked her to forgive me”), and references to others’ evaluations of the narrator’s actions (“my mom told me that’s bad, because revenge isn’t good”).

Coordination of revenge and forgiveness. For accounts of forgiveness events in which the narrator carried out revenge (n = 33, or 35% of the forgiveness narratives), we also considered whether and how revenge and forgiveness were sequenced and coordinated within the broader experience. In almost all cases (97% of forgiveness events involving retaliation), revenge preceded forgiveness in the time course of events. When revenge preceded forgiveness, approximately half of the participants (53%) did not draw connections between revenge and forgiveness. Most frequently in these cases, revenge occurred in the immediate aftermath of the harm, and then youth ultimately forgave after the passage of time or unrelated intervening events. In contrast, the other 47% of narrators described revenge as implicitly or explicitly linked to forgiveness. There were a handful of instances of apparent catharsis or other forms of restored well-being via revenge (9%), and also a few accounts in which the narrator’s act of revenge was described as leading directly or indirectly to an apology from the perpetrator, which facilitated the narrator’s forgiveness (9%). More frequently, however, revenge was described as leading to the narrator’s guilt and/or mutual apologies or reconciliation (28%). In these cases, revenge appeared to result in narrators’ recognition of their own contributions to conflict, thus allowing for forgiveness. Consider the following illustrative example (narratives are edited for length where indicated by [...]):

A girl started to make fun of my grandpa’s disease. She insulted me and started saying that all my family will have the same sickness. She treated me badly and then she pushed me [...] And because of my anger, I took a knife and cornered her. Somebody took the weapon away and I reflected and I asked her to forgive me and we became friends again.

In this narrative, the participant responded to her peer's taunting and physical provocation by cornering her friend with a knife. Although she describes her anger as driving her to respond in this way, after having cooled off, she recognizes her own retaliation as a transgressive act and requests her friend's forgiveness, which opens the door to reconciliation between the two girls.

To provide a contrast with revenge in the context of a nonforgiveness event, here, we provide a second illustrative example. In this account, the narrator confronts her friend for behaving hypocritically, leading to a series of verbal and physical altercations:

A girl from sixth grade [...] used to speak really bad of a friend and, like, she used to treat her bad here and she would push her and hit her, okay? [...] and on Facebook [my friend] began to tell her "my love, let's not fight" and like to forgive her, right? And they began to speak well, they began to take pictures together, and those things. And so I told [my friend] "what is your hypocrisy?" and she said "nothing". [...] I said "what is your hypocrisy with this girl that mistreats you? [...]" And [my friend] started to treat me bad, and to push me, and she spat my jacket and I said "ah". I treated her badly as well. So then I said "no, ok then" and then I went to the classroom, and in the classroom a friend came and told me "oh I'm sure you are not capable of punching her". And I said "You don't think so?" And I went and told her "Can we talk?" and she said "what happened, crazy?" I said "what, crazy?" and so I punched her and then... there was a small fight, but not physical, it was with words. And so she started to tell me "forgive me"- [...] and I was like "No, leave it like that, you go your own way". And she was like "no, but I do not want any trouble with you" and I said "No, but I do". And so that stayed like that and right now, the truth is that we have not spoken, we always smirk at each other.

This account is a good illustration of the characteristics of revenge as both somewhat impulsive but simultaneously aimed at maintaining the respect of others, in that the narrator's retaliatory actions escalate when she is goaded on by a classmate. In contrast to the forgiveness event depicted above, a key difference in this account is that, rather than leading to a process that opens the door to forgiveness, the narrator's retaliation does not lead her to acknowledge her own role in the fight (even though, alongside her retaliatory actions, the narrator could also plausibly be understood as having initiated the conflict). Indeed, even when her friend asks for

forgiveness, she remains entrenched in a position of anger which ultimately perpetuates the conflict and results in the end of the friendship.

Discussion

The primary goals of this mixed-method study were to quantitatively examine how retaliatory desire and action in the context of forgiveness and nonforgiveness were associated with individual differences in youths' exposure to violence, and in turn, to qualitatively explore the broader constructions of meanings in youths' narratives that may account for these patterns. We asked youth to describe experiences of peer injury when they were so angry that they "wanted to get back at" the person who had hurt them. Youth were able to articulate specific instances of such desires in regards to times when they eventually did and did not forgive. Unexpectedly, however, youth were equally likely to describe *actually carrying out* their desires for revenge across forgiveness and nonforgiveness events. This latter finding stands in stark contrast to our own past research with a community sample of adolescents in the US who had little exposure to community or school violence, wherein youth described carrying out their retaliatory desires primarily in instances when they had not forgiven (Wainryb et al., 2020). Although our study does not permit us to disentangle which factors may be most crucial in accounting for this difference, the present Colombian sample and the US sample diverged along multiple dimensions that could be relevant. In this study, youth were more likely to report being provoked by physical aggression or the threat of violence; these types of harms may be reciprocated more often than the interpersonal transgressions that were more commonly reported in the US sample (e.g., being ignored or excluded). Relatedly, the sample in Colombia was more economically disadvantaged and was drawn from a larger urban centre with higher crime rates. Thus, although the Colombian sample featured considerable heterogeneity in terms of their

exposure to violence, on average, these youth were likely exposed to greater adversity than the US community sample. More broadly, Colombia has been affected by a decades-long internal armed conflict; although the youth recruited in this study were not living in an area that was directly affected by the conflict, they were indirectly affected in numerous ways, including but not limited to the barrage of atrocities that are portrayed in the media, as well as high levels of economic and social inequality within their city that were partly due to the large numbers of internally displaced people who have migrated to urban centres to escape the violence. Finally, as noted above, Colombia is characterized by a culture of honor and recent studies indicate the erosion of institutional trust among youth in this country (Schulz et al., 2018). Any or all of these factors may account for the striking pattern in this sample that revenge was a strategy that was relatively prevalent both in situations where the harm was unforgiven as well as in those when the harm was eventually forgiven.

With respect to individual differences within this sample, our findings largely replicate past research regarding associations with gender, exposure to violence, and victimization by peers. Specifically, consistent with McDonald and Asher (2018), we found that boys were more likely than girls to describe retaliatory desires in their narrative accounts. Nevertheless, we did not find significant gender differences for the extent to which boys and girls actually carried out their retaliatory desires. One explanation for this nonsignificant finding may hinge on the fact that many youth recounted events involved harms perpetrated by their friends. Although studies often indicate that boys are more aggressive than girls in the peer group (Rose & Rudolph, 2006), it has been suggested that such gender differences may be attenuated in the context of friendship transgressions (MacEvoy & Asher, 2012).

Our findings are in line with past work suggesting that youths' exposure to violence is

related to retaliatory ideation and reactive aggression (Cooley et al., 2018; Smith, Fischer & Watson, 2009), and also meaningfully extends this research by documenting how these retaliatory processes are juxtaposed with youths' experiences of forgiveness. Specifically, we found that recent experiences of victimization by peers were uniquely associated with whether youth described retaliatory desires in their narrative accounts, and lifetime exposure to violence was uniquely linked to youths' likelihood of describing their own retaliatory actions (i.e., desires that they actually carried out). However, both of these associations were only evident in the context of nonforgiveness accounts, whereas they were nonsignificant for forgiveness events. Put another way, exposure to violence and victimization by peers only distinguished between the groups of youth who did and did not describe wanting or seeking revenge in situations when adolescents described ultimately *not* having forgiven a peer for hurting them.

To ascertain what might explain these findings, we complemented the quantitative analyses with a qualitative exploration of similarities and differences in youths' narratives of forgiveness and nonforgiveness events in which they did or did not describe engaging in retaliatory action. We found that instances of retaliation in the context of nonforgiveness occurred selectively in relationships that were less intimate (i.e., with acquaintances rather than friends) and were more often accompanied by attributions of the perpetrator as hostile or uncaring. Both of these aspects of experiences may decrease the likelihood that adolescents are morally attuned to the other (i.e., resulting in less concern with hurting their peer). And indeed, youth rarely made negative evaluations of their own revenge in their narration of nonforgiveness events. One possible explanation for this finding is that, as suggested by moral disengagement theory, youth are actively suppressing the moral implications of their retaliatory actions and rationalizing their morally problematic behavior (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli,

1996). An alternative explanation for this pattern is that youth are narrowly focused on the harm that was done to them and this is reflected in the meanings that are salient in their accounts. Regardless of how this comes about, and as illustrated in the narrative presented above, these findings imply that youth who sought revenge and did not ultimately forgive remained focused on their own victimhood, and failed to reflect on how their retaliatory actions could be deemed transgressive in their own right. Perhaps not surprisingly then, inasmuch as they remained focused on the original provocation and their own hurt and anger that ensued, when youth had not forgiven their peer for the transgression, taking revenge tended to be associated with a lower likelihood of psychological closure and interpersonal reconciliation.

When revenge was juxtaposed with eventual forgiveness, youths' experiences tended to proceed differently. In narratives in which harms were described as forgiven, retaliatory action was linked to a *greater* likelihood of psychological closure and reconciliation. When we examined patterns of coordination between revenge and forgiveness in youths' narratives that might illuminate this finding, the most common pattern was that youth described experiencing guilt in the aftermath of revenge or apologizing for their own actions, ultimately facilitating forgiveness and reconciliation. Indeed, implicit or explicit indicators of youths' negative evaluations of their own retaliatory actions were more commonly described in forgiveness events as compared to nonforgiveness events.

Overall, then, our findings contribute to existing scholarship on revenge by suggesting that exposure to violence may interfere with youths' capacity to reflect on revenge in ways that recognize their own potential for perpetration. This may, in turn, interfere with processes of relationship reconciliation that depends on a shift from a unilateral view of oneself as a victim to a more empathic stance that acknowledges one's own potential fallibility. This interpretation

builds on past research with adults suggesting that, when revenge is linked to forgiveness, it is because revenge may serve to restore the victims' sense of justice and empowerment (Strelan & van Prooijen, 2013; Strelan et al., 2017). That is, our findings imply that a restored sense of power and control might function to facilitate forgiveness, in part, via youths' recognition of their own moral agency in the aftermath of having hurt another person (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010). This pattern is also consistent with past research suggesting that youth exposed to violence and victimization by peers may have particularly well-developed understandings of themselves as victims, are more sensitive to disrespect from others, and have more trouble recognizing and accounting for their own hurtful actions (McDonald & Asher, 2018; Wainryb & Pasupathi, 2010). Overall, we hope that these findings encourage future researchers and practitioners to not only consider why some youth resort to revenge, but also how they might find their way back from it. Specifically, we believe that a deeper understanding of the psychological processes following youths' experiences of seeking revenge is crucial to supporting adolescents in recognizing and moving beyond both their own hurt and the hurt that they have caused to others, thus allowing them to repair relationships and achieve closure.

This study was based on a relatively small sample of Colombian adolescents living in an urban center. As a result, we caution that it will be important to replicate these findings before drawing any firm conclusions. It will also be important to examine whether these patterns would extend to Colombian youth who have been more directly exposed to the armed conflict, and whether such patterns would also be evident among inner city youth growing up in violence-exposed communities in other countries. Nonetheless, our analysis of youths' narratives of peer conflict is a unique strength of the current study, in that it provides a window into the constructive processes whereby youth form understandings and judgments of revenge and

forgiveness by reflecting on their own lived experiences. Future extensions on this work might consider how youths' experiences of revenge and forgiveness evolve over time by making use of longitudinal designs that capture the dynamic processes whereby youths' constructions of meanings about past events can be transformed.

Although our findings identify one potential pathway whereby revenge might facilitate forgiveness in the context of peer injury, we are certainly not suggesting that revenge should be advocated or promoted. It would arguably be preferable for youth to find alternative routes to forgiveness in the aftermath of having been deeply hurt. This is especially the case because seeking revenge can sow the seeds of future conflict, contributing to cycles of continuing violence and prospective increases in youths' victimization by peers (e.g., Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2004). Indeed, although it seemed that exacting revenge provoked some youth to consider the negative moral implications of their own actions, it may also be possible to support them in considering these concerns *before* actually harming others.

In all, our findings provide a complex portrait of youths' experiences of revenge and forgiveness. While we believe that it is important not to take a reductive perspective that overlooks the importance of structural issues and societal change, these results do suggest multiple potential points of psychological intervention. These include, for example, helping youth to identify other means for achieving their desires for justice, conveying their sense of hurt to the other, and preventing future harms. Furthermore, it may be fruitful to support youths' capacity to recognize the potential for fallibility as part of the human experience – that is, people (including themselves) make mistakes, and sometimes do hurtful things; but they can also forgive themselves and others for transgressions, and use them as an opportunity to consider the kind of person that they want to be and the kind of relationships that they want to have. We

suggest that school-based disciplinary models that are premised on more restorative orientations and provide opportunities for youth to engage in generative dialogues about peer conflicts may be a promising approach, as they may be well-suited to supporting youths' sense of moral agency (Velez, Hahn, Recchia, & Wainryb, 2020). Relatedly, school systems designed to be sensitive to the unique challenges faced by youth exposed to violence (e.g., those guided by trauma-informed practices) may be particularly well-positioned to create a climate of trust and support that can help students to move beyond conflict in adaptive ways (Phifer & Hull, 2016).

References

- Ardila-Rey, A., Killen, M., & Brenick, A. (2009). Moral reasoning in violent contexts: Displaced and non-displaced colombian children's evaluations of moral transgressions, retaliation, and reconciliation. *Social Development, 18*, 181-209. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9507.2008.00483.x
- Arsenio, W. F., & Gold, G. (2006). The effects of social injustice and inequality on children's moral judgments and behavior: Towards a theoretical model. *Cognitive Development, 21*, 388-400. doi:1.1016/j.cogdev.2006.06.005
- Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G. V., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Mechanisms of moral disengagement in the exercise of moral agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71*, 364–374. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.2.364>
- Bettencourt, A. F., & Farrell, A. D. (2013). Individual and contextual factors associated with patterns of aggression and peer victimization during middle school. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 42*, 285–302. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-012-9854-8>
- Bloom, S. L. (2001). Commentary: Reflections on the desire for revenge. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, 2*, 61-94. doi:10.1300/J135v02n04_06
- Bollmer, J. M., Harris, M. J., & Milich, R. (2006). Reactions to bullying and peer victimization: Narratives, physiological arousal, and personality. *Journal of Research in Personality, 40*(5), 803–828. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2005.09.003>
- Brennan, R. T., Molnar, B. E. and Earls, F. (2007), Refining the measurement of exposure to violence in urban youth. *Journal of Community Psychology, 35*, 603-618.
doi:[10.1002/jcop.20167](https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20167)

- Calvete E, & Orue, I. (2011) The impact of violence exposure on aggressive behavior through social information processing in adolescents. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 81, 38-50. doi:10.1111/j.1939-0025.2010.01070.x
- Cohen, D., & Nisbett, R. E. (1994). Self-protection and the culture of honor: Explaining southern violence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 551-567.
doi:10.1177/0146167294205012
- Cooley, J. L., Fite, P. J., & Pederson, C. A. (2018). Bidirectional associations between peer victimization and functions of aggression in middle childhood: Further evaluation across informants and academic years. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 46, 99–111.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-017-0283-8>
- Dusing, C. R., DiClemente, C. M., Miller, K. M., Onyeka, C., Murphy, B. N., Richards, M. H., & Moore II, A. (2018; early view online). Aggression among high-risk african american young adolescents: Impact of relational proximity to perpetrators of violence. *Psychology of Violence*. doi:10.1037/vio0000220
- Enright, R.D., Gassin, E. A., & Wu, C.-R. (1992) Forgiveness: a developmental view. *Journal of Moral Education*, 21, 99-114, doi: [10.1080/0305724920210202](https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724920210202)
- Exline, J. J., Worthington Jr., E. L., Hill, P., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Forgiveness and justice: A research agenda for social and personality psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 7, 337-348. doi:10.1207/S15327957PSPR0704_06
- Flanagan, K. S., Vanden Hoek, K. K., Ranter, J. M., & Reich, H. A. (2012). The potential of forgiveness as a response for coping with negative peer experiences. *Journal of adolescence*, 35, 1215–1223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2012.04.004>
- Fry, D. P. (2006). Reciprocity: The foundation stone of morality. In M. Killen & J. Smetana

- (Eds.), *Handbook of Moral Development* (pp. 399-422). Mahwah, NJ, US: Erlbaum.
- Funk, F., McGeer, V., & Gollwitzer, M. (2014). Get the message: Punishment is satisfying if the transgressor responds to its communicative intent. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 40*, 986-997. doi:10.1177/0146167214533130
- Furlong, M. J., Greif, J. L., Bates, M. P., Whipple, A. D., Jimenez, T. C., & Morrison, R. (2005). Development of the california school climate and safety survey-short form. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*, 137-149. doi:10.1002/pits.20053
- Gassin, E. A., Enright, R. D., & Knutson, J. A. (2005). Bringing peace to the central city: Forgiveness education in Milwaukee. *Theory Into Practice, 44*, 319-328, doi: [10.1207/s15430421tip4404_5](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4404_5)
- Girard, M., & Mullet, E. (1997). Forgiveness in adolescents, young, middle-aged, and older adults. *Journal of Adult Development, 4*, 209–220. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02511412>
- Guerra, N. G., Huesmann, L. R., & Spindler, A. (2003). Community violence exposure, social cognition, and aggression among urban elementary school children. *Child Development, 74*, 1561-1576. doi:10.1111/1467-8624.00623
- Hays, D. G., & Singh, A. A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. Guilford Press.
- Higueta-Gutiérrez, L. F., & Cardona-Arias, J. (2016). Predictive modeling of quality of life, family dynamics, and school violence in adolescent students from Medellín, Colombia, 2014. *School Mental Health, 8*, 399-410. doi:10.1007/s12310-016-9190-3
- Huesmann, L. (2018). The Contagion of Violence. In A. Vazsonyi, D. Flannery, & M. DeLisi (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Violent Behavior and Aggression*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316847992.030

- Kochenderfer-Ladd, B. (2004), Peer victimization: The role of emotions in adaptive and maladaptive coping. *Social Development, 13*, 329-349. doi:[10.1111/j.1467-9507.2004.00271.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9507.2004.00271.x)
- López López W., Correa-Chica, A., Sierra-Puentes, M. C., Castaneda Polanco, J. G., Fernandez Miranda, G., del Rosario Duran Jaramillo, M., & Castro-Abril, P. (2020). Children's conceptualizations of forgiveness, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in the context of armed conflict. In N. Balvin & D. Christie (Eds.), *Children and Peace* (pp. 203-215). Springer.
- Ohbuchi, K-I, & Sato, K. (1994). Children's reactions to mitigating accounts: Apologies, excuses, and intentionality of harm, *The Journal of Social Psychology, 134*, 5-17. doi:[10.1080/00224545.1994.9710877](https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1994.9710877)
- MacEvoy, J. P., & Asher, S. R. (2012). When friends disappoint: Boys' and girls' responses to transgressions of friendship expectations. *Child Development, 83*, 104–119. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01685.x>
- McCullough, M. E., Kurzban, R., & Tabak, B. A. (2013). Cognitive systems for revenge and forgiveness. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 36*, 1-15. doi:[10.1017/S0140525X11002160](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X11002160)
- McCullough, M. E., Root, L. M., & Cohen, A. D. (2006). Writing about the benefits of an interpersonal transgression facilitates forgiveness. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 74*, 887-897. doi:[10.1037/0022-006X.74.5.887](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.74.5.887)
- McDonald, K. L., & Asher, S. R. (2018). Pacifists and revenge-seekers in response to unambiguous peer provocation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 47*, 1907-1925. doi:[10.1007/s10964-017-0767-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0767-4)

- McDonald, K. L., & Lochman, J. E. (2012). Predictors and outcomes associated with trajectories of revenge goals from fourth grade through seventh grade. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, *40*, 225–236. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-011-9560-0>
- McMahon, S. D., Felix, E. D., Halpert, J. A., & Petropoulos, L. A. N. (2009). Community violence exposure and aggression among urban adolescents: Testing a cognitive mediator model. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *37*, 895–910. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20339>
- Pasupathi, M., & Wainryb, C. (2010). Developing moral agency through narrative. *Human Development*, *53*, 55-80. doi:10.1159/000288208
- Pasupathi, M., Wainryb, C., Bourne, S., & Posada, R. (2017). Narrative construction of morality in adolescence among typically developing and violence-exposed youth. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, *37*, 178-198. doi:10.1177/0276236617733826
- Peets, K., Hodges, E. V. E., & Salmivalli, C. (2013). Forgiveness and its determinants depending on the interpersonal context of hurt. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *114*, 131–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2012.05.009>
- Perren, S., Etekal, I., & Ladd, G. (2013). The impact of peer victimization on later maladjustment: Mediating and moderating effects of hostile and self-blaming attributions. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*, *54*, 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2012.02618.x>
- Phifer, L.W., & Hull, R. (2016). Helping students heal: Observations of trauma-informed practices in the schools. *School Mental Health*, *8*, 201-205. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12310-016-9183-2>
- Posada, R. (2012). Experiences of violence and moral reasoning in a context of vengeance. *Revista Colombiana de Psicología*, *21*, 197-212.

- Posada, R., & Wainryb, C. (2008). Moral development in a violent society: Colombian children's judgments in the context of survival and revenge. *Child Development, 79*, 882-898.
doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01165.x
- Raudenbush, S. W., Bryk, A. S., & Congdon, R. (2011). *HLM 7.00 for windows* [Computer software]. Lincolnwood, IL: Scientific Software International.
- Recchia, H. E., Wainryb, C., Pasupathi, M. (2019). "I wanted to hurt her": Children's and adolescents' experiences of desiring and seeking revenge in their own peer conflicts. *Social Development, 28*, 840– 853. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12370>
- Rojas, C. (2003). Género, identidad y conflicto en Colombia. *Revista Venezolana De Economía Y Ciencias Sociales, 9*, 65-89.
- Rose, A. J., & Rudolph, K. D. (2006). A review of sex differences in peer relationship processes: Potential trade-offs for the emotional and behavioral development of girls and boys. *Psychological Bulletin, 132*, 98–131. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.1.98>
- Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B, Agrusti, G., & Friedman, T. (2018). *Becoming citizens in a changing world*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73963-2>
- Secretaria Distrital de Planeación (2017). *Encuesta Multipropósito 2017*. Retrieved from:
http://www.sdp.gov.co/sites/default/files/encuesta_multiproposito_2017_-_principales_resultados_bogota_region.pdf
- Selner-O'Hagan, M. B., Kindlon, D. J., Buka, S. L., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. J. (1998). Assessing exposure to violence in urban youth. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 39*, 215-224. doi:10.1017/S002196309700187X
- Smith, C. E., Fischer, K. W., & Watson, M. W. (2009). Toward a refined view of aggressive

- fantasy as a risk factor for aggression: Interaction effects involving cognitive and situational variables. *Aggressive Behavior*, *35*, 313-323. doi:10.1002/ab.20307
- Strelan, P., Di Fiore, C., & Van Prooijen, J. (2017). The empowering effect of punishment on forgiveness. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *47*, 472-487. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2254
- Strelan, P., & van Prooijen, J. (2013). Retribution and forgiveness: The healing effects of punishing for just deserts. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *43*, 544-553.
doi:[10.1002/ejsp.1964](https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1964)
- Thornberg, R. (2012) Informed grounded theory. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *56*, 243-259, doi: [10.1080/00313831.2011.581686](https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2011.581686)
- Uskul, A. K., Oyserman, D., & Schwarz, N. (2010). Cultural emphasis on honor, modesty, or self-enhancement: Implications for the survey response process. In M. Braun, B. Edwards, J. Harkness, T. Johnson, L. Lyberg, P. Mohler, B.E. Pennell, & T.W. Smith. (Eds.) *Survey methods in multinational, multiregional and multicultural context*. NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- van der Wal, R., Karremans, J. C., & Cillessen, A. H. N. (2017). Causes and consequences of children's forgiveness. *Child Development Perspectives*, *11*, 97-101. doi:10.1111/cdep.12216
- Velez, G., Hahn, M., Recchia, H., & Wainryb, C. (2020). Rethinking responses to youth rebellion: Recent growth and development of restorative practices in schools. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *35*, 36–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.02.011>
- Wainryb, C., Komolova, M., & Florsheim, P. (2010). In *Narrative Development in Adolescence*, How violent youth offenders and typically developing adolescents construct moral agency in narratives about doing harm (pp. 185-206). New York: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-89825-4_10
- Wainryb, C., & Pasupathi, M. (2010). Political violence and disruptions in the development of

moral agency. *Child Development Perspectives*, 4, 48-54. doi:10.1111/j.1750-8606.2009.00117.x

Wainryb, C., Recchia, H., Faulconbridge, O., & Pasupathi, M. (2020). To err is human: Forgiveness across childhood and adolescence. *Social Development*, 29, 509-525.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12413>

Wenzel, M., & Okimoto, T. G. (2014). On the relationship between justice and forgiveness: Are all forms of justice made equal? *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 53, 463-483.
doi:10.1111/bjso.12040

Worthington Jr., E. L., & Wade, N. G. (1999). The psychology of unforgiveness and forgiveness and implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18, 385-418.
doi:10.1521/jscp.1999.18.4.385

Table 1

Youths' Narrative Descriptions of their Retaliatory Desires and Actions

	Forgiveness event	Nonforgiveness event
Overall Presence of	46%	46%
Retaliatory Desires		
Retaliatory Desires (Carried out)	35%	38%
Retaliatory Desires (Not carried out)	13%	13%

Note. Values expressed as % of narratives within each event type. Retaliatory desires that were and were not carried out could co-occur within a narrative.

Table 2

Associations between Lifetime Exposure to Violence (ETV), Recent Victimization by Peers at School, and Youths' Descriptions of Retaliatory Desires and Actions in their Accounts of Forgiveness and Nonforgiveness

	All Retaliatory Desires		Retaliatory Desires (Carried out)		Retaliatory Desires (Not carried out)	
	B (SE)	OR	B (SE)	OR	B (SE)	OR
Intercept	-.46 (.75)	.63	-.97	.38	-3.14 (.72)*	.04
Gender (boy = 1)	1.53 (.47)*	4.61	.93*	2.52	1.83 (.81)*	6.21
Lifetime ETV	.01 (.08)	1.01	-.03	.97		
Recent Victimization	-.36 (.45)	.70				
Nonforgiveness Event	-2.24 (1.08)*	.11	-.89	.41	1.37 (.86)	3.93
Gender (boy = 1)	-1.25 (.64)	.29	-.69	.50	-2.19 (1.05)*	.11
Lifetime ETV	.18 (.11)	1.20	.22*	1.24		
Recent Victimization	1.23 (.61)*	3.43				

Note. With the effect of event type included in the model at L1, coefficients for the intercept refer to the forgiveness event.

* $p < .05$

Supplementary Table 1

Narrative Features in Relation to the Presence and Absence of Retaliatory Action in Forgiveness and Nonforgiveness Accounts

Narrative Feature	Overall (<i>N</i> = 95)	Forgiveness Event		Overall (<i>N</i> = 95)	Nonforgiveness Event	
		In presence of retaliatory action (<i>n</i> = 33)	In absence of retaliatory action (<i>n</i> = 62)		In presence of retaliatory action (<i>n</i> = 36)	In absence of retaliatory action (<i>n</i> = 59)
	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
Recency of Event ($\kappa = 1.0$)						
This year	13 (14)	4 (12)	9 (15)	18 (19)	8 (22)	10 (17)
Last year	13 (14)	4 (12)	9 (15)	5 (5)	3 (8)	2 (3)
> One year	18 (19)	7 (21)	11 (18)	16 (17)	7 (19)	9 (15)
Unspecified	51 (54)	18 (55)	33 (53)	56 (59)	18 (50)	38 (64)
Type of Provocation ($\kappa = .89$)						
Offensive behavior	56 (59)	23 (70)	33 (53)	56 (59)	28 (78)	28 (47)
Physical harm/threat	23 (24)	15 (45)	8 (13)	25 (26)	14 (39)	11 (19)
Property-based harm	14 (15)	5 (15)	9 (15)	10 (11)	5 (14)	5 (8)
Exclusion	8 (8)	1 (3)	7 (11)	3 (3)	1 (3)	2 (3)
Relationship-based harm	21 (22)	4 (12)	17 (27)	40 (42)	10 (28)	30 (51)
Type of Relationship ($\kappa = .88$)						
Friend	49 (52)	17 (52)	32 (52)	31 (33)	9 (25)	22 (37)
Acquaintance	30 (32)	12 (36)	18 (29)	35 (37)	16 (44)	19 (32)
Romantic partner	4 (4)	1 (3)	3 (5)	6 (6)	2 (6)	4 (7)
Disliked peer	5 (5)	2 (6)	3 (5)	8 (8)	3 (8)	5 (8)
Stranger	1 (1)	1 (3)	0 (0)	7 (7)	3 (8)	4 (7)

Unclear	6 (6)	0 (0)	6 (10)	8 (8)	3 (8)	5 (8)
Reoccurrence of harm ($\kappa = 1.0$)						
Reoccurrent harm	32 (34)	14 (42)	18 (29)	42 (44)	21 (58)	21 (36)
Discrete harm	59 (62)	18 (55)	41 (66)	48 (51)	13 (36)	35 (59)
Unclear	4 (4)	1 (3)	3 (5)	5 (5)	2 (6)	3 (5)
Hostile intent attributions ($\kappa = .83$)	18 (19)	6 (18)	12 (19)	31 (33)	15 (42)	16 (27)
Narrator's emotions in response to the harm ($\kappa > .89$)						
Hurt	19 (20)	4 (12)	15 (24)	17 (18)	7 (19)	10 (17)
Angry	43 (45)	17 (52)	26 (42)	44 (46)	19 (53)	25 (42)
Offender's reparations/remorse ($\kappa > .84$)						
Apology, reparation, and/or remorse	45 (47)	14 (42)	31 (50)	15 (16)	4 (11)	11 (19)
Explicit lack of apology, reparation, and/or remorse	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (2)	15 (16)	7 (19)	8 (14)
Narrator's psychological closure ($\kappa > .79$)						
Explicit closure	17 (18)	5 (15)	12 (19)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Implicit closure	52 (55)	23 (70)	29 (47)	4 (4)	2 (6)	2 (3)
Explicit lack of closure	7 (7)	1 (3)	6 (10)	40 (42)	20 (56)	20 (34)
Implicit lack of closure	40 (42)	8 (24)	32 (52)	82 (86)	30 (83)	52 (88)

Reconciliation with
offender ($\kappa = .88$)

Reconciliation	51 (54)	20 (61)	31 (50)	5 (5)	3 (8)	2 (3)
Lack of reconciliation	7 (7)	3 (9)	4 (6)	56 (59)	27 (75)	29 (49)
Unclear	37 (39)	10 (30)	27 (44)	34 (36)	6 (17)	28 (47)

Note. Percentages do not add up to 100 in all cases because some narrative features could co-occur (e.g., multiple types of provocations could be coded within one narrative) or were absent in some narratives (e.g., some youth did not refer to emotions in their accounts). Cohen's kappas (κ) refer to interrater reliabilities computed based on 20% of the data.