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Abstract

In social psychology, forgiveness has been treated almost exclusively as a phenomenon that involves only two parties – namely, victims and their offenders. The present research takes a broader perspective by assuming that forgiveness is a process that can, and often does, involve third-parties, and that third-parties routinely become involved in the aftermath of offenses through transgression discourses. Within such discourses, different communication goals may be pursued by victims and those in whom they confide. In Study 1, offense victims were given the task of telling the story of a personal mistreatment to a third-party with the goal of soliciting either sympathy or objectivity from them. In Study 2, these same goals were given to third-parties who responded to the offense of another participant. A journal condition was utilized in both studies as a baseline for comparing the effects of the aforementioned manipulations on offense story/response content, forgiveness, and offense recollections. Results of both studies were partially supportive of the hypotheses. Victims who pursued the goal of soliciting objectivity gave generally less negative offense accounts, exhibited higher levels of forgiveness, and blamed perpetrators less one week after the first study session. Third-parties who pursued the goal of responding sympathetically generally affirmed the victim's negative perceptions of and reactions to an offense, expressed lower levels of forgiveness, and blamed perpetrators somewhat more when recounting the offense from memory. This research suggests that third-parties and communication goals can be important contributors to the forgiveness process and highlights the importance of a routine social activity for a phenomenon that has largely been viewed as dyadic in nature

Forgiveness and the Pursuit of Communication Goals in Transgression Discourses

If it were possible to secretly listen in on the conversations of patrons at a restaurant, pub, coffeehouse, or pool hall, what would one hear? The content of the exchanges would surely be varied, ranging from small-talk about football drafts or a disappointing first date to more intimate disclosures about a friend who unexpectedly passed away or a life-changing diagnosis. Amid these themes, however, a common thread would likely emerge; in at least some conversations, people would be sharing stories about times, recent or past, in which they felt unjustly harmed by another. Being the imperfect social creatures we are, interpersonal conflicts and transgressions are virtually unavoidable (Fincham, 2000), and when they occur, we often tell others about them. Consequently, these events routinely become the topic of conversation between victims and third-parties, whether over dinner, a pint of beer, cup of coffee, or game of billiards, and the present project will take an initial foray into the previously uncharted territories of transgression discourses to explore the consequences such dialogues have on victims' and third-parties' forgiveness of offense perpetrators and memories for offense episodes.

Through the influence of early psychological theorizing that likened humans to pressure-cookers (see Brener [1973] for a discussion), it has become widely accepted that when upsetting things happen in relationships, the best salve is catharsis – that is, venting the emotions evoked by such experiences. Thus, from the outset, it is tempting to think that unloading the psychological weight of interpersonal transgressions on others is universally helpful to the forgiveness process, but whether discourses about transgressions are truly beneficial to forgiveness may depend on the communication

goals pursued by victims and third-parties. When victims disclose their offense stories to third-parties, they may do so with the goal of soliciting specific kinds of responses from their confidants, and when third-parties respond to the offense experiences of victims, they may do so in a manner that is consonant with the type of feedback that victims have indicated they desire or that third-parties presume they “need”. Thus, both the goals that victims pursue in *telling* their offense stories to third-parties and the goals that third-parties adopt in *responding* to victims’ plights are two components of transgression discourses that may have important consequences for the forgiveness process. In the next section, I provide a brief overview of the history of forgiveness in psychology with the goal of situating the present research in the extant literature and highlighting its importance to the scientific study of forgiveness.

Forgiveness in Psychology

Although forgiveness has only recently attracted the attention of psychologists, its roots are not as shallow as its brief history in our discipline would suggest. Indeed, forgiveness has, in one form or another, been lauded for centuries by the major world religions as a virtuous, if not divine-like act (McCullough, Bono, & Root, 2005; Rye et al., 2000). The close association between forgiveness and religious belief over the centuries has been cited as one of the reasons for the topic’s neglect in the social sciences (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). However, fears that investigating a historically “religious idea” like forgiveness would tarnish psychology’s reputation as a legitimate science could only deter the interest of researchers for so long. Psychologists are in the business of studying human beings, and as such they could not ignore the important question of how people respond to

interpersonal transgressions. Forgiveness being one response that people have to transgression experiences, psychologists took up a serious interest in the phenomenon just over 20 years ago, and they have been laboring to elucidate the intricacies of the construct ever since.

A useful rubric for surveying the history of forgiveness has been offered by McCullough et al. (2000), who divided the literature into two categories, one spanning the years between 1932 and 1980 and another encompassing the time between 1980 and 2000. Generally speaking, the work on forgiveness that appeared in its early years in psychology included theorizing about how it relates to forgetting (Litwinski, 1945) and revenge (Heider, 1958) and its usefulness in pastoral counseling (e.g., Bonell, 1950). The only empirical work on forgiveness done during this epoch of the construct's development was in the domain of social conflict in which researchers examined the consequences of enacting forgiveness (a cooperative response to a competitive act by another game player) in the context of the Prisoner's Dilemma Game (e.g., Gahagan & Tedeschi, 1968). To say the least, the attention devoted by scholars to forgiveness in this early literature was minimal, and though one might expect to find a thorough discussion of forgiveness in the work of Heider (1958), who had many insightful comments to make about human relationships, his treatment of forgiveness is exceedingly brief. Thus, contemporary researchers who look back to earlier thinkers in the discipline for suggestions about how to conceptualize or measure forgiveness find little in the way of guidance.

Around 1980, however, the tides began to shift in psychology, with more and more research on forgiveness being conducted and reported in professional journals

(see McCullough et al. 2005). This explosion of research has propelled the discipline far in its understanding of what forgiveness is and what it is not (e.g., Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; Fincham, 2000); how forgiveness develops (e.g., Enright, Santos, & Al-Mabuk, 1989) and changes across the lifespan (e.g., Girard & Mullet, 1997); how forgiveness unfolds over time (McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003) and manifests itself in close relationships (e.g., Fincham & Beach, 2002; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998); how forgiveness relates to various individual difference variables (e.g., Brown, 2003, 2004; Emmons, 2000; McCullough, 2001; Sastre, Vinsonneau, Chabrol, & Mullet, 2005) and how it can itself be conceptualized as a dispositional tendency (e.g., Berry, Worthington, Parrot, O'Connor, & Wade, 2001; Brown, 2003; Thompson et al., 2005); how forgiveness and mental health-related variables can be promoted through forgiveness-intervention programs (e.g., Coyle & Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Hebl & Enright, 1993; Rye, Folck, Heim, Olszewski, & Traina, 2004); and how social-cognitive factors like the presence versus absence of apologies, victim perspective taking, perceived intentionality, and offense severity influence forgiveness judgments (e.g., Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Takaku, 2001).

The history of forgiveness in psychology may be brief, but in the time it has been studied, much has been learned. Even still, there are many issues that have yet to be explored (see Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003), one of which is the role that third-parties play in the forgiveness process. Given the regularity with which people confide their offense experiences in others, it is surprising that a concern with

third-parties and forgiveness has largely been absent in the literature. This could, in part, be because forgiveness has almost exclusively been construed by scholars as a dyadic phenomenon that only involves a victim and an offender (Green, Burnette, & Davis, 2008). Indeed, even when the potential for third-party forgiveness was acknowledged, the topic was given little attention (Exline et al., 2003; Fincham, 2000). The recent research of several scholars, however, has broadened the prevailing view of forgiveness as a dyadic process by demonstrating that individuals may experience unforgiving sentiments even if they are not the direct targets of offenses (e.g., Green et al., 2008; Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008). But even though forgiveness has been recognized as a construct that is applicable to third-parties, no investigator to date has studied transgression discourses, which I believe represent one of the primary ways that third-parties get entangled in others' offense experiences. The studies reported here, therefore, are intended to extend forgiveness research and theory by 1) calling scholars' attention to transgression discourses as a means by which third-parties become involved in offenses, and 2) show how the communication goals that are pursued in such dialogues might influence victims and third-parties in forgiving and unforgiving ways.

The specific communication goals I will consider are those aimed at soliciting (on the part of victims) and conveying (on the part of third-parties) sympathy versus objectivity. I will use as a basis of comparison a personal journal condition in which transgression episodes are disclosed (on the part of victims) or responded to (on the part of third-parties), but no specific communication goal is pursued. In each study, my focus will be on how the pursuit of these different goals shape victims' and third-

parties' stories of/responses to offenses, their forgiveness of offense perpetrators, and their memories for offense episodes.

Tailoring Stories to Satisfy Social and Motivational Goals

A substantial amount of evidence in the social-cognitive and applied cognitive literatures demonstrates that people tailor the content of their communications in response to the demands of social contexts and the goals they intend to accomplish through communication. One important line of research in this area has examined how people tune (i.e., adjust) messages about a target person to satisfy the rules of good communication (e.g., speakers should take their listeners' knowledge and attitudes into account when conveying information; Higgins, McCaen, & Fondacaro, 1982).

In an effort to create an alternative to the information transmission approach to communication, the dominant theory of interpersonal communication from the 1960s to early 1980s, Higgins and colleagues developed the communication game approach, which takes into account the way that social factors (e.g., socially accepted rules that characterize good communication) shape how individuals share information (Higgins, 1981). Consonant with the view that communicators should share new and useful information with others, Higgins et al. (1982) demonstrated that the information that communicators conveyed to an audience about a target person differed as a function of the information they believed their audience was already privy to. When communicators believed their audience's knowledge was the same as their own, they included more interpretive statements about the target person in their messages, but when they believed their audience's knowledge was different from their own, they stuck closer to the facts they were given about the stimulus person.

In another study, Higgins and Rholes (1978) showed that communicators tuned their messages about a target person to accommodate their audience's preexisting attitude. That is, communicators who believed their audience liked the target person included more positive than negative labels in their messages compared to communicators who thought their audience disliked the target person; the reverse pattern obtained for communicators who believed their audience disliked the target person.

A study by Sedikides (1990) a decade later provided additional evidence for the impact of social influences on communication by demonstrating that individuals could overcome the effects of primes intended to shape their interpretations of a target person's characteristics in order to convey a message about the person's qualities that fit with their audience's attitude. Thus, social goals in communication are so powerful that they have the ability to override the influence of cognitive primes. Each of these studies demonstrates that when individuals engage in communication, they do so not as cold, information processing machines, as the information transmission approach to interpersonal communication would suggest, but as social beings that are sensitive and responsive to the characteristics of their audiences.

Research in the applied cognitive domain supports and extends the above findings by showing that people readily tailor the content of the information they convey to others to achieve different goals (see Marsh, 2007 for a review). For instance, Tversky and Marsh (2000) had participants read a story about two roommates, each of whom performed an equal number of social and annoying behaviors. Which features of the designated roommate's behaviors participants

emphasized in a letter depended upon whether they were writing to a social club to recommend the roommate for admission, or were contacting a student affairs office to complain about the roommate's conduct. In the former case, participants drew attention to the target roommate's social behaviors, but in the latter case they highlighted the roommate's annoying behaviors. Tversky and Marsh (2000) have also demonstrated that participants who were given the goal of prosecuting one of two criminal suspects in a murder mystery story, each of whom committed an equal number of incriminating and exonerating behaviors, included less exonerating information and more incriminating elaborations about the target suspect than neutral participants who were not given this prosecutorial goal. Other studies in this vein report similar results – namely, that the content of retellings depends on whether individuals have the goal of communicating the facts of or their affective reactions to an event (Marsh, Tversky, & Hutson, 2005) and whether they are given the task of describing a story in an entertaining versus accurate way (Dudokovic, Marsh, Tversky, 2004).

Each of the aforementioned investigations provides evidence in favor of the notion that communication goals, whether activated by the social context (e.g., an audience's attitude) or explicitly given via experimental procedures, influence how individuals communicate about events. However, in all of these studies participants read about and retold stories that were not personally relevant. This important limitation raises the question, do similar effects obtain when people recount self-relevant, autobiographical material? This question is of particular importance for

Study 1 of this project, which focuses on offense victims' retellings of past transgression experiences.

Even though no research has directly examined the impact of different communication goals on how autobiographical memories are remembered and retold, there is evidence supporting the idea that momentary motivations may have sway over this process. The work of Ross, McFarland, and Fletcher (1981) is one example. They found that people report engaging in a behavior (toothbrushing) at a rate consistent with the attitude toward the behavior they have been induced to adopt. One interpretation of their results is that participants used their new found attitudes about toothbrushing to selectively survey their memories for examples of attitude-consistent behavior. In a similar vein, Sanitioso, Kunda, and Fong (1990) experimentally manipulated the desirability of two personality traits, introversion and extraversion, by claiming that one was more strongly associated with professional success than the other and found that the accessibility of memories of introverted and extraverted behaviors fluctuated in a manner consistent with the trait that was cast in a desirable light (see also Klein & Kunda, 1993). Finally, in a study on the effect of storytelling on later emotional reactions to an upsetting interpersonal event, McGregor and Holmes (1999, Study 4) had participants describe a hurtful relationship experience from the perspective of either a prosecuting lawyer or an unbiased reporter. Unfortunately, these authors did not investigate the content of participants' stories, but in light of the effect their manipulation had on participants' emotions (which I discuss further below), it seems reasonable to infer that stories were told differently depending on the perspective participants adopted.

The combined message of the above research strongly suggests that pursuing different communication goals in transgression discourses might change what features of offense stories victims retrieve from memory and tell to others and what details third-parties focus on and react to in their responses to victim's offense stories. I discuss these issues more thoroughly next.

Soliciting and Conveying Sympathy versus Objectivity in Transgression Discourses

Victims of offenses who disclose their experiences with others may do so for various reasons, but one reason that likely motivates many such sharing episodes is the desire to solicit sympathetic responses. For instance, victims may want their listeners to offer words of reassurance, emotional support, alliances for seeking revenge, or solutions to more tangible needs like physical protection or financial assistance (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). For supportive responses like these to be forthcoming from third-parties, it may be necessary for victims to clearly demonstrate their need for sympathy, and victims may often achieve this goal by telling stories of their offenses in ways that highlight their status as the undeserving targets of harm. Indeed, research by Baumeister and colleagues demonstrates that even under circumstances in which victims have no expectation of receiving sympathy from another person, they still tell biased stories of offense experiences, ones that underscore aspects of offenses that point to their victim status – e.g., negative consequences, long-term relationship damage, and ongoing anger resulting from the offense (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Kearns & Fincham, 2005; Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). Thus, victims who enter into conversations with the objective of drawing out their listeners' supportiveness and sympathy may re-craft or emphasize different features of their offense stories to achieve this end. Victims may describe

offenses in generally negative terms, magnify the negative outcomes of offenses, overtly blame and vilify perpetrators to make them seem more devilish than they actually were, and omit details of offenses that point to their own culpability or to situational factors that could have influenced perpetrators' offensive behaviors.

Although the goal of soliciting sympathy might come most naturally and frequently to offense victims, it stands to reason that under some circumstances (e.g., when a victim wishes to protect the reputation of an offender, wants impartial advice, or wants to avoid being identified as a hater) victims pursue other communication goals, such as the solicitation of objective responses from listeners. When such a communication goal is adopted, victims likely adjust the content and tone of their offense stories to facilitate goal achievement. The successful solicitation of objective responses from listeners might require victims to water down descriptions of their emotional reactions to and negative consequences associated with the experience, omit details of offenses that point to their perpetrators' culpability, and include other information that points to the influence of circumstantial or mitigating factors on perpetrators' behaviors. It is rarely the case that one party is solely responsible for the entirety of a transgression; for this reason, it is even possible that attempts to solicit objective responses from third-parties leads victims to consider ways in which they contributed to or exacerbated the effects of an offense (Exline, Baumeister, Zell, Kraft, & Witvliet, 2008). Consequently, offense stories that are told with the goal of soliciting objectivity might even include moderate amounts of self-directed blame.

This investigation is also concerned with third-parties' responses to the offense experiences of others, which raises the question, how do third-parties convey sympathy and objectivity to victims of transgressions? The primary dimension on which I expect third-party responses to differ is the degree to which they reinforce or affirm victims' negative reactions to and perceptions of offense experiences. Affirmations of this type should be most prevalent among third-parties seeking to convey sympathy and least evident among third-parties attempting to communicate impartiality. Rates of perpetrator- and victim-directed blame in third-parties' responses should mirror those described above for victims. Specifically, third-parties who respond supportively should blame perpetrators more and victims less for offenses, whereas third-parties who respond objectively to offenses should blame perpetrators relatively less and victims relatively more. Finally, third-parties who attempt to communicate from an objective perspective should introduce into their responses the idea that certain situational factors caused perpetrators to behave offensively.

An important follow-up to questions concerning the influence of communication goals on communication content in transgression discourses is what effect do these goals have on thoughts, emotions, and motivations toward offense perpetrators? The simple act of telling or responding to offense stories in a sympathetic or impartial fashion could have important consequences for victims' thoughts, feelings and motivations toward their perpetrators, as well as how they remember their offense experiences. Indeed, it is my contention that as a result of tailoring offense stories or responses to offense stories to fit momentary

communication goals, victims and third-parties will experience either lower (in the case of sympathy) or higher (in the case of objectivity) levels of forgiveness and be more likely to remember offenses in ways consistent with the adjusted stories they tell and responses they give (e.g., McGregor & Holmes, 1999; Tversky & Marsh, 2000). In the following two sections I consider evidence in support of the effects I have proposed, starting with the consequences that transgression discourses might have for forgiveness.

Consequences for Forgiveness

Several lines of research point to the possibility that spinning offense stories to achieve different communication goals will have ramifications for forgiveness. The most direct evidence comes from the research of McGregor and Holmes (1998, Study 4), in which participants described an upsetting interpersonal event from the perspective of either a prosecuting lawyer or unbiased reporter. Eight weeks after completing the storytelling task, participants were surveyed about their negative emotional reactions to the event. They found that participants' negative reactions (i.e., how hurt and angry they felt) were significantly lower in the reporter than prosecutor condition. Although not tantamount to changes in forgiveness, the group differences in negative emotions observed in this study are certainly suggestive of the effect that I expect different communication goals to have and the possibility that such effects persist over time.

More evidence for the hypothesis that forgiveness is sensitive to differences in how offense stories are told comes from the work of Higgins and Rholes (1978) and Sedikides (1990), who showed that as a result of tailoring their messages about a

target person to accommodate their audiences' attitudes, communicators' own impressions and evaluations of the target can be affected. Specifically, they report that communicators tend to present information about a stimulus person in ways that match the attitude of their audience, and doing this causes communicators to evaluate the stimulus person in line with the message they presented. Similar reports of the effect of audience tuning on stimulus person judgments have been reported elsewhere (Hausmann, Levine, & Higgins, 2008; Higgins & McCann, 1984; Higgins & Rholes, 1978; see Higgins [1992, 1999] for reviews). Thus, it appears that merely adjusting one's comments to suit an audience is sufficient for altering one's attitudes toward another person. If this is true, it is reasonable to suppose that more elaborate adjustments, as might occur when offense stories are told to achieve specific goals, may produce particularly potent effects. Additional support for this possibility comes from the long line of research on the benefits and dangers of emotional expression.

Proponents of catharsis (a psychotherapeutic technique of emotional release once used by Freud to treat hysterical symptoms [Brenner, 1973]) would argue that people are like pressure cookers, and that if anger and other distressing emotions go unexpressed, they eventually inflict devastation on one's psyche. However, years of research into the effects of anger expression on subsequent anger indicates that such a perspective is too simplistic. The conclusion that can be drawn from this literature is that, under many circumstances, expressing anger does not expel it, but rehearses it (Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999) and, in some instances, directs it (Ebbesen, Duncan, & Konceni, 1975).

Ebbesen et al. (1975) conducted interviews with a group of engineers who had signed a three-year contract with a company but were laid-off from their jobs after only one year. These engineers were understandably angry over their lot, but Ebbesen et al. (1975) found that who they were angry at was sensitive to experimental manipulation. Interviewers in this study posed questions that focused participants' attention on explaining how either the company, their immediate supervisor, or their own performance contributed to their early lay-offs. In a control condition, participants were asked to evaluate the quality of the company's engineering library. Post-interview questionnaires revealed that the leading questions posed in the interviews roused participants' anger toward the target under consideration. That is, participants who responded to questions about how the company played a part in their lay-offs were more angry at the company than at their supervisors or themselves, and participants who responded to queries about their supervisors' role in the lay-offs were more frustrated with their supervisors than either the company or themselves. Interestingly, participants who considered their own performance during the interview did not show an increase in self-directed anger. Thus, in this research we find evidence that the expression of anger can serve to rehearse and direct rather than alleviate angry feelings. If the solicitation of sympathy from others requires victims to relive and indulge their bitter feelings via expression, then it could be that pursuing such a goal in transgression discourses has detrimental effects on forgiveness. Likewise, if third-parties echo or egg on victims' bitter feelings to show they are sympathetic and supportive of victims in their plights, third-parties may inadvertently adopt victims' anger and join them in harboring ill-will toward offense perpetrators. It should also be

noted that insofar as the pursuit of objectivity by victims and third-parties leads them to refrain from expressing negative emotion and rehearsing negative features of an offense, then it could be that this goal will have an effect on forgiveness that is opposite of pursuing sympathy.

The work of Ebbesen et al. (1975) is not alone in demonstrating the above effects. Indeed, several studies have shown that discharging anger independent of any cognitive processing of the anger-evoking event does not facilitate recovery from anger (e.g., Bohart, 1977; Green & Murray, 1975; Liberman, Yalom, & Miles, 1973; see also Bohart, 1980 for a review). Apparently, the attainment of insight (i.e., understanding why the angering event occurred, what it means in the context of one's life, or the adoption of new ways of looking at and interpreting the event and provocateur) is necessary for reducing anger. In a study by Bohart (1977), participants were instructed (in a setting designed to resemble a counseling session) to vent their anger as if the perpetrator of the anger were in the room, alternate between playing themselves and the role of the perpetrator in a conversation about the anger they felt, intellectually analyze their anger experience, or merely to describe the physical characteristics of the anger-evoking incident. Bohart (1977) reasoned that the role-play condition would be most effective in reducing anger because it required participants not only to explore their feelings but also do the cognitive work of taking the perspective of the perpetrator, which forgiveness scholars have identified as an important contributor to forgiveness (e.g., Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; North, 1998). Indeed, the insight that the role-playing exercise demanded of participants led to significant reductions in anger

compared to the average amount of anger reduction in the other three conditions. Of particular relevance to the present research was the finding that members of the role-playing condition who presumably achieved a high level of insight into the anger-evoking incident evinced greater reductions in anger, more positive attitudes toward the perpetrator and more favorable judgments of his or her intentions. The results of Bohart's (1977) study suggest that anger expression is only effective in reducing angry feelings when it is accompanied by cognitive processing that leads to insight about the anger-evoking event. Other scholars who have reviewed and synthesized the literature on anger expression agree that discharge without insight is a way of rehearsing, but not resolving angry feelings (e.g., Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999; Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001; Tavris, 1989).

When are the cognitive transformations and discoveries associated with insight likely to be attained in transgression discourses? To be sure, it is unlikely that insight will emerge if sympathy is the communication goal pursued by victims and third-parties. On the other hand, if either victims or third-parties make a concerted effort to talk about a given transgression episode from an impartial and unbiased perspective, insights might develop and, consequently, higher levels of forgiveness. Importantly, McCullough, Root, and Cohen (2006) found that writing about the benefits of a transgression led to significantly higher levels of forgiveness in victims than in either a control condition or a condition in which victims focused on and wrote about the traumatic features of a transgression. McCullough et al. (2006) argue that finding the benefits of transgressions requires cognitive processing of the event. Insofar as similar cognitive processing occurs when victims and third-parties talk about an offense from

an objective perspective, it seems appropriate to predict that doing so will lead to relatively high levels of forgiveness. Thus, it could be the case that transgression discourses aid the forgiveness process if participants in the discourse endeavor to communicate objectively.

Consequences for Memory

In addition to testing the impact of communication goals on victims' and third-parties' forgiveness, this project will examine whether pursuing these goals alters victims' and third-parties' memories for offense episodes. In many of the investigations reported earlier regarding the effect of communication goals on how people retell information, researchers also tested memory. The findings of these studies are consistent. They show that the manner in which information is delivered in one context has implications for how the same information is remembered at a later time, when the original communication goals no longer apply.

First and foremost, Higgins and colleagues (e.g., Higgins & McCann, 1984; Higgins & Rholes, 1978) have repeatedly shown that communicators who adjust target person information to accommodate their audiences' attitudes show biases in their memories that are in line with the valence of their audiences' attitude and the adjusted information they shared with audiences. Further evidence comes from the research of Marsh and colleagues (see Marsh, 2007 for a review). For instance, in a study by Marsh, Tversky, and Hutson (2005), participants were exposed to an action movie depicting several shootings and murders. Following the video, two groups of participants were asked to retell the events they saw in the clip with a goal of either focusing on the facts of the film or their affective reactions to it, and after a 25 minute

delay, all participants, including those in a third condition who did not have the opportunity to discuss the movie, retold the events they remembered from the film. Although participants who focused on their affective reactions to the movie more accurately remembered the positive emotions that the video evoked in them, they included significantly more major errors (e.g., misremembering who was killed) in their retellings than participants in the factual-focus condition, and marginally more than participants who never discussed the movie.

In the research of Dudukovic, Marsh, and Tversky (2004), participants considered the story of a bad night for a fictitious bartender and retold the events of the story with the goal of being either accurate or entertaining. Two days later, participants in these two conditions repeated the retelling exercise with the same goal. After another two days (four days after the first study session), all participants, including those in a control condition that never retold the bartender tale, returned to the lab and recalled the original story they read to the best of their ability. Analysis of the accuracy ratings made by blind judges revealed that participants' retellings in the accuracy condition were more accurate on a global and statement-specific level than participants' retellings in either of the other two conditions. Moreover, participants who told entertaining stories remembered details of the bartender's bad night that were significantly more exaggerated than those remembered by participants in the accuracy condition.

Finally, Tversky and Marsh (2000) report two studies in which participants' memories for a standardized collection of information were affected by the goals they pursued when sharing the information. In their study, participants recommended or

complained about one of two fictional students who exhibited an equal number of social and annoying behaviors. Later, these participants remembered more goal-relevant than goal-irrelevant information for the discussed student but not for the undiscussed student. Furthermore, participants showed a tendency to attribute goal-relevant actions performed by the undiscussed student to the one they focused on in their recommendation/complaint letters. Very similar results obtained in another study in which participants retold the story of a murder-mystery from a neutral or a biased perspective (that of a prosecuting lawyer) in which two suspects performed an equal number of exonerating and incriminating behaviors. The proportion of incriminating behaviors remembered for the discussed suspect was greater in the biased than neutral perspective condition; the reverse was true for exonerating behaviors. Moreover, the authors found some evidence that the misattribution of incriminating behaviors to the discussed suspect was greater in the biased than in the neutral condition.

Several cognitive mechanisms have been proposed to explain the memory effects described above, but of particular relevance to the present research is the notion of selective rehearsal (e.g., Marsh, 2007; Pasupathi, 2000). When victims retell their offense experiences to third parties, they are essentially rehearsing the events they include in their retellings. This rehearsal process leaves stronger memory traces for the retold details of their experience than for those that were excluded from retelling. Of course, for victims to satisfy certain communication goals like soliciting sympathy and objectivity from third-parties, there are certain details of their experiences they would not be able to share because they run counter to the goals they wish to pursue. Thus, victims who want to solicit sympathy from their listeners might

embellish certain features of their offense experiences that make it seem worse than it was and victims who want to solicit objectivity from others might refrain from including story details that make the perpetrator appear highly culpable. Rehearsing such biased stories of offense episodes through retellings should strengthen victims' memories for the adjusted stories they tell, thereby increasing the likelihood that when offenses are recalled under other circumstances, similar biases to those that appeared in goal-directed retellings will manifest.

If, as I have argued, third-parties exhibit biased memories for the offenses they respond to, the memory mechanism responsible for the effect should be different than it is for victims. Whereas the bias in victims should result from selective *retrieval* and *rehearsal* of goal-relevant offense information, the bias in third-parties should follow more from biased *encoding* of goal-relevant offense information. That is, when third-parties have a specific communication goal in mind and are exposed to the details of an offense, they should pass that information through an encoding filter that highlights goal-relevant information and glosses over information that is goal-irrelevant. An important example of this phenomenon comes from Stillwell and Baumeister (1997). These authors had participants assume the role of either the victim or offender in a hypothetical transgression and then exposed them to the description of the offense episode. When participants' memories were later tested, they reported details of the offense that coincided with the role they initially adopted; that participants took on these perspectives *prior* to reading the offense story implicates encoding as the process by which memory biases emerged. Because third-parties in the present study will be given communication goals before being exposed to the details of a

hypothetical offense, goal-consistent encoding processes should lead to memory biases, as was the case in Stillwell and Baumeister's (1997) study.

This is not to say that rehearsal will play no role in the memory biases of third-parties. Importantly, third-parties in the present study will respond to the offense they read about before their memories are tested. Insofar as these responses reinforce or strengthen memory traces for the information they initially encoded, then it could be argued that encoding *and rehearsal*, not just encoding, are working together to create the memory effects found among third-parties.

Measuring Forgiveness in the Present Studies

It is no secret that in the forgiveness literature, a consensual definition of the construct has not been forthcoming. Scholars agree that forgiving wrongs is distinct from justifying, excusing, or condoning them. They also agree that forgiveness entails a reduction of offender-directed malevolence, which has been variously defined in terms of victims' cognitions, emotions, and motivational or behavioral inclinations toward transgressors (e.g., Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998; McCullough et al., 1998; Subkoviak et al., 1995). Much of the definitional disagreement lies in determining whether forgiveness entails the adoption of benevolent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward offenders. For the sake of achieving a parsimonious and conceptually clear definition, Brown and Phillips (2005) have proposed that forgiveness simply be defined in terms of reductions in offender-directed hostility or ill-will. Although this approach does not treat the adoption of benevolence as a unique dimension of forgiveness that needs to be independently assessed, as some researchers believe it should (e.g., McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003; Subkoviak et al., 1995),

it does focus on what forgiveness researchers of all stripes agree the construct should include – i.e., forgiveness, at the very least, involves a reduction in malevolence or hostility toward transgressors. For this reason, I have elected in the present study to conceptualize forgiveness in this way.

Brown and Phillips (2005) also suggest that forgiveness researchers might benefit from conceptualizing forgiveness as a change in attitude toward offense perpetrators. This mode of thought suggests that forgiveness, like other attitudes, can be assessed in terms of its constituent cognitions, emotions, and behavioral intentions. Thus, in keeping with this perspective, my measurements in the present studies focus on the affective, motivational, and cognitive concomitants of forgiveness. My decision to focus on these aspects of forgiveness as opposed to the behavioral in these studies is based mostly on practical concerns: having victims, their offenders, and various third-parties in a laboratory situation where behaviors could be assessed would be a difficult, if not impossible, meeting to arrange. Furthermore, because this is the first set of studies of this kind in the forgiveness literature, it seems important to first demonstrate that offense discourses influence fundamental psychological states like offense-relevant cognitions and emotions, which presumably give rise to forgiveness-related behaviors like vengeance and avoidance. Brief descriptions of the instruments I have selected for use in the present studies are presented below.

Assessment of the Affective and Motivational Components of Forgiveness

Brown and Phillips' (2005) State Forgiveness Scale (SFS) includes items that assess respondents' current levels of hostility (ill-will) toward offense perpetrators. The SFS also contains two items that tap the extent to which respondents desire revenge and wish to avoid their transgressors – two features of forgiveness that are

central to McCullough et al.'s (1998) treatment of the construct. The scale includes 7-items designed to capture the extent to which respondents' are currently experiencing several forgiveness-related thoughts ("I hope this person gets what's coming to them for what they did to me."), feelings ("I feel warmly toward this person"), and motivations ("If I saw this person again, I would try to avoid interacting with him/her"). The advantage of this scale compared to other state measures of forgiveness (e.g., McCullough et al., 1998) is that it is appropriate for individuals who have experienced an offense at the hand of either a stranger or a close relationship partner.

To further assess participants' current levels of forgiveness (i.e., ill-will) toward transgressors, I will administer the Wish for Offender's Emotional Suffering (WOES) scale (Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2009). This instrument is designed to tap a facet of vengeance that is often over-looked in forgiveness measures that assess vengeful desires and motivations – namely, the extent to which individuals want offenders to experience negative emotions simply because the emotions *feel* bad. The WOES asks respondents to rate on a 7-point scale the extent to which they want transgressors to experience negative emotions (e.g., shame, distress, anxiety, guilt) over the offense they committed "[e]ven if [doing so] never leads to lasting positive changes in the way he or she interacts with [victims] or with other people". Because there are social norms that could prevent individuals from expressing their vengeful desires, respondents might be more likely to endorse items like those on the WOES than ones presented in traditional measures of revenge because wanting someone to feel bad over an offense they have committed is less likely to be frowned upon by society than wanting to do harm or see harm come to that person.

Assessment of the Cognitive Component of Forgiveness

The cognitive component of forgiveness will be tapped with the Offensive Identity Scale (OIS). North (1998) has argued that one impediment to forgiveness is the failure of victims to recognize that the whole of an offender's identity is not summed up in the offensive act he or she committed. On the OIS, respondents rate their level of agreement with statements concerning the extent to which the transgressions their offenders committed are representative of the *kind of people* they are (e.g., "This person's wrongful actions toward me pretty well sum up the kind of person he/she is"), to capture this unique facet of forgiveness.

Assessment of Implicit Forgiveness

In an effort to circumvent the self-presentation concerns that could alter individuals' responses on the self-report measures of forgiveness described above, I borrowed Osterman and Brown's (2009) approach to assessing implicit forgiveness, which relies on the concept of infrahumanization developed by Leyens et al. (2001). Research on infrahumanization (e.g., Leyens et al., 2001) has demonstrated that people are more inclined to attribute secondary emotions (i.e., emotions like nostalgia, pride, compassion, and remorse that are experienced by human beings but not lower animals) to members of their ingroup than to members of outgroups. According to Leyens et al. (2001) the tendency to ascribe greater "humanity" to ingroups than outgroups is a sign of prejudice. It is possible that infrahumanization is relevant for forgiveness research as well. For instance, it would likely be easier for victims to justify maintaining feelings of hostility and enacting vengeful desires if they perceive their offenders as less human than either themselves or the average other person. The infrahumanization scale that participants in the present studies will complete will

require that they rate on a 7-point scale the extent to which they believe offenders are capable of experiencing a list of 10 positive and 10 negative primary and secondary emotions (e.g., humiliation, pain, elation, surprise). These emotion words were selected from a list of positively and negatively valenced primary and secondary emotions compiled by Demoulin et al. (2004).

Overview of Studies

The two studies in this project are designed to answer several questions about the consequences of victims and third-parties pursuing certain communication goals in transgression discourses. Study 1 focuses on offense victims. Specifically, participants will recall an offense experience from their lives and then disclose the offense to a fictitious other person with the goal of soliciting either a sympathetic or an objective response from him or her. A third group of participants will describe their offense experience to themselves in a personal journal format. One week later, offense experiences will be retold under no communication goal restrictions. At both time points, participants' stories will be saved for content coding and forgiveness will be assessed. In Study 2, the spotlight will be taken from offense victims and placed on the third-parties in whom they confide. Participants in this study will also pursue sympathy and objectivity in their communications, but their aim will be to convey these themes in their responses to a fictitious offense victim. These responses will be saved for content coding, as will their recollections of the complete offense story, which participants will report as a final part of the study protocol. Participants' forgiveness of the offender will also be assessed to determine the extent to which

communication goal pursuit has implications for third-party forgiveness (cf. Brown et al., 2008; Green et al., 2008).

Rationales for the hypotheses I tested are addressed at length in the above sections of this introduction. Succinct recapitulations of these predictions are presented in Tables 1 and 2. In the case that these hypotheses are supported, this research would suggest that an activity people often take for granted as a means for coping with transgression experiences can have important unintended consequences for forgiveness, and whether transgression discourses promote or impede forgiveness depends in large part on *how* offense stories are described by victims and responded to by third-parties.

Study 1

In this study, individuals were invited to disclose an offense from their lives to a third-party, from whom they expected to receive a response at a later time. These disclosures were made with the goal of soliciting either sympathy or objectivity from the third-party. Other individuals wrote about their offense to themselves in a personal journal format. Forgiveness was assessed subsequently. One week later, participants returned to the laboratory and wrote about their offenses a second time, but under no communication goal restrictions. Forgiveness was measured again after the final disclosures were made. I hypothesized that participants would adjust their offense stories to achieve their assigned communication goals, that these goals would have positive consequences for forgiveness in the objectivity condition and negative consequences for forgiveness in the sympathy condition. Finally, I expected

participants' session two offense disclosures and self-reported forgiveness of offenders to mirror the patterns observed in the initial laboratory session held the previous week.

Method

Participants

Participants were 145 undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course at the University of Oklahoma. Six participants who expressed suspicion were removed from the dataset and an additional seven participants were lost for not reporting how long ago their offense experience occurred. Thus, 131 participants (110 females) were included in the analyses reported for Session 1 below. The attrition rate for Session 2 of the study (held one week later) was low: 115 participants (98 females) returned. All participants were run in small group sessions ranging in size from one to four. In exchange for their time, participants received course credit.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were invited to the laboratory to complete a study entitled "Communicating with Others." Upon arriving at the study site, participants were placed in individual cubicles containing computers. Instructions for the study were administered entirely by the computers via text and audio. On a welcome screen, participants were told that they would be writing to another person about a recent event in their lives in which they felt harmed or offended. They were also told that the primary objective of the study was to examine how their partners responded to the experience they wrote about. Next, participants were presented with the following instructions to guide them in selecting an appropriate event to write about:

“Please take a moment to think back upon an example from the recent past (the last 3 months) in which someone wronged you, mistreated you, offended you, or betrayed you. The person could be a friend, a casual acquaintance, a stranger, a family member, a romantic partner, a classmate, a coworker, etc., and the wrongdoing could be an action or an inaction - something someone said or did, or something someone failed to say or do that they ought to have said or done. In addition, this incident should be one that, when you think about it, causes you to experience negative emotions (e.g., anger, hurt, and distress) similar to those you felt when the event first transpired.”

After selecting an appropriate offense experience, participants completed a series of questions concerning specific features of the offense episode that were treated as control variables in all analyses. First, they indicated the gender of their offender and whether he or she apologized for the incident. Current relationship closeness between participants and offenders was measured with the statement, “How close to this person do you feel now?” Current perceptions of offense severity were assessed with four statements concerning how hurtful, serious, and offensive participants felt the offense was and how rejected they currently felt as result of the experience ($\alpha = .86$). Ratings for all of the above items were made on 7-point scales with appropriate pole labels – e.g., 1 (“not at all close”) to 7 (“extremely close”). Finally, participants reported the length of time since the offense occurred. These values were converted to months and fractions of months.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three writing conditions after completing the above measures. In every condition, participants were led to believe

that the gender of the person who would read and respond to their offense description was the same as their own; also, all participants were given 8 minutes to write. The specific instructions that accompanied each writing condition appear below.

Sympathy Condition Instructions

“Because our primary interest in this project is in this person's reactions to your offense experience, it is very important that you make every effort to construct an account that you think will be most effective in soliciting a supportive and sympathetic reaction from him or her – one that indicates he or she is on your side and seeing the situation from your perspective.”

Objectivity Condition Instructions

“Because our primary interest in this project is in this person's reactions to your offense experience, it is very important that you make every effort to construct an account of your offense experience that you think will be most effective in soliciting an objective and impartial reaction from him or her – one that indicates he or she is viewing your situation from the outside, and maintaining an unbiased perspective.”

Journal Condition Instructions

“Although our primary interest in this project is in other persons' reactions to the offense experiences that people disclose, it is very important that we create a baseline condition in our study. With that goal in mind, we ask that you simply write about your offense experience to yourself, much like you would if you were writing in a personal journal. In so doing you will help us create the baseline condition we need for this investigation.” Participants in this condition were reminded that their offense accounts would not be given to their partners to read.

After completing the writing task, participants were advanced to a survey section that contained the focal dependent variables of the study. These measures were presented in a fixed order, beginning with the Infrachumanization Scale and the Offensive Identity Scale, followed by the Wish for Offender's Emotional Suffering Scale and the State Forgiveness Sale.

Infrachumanization Scale (IHS). Several measures of infrachumanization have appeared in the literature. The present version of the scale was constructed based on normative data collected by Demoulin et al. (2004). These authors report a table of positive and negative emotions arranged on a continuum from those perceived to be common to humans and lower animals (primary emotions) and those considered uniquely human (secondary emotions). From these emotions, 20 were selected: 10 primary, five of which were positive (surprise, pleasure, attraction, excitement, enjoyment; Session 1 $\alpha = .90$; Session 2 $\alpha = .91$), and five of which were negative (pain, sadness, suffering, distress, anguish; Session 1 $\alpha = .90$; Session 2 $\alpha = .92$), and 10 secondary, five of which were positive (love, elation, passion, admiration, nostalgia; Session 1 $\alpha = .88$; Session 2 $\alpha = .91$), and five of which were negative (humiliation, guilt, remorse, shame, disappointment; Session 1 $\alpha = .86$; Session 2 $\alpha = .89$). Participants rated the extent to which they believed the person responsible for the offense against them seemed capable of experiencing each of the aforementioned emotions on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 9 ("very strongly"). Reliabilities for the combined secondary positive and negative scales (Session 1 $\alpha = .90$; Session 2 $\alpha = .92$) and for the combined primary positive and negative scales (Session 1 $\alpha = .91$; Session 2 $\alpha = .91$) were high.

Offensive Identity Scale (OIS). Based on the reasoning of North (1998), the OIS includes 5 items intended to capture the extent to which respondents have difficulty separating the identity of an offender from the offensive act he or she committed. Example items include, “This person’s wrongful actions toward me pretty well sum up the kind of person he or she is,” and “There’s no way for me to separate who this person is from what he or she did to me.” Ratings for the items on the OIS were made on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 9 (“strongly agree”). One item (“There’s more to who this person is than the offense he or she committed against me”) was dropped from the final version of the scale to improve its reliability (Session 1 $\alpha = .91$; Session 2 $\alpha = .92$).

Wish for Offender’s Emotional Suffering (WOES). Revenge motivations were assessed with the WOES (Barnes et al., 2009). As explained earlier, this instrument taps a facet of vengeance often over-looked in related measures – namely, the extent to which victims want their offenders to experience negative psychological/emotional states simply because such states *feel* bad. Respondents rated on a 9-point scale the extent to which they wanted transgressors to experience 10 negative psychological/emotional states (i.e., humiliation, shame, guilt, sadness, remorse, suffering, pain, distress, disappointment, anguish) because of the offense they committed, even if doing so never led to lasting positive changes in the way they interacted with respondents or other people. The reliability of the scale was excellent (Session 1 $\alpha = .95$; Session 2 $\alpha = .97$).

State Forgiveness Scale (SFS). Forgiveness was measured using Brown and Phillips’ (2005) SFS. The SFS includes 7-items designed to capture the extent to

which respondents' are currently experiencing several forgiveness-related thoughts ("I hope this person gets what's coming to them for what they did to me"), feelings ("I feel warmly toward this person"), and motives ("If I saw this person again, I would try to avoid interacting with him/her"). Ratings for the SFS were made on 9-point scales ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 9 ("strongly agree"). The internal reliability of the SFS was very good in this sample (Session 1 $\alpha = .89$; Session 2 $\alpha = .91$).

Next, participants responded to Watson, Clark, and Tellegen's (1988) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) by rating the extent to which they felt each of 10 positive (e.g., interested, excited, inspired, proud) and negative (jittery, ashamed, irritable, upset) affective states at the present moment using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 ("very slightly or not at all") to 7 ("extremely"). Both the positive (Session 1 $\alpha = .87$; Session 2 $\alpha = .87$) and negative (Session 1 $\alpha = .85$; Session 2 $\alpha = .84$) dimensions of the PANAS exhibited good internal reliability in this sample.

Finally, participants completed two individual difference scales: the Attitudes Toward Forgiveness (ATF) and Tendency to Forgive (TTF) scales (Brown, 2003). Brown's (2003) 6-item ATF was used to measure the extent to which participants value forgiveness (e.g., "I believe forgiveness is a moral virtue" and "It is admirable to be a forgiving person"). The internal reliability of the ATF in this sample was low, but acceptable ($\alpha = .67$).

The 4-item TTF (Brown, 2003), was administered to measure participants' past forgiveness experiences (e.g., "I tend to get over it quickly when someone hurts my feelings" and "When people wrong me, my approach is just to forgive and forget"). The TTF also demonstrated acceptable internal reliability in this sample of

respondents ($\alpha = .69$). Participants rated their level of agreement with each of the statements included in both the ATF and TTF on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (“strongly disagree”) to 6 (“strongly agree”).

Participants returned to the laboratory one week after their first study session to give a second account of their offense experience (under no communication goal restrictions) and respond to the forgiveness measures administered during Session 1. Participants were presented with the following instructions via computer:

“In last week's session you were given special instructions to write in a particular way about an experience from your recent past in which someone wronged you, mistreated you, offended you, or betrayed you. In today's session we would like you to bring this event to mind again for the purpose of answering some additional questions about it. However, we ask that you please disregard whatever instructions you received during last week's session because they do not apply to the tasks you will be performing today.”

After reading these instructions, participants were instructed to give a second account of their offense experience. Specifically, they were told to “tell the story of what happened to [you], giving [your] take on the events that transpired.” All participants were allotted 8 minutes to perform this task and were then presented with the forgiveness instruments. Following completion of the forgiveness measures, participants were thanked for their contribution to the study, debriefed, and excused from the laboratory.

Results

The majority of offenses reported by participants were committed by either friends (20.6%), best friends (22.9%), or romantic partners (22.9%). Family members were responsible for 9.9% of the offenses (mother or father: 4.6%; sibling: 3.8%, other family member: 1.5%). The remaining offenses were perpetrated by acquaintances/strangers (9.2%), bosses (5.3%), co-workers (3.1%), or coaches/teachers (0.8%); seven participants indicated that their offender could not be placed in any of these categories (5.3%). The average pre-offense closeness between participants and offenders was above the midpoint of a 7-point scale ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 2.19$).

Because of the self-selected nature of the offenses that participants reported, I controlled for a host of variables in my analyses. These covariates can generally be divided into three categories: 1) offense-specific variables (i.e., participant gender, offender gender, offender apology, time since offense, and current evaluations of relationship closeness and offense severity), 2) individual difference variables (i.e., ATF and TTF scores), and 3) momentary mood (i.e., scores on the positive and negative dimensions of the PANAS). Importantly, no condition effects were detected for the ATF and TTF, which were administered after the manipulation. Zero-order correlations between the covariates and the dependent variables from Session 1 of Study 1 are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Results for Session 1 offense descriptions and forgiveness measures are presented first, followed by results for the offense accounts and forgiveness measures from Session 2.

Offense Account Content (Session 1)

Two independent raters (blind to study condition) coded offense accounts given by participants for the number of statements in each that pointed to the negative consequences of the offense, connoted self-directed or perpetrator-directed blame for the offense, and reflected recognition of factors that might mitigate offenders' culpability. In every case, the number of unique statements or thoughts that fit into each category were counted and recorded. These totals were averaged across the two raters to create a single index for each coding dimension.

Statements that qualified as indicators of negative outcomes were those that highlighted social/relational (e.g., "I still have not hung out with either of them because of him. I feel like I lost two good friends"), personal/psychological (e.g., "I was very hurt when she said this to me"), material/practical (e.g., "My picture frames ... were broken, ... and my very expensive ... purse was not in good shape") losses or damages that resulted from the offense and other undesirable outcomes (e.g., violations of expectations and feelings of helplessness). Ratings on these coding dimensions were highly correlated between the raters ($r = .77, p < .001$).

Instances of self-directed and perpetrator-directed blame included statements in which participants suggested, implied or directly identified themselves (e.g., "I tried my hardest to be fun, but I was a downer ... I know I wasn't much fun that weekend") or offenders (e.g., "[S]he knows I hate being [as] short [as] I am, and she knows it bothers me a lot when people make fun of me for it") as partially or wholly responsible for the offense. Raters' evaluations for each of these dimensions correlated highly ($r = .64, p < .001$ for self-directed blame, and $r = .73, p < .001$ for perpetrator-directed blame). Phrases like "Guys will be guys ...," "It was his busiest day of the

week ...,” and “In a way, his jokes are just jokes ...” were counted as statements that reflected a recognition of mitigating factors. Again, raters’ evaluations correlated highly ($r = .78, p < .001$).

In addition to the above, raters evaluated the general negative tone of each account. Specifically, raters were instructed to evaluate how “complaining, whiny, bitter, angry, gloomy, dismal, and pessimistic” participants’ offense accounts were on a three point scale: 1 = “minimal or no negative tone,” 2 = “moderate negative tone,” and 3 = “pronounced negative tone.” Accounts that included particularly biting or pejorative language received a rating of 3 (e.g., “I think she is cold-hearted and stuck up and I find her to be annoying and hope she moves out!”). Ratings of 2 were assigned to accounts that included statements rich with mentions of negative affect but lacked the derogatory tone associated with accounts rated at a 3 (e.g., “When she dropped me all of a sudden, it was a surprise ... I felt like I could trust this girl, so my feelings were hurt very bad when she did this”). Accounts that were affectively flat and neutral in tone were assigned a value of 1 on the rating scale (e.g., “[H]e treated me different than usual and acted differently in order to fit in with his new friends. I felt that an old friend was not being himself, and I think he may have been embarrassed by me”). Raters’ evaluations of general negativity correlated highly ($r = .62, p < .001$), and were averaged together to create a total score. Note that Table 5 contains the correlations between and descriptive statistics for the content coding variables and forgiveness measures in Session 1. Also, each of the condition effects reported below are presented in Table 6.

Each of the aforementioned coding variables were submitted separately to a one-way ANCOVA model in which the offense-specific, individual difference, and momentary mood variables mentioned above were treated as covariates.

Communication goal condition had a significant effect on the number of statements made by participants that pointed to the negative outcomes of the offense, $F(2, 118) = 4.25, p = .016$. Participant gender was the only significant covariate in the model ($p = .05$), with males ($M = 3.63, SE = .63$) including somewhat fewer statements of negative consequences than females ($M = 4.73, SE = .26$). Follow-up contrasts between the conditions revealed that participants who pursued objectivity ($M = 3.56, SE = .41$) as a communication goal included significantly fewer references to negative offense outcomes than participants in either the sympathy ($M = 4.94, SE = .41$) or journal ($M = 5.14, SE = .41$) conditions ($p = .02$ for the former contrast, and $p = .008$ for the latter contrast). Contrary to expectations, however, the sympathy and journal conditions did not differ from each other.

Evidence was also found for an effect of condition on rates of self-directed blame statements, $F(2, 118) = 3.24, p = .043$; however, the pattern of means for this variable were not in the predicted direction. Specifically, the number of self-directed blame statements were lowest in the sympathy ($M = .09, SE = .10$) and objectivity ($M = .18, SE = .10$) conditions and highest in the journal condition ($M = .44, SE = .10$). The contrast between the sympathy and journal conditions was significant ($p = .015$) and the contrast between the objectivity and journal conditions was marginally significant ($p = .077$). This finding suggests that victims may blame themselves more for the offenses they suffered than they are willing to admit to others when the

communication goals of sympathy and objectivity are pursued. TTF scores ($\beta = .25, p = .014$) and momentary negative mood ratings on the PANAS ($\beta = .26, p = .006$) were the only significant covariates in the model.

Rates of perpetrator-directed blame statements were also significantly affected by the manipulation, and largely in the predicted direction, $F(2, 118) = 7.70, p = .001$. Those who attempted to solicit objectivity ($M = 4.94, SE = .47$) from a third-party included significantly fewer statements of perpetrator blame than did participants in either the sympathy ($M = 6.83, SE = .46$) or journal ($M = 7.49, SE = .46$) conditions ($p = .006$ for the former contrast, and $p < .001$ for the latter contrast). However, as was true with the negative consequences variable, no difference emerged between the sympathy or journal conditions. Again, participant gender was the only significant covariate in the model ($p = .041$), with males ($M = 4.77, SE = .74$) including significantly fewer statements of negative consequences than females ($M = 6.75, SE = .31$).

The number of statements reflecting a recognition of mitigating factors in participants' offense accounts was influenced by the manipulation, but this effect was marginally significant, $F(2, 118) = 2.46, p = .090$. Follow-up contrasts revealed that although the difference between the objectivity ($M = .50, SE = .11$) and journal ($M = .23, SE = .11$) condition for this variable was only marginally significant ($p = .093$), the difference between the objectivity and sympathy conditions was significant ($p = .038$), with members of the objectivity condition recognizing more mitigating factors than members of the sympathy ($M = .17, SE = .11$) condition. No difference was

detected for the contrast between the sympathy and journal conditions, and none of the covariates included in the model were significant.

Finally, the extent to which the manipulation influenced the negative tone of participants' offense accounts was examined and found to be significant, $F(2, 118) = 6.31, p = .002$. The follow-up contrasts revealed that offense accounts created in the sympathy ($M = 2.12, SE = .08$) and journal ($M = 2.10, SE = .08$) conditions were similar in degree of negative tone, but those created in the objectivity ($M = 1.76, SE = .08$) condition were significantly less negative than both of these conditions ($p = .002$ for the contrast between the sympathy and objectivity conditions, and $p = .004$ for the contrast between the journal and objectivity conditions).

Forgiveness (Session 1)

The effect of communication goals on forgiveness was tested next. I began by reversing the total scores on the OIS and WOES so that high scores reflected more forgiveness. Total scores for the OIS, WOES, and SFS were then standardized. With the IHS, I wished to obtain a measure of the extent to which secondary emotions were attributed to offenders independent of primary emotions. To accomplish this, I regressed the secondary emotions subscale of the IHS on the primary emotions subscale and saved the standardized residuals from this analysis. I then combined these values with the standardized total scores for the OIS, WOES, and SFS. The internal reliability of this four-item composite scale was reasonable ($\alpha = .78$), but was improved when the values from the IHS were removed ($\alpha = .83$). For this reason, I analyzed the IHS values separately from the combined values on the other forgiveness measures. With both measures, higher scores connote great forgiveness.

The aggregate measure using the OIS, WOES, and SFS was submitted to the ANCOVA model described above. The omnibus F-test was marginally significant, $F(2, 118) = 2.57, p = .081$. Follow-up contrasts revealed that the objectivity ($M = .18, SE = .08$) and journal ($M = -.07, SE = .08$) conditions differed significantly from each other ($p = .034$) and the contrast between the objectivity and sympathy ($M = -.03, SE = .08$) condition was marginally significant ($p = .083$). The pattern of data here points to the possibility of a quadratic trend. Consistent with this reasoning, a quadratic polynomial contrast comparing the adjusted mean of the objectivity condition to the pooled adjusted mean of the journal and sympathy conditions was statistically significant ($p = .028$). The significant covariates in the model included offender gender ($p = .028$; male offenders were forgiven less [$M = -.09, SE = .07$] than female offenders [$M = .10, SE = .06$]), current closeness ($\beta = .60, p < .001$), current severity ratings ($\beta = -.22, p < .001$), and ATF scores ($\beta = .15, p = .005$).

The arguments presented in the introduction suggest that forgiveness might be bolstered among victims who pursue objectivity as a communication goal because 1) they rehearse negative reactions to offenses less, 2) consider their own contributions to offenses more, and 3) take into account mitigating influences on perpetrators' behaviors more. The analyses presented above rule out the second of these arguments as a possible mechanism for the forgiveness effect observed here, because members of the objectivity condition included the same number of self-blame statements as did those in the sympathy condition and fewer than members of the journal condition, which does not fit the hypothesized pattern. The third argument is also ruled out as a possibility because statements of mitigating factors in participants' offense narratives

were uncorrelated with forgiveness (see Table 5). Of the remaining content coding variables, only two were correlated with forgiveness and could be taken as indirect indicators of negative rehearsal – namely, general negativity ratings and statements of perpetrator blame. Including these variables in the ANCOVA model as covariates eliminated the condition effect, $F(2, 116) = 1.39, ns$, and all of the contrasts were nonsignificant. However, within the model, neither general negativity nor statements of perpetrator blame significantly predicted forgiveness, and this did not change when the variables were entered separately into the model, which casts doubt on their roles as mediators of the experimental effect.¹ It should be noted that attempts to create a composite measure using the content coding dimensions were unsuccessful. Despite their moderate correlations with each other, the reliability of a composite measure using the coding variables was exceedingly low and unacceptable ($\alpha < .50$).

Finally, the condition effect on the IHS was analyzed in the ANVOCA model. The omnibus F-test was non-significant, $F(2, 118) = .063, ns$, as were the follow-up contrasts. Dividing the IHS based on the valence and status of scale items as primary or secondary emotions did not change the results. Note that the effects of the manipulation on all of the forgiveness measures completed by participants in Session 1 appear in Table 6.

Offense Account Content (Session 2)

Ratings of offense accounts were made on the same dimensions and using the same procedures as those described above for Session 1 accounts. Correlations between the two raters' evaluations of participants' were high for negative outcomes ($r = .75, p < .001$), self-directed blame ($r = .78, p < .001$), perpetrator-directed blame

($r = .87, p < .001$), recognition of mitigating factors, ($r = .85, p < .001$), and general negativity ($r = .58, p < .001$). Several of the covariates included in the Session 1 model were exchanged for up-to-date ratings collected at Session 2 – specifically, indications of whether offenders apologized, and scores on the positive and negative dimensions of the PANAS. Also, the number of people participants reported talking about the offense with between Sessions 1 and 2 was recorded and made a covariate.

A marginally significant effect of the manipulation on mentions of negative consequences was detected with this adjusted ANCOVA model, $F(2, 101) = 2.36, p = .099$. Follow-up contrasts revealed that the sympathy condition ($M = 2.83, SE = .30$) was significantly different from the journal condition ($M = 3.75, SE = .31; p = .037$), but not the objectivity condition ($M = 3.48, SE = .31; ns$). The contrast between the journal and objectivity condition was not significant. The number of people participants spoke with concerning the offense between Session 1 and 2 ($\beta = .29, p = .003$) along with ATF ($\beta = .25, p = .011$) and TTF ($\beta = .20, p = .040$) scores were significant covariates in the model. Thus, although it was expected that attempts to solicit sympathy from a third-party would lead to negative memories of offenses at Session 2, it appears that it impedes memory for the negative outcomes that followed from offenses.

Also, the manipulation had a significant effect on perpetrator-directed blame, $F(2, 101) = 3.34, p = .039$. The contrast between the objectivity ($M = 5.64, SE = .58$) and journal ($M = 7.77, SE = .57$) conditions was significant ($p = .011$); rates of perpetrator-directed blame for the objectivity and sympathy ($M = 6.85, SE = .55$) conditions were statistically indistinguishable ($p = .14$), as were those for the

sympathy and journal conditions ($p = .26$). Two of the covariates in the model were significant: current ratings of closeness (made during Session 1; $\beta = -.21, p = .044$) and the number of people participants spoke with about the offense since Session 1 ($\beta = .26, p = .007$). No other manipulation effects were detected for the offense content variables.

Forgiveness (Session 2)

A composite measure of forgiveness was created for Session 2 following the procedure described above for the Session 1 data. Combining the standardized total scores for the OIS, WOES, and SFS produced a scale with good internal reliability ($\alpha = .89$). With the IHS included the reliability of the scale was lower ($\alpha = .82$); therefore, the standardized residual values for the IHS were analyzed separately. No effect on condition was found for the composite OIS, WOES, SFS measure, $F(2, 101) = .41, ns$. Also, no significant effect was found for the standardized residuals from the IHS, $F(2, 101) = .11, ns$. This was true even when the positive and negative emotions of the IHS were analyzed separately.

Intercorrelations between all of the Session 1 and Session 2 dependent variables appear in Table 7, followed by the correlations among the Session 2 dependent variables in Table 8. Finally, results for the analyses conducted on the content coding dimensions and the individual forgiveness scales are presented in Table 9.

Discussion

The results for the communication goal manipulation on offense accounts at Session 1 extend knowledge on how victims construct stories of their offense

experiences. It has repeatedly been shown that victims exhibit self-serving biases in their offense accounts (Baumeister et al., 1990; Kearns & Fincham, 2005; Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002), but in none of these studies has the effect of communication goals on account construction been examined. Insofar as the journal condition in the present study mirrors the conditions under which participants composed offense accounts in these prior studies, my results suggest that pursuing sympathy changes little about how offense accounts are described. Whether offenses are told to the self or to others with the goal of soliciting sympathy, the content is largely the same. The only difference is in the amount of self-directed blame that is present. The results suggest that when victims recount an offense to themselves, they may be inclined to recognize their own contributions to the event more so than when they attempt to solicit sympathy (or objectivity) from a third-party.

The results also show that victims who pursue objectivity tell different stories to third-parties than those they tell to themselves or to third-parties they wish to solicit sympathy from. Specifically, pursuing objectivity appears to lead victims to give less negative accounts of offenses, report fewer negative outcomes, and blame perpetrators less, relative to offense stories told to solicit sympathy from a third-party and to the self in a journal format. Moreover, there is some indication that pursuing objectivity leads victims to take more mitigating factors into account. This is unequivocally true when sympathy-soliciting accounts are the basis of comparison, and may also be the case when compared to accounts told to the self, though this effect needs additional support.

The analyses performed on the Session 1 forgiveness measures are somewhat equivocal. Although the difference between the objectivity and journal conditions was significant for the composite forgiveness measure, the contrast between objectivity and sympathy was not, and the manipulation had no discernable impact on the IHS. It could be said that participants' responses to the composite forgiveness measure are merely evidence for a demand characteristic – i.e., participants who suspected the forgiveness measures were central to the purpose of the study and guessed the hypothesized effects may have attempted to respond in the manner that was expected of them. The fact that participants were excluded on the basis of the suspicion check, that the communication goal instructions clearly applied to the offense stories and not the subsequent measures, and that participants were told on two occasions that the focus of the study was on their partner's *responses* to their offenses, not their own, casts some doubt on the influence of demand characteristics. None of these counterarguments make a watertight case, however. Had the manipulation produced the hypothesized effect on the IHS measure, more confidence could be placed in the findings, as it is unlikely that respondents realized precisely what the IHS measured and were, therefore, less able to control their responses to it. Unfortunately, this cannot be said for the other forgiveness scales. Thus, more evidence is needed to definitively rule out the possibility that demand characteristics are responsible for the results I obtained.

Similarly problematic for the present study is the failure of the communication goal manipulation to produce statistically discernable effects on the coded dimensions of the Session 2 offense accounts and on the Session 2 forgiveness measures. The

results for statements of perpetrator-directed blame were statistically significant and mostly consistent with those observed in Session 1, but this was not true for any of the other content dimensions. Indeed, those who attempted to solicit sympathy from a third-party in Session 1 actually included fewer mentions of negative outcomes in their offense accounts than those in the journal condition of Session 1. These findings might suggest that participants in these two conditions perceived their offenses in somewhat less negative terms, but the fact that these trends did not materialize on any of the other coding dimensions or on the forgiveness measures leaves this possibility open to question.

The effect of pursuing communication goals on immediate offense story construction is informative, but the failure of the manipulation to produce consistent effects on forgiveness and offense story content over time raises questions about the tenability of the hypotheses that I tested. In the General Discussion section, I return to this point and examine the alternative possibility that my hypotheses are accurate but should be tested using an improved methodology.

Study 2

In Study 2, attention was taken from the role of victims in transgression discourses and placed on third-parties. The goal in doing so was to understand how the pursuit of the same communication goals examined in Study 1 influences third-parties' responses to offense disclosures and, in turn, their forgiveness of offense perpetrators and memories for offense episodes. All participants had a brief, positive interaction with a fictitious co-participant. Subsequently, they were assigned to a specific communication goal condition and were presented with a standardized offense account

they believed was experienced by their partner. Participants then responded to the disclosed account and completed several measures of forgiveness. Finally, participants recounted the offense from memory. I hypothesized that participants would adjust their responses to achieve their assigned communication goal, that these goals would have positive consequences for third-party forgiveness in the objectivity condition and negative consequences for third-party forgiveness in the sympathy condition. Finally, I expected participants' recollections of the offense they read about to be biased in a direction consistent with the communication goal they pursued earlier in the study.

Method

Participants

Participants were 163 undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course at the University of Oklahoma. Fourteen participants who expressed suspicion were removed from the dataset and an additional four participants were lost for not properly following the communication goal instructions. Thus, 145 participants (120 females) were included in all analyses reported below, except for those that targeted participants' offense recollections because four participants (one female) failed to provide useable narratives. In exchange for their time, participants received course credit.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were invited to the laboratory to complete a study entitled "Interpersonal Interactions." Upon arriving at the study site, participants were placed in individual cubicles containing computers. The experimenter then explained to participants that they were paired with another participant of their same gender, who was actually fictitious, that they would be corresponding with during the study.

Participants were also told that they would have the opportunity to meet their partners at the end of the study. The experimenter went on to explain that they had been randomly assigned to be the “responders” in the study and that their partners would be writing about an offense experience from their life that they would later respond to. Participants then performed a brief “get to know you” task under the guise that doing so would facilitate their partner’s self-disclosure. Included on this paper-and-pencil task were questions concerning participants’ favorite movies, music groups, restaurants, vacation spot, and magazine/book. Participants also responded to the questions, “If you had a choice of spending a night on the town or staying in for a quiet night at home, which would you prefer,” “Do you like having more friends than you can count or just a few that you are really close to,” and “Do you prefer living in urban or rural areas?” After completing this task, participants’ questionnaires were supposedly delivered to their partners. While their partners supposedly considered their questionnaire responses and composed their offense accounts, participants completed a series of preliminary questionnaires in the order they appear below. Several additional filler measures were completed by participants so they would believe their partners had time to create their offense accounts.

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). The perspective taking (IRI-PT) and empathic concern (IRI-EC) subscales of the IRI (Davis, 1983) were administered to participants. Each subscale included seven statements with which participants rated their level of agreement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). The IRI-PT includes statements like, “I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both,” and “I sometimes try to

understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective” and exhibited good internal reliability in the present sample ($\alpha = .82$). Included in the IRI-EC subscale are statements like, “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me,” and “When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.” This scale also exhibited good internal reliability ($\alpha = .85$).

Attitudes Toward Forgiveness (ATF) and Tendency to Forgive (TTF). As in Study 1, participants also completed the ATF and TTF. The internal reliability of the ATF in this sample was acceptable ($\alpha = .70$), as was that of the TTF ($\alpha = .71$).

After completing these measures and the additional filler scales, the experimenter presented participants with an envelope containing their partner's responses to their “get to know you” questionnaire and an additional comment sheet that included several Likert-scale items on which participants' partners supposedly gave ratings (“How similar do you feel to your partner,” “How much do you feel like you and your partner have in common,” “How much do you like your partner,” “Would you be interested in getting to know your partner better if you had the opportunity to,” and “How comfortable do you feel disclosing your offense experience to your partner”). These ratings were made on 7-point scales with appropriate poll labels. On the “get to know you” questionnaire, 3 of the 8 questions were circled (i.e., “Name three of your favorite movies, Name three of your favorite bands/musical artists,” and “If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would it be”), which indicated to participants that their partner really liked their answer. Three other questions were asterisked which indicated to participants that their partner liked their

answer and would have responded the same (i.e., “Do you like having more friends than you can count or just a few that you are really close to,” “If you had the choice of spending a night on the town or staying in for a quiet night at home, which would you prefer,” “Do you prefer living in urban or rural areas”). On the Likert-scale items included on the comment sheet, the average rating supposedly given by participants’ partners was a 6. Also, participants’ partners made the following comment: “It was fun learning a little about you. You seem like a really cool person and I think we have a lot in common. See you at the end of the study!” Importantly, all participants received the same favorable feedback. The overarching purpose of this feedback was to promote investment in the response process in participants. Similar methods have been used by other researchers (e.g., Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1999).

Next, participants were randomly assigned to a communication goal condition. The specific instructions given in each condition are presented below:

Sympathy Condition Instructions

“Because our primary interest in this study is in your partner's reactions to what you write in response to his/her offense experience, the quality and nature of the response you give is *very* important. For this reason, we ask that you make every effort to respond in a way that indicates that you support and sympathize with your partner, that you are on his/her side in the situation, and that you are seeing the event from his/her perspective.”

Objectivity Condition Instructions

“Because our primary interest in this study is in your partner's reactions to what you write in response to his/her offense experience, the quality and nature of the

response you give is *very* important. For this reason, we ask that you make every effort to respond to your partner in a way that indicates you are objective and impartial in your opinion of his/her experience, that you are seeing his/her situation from the outside and maintaining an unbiased perspective.”

Journal Condition Instructions

“Because it is important that there be a baseline condition in the study, you have been given the responsibility of writing out your reactions to your partner's offense experience to yourself, much like you would if you were writing your thoughts and feelings down in a personal journal. Thus, you will write about your reactions to your partner's experience just as some of the other participants in the study are doing, but what you write will never be given to your partner to read and consider. We will, instead, examine your partner's responses to our survey instruments and questions independent of exposure to your written response.”

All participants were then presented with the fictitious offense scenario, which was adapted from a version used by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997) and appears in the Appendix. Because prior research suggests that victims are unlikely give offense descriptions that point to their own misbehaviors or diminish perpetrators' responsibility (Baumeister et al., 1990) and because this information may be important for third-parties to be aware of in pursuing an objective perspective, I elected to rely on a fictitious offense in which I had control over the story content instead of stories generated by actual victims where this information may or may not be included.

Participants were allotted 8 minutes to compose their responses to the offense description. These responses were then taken from the lab room to either be delivered

to the other participants (sympathy and objectivity conditions) or filed away (journal condition). Participants' computers advanced them to a survey section that contained the focal dependent variables of the study. These measures were presented in a fixed order, beginning with the SFS and WOES, and followed by the OIS and IHS. These scales were modified to be appropriate for use with third-parties. These modifications are described below.

State Forgiveness Scale (SFS). On a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (“very little”) to 9 (“very much”) participants indicated the extent to which they felt “anger,” “warmth,” “irritation,” “frustration,” “annoyance,” “good-will,” and “displeased” with the offense perpetrator. They also rated their level of agreement with four statements designed to tap somewhat subdued revenge (“I think it would be nice if the offender was somehow paid back for what he/she did to [my partner], “It would be sort of gratifying to learn that [the offender] had something rotten happen to him/her as a result of what he/she did to [my partner]”) and avoidance (“If I knew [the offender] personally, I would probably avoid interacting with him/her,” “If I knew [the offender] personally, I don’t think I would have any trouble being around him/her”) motives that might manifest in third-parties. The internal reliability of the modified SFS was very good ($\alpha = .86$).

Wish for Offender’s Emotional Suffering (WOES). Participants rated on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (“not at all”) to 9 (“to the fullest extent possible”) the extent to which they felt the offender should experience each of 10 emotional/psychological states (i.e., humiliation, shame, guilt, sadness, remorse, suffering, pain, distress,

disappointment, anguish) as a result of how he/she treated their partners. The reliability of the modified WOES was high ($\alpha = .91$).

Offensive Identity Scale (OIS). Ratings for the modified items on the OIS were made on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 9 (“strongly agree”). Example statements on the modified OIS that participants responded to are, “I think it's fair to say that [the offender's] wrongful actions toward [my partner] pretty well sum up the kind of person he/she is,” and “I'm sure there's more to who [the offender] is than the offense he/she committed against [my partner].” Two items were removed to raise the reliability of the scale from .74 to .81.

Infrahumanization Scale (IHS). Participants rated the extent to which they believed the offender described in the offense story could experience the 20 emotions included in the IHS used in Study 1 on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (“not at all”) to 9 (“very much”). Reliabilities for the combined secondary positive and negative scales ($\alpha = .84$) and for the combined primary positive and negative scales ($\alpha = .87$) were good. The reliability of the primary positive ($\alpha = .90$) and negative ($\alpha = .85$) emotions subscales were good, as was the reliability of the secondary positive ($\alpha = .86$) and negative ($\alpha = .80$) emotions.

Participants then responded to Watson et al.'s (1988) PANAS, as in Study 1. Both the positive ($\alpha = .86$) and negative ($\alpha = .86$) dimensions of the PANAS exhibited good internal reliability in this sample.

After a 10 minute delay in which all participants completed a word search task, participants were instructed to recall the offense story they read from memory. Specifically, they were told to, “recount your partner's offense experience, start to

finish, as best you can from memory. Be as thorough and complete in your retelling as possible.” Following completion of this final recollection task, participants were thanked for their contribution to the study, debriefed, and excused from the laboratory.

Results

Several covariates were utilized in the analyses I report below, including gender, the IRI-EC and IRI-PT, the ATF and TTF, and the positive and negative dimensions of the PANAS. Zero-order correlations between and descriptive statistics for the covariates and dependent measures administered in Study 2 appear in Tables 10 through 13. Results for offense responses and forgiveness measures are presented first, followed by results for the offense accounts participants gave at the end of the experiment session.

Response Content

Two independent raters (blind to study condition) coded offense responses given by participants for the number of statements that affirmed negative responses to the offense, connoted victim-directed or perpetrator-directed blame, and reflected recognition of factors that mitigated the offender’s responsibility. In every case, the number of unique statements or thoughts that fit into each category were counted and recorded. These totals were averaged across the two raters to create a single index for each coding dimension.

Statements qualified as affirmations or validations of the victim’s negative responses if they emphasized the badness of the offense (e.g., “Having your trust violated is hard, especially when the person who violates your trust is a friend”), mentioned that the participant understood or identified with the feelings of the victim

(e.g., “I hate it when people make promises they end up breaking”), or that the victim responded rightly to the offense (“A complete break from your friend sounds like the smartest resolution to the problem”). Ratings on this coding dimensions were highly correlated between raters ($r = .64, p < .001$).

Instances of victim-directed and perpetrator-directed blame included statements in which participants suggested, implied or directly identified the victim (“You could have started looking for other classmates or teachers to help you,” “You were the one who enrolled in the class in the first place”) or the offender (“He shouldn’t have let you down like that,” “She wasn’t very loyal when you needed her”) as partially or wholly responsible for the offense. Raters’ evaluations for each of these dimensions correlated highly ($r = .83, p < .001$ for victim-directed blame, and $r = .79, p < .001$ for perpetrator-directed blame). Phrases like “Maybe the way the two of you communicated wasn’t very efficient,” and “I’m sure she didn’t mean to ruin your grade or hurt your chances of keeping the scholarship” were counted as statements that reflected a recognition of mitigating factors. Again, raters’ evaluations correlated highly ($r = .83, p < .001$).

Each of the aforementioned coding variables were submitted separately to a one-way ANCOVA model in which the variables mentioned earlier were treated as covariates. The communication goal pursued by participants had a significant effect on the number of statements made by participants that pointed to the negative outcomes of the offense, $F(2, 135) = 15.32, p < .001$. None of the covariates in the model were significant. Follow-up contrasts between the conditions revealed that participants who responded objectively ($M = 3.05, SE = .26; p < .001$) and who wrote their response in

a journal format ($M = 2.66, SE = .25; p < .001$) included significantly fewer statements that affirmed the victim's negative reactions than did participants who responded sympathetically ($M = 4.57, SE = .26$). The nonsignificant contrast between the journal and objectivity condition was not expected.

Evidence was also found for an effect of condition on rates of self-directed blame statements, $F(2, 135) = 17.51, p < .001$. As was true above, the objectivity ($M = .94, SE = .15; p < .001$) and journal ($M = 1.25, SE = .15; p < .001$) conditions differed significantly from the sympathy condition ($M = -.01, SE = .16$), but the former two conditions did not differ from each other, contrary to expectations. Both participants' scores on the IRI-PT ($\beta = .15, p = .038$) and the negative dimension of the PANAS ($\beta = -.23, p = .006$) were significant covariates in the model.

Rates of perpetrator-directed blame statements were also significantly affected by the manipulation, and largely in the predicted direction, $F(2, 135) = 5.38, p = .006$. Those who communicated objectively to the victim ($M = 2.48, SE = .24; p = .018$) and who responded in a journal format ($M = 2.24, SE = .23; p = .002$) included significantly fewer statements of perpetrator-directed blame than did participants in the sympathy condition ($M = 3.30, SE = .24$). However, as has been true with the other content coding dimensions so far, no difference emerged between the objectivity and journal conditions. Also, none of the covariates in the model were significant.

The number of statements reflecting a recognition of mitigating factors was also influenced by the manipulation, $F(2, 135) = 10.29, p < .001$, and the contrasts revealed that the differences between conditions conformed to the predicted pattern. All of the differences were significant, with members of the objectivity condition

including more statements of mitigating factors ($M = 1.00, SE = .13$) than members of either the journal ($M = .55, SE = .13; p = .016$) or sympathy conditions ($M = .15, SE = .13; p < .001$), and members of the journal condition including more of these statements than members of the sympathy condition ($p = .033$).

Forgiveness

The effect of communication goal pursuit on forgiveness was examined next. Total scores for the OIS, WOES, and SFS were reversed so that high scores represented higher levels of forgiveness; these values were then standardized. The approach I followed to create standardized residuals for the IHS in Study 1 was followed again here. As might be expected in light of the absence of a correlation between the IHS and the other forgiveness scales (see Table 13), including all four measures in a composite index of forgiveness resulted in a scale with unacceptably low reliability ($\alpha = .57$). Omitting the IHS improved the internal consistency of the scale considerably ($\alpha = .79$); therefore, I analyzed the IHS separate from the other forgiveness measures.

The aggregate measure using the OIS, WOES, and SFS was submitted to the same ANCOVA model used with the content coding variables. The omnibus F-test was significant, $F(2, 135) = 3.05, p = .05$. Follow-up contrasts revealed that the members of the sympathy condition ($M = -.23, SE = .11$) expressed significantly lower levels of forgiveness than did participants in either the objectivity ($M = .13, SE = .11; p = .028$) or journal ($M = .10, SE = .11; p = .041$) conditions, but members of these latter two conditions expressed levels of forgiveness that were indistinguishable from each other. Gender was the only significant covariate in the model, with males ($M =$

.27, $SE = .16$) scoring higher on forgiveness than females ($M = -.06$, $SE = .07$), $p = .046$.

The impact of communication goal pursuit on the IHS was also examined in the ANVOCA model. The omnibus F-test was non-significant, $F(1, 135) = .073$, *ns*. The effect of the manipulation on the residualized secondary negative emotion subscale was nonsignificant, $F(1, 135) = 2.23$, *ns*. The contrast between the objectivity ($M = -.20$, $SE = .14$) and journal conditions ($M = .21$, $SE = .13$), however, was significant ($p = .037$), but none of the other contrasts were, and the fact that this measure was completely uncorrelated with forgiveness makes this finding of little interest to the present study. The effect of the manipulation on the residualized secondary positive emotion subscale was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 135) = 2.18$, *ns*, as were all of the follow-up contrasts. Thus, the manipulation failed to create any clear effects on the IHS.

As in Study 1, I treated the content coding variables from offense responses as covariates in the ANCOVA model to determine if they were the means by which the condition effect influenced forgiveness. I expected third-parties who attempted to convey sympathy to express less forgiveness because in their responses they 1) rehearsed negative reactions to the offense more, 2) held victims less responsible for the offense, and 3) recognized fewer mitigating factors. Each of these content coding dimensions were correlated with forgiveness, but statements of perpetrator blame were not (see Table 12). Entering statements of negative affirmation, victim blame, and mitigating factors simultaneously into the ANCOVA model entirely eliminated the observed condition effect on forgiveness, $F(2, 131) = .22$, *ns*, and the follow-up

contrasts. Importantly, however, only statements of victim blame ($\beta = .30, p < .001$) and mitigating factors ($\beta = .19, p = .012$) were significantly related to forgiveness in the model. Mostly the same effects obtained when the content coding variables were entered separately into the ANCOVA model. The condition effect was eliminated with the inclusion of each, individual content coding variable, but affirmations of negative consequences ($\beta = -.23, p = .013$) joined victim blame and mitigating factors as a significant predictor of forgiveness. Note that attempts to create a composite measure using the content coding dimensions were unsuccessful. Despite their moderate correlations with each other, the reliability of a composite measure using the coding variables was exceedingly low and unacceptable ($\alpha < .50$).

To improve upon the above analyses, I submitted the forgiveness variable and the content coding dimensions to a multiple mediator analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Doing this required that the manipulation be made a two- rather than three-level factor. I accomplished this by collapsing the objectivity and journal conditions into a single group. Although collapsing in this way glosses over the distinction between these two conditions on the recognition of mitigating factors variable, it should be noted that both groups reported significantly more of such statements than did members of the sympathy condition; also, these groups scored approximately the same on the forgiveness measure and significantly less than the sympathy condition, which makes the above issue less worrisome.

Preacher and Hayes' (2008) approach allows for more accurate significance tests of mediation paths through bootstrapping, which entails resampling many times from an observed dataset and computing the product of the path weights leading to

and from a proposed mediator on each resample. These products are arranged in a distribution to create an empirically-based sampling distribution from which bootstrapped confidence intervals can be obtained. A mediation path is said to be significantly different from zero if its confidence interval does not include zero. Also, with Preacher and Hayes' (2008) approach, it is possible to perform contrasts that compare the relative strength of the mediators contained in the model to determine which of the mediators, if any, are the primary channels by which a predictor variable is related to a criterion variable.

In the multiple mediator model I examined, the condition variable (with the journal and objectivity condition coded as 1 and sympathy condition coded as 0) was treated as the predictor variable, participants' scores on the abbreviated forgiveness measure as the criterion variable, and the content coding variables (i.e., negative affirmations, perpetrator blame, victim blame, and recognition of mitigating factors) as the potential mediators. The mediational utility of these variables in this model were examined simultaneously. The path weights (unstandardized betas) and a diagram of the model I tested appear in Figure 1. Note that IRI-EC scores were the only statistically significant covariate in the model, $B = .20$, $t = 2.62$, $p < .010$.

Using the bootstrapping method described above (with 5,000 resamples), 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals were computed to perform statistical tests of the indirect paths contained in the model (i.e., the paths from the condition variable to the forgiveness measure through negative affirmations, perpetrator blame, victim blame, and recognition of mitigating factors) and the contrast of these indirect paths to compare the strengths of the mediators. Confidence

intervals that do not contain zero denote statistically significant indirect paths and contrasts. A significant indirect effect also indicates a significant reduction in the direct relationship between the predictor and criterion variables of interest (as with the Sobel test).

The computed point estimates for the total indirect and specific indirect effects and confidence intervals are presented in Table 15. As can be seen in this table, the direct association between condition and forgiveness, $B = -.34, t = -2.47, p = .015$, was significantly reduced, $B = .10, t = .16, p = .540$) when the mediators were included. Among the possible mediators, however, victim-directed blame and recognition of mitigating factors were uniquely significant (i.e., the confidence intervals around their point estimates did not contain zero). None of the remaining mediators were significant.²

Of the contrasts that were performed, only one was significant: the contrast between victim- and perpetrator-directed blame. Because victim-directed blame was the only significant mediator in this contrast, this result does not deserve much attention. It is, however, important to note that the contrast between victim-directed blame and recognition of mitigating factors was not significant, meaning that these two variables mediated the condition-forgiveness effect to an equal extent.

Recollection Content

The content coding performed on the offense accounts that participants created from memory included all of the dimensions used with the offense responses, with one exception: statements of negative affirmation were not counted; instead, statements that focused on the negative outcomes of the offense were. Statements that reflected

identification of social/relational (“Lindsey and Kelly don’t live together anymore”), personal/psychological (“[Chris] was really frustrated at Jeff”), and material/practical (“[Chris] might as well have flushed the money he paid for the class down the toilet”) losses were counted as members of this category, as was true in Study 1. The correlation between raters on this dimension was high ($r = .84, p < .001$). Also, because statements of victim-directed blame were so rare in the offense recollections (97.2% of participants did not include statements of victim blame), this dimension was not analyzed. It should be noted that this is not a surprising finding given that the offense account that participants read did not include clear statements of victim blame.

The only coding dimension that even approached significance for offense recollections was statements of perpetrator-directed blame, $F(2, 131) = 2.05, p = .13$. Follow-up contrasts revealed that members of the sympathy condition ($M = 4.70, SE = .21$) included more statements of perpetrator blame than did members of the journal condition ($M = 4.12, SE = .20; p = .048$); rates of perpetrator blame statements in the objectivity condition ($M = 4.48, SE = .20$) fell between these conditions and was not significantly different from either one. None of the covariates in the model were significant.

Discussion

The results of Study 2 reveal that pursuing different communication goals has discernable consequences for the content of third-parties’ responses to another’s offense experience. Just as the solicitation of sympathy in Study 1 produced effects on story content that were virtually identical to those in the baseline, journal condition, the act of conveying objectivity in the present study led to effects on response content

that largely matched those of the journal condition. Thus, third-parties appear to assume an objective role when they consider the offenses of others in private, much as victims tend to craft sympathy-soliciting offense stories even if they are recounting the story to themselves, with no audience.

One important difference in the present study, however, is that third-parties who responded objectively included more mitigating factors in their responses than did third-parties in any of the other conditions. This, however, did not appear to lead to greater forgiveness in the objectivity condition; indeed, individuals who attempted to respond objectively displayed levels of forgiveness that were the same as those observed in the journal condition. This suggests that recognizing mitigating factors may not be as important to third-parties' forgiveness as to forgiveness in victims. Nevertheless, the fact that participants who conveyed sympathy expressed less forgiveness than participants in either the journal or the objectivity conditions advances research on the phenomenon of third-party forgiveness (Brown et al., 2008; Green et al., 2008) and dispels the notion implied by some researchers that forgiveness is only relevant to those directly affected by offenses (e.g., Exline, Freedman, Rique, 1998). Unfortunately, the effect of the manipulation on the composite forgiveness measure was not substantiated by the IHS, which would have been ideal to reduce concerns about demand characteristics, which I discuss further below.

Some evidence was also found for an effect of communication goal pursuit on third-parties' memories for the offense story – specifically, individuals who initially responded with sympathy included more statements that reflected perpetrator-directed blame in their offense recollections than persons who responded in a journal format.

This finding extends research on memory effects observed in individuals who play the victim in an offense story (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997) by showing that the memory of victim's confidants might be colored by the communication goals they adopt in transgression discourses.

A similar question to the one faced in Study 1 applies here – namely, can the effect of the manipulation on forgiveness be attributed to the influence of demand characteristics? Several points which I now address cast doubt on this interpretation. First and foremost, participants' investment in the fictitious offense they were presented with was minimal; they did not have a vested interest in expressing forgiveness or harboring ill-will toward the offender they read about. Second, like in Study 1, the communication goal instructions applied specifically to participants' responses to the offense. No instructions were given that would have led participants to believe that the guidelines for the writing task applied to the questionnaires they responded to subsequently. Third, any participant who expressed an awareness of the connection between the communication goal they were assigned to pursue and the follow-up measures they completed were excluded from all analyses. Fourth, and finally, the improbability of participants being able to successfully identify which value on a 9-point scale represents an "objective" or a "sympathetic" response should be noted. It is possible, even in light of the above arguments to the contrary, that participants made the connection between the communication goal instructions and the forgiveness measures. Nevertheless, even with this knowledge in hand, participants would have had to determine which scale values represented objective and sympathetic responses on the forgiveness items, which seems like a difficult task to

perform with precision. Consequently, I believe it is more reasonable to assume that participants expressed on the forgiveness items their true postures toward the offense perpetrator, but it will, of course, be desirable to replicate these effects in future research with a more subtle manipulation.

Insofar as the above arguments sufficiently deal with the problem of demand characteristics, the results of this study suggest that responding sympathetically versus objectively to another's offense can raise issues of third-party forgiveness, which has recently become a topic of investigation in the forgiveness literature (e.g., Brown et al., 2008; Green et al., 2008). It also raises the possibility that communication goals influence how offenses are remembered by third-parties, which may have important implications for the forgiveness process, both among victims and third-parties. I discuss these issues in greater detail below.

General Discussion

The central thesis of the present project and of current forgiveness research (Brown et al., 2008; Green et al., 2008) is that interpersonal offenses do not occur in vacuums. That is to say that offenses not only have consequences for the victims and perpetrators of offenses but also for other people not directly involved. Third-parties frequently get roped in to the offenses of others, and in this research I attempted to model in a controlled laboratory setting one means by which this process occurs – namely, transgression discourses. Victims frequently confide their offense experiences to others, and they do so not as the unfeeling, dispassionate robots of science fiction novels, but as motivated humans (Klein & Kunda, 1993) who communicate with others with certain, perhaps self-serving, goals in mind (Baumeister et al., 1990).

Likewise, the third-parties in whom victims confide do not always receive and respond to the offense episodes of others (particularly close others) as blank, emotionless sounding boards. Instead, they listen and respond with certain goals in mind, and the present research assumed that these goals have consequences for the communication patterns of victims and third-parties, their forgiveness of offense perpetrators, and their memories for offense episodes. In so doing, this research attempted to fill a looming gap in the forgiveness literature by highlighting the importance of transgression discourses and third-parties to the forgiveness process. The results of two studies, the first of which focused on victims of real-world offenses and the second of which pinpointed third-parties to an offense, strongly suggest that the communication goals pursued in transgression discourses have important implications for forgiveness previously unrecognized in the literature, although a nontrivial amount of work related to the matter has been published in the areas of communication (Higgins & Rholes 1990; Sedikides, 1990), emotional expression (for reviews, see Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 1999; Kennedy-Moore & Watson, 2001; Tavris, 1989), and memory (Dudukovic et al., 2004; Marsh & Tversky, 2000; Marsh et al., 2005). The results, however, were not wholly in line with predictions, and therefore represent an important first step in transgression discourse research, but by no means offer the final word on the subject.

Victims who attempted to solicit an objective response from a third-party exhibited the most notable and consistent effects on offense-story construction, forgiveness, and offense-story memory in Study 1. Specifically, soliciting objectivity led to offense stories that included fewer statements of negative offense consequences,

perpetrator blame, and lower levels of negative tone. Some evidence also emerged in support of the argument that speaking objectively about an offense leads to greater insight (i.e., recognition of mitigating influences on perpetrators' behaviors). Pursuing objectivity also led to the highest levels of expressed forgiveness toward offenders, but this was only true when the journal condition was the basis of comparison. Finally, one week after telling their offense stories in an objective manner, individuals included fewer statements of perpetrator-directed blame in their offense recollections than did members of the baseline, journal condition. Insofar as attributions of blame and forgiveness are related constructs (Boon & Sulsky, 1997), this finding suggests that members of the objectivity condition may have been more forgiving of offenders, but this was not corroborated by the direct measures of forgiveness administered at Session 2.

Several important qualifications to the above summary should be noted. First, contrary to expectations, individuals in the journal condition included more statements of self-directed blame than those in the other conditions. This finding suggests that people who disclose their offenses to an audience may be less willing to acknowledge their own contributions to the conflict, perhaps out of self-presentation or impression management concerns. In addition, my attempt to account for the experimental effect on forgiveness at Session 1 with the content coding variables was largely unsuccessful. Despite the fact that the effect was eliminated when general negativity ratings and perpetrator blame were controlled, neither of these variables significantly predicted forgiveness when included in the statistical model, which calls into question

their roles as mediators. Consequently, the means by which communication goal pursuit influences forgiveness in victims is unclear at this time.

The Session 2 effects that emerged were only partially consistent with those observed in Session 1. As already noted, members of the objectivity condition included relatively fewer statements of perpetrator blame (when compared to the journal condition). However, statements of negative consequences in the Session 2 offense accounts were lowest in the sympathy condition (when compared to the journal condition), which is surprising in light of the fact that these statements occurred with equal frequency in the sympathy and journal conditions in Session 1. The psychological mechanism responsible for this effect is unclear at this time, but given the disparity between the finding and the theorizing presented in the introduction, I am of the mind that the effect is suspect until replicated in future research. Most importantly, however, the effects observed on forgiveness in Session 1 were wholly absent in Session 2, which raises questions about the durability of the effect of communication goals on forgiveness.

In Study 2, the impact of communication goal pursuit on third-parties' responses to a standardized offense disclosed by a fictitious other person were examined. As was expected, the goals that third-parties pursued had discernable consequences for how they responded to the offense victim. Interestingly, however, the goal that appeared to produce the most pronounced and consistent effects was the pursuit of sympathy. Individuals who responded with sympathy affirmed the victim's negative reactions to the offense and blamed the perpetrator more; they also held the victim least culpable and reported the fewest mitigating factors in their responses. Not

surprisingly, then, individuals who pursued sympathy also expressed the lowest levels of forgiveness toward the offender in the story and when later asked to recount the offense story from memory in its entirety, they included the most statements of perpetrator blame in their retellings, although this was only significantly more than the frequency observed in the journal condition. This latter effect suggests that how third-parties respond to an offense changes what details of the offense they are able to remember at a later time.

Of the coding variables that could account for the experimental effect on forgiveness in Study 2, two were detected: statements of victim blame and recognition of mitigating influences. Some evidence was found for the role of statements of negative consequences, but only when this variable was included in the model separate from the other content coding dimensions. Thus, unlike Study 1, the content of the responses given by third-parties to the offense experience of another accounted for or mediated the experimental effect on forgiveness that was observed, and this finding was substantiated with analyses performed using a multiple mediator model (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This demonstrates that the content of third-parties' responses has implications for forgiveness, which is an important insight into the impact of transgression discourses on those in whom victims confide.

Importantly, individuals who pursued the goal of objectivity in their responses included more statements of possible mitigating factors than individuals in the other conditions. Contrary to my predictions, however, recognizing mitigating factors did not lead individuals in this condition to express any higher levels of forgiveness than those in the journal condition. Indeed, aside from this one difference, individuals who

pursued objectivity or wrote in a journal format responded in virtually identical manners. Thus, just as victims appear to pursue sympathy even when they are acting as their own audience (Study 1), so do third-parties assume an objective role when they contemplate another person's offense experience by themselves (Study 2).

Limitations and Future Research

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the present research is its exclusive reliance on direct manipulations of communication goals and direct assessments of forgiveness using face-valid, self-report measures. The inhumanization measure, which was used in both studies to capture implicit forgiveness, is a more subtle index that is likely difficult for respondents to identify as a forgiveness scale. Unfortunately, the manipulation had no impact whatsoever on the IHS, leaving open the possibility that the condition differences in forgiveness were due to demand characteristics, not the communication goals that participants pursued. I presented counterarguments to this conclusion in the Discussion sections of Studies 1 and 2 above; nevertheless, they do not make for an open-and-shut case. No matter what argument is presented in defense of the findings reported, the demand characteristic explanation remains. For this reason, future research should rely on manipulations that activate the goals of soliciting or responding with objectivity versus sympathy in a more subtle fashion.

Numerous studies in the social-cognitive literature have shown that priming interpersonal relationships can activate relationship-relevant goals (e.g., Baldwin, 1992; Baldwin & Holmes, 1987; Fitzsimmons & Bargh, 2003). Thus, one approach to manipulating communication goals more subtly would be to have participants communicate with persons who, by virtue of the social roles they occupy, activate

interpersonal motivations to tell sympathy- versus objectivity-soliciting offense stories. For instance, having a close friend as an audience might activate desires for social support and compel victims to, unwittingly, tell their stories in a sympathy-soliciting manner. It is likely that similar goals would be activated among third-parties and motivate them to respond to the offenses of close friends with sympathy.

On the other hand, audiences like parents who might trigger concerns about judgment (particularly with respect to the offense perpetrator – e.g., “I cannot believe your boyfriend would treat you like that. I knew he was bad for you.”) or meddling (e.g., “I do not want my mother involved in my personal business”) could motivate victims to give objective retellings to either protect those who have harmed them or keep their personal affairs private. Similarly, third-parties primed with the social roles of therapist or court judge could be more inclined to respond objectively than they would under normal circumstances. Again, activating interpersonal goals in these ways should lead to sympathetic or objective retellings and responses that largely go unnoticed by transgression discourse participants. Of course, the drawback to such an approach is the fact that most social roles are associated with *multiple* interpersonal goals; thus, employing manipulations that only or primarily activate the communication goals of sympathy and objectivity would be essential in future research of this kind.

Although using a standardized offense scenario in Study 2 allowed for greater control over story content, it leads to the unfortunate drawback of not being able to generalize the observed effects to offenses of different types or offenses in which there is a true imbalance of blame. Likewise, Study 2 overlooks the possibility that

responding with sympathy to a sympathy-soliciting offense account and responding with objectivity to an objectivity-soliciting offense account could have important, synergistic consequences for third-party forgiveness and offense memory. Crossing offense story framing with communication goal pursuit would, therefore, be a good path for future research to follow as well.

This research was also limited by its focus on the stories of victims and the responses of third-parties, without any consideration of the impact that the latter might have on the former. Transgression discourses involve *exchanges* between victims and their confidants, and the pair of studies reported here fail to take the impact of these exchanges into account. An important avenue for future research would be an investigation of the impact that third-parties' sympathetic versus objective responses have on victim's forgiveness and memories for offense episodes. Indeed, it is entirely possible that more lasting changes in forgiveness and more consistent memory effects would obtain among offense victims if their sympathy-soliciting stories were ratified by third-parties. Of course, it is also conceivable that the exact opposite outcome would occur. Bosson, Johnson, Niederhoffer, and Swann (2006) have reported that people can bond by sharing negative attitudes about others, and insofar as solidifying social bonds facilitates forgiveness (Barnes, Carvallo, Brown, & Osterman, in press; for similar findings, see Twenge et al., 2007), it could be argued that bonding, even over negative evaluations of another person, promotes rather than impedes forgiveness. Indeed, the research of Eaton, Struthers, and Santelli (2006) suggests that victims who receive validating responses concerning their offenses are more forgiving of their offenders. Eaton et al. (2006) posited that validation reduces feelings of

uncertainty about offenses and thereby produces forgiveness, but it is conceivable that bolstered feelings of belongingness lead to the same outcome.

What, then, does this mean for the link I have proposed between transgression discourses and forgiveness? Does soliciting sympathy and receiving a validating response from third-parties hinder forgiveness? Similarly, does pursuing and receiving an objective response from a third-party advance forgiveness? The answers to these questions await future research. Neither the work of Eaton et al. (2006) nor the present pair of studies can conclusively address these issues because both treat forgiveness as a static phenomenon that can be adequately assessed at a single time-point, but McCullough, Fincham, and Tsang (2003) have rightly argued that this is an improper view of the construct. Taking a snap shot of forgiveness in this way may give the impression that forgiveness is affected (or not affected) by a manipulation in *one* way. It is possible, however, that a manipulation has an immediate impact on forgiveness (e.g., the validation manipulation of Eaton et al., 2006) that does not hold up or that completely reverses over time. The fact that the manipulations employed in the present study had no discernable effect on forgiveness at Session 2 does not preclude the possibility that trends would have emerged if forgiveness were measured more than once after Session 1. If it is true that forgiveness is more of a process than a state of being, it would be advantageous for future research on transgression discourses to take the dynamical nature of forgiveness into account.

In a similar vein, identifying reliable consequences of transgression discourses for forgiveness and offense story memory may require that individuals pursue the same communication goal on multiple occasions. Indeed, a more realistic portrayal of

transgression discourses in social psychology research would be to require individuals to recount or respond to an offense story in the same manner several times, as it is often the case that individuals communicate with others about offenses more than once and with the same communication goals in mind. Thus, it could be that the effects I predicted and tested in the present study will only manifest when 1) offense episodes are discussed multiple times with the same communication goal in mind, and 2) forgiveness is assessed at several time points. Future research that introduces these improvements may help clarify the role that transgression discourses play in the forgiveness process for victims and third-parties.

Implications and Conclusion

It is routinely the case that persons who have suffered an interpersonal offense look for others to confide in (cf. Rimé, Mesquita, Phioppot, & Boca, 1991). Likewise, it is routinely the case that third-parties are called upon to listen and respond to the mistreatments endured by victims of transgressions. The results of the present research suggest that the commonplace social activity of transgression discourses, which involve the pursuit of communication goals by discourse participants, has consequences for how offenses are talked about, reacted to, and remembered. Generally speaking, efforts to solicit objective responses on the part of offense victims appear to lead to forgiveness-promoting changes in how offense stories are described, and later remembered by victims. Also, attempts to respond sympathetically to the offense of another appear to produce forgiveness-discouraging reactions to and memories for offenses among third-parties. These findings show that the mere pursuit of different communication goals has discernable consequences for forgiveness that

have previously gone unrecognized in the literature. They also call attention to one means by which third-parties become involved in the offense experiences of others – namely, through transgression discourses.

If third-parties are as central to the experience of offense victims as I have argued, it must be the case that third-parties also have sway over the experiences of offense perpetrators. Consider a case in which the primary actors in a transgression (i.e., victims and offenders) turn to members of their social networks for support. If, as prior research (Baumeister et al., 1990; Kearns & Fincham, 2005; Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002) and the findings of the present study suggest, victims and perpetrators give self-serving accounts of their offenses to their confidants, then one might expect victims and perpetrators to walk away from transgression discourses feeling equally validated in their perceptions of the offense episode and attitudes toward one another. The ultimate result of such a state of affairs would likely be an interpersonal climate that is unfavorable to repentance, forgiveness, and, ultimately, reconciliation. Thus, the assumption that self-disclosure following transgressions is a ubiquitously healthy means of coping with the fallout of offenses could be short-sided. How offense stories are told and the responses that these stories elicit might be important determinants of whether transgression discourses restore or further decay relationships damaged by an offense.

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Footnotes

¹The multiple mediator procedure used in Study 2 was implemented with the Study 1 data, but no results were obtained to support the mediation of the condition effect on forgiveness by statements of perpetrator blame or general negativity ratings.

²It is also possible to construe the content coding variables as indicators of the extent to which participants empathized with the offense victim in their responses. The mediation results for Study 2 would, therefore, suggest that the more participants empathized with the victim, the more likely they were to adopt the offense as their own and exhibit low levels of forgiveness. To better test this hypothesis, I computed an index of offense adoption by taking the average degree to which participants, *themselves* felt the offense was serious, hurtful, offensive, unjust and inappropriate ($\alpha = .91$) and subtracted this value from the average extent to which they believed the *victim* felt the offense was serious, hurtful, offensive, unjust, and inappropriate ($\alpha = .71$). Thus, higher scores on this variable represented lower levels of offense adoption. I submitted this index to the ANCOVA model used in study 2 and found that the omnibus F-test was marginally significant, $F(2, 135) = 2.72, p = .069$. This occurred in part because the members of the sympathy condition ($M = 1.11, SE = .18$) empathized more with the victim than did members of the journal condition ($M = 1.68, SE = .17; p = .022$), but the difference between the sympathy and objectivity condition was only marginally significant ($M = 1.46, SE = .18; p = .159$). Also, the difference between the objectivity and journal condition was not significant.

To determine the extent to which offense adoption accounted for the condition effect on forgiveness, I ran two separate mediator models, one in which the forgiveness difference between the sympathy and journal condition was examined and

another in which the forgiveness difference between the sympathy and objectivity condition was examined. In both models, the offense adoption index was treated as a potential mediator. Taking offense adoption into account caused the marginally significant condition (sympathy vs. journal) effect on forgiveness ($B = .14, p = .09$) to drop to nonsignificance ($B = .04, p = .56$; point estimate = .1009; 95% CI from .0061 to .1969). Offense adoption was also a significant mediator of the condition (sympathy vs. objectivity) effect on forgiveness ($B = .39, p = .02$; point estimate = .1915; 95% CI from .0025 to .4150). Inclusion of the offense adoption index in the model caused the direct link between the condition variable and forgiveness to drop to nonsignificance ($B = .20, p = .14$). Taken together, these results suggest that empathic responding to the offense of another person may contribute to low levels of third-party forgiveness.

Table 1

Hypothesized Results for Offense Victims (Study 1).

	Condition		
	Sympathy	Journal	Objectivity
Forgiveness	Low	Medium	High
<i>Content Coding for Session 1 and Session 2</i>			
Negative Consequences	High	Medium	Low
Self Blame	Low	Medium	Medium
Perpetrator Blame	High	Medium	Low
Recognition of Mitigating Factors	Low	Medium	High
General Negativity	High	Medium	Low

Table 2

Hypothesized Results for Third-Parties (Study 2).

	Condition		
	Sympathy	Journal	Objectivity
Forgiveness	Low	Medium	High
<i>Content Coding at Session 1</i>			
<i>(Responses)</i>			
Validation of Negative Reactions	High	Medium	Low
Victim Blame	Low	Medium	Medium
Perpetrator Blame	High	Medium	Low
Recognition of Mitigating Factors	Low	Medium	High
<i>Content Coding at Session 2</i>			
<i>(Memory Accounts)</i>			
Negative Consequences	High	Medium	Low
Victim Blame	Low	Medium	Medium
Perpetrator Blame	High	Medium	Low
Recognition of Mitigating Factors	Low	Medium	High

Table 3.

Intercorrelations between Study 1 Covariates and Offense Account Content Variables (Session 1)

	Gender	O-Gender	Apology	Time	Close	Severe	ATF	TTF	NA	PA
Negative Consequences	-.17	-.13	.01	.05	.00	.13	.16	.02	.08	.13
Self Blame	-.05	.05	.07	.01	.01	.05	.01	.12	.21*	-.06
Perpetrator Blame	-.19*	-.13	-.13	.01	-.18*	.12	-.03	-.15	-.06	.13
Mitigating Factors	.02	-.01	.04	-.02	.03	-.10	.15	-.01	-.04	-.08
General Negativity	-.15	-.16	-.02	.06	-.09	-.20*	.15	-.16	.10	.16
<i>M</i>	----	----	----	1.15	3.33	4.11	5.59	3.85	2.28	3.79
<i>SD</i>	----	----	----	1.09	2.10	1.43	0.88	1.32	1.00	1.13

Note: $N = 131$, $*p < .05$. Gender (0 = female, 1 = male) = Participant Gender, O-Gender (0 = female, 1 = male) = Offender Gender, Apology (0 = no apology, 1 = apology) = Offender Apology, Time = Time Since Offense (in months and fractions of months), Close = Current Closeness, Severe = Current Severity, NA = Negative Affect (PANAS), PA = Positive Affect (PANAS).

Table 4.

Intercorrelations between Study 1 Covariates and Forgiveness Variables (Session 1)

	Apology	Time	Close	Severe	ATF	TTF	PA	NA
SFS	.40**	-.04	.73**	-.36**	.30**	.39**	.01	-.16
WOES	-.04	.18*	-.42**	.42**	-.34**	-.25**	.03	.34**
OIS	-.35**	.20*	-.71**	.28**	-.23**	-.31**	.01	.04
Forgiveness	.30**	-.16	.72**	-.41**	.33**	.37**	-.01	-.21*
IHS	.25**	-.12	.40**	-.06	.01	.11	-.09	.03

Note: $N = 131$, ** $p \leq .004$, * $p < .05$. Participant gender and offender gender were correlated at approximately zero with each forgiveness measure. Apology (0 = no apology, 1 = apology) = Offender Apology, Time = Time Since Offense (in months and fractions of months), Close = Current Closeness, Severe = Current Severity, PA = Positive Affect (PANAS), NA = Negative Affect (PANAS). Forgiveness = composite of standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 5.

Intercorrelations between Offense Account Content Variables and Forgiveness Variables (Session 1, Study 1).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Negative Consequence	----									
2. Self Blame	.04	----								
3. Perpetrator Blame	.40**	-.10	----							
4. Mitigating Factors	.08	-.08	-.08	----						
5. General Negativity	.69**	-.03	.53**	.00	----					
6. SFS	-.07	.05	-.30**	.11	-.19*	----				
7. WOES	.04	.10	.10	-.16	.15	-.60**	----			
8. OIS	-.11	-.12	.22*	-.04	.13	-.72**	.55**	----		
9. Forgiveness	.01	.02	-.24*	.13	-.17*	.89**	-.83**	-.88**	----	
10. IHS	-.07	-.01	-.15	-.03	-.22*	.38**	-.16	-.45**	.38**	----
<i>M (SD)</i>	4.56 (2.78)	0.24 (0.66)	6.43 (3.29)	0.30 (0.72)	2.00 (0.55)	6.27 (2.09)	4.54 (2.23)	4.00 (2.20)	0.02 (0.87)	-0.02 (0.99)

Note: $N = 131$. ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$. Forgiveness = composite of standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 6.

Effect of Communication Goal Pursuit on Study 1 Dependent Variables (Session 1).

	Condition			Omnibus <i>F</i>
	Sympathy	Journal	Objectivity	<i>p</i>
<i>Content Coding (Session 1)</i>				
Negative Consequences	4.94 ^A (.41)	5.14 ^A (.41)	3.56 ^B (.41)	.016
Self Blame	0.09 ^A (.10)	0.44 ^{B†} (.10)	0.18 ^{A,B†} (.10)	.043
Perpetrator Blame	6.83 ^A (.46)	7.49 ^A (.46)	4.94 ^B (.47)	.001
Mitigating Factors	0.17 ^A (.11)	0.23 ^{A,B†} (.11)	0.50 ^{B†} (.11)	.090
General Negativity	2.12 ^A (.08)	2.10 ^A (.08)	1.76 ^B (.08)	.002
<i>Forgiveness (Session 1)</i>				
SFS	6.17 ^A (.20)	6.06 ^{A†} (.20)	6.59 ^{A†} (.20)	.148
WOES	4.50 ^A (.26)	4.86 ^A (.26)	4.24 ^A (.27)	.255
OIS	4.46 ^{A†} (.25)	4.28 ^A (.25)	3.78 ^{A†} (.26)	.160
Forgiveness	-0.03 ^{A,B†} (.08)	-0.07 ^A (.08)	0.18 ^{B†} (.08)	.081
IHS	-0.05 ^A (.14)	0.02 ^A (.14)	-0.01 ^A (.15)	.939
<i>N</i>	44	44	43	----

Note: Means that do not share superscripts are significantly different from each other.

Means that share the same superscript but are accompanied by † are marginally significantly different from each other (i.e., $.10 > p > .05$). Forgiveness = composite of standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 7.

Intercorrelations between Session 1 and Session 2 Dependent Variables (Study 1).

<i>Session 1</i>	<i>Session 2</i>									
	NC	SB	PB	RMF	GN	SFS	WOES	OIS	Forg	IHS
NC	.50**	-.06	.32**	.06	.17	.02	.03	-.06	.03	-.11
SB	.23*	.50**	-.03	-.03	.16	-.05	.23*	.02	-.10	.00
PB	.06	.10	.61**	-.10	.16	-.20*	.07	.22*	-.17	-.24**
RMF	.27**	.29**	.09	.32**	.12	.02	-.11	-.07	.07	-.06
GN	.22*	.03	.42**	-.02	.24**	-.17	.16	.21*	-.19*	-.17
SFS	-.13	-.02	-.22*	.05	-.30**	.89**	-.63**	-.80**	.85**	.33**
WOES	.15	.09	.13	-.05	.31**	-.63**	.81**	.58**	-.74**	-.15
OIS	.05	.04	.17	-.04	.25*	-.76**	.50**	.89**	-.79**	-.38**
Forg	-.11	-.06	-.20*	.05	-.32**	.87**	-.74**	-.87**	.91**	.32*
IHS	-.18	-.08	-.16	-.05	-.21**	.47**	-.23*	-.48**	.44**	.68**

Note: $N = 115$. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. NC = Negative Consequences, SB = Self-Blame, PB = Perpetrator Blame, RMF = Recognition of Mitigating Factors, GN = General Negativity, Forg = composite of standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 8.

Intercorrelations between Offense Account Content Variables and Forgiveness Variables (Session 2, Study 1).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Negative Consequences	----									
2. Self Blame	.19*	----								
3. Perpetrator Blame	.36**	.07	----							
4. Mitigating Factors	.01	.02	-.07	----						
5. General Negativity	.50**	.24**	.52**	-.10	----					
6. SFS	-.14	-.09	-.22**	.06	-.39*	----				
7. WOES	.20*	.15	.14	-.07	.34**	-.70**	----			
8. OIS	.03	.06	.12	-.01	.25**	-.84**	.62**	----		
9. Forgiveness	-.13	-.11	-.17	.05	-.36**	.94**	-.85**	-.91**	----	
10. IHS	-.20*	-.03	-.30**	-.03	-.20*	.39**	-.19*	-.41**	.37**	----
<i>M (SD)</i>	3.34 (2.02)	0.40 (1.09)	6.77 (3.66)	0.32 (0.83)	1.99 (0.51)	6.29 (2.20)	3.94 (2.36)	3.84 (2.42)	-0.02 (0.91)	-0.01 (0.99)

Note: $N = 115$. ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$. Forgiveness = composite of standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 9.

Effect of Communication Goal Pursuit on Study 1 Dependent Variables (Session 2).

	Condition			Omnibus <i>F</i>
	Sympathy	Journal	Objectivity	<i>p</i>
<i>Content Coding (Session 2)</i>				
Negative Consequences	2.83 ^A (.30)	3.75 ^B (.31)	3.48 ^{A,B} (.31)	.099
Self Blame	0.14 ^{A†} (.17)	0.60 ^{A†} (.18)	0.49 ^A (.18)	.161
Perpetrator Blame	6.85 ^{A,B} (.55)	7.77 ^A (.57)	5.64 ^B (.58)	.039
Mitigating Factors	0.35 ^A (.14)	0.26 ^A (.14)	0.36 ^A (.14)	.865
General Negativity	1.95 ^A (.08)	1.98 ^A (.08)	2.05 ^A (.08)	.680
<i>Forgiveness (Session 2)</i>				
SFS	6.38 ^A (.23)	6.17 ^A (.24)	6.32 ^A (.24)	.814
WOES	3.87 ^A (.31)	4.13 ^A (.32)	3.83 ^A (.32)	.747
OIS	4.21 ^{A†} (.27)	3.78 ^A (.28)	3.52 ^{A†} (.29)	.220
Forgiveness	-0.08 ^A (.10)	0.02 ^A (.10)	0.03 ^A (.10)	.770
IHS	-0.03 ^A (.15)	0.05 ^A (.16)	-0.06 ^A (.16)	.895
<i>N</i>	40	38	37	---

Note: Means that do not share superscripts are significantly different from each other.

Means that share the same superscript but are accompanied by † are marginally significantly different from each other (i.e., $.10 > p > .05$). Forgiveness = composite of standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 10.

Intercorrelations between Study 2 Covariates and Response Content Variables.

	Gender	IRI-EC	IRI-PT	TTF	ATF	PA	NA
Negative Affirmations	-.15	.06	-.01	-.05	-.03	-.08	.06
Victim Blame	.00	.00	.10	-.03	.04	-.10	-.23**
Perpetrator Blame	-.06	-.01	-.08	.11	.05	-.08	.06
Mitigating Factors	.05	-.05	.05	-.03	.16	-.05	.05
<i>M</i>	---	5.62	4.95	4.13	5.50	3.73	2.17
<i>SD</i>	---	1.01	1.04	1.25	0.86	1.09	0.99

Note: $N = 145$, $*p < .05$, $**p = .006$. Gender (0 = female, 1 = male) = Participant Gender, PA = Positive Affect (PANAS), NA = Negative Affect (PANAS).

Table 11.

Intercorrelations between Study 2 Covariates and Forgiveness Variables.

	Gender	IRI-EC	IRI-PT	ATF	TTF	PA	NA
SFS ^r	.05	.23**	.23**	.18*	.07	.02	-.21*
WOES ^r	-.05	.29**	.22**	.20*	.23**	.13	-.26**
OIS ^r	.13	.20*	.19*	.35**	.08	.02	.00
Forgiveness	.05	.29**	.25**	.30**	.15	-.03	-.18*
IHS	.03	-.01	-.01	-.03	.05	.12	-.14

Note: $N = 145$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p < .05$. Scales marked with an *r* superscript were reversed so that high scores connote more forgiveness. Forgiveness = composite of reversed and standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 12.

Intercorrelations between Response Content Variables and Forgiveness Variables (Study 2).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Negative Affirmations	----								
2. Victim Blame	-.39**	----							
3. Perpetrator Blame	.28**	-.24*	----						
4. Mitigating Factors	-.26**	.15	-.03	----					
5. SFS'	-.31**	.35**	-.15	.24**	----				
6. WOES'	-.17*	.34	-.06	.15	.63**	----			
7. OIS'	-.20*	.30**	-.15	.28**	.57**	.46**	----		
8. Forgiveness	-.27**	.39**	-.14*	.27**	.87**	.83**	.81**	----	
9. IHS	-.17*	.13	-.01	.02	.14	.03	.09	.10	----
<i>M (SD)</i>	3.41 (1.92)	0.74 (1.21)	2.66 (1.66)	0.57 (0.95)	4.43 (1.35)	5.68 (1.60)	5.96 (1.83)	0.00 (0.84)	0.03 (0.93)

Note: $N = 145$. ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$. Scales marked with an r superscript were reversed so that high scores connote more forgiveness. Forgiveness = composite of reversed and standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 13.

Intercorrelations between Response and Recollection Content Coding Variables.

<i>Response</i>	<i>Memory Account</i>		
	Negative Consequences	Perpetrator Blame	Mitigating Factors
Negative Affirmations	.19*	.22*	-.04
Victim Blame	-.02	-.08	.14
Perpetrator Blame	-.03	.16	.17
Mitigating Factors	-.09	-.13	.10
SFS ^r	.01	-.06	.11
WOES ^r	-.07	-.01	.04
OIS ^r	.11	-.02	-.01
Forgiveness	.02	-.04	.05
IHS	.07	.15	-.08

Note: $N = 141$. $*p < .05$. Scales marked with an *r* superscript were reversed so that high scores connote more forgiveness. Forgiveness = composite of reversed and standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 14.

Effect of Communication Goal Pursuit on Study 2 Dependent Variables.

	Condition			Omnibus <i>F</i>
	Sympathy	Journal	Objectivity	<i>p</i>
<i>Content Coding (Responses)</i>				
Negative Affirmations	4.57 ^A (.26)	2.66 ^B (.25)	3.05 ^B (.26)	<.001
Victim Blame	-0.01 ^A (.16)	1.25 ^B (.15)	0.94 ^B (.15)	<.001
Perpetrator Blame	3.30 ^A (.24)	2.24 ^B (.23)	2.48 ^B (.24)	.006
Mitigating Factors	0.15 ^A (.13)	0.55 ^B (.13)	1.00 ^C (.13)	<.001
<i>Forgiveness</i>				
SFS ^r	4.06 ^A (.19)	4.63 ^B (.18)	4.60 ^B (.19)	.060
WOES ^r	5.27 ^{A†} (.22)	5.90 ^B (.21)	5.84 ^{A†,B} (.22)	.082
OIS ^r	5.66 ^{A†} (.25)	5.97 ^A (.24)	6.25 ^{A†} (.25)	.250
Forgiveness	-0.23 ^A (.11)	0.10 ^B (.11)	0.13 ^B (.11)	.051
IHS	-0.01 ^A (.14)	0.07 ^A (.13)	0.03 ^A (.14)	.930
<i>Content Coding (Memory Accounts)</i>				
Negative Consequences	7.95 ^A (.35)	7.59 ^A (.34)	8.06 ^A (.34)	.606
Perpetrator Blame	4.70 ^A (.21)	4.12 ^B (.20)	4.48 ^{A,B} (.20)	.133
Mitigating Factors	2.00 ^A (.17)	2.14 ^A (.17)	2.09 ^A (.17)	.830
<i>N</i> (<i>N</i> for Memory Accounts)	47 (45)	50 (48)	48 (48)	---

Note: Means that do not share superscripts are significantly different from each other.

Means that share the same superscript but are accompanied by † are marginally significantly different from each other (i.e., $.10 > p > .05$). Scales marked with an *r* superscript were reversed so that high scores connote more forgiveness. Forgiveness = composite of reversed and standardized SFS, WOES, and OIS scores.

Table 15

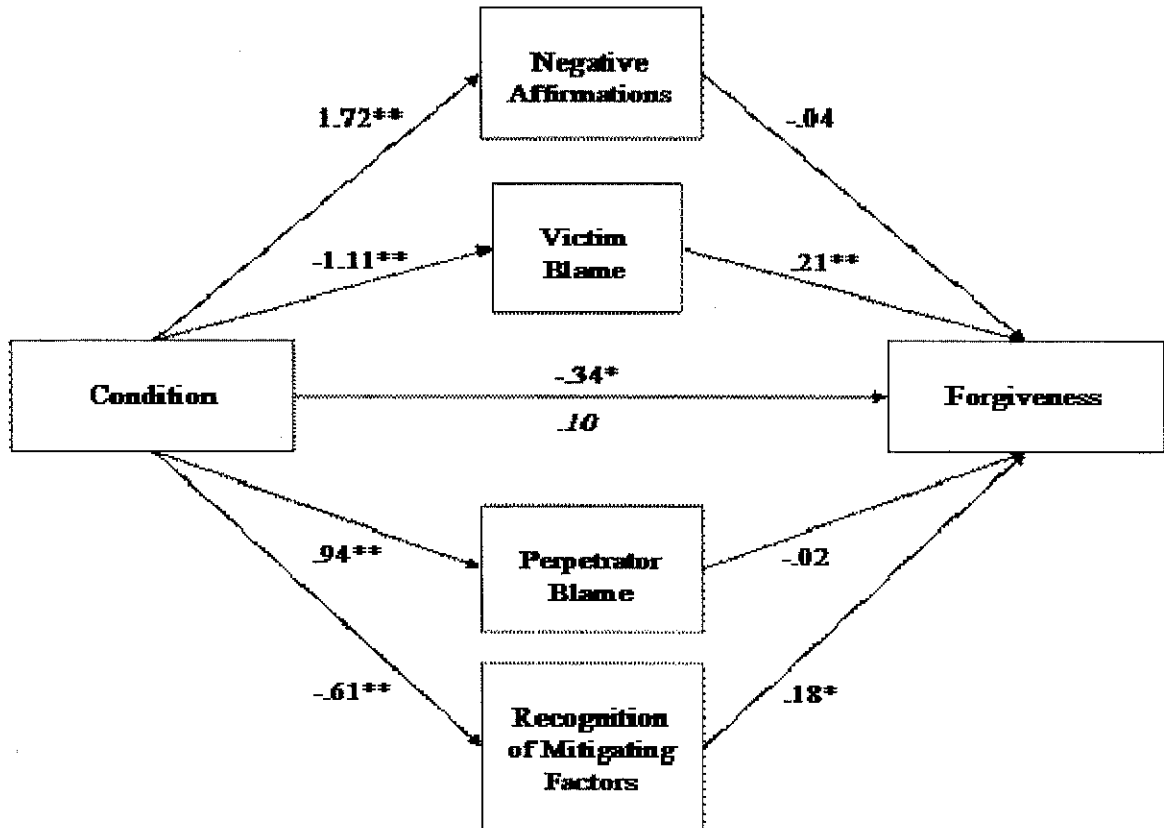
Mediation of the Condition Effect on Forgiveness by Response Content Dimensions.

	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
		Lower	Upper
Total Indirect Effect			
of Mediator Set	-.4371	-.6590	-.2680
Negative Affirmations	-.0742	-.2412	.0532
Victim Blame	-.2335	-.3846	-.1183
Perpetrator Blame	-.0242	-.1070	.0336
Mitigating Factors	-.1051	-.2176	-.0285

Note: Confidence intervals that do not include zero indicate statistical significance.

Figure 1. Mediation of Condition Effect on Forgiveness in Study 2. Values represent unstandardized path coefficients (with covariates from the ANCOVA models included).

* $p = .01$, ** $p \leq .002$.



Appendix A: State Forgiveness Scale (Study 1)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement below using the provided rating scale.

1----- 2----- 3----- 4----- 5----- 6----- 7----- 8----- 9

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1. I have forgiven this person.
2. I feel angry toward this person.
3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I do not feel ill-will toward him/her.
4. I dislike this person.
5. I feel warmly toward this person.
6. I hope this person gets what's coming to him/her for what he/she did to me.
7. If I saw this person again, I would try to avoid interacting with him/her.

Appendix B: Wish for Offender's Emotional Suffering Scale (Study 1)

Even if it never leads to lasting positive changes in the way he/she interacts with you or with other people, rate the extent to which you would like this person to experience each of the following emotions/psychological states in response to how he/she treated you:

	Not at all	To the fullest extent possible
1. humiliation	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
2. pain	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
3. guilt	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
4. sadness	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
5. remorse	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
6. suffering	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
7. shame	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
8. distress	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
9. disappointment	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
10. anguish	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	

Appendix C: Offensive Identity Scale (Study 1)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement below using the provided rating scale.

1----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1. This person's wrongful actions toward me pretty well sum up the kind of person he/she is.
2. There's more to who this person is than the offense he/she committed against me.
3. I can think of no better way to describe this person than in terms of how he/she harmed me.
4. There's no way for me to separate who this person is from what he/she did to me.
5. In my mind, who this person is and what he/she did to me are one and the same.

Appendix D: Infrhumanization Scale (Study 1)

Please rate the extent to which you believe the person responsible for the offense against you seems capable of feeling each of the emotions/psychological states listed below:

	Not at all								Very much								
1. humiliation	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
2. pain	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
3. love	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
4. surprise	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
5. guilt	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
6. sadness	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
7. elation	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
8. pleasure	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
9. remorse	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
10. suffering	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
11. passion	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
12. attraction	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
13. shame	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
14. distress	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
15. admiration	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
16. excitement	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
17. disappointment	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
18. anguish	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
19. nostalgia	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
20. enjoyment	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9

Appendix E: Fictitious Offense Scenario Adapted from Stillwell & Baumeister (1997)

[Study 2]

This summer, I was rooming with a friend of mine named Kelly [Jeff]. I was enrolled in a tough class for my major that Kelly [Jeff] had completed in the Spring and done really well in. She [He] made an offer to help me out with anything in the course that she [he] could.

Before a big paper in the class was due (worth 50% of the grade), I asked Kelly [Jeff] if she [he] would mind giving me a hand with it. She [he] said that she [he] was a bad writer and wouldn't be much help. After I reminded her [him] of her [his] offer, Kelly [Jeff] said that she [he] would help out as best she [he] could. It bothered me that she [he] seemed so reluctant to help after telling me she [he] would ... I mean, that's what friends are for, right? They help each other out.

On the day that Kelly [Jeff] and I were supposed to work on the paper, she [he] didn't show up! She [He] said that she [he] had forgotten and gone out drinking with her [his] buddies who were leaving town for the summer. Kelly [Jeff] was so drunk that night that she [he] was absolutely no help to me at all, but she [he] still promised to give me a hand. I appreciated her [his] promise, but still ... I couldn't believe she [he] ditched me to go get drunk with her [his] friends. That really made me mad.

I spent several days working hard on the paper. By the time that Kelly [Jeff] and I were suppose to meet the second time, I had gotten a big part of it finished. I only had a few things to talk to her [him] about, but it was getting close to the end of the summer and we both had finals to prep for. Kelly [Jeff] told me that she [he] had to study for her [his] own tests and wouldn't be able to help me after all. She [he] said she [he] was sorry. Later that night, I tried calling her [him] a couple of times to see if she [he] could answer a few questions over the phone ... but she [he] never answered! I found out later that she [he] was talking with her [his] boyfriend [girlfriend] who was really stressed out over something that happened at his work. Anyway, I

eventually gave up on Kelly [Jeff] and tried to schedule a meeting with my professor, but she [he] was out of town for some reason, so I had to complete the paper on my own.

I was so angry at Kelly [Jeff]. I mean, I understand that she [he] had a lot going on, but she [he] shouldn't have made a promise she [he] couldn't keep! There at the end, I didn't even feel like I was asking that much of her [him]. The least she [he] could've done was pick up her [his] phone and spend a few minutes answering my questions.

What sucks is that because of the paper, I just missed getting the grade I needed in the class to keep a scholarship I got my freshmen year! Also, the class is a prerequisite for a course I needed to take this semester to stay on track for graduation. Now that plan is shot to pieces. I might as well have taken the money I spent on the class and flushed it down the drain! Now I'm thinking about switching majors, and spending a semester or two at a less expensive college to bring my GPA up.

I feel like a lot of this has happened because Kelly [Jeff] didn't keep her [his] promise. I'm still angry at her [him] and wonder how we were ever friends in the first place. We don't live together anymore. I make it a point not to talk to her [him], because I want her [him] to know how mad she [he] made me. I hope she [he] feels really bad about it all.

Appendix F: State Forgiveness Scale (Study 2)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement below using the provided rating scale.

1----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1. I think it would be nice if Kelly [Jeff] was somehow paid back for what he/she did to Lindsey [Chris].
2. It would be sort of gratifying to learn that Kelly [Jeff] had something rotten happen to him/her as a result of what he/she did to Lindsey [Chris].
3. If I knew Kelly [Jeff] personally, I would probably avoid interacting with him/her.
4. If I knew Kelly [Jeff] personally, I don't think I would have any trouble being around him/her.
5. To what extent do you feel *anger* toward Kelly [Jeff]?
6. To what extent do you feel *warmth* toward Kelly [Jeff]?
7. To what extent do you feel *irritation* toward Kelly [Jeff]?
8. To what extent do you feel *frustration* toward Kelly [Jeff]?
9. To what extent do you feel *annoyance* toward Kelly [Jeff]?
10. To what extent do you feel *good-will* toward Kelly [Jeff]?
11. To what extent do you feel *displeased* toward Kelly [Jeff]?

Appendix G: Wish for Offender's Emotional Suffering Scale (Study 2)

To what extent do you think it Kelly [Jeff] should experience each of the following emotions/psychological states for how he/she treated Lindsey [Chris]:

	Not at all	To the fullest extent possible
1. humiliation	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
2. pain	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
3. guilt	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
4. sadness	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
5. remorse	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
6. suffering	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
7. shame	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
8. distress	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
9. disappointment	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	
10. anguish	1 ----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9	

Appendix H: Offensive Identity Scale (Study 2)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement below using the provided rating scale.

1----- 2 ----- 3 ----- 4 ----- 5 ----- 6 ----- 7 ----- 8 ----- 9

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

1. I think it's fair to say that Kelly's [Jeff's] wrongful actions toward Lindsey [Chris] pretty well sum up the kind of person he/she is.
2. I'm sure there's more to who Kelly [Jeff] is than the offense he/she committed against Lindsey [Chris].
3. It's difficult for me to separate who Kelly [Jeff] is from what he/she did to Lindsey [Chris].
4. It would *not* be reasonable to conclude that Kelly's [Jeff's] actions toward Lindsey [Chris] are an adequate summary of who he/she is as an individual.
5. In my mind, who Kelly [Jeff] is and what he/she did to Lindsey [Chris] are pretty much one and the same.

Appendix I: Infrahumanization Scale (Study 2)

Please rate the extent to which you believe Kelly [Jeff] seems capable of feeling each of the emotions/psychological states listed below:

	Not at all								Very much								
1. humiliation	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
2. pain	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
3. love	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
4. surprise	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
5. guilt	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
6. sadness	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
7. elation	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
8. pleasure	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
9. remorse	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
10. suffering	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
11. passion	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
12. attraction	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
13. shame	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
14. distress	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
15. admiration	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
16. excitement	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
17. disappointment	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
18. anguish	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
19. nostalgia	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9
20. enjoyment	1	-----	2	-----	3	-----	4	-----	5	-----	6	-----	7	-----	8	-----	9