Does it matter why people forgive? How a victim's reasons for forgiving change the outcomes of forgiveness

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the

degree Doctor of Philosophy with Masters in

Psychology

December 2018

THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is designed to answer the question, "does it matter *why* people choose to forgive?" and more specifically, "when forgiving potentially exploitative offenders, should people forgive for the sake of their own wellbeing or should they forgive for the sake of their relationship?" To establish the context for this question, the first chapter introduces several relevant issues. To begin Chapter 1.1, I review the literature highlighting the costs and benefits associated with granting forgiveness, and argue that the outcomes of forgiveness are generally negative when the offender presents an exploitation risk. In Chapter 1.2, I discuss why victims might choose to forgive an exploitative offender, outlining the many reasons victims cite for granting forgiveness. In Chapter 1.3, I bring these two discussions together and argue that the outcomes of forgiveness depend on the combination of the victim's reason for forgiving and the degree to which the offender presents an exploitation risk. More specifically, I argue that the outcomes of forgiving an exploitative offender depend on the degree to which forgiveness is focussed on the self, relative to the relationship.

This thesis has also been designed to shed light on an area of forgiveness research that has historically received very little attention: forgiveness of non-human entities such as organisations. Much of the research on forgiveness has focussed primarily on revenge and forgiveness between individuals in close relationships. However, I argue that it is equally important to investigate forgiveness of nebulous others such as organisations. Accordingly, in the latter half of the thesis I address this gap by investigating the outcomes of forgiveness between individuals and organisations.

To test the central hypothesis of this thesis, a series of five studies was conducted. Study 1 was a two-phase prospective study of close relationship partners who were the victim of an actual transgression at phase one. Participants were later assessed at phase two for forgiveness motives and levels of distress. Studies 2 and 3 were online experiments in which exploitation risk and forgiveness motives were manipulated to test their effect on measures of forgiveness-related distress. Study 4 was a factor analysis designed to more clearly understand the reasons people forgive organisations. Study 5 examined personally experienced transgressions where the offender was an organisation, testing the moderating effect of the motives identified in Study 4.

Taken together, these five studies have provided an answer to the initial question, "does it matter *why* people choose to forgive?" At least in the short-term, forgiving explicitly to benefit the self not only results in more positive outcomes than withholding forgiveness, but also more positive outcomes than forgiving to restore a relationship. Moreover, within close interpersonal relationships, forgiving for the sake of the self also provides a buffer against the distress associated with forgiving an exploitative offender.

Unfortunately, the pattern of results that emerged from the studies examining the impact of forgiveness of organisations was less clear. Nonetheless, the finding that the impact of forgiveness motives appears to be less important when victims forgive organisations as opposed to individuals is novel. The body of research presented in this thesis demonstrates that the outcomes of forgiveness and reconciliation depend on not only *why* victims forgive but also *whom* they forgive.

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DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the many people who have supported me during my PhD candidature. To my primary supervisor Dr. Peter Strelan, I am immensely grateful that you have taken the time to invest not only in my formal education but also in my professional and personal development more broadly. Peter, it was a privilege to have worked alongside you over the years and I hope we can continue to work together in some way or another in the future. I would like to thank my dear friend and officemate Josiah Krieg. I am so grateful for the enormous amount of time and energy you have invested into helping me structure paragraphs, design studies, sharpen my arguments, and improve the way I think about the world.

I would also like to thank my closest friends/colleagues, my girlfriend, and family who have encouraged me along the way. To Jeremy Stevenson, thank you for taking the time to patiently coach me through the PhD/Masters processes. Our planning days, coaching sessions and writing lock-ins have been some of the most enjoyable times of my life. My friendship with you has not only contributed to my professional work but also imbued my life with a deeper sense of meaning.

To Wai Keen Vong, it has been such a pleasure to have gone through the PhD process with you. Nobody has introduced me to as many new ideas as you have. I thank you for helping me become more intellectually well-rounded. I hope we can continue to read books, listen to podcasts and learn about the world until the days we die.

Alex: thank you for helping me through the trials and tribulations of Masters. Karin: thank you for being a loving girlfriend and for providing tough love when necessary (I now know, planning is not progress). To Mum, Dad, and the rest of my

family, thank you for your unconditional positive regard and consistent support. And to my other friends and colleagues who have helped me in different ways along the way: John, Lucinda, Chris, Sarah, Kristy, Stef and Mark.

Lastly, I would like to thank all those who participated in my studies. Thank you for taking the time and having the courage to share your experiences with me. This thesis tells the story of many lost loves, broken hearts and mending souls.

Chapter 1:   Introduction

Every day people are mistreated by close friends, relationship partners and the organisations they are involved with. And every day people choose to let go of those transgressions and refrain from retaliating, even when it seems justifiable to do so. Why is it that people choose to forgive offenders even when they are exploitative? Does it even matter *why* people choose to forgive? When forgiving potentially exploitative offenders, should people forgive for the sake of their own wellbeing or should they forgive for the sake of their relationship?

I designed this dissertation to answer these questions. To begin Chapter 1.1, I review the literature highlighting the costs and benefits associated with granting forgiveness, and argue that the outcomes of forgiveness are generally negative when the offender presents an exploitation risk. In Chapter 1.2, I discuss why it is victims might choose to forgive an exploitative offender, outlining the many reasons victims cite for granting forgiveness. In Chapter 1.3, I bring these two discussions together and argue that the outcomes of forgiveness depend on the combination of the victim's reason for forgiving and the degree to which the offender presents an exploitation risk. More specifically, I argue that the outcomes of forgiving an exploitative offender depend on the degree to which forgiveness is focussed on the self, relative to the relationship.

In Chapters 2 through 6, I explicitly test this hypothesis, first in the context of transgressions committed within close interpersonal relationships and then in the context of transgressions committed by an entire organisation. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 explore the nature of forgiveness when the offender is an entire organisation rather than a single individual, and how that impacts the relationships between

exploitation, forgiveness motives, and their outcomes. Finally in Chapter 7, I summarise and discuss my findings.

1.1 When does forgiveness have positive or negative outcomes?

In the sections below I discuss some of the positive and negative ramifications of deciding to forgive. My focus in this discussion is on the impact of forgiveness on the victim, in particular on their health and wellbeing. While some research has explored the impact of forgiveness on aspects outside of the victim, such as the offender's wellbeing (e.g., Gassin, 1998; Hannon, Finkel, Kumashiro, & Rusbult, 2012; Wallace, Exline, & Baumeister, 2008), those studies fall outside the purview of my review.

1.1.1 The positive outcomes of forgiveness

One of the most robust findings from a now large psychological literature is that forgiveness is a good idea. It unburdens victims from the weight of hurt, resentment, and rumination (e.g., Wade, Hoyt, Kidwell, & Worthington, 2014), and helps to restore valued relationships (McCullough, 2008). Forgiveness has even been shown to have a positive association with a person's physical health (Lawler-Row, Karremans, Scott, Edlis-Matityahou, & Edwards, 2008; Lawler et al., 2005; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Laan, 2001) and the quality of their close relationships (Bono, McCullough, & Root, 2008; Fenell, 1993). Building on this research, therapeutic interventions have been developed to facilitate forgiveness so that victims can secure the positive psychological consequences of forgiveness, including reductions in depression, anger and distress (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Wade, Bailey, & Shaffer, 2005; Wade et al., 2014).

The appeal of forgiveness has even extended beyond individuals and their close relationships. Indeed, organisational scholars have started to promote

forgiveness as a virtue within a workplace setting. Forgiveness is now seen as a tool to help managers deal with the potentially destructive feelings that arise in the aftermath of workplace conflicts (Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, & Murnighan, 2002; Kurzynski, 1998). Aquino, Grover, Goldman, and Folger (2003) have suggested that forgiveness should be an important concern of both organisational scholars and practitioners. Taken together, a burgeoning literature that documents numerous positive implications of forgiveness may lead one to think of forgiveness as a foolproof panacea for physical and mental health problems. However, as I will argue, this is not always the case.

1.1.2 The negative outcomes of forgiveness

Given the abundance of evidence demonstrating the benefits of forgiveness, one might wonder why victims so often struggle to grant forgiveness. In short, the answer is that forgiveness is not without risks either (Williamson, Gonzales, Fernandez, & Williams, 2014). In fact, a substantial literature highlighting the costs associated with granting forgiveness also exists. Previous research has demonstrated that granting forgiveness can have negative ramifications for one's interpersonal relationships, personal wellbeing and general social standing. Each of these is discussed in detail in the sections below.

1.1.2.1 The interpersonal risks of forgiveness

A significant negative effect of granting forgiveness within interpersonal relationships is that it can increase the likelihood that a relationship partner will re-offend (McNulty, 2010). One of the most well established findings within psychology is that unwanted consequences deter behaviour (see for example Skinner, 1969). In the domain of interpersonal transgressions, offenders are deterred from repeatedly taking advantage of victims by the threat of retaliation. Revenge, the opposite response to forgiveness, functions to deter future exploitation by leaving

the offender with feelings of guilt, rejection and loneliness (McCullough, 2008). The threat of having these costs imposed motivates perpetrators to treat their potential victims well, minimise inequities, and enables less powerful partners to get their way (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994).

The motivation for revenge is to send a message to the offender, communicating the sentiment, "you can't treat me that way". Consistent with this interpretation of the function of revenge, experimental research has demonstrated that revenge provides emotional satisfaction for victims only when the transgressor signals that they understand why revenge was taken upon them and begins to change their ways (Funk, McGeer, & Gollwitzer, 2014; Gollwitzer, Meder, & Schmitt, 2011).

When perpetrators are forgiven, the incentive to consider their victim's needs is removed. In line with this prediction, the behavioural economics and experimental games literature provides consistent evidence that people who reliably forgive are reliably taken advantage of. For example, in a seminal study, Solomon (1960) examined participants' responses toward accomplices who were unconditionally benevolent (i.e., always cooperated) in a prisoner's dilemma game. Participants tended to prefer to compete against accomplices who were unconditionally benevolent, profiting at the accomplice's expense. Since Solomon's initial study, numerous other studies have demonstrated that individuals tend to take advantage of people who unconditionally cooperate (e.g., Gruder & Duslak, 1973; Lave, 1965; Shure, Meeker, & Hansford, 1965). Furthermore, these studies have also demonstrated that exploitation tends to increase over time if accomplices do not retaliate.

Importantly, the negative effects of unconditional forgiveness are not limited to two-person mixed-motive games. In more recent years, a literature has begun to emerge demonstrating that high levels of forgiveness can also result in unfavourable outcomes within romantic relationships. In examining the consequences of spouses' tendencies to forgive their partners over the first two years marriage, McNulty (2008) found that a tendency to forgive interacted with the frequency of negative behaviours to predict changes in marital outcomes. For people whose spouse frequently behaved negatively, higher forgiveness was related to steeper declines in marital satisfaction over time.

One explanation for why forgiveness resulted in steeper declines in marital satisfaction is that overly forgiving spouses are more likely to experience repeat offenses. For example, in a later study McNulty (2010) found spouses were more likely to report that their partners had engaged in a negative behaviour on days after they had forgiven those partners for a negative behaviour. It was argued that, by forgiving, victims failed to impose unwanted consequences such as criticism and guilt that would otherwise discourage their partner from reoffending. Consistent with this finding, research by Williamson et al. (2014) indicates that victims are acutely aware of the risk of reoffending if they forgive, and thus concerns about self-protection are a major reason people choose not to grant forgiveness.

Consistent with his early findings, McNulty (2011) also found that among newlywed couples, spouses who reported being relatively less forgiving experienced declines in psychological and physical aggression over time. This result suggested that by withholding forgiveness, victims were able to impose consequences on their partner such as criticism, rejection, and loneliness that discouraged the partner from behaving negatively in the future.

In addition to increasing the likelihood of reoffending, other research indicates that high levels of forgiveness increases the likelihood that victims will stay in dangerous abusive relationships. For example, J. Katz, Street, and Arias (1997) demonstrated that, in hypothetical dating violence scenarios, women who held themselves responsible for the partner's violent behaviour were more likely to forgive their partner's violence and therefore stay in the abusive relationship. Even more troubling, Gordon, Burton, and Porter (2004) found that forgiveness uniquely predicted the intentions of abused women in domestic violence shelters to maintain their relationship with an abusive spouse. This finding suggests that the degree to which women are willing to 'move on' from abuse and to let go of their anger toward their partners plays a significant role in their intention to remain in dangerous relationships.

Taken together, research from behavioural economics and experimental games, longitudinal analyses of married couples, and responses to abusive relationships all indicate that high levels of forgiveness can result in increased reoffending and the maintenance of unhealthy relationships. By repeatedly forgiving, victims remove the offender's incentive to consider their interests, and leave themselves vulnerable to further exploitation.

1.1.2.2 The emotional risks of forgiveness

In addition to leaving victims vulnerable to further exploitation, there is some evidence that forgiveness can also have adverse effects on victim wellbeing. Following a transgression, victims experience a range of negative emotions directed at the offender (Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989). Because of those feelings, they are motivated to seek revenge or at least avoid the person (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998; McCullough et al., 1998).

Accordingly, a decision to forgive an offender is in direct conflict with a gut-level behavioural preference. McCullough (2008) has contended that individuals who choose to forgive even when it runs counter to their gut-level behavioural preference are left feeling as though they have not adhered to their principles by standing up for themselves. Consistent with this theory, Luchies, Finkel, McNulty, and Kumashiro (2010) found that forgiveness resulted in reduced self-respect and self-concept clarity when the offender was perceived to be an exploitation risk.

In addition to feeling as though they have not stood up for themselves, individuals who forgive must also give up their victim status. By holding a grudge, wronged individuals are able to maintain the victim role and thereby continue to reap its associated benefits which include legitimate feelings of anger, righteous indignation, and moral superiority (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998). These feelings give victims a sense of personal power and also elicit feelings of sympathy and support from others (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Thus, by forgiving, victims can lose a sense of power as well as the support of others around them.

1.1.2.3 The social risks of forgiveness

Victims who choose to forgive a wrongdoing also run the risk of damaging their social reputation. When other people become aware of a victim's forgiveness they may be inclined to view them as weak, pathetic, pitiable or naïve. Indeed, experimental research conducted by Smith, Goode, Balzarini, Ryan, and Georges (2014) showed that observers rated victims who forgave sexual infidelity as weaker and less competent than victims who retaliated or ended the relationship. Victims were viewed this way because they were seen to have violated shared norms about the appropriate response to a transgression as well as damaging their group's power and status.

In contrast to an arguably passive response such as forgiveness, when victims choose to stand up for themselves by seeking revenge or retaliation, they are able to re-establish a public persona of strength (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). By imposing harsh consequences on wrongdoers, the offended party sends a clear social signal that they will not be taken advantage of without recourse and thus is able to re-establish their dominance within the social hierarchy. Indeed, victims are aware of the risk of appearing weak to others by forgiving, reporting it as a major barrier to granting forgiveness (Williamson et al., 2014). Accordingly, by granting forgiveness, victims run the risk of downgrading their status in the mind of the offender as well as their wider social group.

Forgiveness can also bring with it additional social costs if the offender does not view themselves as responsible for the transgression. In a series of studies, Adams, Zou, Inesi, and Pillutla (2015) demonstrated that when transgressors feel they are not responsible for an offense, they view victims who grant forgiveness as self-righteous. This leads them to avoid the victim, further damaging their relationship. Given that offenders are highly motivated to maintain favourable views of themselves by downplaying their responsibility (Kearns & Fincham, 2005), the risk of being viewed as self-righteous is often a legitimate concern for victims considering expressing forgiveness.

1.2 How can it be that forgiveness can have both good and bad outcomes?

Taken together, there does exist a considerable amount of evidence demonstrating that forgiveness is not without its costs. However, I have also reviewed evidence that shows forgiveness has a range of positive effects. This begs the question; how can we reconcile this 'dark-side' of forgiveness with the large

body of evidence demonstrating positive consequences? When does forgiving have good or bad outcomes?

One answer to this question lies in how the offender signals they will treat the victim in the future. The extent to which forgiveness is likely to have positive or negative outcomes depends on the degree to which the offender presents an ongoing exploitation risk (Luchies et al., 2010; McCullough, 2008). While forgiveness generally does have positive outcomes, theorizing (Lamb & Murphy, 2002; Murphy, 2005) and previous research (Gordon et al., 2004; Luchies et al., 2010; McNulty, 2008, 2010, 2011) indicates that when victims forgive exploitative others, they are less likely to experience these positive outcomes. While forgiving may help to maintain a valued relationship, if a relationship partner continues to be exploitative then the longer term costs may outweigh any immediate benefit. As such, one take-home message about forgiveness seems clear; if you think you might be taken advantage of, forgiving may not be such a good idea.

1.2.1   Forgiveness has negative outcomes when the offender is an exploitation risk

Across a series of studies Luchies et al. (2010) demonstrated that the effect of forgiveness on self-respect and self-concept clarity depends on the extent to which the perpetrator has acted in a manner that signals that the victim will be safe and valued in a continued relationship with the perpetrator. When victims granted forgiveness despite the offender acting in a generally disagreeable manner such as not making amends, forgiveness resulted in decreased self-respect and self-concept clarity. The authors argued this was because forgiveness in this context was antithetical to victims' gut-level behavioural preference of avoiding their perpetrators or seeking revenge. In essence, victims were left feeling that they had

not stood up for themselves or adhered to their values, leaving them with decreased respect for themselves.

Building on these findings, Strelan, McKee, and Feather (2016) found that when offenders apologised or made amends, this caused victims to believe that the offender deserved forgiveness. The authors argued that post-transgression offender effort facilitated positive perceptions of the offender's personality, as well as promoting empathy and renewed trust toward the offender. Critically, this sense of deservingness evoked notions of justice which resulted in the personal consequences of forgiving being experienced positively. Conversely, when offenders did not apologise or make amends victims felt they did not deserve forgiveness. Consequently, forgiveness in these cases resulted in decreased well-being.

As well as moderating the effect of forgiveness on personal wellbeing, the degree to which the offender behaves in an agreeable manner has also been shown to moderate the effect of forgiveness on re-offending. McNulty and Russell (2016) found that whereas forgiveness was associated with less re-offending among agreeable transgressors, forgiveness was associated with more re-offending among non-agreeable transgressors. The authors argued that when the offender was agreeable, forgiveness reduces the likelihood of repeat offenses by triggering the social norm of reciprocity. That is, because the victim treated the offender with kindness, offenders responded with kindness of their own. However, for disagreeable offenders, because they were not punished (i.e., by an angry response), they continued to re-offend.

1.2.2 Conclusion

Taken together, we can see that the degree to which forgiveness has positive or negative outcomes for the victim appears to depend on the offender's behaviour.

Specifically, when offenders signal that the victim will be safe and valued in a continued relationship by making a genuine apology, making amends, or behaving in a generally agreeable manner, forgiveness tends to have positive outcomes for victims. However, when an offender presents an ongoing exploitation risk, forgiveness has been shown to reduce victim wellbeing, erode self-respect, and increase re-offending. We can therefore reasonably conclude that the greater the risk of exploitation for a victim, the worse the personal consequences of forgiveness will be.

1.3   What are the reasons or motives for forgiveness?

As discussed in the previous section, when an offender presents on ongoing exploitation risk, forgiveness has been shown to reduce victim wellbeing, erode self-respect, and increase re-offending. This begs the question, why do victims forgive when their transgressor presents an exploitation risk? In the section below, I discuss a number of possible reasons victims forgive exploitative offenders.

One reason it can be beneficial to forgive an exploitative offender is that forgiveness can function to maintain broader social harmony and the fundamental human need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Karremans & Van Lange, 2004; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). The dissolution of a relationship often results in the dissolution of peripheral relationships. For example, after a breakup of one kind or another, the friends, family and acquaintances of a couple often maintain loyalty to only one of the relationship partners. Thus, by withholding forgiveness from an exploitative partner, victims risks damaging their network of friends and acquaintances.

Damage to relationship networks can be even more costly when an individual's access to material benefits and other resources are tied to their network of relationships (Berscheid, 1983). For example, within a workplace setting, an employee's career trajectory may be dependent on maintaining harmonious relationships with certain colleagues. Withholding forgiveness can therefore jeopardise their chances of obtaining more favourable work, promotions, or other benefits.

People might also forgive exploitative relationship partners automatically and unconsciously. Within close relationships, forgiveness is often a habitual response based on well-established patterns of interaction between partners (e.g.,

Karremans & Aarts, 2007). So while forgiveness might not necessarily be beneficial to a victim, they may still do it habitually.

Finally, victims may forgive exploitative offenders to avoid the detrimental effects of experiencing *un*forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1998; Worthington, 2001). Sustaining the negative emotional state of unforgiveness not only damages psychological well-being (Lawler et al., 2005; Worthington & Scherer, 2004), it can also negatively impact physical health (Seawell, Toussaint, & Cheadle, 2014). Thus, while reconciling with a potentially exploitative offender can be detrimental to a victim's wellbeing, withholding forgiveness completely is not without drawbacks either.

As we can see, there are many different reasons a victim might choose to forgive an exploitative offender, or in fact any offender. Crucially, forgiveness does not just function to restore relationships. Forgiveness can also function to protect personal wellbeing, material benefits, or broader social standing. Indeed, many people choose to forgive precisely because the consequences of forgiveness were perceived to be better than the consequences of withholding forgiveness. We might therefore expect that the outcomes of granting forgiveness depend on the reason that compelled forgiveness in the first place. So while there is some evidence to suggest that the outcomes of forgiveness are negative when an offender is exploitative, I argue that this is not always the case.

1.3.1 The function of forgiveness changes how people are affected by exploitation

I will argue that because the function of forgiveness changes the way a victim responds to a transgression, it also influences how they are affected by exploitation. Accordingly, I aim to build on the existing research into forgiveness

within potentially exploitative relationships (Lamb & Murphy, 2002; Luchies et al., 2010; McNulty, 2008, 2010; McNulty & Fincham, 2012) by examining how a victim's motivation for forgiving affects the relationship between exploitation and forgiveness related distress. In doing so, I hope to bring attention to the intrapersonal as well as the interpersonal context in which forgiveness takes place. Therefore, the novel contribution of this research comes from showing how the interpersonal context (i.e., exploitation) interacts with the intrapersonal context (i.e., the function of forgiveness) to determine outcomes for the victim. I propose that forgiveness will only promote wellbeing when the intrapersonal context is appropriately matched with the interpersonal context.

In order to predict how the function of forgiveness interacts with the nature of the relationship to determine the outcomes of forgiveness, we need a fuller understanding of the reasons that compel forgiveness in the first place. Research on the reasons why people forgive is still in its infancy, and hence there is not a clear theoretical framework to guide research. Nonetheless, several attempts have been made at developing a typology of forgiveness motives (e.g., Cox, Bennett, Tripp, & Aquino, 2012; Strelan, McKee, Calic, Cook, & Shaw, 2013; Takada & Ohbuchi, 2008). In the section below I will discuss the existing research on the reasons or motives for why people forgive, and draw from each to develop a more general typology of forgiveness motives. My discussion is organised into three sections. First, I briefly discuss theoretical analyses of forgiveness motives. Second, I review qualitative research that has explored lay understandings of forgiveness and the reasons that compel it. Third, I close with a review of the quantitative research that has generated forgiveness typologies.

1.3.1.1 Theorising on forgiveness motives

Early academic definitions of forgiveness emphasised the prosocial motives involved, suggesting it was a process motivated at least in part by empathy for the offender and a desire to reduce their suffering. For example, McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen (2000) defined forgiveness as 'intra-individual prosocial change towards the offender'. This prosocial motivational change is implied through relationship-specific cues (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002), and conciliatory and inclusive gestures and words (see McCullough, 2008) which reflect the behavioural expression of forgiveness.

However, Baumeister et al. (1998) pointed out that forgiveness can be motivated by factors that are not solely pro-social in nature. Rather, they suggested that forgiveness is often driven primarily by emotion regulation, not just a desire for reconciliation. In their analysis of forgiveness they described two primary dimensions or types of forgiveness. The first dimension involved the inner intrapsychic aspects of forgiveness; the victim's emotional, cognitive and behavioural state. When motivated by the intrapsychic dimension, forgiveness functions to relieve the victim of the unpleasant feelings associated with sustaining anger and resentment. The second dimension involves the interpersonal aspects of forgiving. This type of forgiveness is driven by and focussed on the relationship between the victim and the transgressor, and primarily functions to restore the relationships after a transgression. Accordingly, forgiveness can be characterised as being intrapersonal, interpersonal, or both.

1.3.1.2 Qualitative research on forgiveness motives

Early empirical research into the reasons that compel forgiveness explored lay perspectives on what it means to forgive and why people grant forgiveness.

Younger, Piferi, Jobe, and Lawler (2004) asked college students to write about their reasons for forgiving. Younger and colleagues also interviewed members of the broader community about a time of hurt or betrayal, exploring their understanding of what it means to forgive. This approach revealed two prominent reasons people forgive. First, if the relationship was considered to be an important part of the victim's life, they indicated being very likely to forgive in order to keep the relationship. Second, people frequently reported forgiving in order to promote personal health and happiness. Interestingly, despite the academic research showing that empathy is a key facilitator of forgiveness (see Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010), the majority of participants focussed on more self-oriented reasons for forgiving.

Building on this research, Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Edlis-Matityahou, and Moore (2007) compared the descriptions of forgiveness from young adults to those of philosophers, theologians and psychological researchers. Again they found that people most commonly described forgiveness as an intrapersonal process, with 45.6% indicating that the orientation of their forgiveness was self-focussed. Of the remaining particpants, 31.1% described forgiveness as an interpersonal process and 20.4% as both intrapersonal and interpersonal.

Another foundational piece of research into the reasons that compel people's forgiveness was conducted by Bright, Fry, and Cooperrider (2006) who used a grounded approach of qualitative interviews of workers in a unionised trucking company. They identified two motives for forgiveness. The first was transcendence, which reflected a desire to learn from the experience and focus on positive thoughts and emotions. The second was pragmatic forgiveness, which was granted because it was in one's best interests to forgive the offender. This pragmatic dimension of forgiveness is similar to the self-interested orientation of forgiveness identified by

Lawler-Row et al. (2007). However, transcendent forgiveness reflected more empathic concern within the forgiveness process.

Wohl, Kuiken, and Noels (2006) also explored lay understandings of forgiveness. While they did not explicitly investigate victims' motives for forgiveness they gained some insight into why people forgive by identifying respondents' implicit understanding of what it means to forgive. This approach revealed three qualitatively distinct types of forgiveness. The first type of forgiveness involved the victim directly confronting the transgressor about their issues and concerns. This enabled victims to let go of their negative feelings toward the transgressor and strengthen their relationship. The second type of forgiveness was a more intrapersonal process which was driven by the realisation that nobody is perfect and that as a victim you do have the strength to forgive even without an apology. Finally, the third type of forgiveness emerges from the desire to resume a positive relationship with the transgressor but without the presumption that forgiveness will enable one to ignore or forget the transgression. Consistent with previous qualitative research on the motives for forgiveness, these three types of forgiveness primarily function to either remove negative feelings such as anger and resentment or restore the relationship.

Taken together, when victims are asked about why they forgive, the reasons they cite tend to be self-oriented. Forgiveness is usually described as functioning either to improve personal wellbeing or restore a relationship. Despite much of the theory and research into forgiveness implicating empathy as a key facilitator of forgiveness, other-oriented definitions of forgiveness are rarely given by lay persons.

1.3.1.3   Quantitative research on forgiveness motives

Building on the early qualitative explorations into the reasons and motives that compel forgiveness, several attempts have been made to delineate the main motives for forgiveness into a typology. This was first done by Takada and Ohbuchi (2004) who conducted a preliminary content analysis of students' responses to survey items measuring motives for forgiveness. Their analysis revealed eight dimensions of forgiveness motives: sympathy, consideration, maintenance of the relationship, need for acceptance, reduction of guilt, protection of identity, maintenance of social harmony, and general reciprocity. In a later study, Takada and Ohbuchi (2008) factor analysed these motives for forgiveness, producing six dimensions: need for acceptance, maintenance of relationship, pervasiveness of negative event, maintenance of social harmony, non-commitment, and consideration. The authors regarded 'consideration' and 'pervasiveness of negative events' as motives characterised by altruism, which reflected benevolence and concern for the perpetrator's welfare. The remaining motives were egocentric in nature, reflecting a concern for personal interest.

Takada and Ohbuchi (2013) later categorized the motives for forgiveness that they had previously identified into relationship-oriented motives and self-oriented motives. They identified three motives for forgiveness that loaded highly on the relationship-focussed dimension of forgiveness: sympathy, maintenance of relationship, and generosity. Conversely, forgiveness motivated by maintenance of social harmony, stress reduction, need for acceptance, and protection of identity loaded highly on the self-focussed dimension. Integrating these results into earlier theorising by Baumeister et al. (1998), the authors found that the relationship-oriented motives encouraged 'true forgiveness', which is associated with

collaborative engagement with the offender and more satisfying outcomes. On the other hand, self-oriented motives prompted 'hollow forgiveness', which was associated with avoidance and less satisfying outcomes for the victim.

Ballester, Chatri, Muñoz Sastre, Rivière, and Mullet (2011) also conducted an exploratory factor analysis that aimed to delineate the main motives for forgiveness, using a sample of Western Europeans. Their analysis revealed that forgiveness appeared to be primarily fuelled by three largely independent kinds of motives: sympathy for the offender, applying a moral principle, and preserving a meaningful relationship.

The first motive, labelled 'having recovered sympathy for a repentant', is motivated by sympathetically seeing the offender as someone who acted involuntarily or who was able to recognize their wrong and apologise. The second motive, labelled 'applying a moral principle', reflected an intrinsic desire to conform to moral norms which were generally religious in nature. In most instances this form of forgiveness was found to be unconditional and resulted in a full change of heart toward the offender. The third motive, labelled 'preserving a meaningful relationship' was found to be associated with a strong need for affiliation as it functioned to preserve the offender's love and affection. Interestingly, the authors also found that participants reported a form of pseudo-forgiveness that was used to manipulate or control the offender. Forgiveness of this nature is lorded over the offender so that the victim can assume a position of moral ascendency which is used to dominate or humiliate the offender.

Unlike earlier factor analyses of forgiveness motives, Ballester et al. (2011) identified motives that didn't appear to be entirely self-serving, but rather were based on empathy and religious beliefs. In fact, the strongest motives evoked were

directly or indirectly linked with religion: morality and sympathy (as a result of the offender's repentance). Notably, these motives were most strongly endorsed by participants who reported greater religiosity, perhaps explaining why such motives were not present in similar studies conducted on less religious samples of Japanese university students (Takada & Ohbuchi, 2004; Takada & Ohbuchi, 2008, 2013).

While the specific motives for forgiveness in the studies discussed thus far have differed to some degree, they generally identified that forgiveness could function to benefit the victim, the offender, or their relationship. Building on this idea, Strelan et al. (2013) developed a more general typology of forgiveness motives, by analysing forgiveness on the basis of its functional properties (i.e., what forgiveness achieves for a victim). They argued that when a victim forgives their transgressor there are three relevant units: the victim, the transgressor, and their relationship. When going through the forgiveness process the victim can have thoughts and feelings about the self, the offender, or the relationship, and can be motivated to forgive in order to benefit each of these factors to varying degrees. For example, when motivated by the self, forgiveness may function as a means to tolerate or avoid the pain of an interpersonal transgression. On the other hand, forgiveness motivated by the transgressor or the relationship is not driven by an attempt to regulate one's own emotions, but rather aims to change either the offender's emotional state or the state of the relationship.

Strelan et al. (2013) made a distinction between relationship-focussed and offender-focussed forgiveness, suggesting that to varying degrees forgiveness can function to preserve the relationship and/or relieve the offender of unpleasant emotions such as guilt. However, in their initial qualitative assessment of 243 participants, they found that only 3% reported forgiving for the sake of the offender,

indicating that purely altruistic forgiveness is somewhat rare. This is consistent with lay belief surveys (e.g., Younger et al., 2004), which have also found relatively little support for the idea that people forgive for the sake of an offender. Rather, to the extent that forgiveness is other-oriented it generally functions to restore the relationship rather than being driven solely by sympathy or generosity.

1.3.1.4 *Workplace forgiveness motives*

A victim's motivation to forgive is likely to be dependent on the nature of the relationship and the context in which forgiveness is granted. The forgiveness typologies discussed so far (e.g., Ballester et al., 2011; Takada & Ohbuchi, 2004) have mainly focussed on transgressions within close interpersonal relationships. In such contexts, it is likely that other- and relationship-oriented motives will be more prevalent than in less close relationships such as in a workplace. Within a workplace, relationships are often shaped by status differences, power differentials, and task structures. These characteristics may require individuals to work with supervisors by assignment rather than by choice, and are therefore likely to change the way victims respond following a transgression. As such, individuals within organisations may approach forgiveness at work differently than forgiveness within personal relationships. For this reason, several authors have sought to create forgiveness motive typologies that are specific to an organisational context.

Cox et al. (2012) investigated employee's motives for forgiveness within the workplace, focussing on forgiveness of co-workers and supervisors. Their forgiveness typology amalgamated the research of Trainer (1981) and Bright et al. (2006). The forgiveness motive typology created by Trainer (1981) was generated through interviews with divorced couples, and outlined three specific motives for forgiveness: expedient (forgiving behaviour as a means to an end, e.g., to avoid

harm), role-expected (forgiving because society, family, or church expects it), and intrinsic (forgiving because of internal moral principles). Alternatively, as discussed previously, Bright et al. (2006) interviewed workers from a trucking company and identified two motives for forgiveness: transcendence (i.e., wanting to learn from the experience and focus on positive thoughts and emotions) and pragmatic forgiveness (i.e., because it was in one's best interests to forgive the offender). Pulling these two typologies together, Cox et al. (2012) identified five reasons for forgiving in a workplace context: response to an apology, moral reasons, religious obligation, relationship with the offender, and lack of alternatives.

Cox et al. (2012) argued that these five motives lie along a continuum from extrinsically motivated to intrinsically motivated forgiveness. Intrinsically motivated forgiveness occurs when a victim is driven by internal rewards such as a desire to let go of the pain of holding onto resentment. Extrinsically motivated forgiveness is driven by external factors such as the need to maintain a working relationship or job as a source of income. They position forgiveness motivated by a lack of alternative options and forgiveness out of religious obligation at the extrinsic end of the continuum, and morally motivated forgiveness (i.e., because it is the right thing to do) at the intrinsic end of the continuum.

Thompson and Simkins (2016) also developed a typology of forgiveness motives within a workplace. Like Cox et al. (2012), their typology was also based on the foundational qualitative work of Bright et al. (2006). However, rather than positioning forgiveness motives on a continuum from extrinsically motivated to intrinsically motivated, they categorised forgiveness as being on a continuum from self-oriented to other-oriented.

They defined self-oriented forgiveness motive as the removal of negative thoughts and feelings on the basis of self-interested rational calculation. Forgiveness of this nature is driven by a transactional and calculating mindset aimed at removing any animosity or conflict which might negatively impact the victim. For example, a subordinate might forgive a manager's transgression in order to preserve a potential promotion, positive evaluation, or even continued employment. The authors note that this form of forgiveness is not simply impression management, as the individual forgiving legitimately attempts to move past their anger and resentment which might otherwise damage the relationship.

On the other end of the continuum, they defined other-oriented forgiveness motive as the removal of negative thoughts and feelings on the basis of concern for others and benevolence, wherein the individual feels empathy and compassion for the transgressor. This type of forgiveness is more in line with what some academics see as 'genuine forgiveness' (e.g., Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998). That is, forgiveness granted as a purely altruistic gift, free from self-serving calculations.

Importantly though, while the two motives were distinct, one is not superior to the other. Both forms of forgiveness fostered positive relational outcomes, however they did so through different pathways. People whose forgiveness was self-oriented were more inclined to exercise task-focussed helping which fostered positive relationship outcomes. Alternatively, people whose forgiveness was other-oriented were more likely to provide interpersonal support which also led to positive relationship outcomes.

1.3.2 Conclusion

Taken together, there exists a wide range of typologies and theoretical frameworks for what motivates victims to forgive. However, at least within close

interpersonal relationships, both lay understandings of forgiveness and the majority of typologies tend to include motives that can be categorised as either intrapersonal (focussed on the self) or interpersonal (focussed on the relationship) in nature. In fact, in Worthington's (2005) summary of the forgiveness literature he notes that the lack of consensus regarding a definition of forgiveness is precisely because some investigators consider it to be an interpersonal process, while others consider it to be an intrapersonal process. Given that forgiveness researchers and the general public adopt both intrapersonal and interpersonal descriptions of forgiveness, it does not seem reasonable to limit the study of forgiveness to one or the other, nor does it seem reasonable to combine the two and study them as though they are the same phenomenon. Rather, the two dimensions of forgiveness should both be measured. In this way, the study of forgiveness can be advanced by investigating the consequences and correlates of both intrapersonal and interpersonal forgiveness.

Building on this idea, I will argue that this distinction between relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness has implications for the impact of forgiving within exploitative relationships. Specifically, I argue that the effects of exploitation risk on the outcomes of forgiveness is dependent on whether forgiveness is focussed on the self or on the relationship.

1.4 The interpersonal context interacts with the intrapersonal context to determine the outcomes of forgiveness

In section two of this chapter I argued that the degree to which forgiveness has positive or negative outcomes for the victim depends on whether the offender is exploitative or not. In section three I outlined the wide range of reasons victims grant forgiveness and suggested that the consequences of forgiveness may depend on those reasons. In this section I will bring these two discussions together and argue that the outcomes of forgiveness depend on the combination of the victim's reason for forgiving and the degree to which the offender presents an exploitation risk. More specifically, I will argue that the outcomes of forgiving an exploitative offender depend on the degree to which forgiveness is focussed on the self, relative to the relationship.

1.4.1 The difference between self- and relationship-focussed forgiveness

When motivated by self-concern, forgiveness can function as a means to tolerate or avoid the pain of being hurt without having to restore a relationship (Strelan et al., 2013). As such, self-focussed forgiveness is not aimed at managing or altering the problem, but rather at regulating emotional responses to the transgression (Strelan & Covic, 2006; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Thematic analyses of lay people's reasons for forgiving indicate that a self-focus facilitates the acceptance and eventual removal of negative feelings and grudges (Younger et al., 2004). Thus, self-focussed forgiveness is a means of relieving feelings of anger and resentment without necessarily making oneself vulnerable to further transgressions within a relationship.

Alternatively, when victims forgive in order to preserve a relationship, the primary focus is not their immediate emotional state but rather their relationship

with the offender (Strelan et al., 2013). Accordingly, a victim may choose to endure greater emotional distress so as not to damage a valuable relationship. In such cases, forgiveness is an approach-oriented response to a transgression that functions primarily to restore and maintain relationships. Indeed, McCullough (2008) has argued that relationship preservation is the main adaptive function of forgiveness; forgiveness exists *because* it helps to preserve valuable relationships. Consistent with this argument, forgiveness often enhances pro-relationship motivations—such as cooperation, accommodation, and willingness to sacrifice—which contribute to relationship maintenance and repair (Karremans & Van Lange, 2004). Relationship-focussed forgiveness aims to communicate goodwill while refraining from behaviours and attitudes that may be perceived as harmful to the relationship.

Taken together, self-concerned and relationship-concerned forgiveness constitute quite different strategies for responding to a transgression. Thus, they should have different ramifications for how a victim is likely to feel about forgiving in the face of potential exploitation. In order to predict how self- or relationship-focussed forgiveness impact the outcome of forgiving an exploitative offender, we first need to understand the mechanisms through which forgiveness gains its association with distress and wellbeing. Accordingly, in the sections that follow I will explore the mechanisms through which forgiveness impacts wellbeing and discuss how those mechanisms might be altered by the victim's motivation for forgiving. In doing so, I outline a theory for how the underlying motivation for forgiveness changes the outcomes of forgiveness within exploitative relationships.

1.4.2 How does forgiveness reduce distress?

One of the primary reasons forgiveness has been argued to reduce distress and improve wellbeing following an interpersonal transgression is because it helps

to restore and maintain valued relationships (Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, 2003; Sastre, Vinsonneau, Neto, Girard, & Mullet, 2003). Tsang and colleagues' (2006) longitudinal research provides strong evidence that forgiveness facilitates the restoration of closeness and commitment following a transgression. Increased closeness is important for several reasons. First, humans have a fundamental need to belong and are averse to ending relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Forgiveness meets the need for connectedness by restoring social harmony and relational bonds (Karremans & Van Lange, 2004; Tsang et al., 2006). In addition, relationships bring with them significant material benefits that are threatened when forgiveness is withheld and closeness is decreased (Berscheid, 1983). Secondly, increased closeness can also relieve the victim of the stress associated with conflict (Bono & McCullough, 2006). A plethora of studies have demonstrated links between increases in emotional and social support, and improvements in physical, psychological, and social functioning (Szcześniak & Soares, 2011; Webb, Toussaint, Kalpakjian, & Tate, 2010). Accordingly, forgiveness influences aspects of wellbeing indirectly through relationship closeness and satisfaction.

Given that one of the primary mechanisms through which forgiveness relieves distress is by restoring relationship closeness, the most adaptive type of forgiveness will be that which most effectively restores closeness and commitment within a relationship. Strelan et al. (2013) investigated this very question, comparing how expressing self-concerned and relationship-concerned forgiveness impacted the relationship between the victim and the offender. They found that when forgiveness was motivated by the victim's concern for their own wellbeing, forgiveness actually distanced the victim from their transgressor. Conversely, when motivated by concern

for the relationship or the offender, forgiveness was found to draw the victim and the transgressor closer together. Accordingly, because forgiveness gains its association with wellbeing at least in part by restoring closeness and bolstering commitment, one might expect that forgiveness motivated by self-concern will less positively impact wellbeing compared to relationship-focussed forgiveness.

While relationship-concerned forgiveness more effectively facilitates the restoration of closeness (Strelan et al., 2013), it is not always the case that restored closeness is a desirable outcome for victims. Indeed, for forgiveness to even be relevant an offender must have seriously transgressed the victim. Following a transgression, victims experience a range of negative emotions directed at the offender (Ohbuchi et al., 1989). Because of those feelings, they are motivated to seek revenge or at least avoid the person (Aquino et al., 2006; Leary et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 1998). The desire for revenge is a natural response which often results in the victim distancing themselves from the transgressor, at least temporarily (McCullough, 2008). There is a reason forgiveness does not come easily, and that is because revenge is a self-protecting mechanism which has evolved to guard the victim against continual exploitation (Baumeister et al., 1994). Unforgiving responses deter exploiters from imposing further harm on their victims; without the threat of revenge, victims are vulnerable. Accordingly, victims whose forgiving response is motivated by relationship restoration face the difficulty of suppressing their inclination to protect themselves against further harm.

1.4.2.1 *Forgiving an exploitative offender for the sake of the relationships*

While anyone forgiving a transgression faces the challenge of overcoming self-protecting motives such as the desire for revenge, this challenge is even greater when the offender is perceived to be an ongoing exploitation risk. As was discussed

in section one, a significant factor that affects the level of distress experienced when forgiving is the degree to which the victim feels continued exploitation is likely to occur (Burnette, McCullough, Van Tongeren, & Davis, 2012). When an offender presents an ongoing exploitation risk, forgiveness has been shown to reduce victim wellbeing, erode self-respect, and increase re-offending (Gordon et al., 2004; Luchies et al., 2010; McNulty, 2011; Strelan et al., 2016). Critically, these risks are likely to be even more pronounced when forgiveness is focussed on the relationship. When forgiveness functions to restore a relationship, it occurs at an interpersonal level and is therefore more likely to be explicitly expressed to the offender (Wohl et al., 2006). An explicit expression of forgiveness signals to the offender that the transgression is behind them and that they can continue to go on with the relationship as they had before the transgression occurred (Baumeister et al., 1998). Given that the transgression occurred under conditions that have not changed as a result of forgiveness, it is possible that returning to the previous state of the relationship will lead to yet further harm for the victim. Thus, when the offender is perceived to be an exploitation risk, forgiveness should cause the greatest dissonance and therefore distress when it is aimed at restoring the relationship.

While forgiving an exploitative offender for the sake of one's relationship with them can be costly, it is important to note that there are other benefits to granting forgiveness that are not affected by the risk of exploitation. Forgiving can also mean freeing oneself of the negative emotions associated with unforgiveness (Worthington & Scherer, 2004; Worthington & Wade, 1999). Victims that choose not to forgive the offender in order to guard themselves against continued exploitation may be left with feelings of anger and resentment. Indirect evidence suggests that the health implications of sustaining such feelings can be substantial,

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including coronary heart disease and premature death (Miller, Smith, Turner, Guijarro, & Hallet, 1996). Indeed, the consequences of sustained unforgiveness can be even more detrimental than the negative emotions associated with forgiving an exploitative transgressor. Thus, while reconciling with a potentially exploitative offender can be detrimental to a victim's wellbeing, withholding forgiveness completely is not without drawbacks either.

1.4.2.2 Forgiving an exploitative offender for the sake of the self

As I have outlined, forgiving an exploitative partner involves trade-offs to which victims are sensitive (Burnette et al., 2012; McCullough, Kurzban, & Tabak, 2013). Clearly, reconciling with an exploitative offender has a number of costs. However, withholding forgiveness can leave victims with the detrimental consequences of sustained unforgiveness (Seawell et al., 2014), social judgement (Williamson et al., 2014) and the loss of material benefits (Berscheid, 1983). Accordingly, victims can benefit from employing strategies which provide some of the benefits of forgiveness, while minimising the costs of reconciling with an exploitative offender.

Critically, the benefits that can be gained by forgiving exploitative partners can be largely independent of the victim's relationship with the offender. Victims who, in order to guard themselves against continued exploitation, choose not to forgive their offenders may be left with (often unresolved) feelings of anger and resentment. These feelings may be equally as damaging as the negative emotions associated with forgiving an exploitative transgressor (Worthington & Wade, 1999; Worthington, Witvliet, Pietrini, & Miller, 2007; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009). Forgiving can also be beneficial as a means of freeing oneself from negative emotions (Worthington & Scherer, 2004; Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Commensurately, some victims report forgiving for the sake of their own wellbeing and not for the sake of their relationship (Lawler-Row et al., 2007; Strelan et al., 2013; Younger et al., 2004). When focussed on the self, forgiveness functions as a means to tolerate or avoid the pain of being hurt without necessarily attempting to restore a relationship.

Because victims forgiving for their own sake are less concerned with restoring the relationship, self-focussed forgiveness can also distance the victim from the offender (Strelan et al., 2013). As such, forgiving for the self may allow victims to free themselves from distress associated with the transgression while still guarding themselves against any further exploitation. Furthermore, because focussing on the self serves to distance the victim from the offender, it doesn't as strongly conflict with the instinctive behavioural preference to seek revenge or avoid the offender, and therefore does not generate high levels psychological tension. Accordingly, I expect that forgiving exploitative offenders will not necessarily increase distress when forgiveness is focussed on the self.

1.4.3 Conclusion

I began this chapter with a question: does it matter if forgiveness is expressed to benefit the self or to restore the relationship? The answer appears to be: it depends. Because self-concerned forgiveness protects the victim against further harm, it should be a more adaptive response than relationship-concerned forgiveness when the offender poses an ongoing exploitation risk. Conversely, when the offender does not pose an ongoing exploitation risk, relationship-concerned should be a more adaptive response as it more effectively facilitates the maintenance and restoration of valued relationships. Therefore, I hypothesise that a victim's motivation for forgiving will moderate the relationship between exploitation risk and

forgiveness-related distress, such that the negative effects of high exploitation risk on forgiveness-related outcomes will be magnified when forgiveness is focussed on the relationship, but somewhat buffered when forgiveness is focussed on the self.

Publication Information

Studies 1 and 2 (outlined in Chapters 2 and 3), have been published as a single paper in the British Journal of Social Psychology. Accordingly, the statement of authorship for each paper is identical.

Statement of Authorship

Title of Paper	For Whom We Forgive Matters: Relationship-focus Magnifies, but Self-focus Buffers against the Negative Effects of Forgiving an Exploitative Partner
Publication Status	☒ Published ☐ Accepted for Publication ☐ Submitted for Publication ☐ Unpublished and submitted work written in manuscript style
Publication Details	Gabriels, J. B., & Strelan, P. (2018). For whom we forgive matters: relationship focus magnifies, but self-focus buffers against the negative effects of forgiving an exploitative partner. British Journal of Social Psychology, 57, 154-173. doi:10.1111/bjso.12230

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Contribution to the Paper	Study concept and design, data collection, statistical analyses, writing and submitting manuscript, addressing referee comments.	
Overall percentage (%)	80%	
Certification:	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.	
Signature		Date:

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

  i.   the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);
 ii.   permission is granted for the candidate in include the publication in the thesis; and

iii.   the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the
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Chapter 2:   For whom we forgive matters: Relationship-focus magnifies, but self-focus buffers against the negative effects of forgiving an exploitative partner (Study 1)

2.1   Abstract

Increasingly, studies indicate that victims experience negative outcomes after forgiving offenders who present an exploitation risk. However, we demonstrate that the link between exploitation risk and forgiveness-related outcomes is dependent upon a victim's focus of forgiving. Employing a prospective design (N=110) we replicate previous research on the negative effects of exploitation risk and also test two new hypotheses. First, we found that forgiving explicitly for the sake of a relationship is associated with greater distress, relative to deciding to forgive for the sake of the self. Second, we found that relationship-focussed forgiveness magnified the distress caused by exploitation risk, whereas self-focussed forgiveness, relative to relationship-focussed forgiveness, provides a buffer against it. In short, these findings demonstrate that for whom we forgive matters.

2.2 Introduction

Forgiveness has the potential to unburden victims from the weight of hurt, resentment, and rumination (e.g., Wade et al., 2014). However, it can still be a risky undertaking. According to evolutionary theorizing, it is non-adaptive to forgive valued *exploitative* partners (e.g., Burnette et al., 2012; McCullough et al., 2013). Even so, people do—and when they do, another literature, on the costs of forgiving, confirms that forgiving is associated with negative personal outcomes (e.g., McNulty, 2011; Strelan et al., 2016).

There are many reasons why individuals act against what McCullough (2008) calls our "forgiveness instinct"—the evolved ability to identify the appropriate circumstances under which to forgive. First, humans have a fundamental need to belong and are averse to ending relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Forgiveness meets the need for connectedness by restoring social harmony and relational bonds (Karremans & Van Lange, 2004; Tsang et al., 2006). In addition, relationships bring with them significant material benefits that are threatened when forgiveness is withheld (Berscheid, 1983). Second, people often forgive automatically, particularly in close relationships (e.g., Karremans & Aarts, 2007). Third, not forgiving apparently minor transgressions may be viewed as churlish, leading to perceived worse consequences than forgiving, such as further conflict (Strelan et al., 2016). Fourth, victims may forgive to avoid the detrimental effects of being in a state of *un*forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1998; Witvliet et al., 2001; Worthington, 2001), which include damage to physical health (Seawell et al., 2014) and well-being (Lawler et al., 2005; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). So, while reconciling with an exploitative offender can be problematic, withholding forgiveness is also not without risks.

Clearly, forgiving an exploitative partner involves trade-offs. Humans are sensitive to the risks and benefits involved in forgiving (Burnette et al., 2012; McCullough et al., 2013) and can potentially forgive in ways that mitigate risk and maximise benefits. In this article, we propose that there is a way that victims can forgive valued exploitative offenders while protecting themselves against negative personal outcomes. We argue that the effects of exploitation risk on victim wellbeing are strikingly different once we take into account the *functions* that forgiveness serves.

2.2.1 A functional analysis of forgiveness

Forgiveness is a multi-faceted construct, possessing intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions, and indicated by a suite of inter-related cognitions, emotions, motivations, and behaviours (e.g., McCullough et al., 1998). In this article, we conceptualize forgiveness on the basis of its 'decisional' properties. Decisional forgiveness refers to a behavioural intention to act less negatively and more positively toward an offender—in contrast to emotional forgiveness which is a process in which positive other-oriented emotions replace unforgiving emotions (Davis et al., 2015). Accordingly, when we refer to the functions that forgiveness serves, we are referring to victims' reasons for intentionally acting less negatively and more positively toward an offender.

Functional analysis posits that feelings, cognitions, attitudes, beliefs, etc., exist to serve particular ends. Accordingly, different people may engage in the same behavioural and mental processes to fulfil different psychological functions (M. Snyder, 1993). Functional theorists argue that forgiveness serves primarily to restore relationships (e.g., McCullough, 2008)—referred to as *relationship-focussed forgiveness*—and/or relieve victims of the unpleasant feelings and cognitions

associated with sustained anger and resentment following a transgression—referred

to as *self-focussed forgiveness* (e.g. Baumeister et al., 1998; Strelan et al., 2013)[1].

When victims decide to forgive to preserve a relationship, the primary focus

is not their immediate emotional state but rather their relationship with their offender

(Strelan et al., 2013). Relationship-focussed forgiveness aims to communicate

goodwill while refraining from behaviours and attitudes that may be perceived as

further harming the relationship.

Relationship-focussed forgiveness differs from the closely-related concept of

'relationship value' (McCullough, Luna, Berry, Tabak, & Bono, 2010). Relationship

value is a measure of how much individuals value their relationships. Relationship-

focussed forgiveness reflects a motivation or rationalization of a decision to forgive

for the sake of a relationship. So, relationship value predicts the likelihood of

forgiving, whereas relationship-focussed forgiveness presumes that a decision to

forgive has already been made and is concerned with the intent underlying that

decision.

In contrast, self-focussed forgiveness is a form of emotion-based coping

(Strelan & Covic, 2006; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). It helps victims regulate

their responses to transgressions. Notably, there is no imperative in self-focussed

forgiveness to restore a relationship; self-focussed forgiveness entails forgiving for

the sake of one's own wellbeing, not the wellbeing of the relationship. Self-focussed

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[1] Strelan et al. (2013) argued that forgiveness functions to serve the wellbeing of the three units relevant when a transgression occurs: the victim, the transgressor, and their relationship. However, only three percent of their participants reported forgiving for the sake of the offender. Furthermore, lay belief surveys (Younger et al., 2004) find relatively little support for the idea that people forgive for the sake of an offender. For this reason, we have limited our analysis of forgiveness motives to the two most prominent motives: self- and relationship-focussed forgiveness.

forgiveness therefore allows victims to forgive and move on without necessarily making themselves vulnerable to further transgressions within a relationship (Strelan et al., 2013).

2.2.2 The adaptive effect of forgiving for the sake of the self

A large literature indicates that, all things being equal, forgiving *per se* reduces victims' distress and negative affect (e.g., Wade et al., 2014). However, until now, researchers have not tested how victims feel when they *explicitly* forgive for the sake of a relationship relative to *explicitly* forgiving for the sake of the self. Following transgressions, victims experience a range of negative emotions directed at offenders (Ohbuchi et al., 1989), so that typically they are motivated to retaliate or at least avoid transgressors (Aquino et al., 2006; Leary et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 1998). Thus, a decision to forgive offenders is in direct conflict with a gut-level behavioural preference (e.g., Burnette et al., 2012; McCullough et al., 2013). Victims experience the conflict more keenly when their primary purpose for forgiving is maintaining relationships with transgressors.

Conversely, self-focussed forgiveness does not conflict as strongly with the instinct to retaliate or avoid; the motivation behind forgiveness is self-preservation rather than approach-oriented. Thus, a decision to forgive for the sake of the self should generate less distress and negative emotions than the decision to forgive for the sake of the relationship.

2.2.3 Forgiving an exploitative partner: Differential effects of relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness

As we have noted, when individuals deliberately choose to forgive to maintain a relationship with one who has inflicted hurt, such a decision creates dissonance. The dissonance is magnified even more in relationships where the

partner is exploitative. In such circumstances, it may be more adaptive to forgive for the sake of the self. Doing so allows victims to free themselves of the burden of hurt without necessarily committing to resuscitating the relationship. Because victims forgiving for their own sake are less concerned with restoring the relationship, self-focussed forgiveness can also serve to distance the victim from the offender (Strelan et al., 2013), thereby guarding against further exploitation.

2.2.4 New hypotheses and methodological considerations

We aimed to replicate the well-established main effect of exploitation risk on forgiveness outcomes. The more exploitative a transgressor, the more victims will experience distress and negative emotions when they forgive. More importantly, we tested two novel new hypotheses. First, we tested for a main effect of forgiveness focus. Forgiving explicitly for the sake of a relationship will be associated with distress and negative emotions, relative to deciding to forgive for the sake of the self.

Second, we asked an important applied question: When an offender is an exploitation risk, but the victim still decides to forgive, can the forgiver's *focus* differentially affect how he/she experiences forgiveness? To answer this question, we tested an interaction hypothesis: Relationship-focussed forgiveness will magnify the distress caused by exploitation risk, whereas self-focussed forgiveness, relative to relationship-focussed forgiveness, provides a buffer against it.

Finally, we make a new methodological contribution. Previous research has measured the functions of forgiveness (Strelan et al., 2013). Such an approach reflects that forgiveness can serve several functions at the same time, to varying degrees. For example, when victims forgive primarily for the sake of relationships, they may also benefit themselves (e.g., by reducing anxiety about the implications of the offense for the future of the relationship; reducing anxiety that the offense

communicated disrespect). Thus, one limitation of the previous research is that it is not clear the extent to which relationship-focussed effects are confounded with self-focussed effects.

We addressed this problem by treating self-focussed and relationship-focussed forgiveness as separate entities. In Study 1 we employed a prospective design and operationalized focus as a difference score (i.e., between relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness). In Study 2, we employed an experimental design and manipulated focus so that participants forgave for the self or they forgive for their relationship. By effectively dichotomizing focus, we expected to gain a clearer picture of the relative effects of relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness.

2.3   Study overview

A primary aim of Study 1 was to gain access to real-life experiences of non-trivial transgressions. We employed a two-phase prospective design. We advertised for people who had not forgiven—or felt they were struggling to forgive—someone who had significantly hurt them within the last month. The transgressor was also required to be someone with whom participants were still in contact (specifically a current partner, friend, or family member). In the first phase of the study [T1] participants completed measures relating to the transgression, their relationship with the transgressor, levels of forgiveness, and distress related to their state of unforgiveness. One month after completing T1 measures we emailed participants reminding them to complete the study's second phase [T2], where they again indicated levels of forgiveness and distress. We did not administer an intervention between T1 and T2. We were confident that most participants would become significantly more forgiving over the course of that month, given that previous

research indicates that the majority of forgiveness occurs within the first few months after a transgression (McCullough, Luna, et al., 2010). Those who had forgiven at T2 were additionally asked to indicate their forgiveness-focus.

This design offered several advantages. First, by reporting on transgressions they could not or were struggling to forgive, participants responded on the basis of transgressions that were non-trivial. Second, it enabled us to measure and control for participants' level of distress prior to forgiving. By controlling for prior distress, we could show that judgements about an offender's exploitation risk reflected more than just negative emotional reactions to the transgression. Third, we could also measure the distress levels of participants who had not forgiven at T2, allowing us to compare the effects of forgiveness on distress against the effects of not forgiving at all.

2.4 Method

2.4.1 Participants

Participants were Australian psychology undergraduates participating for course credit. Two-hundred twenty-eight participants completed T1 measures, with 110 returning to complete T2 measures[2]. Thus, data from 110 cases were analysed (77 women; 33 men, $M_{age} = 22$, $SD = 7.07$).

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[2] Attrition was likely due to the fact that course credit was provided separately for participation at T1 and at T2. Data collection for T2 occurred towards the end of the semester. We suspect that the majority of students who did not return at T2 had by that point either already attained all their course credit, or had decided to do other studies instead. To ensure attrition was independent of any of the constructs measured, we conducted independent samples t-tests on all measures and found no difference between participants who completed phase two of the study and those who did not.

2.4.2   T1 procedure and materials

Participants provided the name of their transgressor, enabling survey customization, thereby enhancing engagement. They described the transgression and responded to the measures listed below (all items 1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*, unless otherwise indicated). Items within each measure were presented in random order. Scores represent the mean of items within a measures, with higher scores reflecting greater endorsement.

We measured the following variables for descriptive purposes:

Type of relationship with offender: Participants selected one of the following options: 'romantic partner'; 'same-sex friend'; 'opposite-sex friend'; 'family member'; or 'other'.

Time elapsed since the transgression (in days).

Harm severity: 'Compared to other hurtful events that have occurred in my life, this is the most hurtful of all'; and 'Right now the offence is still painful for me'.

Apology/amends: 'They have sincerely apologized or made amends for what they did to hurt me'.

Relationship closeness: The single-item Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). Participants indicated their current level of closeness with the offender. Scores range from one to seven, with seven indicating maximum relationship closeness.

To confirm ecological validity, we measured *forgiveness* with the 17-item Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations inventory (TRIM; McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003; McCullough et al., 1998), reverse-scoring where necessary (α = .90).

For statistical control purposes, we measured *distress* with the 21-item version of the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) (0 = *not at all* to 3 = *very much, or most of the time*) ($\alpha = .96$). To ensure participants responded specifically in relation to the transgression, the items were preceded by the instruction: 'Think about the fact that you have not be able to forgive [X] and indicate the extent to which you currently experience the following emotions'.

2.4.3 T2 procedure and materials

One month after completing T1 measures, we reminded participants by e-mail to complete the second phase of the study. To begin T2, participants described the transgression they had reported at T1. The purpose of this was to ensure participants reflected on the transgression again, in addition to making sure they were reporting on the same transgression as at T1.

To separate participants who had forgiven during the previous month from those who had not, participants reported forgiveness on the single item, 'I have forgiven him/her for what he/she did to me' (1 = *strongly disagree*; 6 = s*trongly agree*). We categorized participants who scored from 4 to 6 on this scale (*partly agree* to *strongly agree*) as having forgiven the transgressor, directing them to items assessing the focus of forgiveness. Participants who scored from 1 to 3 (*strongly disagree* to *partly disagree*) skipped the focus of forgiveness items and continued with the remainder of the questionnaire.

We measured *forgiveness* as described for T1 (17 items, T2 $\alpha = .92$).

We measured *focus of forgiveness* using Strelan et al's (2013) scale which assesses self-focussed and relationship-focussed motives for forgiving in response to specific transgressions. Only participants who had reported forgiving on the

forgiveness screening item responded to this scale. Five items assess *self-focussed forgiveness* (α = .85; example item: 'I forgave to help myself get over what happened') and five assess *relationship-focussed forgiveness* (α = .89; example item: 'I forgave because preserving the relationship was important to me'). We operationalized forgiveness-focus as the difference between a participant's total score on the relationship-focussed items and their total score on the self-focussed forgiveness items. Thus, positive scores reflected greater relationship-focus than self-focus, and negative scores reflected greater self-focus than relationship-focus.

We measured *exploitation risk* using the exploitation risk subscale (five items; α = .78) of the Relationship Value and Exploitation Risk scale (RVEX; Burnette et al., 2012) (sample item: "I feel like he/she might do something bad to me again").

We measured *distress* as described for T1, however the items were preceded by the tag 'Think about the fact that you have forgiven (*have not been able to forgive*) [X] and indicate the extent to which you currently experience the following emotions.'

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Background variables

Participants described a variety of hurtful actions, including neglect, lying, and public humiliation. The transgressions were committed by friends (58%), romantic partners (22%), and family members (20%), who were typically not very close to the victim ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.53$). The offences had occurred quite recently ($Mdn = 18$ days), were moderately upsetting compared to the most hurtful events that had occurred in participants' lives ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 1.14$), and were still hurtful

($M = 3.75$, $SD = .86$). Participants also tended to disagree that the offender had apologised or made amends at T1 ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.26$).

2.5.2 Differences between forgivers and unforgivers

Of the 110 participants who completed the T2 measures, the screening item revealed that 73 had forgiven the offender, and the remaining 37 had not forgiven. We conducted a series of t-tests to compare the forgiving and unforgiving groups on forgiveness, as measured by the TRIM scale. Descriptives for T1 and T2 measures are displayed separately for forgivers and unforgivers in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Study 1 means and standard deviations for non-forgivers and forgivers on T1 and T2 forgiveness, forgiveness-focus, exploitation risk, and distress (N=110)

| | Not forgiving at T2 ($N = 37$) | | Forgiving at T2 ($N = 73$) | |
| | M (SD) | | M (SD) | |
	T1	T2	T1	T2
Forgiveness	3.05 (0.73)	3.04 (0.74)	3.91 (0.55)	3.93 (0.55)
Forgiveness-focus	-	-	-	-.05 (0.72)
Exploitation Risk	3.16 (0.89)	2.84 (0.73)	2.69 (0.75)	2.41 (0.72)
Distress	5.04 (4.54)	4.27 (3.98)	3.91 (3.84)	2.77 (3.48)

Table 2.1 shows that forgiving participants had initially (i.e., at T1) reported greater forgiveness than unforgivers, $t(108) = 6.87$, $p < .001$. To assess changes in forgiveness between T1 and T2, two paired-sample t-tests were conducted; the first for participants who reported forgiving at T2, and the second for those who had not forgiven. Participants who reported forgiving their offender at T2 did indeed become more forgiving between T1 and T2, reporting significantly higher levels of

forgiveness at T2, $t(72) = 4.24$, $p < .001$. Conversely, participants who had not forgiven their offender at T2 reported no change in forgiveness between T1 and T2, $t(36) = 1.40$, $p = .169$.

Finally, at T2, participants who reported forgiving their offender reported significantly higher forgiveness compared to unforgivers, $t(108) = 7.09$, $p < .001$. Thus, the single item forgiveness measure appeared to adequately distinguish forgivers from unforgivers. Consistent with previous research on the benefits of forgiveness, forgivers also reported significantly lower distress at T2, $t(108) = 2.03$, $p = .045$.

2.5.3 Correlations between forgiveness-focus, distress and TRIM scale

For participants who reported forgiving their offender at T2, forgiveness-focus was positively related to forgiveness as measured by the TRIM scale, $r(71) = .33$, $p = .005$, indicating that the more relationship-focussed victims are, the more likely they will forgive. A greater focus on the relationship was also related to greater distress at T2, $r(77) = .30$, $p = .010$, but was not related to perceived exploitation risk, $r(71) = .00$, $p = .971$.

Finally, the self- and relationship-focussed components of the forgiveness-focus scale were positively correlated, $r(71) = .61$, $p < .001$, reflecting their common underlying association with forgiveness.

2.5.4 Effect of exploitation risk on distress as a function of forgiveness-focus

Next, we tested our main hypothesis, which was concerned with participants who had forgiven at T2. We conducted a moderation analysis (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991) to identify whether exploitation risk had a differential effect on distress as a function of forgiveness-focus (while controlling for prior [T1] distress).

We conducted a hierarchical regression with T2 distress as the outcome variable. After mean centering, we entered the independent variable (*exploitation risk*) and moderator (*forgiveness-focus*) at step 1. We entered the interaction term (*forgiveness-focus × exploitation risk*) at step 2. We entered the control variable, T1 distress, at step 3. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

The moderating effect of forgiveness-focus on exploitation risk predicting T2 distress (Study 1)

Step		T2 Distress		
		β	R^2	ΔR^2
1			.273*	.273*
	T2 exploitation risk	.428*		
	Forgiveness-focus	.298*		
2			.383*	.111*
	T2 exploitation risk	.431*		
	Forgiveness-focus	.262*		
	T2 exploitation risk × Forgiveness-focus	.334*		
3			.517*	.133*
	T2 exploitation risk	.182		
	Forgiveness-focus	.127		
	T2 exploitation risk × Forgiveness-focus	.261*		
	T1 distress	.470*		

Note. *$p < .01$

Table 2.2 shows that, at step 1, exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus were each significantly associated with T2 distress, indicating that as exploitation risk increased or as forgiving became more relationship-focussed, forgivers were more likely to experience distress as a result of forgiving. Importantly, at step 2, the

interaction term was also significant, and remained significant at step 3 when T1 distress was included. Thus, the effect of perceived exploitation on forgiveness-related distress significantly changed as a function of forgiveness-focus.

To illustrate this interaction effect, we plotted the relation between exploitation risk and distress (Figure 1) when forgiveness-focus was either one standard deviation above (i.e., more focussed on the relationship) or one standard deviation below (i.e., more focussed on the self) the mean. In Figure 1, exploitation risk scores one standard deviation above the mean represent exploitative relationships and one standard deviation below the mean represent non-exploitative relationships.

An analysis of the simple slopes indicated a significant effect of exploitation risk on distress when forgiveness-focus was high (i.e., more focussed on the relationship; $\beta = .445$, $p = .003$), but no significant effect when forgiveness-focus was low (i.e., more focussed on the self; $\beta = -.081$, $p = .521$)[3].

Finally, to rule out alternative explanations and test the stability of the effect, we repeated the regression analysis, including harm severity, T1 apology and relationship closeness as covariates at step 3. The interaction term remained significant.

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[3] We repeated the main analyses by running separate regressions in which we explored the moderating effect of self- and relationship-focus independently. First, prior to entering the control variables, relationship-focus significantly moderated the effect of exploitation risk on distress ($p = .050$), but self-focus did not ($p = .245$). This outcome is consistent with the simple effects component of the main analysis showing a significant effect in the direction of relationship-focus but not self-focus. However, whenever we controlled for T1 distress or the self-focus measure (which we entered at step 3, as per the main analysis), the interaction with relationship focus became non-significant. Thus, treating the foci of forgiveness in *relative* terms appeared to provide a clearer picture of its relations with exploitation risk and distress.
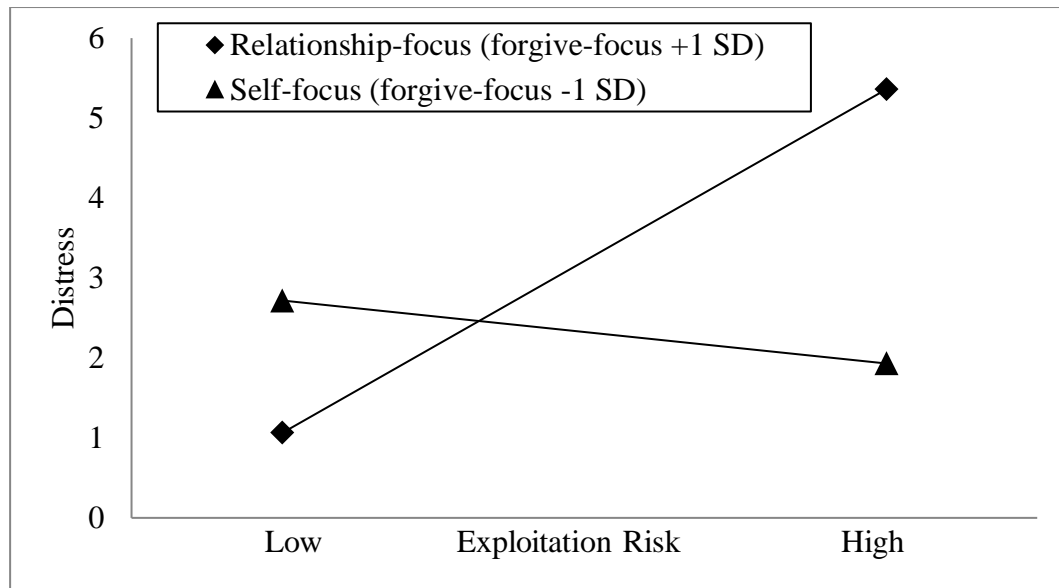
Figure 2.1 Predicting the trajectory of distress from exploitation risk for relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness (Study 1).

2.6 Discussion

Confirming our hypotheses, there were main effects for exploitation risk and focus, although these disappeared when T1 distress was controlled for. Most notably, and also as hypothesized, when forgiveness was more focussed on the relationship, exploitation risk was related to greater distress. Conversely, exploitation risk was not associated with greater distress when forgiveness was more focussed on the self. Finally, Study 1 provides further evidence that forgiving is associated with less distress compared to not forgiving.

Statement of Authorship

Title of Paper	For Whom We Forgive Matters: Relationship-focus Magnifies, but Self-focus Buffers against the Negative Effects of Forgiving an Exploitative Partner
Publication Status	☒ Published ☐ Accepted for Publication ☐ Submitted for Publication ☐ Unpublished and submitted work written in manuscript style
Publication Details	Gabriels, J. B., & Strelan, P. (2018). For whom we forgive matters: relationship focus magnifies, but self-focus buffers against the negative effects of forgiving an exploitative partner. British Journal of Social Psychology, 57, 154-173. doi:10.1111/bjso.12230

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Name of Principal Author	Jordan Brian Gabriels	
Contribution to the Paper	Study concept and design, data collection, statistical analyses, writing and submitting manuscript, addressing referee comments.	
Overall percentage (%)	80%	
Certification:	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.	
Signature		Date:

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

 i.   the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);
 ii. permission is granted for the candidate in include the publication in the thesis; and
 iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

Name of Co-Author	Peter Strelan	
Contribution to the Paper	Principal supervision, advice about the study concept and design, manuscript proofreading and approval.	
Signature		Date:

Chapter 3: Does it matter why victims forgive exploitative offenders? Directly comparing the effects of forgiveness expressed to benefit the self vs. the relationship (Study 2)

3.1 Abstract

Increasingly, studies indicate that victims experience negative outcomes after forgiving offenders who present an exploitation risk. However, we demonstrate that the link between exploitation risk and forgiveness-related outcomes is dependent upon a victim's focus of forgiving. Using an experimental scenario method (N=261) we replicate previous research on the negative effects of exploitation risk and also test two new hypotheses. First, we found that forgiving explicitly for the sake of a relationship is associated with greater distress, relative to deciding to forgive for the sake of the self. Second, we found that relationship-focussed forgiveness magnified the distress caused by exploitation risk, whereas self-focussed forgiveness, relative to relationship-focussed forgiveness, provides a buffer against it. In short, these findings demonstrate that for whom we forgive matters. We discuss theoretical and practical implications for understanding *when* forgiving is costly.

3.2 Introduction

A strength of Study 1 was that we gained insight into how forgiveness-focus operates in real and subjectively serious transgressions. Moreover, the study's prospective design allowed us to control for participants' level of distress prior to forgiving, providing evidence that the effects at T2 reflected more than just negative initial reactions to the transgression. Nonetheless, Study 1 possessed some limitations. First, the correlational nature of the design precludes us from making causal statements about relations between the key variables. Second, although attrition from T1 to T2 was unlikely related to the T1 variables (see footnote 2), the relatively high attrition rate may have introduced some unmeasured bias, and also left the sample used to test the interaction effect somewhat underpowered. We designed Study 2 to address these limitations.

Study 2 employed a 2 (exploitation risk: non-exploitative vs. exploitative) × 3 (forgiveness-focus: self vs. relationship vs. withheld) experimental design. One feature of our approach is that we took advantage of several paradigms used successfully in previous research. Replicating a paradigm developed by Burnette et al. (2012), we instructed participants to bring to mind a person who they thought was either exploitative or not exploitative (the exploitation risk manipulation). We then asked participants to imagine this person betraying them, in a scenario used previously by Strelan et al. (2016). Finally, borrowing from Wenzel and Okimoto (2012), we instructed participants to write an email in which they forgave for the sake of the self, the relationship, or not at all (the forgiveness-focus manipulation), and report how they felt after writing the email. This procedure allowed us to test our main hypothesis in a more controlled setting.

In Study 1, it was not possible to directly compare non-forgivers to relationship-focussed or self-focussed forgivers. Therefore, in Study 2 we included a third focus condition where forgiveness was withheld. This enabled us to contrast outcomes of non-forgiveness with the outcomes of forgiving either for the sake of the self or the relationship.

In addition to measuring forgiveness-related distress, Study 2 made a further contribution by measuring positive emotional aspects of psychological functioning. We used general negative emotions as a measure of distress, rather than the DASS (as in Study 1), since the DASS items would have seemed contrived in a hypothetical scenario. Thus, the two dependent variables for Study 2 were positive and negative emotions.

As in Study 1, we expected that exploitation risk would result in more negative emotions and less positive emotions when forgiveness was relationship-focussed, compared to when forgiveness was self-focussed.

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Participants

Participants were 261 North Americans (183 female, 78 male; $M_{age} = 37$ years, $SD = 11.9$) recruited via a labour-sourcing website, CrowdFlower, paid $1 each.

3.3.2 Procedure and materials

We asked participants to think of someone close to them (a friend, family member, or romantic partner). This person's name would appear thereafter, to make the transgression more personally relevant. This technique of bringing to mind an actual person and imagining them committing the transgression has been shown to

enhance personal relevance in hypothetical scenarios (e.g. Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010).

We manipulated exploitation risk by randomly assigning participants to one of two conditions where they were given the following instruction (see Burnette et al., 2012):

Non-exploitative: 'Please bring to mind someone with whom you are in regular contact and who, as a general rule, puts YOUR needs ahead of his/her own [i.e., prioritizes YOU].'

Exploitative: 'Please bring to mind someone with whom you are in regular contact but who, as a general rule, puts HIS/HER own needs ahead of yours [i.e., prioritizes HIM/HERSELF].'

We included the five-item exploitation risk subscale of the RVEX scale (Burnette et al., 2012) as a manipulation check (α = .90) (1 = *extremely disagree*; 11 = *extremely agree*).

Next, we instructed participants to vividly imagine the following hypothetical transgression (from: Strelan et al., 2016):

'One night you and [X] are out with a group of friends. [X] happens to tell everyone a story about you that everyone thinks is hilarious, but makes you feel embarrassed and humiliated. Understandably you are quite upset, so later that night you take [X] aside to query her/his actions and express how you feel.'

We then randomly assigned participants to one of three forgiveness-focus conditions. Each statement began with the sentence 'We are particularly interested in how people respond to being hurt'.

Relationship-focussed forgiveness condition: 'One way people can respond is to forgive for the relationship. When you forgive for the relationship, you are putting

the needs of the relationship ahead of your own. We would like you to write a brief email to [X] expressing that you have forgiven her/him for the sake of your relationship. Make sure to express that you are forgiving for the relationship.'

Self-focussed forgiveness condition: 'One way people can respond is to forgive for their own sake. When you forgive for yourself, you are putting your own needs ahead of the relationship. We would like you to write a self-declaration expressing that you have forgiven [X] for your own sake. This is a note written to yourself, for yourself, stating that you have forgiven [X] for embarrassing you. Make sure to express that you are forgiving for your own sake.' To be consistent with the conceptualisation of self-focussed forgiveness as an intrapersonal coping process (Strelan et al., 2013; Worthington & Scherer, 2004), forgiveness was not explicitly communicated to the offender, unlike in the relationship-focussed condition.

Withholding forgiveness condition: 'We would like you to write an email in which you DO NOT forgive [X]. Please, take some time to think about what you will write. What will you say to express your non-forgiveness to [X]?'

For the forgiveness-focus *manipulation check*, participants read: 'In my message I…' and then selected one of three options: 'forgave [X] for the sake of myself', 'forgave [X] for the sake of our relationship' or 'did not forgive [X].'

3.3.2.1 Background variables

We measured *scenario realism* with the item, 'I could imagine [X] telling a story about me' and *harm severity* with two separate items, 'If this had really happened to me, I would be upset/annoyed' and '[X]'s behaviour was hurtful.'

3.3.2.2   Dependent variables

The items used to measure positive and negative emotions were derived from the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Expanded Form (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994) (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *extremely*). Items within each scale were presented in random order. Scores represent the mean of items within the construct.

Positive emotions: 'In regards to my email/self-declaration I feel: happy, proud, hopeful, self-assured, determined, hopeful, content, strong, calm, and inspired' (nine items; α = .90).

Negative emotions: 'In regards to my email/self-declaration I feel: angry, annoyed, frustrated, irritated, disappointed, upset, resentful, anxious, ashamed, hostile, nervous, and alone' (12 items; α = .94).

3.4   Results

3.4.1   Background variables

In general, participants agreed that the hypothetical transgression would have been quite hurtful ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.57$) and could imagine the offender telling the embarrassing story ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.98$). Examples of the emails that participants wrote are: "I was very hurt and embarrassed by what you did. But I love you and want this relationship to work. So I forgive you for the sake of this relationship. I think it is worth it" (*relationship focus*); "I have chosen to forgive [X] because it's beneficial to myself. It is healthy for me to do that so I do not stress and cause myself more problems" (*self focus*); and "That was so embarrassing last night. You shouldn't share personal stuff like that in public. I was hurt and your drinking is no excuse. I don't trust you now" (*withheld forgiveness*).

3.4.2   Manipulation checks

Participants in the exploitation condition ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 2.30$) reported significantly greater exploitation risk than participants in the non-exploitation condition ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 1.68$), $t(196) = 8.39$, $p < .001$.[4]

The focus of forgiveness that participants reported significantly matched the focus condition they were allocated to, $\kappa = .609$, $p < .001$.

We conducted a one-way between subjects ANOVA to check that the forgiveness manipulation did not also affect perceptions of exploitation risk. This revealed no significant difference in exploitation risk between the three forgiveness conditions, $F(2, 258) = 0.33$, $p = .71$.

***3.4.3*   Effects of exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus on positive and negative emotions**

Means and standard deviations for positive and negative emotions in each condition are presented in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2.

To test the hypothesis that exploitation risk has a differential effect on positive and negative emotions as a function of forgiveness-focus, we conducted two separate two-way ANOVAs. Exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus were the between-subjects factors, with positive and negative emotions as the dependent variables.

3.4.3.1   Main effects

Exploitation risk had no effect on positive emotions, $F(1, 255) = .004$, $p = .95$, or negative emotions, $F(1, 255) = 1.16$, $p = .283$.

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[4] Levene's Test for Equality of Variances indicated that the two exploitation risk conditions had unequal variances. Therefore we used the pooled estimate for the error term for the t-statistic, and also made adjustments to the degrees of freedom using the Welch-Satterthwaite method.

There was a main effect of forgiveness-focus on both positive emotions, $F(2, 255) = 4.08$, $p = .018$, $\eta^2 = .031$ and negative emotions, $F(2, 255) = 32.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .124$. We conducted post hoc analyses using the Tukey HSD on all possible pairwise contrasts. Participants in the withheld forgiveness condition reported significantly higher negative emotions and lower positive emotions than participants in the self- and relationship-focussed conditions (all ps $< .05$). Participants in the relationship-focussed condition reported significantly higher negative emotions than those in the self-focussed condition ($p = .020$), but did not report different levels of positive emotions ($p = .98$).

3.4.3.2   Interaction

The two-way interaction between exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus was significant for negative emotions, $F(2, 255) = 4.07$, $p = .018$, $\eta^2 = .031$ (see Figure 3.1), and approached significance for positive emotions, $F(2, 255) = 2.85$, $p = .060$, $\eta^2 = .022$ (see Figure 3.2).

Table 3.1

Study 2 means and standard deviations for positive emotions within exploitation risk and forgiveness conditions (N = 261)

| | | Forgiveness condition | | | |
		Withheld (*n* = 85)	Relationship-focus (*n* = 88)	Self-focus (*n* = 88)	Total
Exploitation risk condition	Non-exploitative (*n* = 146)	2.55 (1.27)	3.40 (1.46)	3.03 (1.20)	2.99 (1.35)
	Exploitative (*n* = 115)	2.76 (1.04)	2.84 (1.32)	3.36 (1.58)	2.98 (1.35)
	Total	2.64 (1.17)	3.14 (1.42)	3.17 (1.38)	2.99 (1.35)

Table 3.2

Study 2 means and standard deviations for negative emotions within exploitation risk and forgiveness conditions (N = 261)

| | | Forgiveness-focus condition | | | |
		Withheld (*n* = 85)	Relationship-focus (*n* = 88)	Self-focus (*n* = 88)	Total
Exploitation risk condition	Non-exploitative (*n* = 146)	3.63 (1.37)	2.44 (1.41)	2.33 (1.20)	2.80 (1.45)
	Exploitative (*n* = 115)	3.41 (1.08)	3.29 (1.47)	2.24 (1.42)	2.98 (1.43)
	Total	3.53 (1.25)	2.84 (1.49)	2.29 (1.29)	2.88 (1.44)

3.4.3.3 *Relative effect of withholding forgiveness*

Our main aim in these studies is to examine the moderating effect of forgiveness-focus on exploitation risk. However, it is also instructive to compare the effects of forgiveness-focus with withholding forgiveness, which we did by conducting simple effects analyses within each of the exploitation conditions. In the non-exploitation condition, when forgiveness was withheld, negative emotions were higher, compared to relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness (*ps* < .05), while positive emotions were lower compared to self-focussed forgiveness (*p* < .05) and no different than relationship-focussed forgiveness (*p* = .072).

In the exploitation risk condition, negative and positive emotions were the same in the withheld forgiveness and relationship-focussed forgiveness conditions (*p*s > .087). However, negative emotions were lower (*p*s < .001) and positive emotions marginally higher (*p* = .053) in the self-focussed condition relative to withholding forgiveness.

3.4.3.4 *Forgiveness-focus × Exploitation risk*

Returning to the main aim of the study, the key test of our hypothesis was the interaction contrast between the self-focus and relationship-focus forgiveness conditions (i.e., excluding the withheld forgiveness condition). Thus, the amount of interaction contained in the 2 (self-focus vs. relationship-focus) × 2 (exploitative vs. non-exploitative) contrast was tested using the error term from the omnibus two-way ANOVA for all of the interaction contrasts. The results for negative emotions, $F(1, 255) = 5.34$, $p = .022$, $\eta^2 = .021$ (Figure 3.1) and positive emotions, $F(1, 255) = 4.84$, $p = .029$, $\eta^2 = .019$ (Figure 3.2) showed that the interaction was significant in both

analyses[5]. These results indicate that the effect of exploitation risk on positive and negative emotions depended on the victim's focus of forgiveness. We then examined the effects of the exploitation risk manipulation for participants in the self-focussed and relationship-focussed conditions separately.
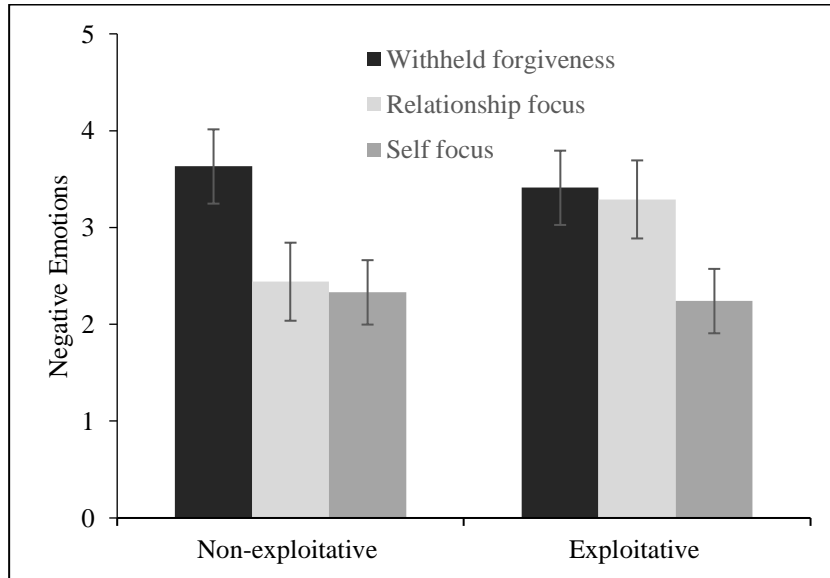
Figure 3.1 The effects of exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus on negative emotions (Study 2). The 95% confidence intervals are represented in the figure by the error bars attached to each column.

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[5] We also conducted analyses with exploitation risk as the moderator. The interaction effect was retained for distress (Study 1) and negative emotions (Study 2), with the same pattern emerging. When exploitation risk and relationship focus is high, forgiving is a negative experience for victims. Outcomes are the same in the self-focus condition, regardless of the level of exploitation risk.
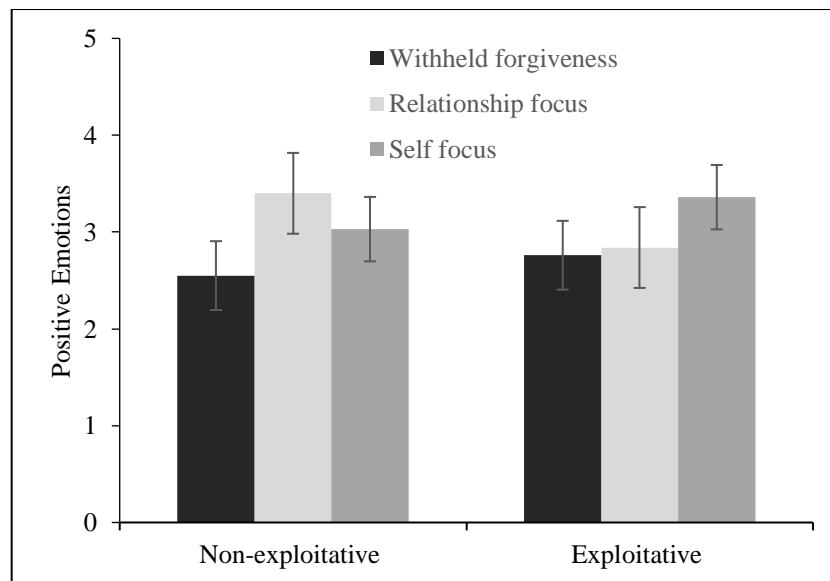
Figure 3.2 The effects of exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus on positive emotions (Study 2). The 95% confidence intervals are represented in the figure by the error bars attached to each column.

3.4.3.5 Simple effects

For participants in the self-focussed condition, there was no significant difference in negative ($p = .752$) or positive emotions ($p = .257$) between the two exploitation risk conditions. However, for participants in the relationship-focussed condition, those forgiving an exploitative offender reported significantly higher negative emotions ($p = .003$) and lower positive emotions ($p = .049$). Thus, forgiving an exploitative offender resulted in more negative emotional outcomes when forgiveness was focussed on the relationship but not when it was self-focussed.

3.5 Study 2 Discussion

Study 2 extended Study 1 by experimentally manipulating exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus, and assessing the impact on positive and negative emotions using a standardised transgression. This time there was no main effect for exploitation risk, but there was one for forgiveness focus on negative emotions.

Notably, the moderation hypothesis received support. When participants imagine forgiving for the sake of their relationship with the exploitative offender, they are more likely to indicate negative emotions, and less likely to indicate positive emotions, relative to those participants imagining forgiving within a non-exploitative relationship. Conversely, positive and negative emotions remained the same across the non-exploitative and exploitative conditions when forgiveness was self-focussed.

Importantly, there is evidence that self-focussed forgiveness can buffer the deleterious effects of exploitation risk. In the exploitative condition, self-focussed forgiveness predicted lower levels of negative emotion and marginally higher levels of positive emotion compared to relationship-focussed forgiveness.

Finally, we extended upon Study 1 by demonstrating that when an offender is not an exploitation risk, withholding forgiveness has worse outcomes than forgiving, regardless of the focus. However, when an offender *is* an exploitation risk, if victims forgive for the sake of the relationship the outcomes are no better than withholding forgiveness.

3.6   General Discussion (Studies 1 and 2)

Two studies, one prospective and one experimental, provided complementary evidence for our new hypotheses in particular. First, in Study 1, we replicated previous research showing that, all things being equal, forgiving exploitative offenders is a negative experience for victims (e.g., McNulty, 2011; Strelan et al., 2016).

Second, we found support for a new hypothesis that the focus of forgiveness affects how victims experience the outcomes of forgiveness. In both studies, forgiving for the sake of the relationship was associated with increased distress or negative emotions, relative to forgiving for the sake of the self. This finding has

implications for arguably the most robust sets of findings in the forgiveness literature, which is that forgiving *per se* leads to decreased distress or negative emotions. Clearly, we need to consider the functions of forgiveness when interpreting when forgiveness will be beneficial. On one hand, forgiving helps restore a valued relationship—which, in itself, may be beneficial. On the other hand, forgiving explicitly for the sake of that relationship has deleterious affective consequences for the victim. As such, our findings suggest somewhat of a paradox: victims might be motivated to forgive to maintain their relationship, but at the same time, relative to forgiving for their own sake, they do not feel good about it.

Third, we found support for our other new hypothesis, which proposed a moderating effect of forgiveness focus on exploitation risk. In both studies, forgiving exploitative offenders to restore a relationship is linked to higher distress and negative emotions, relative to forgiving for the sake of the self. In fact, Study 2 suggests that if victims forgive an exploitative offender more for the sake of their relationship than the self, they may as well not forgive at all, since the emotional outcomes are effectively the same.

3.6.1   Limitations and Future Directions

A strength of the present studies is that they sought to maximize ecological validity, measuring responses to actual transgressions in Study 1, and, in Study 2, asking participants to communicate forgiving in a way that reflected relationship- and self-focussed forgiving processes—i.e., relationship-focussed forgiveness was communicated to the transgressor whereas self-focussed forgiveness was a private matter. However, this strength could also be a limitation, particularly with regards to the manipulation in Study 2. It is possible that the negative effects of relationship-focussed forgiveness might have been different if it was not explicitly expressed to

the offender (as was done in the self-focussed condition). However, it is also possible that the outcomes of relationship-focussed forgiveness could have been even more negative if it was not communicated, as it can be empowering to actually communicate forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not a linear process; feelings toward a transgressor can change from day to day (McCullough et al., 2003; McCullough, Luna, et al., 2010; Tsang et al., 2006). Thus, a limitation of the studies is that we assessed forgiveness outcomes at a sole time point. Establishing how forgiveness-focus and exploitation risk interact across time is particularly important, because the effectiveness of a response to a transgression is dependent upon when it is used in the aftermath of a betrayal (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). For example, avoidance is typically a more helpful response in the short term as it can help facilitate other, potentially more sustainable, means of coping with betrayal. However, when used as a longterm strategy, avoidance may exacerbate distress (C. R. Snyder & Pulvers, 2001). Because self-focussed forgiveness reflects a more avoidant response (Strelan & Covic, 2006; Strelan et al., 2013), its utility as a means of coping could be unsustainable in the long term. So, while self-focussed forgiveness might allow for temporary relief from the distress of a transgression, it might also result in the maintenance of dangerous relationships. Accordingly, any conclusions drawn from the present studies may only be applicable to the short term. Further research should explore whether self-focussed forgiveness is adaptive in the long term.

Similarly, exploitation risk was relatively mild in our studies. Thus, our findings may not generalise to relationships characterised by more severe exploitation. For instance, if self-focussed forgiveness leads to a reduction in strong negative emotions associated with unforgiveness, it may also inhibit necessary

escape behaviours (McNulty, 2011). Caution should therefore be taken in recommending self-focussed forgiveness—indeed, perhaps, any form of forgiveness—within potentially dangerous relationships.

One should also be cautious when interpreting what is driving our effects. The simple effects analyses (and the alternative interactions reported in footnote 5) indicate that when relationship-focussed forgiveness and exploitation risk are high, forgiving is non-adaptive. Meanwhile, the effect of self-focussed forgiveness on distress and negative emotions is the same across exploitation risk conditions. So, any effect of self-focussed forgiveness is *relative* to relationship-focussed forgiveness. And, as self-focussed forgiveness is an emotion-focussed rather than a problem-focussed coping mechanism (e.g., Strelan & Covic, 2006; Worthington & Scherer, 2004) we would not claim that it *actively reduces* such effects.

Thus, there is much scope for future researchers to identify if self-focussed forgiveness, in and of itself, has the capacity to dampen negative outcomes and, if so, under what conditions. For example, self-focussed forgiveness might actively improve wellbeing when a victim is no longer involved with a transgressor, but still cannot move on. Forgiving for the sake of the self should be beneficial relative to continuing to ruminate.

Relatedly, in our theorizing, we have suggested that relationship-focussed forgiveness is associated with increased negative affect because there is greater dissonance when forgiving to maintain a relationship with one who has caused hurt (relative to self-focussed forgiveness). We have also suggested that self-focussed forgiving (relative to relationship-focussed forgiving), makes victims feel less vulnerable. Future research should now consider testing the psychological processes underlying the differential focus effects.

Finally, the finding that forgiveness focus affects how forgiveness is experienced suggests that measures of forgiveness which emphasize either relationship- or self-focussed aspects of forgiveness may result in different conclusions. For example, the most widely-used measure of forgiveness, the TRIM scale (McCullough et al., 2003; McCullough et al., 1998), is highly correlated with the measure of relationship-focussed forgiveness (Strelan et al., 2013). Studies using the TRIM might therefore exaggerate the positive outcomes of forgiving within non-exploitative relationships, as well as the negative outcomes of forgiving within exploitative relationships.

3.6.2   Conclusion

Previous scholarship on evolutionary theory has demonstrated that when exploitation risk and relationship value are high, it is non-adaptive to (e.g., Burnette et al., 2012; McCullough, Kurzban, & Tabak, 2010). Another literature on the costs of forgiveness confirms the consequences of acting in a non-adaptive way; forgiving valued exploitative offenders is associated with negative outcomes (e.g., McNulty, 2011; Strelan et al., 2016). Our studies integrate and extend these two literatures. We have shown that victims can protect themselves against the negative consequences of forgiving exploitative offenders by forgiving for the sake of the self. In this way, victims can move on while at the same time minimising the psychological costs of restoring relationships with exploitative partners.

In short, for whom we forgive matters. We have provided novel evidence that forgiving for the sake of a relationship is more negative than forgiving for the sake of the self. Notably, for whom we forgive matters most when offenders constitute an exploitation risk.

Statement of Authorship

Title of Paper	Study 3: Does it matter why people forgive organisations? (Experimental study)
Publication Status	☐ Published ☐ Accepted for Publication ☐ Submitted for Publication ☒ Unpublished and submitted work written in manuscript style
Publication Details	N/A

Principal Author

Name of Principal Author	Jordan Brian Gabriels	
Contribution to the Paper	Study concept and design, data collection, statistical analyses, writing manuscript.	
Overall percentage (%)	80%	
Certification:	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.	
Signature		Date:

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

i.   the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);

ii.   permission is granted for the candidate in include the publication in the thesis; and

iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

Name of Co-Author	Peter Strelan	
Contribution to the Paper	Principal supervision, advice about the study concept and design, manuscript proofreading.	
Signature		Date:

Chapter 4: The outcomes of forgiving exploitative organisations for the sake of the self or the relationship (Study 3)

4.1 Abstract

Previous research has demonstrated that outcomes of forgiving an exploitative offender depend on why the victim decided to forgive in the first place (Cox et al., 2012; Gabriels & Strelan, 2018; Strelan et al., 2013). However, this research has exclusively focussed on forgiveness within clearly defined interpersonal dyads. Accordingly, the present study aimed to test the outcomes of relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness of an exploitative organisation, rather than a single individual. I hypothesised that relative to relationship-focussed forgiveness, self-focussed forgiveness would provide a buffer against the negative effects of exploitation. I tested this hypothesis using an experimental scenario method (N=206), where participants imagined forgiving a hypothetical organisation. Unlike previous research on interpersonal forgiveness, the effect of exploitation risk on negative outcomes remained the same when forgiveness was either relationship-focussed or self-focussed. However, a significant interaction effect was found for positive outcomes. I discuss several explanations for this difference in results.

4.2 Introduction

Forgiveness has generally been shown to have positive outcomes within non-exploitative relationships (e.g., Wade et al., 2014) and less positive outcomes in exploitative relationships (e.g., Luchies et al., 2010; McNulty, 2011). However, other research indicates that the outcomes of forgiveness can change depending on the reason that compels forgiveness (e.g., Cox et al., 2012; Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). Taken together, these findings have implications for arguably the most robust set of findings in the forgiveness literature – that is, that forgiving *per se* leads to decreased distress and negative emotions. Instead, it might be the case that the degree to which forgiveness is beneficial depends on *why* victims forgive.

Importantly though, this line of inquiry is still in its infancy. More research is needed to test the effect of forgiveness motives in response to more varied transgressions, and with more varied research methods. Accordingly, the aim of the present study is to expand the focus of forgiveness research by testing the impact of different forgiveness motives in a new setting; namely, in a context where the offender is an entire organisation rather than a single individual.

4.2.1 How does the reason for deciding to forgive impact the outcomes of forgiveness?

There exists a wide range of typologies and theoretical frameworks for what motivates victims to forgive. However, the majority of typologies tend to include motives that can be categorised as either intrapersonal (focussed on the self) or interpersonal (focussed on the relationship) (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1998; Strelan et al., 2013; Thompson & Simkins, 2016; Younger et al., 2004). When victims decide to forgive to preserve a relationship, the primary focus is not their immediate emotional state but rather their relationship with the offender (Strelan et al., 2013).

In contrast, self-focussed forgiveness is a form of emotion-based coping (Strelan & Covic, 2006; Worthington & Scherer, 2004) with no imperative to restore the relationship.

Because victims forgiving for their own sake are not necessarily committing to resuscitating the relationship, self-focussed forgiveness does not conflict as strongly with the instinct to retaliate or avoid an offender following a transgression. In contrast, deliberately choosing to forgive in order to maintain a relationship is in direct conflict with the desire to retaliate or avoid someone who has inflicted hurt. Accordingly, a decision to forgive for the sake of a relationship creates dissonance in the mind of the forgiver. Consistent with this theory, Gabriels and Strelan (2018) have demonstrated that forgiving explicitly for the sake of a relationship is associated with greater distress, relative to deciding to forgive for the sake of the self. Furthermore, they have shown that the distress associated with exploitation is magnified when victims forgive for the sake of a relationship, relative to forgiving for their own sake.

4.2.2 Forgiving a nebulous other

Research exploring the impact of forgiveness motives (e.g., Cox et al., 2012; Gabriels & Strelan, 2018) has contributed to an important advance in understanding of how forgiveness affects victims. However, it has been limited in that it has solely focussed on forgiveness within clearly defined interpersonal dyads. Indeed, much of the research on forgiveness has focussed primarily on revenge and forgiveness between individuals in close relationships. However, as I will argue, revenge and forgiveness does not only exist between individuals (Bright et al., 2006; Enright et al., 2016; Neto, Da Conceição Pinto, & Mullet, 2007). For example, within an organisational setting it is often the case that people feel transgressed against not by

individual co-workers or managers, but rather by the organisation as a whole (Gibson & Callister, 2009; Rousseau, 1989).

Aquino et al. (2003, p. 1) have defined forgiveness within a workplace setting as "*cognitively acknowledging the wrongfulness of an injurious act and deliberately choosing to release negative emotions and inhibit the desire for revenge*". Interestingly, nothing in this definition suggests that the process of forgiveness is unachievable even when the offender is a nebulous entity. Furthermore, in the forgiveness literature it is stressed that forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation (Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992; McCullough et al., 2000), so the victim and offender need not go through a process of relationship dissolution and repair for forgiveness to be relevant. Consistent with this view, research has shown that people can express forgiveness toward entire groups (Mullet, Nann, Kadima Kadiangandu, Neto, & da Conceição Pinto, 2010; Neto et al., 2007). If it is possible to forgive non-human entities such as organisations, it begs the question, are the outcomes of relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness the same when the offender is a non-human entity?

4.2.2.1 *The impact of relationship-focus when forgiving organisations*

Forgiveness motivated by relationship-concern is an approach-oriented response that functions to restore and maintain relationships following a transgression. However, when the offender is an organisation, what it means to forgive for the sake of the relationship is not immediately obvious. Forgiving to maintain a relationship with an organisation entails a deliberate attempt to preserve an implicit or explicit exchange agreement. In an exchange relationship, members give benefits with the expectation of receiving comparable benefits soon afterwards and do not necessarily feel a special responsibility for one another beyond ensuring

the ledger of exchange is roughly equal (Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark, Mills, & Powell, 1986). For example, members of organisations might exchange their time, energy and expertise for benefits such as income, status, social connections, and purpose. Thus, when a victim forgives for the sake of their relationship with an organisation, they choose to let go of anger and resentment so that they can preserve the exchange agreement they hold with the organisation. In doing so, the victim is better able to let go of their resentment regardless of the impact it has on their immediate wellbeing. This is in contrast to self-concerned forgiveness, where the victim's immediate emotional state is prioritized over the preservation of the exchange agreement.

As such, how is a victim likely to feel about deciding to let go of their desire to retaliate or avoid an organisation, so that they can continue their involvement with it? Gabriels and Strelan (2018) have argued that forgiving for the sake of a relationship requires acting against a gut-level behavioural preference to retaliate or avoid the offender. Accordingly, forgiving an organisation for the sake of one's relationship necessitates suppressing an immediate desire to retaliate, which at least in the short term should generate feelings of dissonance and therefore distress.

When the offender is an entire organisation, I hypothesise that the negative effect of relationship-focussed forgiveness will be particularly prominent. In such instances, letting go of the injustice is often a forced choice because the balance of power between an organisation and a single member of the organisation is considerably asymmetrical (Aquino et al., 2006). For example, in a workplace setting, an individual may be dependent on an organisation to ensure their continued income or career progression. Accordingly, a victim risks jeopardising their future livelihood by seeking alternative responses such as revenge or avoidance. Indeed,

Cox et al. (2012) have demonstrated that when forgiveness is a forced choice, victims are less likely to experience its positive affective consequences. On the basis of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002), they argued that because such a decision is extrinsically motivated it fails to meets a victim's need for felt autonomy, which ultimately results in increased distress (e.g., Baker, 2004).

I expect that the negative effect of forgiving explicitly for the sake of a relationship with an organisation will be intensified when the organisation is perceived to be an exploitation risk. If a victim feels that an ongoing relationship with the offender is likely to result in further exploitation, a decision to actively maintain that relationship is in direct conflict with the gut-level behavioural preference to retaliate or avoid the offending organisation (e.g., Burnette et al., 2012; McCullough et al., 2013). As I will discuss, in such circumstances, it may be more adaptive to forgive for the sake of the self.

4.2.2.2   *The impact of self-focus when forgiving organisations*

In the context of a transgression committed by an organisation, self-focussed forgiveness is an especially useful response. This is because victims are often in a position where they cannot directly influence the cause of their distress. For example, a single employee might have very little ability to impact a company downsizing and staff being laid off. In such cases, self-concerned forgiveness could be a constructive response, as it is aimed at regulating emotional responses to the transgression rather than managing or altering the problem (Lamb & Murphy, 2002; Strelan & Covic, 2006; Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

Unlike relationship-focussed forgiveness, self-focussed forgiveness does not conflict as strongly with the instinct to retaliate or avoid; the motivation behind forgiveness is self-preservation rather than an approach-orientation. When

forgiveness is self-focused, victims are more inclined to temporarily avoid the offender and the thoughts associated with the transgression in order to manage their emotional responses. Conversely, victims forgiving for the sake of a relationship are more focussed on actively trying to restore the relationship.

Qualitative studies of people's reasons for forgiving indicate that forgiveness focussed on the self can facilitate the acceptance and eventual removal of negative feelings and grudges (Younger et al., 2004). Thus, in a context where the victim is unable to impact the cause of their distress, such as when the offender is an entire organisation, self-focussed forgiveness should be effective at reducing distress.

Similarly, because self-focussed forgiveness does not force the victim to suppress their inclination to protect themselves, it should also have more positive outcomes than relationship-focussed forgiveness when the offender poses a continued exploitation risk. In part, this is because self-focussed forgiveness creates psychological distance between the victim and the offender relative to relationship-focussed forgiveness. Strelan et al. (2013) found that self-oriented forgiveness was associated with increased avoidance and decreased closeness with the transgressor. Accordingly, when motivated by the self rather than a relationship, victims are likely to feel less uneasy about forgiving an exploitative offender. Furthermore, if perceived exploitation does actually lead to exploitation, self-concerned forgiveness guards against future attacks by distancing the victim from the transgressor. In this instance, self-concerned forgiveness can be liberating, as it allows the victim to free themselves from the distress associated with the transgression, whilst protecting against further exploitation.

4.2.3 Hypotheses and methodological considerations

I aim to test the effect of self- and relationship-focussed forgiveness when the offender is an entire organisation. First, I will test for a main effect of forgiveness focus. I hypothesise that forgiving explicitly for the sake of a relationship with an organisation will be associated with less positive and more negative outcomes, relative to deciding to forgive for the sake of the self. Second, I will test the degree to which the forgiver's *focus* changes the relationship between perceived exploitation and the outcomes of forgiving an organisation. I hypothesise that exploitation will have a stronger negative impact on distress when forgiveness is relationship-focussed than when it is self-focussed.

The present study also aims to address a methodological limitation of previous research examining forgiveness foci. Previous research has asked participants to communicate forgiveness in a way that reflected relationship- and self-focussed forgiving processes—i.e., relationship-focussed forgiveness was communicated to the transgressor whereas self-focussed forgiveness was a private matter (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). However, manipulating focus in this way confounds focus with the public or private expression of forgiveness. Accordingly, it is possible that the negative effects of relationship-focussed forgiveness might have been different if it was not explicitly expressed to the offender. For example, the victim might feel more negative because the offender is aware that they have forgiven and therefore may take advantage of their forgiveness. The present study overcomes this limitation by manipulating forgiveness focus such that both relationship- and self-focussed forgiveness is expressed to a third party. Thus the degree to which forgiveness is publicly expressed is equivalent between conditions.

4.3   Overview of Study

The present study employed a 2 (exploitation risk: non-exploitative vs. exploitative) $\times$ 2 (forgiveness-focus: self vs. relationship) experimental design. Unlike previous forgiveness research which has aimed to manipulate exploitation risk (Burnette et al., 2012), I manipulated exploitation risk within a description of a hypothetical organisation that failed to pay the participant properly. Previous research by Burnette et al. (2012) has instructed participants to bring to mind a person who they thought was either exploitative or not exploitative. However, I thought this approach was infeasible given that the offender needed to be an organisation that the participant was directly involved with. Some participants may have struggled to bring to mind an organisations that they thought was exploitative or not.

In order to manipulate forgiveness-focus I used a similar approach to that used originally by Wenzel and Okimoto (2010) that was later adapted by Gabriels and Strelan (2018). I instructed participants to write an email to a colleague in which they forgave for the sake of the self or their relationship with the organisation. Participants then reported how they felt writing the email using a combination of affective and wellbeing items. This procedure allowed us to test our hypotheses in a controlled setting.

4.4   Method

4.4.1   Participants

Participants were 206 individuals living in the United States and Australia who provided usable responses in an online study (120 women; 86 men, $M\ age =$ 1.58, $SD = 0.49$). I gathered data from two sources, 96 Australian psychology undergraduates (69 women; 27 men, $M\ age = 19.49$, $SD = 3.99$) participated for

course credit and 110 North Americans (59 female, 51 male; M_{age} = 36.20 years, SD = 11.39) recruited via a labour-sourcing website, CrowdFlower[6]. The latter participants were each paid $1 for their participation.

4.4.2 Procedure and materials

The participants completed all procedures online. After providing consent and basic demographic information I asked participants to imagine that they worked for a hypothetical organisation called Comley Inc.

4.4.2.1 Exploitation Risk Manipulation

I then asked participants to imagine the following scenario:

"You have been working there for some time now and you are generally happy, however you have recently learnt that you have been under paid for the last 3 months. You have notified the payroll department and your claim is currently being processed."

I then manipulated perceptions of exploitation risk by randomly assigning participants to one of two conditions where they were given the following instruction:

Non-exploitative: 'Understandably, you are quite upset about the situation. However, in the three years you have been working at Comley Inc., this is the first time that something like this has happened. In all other instances they have acted in your best interest and you are confident that they will continue to do so.'

Exploitative: 'Understandably, you are quite upset about the situation. In the three years you have been working at Comley Inc., this type of thing has happened a

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[6] Controlling for participant pool did not change the result of any of the main analyses conducted in this study.

number of times. The company has rarely acted in your best interest and you are not sure that they will treat you well in the future.'

I included a three-item measure of exploitation risk as a manipulation check ($\alpha = .91$). The three items were: 'I would feel like something bad might happen to me again', 'I feel like Comely Inc. may exploit me', and 'I would be concerned about how I might be treated by Comley Inc.' These items were adapted from the exploitation risk subscale of the RVEX scale (Burnette et al., 2012). Each item was given a rating from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*.

4.4.2.2   Background variables

I then asked participants questions about the scenario, in order to assess the degree to which they were able to engage with the hypothetical situation, thought the offense was serious, and felt hurt. All items were given a rating from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*.

Scenario realism was measured with the item, 'I could imagine this happening.'

Seriousness was measured with two separate items, 'Comley Inc.'s actions were wrong' and 'under paying staff was a serious error.'

Harm severity was measured with the item, 'If this had really happened to me, I would have been upset.'

4.4.2.3   Forgiveness-focus Manipulation

I then randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions designed to manipulate the type of forgiveness they expressed to the offender (from: Strelan et al., 2016):

Relationship-focussed forgiveness condition: 'We are particularly interested in how people respond to being treated unfairly. One way people can respond is to

simply let go and move on for the sake of their relationship with an organisation.
When you do this, you let go of the incident so that you don't damage your
relationship with the organisation. Below is a message that was sent to you by a
colleague regarding the incident. Regardless of how you feel, we would like you to
reply to this message using the box below. In your message, please explain to your
colleague that you have decided to let go of the incident for the sake of your
relationship with Comley Inc.'

  Self-focussed forgiveness condition: 'We are particularly interested in how
people respond to being treated unfairly. One way people can respond is to simply
let go and move on for their own sake. When you do this, you let go of your anger
and resentment so that you can move on with your life. Below is a message that was
sent to you by a colleague regarding the incident. Regardless of how you feel, we
would like you to reply to this message using the box below. In your message,
please explain to your colleague that you have decided to let go of the incident for
the sake of your own wellbeing.'

  Participants in both conditions were then shown a screenshot of a text-
message containing the following message: '*OMG can you believe they have been
under paying us this whole time! What are you going to do?*' I then asked
participants to type a reply to the message according to the instructions given in the
forgiveness manipulation.

  I included a six-item measure of forgiveness focus as a manipulation check.
Three items measured the degree to which the participant was focussed on the self
(e.g., 'I chose to let go because it was a way to make myself feel better'), $\alpha = .78$.
Three items measured the degree to which the participant was focussed on the
relationship (e.g., 'I chose to let go because I wanted to maintain a good relationship

with Comley Inc.'), $\alpha = .83$. These items were adapted from an interpersonal forgiveness focus scale (Strelan et al., 2013). Each item was given a rating from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*.

4.4.2.4 Dependent variables

Finally, participants responded to the dependent variables. All measures were assessed using five-point scales (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*), unless otherwise indicated. Items within each scale were presented in random order. Scores represent the mean of items within the construct.

In order to measure positive and negative outcomes I utilized a combination of affective and personal wellbeing items. The affective items were derived from the PANAS-X (Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Expanded Form; Watson & Clark, 1994) and the items measuring wellbeing were adapted from a personal wellbeing scale previously used by Strelan et al. (2016).

Positive outcomes in regards to participants' message were assessed using seven items that measured positive affect (happy, proud, self-assured, hopeful, content, strong, and calm) and five items measuring positive wellbeing, an example item is: 'I can move on from the situation'. Items in the scale preceded by the tag 'how did writing that message make you feel?' In total the scale included 12 items; α = .93)

Negative outcomes in regards to participants' message were assessed using seven items that measured negative affect (weak, angry, annoyed, frustrated, upset, resentful, and anxious) and four items adapted from the Decision Regret Scale (Brehaut et al., 2003) that measured negative wellbeing, an example item is: 'choosing to let it go was not in my best interest'. In total the scale included 11 items; α = .89)

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Background variables

In general, participants agreed that the hypothetical offense was a serious error ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.05$); it would have been quite upsetting ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .93$); and they could imagine the offense occurring ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .99$).

4.5.2 Manipulation checks

To check the effectiveness of the exploitation risk and forgiveness focus manipulations, I ran a 2 (exploitation risk: non-exploitative vs. exploitative) $\times$ 2 (forgiveness-focus: self vs. relationship) analysis of variance using the relationship-focussed forgiveness, self-focused forgiveness and exploitation risk scales as the outcomes.

The results of this analysis revealed a strong effect of the forgiveness focus condition on relationship-focussed forgiveness ($F(205) = 9.14$, $p = .003$), and a moderate effect on self-focussed forgiveness, ($F(205) = 4.79$, $p = .027$). Individuals in the relationship-focussed condition ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.01$) reported significantly more relationship-focussed forgiveness than did individuals in the self-focussed condition ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.99$). Individuals in the relationship-focussed condition ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.08$) also reported significantly less self-focussed forgiveness than did individuals in the self-focussed condition ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.88$). The exploitation risk condition had a strong effect on measured exploitation ($F(205) = 94.77$, $p < .001$), with individuals in the exploitative condition ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.75$) reporting significantly more exploitation risk than did individuals in the non-exploitative condition ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.97$)

For discriminant validity purposes, I note that the exploitation risk manipulation did not influence relationship focussed forgiveness ($p = .203$), but did

have a moderate effect on self-focussed forgiveness ($p = .033$). Additionally, the

forgiveness focus condition had a small effect on exploitation risk ($p = .041$).

4.5.3 Effects of exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus on positive and negative outcomes

Means and standard deviations for positive and negative outcomes in each

condition are presented in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

Table 4.1

Means and standard deviations for positive outcomes within exploitation risk and

forgiveness conditions (N = 206)

		Forgiveness condition		
		Relationship-focus ($n = 107$)	Self-focus ($n = 99$)	Total
Exploitation risk condition	Non-exploitative ($n = 103$)	3.01 (.96)	3.01 (.96)	3.05 (.96)
	Exploitative ($n = 103$)	2.47 (1.02)	3.02 (.86)	2.71 (.99)
	Total	2.75 (1.04)	3.02 (.96)	2.88 (.99)

Table 4.2

Means and standard deviations for negative outcomes within exploitation risk and

forgiveness conditions (N = 206)

		Forgiveness condition		
		Relationship-focus (*n* = 107)	Self-focus (*n* = 99)	Total
Exploitation risk condition	Non-exploitative (*n* = 103)	2.42 (1.04)	2.19 (.73)	2.30 (.89)
	Exploitative (*n* = 103)	2.84 (.83)	2.47 (.78)	2.67 (.83)
	Total	2.65 (.95)	2.32 (.76)	2.49 (.88)

To test the hypothesis that exploitation risk has a differential effect on positive and negative outcomes as a function of forgiveness-focus, I conducted two separate two-way ANOVAs. Exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus were the between-subjects factors, with positive and negative outcomes as the dependent variables.

4.5.3.1 Main effects

Results revealed a significant main effect of exploitation risk on positive outcomes $F(1, 202) = 5.115$, $p = .023$, $\eta^2 = .025$ and negative outcomes $F(1, 202) = 8.343$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .040$ with participants in the high-exploitation risk condition reporting higher positive outcomes and lower negative outcomes.

No main effect of forgiveness-focus was found for positive outcomes $F(1, 202) = 3.097$, $p = .080$, $\eta^2 = .015$. However, there was a significant main effect of

forgiveness-focus on negative outcomes $F(1, 202) = 6.245$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = .030$, with participants in the self-focus condition reporting lower negative outcomes.

4.5.3.2   Interaction

The two-way interaction between exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus was significant for positive outcomes $F(1, 202) = 5.705$, $p = .018$, $\eta^2 = .027$. However, the interaction was not significant for negative outcomes $F(1, 202) = .357$, $p = .551$, $\eta^2 = .002$. These results indicate that the effect of exploitation risk on positive outcomes depended on the victim's focus of forgiveness. I then examined the effects of the exploitation risk manipulation for participants in the self-focussed and relationship-focussed conditions separately.

4.5.3.3   Simple effects analysis for positive emotions

For participants in the self-focussed condition, there was no significant difference in positive outcomes ($p = .930$) between the two exploitation risk conditions. However, for participants in the relationship-focussed condition, those forgiving an exploitative offender reported significantly lower positive outcomes ($p = .001$). Thus, forgiving an exploitative offender resulted in less positive outcomes when forgiveness was focussed on the relationship.
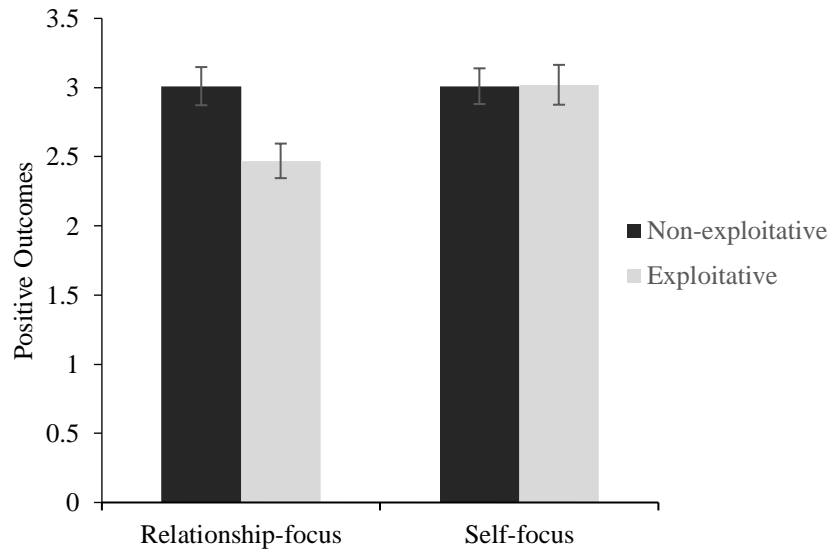
Figure 4.1 The effects of exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus on positive

outcomes. Error bars represent standard errors.
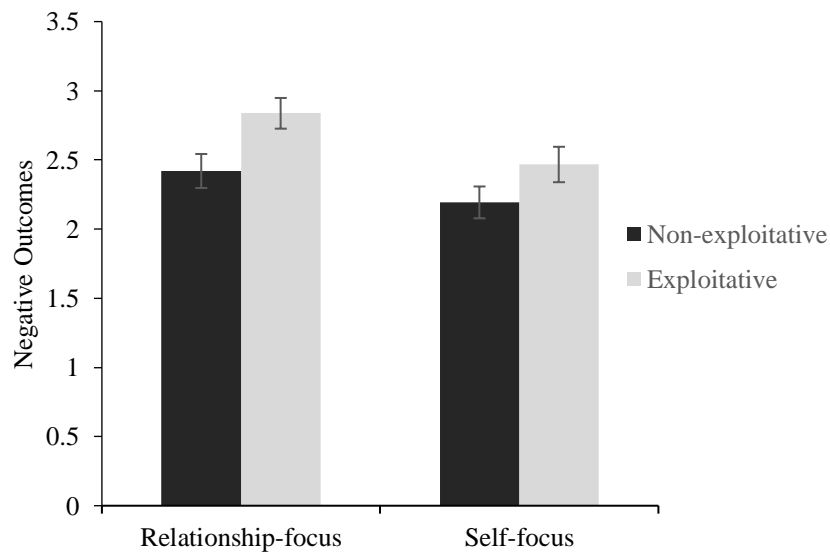
Figure 4.2 The effects of exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus on negative

outcomes. Error bars represent standard errors.

4.6 Discussion

Using an experimental design, I replicated the design of previous research

(e.g., Gabriels & Strelan, 2018) which has demonstrated that the focus of

forgiveness affects how victims experience the act of forgiving. However, I tested

this effect in the novel context of wrongdoing by an organisation. All things being

equal, I found that forgiving explicitly for the sake of a relationship, as opposed to the self, results in more negative outcomes but no differences in positive outcomes. The results of the experiment were also partially consistent with previous research which has demonstrated a moderating effect of forgiveness focus on the impact of exploitation risk. I found that participants reported less positive outcomes when they imagined forgiving an exploitative offender for the sake of their relationship. However, unlike previous research, the effect of exploitation risk on negative outcomes remained the same when forgiveness was either relationship- or self-focussed.

These results add to the growing body of research demonstrating that the outcomes of forgiveness depend on *why* a victim chooses to grant it (Cox et al., 2012). Indeed, not all motivations for granting forgiveness are related to uniformly beneficial outcomes for the victim. Our results suggest that deciding to let go of a transgression so that one may maintain a relationship with an organisation involves a trade-off. Letting go of the transgression might ensure the preservation of a mutually beneficial exchange agreement; however, the decision also results in less positive personal outcomes. Alternatively, letting go of a transgression for one's own sake results in more positive outcomes for victims, suggesting that self-focussed forgiveness could be a good option for victims of organisational transgressions.

Notably, unlike previous research on forgiveness of exploitative offenders, I did not find a difference in *negative* personal outcomes between people forgiving for their own sake versus for the sake of a relationship, only a difference in *positive* outcomes. There are two possible explanations for this discrepancy in results. First, one obvious difference between the present study and previous research was that the present study looked at forgiveness of organisations rather than individuals.

Forgiving exploitative offenders for the sake of a relationship generates dissonance in part because the victim forgoes the opportunity to exercise revenge and avoidance. However, it is likely that the ability to exact satisfying revenge—where the offender signals they understand why revenge was taken upon them (Gollwitzer et al., 2011)—is less when the offender is an entire organisation. Furthermore, when the offender is an entire organisation, the utility of revenge and avoidance to actually deter future exploitation is limited. Accordingly, a decision to forgive an organisation for the sake of the relationship in the face of exploitation could conflict less with the victim's forgiveness instinct (McCullough, 2008).

Secondly, a methodological consideration may account for the fact that I did not find elevated levels of distress for people forgiving an exploitative offender for the sake of their relationship. Previous research which has found such an effect (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018) manipulated relationship-focussed forgiveness by asking participants to express their forgiveness directly to the offender. However, in the present study I manipulated relationship-focussed forgiveness such that it was expressed to a third party, rather than to the offender directly. Accordingly, it is possible that the negative effects of relationship-focussed forgiveness previously found might have been due to the public expression of forgiveness. For example, victims might have felt more negative because the offender is aware that they had forgiven and therefore may take advantage of their forgiveness. Conversely, when forgiveness is not expressed to the offender directly, as it was in the present study, the victim does not make themselves so vulnerable to future exploitation.

4.6.1 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The limitations of this research must be acknowledged. First, I utilised a tightly controlled experimental design, measuring reactions to a single hypothetical offense at one point in time. This approach limits the degree to which conclusions can be generalised outside of this setting. Nonetheless, the study builds on previous research which has explored the impact of forgiveness focus, extending it in a slightly new direction. Specifically, we explored the impact of forgiveness-focus when the offender is entire organisation.

Secondly, while the distinction between self and relationship focus has consistently emerged in research on forgiveness motives (Baumeister et al., 1998; Strelan et al., 2013; Thompson & Simkins, 2016; Younger et al., 2004), it is possible that those motives are less salient when the offender is an entire organisation. For example, when the offender is an organisation, forgiving for the sake of one's relationship may be harder to distinguish from self-focussed forgiveness. When the offender is an organisation, self-oriented benefits such as income are tied to the relationship. Therefore, forgiving to restore a relationship often necessarily results in self-benefit. Accordingly, future research should aim to delineate exactly what the salient motives for forgiveness are when forgiving an entire organisation[7].

4.6.2 Conclusion

The present study aimed to test the impact of forgiveness motives in a context where the offender was an entire organisation, rather than a single individual. The results suggest that, by forgiving for the sake of the self, victims can experience more positive outcomes when forgiving an exploitative organisation.

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[7] Cox et al. (2012) have explored motives for forgiveness when forgiving transgressions committed by *individuals* within organisations but not transgressions by organisations.

While the findings were partly consistent with previous research which has demonstrated that the outcomes of forgiveness depend on why victims decide to forgive, some differences also emerged. Accordingly, more research is needed to explore how the outcomes of forgiveness change when the offender is an organisation. Thus, in future research on the outcomes of forgiveness and reconciliation, I encourage researchers to consider not only *why* victims forgive but also *whom* they forgive.

Statement of Authorship

Title of Paper	Study 4: A closer look at why do people forgive organisations. (Factor analysis)
Publication Status	☐ Published ☐ Accepted for Publication ☐ Submitted for Publication ☒ Unpublished and submitted work written in manuscript style
Publication Details	N/A

Principal Author

Name of Principal Author	Jordan Brian Gabriels	
Contribution to the Paper	Study concept and design, data collection, statistical analyses, writing manuscript.	
Overall percentage (%)	80%	
Certification:	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.	
Signature		Date:

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

i.   the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);

ii. permission is granted for the candidate in include the publication in the thesis; and

iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

Name of Co-Author	Peter Strelan	
Contribution to the Paper	Principal supervision, advice about the study concept and design, manuscript proofreading.	
Signature		Date:

Chapter 5: Why do people forgive organisations? A factor analysis of forgiveness motives when forgiving an organisations (Study 4)

5.1 Abstract

The need to understand why people forgive organisations has been highlighted by recent research demonstrating that outcomes of forgiveness can be quite different depending on the underlying motive for forgiveness (e.g., Cox et al., 2012; Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). However, research exploring forgiveness motives within organisations has largely been focussed on forgiveness between specific individuals (i.e., co-workers and managers). Accordingly, the present study aimed to develop a typology of forgiveness motives for when the offender is an entire organisation. Building on earlier functional analyses of forgiveness (Strelan et al., 2013), I conducted an exploratory factor analysis of 162 victims' reasons for forgiving organisations. The resultant factor structure that emerged consisted of four motives for forgiving organisations: impression management, organisation-concern, task-concern and self-concern. Each of these motives along with their implications for future research and theory development are discussed.

5.2 Introduction

Given the complex network of relationships within organisations, it is simply not possible to satisfy every individual's expectations. People will be misunderstood, expectations will not be fulfilled and intentions will be thwarted (Aquino & Thau, 2009; D. Katz & Kahn, 1978; Pondy, 1967). Therefore, within any organisation, a need for forgiveness is inevitable (Aquino et al., 2006; Goodstein & Aquino, 2010; Stone, 2002). When employees relinquish a desire to punish, organisations can thrive (Fehr, 2011; Guchait, Lanza-Abbott, Madera, & Dawson, 2016). This presents a challenge for organisations that are constantly trying to retain talent, protect company reputation, and stay focussed on their core objectives. When things go wrong, how can they encourage forgiveness? Answering this question necessitates understanding why people might choose to forgive organisations for their failures in the first place.

It is this question that I will attempt to provide an answer to—why do people forgive organisations? By understanding the reasons for why people grant forgiveness, organisations may be able to facilitate the development of a forgiving culture and avoid the costly consequences of resentment and revenge (Fehr, 2011). The need to understand why people forgive organisations is further highlighted by a growing body of research that has demonstrated that outcomes of forgiveness depend on why victims decide to forgive (e.g., Cox et al., 2012; Gabriels & Strelan, 2018).

5.2.1 Why encourage forgiveness over punishment?

Before seeking to understand why people forgive organisations, it is important to clarify why forgiveness should be pursued over punishment. Indeed, for some people, forgiving the shortcomings of an organisation may be seen as a *failure*

of justice, given that the offended party has a right to seek retribution. However, encouraging forgiveness can often result in better outcomes for both the victim and the organisation (Cameron & Caza, 2002; Guchait et al., 2016). Two prominent reasons exist for why encouraging forgiveness within an organisation might lead to better outcomes.

First, pursuing formal procedural justice for many transgressions is not always possible. While there is a place for formal procedural justice, for some more minor transgressions initiating formal processes might actually be perceived as a transgression by the offender. Additionally, the process can be costly if used for every single transgression (de Lara, 2006). For both the victim and offender it is helpful to just let some things go.

Secondly, developing a forgiving culture can allow an organisation to turn mistakes into opportunities for growth (Edmondson, 1999). In a forgiving culture, employees are able to take responsibility for their actions, rather than going through the potentially costly process of shifting blame to avoid punishment (Cox, 2011). Relatedly, in a forgiving culture employees are free to be creative, take risks and pursue tasks that don't have a guaranteed outcome (Guchait et al., 2016; Stone, 2002).

5.2.2 Forgiving within organisations versus forgiving organisations (forgiving a nebulous other)

Given that a culture of forgiveness has these benefits, it is important to understand why people forgive organisations. While prior research has explored people's reasons for forgiving in a workplace context (Bright et al., 2006; Cox et al., 2012), the focus has been on transgressions committed by specific individuals (i.e., co-workers and managers). This research has been useful for understanding

forgiveness within clearly defined interpersonal dyads in a workplace setting, however, resentment and forgiveness does not only exist between individuals (Bright et al., 2006; Enright et al., 2016; Neto et al., 2007). Within an organisational setting it is often the case that people feel transgressed against not by an individual co-worker or manager but rather by the organisation as a whole (Gibson & Callister, 2009; Rousseau, 1989).

For example, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, millions of people remained resentful towards 'the banks' for taking excessive and unnecessary risks. Notably, when people blamed 'the banks' their resentment was directed towards a nebulous intangible other rather than specific individuals. Indeed, it is often the case that people hold grudges against various non-human entities (e.g., Barbalet, 1992). People may express anger and resentment towards things like a broken-down car, an illness, a god or even the universe. If forgiveness is conceptualised as the process of letting go of negative emotions such as anger and resentment and transitioning to positive emotions such as gratitude and love (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough et al., 1998), the forgiveness process is still relevant when the offender is a nebulous entity.

Consistent with this example, research has shown that people can express forgiveness toward entire groups (Mullet et al., 2010; Neto et al., 2007) and even more nebulous situations such as the circumstances surrounding a debilitating illness or accident (Strelan, 2007). Accordingly, our novel contribution to the research on forgiveness is exploring people's reasons for forgiving outside of clearly defined interpersonal relationships; namely, forgiving organisations themselves.

5.2.3 Forgiving organisations: a functional framework

Having clarified that it is indeed possible for people to forgive an entire group we return to our central question; why do people choose to forgive organisations? One approach that has been taken to understanding people's motivations for forgiving others is functional analysis (Baumeister et al., 1998; Strelan et al., 2013). This approach is based on the idea that forgiveness reflects a desire on the part of the victim to do something constructive about a transgression. That is to say, that people choose to grant forgiveness in order to achieve particular outcomes. As noted earlier, functional approaches to forgiveness argued that there are three units relevant to an interpersonal transgression: the victim, the transgressor, and their relationship (Strelan et al., 2013). Accordingly, forgiveness can serve to benefit one or more of these three units. In the context of a transgression committed by an organisation the three relevant units would be the victim, the organisation and the victim's relationship with the organisation. In the sections below I expand upon these three units and assess the degree to which they might be salient motives for forgiveness of organisations.

5.2.3.1 *Forgiveness motivated by self-concern*

Functional approaches to forgiveness have argued that victims are often primarily concerned with regulating their own emotional state and self-healing (Baumeister et al., 1998; Strelan et al., 2013; Younger et al., 2004). Forgiveness of this nature functions to preserve the victim's wellbeing rather than the wellbeing of a relationship. In fact, a significant industry has emerged around this aspect of forgiveness, in part due to the proliferation of academic research showing the positive consequences of forgiveness for victims (Bono et al., 2008; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Karremans et al., 2003; Tsang et al., 2006). Consequently, there are

now a number of interventions that have been developed to help victims forgive

(Coyle & Enright, 1997; Enright, 1996; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Madsen, Gygi,

Hammond, & Plowman, 2009). There is also a sizable self-help literature

encouraging victims to forgive so that they can experience improved wellbeing

(Enright, 2001; Smedes, 1996, 1997). Consistent with this trend, research into lay

beliefs indicate people view the primary function of forgiveness as self-healing (e.g.,

Lawler-Row et al., 2007; Younger et al., 2004). In summary, self-concern is

certainly a prominent reason people forgive.

In the context of a transgression committed by an organisation, self-

concerned forgiveness is especially relevant. This is because victims in this situation

are often in a position where they cannot directly influence the cause of their

distress. For example, a single employee might have very little ability to impact a

company downsizing and staff being laid off. In such cases, self-concerned

forgiveness could be a useful response, as it is aimed at regulating emotional

responses to the transgressions rather than managing or altering the problem (Lamb

& Murphy, 2002; Strelan & Covic, 2006; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Qualitative

studies of people's reasons for forgiving indicate that this form of forgiveness does

facilitate the acceptance and eventual removal of negative feelings and grudges

(Younger et al., 2004). Thus, in a context where the victim is unable to impact the

cause of their distress, such as when the offender is an entire organisation, they

might choose to forgive for the sake of the self.

5.2.3.2   *Preserving the relationship with the organisation*

Functional analyses of forgiveness have argued that a second prominent

reason victims choose to forgive is to preserve the relationship with the offender

(Baumeister et al., 1998; Strelan et al., 2013). In fact, McCullough (2008) has

argued that preserving valuable relationships is the main evolutionary function of forgiveness. Consistent with this argument, forgiveness has been shown to enhance pro-relationship motivations—such as cooperation, accommodation, and willingness to sacrifice—which contribute to relationship maintenance and repair (Karremans & Van Lange, 2004). When forgiving to preserve a relationship, victims can continue interacting positively with someone who has hurt them. In this way, forgiveness functions as a practical strategy to protect valued relationships.

Unlike forgiveness motivated by self-concern, a victim's primary focus when forgiving for a relationship is not their immediate emotional state but rather their relationship with their offender (Strelan et al., 2013). Forgiveness motivated by relationship-concern is an approach-oriented response that functions to restore and maintain relationships following a transgression. Effectively, relationship-focussed forgiveness primarily aims to communicate goodwill while refraining from behaviours and attitudes that may be perceived as harmful to the relationship.

When the offender is an organisation, forgiving for the sake of your relationship with the organisation functions to restore or conserve the previous state of the relationship. For example, a victim might chose to move on from a transgression so that they can continue to go to work, perform their duties, and interact with their colleagues without disruption. In this way, forgiveness benefits both the organisation and the victim by preserving a mutually beneficial exchange without the emotional and finical costs of revenge or avoidance.

5.2.3.3   *Protecting the organisation*

A third focal point that functional analyses of forgiveness have identified is a concern for the offender. Unlike relationship-focussed forgiveness which is driven by a desire to preserve the benefits a relationship provides, offender-focussed

forgiveness functions to release the offender from unpleasant emotions, such as guilt (Strelan et al., 2013). Indeed, forgiveness is often conceptualised as an other-oriented altruistic response to a transgression (see Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough et al., 1998; Worthington, 2001). Consistent with this view of forgiveness, empathy—a construct reflecting concern for another person—is an important facilitator of forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1998). However, when the offender is perceived to be an organisation, how relevant is concern for the wellbeing of the offender? Is it even possible to feel empathy and compassion for an organisation?

The perspective offered by social identity theory suggests that concern for an organisation might still be relevant for forgiveness. According to social identity theory (Hornsey, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), a person's self-image reflects not just their personal identities, behaviours and memories, but also the social identities that they draw from group memberships. This provides one explanation for why people protect their professional and institutional loyalties so fiercely. For example, members of the Catholic Church have been shown to be more likely to excuse the failures of the church to respond appropriately to child rape allegations (Minto, Hornsey, Gillespie, Healy, & Jetten, 2016). We argue that because people's identities can often include the organisations they belong to, some victims would be willing to lay down their right to resentment to benefit the organisation. However, this question has not been directly answered in the forgiveness literature. Accordingly, I have also included concern for the organisation as a third motive for forgiveness of an organisation.

5.2.4 Summary

In summary, I predict that three factors motivate forgiveness of an organisation: concern for the self, concern for the organisation, and concern for the relationship with the organisation. My main objective in this study is to develop a measure that can be used to assess the focus of forgiveness when a victim forgives an organisation. In doing so, I make a novel contribution to the forgiveness literature by exploring forgiveness motives in a context where the offender is not a single individual, but rather a nebulous impersonal other in the form of an organisation.

5.3 Method

5.3.1 Participants

I recruited participants using an online snowball sampling method via Facebook. Information about the study was posted on the site by the researcher and reposted by participants. I received 239 completed surveys, however given that I was only interested in analysing the responses of participants who had forgiven, 77 participants were excluded (see section 5.3.2 for a discussion of the exclusion criteria used). This left 162 cases (97 female, 62 male, 3 other; $M_{age} = 32.52$ years, $SD = 12.47$).

In order to participate in the study, participants needed to be able to recall a time when they were wronged or mistreated by an organisation that they were directly involved with at the time they were completing the survey (i.e., not just a customer).

5.3.2 Procedure and Materials

First, I asked participants to recall a situation where they felt an organisation wronged or aggrieved them in some way. The offense must have been caused by the organisation, or at least by someone who represented the organisation. The

organisation must also be one that the participant was directly involved with (e.g., not just a customer). Participants who could not recall an instance that matched this description were directed to an exclusion page that explained that they could not continue any further with the questionnaire. Participants were free to recall a transgression of their choosing and were not required to have forgiven the transgressor. It was intended that this free recall format would encourage more valid responses. Given that participants who had not forgiven would not be able to complete the reasons for forgiving scale, a screening item was used to direct them to another set of questions that would be used as part of another study.

Participants provided the name of the transgressing organisation at the beginning of the survey, allowing us to customise survey questions and therefore enhance participant engagement. Participants then briefly described the transgression and responded to the measures listed below. Some of these measures were not directly relevant to the central hypothesis but nonetheless have been shown to be relevant to forgiveness decisions (for a meta-analysis, see Fehr et al., 2010) and thus were included for descriptive purposes (i.e., type of organisation; time involved with the organisation; time elapsed since the transgression; harm severity; apology/amends; and intentionality). All measures were assessed using seven-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*), unless otherwise indicated. Items within each measure were presented in random order. Scores represent the mean of items within a construct (with negatively-worded items reverse scored), unless otherwise indicated.

Type of organisation was measured by participants selecting one of the following options: 'Workplace'; 'Religious Organisation'; 'Volunteer Group'; 'Academic Institution'; 'Sporting Club'; 'Social Group'; or 'other'.

Time elapsed since the transgression was measured in months.

Time involved with the organisation before the transgression was measured in days.

Harm severity was measured with two separate items: 'Compared to other hurtful events that have occurred in my life, this is the most hurtful of all'; and 'Right now the offence is still painful for me'.

Apology/amends was measured with a single item: 'They have sincerely apologized or made amends for what they did to hurt me'.

Forgiveness filter. In order to separate participants who had forgiven the organisation from those who had not, participants reported the extent to which they had forgiven on a 4-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 2 = *slightly*, 3 = *quite a bit*, 4 = *a great deal*). Participants were provided with a definition of forgiveness that read: "*For the purpose of this survey, we define forgiveness as: Making a deliberate attempt to overcome negative emotions (e.g., resentment, anger, hostility) toward [X] AND Refraining from causing [X] harm even though it might be justifiable to do so*" (Aquino et al., 2003). Participants who reported forgiving the transgressor on this scale (i.e., scoring between 2 = *slightly* and 4 = *a great deal*) were directed to a set of items assessing the focus of forgiveness before completing the remainder of the survey. Participants who reported having not forgiven the transgressor (i.e., scoring 1 = *not at all*) skipped the items assessing the focus of forgiveness and completed an alternative set of questions that were used as part of a separate study.

Forgiveness motives scale. This scale was developed by generating a set of 39 items assessing motivation for forgiveness of an organisation. By expanding on the pool of items first developed by Strelan et al. (2013), a small focus group generated an exhaustive list of statements for why a victim might forgive. The

statements were related to the three forgiveness foci: self, relationship and offender. The statements were then adapted so that they were applicable to forgiveness of an organisation. After removing redundant statements, 39 items remained that could be used to establish the dimensionality of victim's forgiveness motives when forgiving an organisation. Only participants who had reported forgiving on the single-item forgiveness screening item responded to this scale. Items were preceded by the tag "*I forgave, or at least made an effort to forgive [XX]…*"

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Background Variables

Participants described a variety of hurtful situations, including unsafe work environments, systemic abuse/sexual harassment, underpay, inadequate training and unfair performance management systems. The transgressions were committed by workplaces (64%), religious organisations (15%), academic institutions (6%), sporting clubs (5%) and other organisations. On average participants tended to agree the offence was still painful for them ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.78$) but disagreed that events were the most hurtful in their lives ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.74$). Participants reported events that on average occurred 46 ($SD = 43.4$) months prior to completing the survey and had been involved with the organisation for 52 months ($SD = 72.1$) at the time of the offense. Providing further evidence for the perceived hurtfulness of the transgression, participants tended to disagree that the organisation had apologised or made amends ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.81$).

5.4.2 Factor Analysis

Initially, the factorability of the 39 reasons for forgiving items were examined. Firstly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .89, above the recommended value of .6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant

$(\chi^2 (741) = 4230.37, p < .001)$. The diagonals of the anti-image correlation matrix were all over .5, supporting the inclusion of each item in the factor analysis. Given these overall indicators, factor analysis was conducted with all 39 items.

An exploratory factor analysis using the principle-axis factor extraction was conducted to determine the factor structure of the *Reasons for Forgiving Organisations Scale (RFOS)*. Both parallel analysis and Velicer's MAP test (O'connor, 2000) indicated a four-factor structure. Additionally, the component correlation matrix indicated that the correlations between factors were sufficiently low to be considered orthogonal. Accordingly, I employed a Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. Such a rotation created four factors with sums of squared loadings ranging from 6.5 to 2.8, and the clustering of items into factors seemed easily interpretable.[8] I labelled these four factors: 'Impression Management', 'Organisation-concern', 'Task-concern' and 'Self-concern'. The results of an orthogonal rotation of the solution are shown in Table 5.1 which displays the 26 items that were retained after removing items that did not clearly load onto a single factor. Items were retained if the loading on one factor was greater than 0.50 and the loading was at least .20 higher than the loading on any other factor (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006), 13 items did not meet these criteria and were dropped. Seven items were significantly cross-loaded. For example, "Because I didn't want to cause trouble for anyone" cross-loaded on both the Impression Management and Organisation-concern motives. Six of the items did not load heavily on any one factor (i.e., had a factor loading less than .50).

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[8] In an additional analysis I forced a 3 factor solution. The resultant factor structure that emerged was not easily interpretable and was not consistent with the three factors I had internally proposed. Accordingly, I decided to focus on the four factor solution.

This process left 26 items, which each loaded onto one of the four factors. The items within each factor were averaged to create a single score with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of a particular reason for forgiving. The factors were identified as Impression Management, Organisation-concern, Task-concern and Self-concern. Impression Management included 10 items, such as, "[I forgave] so that I would be perceived favourably by my peers within the organisation." "[I forgave] because despite what they did, I didn't want the organisation to suffer" was one of the seven items that made up the Organisation-concern factor. The Task-concern factor consisted of four items, including "[I forgave] because I needed to get on with what I was doing within the organisation." Finally, the fourth factor Self-concern, included five items, and one example was, "[I forgave] because I didn't want anger and resentment to rule my life." The four forgiveness motives identified and the factor loadings and correlations are reported in Table 5.1.

Descriptive statistics and reliabilities are for each scale are shown in Table 5.2. Alpha coefficients were high, as were correlations between Factors 1, 2 and 3, correlations between factors are shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.1

Factor Analysis of Forgiveness Motive Items Principal-Axis Factoring Extraction Varimax (orthogonal) rotation.

Item content: All items were preceded by the tag, 'I forgave…'	Impression Management	Organisation-concern	Task-concern	Self-concern
So that I would be perceived favourably by my peers within the organisation.	**.75**	.07	.22	.08
Because forgiveness was a way to protect my social standing within the organisation.	**.74**	.12	.28	.05
So that I would be perceived favourably by the organisation.	**.69**	.18	.23	-.04
Because I didn't want go against the grain or cause trouble.	**.67**	.06	.09	.01
Because I wanted to appear easy going and resilient.	**.63**	.18	.17	.05
So that I could avoid future punishment or negative consequences.	**.61**	.10	.18	-.18
Because I didn't want to appear angry or resentful to others.	**.61**	.17	.02	.27
So that I wouldn't be excluded from the group.	**.61**	.19	.22	-.06
To maintain social relationships and networks.	**.57**	.18	.25	.23
To save face or avoid humiliation.	**.54**	.18	-.01	-.05
Because despite what they did, I didn't want the organisation to suffer.	.10	**.80**	.17	.08
Because letting go of my anger and resentment was in the best interests of the organisation.	.17	**.77**	.24	.00
For the sake of the organisation.	.17	**.73**	.20	.08
Because I genuinely cared about the organisation.	.09	**.67**	.24	.16
For the sake of the task/project we were working on at the organisation.	.13	**.63**	.33	.05
So that the organisation could save face.	.34	**.61**	.07	.04
Because the resentment I held was only damaging the organisation.	.19	**.59**	.22	.11

So that a cohesive work environment could be maintained.	.10	.35	**.70**	.08
Because I needed to get on with what I was doing within the organisation.	.18	.23	**.60**	-.06
Because my position/role was important to me.	.18	.20	**.54**	.06
So that I could get on with the work I was doing.	.13	.22	**.52**	.08
So I could move on with my life.	-.01	.04	-.02	**.74**
Because I didn't want anger and resentment to rule my life.	-.05	.09	.04	**.73**
Because it seemed to be a way to stop myself hurting.	.04	.11	-.02	**.69**
Because it was a way to make myself feel better.	.14	-.04	-.01	**.68**
To help myself get over what happened.	.09	.16	.02	**.61**
Initial eigenvalue.	12.60	3.63	2.87	1.73
Percentage of variance explained.	32.30	9.32	7.35	4.44
Cumulative percentage of variance explained.	32.30	41.61	48.96	53.41

Note. Factor loadings <.50 are in boldface.

Table 5.2

Variable means and standard deviations, range of scores and internal consistency

(α)

Factor	No. items	*M*	*SD*	Range	*α*
Impression Management	10	4.00	1.18	1-7	.86
Organisation-concern	7	3.36	1.48	1-7	.90
Task-concern	4	4.51	1.50	1-7	.78
Self-concern	5	5.25	1.21	1-7	.83

n = 162

Table 5.3

Correlations between factors

	1	2	3	4
1. Impression Management	-			
2. Organisation-concern	.449**	-		
3. Task-concern	.446**	.537**	-	
4. Self-concern	.271*	.183*	.092	-

**p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

5.5 Discussion

The three-factor motive structure hypothesised was partially supported. While the 'self-concern' and 'organisation-concern' motives emerged as expected, the 'relationship-concern' motive I had proposed did not. Rather, the relationship-concern factor that was initially proposed split into two new motives which I labelled 'task-concern' and 'impression management'. The resultant four factor

structure was also more easily interpretable than the factor structure that occurred when forcing a three factor solution. Each of the four motives for forgiveness that emerged in the four factor solution are discussed in turn.

Consistent with earlier functional analyses of forgiveness (Baumeister et al., 1998; Strelan et al., 2013), as well as other research on forgiveness motives (Takada & Ohbuchi, 2013; Thompson & Simkins, 2016), self-concern emerged as a unique motivator for forgiveness. This form of forgiveness reflects a means of emotional regulation, serving to relieve the victim of the negative feelings associated with sustaining anger and resentment; thus, helping the victim move on with their life.

Also consistent with earlier functional analyses of forgiveness, concern for the offender (i.e., the organisation) emerged as a unique reason for granting forgiveness. Forgiveness motivated by concern for the organisation is granted because the victim genuinely wants the best for the organisation. Unlike the other motives, the victim aims to let go of their anger and resentment because it is not in the best interest of the organisation and thus forgiveness functions to protect the organisation.

In contrast, task-concerned forgiveness reflects a less sentimental and more pragmatic form of forgiveness that reflects a desire to get on with one's job. In this instance, resentment is seen as an impediment to progress on specific work tasks and thus forgiveness allows the victim to remove this impediment. Forgiveness of this type is not motivated by self-protection, or even concern for the organisation as a whole, but rather is motivated by a desire to get on with the work they were doing at the organisation.

Finally, when forgiveness is motivated by impression management, the victim is primarily concerned with protecting their social standing by avoiding going

against the grain or causing trouble. This type of forgiveness functions to avoid confrontation so that the victim will not be singled out or excluded. As Thompson and Simkins (2016) have noted, forgiveness motivated by impression management is distinct from self-concerned forgiveness in that the individual does not legitimately attempt move past their anger and resentment, but rather uses forgiveness as a means to better their own position. This motive for forgiveness appears very similar to a form of pseudo-forgiveness previously identified in factor analyses of forgiveness motives by Ballester et al. (2011). They found that participants reporting pseudo-forgiveness used it to manipulate or control the offender. For example, such self-serving forgiveness was often lorded over the offender so that the victim could assume a position of moral ascendency.

Together, the results of the present study extend the typology of forgiveness motives proposed by Strelan et al. (2013), by testing its applicability to the forgiveness of organisations. Notably, when the offender is an entire organisation, concern for the relationship with the organisation is not a salient motive for victims. Rather, victims report forgiving for the sake of their work at the organisation (task-concern) or alternatively for the sake of relationships within the organisation (impression management). This finding has implications for previous experimental research which has tested the impact of forgiving organisations out of relationship-concern (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). Given that relationship-concern is not a salient motive for forgiving organisations, future research should aim to test the impact of forgiveness motivated by task-concern and impression management.

5.5.1 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One limitation of the present study is that the measure of forgiveness motives developed is from a single study with a limited sample group. While the participants

in this study did report a range of transgressions, committed by variety of organisations, the findings still only reflect the attitudes of 162 people. Future research should aim to test if the motives for forgiveness identified remain consistent across more varied sample groups.

A related limitation of the present study is that the functional analysis used is only one of many potential approaches for measuring motives or reasons for forgiveness. For example, Cox et al. (2012) developed a more general framework of forgiveness motives in the workplace which contained items that our measure did not address, such as the degree to which forgiveness was religiously motivated. Accordingly, the typology we have created is by no means comprehensive. Nonetheless, it does provide a starting point for understanding the reasons people do or do not forgive impersonal entities such as workplaces and other organisations. Future research should aim to replicate the forgiveness motives we have identified, and see how they fit into other frameworks of forgiveness motives that are relevant to forgiveness of organisations.

When a more complete picture of the reasons people forgive organisations is developed, future research could explore the degree to which those motives impact the outcomes of forgiveness. For example, recent research has demonstrated that a victim's reason for forgiving organisations affects how they experience the act of forgiving (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). Accordingly, future research should aim to test the personal outcomes of forgiveness when it is motivated by self-concern, organisation-concern, task-concern, and impression management. Indeed, it would be important to explore if it even matters why people forgive organisations.

5.5.2 Conclusion

In the present study, a new measure of the reasons people forgive organisations was developed based on a functional analysis of forgiveness. When people were offended by an organisation they were involved with, four separate reasons appeared to motivate forgiveness: self-concern, organisations-concern, task-concern and impression management. To my knowledge, this is the first multifactorial measure of forgiveness motives when the offender is a nebulous impersonal other, such as an organisation. The new measure has potential for inclusion in future research and theory development.

Statement of Authorship

Title of Paper	How does a victim's motivation for forgiving an organisation change the outcomes of forgiveness? (Correlational study)
Publication Status	☐ Published ☐ Accepted for Publication ☐ Submitted for Publication ☒ Unpublished and submitted work written in manuscript style
Publication Details	N/A

Principal Author

Name of Principal Author	Jordan Brian Gabriels	
Contribution to the Paper	Study concept and design, data collection, statistical analyses, writing manuscript.	
Overall percentage (%)	80%	
Certification:	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.	
Signature		Date:

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

i.   the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);

ii. permission is granted for the candidate in include the publication in the thesis; and

iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

Name of Co-Author	Peter Strelan	
Contribution to the Paper	Principal supervision, advice about the study concept and design, manuscript proofreading.	
Signature		Date:

Chapter 6: Exploring the impact of forgiveness motives on the emotional and behavioural outcomes of forgiving unjust organisations (Study 5)

6.1 Abstract

Previous research has demonstrated that when victims forgive unjust or exploitative organisations, they are less likely to experience positive outcomes. However in this article, I test the possibility that the emotional and behavioural outcomes of forgiving exploitative organisations depends on the underlying reasons that compelled forgiveness. Using a free recall format (N = 249), I failed to replicate previous research which has found that a victim's motivation for forgiving moderates the relationship between exploitation risk (justice perceptions) and stress. However, partial support was found for a hypothesised model describing the relationship between forgiveness motives, forgiveness, revenge, and reconciliation. I discuss the divergence in results between the present study and previous research.

6.2 Introduction

People often push back when they feel as though they have been mistreated or hurt by organisations—they might seek financial restitution, decrease their commitment, or even actively try to damage the organisation (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000; Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Jensen, Opland, & Ryan, 2010; Lindebaum & Geddes, 2016). On the other hand, victims often deliberately choose not to seek revenge, and instead consciously decide to let go of their resentment (Aquino et al., 2003; Aquino et al., 2006). This begs the question: why would a person choose not to exercise their moral right to seek retribution when transgressed by an organisation?

For some people, forgiveness might ensure their personal advancement within an organisation. For others, forgiveness might protect a valuable relationship. Indeed, the reasons people decide to forgive organisations are surely complex and varied. Accordingly, it is reasonable to expect that how a person feels and behaves in the aftermath of forgiveness will be equally complex and varied. In this article, I attempt to predict the emotional and behavioural outcomes of forgiveness, based on the underlying reason that compelled it. I will argue that forgiveness motives play an important role in determining how a person feels about forgiving unjust organisations, as well as how likely they are to reconcile with the organisation.

6.2.1 Why do people forgive organisations?

One approach to understanding the motivational foundations of forgiveness involves the strategy of functional analysis (e.g., Baumeister et al., 1998; Strelan et al., 2013). This approach is based on the idea that when a person decides to forgive, they do so because they hope to achieve a particular outcome. Importantly, what forgiveness achieves for one person might not be the same for another. According to

functionalist logic, acts of forgiveness that appear to be quite similar on the surface may reflect markedly different underlying motivations; that is, they may be serving entirely different psychological functions.

Using a functionalist approach to try to understand why people decide to forgive organisations, I factor analysed victim's reasons for forgiving an organisation (See Chapter 5). This process revealed four primary motives for forgiving an organisation: self-concern, offender-concern, task-concern, and impression management. I outline each of these motives in the section below. Following that, I hypothesise how each motive might impact a victim's experience of forgiving.

First, self-concerned forgiveness reflects a means of emotional regulation, serving to relieve the victim of the negative feelings associated with sustaining anger and resentment and helping them move on with their life. Second, forgiveness motivated by concern for the organisation is granted because the victim wants the best for the organisation. The victim decides that sustaining anger and resentment will damage the organisation, and thus forgiveness functions to protect the organisation. Third, when forgiveness is motivated by task-concern, the victim chooses to let go of their resentment or right to seek retribution so that they can get on with the work they are doing at the organisation. In this instance, holding onto resentment is seen to impede progress on specific work tasks. Finally, when forgiveness is motivated by impression management, the victim is primarily concerned with protecting their social standing by avoiding going against the grain or causing trouble. This type of forgiveness functions to avoid confrontation so that the victim will not be singled out or excluded.

6.2.2 A victim's reason for forgiving changes how they feel about forgiving the organisation

Given that people forgive organisations for a range of different reasons, it seems reasonable to expect that they would also have a range of experiences when they forgive. Indeed, a victim's reason for granting forgiveness has been shown to impact approach and avoidance behaviours (Strelan et al., 2013), stress and health outcomes (Cox et al., 2012), and the experience of exploitation (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). Importantly, much of this research has investigated the outcomes of forgiveness motives when forgiveness is directed toward individuals. In this article, I attempt to test the impact of four primary motives for forgiving *organisations* on the outcomes of forgiveness.

6.2.3 Motives moderate the relationship between organisational justice perceptions and forgiveness-related stress

Theory (Lamb & Murphy, 2002; Murphy, 2005) and previous research (Gordon et al., 2004; Luchies et al., 2010; McNulty, 2008, 2010, 2011) indicates that when victims forgive exploitative others, they are less likely to experience the liberating affective consequences of forgiving. This is because a decision to forgive an untrustworthy offender is in direct conflict with a gut-level behavioural preference to retaliate or avoid them (e.g., Burnette et al., 2012; McCullough et al., 2013). Accordingly, victims should feel negative about forgiving organisations that they feel are unjust, and therefore might take advantage of them in the future. However, recent research by Gabriels and Strelan (2018) suggests that this might not be the case. They have shown that the risk of exploitation does not necessarily lead to negative outcomes when forgiving. Although exploitation risk led to greater

forgiveness-related distress when forgiving for the sake of the relationship, distress was not heightened if the victim forgave for their own sake.

Forgiving an untrustworthy offender for one's own sake is relatively less distressing because forgiveness is not aimed at managing or altering the problem causing the distress, but rather is directed at regulating emotional responses to the transgression (Strelan & Covic, 2006; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Because the victim is less concerned with restoring the relationship, self-focussed forgiveness can also serve to distance the victim from the offender (Strelan et al., 2013), thereby guarding against further exploitation. Accordingly, I hypothesise that forgiving an unjust organisation will result in less distress when forgiveness is self-concerned, compared to when forgiveness is motivated by concern for the organisation, the task, or impression management.

6.2.4 Motives are differentially associated with forgiveness, revenge and reconciliation

As well as changing how victims feel about forgiving untrustworthy offenders, the victim's reasons for forgiving have been shown to change the nature of their forgiving responses. For example, several studies have shown that that a focus on the relationship or the offender when forgiving is associated with generally more forgiving responses (i.e., increased benevolence and decreased revenge and avoidance), compared to a focus on the self (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018; Strelan et al., 2013). However, as I will argue, the relationship between forgiveness motives and forgiving responses may be different when looking at forgiveness of organisations, as well as when using different measures of forgiveness.

Building on previous research that has examined the relationship between motives and the nature of forgiveness, I will explore how the four primary motives

for forgiving organisations impact the victim's willingness to seek forgiveness and revenge. In doing so, I propose a model that explains the relationship between motives and reconciliation, mediated through forgiveness and revenge. In the sections below I discuss the various pathways in my proposed model.

6.2.4.1 The impact of offender- and task-concerned forgiveness

In testing the relationship between motives and forgiveness within interpersonal relationships, Strelan et al. (2013) found that a focus on the relationship or the offender was associated with relatively more forgiving responses compared to a focus on the self. They argued that this was because a focus on the relationship or the offender functioned to communicate some form of goodwill, and therefore the forgiver would not want to engage in behaviours or indicate attitudes that could be perceived as harmful to the offender. Following this line of reasoning, I expect that forgiving for the sake of the offending organisation will be associated with increased forgiveness and decreased revenge. Similarly, I expect that forgiveness motivated by task-concern will also be associated with increased forgiveness and decreased revenge. This is because forgiveness motivated by task-concern functions to enable progress on specific work tasks, and thus seeking revenge would be antithetical to that goal.

6.2.4.2 The impact of self-concerned forgiveness

Previous research has shown that self-concerned forgiveness is associated with relatively less forgiving responses compared to relationship-focussed forgiveness (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018; Strelan et al., 2013). However, this research has measured forgiveness using the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIM) inventory (McCullough et al., 2003; McCullough et al., 1998), which operationalises forgiveness in part based on a reduction in avoidant motivations and

an increase in benevolent motivations (i.e., a desire to restore the relationship with the offender). Given that self-focussed forgiveness reflects a form of avoidant coping (Strelan & Covic, 2006), measuring forgiveness using the TRIM scale may understate the degree to which self-focussed forgiveness is associated with forgiving responses per se. Since self-focussed forgiveness reflects a genuine desire to move on from the transgression, if measured with a scale that better distinguishes forgiveness from reconciliation (e.g., Aquino et al., 2006), I expect that self-focussed forgiveness will be associated with increased forgiveness and decreased revenge.

6.2.4.3   *The impact of impression management motivated forgiveness*

Unlike the other motives, impression management does not reflect a legitimate desire to move on from the transgression. Instead, the victim's primary concern is protecting their social standing. In this way, forgiveness motivated by impression management is similar to what Baumeister et al. (1998) have described as hollow forgiveness. Hollow forgiveness occurs when a victim exhibits forgiving behaviour without feeling forgiveness internally. Accordingly, for victims whose forgiveness is motivated by impression management, they may attempt to reconcile with the offending organisation without necessarily attempting to let go of their resentment or inhibit their desire to seek revenge. For these reasons I expect that the impression management motive will be negatively associated with forgiveness but positively associated with revenge and reconciliation.

6.2.4.4   *The impact of forgiveness and revenge on reconciliation*

In the previous section, I discussed the relationship between forgiveness motives and actual forgiveness and revenge. However, I am also interested in the degree to which the victims seek reconciliation. In the model I propose,

reconciliation reflects a behavioural outcome of seeking revenge and forgiveness. As I will argue, both revenge and forgiveness are tools at the disposal of victims which can be used to maintain an equitable relationship in the aftermath of a transgression (e.g., McCullough et al., 2013). In the section below I discuss the potential impact of increased forgiveness and revenge on reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a common consequence of granting forgiveness. Indeed, McCullough (2008) has argued that relationship preservation is the main adaptive function of forgiveness. Consistent with this argument, McCullough et al. (1998) have conducted path analyses revealing that post-transgression closeness is facilitated by forgiveness in the form of reduced avoidance. Furthermore, Tsang et al. (2006) have found that in the aftermath of a transgression, increases in forgiveness motivations predict future increases in closeness and commitment. Taken together, there exists a considerable body of evidence suggesting that increases in forgiveness result in increases in reconciliation (Hall & Fincham, 2006; McCullough et al., 1998; Tsang et al., 2006; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). Accordingly, in my model I hypothesise that increased forgiveness will result in increased reconciliation.

While seeking forgiveness appears to reliably result in increased reconciliation, the impact of revenge on reconciliation is less obvious. Intuitively, seeking revenge should result in decreased reconciliation. Indeed, it seems reasonable to assume that if a person deliberately imposed suffering upon their relationship partner, they would damage the relationship and decrease the likelihood that they will later reconcile. However, when revenge is inflicted against an organisation rather than a single individual, its impact could be the opposite.

Equity theory predicts that people are highly motivated to maintain a sense of equity with regard to power and resources in their relationships (Walster & Walster, 1975). Accordingly, in the aftermath of a transgression, victims are motivated to restore a sense of justice by seeking revenge (Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2007). By seeking revenge, victims can restore their sense of justice and therefore facilitate their own willingness to reconcile. However, as Kim and Smith (1993) have shown, if the victim's retaliation exceeds the original offense in terms of magnitude, then the original offender becomes a victim as well. Thus, a cycle of escalating revenge begins which can ultimately result in the breakdown of the relationship.

Within interpersonal relationships these negative sum cycles of revenge are more likely to occur because of what Baumeister (1997) has termed the *magnitude gap*. The magnitude gap is a common situation where the victim of a transgression views and describes the transgression as relatively severe and unresolved, whereas the perpetrator describes it as less severe and with a sense of closure. This bias can result in a perpetual sense of injustice on the part of both relationship members. Accordingly, seeking revenge can trigger a cycle that results in decreased closeness and potentially the dissolution of the relationship. However, when one of the two relationship members is an organisation rather than a single individual, a perpetual injustice gap is not likely to occur. When an individual seeks revenge on an organisation, such as by decreasing their efforts at work, they can restore a sense of justice personally without the retaliation being felt too strongly, or indeed noticed, by the organisation. Accordingly, when seeking revenge against an organisation, victims can restore a sense of justice without a strong threat of counter-retaliation. Indeed, Strelan and Prooijen (2013) have demonstrated experimentally that punishment facilitates forgiveness because of its capacity to restore a sense of

justice. By taking deliberate actions to get even with an organisation, victims feel more empowered, which ironically can restore a sense of social harmony and later reconciliation (Strelan, Di Fiore, & Prooijen, 2017). Accordingly, I hypothesise that when an individual seeks revenge against an organisation, their willingness to reconcile with the organisation will actually increase in the long run.

6.2.4.5   Conclusion

Taken together, I expect that forgiveness motivated by organisation-, task- and self-concern will be associated with increased forgiveness and decreased revenge. Conversely, forgiveness motivated by impression management will be associated with decreased forgiveness and increased revenge. In turn, seeking revenge and forgiveness will be associated with an increased willingness to reconcile with the offender.

6.3   Hypotheses and Overview of Study

I designed the present study to address two hypotheses. First, I will test the degree to which forgiveness motives moderate the relationship between the trustworthiness of an organisation and the distress victims experience when forgiving. Specifically, I hypothesise that the relationship between organisational injustice and forgiveness-related stress will be stronger when forgiveness is motivated by concern for the organisation, the task, or impression management than when it is motivated by self-concern (hypothesis 1). Second, I will test a model that describes the relationship between forgiveness motives, forgiveness, revenge, and reconciliation. I expect that forgiveness motivated by organisation-, task- and self-concern will be associated with increased forgiveness and decreased revenge, whereas forgiveness motivated by impression management will be associated with

decreased forgiveness and increased revenge. In turn, forgiveness and revenge will both be positively associated with reconciliation (hypothesis 2).

The study designed to test these hypotheses asked participants to recall a time they felt an organisation wronged or aggrieved them in some way. They then responded to a series of scales relating to the offending organisation and their feelings toward it. I expect that this free recall design would help me gain insight into how forgiveness motives operate in real and subjectively serious transgressions.

6.4 Method

6.4.1 Participants

327 North Americans recruited via a labour-sourcing website, CrowdFlower completed the survey. Participants were each paid $1 for their participation. 12 participants engaged in rote responding (e.g., answering '7' to all items) and/or completed the entire survey in an unreasonable timeframe (i.e., completed the entire survey in less than 3 minutes, substantially less than the median completion time of 11:15 minutes) and were therefore excluded from the final sample. As the present study only aimed to investigate the experience of participants who had forgiven their transgressor, 66 participants who reported having not forgiven their transgressor were excluded from the analysis (see section 6.4.2 below for a discussion of the screening criteria used). The final sample consisted of 249 participants (119 female, 129 male; M_{age} = 35.4 years, SD = 10.9).

6.4.2 Procedure and materials

First, I asked participants to recall a situation where they felt an organisation wronged or aggrieved them in some way. The offense had to be caused by the organisation, or at least by someone who represented the organisation. The organisation also had to be one that the participant was directly involved with (e.g.,

not just a customer). Participants who could not recall an instance that matched this description were directed to an exclusion page that explained that they could not continue any further with the questionnaire. Participants were free to recall a transgression of their choosing and were not required to have forgiven the transgressor. It was intended that this free recall format would encourage more valid responses. Given that participants who had not forgiven would not be able to complete the reasons for forgiving scale, a screening item was used to direct them to another set of questions that would be used as part of another study.

Participants provided the name of the transgressing organisation at the beginning of the survey, allowing us to customise survey questions and therefore enhance participant engagement. Participants then briefly described the transgression and responded to the measures listed below. Some of the measures were employed for descriptive purposes only (i.e., type of organisation; time involved with the organisation; time elapsed since the transgression; harm severity; apology/amends; and intentionality). All measures were assessed using seven-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*), unless otherwise indicated. Items within each measure were presented in random order. Scores represent the mean of items within a construct (with negatively-worded items reverse scored), unless otherwise indicated.

Type of organisation was measured by participants selecting one of the following options: 'Workplace'; 'Religious Organisation'; 'Volunteer Group'; 'Academic Institution'; 'Sporting Club'; 'Social Group'; or 'other'.

Time elapsed since the transgression was measured in days.

Time involved with the organisation before the transgression was measured in days.

Inclusion of organisation and colleagues in self was measured using two items adapted from the, Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) scale (Aron et al., 1992), a single item pictorial measure of closeness. Participants were instructed to indicate how strongly they identified with the organisation and also their colleagues by selecting one of seven images from a set of Venn-like diagrams of overlapping circles, where greater overlap depicts greater identification/closeness. The circles were labelled 1 to 7, with 7 indicating maximum closeness within the relationship.

Harm severity was measured with two separate items: 'Compared to other hurtful events that have occurred in my life, this is the most hurtful of all'; and 'Right now the offence is still painful for me'.

Apology/amends was measured with a single item: 'X has sincerely apologized or made amends for what they did to hurt me'.

Responsibility was measured with a single item: 'X was responsible for what happened'.

Intentionality was measured with a single item: 'X's actions were intentional'.

Organizational justice was measured using the Perceived Overall Justice (POJ; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009) scale a six-item measure of overall justice (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). There are a number of ways to measure the degree to which a victim feels their offender will take advantage of them in future. Previous research on forgiveness has measured this using the Relationship Value and Exploitation Risk scale (RVEX; Burnette et al., 2012). However, given that the focus of this study is on forgiveness of organisations as a whole, I assessed this construct using a measure of overall justice perceptions, the Perceived Overall Justice scale (POJ; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). The measure assesses what has

been termed entity judgments, which ask individuals to assess some entity (e.g., organisation, group, or management) as a whole. While the items within each measure are very similar, the POJ scale appears to be a better measure of the degree to which an individual feels an *organisation* will impose costs on them in the future. The scale consists of three items that assess individuals' personal justice experiences (e.g., 'Overall, I'm treated fairly by my organization') and three items assess the fairness of the organisation generally (e.g., 'Usually, the way things work in this organization are not fair', reverse coded). All items scores were averaged to produce a single index of organisational justice, such that higher ratings reflect greater perceptions of fairness (6 items; α = .88).

Forgiveness, reconciliation and revenge was measured using the set of items used by Aquino et al. (2006). Reconciliation was measured using three items (e.g., "I made an effort to be more friendly and concerned"), forgiveness with four items (e.g., "I let go of the resentment I felt toward them") and revenge with four items (e.g., "I did something to make them get what they deserve"). The three subscales all showed adequate internal consistency (*α* = .56, .84 and .90 respectively).

Forgiveness filter. In order to separate participants who had forgiven the organisation from those who had not, participants reported the extent to which they had forgiven on a 4-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 2 = *slightly*, 3 = *quite a bit*, 4 = *a great deal*). Participants were provided with a definition of forgiveness that read: "*For the purpose of this survey, we define forgiveness as: Making a deliberate attempt to overcome negative emotions (e.g., resentment, anger, hostility) toward [X] AND Refraining from causing [X] harm even though it might be justifiable to do so*" (Aquino et al., 2003). Participants who scored from 2 to 4 on this scale (*slightly* to *a great deal*) were categorised as having forgiven the transgressor, and

directed to a set of items assessing the focus of forgiveness before completing the remainder of the survey. Participants who scored 1 on the scale (*not at all*) skipped the items assessing the focus of forgiveness and completed the barriers to forgiveness scale instead.

Focus of forgiveness was measured using a 16-item version of the *Reasons for Forgiving Organisations Scale (RFOS)* that was developed in the previous study (See Chapter 5.4.2). The scale assesses motivations for forgiving an organisation in a particular circumstance, measuring four primary motives for forgiveness: impression management, organisation-concern, task-concern, and self-concern. I used an abbreviated version of the original RFOS scale in order to reduce the overall length of the survey and maximise participant engagement. Four items were selected from each of the four primary factors that were seen to reflect the breadth and depth of the construct. Each of the four sub-scales had adequate internal consistency reliability. Only participants who had reported forgiving on the single-item forgiveness screening item responded to this scale. Items were preceded by the tag "*I forgave, or at least made an effort to forgive X...*"

Impression management was assessed with the following items: 'So that I would be perceived favourably by my peers within the organization', 'because forgiveness was a way to protect my social standing within the organization', 'to maintain social relationships and networks', and 'to maintain friendships within the organization' (4 items: $\alpha = .77$).

Organisation-concern was assessed with the following items: 'because despite what they did, I didn't want the organization to suffer', 'for the sake of the organization', 'because I genuinely cared about the organization', and 'because

letting go of my anger and resentment was in the best interests of the organization' (4 items: $\alpha = .83$).

Task-concern was assessed with the following items: 'because I needed to get on with what I was doing within the organization', 'so that I could get on with the work I was doing', 'because my position/role was important to me', and 'because forgiving and moving on was easier than finding a new organization to be a part of' (4 items: $\alpha = .78$).

Self-concern was assessed with the following items: 'so I could move on with my life', 'because I didn't want anger and resentment to rule my life', 'because it was a way to make myself feel better', and 'to help myself get over what happened' (4 items: $\alpha = .82$).

Perceived stress was measured using the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). The Perceived Stress Scale was selected as a measure of forgiveness related distress because there is a large body of research linking forgiveness to the stress response (Delongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988; Harris et al., 2006). In addition, the measure has also been used in a similar study investigating the impact of forgiveness motives in a workplace setting (Cox et al., 2012). The scale consisted of 14 items measuring overall stress levels in the last month (e.g., 'in the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?'). Each item was rated on a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Very Often. Item scores were averaged to produce a single index of stress, such that higher ratings reflect greater stress (14 items; $\alpha = .82$).

6.5   Results

6.5.1   Background variables

Participants described a variety of hurtful actions, including unsafe work environments, inadequate responses to bullying and sexual harassment, underpay and unreasonable performance targets, that occurred on average 27.2 months ($SD =$ 33.6) prior to responding to the survey. At the time of the offense, participants had been involved with the organization for an average of 55.4 months ($SD = 71.8$). The transgressions were mostly committed by workplaces (61%), volunteer groups (10%), religious organizations (8%), and academic institutions (7%) that victims felt moderately close to ($M = 3.74, SD = 1.44$) as well as moderately close to their colleagues ($M = 4.04, SD = 1.45$).

Participants tended to agree that the offense was still painful for them ($M =$ 4.59, $SD = 1.66$), agreed that the organisation was responsible for what happened ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.57$), agreed that their actions were intentional ($M = 4.71, SD = 1.82$) and disagreed that they had apologised or made amends ($M = 3.27, SD = 1.90$).

6.5.2   Differences between forgivers and unforgivers

Of the 315 participants who completed the survey, the forgiveness screening item revealed that 249 had forgiven the offender, and the remaining 66 had not forgiven. I conducted a t-test to compare the forgiving and unforgiving groups on the forgiveness scale. Participants who reported forgiving their offender on the single item screening measure reported significantly higher forgiveness compared to unforgivers, $t(313) = 9.61, p < .001$ (descriptive statistics presented in Table 6.1). Thus, the single item forgiveness measure appeared to adequately distinguish forgivers from unforgivers.

Table 6.1

Study 5 means and standard deviations for non-forgivers and forgivers s (N = 315)

	Forgivers (*N*=249)		Non-forgivers (*N*=66)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Justice Perceptions	4.43	1.14	3.81	1.42
Forgiveness	4.64	1.21	2.96	1.47
Reconciliation	4.41	1.09	2.76	1.30
Revenge	2.35	1.39	2.31	1.26
Stress	1.70	0.54	1.79	0.55
Image management	2.76	0.95		
Organisation-concern	3.22	0.95		
Task-concern	2.96	1.02		
Self-concern	3.47	0.95		

6.5.3   Relative endorsement of forgiveness motives

A repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that the mean endorsement of the four forgiveness motives differed significantly ($F_{(71.092, 323.783)} = 54.452$, $p < 0.001$). Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction revealed that all pairwise comparisons were significant ($p <= .005$). This suggested that the most strongly endorsed forgiveness motive was Self-concern, followed by Organisation-concern, then Task-concern, with Impression Management being the least strongly endorsed.

6.5.4 Effects of justice perceptions and forgiveness-concern on outcomes of forgiving

Next, I tested my main hypothesis, which was concerned with participants who had forgiven. I conducted a moderation analysis (Aiken et al., 1991) to identify whether justice perceptions had a differential effect on stress as a function of forgiveness-focus. Given that the four forgiveness-foci correlate fairly strongly with one another (See Table 6.2), I also controlled for the alternative forgiveness-foci in each moderation analysis to isolate the impact of each forgiveness-focus.

I conducted a hierarchical regression with stress as the outcome variable. After mean centering, I entered the independent variable (*justice perceptions*) and moderator (*forgiveness-focus*) at step 1. I entered the interaction term (*forgiveness-focus × justice perceptions*) at step 2. I entered the control variables, the alternative foci, at step 3. I repeated this process for each of the four forgiveness-foci. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.3.

For all four regression analyses the interaction term was not significant. This result indicates that a person's primary concern when forgiving does not change the relationship between justice perceptions and stress.

Table 6.2

Correlations between forgiveness-concerns, stress, justice perceptions, forgiveness, reconciliation and revenge

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) Justice Perceptions	-								
(2) Stress	-.17**	-							
(3) Image management	.00	-.05	-						
(4) Organisation-concern	.16**	-.18**	.53**	-					
(5) Task-concern	.24**	-.15*	.57**	.58**	-				
(6) Self-concern	.04	-.16*	.45**	.59**	.49**	-			
(7) Forgiveness	.33**	-.21**	.12	.22**	.26**	.33**	-		
(8) Reconciliation	.22**	-.03	.29**	.21**	.30**	.34**	.60**	-	
(9) Revenge	-.20**	.33**	.23**	-.06	.05	-.11	-.20**	.00	-

Table 6.3

The moderating effect of Impression Management, Organisation-concern, Task-concern, and Self-concern on Justice Perceptions predicting Stress

	B	R^2
(Model 1)		.067*
Justice perceptions	-.156*	
Impression Management	-.117	
Justice perceptions × Impression Management	.036	
Organisation-concern	-.059	
Task-concern	-.025	
Self-concern	-.059	
(Model 2)		.061*
Justice perceptions	-.125	
Organisation-concern	-.144	
Justice perceptions × Organisation-concern	.019	
Impression Management	.047	
Task-concern	-.028	
Self-concern	-.059	
(Model 3)		.070**
Justice perceptions	-.191*	
Task-concern	-.219	
Justice perceptions × Task-concern	.044	
Impression Management	.054	
Organisation -concern	-.060	
Self-concern	-.068	
(Model 4)		.064*
Justice Perceptions	-.192	
Self-concern	-.211	
Justice perceptions × Self-concern	.035	
Impression Management	.046	

Organisation-concern	-.062
Task-concern	-.032

Note. *$p < .01$

6.5.5 Effects of forgiveness and forgiveness-concern on stress

I conducted additional analyses to see if the relationship between reported forgiveness and stress changed depending on the victim's primary concern when forgiving (see Table 6.4). I found no interaction effect, indicating that the victim's primary concern when forgiving did not impact how they felt about forgiving.

Table 6.4

The moderating effect of Impression Management, Organisation-concern, Task-concern and Self-concern on Forgiveness predicting Stress

Models Predicting Stress	*B*	R^2
(Model 1)		.045*
Forgiveness	-.090	
Impression Management	-.132	
Forgiveness × Impression Management	.015	
(Model 2)		.063**
Forgiveness	-.134	
Organisation-concern	-.162	
Forgiveness × Organisation-concern	.017	
(Model 3)		.056**
Forgiveness	-.143	
Task-concern	-.165	
Forgiveness × Task-concern	.022	
(Model 4)		.051
Forgiveness	-.080	
Self-concern	-.059	
Forgiveness × Self-concern	.001	

Note. *$p < .01$

6.5.6 Forgiveness motives are differentially associated with forgiveness, revenge and reconciliation

I then tested a hypothesised structural model of the relations between each forgiveness motive, forgiveness, revenge and reconciliation using the regression model for directly observed variables, using the software package AMOS (Arbuckle, 2014). Table 6.2 displays the correlations between the variables included in the model. Reflecting their common underlying association with forgiveness, the four forgiveness motives were allowed to correlate with each other. I expected a positive path from impression management to revenge and a negative path to forgiveness. Conversely, I expected negative paths from organisation-concern, task-concern, and self-concern to revenge, and positive paths to forgiveness. The final model also predicted positive paths from revenge and forgiveness to reconciliation. Residual terms for forgiveness, revenge and reconciliation were allowed to correlate with each other (McCullough et al., 1998).

The initial model test indicated that by most indices the hypothesized model was a reasonable fit to the data, $\chi2(3) = 6.57$, p = .087 (adjusted goodness of fit index [AGFI] = 0.93, comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.99, non-normed fit index [NNFI] = 0.95, root mean residual [RMR] = 0.014, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.069).

As testing of the proposed model in this study was at least partly exploratory in nature, I inspected the residuals and modification indices for any potential alternative models that were justified within our theoretical framework. No additional paths were suggested. As suggested by MacCallum (1986), I then deleted sequentially those nonsignificant paths that did not degrade model fit, resulting in the removal of paths from image management to forgiveness, from organisation-

concern to forgiveness and from task-concern to revenge. This resulted in a final model (Figure 1) that provided a good fit to the data, $\chi2(6) = 7.19$, $p = .303$ (AGFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.998, NNFI = 0.99, RMR = 0.018, RMSEA = 0.028).

As can be seen in Figure 6.1, self-concern was associated with increased forgiveness and decreased revenge. Although organisation-concern was moderately correlated with forgiveness, this relation drops out in the structural model and instead becomes negatively associated with revenge. Task-concern was positively associated with forgiveness and unrelated to revenge. Finally, impression-management was associated with increased revenge and unrelated to forgiveness. As predicted, forgiveness and revenge were both found to be associated with increased reconciliation.

In the final model the indirect effects of self-concern, task-concern and impression management on reconciliation were positive indicating that they were all related to increased reconciliation. However, the indirect effects of organisation-concern on reconciliation was negative indicated that forgiveness motivated by concern for the organisation was actually associated with reduced reconciliation with the organisation.
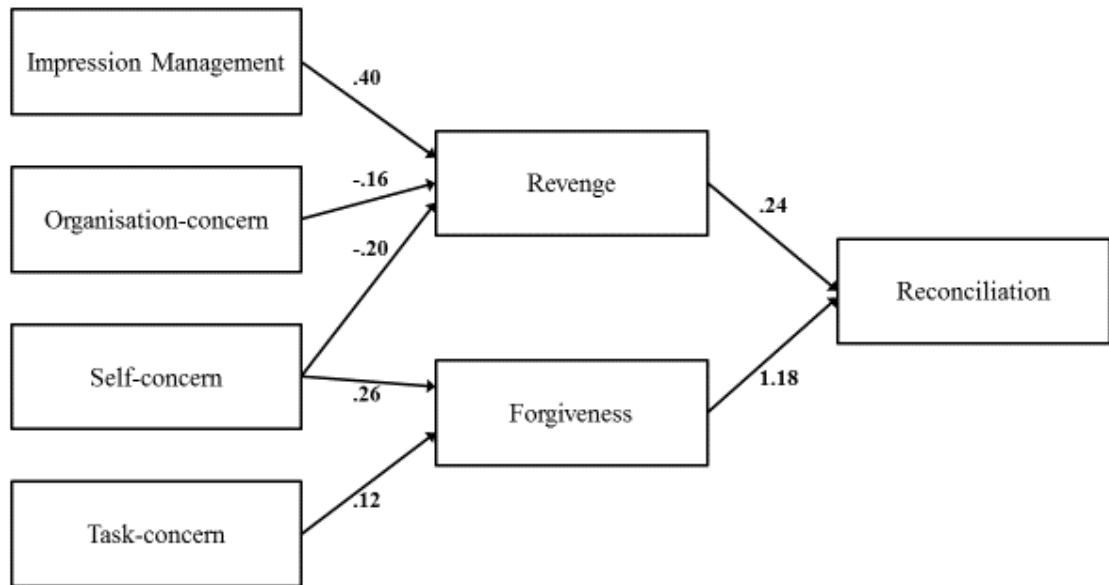
Figure 6.1 Empirical structural model of relations between forgiveness motives, revenge, forgiveness and reconciliation (Study 5).

6.6 Discussion

The findings of the present study found mixed support for the two hypotheses. First, the victim's motivation for forgiving the offending organisation did not moderate the relationship between organisational justice perceptions and stress when forgiving. This result was inconsistent with previous research which has tested similar hypotheses within interpersonal contexts (e.g., Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). Second, the hypothesised model describing the relationship between forgiveness motives, forgiveness, revenge, and reconciliation received mixed support. In the sections below I discuss each of these hypotheses in-turn.

6.6.1 Motives do not moderate the relationship between organisational justice perceptions and forgiveness related stress

The findings did not support the hypothesis that forgiveness motives would moderate the relationship between organisational justice and stress. While higher

organisational justice was related to lower stress when forgiving, the victim's primary concern when forgiving did not change that relationship. Furthermore, additional analyses revealed that the relationship between actual forgiveness and stress when forgiving did not change on account of the victim's motivation for forgiving. These findings are inconsistent with previous research which has found that a victim's motivation for forgiving changes how they experience forgiveness (Cox et al., 2012; Strelan et al., 2013) and exploitation (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). However, several differences between the present study and previous research could account for the differences in results. In the section below I discuss each of these possibilities.

Firstly, previous research which has found a moderating effect of forgiveness motives on forgiveness-related distress has measured forgiveness directed towards individuals rather than organisations.[9] For example, Gabriels and Strelan (2018) hypothesised that within close interpersonal relationships, forgiving to restore the relationship caused more distress than forgiveness focussed on the self because it forced the victim to override a desire to retaliate or avoid the offender. It is possible that when forgiving an organisation, the conflict between certain forgiveness motives and the threat of future exploitation is felt less keenly. One reason for this might be that when the offender is an entire organisation, the victim may be less likely to make conflict-promoting attributions for transgressions; that is, to see the transgression as being intentional, selfishly motivated, and blameworthy (Fincham, 2000). Accordingly, forgiving an organisation for the sake of maintaining one's relationship with them should not conflict as strongly with the instinct to retaliate or

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[9] Study 3 did find a moderating effect of forgiveness motives on positive outcomes when forgiving an organisation, however, no effect was found for negative outcomes.

avoid the organisation as much as forgiving an exploitative friend or romantic partner.

Secondly, victims were reporting on transgressions that on average occurred two years prior to responding to the survey. Previous research which has demonstrated that self-focused forgiveness can provide a buffer against the negative effects of exploitation risk has measured outcomes in the short-term (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). This is an important difference for two reasons. First, self-concerned forgiveness reflects an avoidant response (Strelan & Covic, 2006; Strelan et al., 2013) which can inhibit potentially more sustainable means of coping with betrayal in the long-term (C. R. Snyder & Pulvers, 2001). Accordingly, because the present study measured outcomes in the longer term, self-focussed forgiveness might not have provided a relative advantage over other motives for forgiving. Second, the measure of stress used asked participants to report their global levels of stress over the last month. It is possible that the positive or negative effects of the various forgiveness motives had washed out over the two year period since the transgression[10].

Third, a key difference between the results of the present study and those of earlier studies relates to the surprisingly strong correlation between self-concerned forgiveness and reconciliation. I had hypothesised that forgiving an untrustworthy offender for one's own sake is less distressing because the victim is not concerned with restoring the relationship, but rather distances themselves from the offender

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[10] Notably, the moderating effect of self-focussed forgiveness on the relationship between justice perceptions and stress was much stronger when excluding participants who were reporting on transgressions that had occurred more than 6 months prior to responding to the survey (B = .088, p = .165). However, only 25% of the sample (n = 62) met this criteria, meaning the sample size was too small to detect a statistically significant effect.

(Strelan et al., 2013) which protects them further exploitation. However, unlike in previous research, forgiveness motivated by self-concerned was more strongly positively correlated with reconciliation than forgiveness motivated by other reasons. This suggests that when forgiving an organisation, self-concerned forgiveness is a comparatively less avoidant response to a transgression which may have accounted for the difference in results.[11]

Fourth and finally, the present study did not include a motive for forgiveness that was explicitly motivated by a concern to maintain the relationship with the organisation. Rather it included motives relating to 'task-concerns' and 'impression management'. This is an important difference because the results earlier of studies indicate that the difference in outcomes between self- and relationship-concerned forgiveness is not driven by the protective effect of self-concerned forgiveness. Rather, relationship-concerned forgiveness exacerbates distress because it generates a state of dissonance when forgiving to maintain a relationship with one who has caused hurt. In effect, self-concerned forgiveness only provides a relative advantage over relationship-concerned forgiveness when forgiving an exploitative offender, not an absolute advantage. Accordingly, because relationship-focussed forgiveness was not measured in this study the relative advantage of self-concerned forgiveness was not visible.

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[11] One important consideration is that the measure of reconciliation used in this study was different to that used in Study 1. Study 1 utilised the TRIM (McCullough et al., 2003; McCullough et al., 1998) which is a very relationship oriented measure of forgiveness, compared to the measure used in the present study (Aquino et al., 2006). It is possible that correlations would have been different if I had used the TRIM as in Study 1.

6.6.2 Motives are differentially associated with forgiveness, revenge and reconciliation

Partial support was found for the proposed model explaining the relation between motives, forgiveness, revenge and reconciliation. The final model provided a good fit to the data. First, task-concern was associated with increased forgiveness and unrelated to revenge. Second, organisation-concern was related to reduced revenge and unrelated to forgiveness. Third, self-concern was related to increased forgiveness and decreased revenge. Fourth, impression management was associated with increased revenge and unrelated to forgiveness (see Figure 1).

The final model indicates that the four motives were also indirectly related to reconciliation through their association with forgiveness and revenge. First, task-concern was related to increased reconciliation through its association with increased forgiveness. This suggests that victims who forgive so that they can get on with their work are able to let go of their resentment, which ultimately facilitates reconciliation with the organisation.

Second, organisation-concern was actually related to decreased reconciliation through its association with reduced revenge. This result is consistent with the proposal of Tripp et al. (2007) that seeking revenge can facilitate a sense of justice, and therefore reconciliation. Because victims who are primarily concerned about the organisation refrain from seeking revenge, they might also fail to achieve a sense of justice which in turn inhibits reconciliation.

Third, self-concern was related to increased reconciliation through its association with increased forgiveness. However, this effect was dampened by its association with decreased revenge. This is partially consistent with previous research that has found that that self-focussed forgiveness is related to more avoidant

responses and reduced closeness (Strelan et al., 2013). It seems to be the case that people who forgive for their own sake are able to let go of the transgression, however they are also less likely to seek revenge, which might inhibit a sense of restored justice and later reconciliation.

Finally, impression-management was related to increased reconciliation through its association with increased revenge. This suggests that victims who forgive so that they can protect their social standing within the organisation are more likely to seek revenge, which in turn can facilitate reconciliation. In this way, forgiveness motivated by impression-management reflects a form of hollow forgiveness (Baumeister et al., 1998), where the victim exhibits forgiving behaviour such as reconciling with the offender without a legitimate desire to move on from the transgression.

6.6.3   Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The implications of the results need to be considered alongside the limitations of the research and its design. One limitation of the present study is that participants reported their motives for forgiving the offending organisation at a single point in time. This is problematic because forgiveness is not a linear process; feelings toward a transgressor can change from day to day (McCullough et al., 2003; McCullough, Luna, et al., 2010; Tsang et al., 2006). Nonetheless, participants were reporting on transgression that occurred a relatively long time ago so we can be confident that feelings towards the offender had stabilised given that previous research indicates that the majority of forgiveness (i.e., increases in benevolent motivations and decreases in avoidant and revenge motivations) occurs within the first few months after a transgression (McCullough, Luna, et al., 2010). Nonetheless, future research could aim to test the temporal stability of forgiveness motives.

A strength of the present study is that it sought to maximize ecological validity by measuring responses to actual transgressions that were subjectively serious to participants. However, this strength also presents a limitation in that there was very little control over the type of offenses participants recalled and the nature of their relationship with the offending organisation. This variance in the data could mean that the signal-to-noise ratio in the present study was too low to detect significant effects. Furthermore, while the model linking forgiveness motives with reconciliation provided a good fit to the data, the correlational nature of design precludes one from making any claims about causality. Accordingly, future research could aim to test the various path ways within the model using experimental research designs.

A final limitation of the present study is that the measure of distress used was only a general measure of stress that was not specifically related to feelings surrounding the transgression. I had hypothesised that forgiving an unjust organisation for the sake of the relationship, task or organisation would generate a feeling of dissonance that would generate distress. It is possible that the general measure of stress used was not sensitive to subtle feelings of dissonance. While some research has found that forgiveness motives can impact general stress (e.g., Cox et al., 2012) other research has focussed on more targeted outcomes. For example, Luchies et al. (2010) found that forgiving when doing so opposes one's better judgement diminishes victim's self-respect and self-concept clarity. Future research could aim to measure the impact of forgiveness motives with more varied outcomes such as regret or self-respect.

6.6.4 Conclusion

The present study aimed to test the impact of forgiveness motives in a context where the offender was an entire organisation, rather than a single individual. I was not able to replicate previous research which has found that, by forgiving for the sake of the self, victims can experience more positive outcomes when forgiving an exploitative or unjust offenders. This result suggests that the buffering effect of self-focussed forgiveness is less pronounce in the long term and when forgiving organisations rather than individuals. The present study also found partial support for a model explaining the relation between forgiveness motives and reconciliation. The model proposed indicated that the propensity of the victim to seek reconciliation depended on their motivation for forgiving. Taken-together, the mixed results of the present study highlight the need for more research to delineate the effect of forgiveness motives on the personal and interpersonal outcomes of forgiveness.

Chapter 7: General Discussion

I began this dissertation by asking a series of related questions. Why is it that people choose to forgive offenders even when they are exploitative? Does it even matter why people choose to forgive? And, when forgiving potentially exploitative offenders, should people forgive for the sake of their own wellbeing or should they forgive for the sake of their relationship?

I conducted five studies which were designed to answer specific aspects of these questions. In this chapter, I will discuss the overall significance of those five studies. First, I will re-state the findings of each study. Second, I will highlight some of the strengths of the research. Third, I will discuss the implications of these findings in terms of forgiveness theory, research and practice. Fourth, I will discuss the limitations of the research and outline areas for future research. Finally, I will provide a concluding statement.

7.1 Overview of Findings

Here, the findings of the present series of studies and their relationship to each other will be summarised briefly.

7.1.1 Study 1 findings

Study 1 replicated the well-established finding that victims experience greater distress when forgiving offenders they perceive to be exploitative (Luchies et al., 2010; McNulty, 2011; Strelan et al., 2016). Additionally, victims who forgave for the sake of the relationship experienced greater distress than those forgiving for their own sake (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). However, the results of the study added nuance to this finding by also asking victims to report their primary focus or motivation for forgiving. This approach revealed that the forgiver's focus

differentially affected how he/she experienced forgiveness. When forgiveness was more focussed on the relationship, exploitation risk was related to greater distress. Conversely, exploitation risk was not associated with greater distress when forgiveness was more focussed on the self.

7.1.2   Study 2 findings

Study 2 extended Study 1 by experimentally manipulating exploitation risk and forgiveness-focus, and assessing the impact on positive and negative emotions. The moderation hypothesis again received support. When participants imagined forgiving for the sake of their relationship with the exploitative offender, they are more likely to indicate negative emotions, and less likely to indicate positive emotions, relative to those participants who imagined forgiving within a non-exploitative relationship. Conversely, positive and negative emotions remained the same across the exploitation conditions when forgiveness was self-focussed. In effect, a focus on the self was found to buffer the deleterious effects of forgiving an exploitative offender.

Taken together, Studies 1 and 2 provided complementary evidence demonstrating that for whom we forgive matters. Forgiving for the sake of a relationship results in more distress than forgiving for the sake of the self. Notably, for whom we forgive matters most when offenders constitute an exploitation risk.

7.1.3   Study 3 findings

As I had done in Studies 1 and 2, in Study 3 I tested the effects of forgiveness when it was primarily focussed on the relationship versus the self. However, in Study 3 I tested the effect in a new setting; namely, in a context where the offender was an entire organisation. In doing so, I aimed to shed light on an area

of forgiveness research that has historically received scant attention—forgiveness of non-human entities such as organisations.

Using an experimental design, I partially replicated the results of Studies 1 and 2 which demonstrated that the focus of forgiveness affects how victims experience the act of forgiving. Specifically, I found that participants reported less positive outcomes when they imagined forgiving an exploitative offender for the sake of their relationship. However, unlike previous research, the effect of exploitation risk on negative outcomes remained the same when forgiveness was either relationship- or self-focussed.

In Chapter 3 I discussed several potential explanations for why the moderating effect of forgiveness focus did not completely replicate in Study 3. One possibility discussed was that the distinction between self- and relationship-focus is less salient when the offender is an entire organisation. For example, when the offender is an organisation, forgiving for the sake of one's relationship may be harder to distinguish from self-focussed forgiveness. This is because self-oriented benefits such as an income are tied to the relationship and thus forgiving to restore a relationship necessarily results in self-benefit. Accordingly, I designed Study 4 to delineate the salient motives for forgiveness when forgiving an entire organisation.

7.1.4 Study 4 findings

The aim of Study 4 was to more clearly understand the reasons people forgive organisations. To do this I used a functionalist approach, starting with the assumption that people forgive because they hope to achieve a particular outcome. Based on earlier research adopting a functionalist perspective (Strelan et al., 2013), I hypothesised that three factors motivate forgiveness of an organisation: concern for the self, concern for the organisation, and concern for the relationship with the

organisation. To test this hypothesis, I factor analysed a set of 39 items which assessed a victim's motivation for forgiveness of an organisation.

The results of the factor analysis partially supported the factor structure hypothesised, with two of the three factors emerging. The 'self-concern' and 'organisation-concern' motives emerged as expected. However, the 'relationship-concern' motive I had proposed did not clearly emerge. Rather, victims reported forgiving for the sake of their work at the organisation (task-concern) or for the sake of relationships within the organisation (impression management). This finding had implications for the results of Study 3 which tested the impact of forgiving organisations out of relationship-concern. The unexpected effects of relationship-concerned forgiveness in Study 3 could have been due to the fact that relationship-concern is simply not a salient motive for people forgiving an organisation. Accordingly, in Study 5, I aimed to test the impact of forgiveness motivated by task-concern and impression management instead of relationship-concern.

7.1.5   Study 5 findings

The overarching goal of Study 5 was to test the outcomes of forgiving an organisation based on the four motives identified in Study 4 (self-concern, organisation-concern, task-concern and impression management). Specifically, I designed the study to address two hypotheses. As in Studies 1, 2 and 3, the first hypothesis was that forgiveness motives would moderate the relationship between exploitation risk (measured as organisational justice perceptions) and stress. The second hypothesis for this study proposed a model describing the relationship between the four forgiveness motives and forgiveness, revenge, and reconciliation.

Unlike in Studies 1, 2 and 3, the results did not support the hypothesis that forgiveness motives would moderate the relationship between exploitation risk and

stress. While higher organisational justice (i.e., a lower risk of exploitation) was related to lower stress when forgiving, the victim's primary concern when forgiving did not alter that relationship.

While the first hypothesis received no support, partial support was found for the proposed model explaining the relationship between motives, forgiveness, revenge and reconciliation. As depicted in Figure 6.1, the final model indicated that the four motives were indirectly related to reconciliation through their association with forgiveness and revenge. Interestingly, while task-concern, self-concern and impression management were all related to increased reconciliation in the model, organisation-concern was not. This result was consistent with the proposal of Tripp et al. (2007) that seeking revenge can facilitate a sense of justice, and therefore reconciliation. Because victims who are primarily concerned about the organisation refrain from seeking revenge, they might also fail to achieve a sense of justice and in turn reconciliation.

Taken together, the mixed results of Study 5 suggest that the impact of forgiveness motives are different when the offender is an organisation as opposed to a close relationship partner. This highlights the need for more research to delineate the effect of forgiveness motives (and more generally forgiveness) when the offender is a nebulous non-human entity such as organisation.

7.2   Strengths of the Current Research

Here, I will discuss the strengths of the present studies in combination. In brief, these are: the broad sample used, the examination of both real-life and hypothetical forgiveness, and the conceptual replication of key findings.

7.2.1 Broad sample

A strength of the present studies is that they utilised community ($n = 239$) and online ($n = 698$) samples in addition to university samples ($n = 234$). A common limitation acknowledged within social psychology is the reliance on university students as participants (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010; Peterson, 2001). This may be especially problematic when examining how victims feel when forgiving exploitative offenders. This is because university-educated people have been shown to more strongly experience the state of cognitive dissonance. In an interesting set of studies, Snibbe and Markus (2005) found that when more educated people don't get what they want they were more likely to alter their attributions to correspond with their forced actions. In effect, they experienced higher levels of cognitive dissonance. This difference is important because as I have argued, forgiving an exploitative relationship partner for the sake of one's relationship with them causes distress because it generates a state of dissonance. Accordingly, an over-reliance on university-educated participants could exaggerate the negative effects of relationship-focussed forgiveness in exploitative relationships. To counter this particular limitation, I utilised community and online samples in addition to university samples. Samples recruited through online labour sourcing websites, such as Amazon Mechanical Turk and CrowdFlower, have been shown to be significantly more diverse than typical university student samples and the data obtained from them is at least as reliable as those obtained via traditional methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). As such, because the current research encompassed a broader sample of participants the results can be more confidently generalised to other groups.

7.2.2 Examining real-life and hypothetical forgiveness

Another strength of the current work is that I utilised a range of methodological procedures. In Studies 1, 4 and 5, participants recalled actual transgressions which meant that the forgiveness processes under examination were emotionally significant to participants. In Studies 2 and 3, I experimentally manipulated exploitation risk and forgiveness, allowing me to test their effects in a more controlled context. The fact that the direct effects of self- and relationship-focussed forgiveness were replicated across these varied methodological approaches is compelling evidence that a victim's reason for forgiving impacts the emotional outcomes of forgiveness.

7.2.3 Conceptual replication of key findings

A widely discussed issue within psychology, in particular social psychology, is the growing concern that many studies fail to replicate on subsequent investigation (Brandt et al., 2014; Klein et al., 2014; Open Science, 2012; Simons, 2014; Stroebe & Strack, 2014). In recent years, as the number of studies with results that cannot be reproduced has mounted (e.g., Klein et al., 2014; Open Science, 2012), the situation has been labelled as a crisis within psychology. This has highlighted the need for scientists to put a greater emphasis on conducting replications of existing research. To this end, an aim of this thesis was to attempt to replicate my core findings across multiple methodologies. This was achieved by conducting a conceptual replication of the initial experiment (Study 1) conducted in Study 3, and a replication of the initial correlational study (Study 2) in Study 5.

As Stroebe and Strack (2014) have argued, the true purpose of replication is a (repeated) test of a theoretical hypothesis, rather than an assessment of the reliability of a particular experimental procedure. In line with this rationale, Studies

3 and 5 were not designed to reproduce precisely the same methodological procedures but rather to operationalise the underlying theoretical variables (exploitation and forgiveness-focus) using different manipulations/measures. By sampling different parts of the same theoretical concept, I was able to gain additional information about the limits of the theory, as well as increase my confidence in results which remained consistent.

However, given that multiple features were changed between the original studies and their replications, one limitation of this approach is that I cannot be certain of what drove any variations in results between studies. Nonetheless, I have outlined what I think are some of the key differences between these studies, and how this may have impacted their results, in the limitations section of this chapter.

7.3   Implications

Here I discuss the implications of three main findings within this thesis. First, I discuss the implications of the findings relating to the main effect of forgiveness motives on distress. Second, I discuss the implications of the findings relating to the interaction between forgiveness motives and exploitation risk. Finally, I discuss the implications of the findings surrounding the mixed effects of forgiveness motives when the offender is an entire organisation.

7.3.1   Implications of the main effect of forgiveness motives

An important implication of this research relates to the growing trend toward forgiveness being granted to benefit the self. Due to research showing the positive consequences of forgiveness (Bono et al., 2008; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Karremans et al., 2003; Tsang et al., 2006), victims of transgressions have increasingly been urged to forgive their offenders to improve wellbeing. For example, clinicians have developed interventions to help victims forgive so that they

can receive the positive benefits of forgiveness (Coyle & Enright, 1997; Enright, 1996; Freedman & Enright, 1996; Madsen et al., 2009). Furthermore, a large self-help literature has emerged stressing that victims need to forgive for the sake of their own wellbeing (Enright, 2001; Smedes, 1996, 1997). These developments have resulted in an increasing secularisation of forgiveness. Where previously forgiveness has been a religious virtue, it is now viewed as a tool for maintaining health and wellbeing. A potential consequence of this trend is that when a victim forgives, self-benefit is often their primary concern rather than concern for the offender or their relationship with the offender (Bright et al., 2006; Younger et al., 2004).

The trend towards forgiving to obtain psychological benefits has led to concerns that forgiveness focussed on the self is artificial. For example, Enright et al. (1998) have argued that when forgiveness is granted out of concern for one's own wellbeing it loses its essential quality as it is no longer expressed out of compassion, generosity and love for the offender. The implicit claim within such arguments is that the benefits of forgiveness come from the fact that it is an altruistic gift, free from self-serving calculations. If true, this would create a paradox. If forgiveness loses its essential quality when expressed out of self-concern, clinicians and authors may be wasting their time stressing the benefits of forgiveness to victims of transgressions.

The results of the present studies provide an answer to this issue by explicitly testing the impact of self- and relationship-focussed forgiveness. In Studies 1, 2 and 3, forgiving for the sake of the relationship was associated with increased distress and negative emotions, relative to forgiving for the sake of the self. This suggests that, at least in the short-term, forgiving explicitly to benefit the self not only results

in more positive outcomes than withholding forgiveness, but also more positive outcomes than forgiving to restore a relationship.

The main effect of forgiveness motives also has implications for a key tenet of the forgiveness literature; that forgiving has positive outcomes for the forgiver. However, my results qualify this statement, suggesting that it is necessary to consider the functions of forgiveness when interpreting when forgiveness will be beneficial. Although forgiving may certainly be beneficial in many cases, it appears that forgiving for the sake of a relationship may be no better than withholding forgiveness under some circumstances. As such, our findings suggest that although victims often forgive to maintain the benefits of their relationship, this type of forgiveness does not necessarily enhance wellbeing.

7.3.2 Implications of the interaction between forgiveness motives and exploitation risk

As I outlined at the beginning of this dissertation, a growing body of research demonstrates that forgiving exploitative offenders is generally not a good idea. When an offender presents an ongoing exploitation risk, forgiveness has been shown to reduce victim wellbeing, erode self-respect, and increase re-offending (Luchies et al., 2010; McNulty, 2008, 2010, 2011). However, completely withholding forgiveness is not without negative consequences either. Indeed, the effects of *un*forgiveness are often detrimental (McCullough et al., 1998; VanOyen Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001; Worthington, 2001). Sustaining the negative emotional state of unforgiveness not only damages psychological well-being (Lawler et al., 2005; Worthington & Scherer, 2004), it can also negatively impact physical health (Seawell et al., 2014). Accordingly, victims of transgressions within

exploitative relationships find themselves in a bind, as both forgiveness and unforgiveness are likely to result in negative outcomes.

The possibility of self-focussed forgiveness provides a solution to the dilemma of whether to forgive exploitative relationship partners. For victims in exploitative relationships, self-focussed forgiveness can be liberating as it allows the victim to free themselves from the distress associated with the transgression whilst protecting against further exploitation. By enacting self-focussed forgiveness, victims can experience the benefits of reduced unforgiveness (Worthington & Scherer, 2004), while at the same time protecting themselves from the potential costs of restored closeness with an exploitive relationship partner (Luchies et al., 2010; McNulty, 2010, 2011). Indeed, forgiving an exploitative offender is not necessarily irrational or unhealthy when it is focussed on the self.

7.3.2.1 *Forgiveness measures*

The finding that the focus of forgiveness interacts with exploitation risk also has implications for research that uses measures of forgiveness which emphasize specific aspects of forgiveness. Measures which emphasize either relationship- or self-focussed forgiveness may result in different conclusions about the efficacy of forgiveness in different situations. For example, the most widely-used measure of forgiveness, the TRIM scale (McCullough et al., 2003; McCullough et al., 1998), is more strongly correlated with relationship-focussed forgiveness than self-focussed forgiveness (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018; Strelan et al., 2013). This is important because the present studies have shown that forgiveness focussed on the relationship is particularly adaptive in non-exploitative relationships but maladaptive in exploitative relationships. Accordingly, studies using the TRIM might exaggerate the positive outcomes of forgiving within healthy relationships, as well as the

negative outcomes of forgiving within unhealthy ones. As such, the present study has highlighted the importance of being cognisant of the aspects of forgiveness (i.e. self- or relationship-focussed) that a given measure is tapping into.

7.3.2.2   *Participant-driven definitions of forgiveness*

A related concern applies to studies using participant-driven understandings of what it means to forgive. The present research has highlighted the multi-faceted nature of forgiveness. Indeed, two people can forgive for entirely different reasons, which can significantly change their experience of forgiveness. Accordingly, the consequences and correlates of forgiveness depend to a large extent on what participants consider forgiveness to be. While a particular forgiveness researcher might have a clear idea of what it means to forgive, participants in psychological studies have disparate ideas about what forgiveness is (Younger et al., 2004). For example, for a person focussing on the relationship, forgiveness has substantial overlap with reconciliation (Strelan et al., 2013). In all likelihood, when this person forgives an exploitative offender they will experience disrupted self-concept clarity and reduced self-respect. Conversely, if another victim conceptualised forgiveness as a more self-focussed process—e.g., focussing on the intrapsychic components of forgiveness—they might not experience the same declines in self-respect when forgiving an exploitative offender. As such, researchers should be cautious when drawing conclusions about the utility of forgiving whenever participants are left to decide what forgiveness means.

7.3.3   **Implications for forgiveness of organisations**

Another goal of this thesis was to shed light on an area of forgiveness research that has historically received very little attention—forgiveness of non-human entities such as organisations. This was done by testing how the outcomes of

forgiving an organisation changed depending on why victims forgave. In the sections below, I discuss the implications of those findings.

7.3.3.1 *Implications of the main effect of forgiveness motives when the offender is an organisation*

The results of Studies 3 and 5 indicate that a focus on the self when forgiving an organisation is related to lower stress and negative emotional outcomes, as was the case for close interpersonal relationships. This suggests that even when the offender is an entire organisation, victims who forgive for the sake of their own wellbeing experience less distress than those who withhold forgiveness or forgive primarily to maintain their relationship with the organisation.

Consistent with my earlier theorising, these results indicate that self-focussed forgiveness should be an especially attractive option for victims who have been transgressed by organisations. This is because when the offender is an organisation, the victim is likely to be able to directly influence the cause of their distress. For example, a single employee might have very little ability to impact a company heading in an undesirable direction. In such cases, victims who forgive for their own sake can at least temporarily regulate their emotional responses to the transgressions which can help facilitate other, potentially more sustainable means of coping in the long-term. Even more encouraging, in Study 5, self-concerned forgiveness was the most strongly endorsed motive for forgiving an organisation, suggesting that the typical response to being transgressed by an organisation is an effective strategy for dealing with distress.

7.3.3.2 *Implications of the interaction effect when forgiving organisations*

I hypothesised that the relationship between exploitation risk (or perceived organisational justice) and forgiveness-related distress would depend on why victims

forgave the offending organisation. However, the results of Studies 3 and 5 only partially supported this hypothesis. Unlike in interpersonal relationships, when the offender was an organisation forgiveness motives did not alter the negative outcomes associated with exploitation risk; although one study did find an effect for positive emotional outcomes. These results suggest that unlike in interpersonal relationships, focusing on the self does not provide a buffer against the negative effects of forgiving an exploitative offender. Additional analyses also indicated that forgiveness motives did not moderate the relationship between actual forgiveness and stress.

Previous research has found that in interpersonal relationships a victim's motivation for forgiving changes how they experience forgiveness (Cox et al., 2012; Strelan et al., 2013) and exploitation (Gabriels & Strelan, 2018). However, my research did not find this effect for forgiveness within organisations. While the results of these studies need to be replicated before confident conclusions can be drawn, it appears that forgiveness motives are less important when the offender is an exploitative organisation as opposed to an exploitative relationship partner. If correct, this would have a number of practical and theoretical implications.

First, because forgiving untrustworthy or exploitative organisations results in more negative emotional outcomes regardless of why forgiveness is granted, clinicians should be cautious about advising victims to forgive untrustworthy organisations. Even if victims forgive with the explicit goal of improving their own wellbeing, this may have little impact on how they experience the risk of exploitation. In effect, it does not matter why you forgive unjust or exploitative organisations; it will result in increased personal distress.

Second, the difference in results when victims forgave organisations as opposed to individuals hints at a potentially fruitful line of research. Specifically, what are the dynamics of forgiveness, revenge and reconciliation in settings where the offender is an entire organisation? The studies included in this thesis were not designed to investigate *why* the impact of forgiveness motives change when the offender is an organisation, only *if* the outcomes change. More research is needed to understand why the dynamics of forgiving an organisation are different to forgiving an individual. For instance, the differences could be driven by reduced closeness, greater power differentials—or something else entirely.

7.3.3.3   *Implications of reasons for forgiving organisations*

In the introduction to this thesis I reviewed literature on the reasons people choose to forgive. I concluded that both lay understandings of forgiveness and the majority of typologies tend to include motives that can be categorised as either intrapersonal (focussed on the self) or interpersonal (focussed on the relationship) in nature. However, the findings of Study 4 suggest that forgiveness directed at impersonal entities such as organisations may be more complex. When the offender was an organisation the distinction between self and relationship focus did not clearly emerge. Self-concern and organisation-concern motives emerged as expected. However, concern for the relationship with the organisation did not emerge as a distinct motive, but rather two separate motives. Instead, victims reported forgiving for the sake of their work at the organisation (task-concern) or for the sake of relationships within the organisation (impression management).

Such a finding may be interesting for organisations that are attempting to develop cultures of forgiveness where people are able to move past the everyday unavoidable instances where they feel they have been mistreated. From this study,

we can conclude that maintaining relationships within an organisation and ensuring continued progress on specific tasks are common reasons people forgive organisations. Accordingly, as one might expect, actions such as removing people from working with colleagues whose company they enjoy, or dropping projects people have invested time into, carry a risk of removing the incentive to be more forgiving.

7.3.3.4   *Reconciling with an organisation after a transgression*

While the overarching goal of this dissertation was to investigate how a victim's motives for forgiveness impact their distress, I was also interested in how this changed their actual behaviour. To do this, I tested a model that sought to explain the relationship between the four primary motives for forgiving organisations and reconciliatory actions. The final model indicated that the four motives were indirectly related to reconciliation through their association with forgiveness and revenge. Self-concern, task-concern and impression management were all related to increased reconciliation through their association with forgiveness and revenge. However, organisation-concern was actually related to decreased reconciliation.

The finding that organisation-concern was related to decreased reconciliation, through its association with reduced revenge, is consistent with the proposal of Tripp et al. (2007) that seeking revenge can facilitate a sense of justice, and therefore reconciliation. Because victims who are primarily concerned about the organisation refrain from seeking revenge, they might also fail to achieve a sense of justice and hence reconciliation. Importantly, one should be cautious when interpreting the relations between organisation-concern and reconciliation. More research is need to establish the impact of forgiveness when the victim is primarily

motivated by a concern for the organisation. Nonetheless, the results of Study 5 suggest that victims who prioritise the needs of an organisations over their own may actually be less inclined make amends and resolve the issue with the organisation. This highlights the importance of being able to identify people's motivation for forgiving an organisation, as it can aid in being able to better predict when and how forgiveness is most likely to be beneficial and for whom.

Organisation-concern was related to decreased reconciliation through its association with reduced revenge. This result is consistent with the proposal of Tripp et al. (2007) that seeking revenge can facilitate a sense of justice, and therefore reconciliation. Because victims who are primarily concerned about the organisation refrain from seeking revenge, they might also fail to achieve a sense of justice and hence reconciliation.

7.4   Limitations and Future Directions

In this section I will discuss the limitations of this research. Briefly, these concern: the measurement of forgiveness focus, the manipulation of forgiveness focus, and the limited range of comparison points, outcome variables and time points examined. Each of these will be discussed in turn along with their implications for future research.

7.4.1   Measuring forgiveness-focus: Can people accurately report why they forgive?

A limitation of the non-experimental studies in this thesis is that they relied on participants accurately recalling why they forgave their offender. For several reasons, this could be an implausible expectation. In the section below, I outline four potential issues with the measurement of forgiveness motives.

First, simply asking participants to recall a transgression and describe why they forgave is likely to be affected by the motivation to see themselves as a good person, or at least an internally consistent person (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Kearns & Fincham, 2005). A victim's account of why they forgave may simply reflect a post-hoc explanation based on the outcomes of the transgression and their subsequent forgiveness. For example, if a victim chose to forgive an offender to maintain their relationship with them, but that offender later took advantage of their forgiveness, the victim may be inclined to recall forgiving for their own sake to maintain self-respect. Future research on forgiveness motives could reduce the impact of motivated recall by capturing participant's reasons for forgiving as close as possible to the transgression. However, this is difficult in that it is not easy to know exactly when forgiveness has occurred. Alternatively, researchers could measure forgiveness and its motives using implicit measures across time, as opposed to self-report scales at a single point in time (e.g., Goldring & Strelan, 2017).

Second, people may not be able to recall why they forgave because they are not necessarily deliberative when they forgive. Within close relationships, forgiveness is often a habitual response based on well-established patterns of interaction between partners (e.g., Karremans & Aarts, 2007). Because forgiveness can occur automatically and unconsciously, an individual's stated reasons for forgiving may not accurately reflect their decision-making process. However, within this thesis, I have conceptualised forgiveness on the basis of its 'decisional' properties (Davis et al., 2015), referring to forgiveness as a conscious decision to behave less negatively and more positively toward an offender. This emphasis on the decisional aspects of forgiveness included the descriptions of forgiveness given to participants in Studies 3, 4, and 5, as well as the specific measures of forgiveness

used (e.g., (Aquino et al., 2006). Of course, it is still likely that participants did experience a gradual change of heart and only 'decided' to forgive at the end of that process. However, as argued above, this problem was mitigated to some extent by guiding participants to report on their conscious decisions rather than their emotional experiences.

A third issue with accurately identifying why people forgave relates to the distinction between relationship-focussed and self-focussed forgiveness. A decision to forgive for a relationship is necessarily going to beget advantages for the self. For example, a motivation to restore a relationship might be difficult to distinguish from a motivation to alleviate stress about the future of the relationship. Accordingly, it may have been difficult for participants to report how much of their decision to forgive was driven by the relationship compared to their own needs. In light of this possibility, we did not conceptualise forgiveness motives as dichotomous, but rather as existing along a continuum from predominately focussed on the self to predominately focussed on the relationship. We also measured forgiveness motives in a manner that aligned with this conceptualisation.

Finally, my approach to measuring why people forgave is limited in that it only captured a small range of potential motives for forgiveness. As I outlined at the beginning of this thesis, there exists a wide range of typologies and frameworks for what motivates victims to forgive. Many of those frameworks include motives for forgiveness that do not neatly fit into the self/relationship continuum that I initially proposed. For example, victims may be motivated by religious beliefs (Ballester et al., 2011; Cox et al., 2012), social or societal harmony (e.g., Takada & Ohbuchi, 2008), deference for authority, or any number of other possible reasons. Given that not all motives would have neatly fit into the self/relationship continuum,

participants were not forced into one category or the other. Rather, they were free to rate themselves as neither forgiving for their own sake nor the sake of their relationship. Accordingly, some participants did score low on both self- and relationship-focus. Presumably, these individuals forgave for reasons not captured by our measures. However, since I aimed to test specific hypotheses about the effects of particular motives, generating a comprehensive list of reasons for forgiving was outside the scope of the research.

7.4.2 Manipulating forgiveness-focus: what drives the effects of forgiveness focus?

As I outlined in the section above, there are a number of difficulties in trying to capture why participants forgave their offenders. Studies 2 and 4 avoided this difficulty by experimentally manipulating people's reason for forgiving. While this approach had the advantage of allowing me to test the causal effect of forgiveness motives in a more tightly controlled setting, it also had limitations. In the section below, I outline two potential issues with experimentally manipulating forgiveness motives.

A potential confound with the forgiveness motive manipulations in Study 2 was that the withheld forgiveness and relationship-focussed forgiveness manipulations were communicated to the offender, whereas in the self-focussed condition forgiveness was expressed privately. Because an offender can more easily exploit a victim when they are aware that forgiveness has occurred, this may have influenced participants' responses. When there is no outward sign that the victim has forgiven—or when there is overt resentment or avoidance—the offender may believe he/she needs to tread more carefully. They might even take step towards repairing the relationship. Accordingly, it is possible that the difference in outcomes

between the two conditions was due to the private versus public nature of the declaration, rather than the forgiveness motive. Nonetheless, as I have argued in the introduction to this thesis, the private or public expression of forgiveness is typically aligned with the underlying motive. When a person is motivated to restore their relationship, they are likely to communicate goodwill explicitly to the offender.

Interestingly, when forgiveness focus was manipulated such that relationship- and self-focussed forgiveness were both expressed to a third party rather than to the offender (Study 3), there was no difference in negative outcomes. While this was not the only difference between the two studies, it suggests that the degree to which forgiveness is communicated to an exploitative offender plays a crucial role in determining how victims feel about forgiving. Future research could aim to directly test this question by comparing the outcomes of relationship-focussed forgiveness when it is communicated to the offender, to the self, or to a third party.

A second limitation of the forgiveness focus manipulations in Studies 2 and 3 is that they may also have manipulated the extent to which participants viewed their relationship as ongoing. Relationship-focussed motives for forgiveness imply there is a continuing relationship with the offender, whereas self-focussed forgiveness does not imply a continuing relationship. For example, in the self-focussed forgiveness manipulation in Study 3, participants were instructed to '*let go of your anger and resentment so that you can move on with your life*'. It could be argued that 'moving on with one's life' implies ending the relationship. This may have influenced the results; if there is no relationship, the offender can't continue to be exploitative, and the victim is less likely to experience distress when forgiving. In other words, it may not be the forgiveness motive per se that qualifies the outcomes of forgiveness, but rather whether there is an ongoing relationship. Importantly, the

degree to which the victim views the relationship as ongoing also reflects a crucial feature of self-focussed forgiveness; that it acts as a means to tolerate or avoid the pain of being hurt *without* having to restore a relationship.

The fact that I have identified two confounds within the experimental manipulations may appear at first glance to be a significant problem. However, this is not necessarily the case. Both confounds are typical features of how self- and relationship-focussed forgiveness function in everyday life. Thus, they do not necessarily undermine the validity of the findings. Nonetheless, it would be useful to have future studies investigate which aspects of the forgiveness motives (e.g., public expression, persistence of the relationship) are driving the observed difference in outcomes.

7.4.3   Limited range of comparison points, outcome variables and time points

Broadly speaking, the results of the five studies included in this thesis indicate that forgiveness focussed on the self has more positive outcomes than other responses to a transgression. However, when interpreting this finding it is important to consider what was not measured. It is possible that the conclusions drawn from this thesis would have been different if the various forgiveness motives were compared to different responses (e.g., grudge holding), if different outcome variables were measured, or if outcomes were measured at different time points. In the section below, I outline each of these three possibilities.

While self-focussed forgiveness tended to have more positive outcomes than the other motives assessed, it is not necessarily the best response to a transgression. Self-focussed forgiveness is one response to a transgression among many other possible responses, only some of which I measured. Crucially, the alternative response that a given forgiveness motive is compared with will impact the

possibility of observing a statistically significant difference between groups. For instance, Study 2 indicated that, all else being equal, both relationship- and self-focussed forgiveness resulted in significantly more positive outcomes than unforgiveness. However, if these motives were compared with other responses to a transgression, such as vengeful behaviour or silent grudge holding, I may have found a different pattern of results. Accordingly, when considering the outcomes of the various forgiveness motives examined in this thesis, they should not be thought of as absolutely good or bad, but rather as better or worse than the specific alternatives measured.

A second factor that could have changed the conclusions drawn from this thesis is the limited range of outcome variables that were measured. I was predominately concerned with measuring the level of negative emotions or distress a victim experiences when they forgive. However, it is possible that the state of cognitive dissonance generated by forgiving an exploitative organisation was not strong enough to impact the general measures of distress used. The interaction effect might have emerged more clearly in the studies examining forgiveness within organisations if outcome variables more closely related to dissonance were used, such as self-respect (Rosenberg, 1965) or decision regret (Brehaut et al., 2003).

A related consideration is that exploitation risk and forgiveness motive may have impacted aspects of relationship functioning not captured by short-term measures of emotional distress. As I have previously discussed, forgiveness can result in the maintenance of dangerous relationships (Gordon et al., 2004) and continued psychological and physical aggression (McNulty, 2011). However, the impact of self- and relationship-oriented forgiveness on other aspects of relationship functioning is unknown, because the studies included in this thesis only measured

current levels of emotional distress. Future research could explore the impact of self- and relationship-focussed forgiveness on more varied outcomes such as ongoing exploitation or relationship persistence.

Finally, in all the studies included in this thesis, forgiveness outcomes were measured at a single time point. This presents a significant limitation because, as previously discussed, the effectiveness of a response to a transgression is dependent upon when it is used within the coping process (e.g., Folkman & Lazarus, 1985). For example, while avoidance can be a helpful response to a transgression in the short term, when used in the long term it can exacerbate distress (C. R. Snyder & Pulvers, 2001). Because self-focussed forgiveness reflects a more avoidant response (Strelan & Covic, 2006; Strelan et al., 2013), its utility as a means of coping could be unsustainable in the long term. This may account for why the outcomes of self-concerned forgiveness were relatively less positive in Study 5, as participants reported on transgressions that had occurred an average of 2 years prior. Further research could examine this possibility by utilising longitudinal research designs that explore the outcomes of self-concerned forgiveness across time.

7.5   Concluding Statement

The clearest message from the academic literature on forgiveness is that it has positive outcomes for the forgiver. However, in this thesis I aimed to challenge that assumption by answering the question: does it matter *why* people choose to forgive individuals and organisations? In part this question was motivated by the observation that forgiveness has, in recent years, secularised. Where previously forgiveness has been a religious virtue, it is now viewed as a tool for maintaining health and wellbeing. This prompted me to ask the question: are the liberating affective consequences of forgiveness the same when it is expressed explicitly to

benefit the self? The results of this thesis have provided an answer to this question. At least in the short-term, forgiving explicitly to benefit the self not only results in more positive outcomes than withholding forgiveness, but also more positive outcomes than forgiving to restore a relationship. Moreover, within close interpersonal relationships, forgiving for the sake of the self also provides a buffer against the distress associated with forgiving an exploitative offender.

Another goal of this thesis was to shed light on an area of forgiveness research that has historically received very little attention: forgiveness of non-human entities such as organisations. Unfortunately, the pattern of results that emerged from the studies examining the impact of forgiveness of organisations was less clear. Nonetheless, the finding that the impact of forgiveness motives appears to be less important when victims forgive organisations as opposed to individuals, hints at a potentially fruitful line of research. Accordingly, in future research on the outcomes of forgiveness and reconciliation, I encourage researchers to consider not only *why* victims forgive but also *whom* they forgive.

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