Expressing Forgiveness after Interpersonal Mistreatment: Power and Status of Forgivers Influence Transgressors' Relationship Restoration Efforts

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Abstract

One adverse consequence of interpersonal mistreatment is that it damages the relationship between the victim and the transgressor. Scholars have promoted forgiveness of such mistreatment as a victim response that can motivate transgressors to work towards relationship restoration. Building on social exchange theory and the social perception literature, we provide an account of when transgressors are less (vs. more) willing to restore their relationship with the victim in response to forgiveness. Specifically, we argue that

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transgressors perceive forgiveness from a victim who has high (vs. low) power, relative to the transgressor, as insincere, making transgressors less willing to restore the relationship. We further argue that this effect of high (vs. low) victim power is pronounced especially when the victim also has low (vs. high) status. Two experiments and two field studies support these predictions. These findings highlight the relevance of studying how contextual conditions color transgressors' perceptions of victims' behavior to understand relationship restoration after interpersonal mistreatment.

Keywords

Interpersonal mistreatment, power, status, hierarchy, forgiveness, sincerity, relationship restoration

Introduction

Interpersonal mistreatment is a common adverse experience for many organization members (Bies & Moag, 1986; Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1993; Hershcovis, Cameron, Gervais, & Bozeman, 2018). It is defined as "a specific antisocial variety of organizational deviance, involving a situation in which at least one organizational member takes counternormative negative actions - or terminates normative positive actions - against another member" (p. 247; Cortina & Magley, 2003). Such mistreatment can range from mild social slights such as offensive jokes to disrespect and general incivility, and even to serious harassment and violence (Cortina & Magley, 2003; Lim & Cortina, 2005). Interpersonal

mistreatment damages the relationship between the victim and the transgressor (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010), thus thwarting the victim's belongingness needs (O'Reilly, Robinson, Berdahl, & Banki, 2009), damaging his/her self-esteem (Penhaligon, Louis, & Restubog, 2009), and even promoting deviant victim behaviors (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010).

One victim response that may facilitate restoring the victim-transgressor relationship following interpersonal mistreatment is forgiveness (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012; Goodstein & Aquino, 2010; Ren & Gray, 2009). Forgiveness is defined as "the internal act of relinquishing anger, resentment, and the desire to seek revenge against someone who has caused harm as well as the enhancement of positive emotions and thoughts towards the harm-doer" (Bies, Barclay, Tripp, & Aquino, 2016, p. 10). When the victim expresses forgiveness to the transgressor, it goes beyond the internal act and becomes an interpersonal gesture (Adams, Zou, Inesi, & Pillutla, 2015; Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002).

The current research is concerned with the effects of expressed forgiveness on subsequent transgressors' relationship restoration efforts. Expressing forgiveness is often promoted as the victim stimulating the transgressor to recommit to the broken rule and to be willing to interact with the victim again; that is, to commit to relationship restoration (Fehr & Gelfand, 2012; Ren & Gray, 2009). However, research that examined transgressor responses to expressed forgiveness have revealed divergent findings. Some found studies that transgressors respond with restorative actions such as complying with victim requests (Kelln & Ellard, 1999), making amends (Hannon, Rusbult, Finkel, & Kamashiro, 2010; Leunissen, De Cremer, & Reinders Folmer, 2012), exhibiting prosocial intentions (Mooney, Strelan, &

McKee, 2015), and refraining from repeating transgressions (Wallace, Exline, & Baumeister, 2008). Yet, other studies found that forgiveness makes transgressors avoid the victim (Adams et al., 2015) and repeat the transgression (McNulty, 2011; McNulty & Russell, 2016). These conflicting findings point to a need to identify moderators that determine when forgiveness is more (vs. less) likely to promote transgressors' restorative efforts. Indeed, forgiveness scholars have suggested that forgiveness does not occur in a social vacuum and its effectiveness largely depends on organizational contexts such as hierarchy (Bies et al., 2016).

In the current paper, we build on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Lovaglia, 1995; Thye, 2000) and the social perception literature (Fragale, Overbeck, & Neale, 2011; Kramer, 1994) to propose that the hierarchy within the victim-transgressor relationship may explain *when* and *why* expressed forgiveness promotes transgressors' restorative actions. As a fundamental part of social exchange theory, the norm of reciprocity dictates that recipients of a beneficial act (e.g., receiving forgiveness) should reciprocate with an equally beneficial act (e.g., restorative actions) (Gouldner, 1960). However, social exchange theory also poses structural constraints on the reciprocity norm: the hierarchical position of actors dictates how recipients perceive their interaction partner's actions and, thus, their reciprocating actions (Blau, 1964; Lovaglia, 1995; Thye, 2000). Important in this respect, the social perception literature has revealed that low-power actors question the sincerity of their high-power interaction partner's actions (Farrell, 2004; Fiske & Durante, 2014; Kramer, 1994; Zheng, Van Dijke, Leunissen, Giurge, & De Cremer, 2016). Because recipients of a beneficial gesture reciprocate gestures they perceive as insincere less (Belmi & Pfeffer, 2015; Eilam & Suleiman, 2004; Flynn, 2006), forgiveness from a victim who has higher (vs. lower) power

may make transgressors less willing to restore the relationship.

However, hierarchies are based on differentiations in power and status. While correlated, these two variables are conceptually distinct and can vary orthogonally (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). In other words, some people with high power may have low status (e.g., security guards, reimbursement clerks) while other people with low power may have high status (e.g., emeritus professors, Olympic athletes) (Fragale et al., 2011). The social perception literature has shown that power and status of actors interact to shape people's perceptions of these actors (Fragale et al., 2011). Building on this, we propose that power and status of the forgiving victim should not only be distinguished but that they should be considered in interaction to understand how they shape transgressor restorative actions following forgiveness. Specifically, we will argue that the transgressor is least likely to exhibit restorative behaviors in response to a forgiveness gesture from a victim with high power and low status. We expect this because the transgressor will perceive forgiveness from such a victim as insincere. Figure 1 visually depicts our proposed model.

Forgiver Power, Forgiveness Sincerity Perceptions, and Transgressor Relationship Restoration Efforts

Power is commonly defined as asymmetric control over valued resources (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). Thus, having power provides the capacity to impose one's will over others (Ng, 1980; Sturm & Antonakis, 2015). The possibility of high-power actors imposing their will motivates low-power actors to make sense of the situation, which produces a hypervigilant mode of information processing (Kramer, 1994; van Dijke, De Cremer, & Mayer, 2010). This, we argue, results in suspicion

of being manipulated by one's high-power interaction partner. For example, Kramer (1994) found that first- (relative to second-) year MBA students perceived their more (vs. less) senior classmates' actions as being driven by malicious intentions. Zheng et al. (2016) showed that low- (vs. high-) power victims see high- (vs. low-) power transgressors' apology as being less sincere. Hommelhoff and Richter (2017) found that individuals in non-managerial (vs. managerial) positions exhibit more distrust. Other studies have revealed that people see high- (relative to low-) power actors as being interpersonally cold (Fragale et al., 2011) and dishonest (Fiske & Durante, 2014). In sum, low-power actors may question the sincerity of their high-power interaction partners' actions.

Expressing forgiveness can result from a true internal change towards the transgressor, or from self-serving motivations such as attempts to enhance status, assert moral superiority, or manage impressions (Adams et al., 2015; Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1998; Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991; Wallace et al., 2008). In the wake of interpersonal mistreatment, low-power transgressors' suspicion of being manipulated may be heightened. They may question whether felt and expressed forgiveness are actually aligned; that is, they may question the sincerity of forgiveness expressed by their high-power interaction partner (Baumeister et al., 1998; Enright & the Human Development Study Group, 1991). When high-power victims express forgiveness, low-power transgressors may view high-power victims as simply putting on a "show" by expressing forgiveness in order to serve their self-interests. As noted, a core element of social exchange theory is that recipients of a beneficial gesture are less willing to reciprocate the gesture when they perceive it as insincere (Belmi & Pfeffer, 2015; Eilam & Suleiman, 2004; Flynn, 2006). Indeed, studies

show that in conflict situations, perceived sincerity of social accounts such as transgressors' explanations for transgressions (Shapiro, 1991) and employers' explanations for layoffs (Skarlicki, Barclay, & Pugh, 2008) influence whether social accounts are effective in mitigating negative recipient reactions. Thus, we reason that low- (vs. high-) power transgressors perceive forgiveness from forgivers with high- (vs. low-) power as less sincere, making transgressors less willing to reciprocate with restorative behaviors.

Forgiver Status and Transgressor Relationship Restoration Efforts

Status refers to the respect, admiration, and regard an individual has in the eyes of others (Blader & Chen, 2012; Fragale et al., 2011; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). It is willingly bestowed by others on those who contribute most to the collective's success and functioning (Kemper, 2006; Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). Status serves as a "parameter" of this person's social value in the eyes of others (Chen, Peterson, Phillips, Podolny, & Ridgeway, 2012). High- (vs. low-) status actors act more prosocially (Blader & Chen, 2012) and are expected to continue to display prosocial behaviors that helped them to achieve their high status in the first place (Fragale et al., 2011).

Because status reflects one's orientation towards the collective, we argue that status moderates the relationship between forgiver power and transgressor restorative efforts. Specifically, we argue that the combination of *high* forgiver power and *low* forgiver status makes transgressors least likely to respond in restorative ways to forgiveness. Transgressors likely view high-status forgivers (regardless of their power) as being oriented towards the collective, suggesting that their forgiveness gestures are sincere. In contrast, low forgiver status arguably amplifies the effect of high (vs. low) forgiver power on forgiveness sincerity

perceptions and subsequent transgressor restorative actions. This is because low status forgivers do not possess any attributes that signal they will use their power to benefit others, rather than their own self-interest. This argument culminates in our hypotheses:

High (vs. low) forgiver power, relative to the transgressor, makes transgressors less willing to restore the relationship. However, this effect is pronounced particularly when the forgiver simultaneously has low (vs. high) status (H1).

The interaction effect of forgiver power and forgiver status on the transgressor's willingness to restore the relationship is mediated by the transgressor's perceptions of forgiveness sincerity (H2).

We tested our hypotheses in two laboratory experiments (Studies 1-2) and two field studies conducted among employees of various organizations (Studies 3-4).

Study 1

Method

Participants and design. One hundred and twenty European undergraduate business students participated in exchange for course credit. We randomly assigned them to one of four conditions that resulted from orthogonally manipulating forgiver power (low vs. high) and forgiver status (low vs. high). Based on criteria explained below (see: Procedure), we included 88 participants in the analyses (48 women; M_{age} = 21.66, SD_{age} = 2.86). There were 22 participants in the low forgiver power / high forgiver status condition, 19 participants in the low power / low status condition, 22 participants in the high power / high status condition, and 25 participants in the high power / low status condition.

Procedure. We induced participants to transgress against their interaction partner in a

trust game (Berg, Dickhaut, & McCabe, 1995), which is often used to study interpersonal transgressions (Leunissen et al., 2012; Desmet & Leunissen, 2014; Zheng et al., 2016). In the trust game, two individuals are randomly assigned to either the trustor (Player 1) or the trustee (Player 2) role. Player 1 starts with a sum of initial endowments (i.e., 10 valuable chips in our study) and decides how many of these chips to send to Player 2. The number of transferred chips is tripled; thus, Player 2 receives three times the number of chips that Player 1 transferred. Player 2 then decides how many chips to return to Player 1. By sending chips to Player 2 (i.e., trusting Player 2), Player 1 can increase his/her own outcomes and those of Player 2. For instance, if Player 1 transfers all 10 chips, Player 2 receives 30 chips and could subsequently divide these chips equally, ensuring that both players end up with 15 chips. However, Player 1 is vulnerable to Player 2's willingness to return a fair number of chips. If Player 2 returns a number of chips that makes Player 1 end up with fewer chips than Player 2, Player 2 commits a transgression by violating Player 1's trust (Leunissen et al., 2012).

Prior research shows that in a trust game, Player 2 is likely to ensure that both Players end up with equal outcomes when Player 2 feels fully trusted by Player 1 (i.e., when Player 1 transfers all his/her chips); when Player 2 feels not fully trusted, he/she is likely to reciprocate by ensuring that Player 1 ends up with fewer chips than Player 2 (Pillutla, Malhotra, & Murnighan, 2003). The procedure that we used to induce participants to commit a trust-violating mistreatment (taken from Leunissen et al., 2012; Desmet & Leunissen, 2014; see also Zheng et al., 2016) builds on this prior work by raising participants' uncertainty regarding Player 1's initial endowment. Specifically, Player 2 learns that Player 1's initial endowment could be anything from 10 to 30 chips. Because the exact initial endowment is

unknown to participants, most participants assume that Player 1's original endowment is larger than 10 chips. As a result, when receiving 10 chips from Player 1, Player 2 is likely to keep more chips for him/herself than to send back to Player 1.

In our study, all participants were seated in separate cubicles and received all information via a computer. We informed participants that the research assistant they met at the beginning of the study was in one of the other cubicles and would interact with them via the computer network in an exchange exercise. We then explained the trust game and informed participants that they would be Player 2; the research assistant would be Player 1. In reality, all actions from Player 1 were preprogrammed.

Before the game started, participants read a message that introduced Player 1 to them. We used this to manipulate the power and status of Player 1. We framed Player 1's power relative to Player 2 in terms of asymmetric control over valuable resources (i.e., chips in this case) without actually changing the game reward structure (taken from Zheng et al., 2016). We operationalized status as the prestige, respect, and esteem the forgiver has in the eyes of others (Anicich, Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2016; Blader & Chen, 2012; Fragale et al., 2011). Specifically, in the low/high forgiver power conditions participants read:

Player 1 depends on you to receive chips. Since you divide the chips that are tripled, Player 1 has little power to influence the final division in this game. / Player 1 divides the initial chips. Thus, Player 1 has a lot of power to influence the final division.

Subsequently, in the low/high forgiver status conditions participants read:

In addition/however, based on the evaluation from many participants who interacted with Player 1 in the game before, they don't have much respect and admiration for her. / they

respect and admire her.

Following the definition of interpersonal mistreatment as taking counternormative negative actions or termination of normative positive actions (Cortina & Magley, 2003), we manipulated interpersonal mistreatment as a trust violation. To induce mistreatment, we informed participants that Player 1 had received between 10 and 30 chips and had decided to transfer 10 chips to them. As we expected, most participants (N = 88, 77%) subsequently committed a trust-violating transgression by returning a number of chips that made Player 1 end up with fewer chips than Player 2 (this percentage is similar to Leunissen et al., 2012, in which 74% committed a transgression). Twenty-six participants returned a number of chips that made Player 1 end up with the same number or more chips than Player 2, and thus did not commit mistreatment; Six participants indicated they have participated in a similar trust game before; we thus included 88 participants in our hypotheses tests.

Because we manipulated interpersonal mistreatment as a trust violation, to check whether participants felt they mistreated their interaction partner, we asked them to indicate "To what extent do you think you violated Player 1's trust in the first round?'' (*1=Not at all, 2=to a small extent, 3=to some extent, 4=to a moderate extent, 5=to a considerable extent, 6=to a great extent, 7=completely*). A t-test showed that participants who mistreated (vs. did not mistreat) their partner felt they violated trust (M = 4.00, SD = 1.51 vs. M = 3.08, SD = 1.72, t (112) = 2.65, p = .01, 95% CI = [.23, 1.61], d = .60). In addition, a t-test showed that mean perceptions of trust violation (M = 4.00, SD = 1.51) for these participants were significantly higher than 3, t (87) = 6.22, p < .001, 95% CI: [.68, 1.32], d = 1.33, indicating these participants felt they "moderately" (4) violated trust on average.

After the first round of the trust game, we presented participants a chart with the outcome for both Players. This chart indicated that Player 1 had 10 chips and sent out all. Player 1 thus ended up with fewer chips than Player 2 for 88 participants. These participants then received an email message from Player 1 that expressed forgiveness (adopted from Leunissen et al., 2012; see also Wallace et al., 2008):

"Hey! I have fewer chips than you! That is too bad. But I will give you the benefit of the doubt for now. I will forgive you but please be cooperative in the future."

After having received the forgiveness message from Player 1, a second round of the trust game commenced. We informed participants that Player 1's endowment was in this round again between 10 and 30 chips and that Player 1 sent them 10 chips. Participants then decided how many chips to return in round 2.

Measures. After participants read the power and status manipulation instructions, they rated Player 1's power with two items from previous studies (Blader & Chen, 2012; Zheng et al., 2016): "In this game, Player 1 has a lot of power over me", "In this game, Player 1 has a big influence on the outcomes of the game" (1 = *strongly disagree;* 7 = *strongly agree*) (M = 5.07, SD = 1.51; α = .86). Participants rated Player 1's status with two items from Blader and Chen (2012): "In this game, Player 1 is respected by other participants", "In this game, Player 1 is held in high regard". (M = 4.22, SD = 1.75; α = .90).

A core element of relationship restoration is the transgressor's recommitment to the norm that was broken (i.e., trust in this case; Ren & Gray, 2009). In light of this, we operationalized transgressor *relationship restoration* as the increase in the number of chips returned to Player 1 in round 2, relative to round 1 (M = 2.94, SD = 3.65). This increase

indicates how much transgressors want to make up for their violation in round 1 (see Wallace et al., 2008; Desmet & Leunissen, 2010, for a similar approach). Table S1 shows the correlations between the study variables.

Results

Manipulation checks. ANOVA on the power manipulation check revealed a significant effect of forgiver power, $F(1, 84) = 13.64$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [.52, 1.72], $d = .81$. Participants in the high-power forgiver condition perceived the forgiver as having more power ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.34$) than participants in the low-power forgiver condition ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.49$). The effects of forgiver status, F (1, 84) = .93, $p = .34$, $d = .20$, and the Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction were not significant, F (1, 84) = 1.14, $p = .30$, $d = .20$.

ANOVA on the status manipulation check revealed a significant effect of forgiver status, $F(1, 84) = 71.02$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = [1.78, 2.88], $d = 1.85$. Participants in the high-status forgiver condition perceived the forgiver as having higher status ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.25$) than participants in the low-status forgiver condition ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.33$). The effect of forgiver power, F (1, 84) = 1.69, $p = .20$, $d = .29$, and the Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction were not significant, F (1, 84) = .48, $p = .49$, $d = .16$.

Hypothesis test. ANOVA on relationship restoration revealed no significant effect of forgiver power, $F(1, 84) = .68$, $p = .41$, $d = .18$, or forgiver status, $F(1, 84) = .28$, $p = .60$, $d = .11$. However, as predicted, the analysis revealed a significant Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction, $F(1, 84) = 5.05$, $p = .03$, $d = .49$ (Figure 2).

In support of H1, simple effects analyses showed that transgressors who interacted with low-status forgivers responded with lowered restoration attempts when the forgiver had

high (M = 1.64, SD = 4.67), rather than low power (M = 2.68, SD = 2.70), $F(1, 84) = 4.68$, p = .03, 95% CI = [-4.53, -.19], d = .47. Transgressors interacting with high-status forgivers, were equally likely to display restoration attempts regardless of whether the forgiver had high (M = 3.77, SD = 3.32) or low power (M = 2.68, SD = 2.70), $F(1, 84) = 1.02$, p = .32, 95% CI = [-1.06, 3.24], d = .22.

Further analyses showed that transgressors did not attempt to restore the relationship with high power / low status forgivers (M = 1.64, SE = .72; 95% CI [.22, 3.07]). However, transgressors attempted to restore the relationship with high power / high status (M = 3.77, SE = .76; 95% CI [2.25, 5.29]), low power / low status (M = 4.00, SE = .82, 95% CI [2.37, 5.64]), and low power / high status (M = 2.68, SE = .76; 95% CI [1.16, 4.20]) forgivers.

Discussion of Study 1 and Introduction to Study 2

In showing that forgiveness from a victim who has high power and simultaneously low status is relatively unlikely to stimulate the transgressor to restore the relationship, the results of Study 1 support H1. However, a potential limitation of Study 1 was that we tested H1 in the stylized trust game context. In this context it may not have been clear how previous players developed the "respect and admiration" they purportedly communicated to the participant as part of our status manipulation. Furthermore, we had to operationalize interpersonal mistreatment narrowly, as a trust violation. In Study 2, we therefore used a more realistic workplace setting, that is, an in-basket task[1]. Such a task delivers findings with high internal validity but also ecological validity for workplace experiences (Treviño, 1992).

[1] The in-basket task is a workplace simulation that is often used in personnel selection. Participants are presented with various materials such as memos and phone/email messages and make decisions based on the available information. Experimental manipulations can be embedded in the materials (Treviño, 1992).

This allowed operationalizing status as respect and admiration from colleagues and interpersonal mistreatment more broadly than a trust violation. Furthermore, in Study 2 we introduced diversity in power operationalizations using a structural power manipulation in which we emphasized asymmetrical outcome dependence: The forgiver was either the transgressor's leader or his/her subordinate who held a formal position that gave him/her a great deal of (vs. very little) control over valued resources in the company. Finally, we tested the process that purportedly drives the effect of forgiver power on transgressor relationship restoration efforts, as a function of forgiver status; that is, forgiveness sincerity perceptions.

Study 2

Method

Participants and design. In total, 117 European undergraduate business students participated in exchange for course credit (64 women; M_{age} = 20.30, SD_{age} = 3.37). We randomly assigned them to one of four conditions that resulted from orthogonally manipulating forgiver power (low vs. high) and forgiver status (low vs. high).

Procedure. We seated each participant in a separate soundproof cubicle. All instructions were communicated via a computer. Participants learned that they worked in an organization called "Duron Paints", a multinational manufacturer of paint products with approximately 3,000 employees. They would either be a leader or a subordinate in the organization, ostensibly based on their responses to items that measured leadership skills. This was to ensure that participants believed that their role in the organization was appointed in a legitimate manner (see Galinsky et al., 2003 and Hoogervorst, De Cremer, & Van Dijke, 2013). In reality, we assigned participants randomly to the high or low forgiver power

condition. We manipulated status as the prestige, respect, and esteem the victim had in the eyes of colleagues (Blader & Chen, 2012). In the low/high forgiver power participants read:

You are (Andrew is) the Plant Manager of Duron Paints. Andrew is your direct subordinate (you are Andrew's) direct subordinate. This means that Andrew holds (you hold) a formal position that gives him (give you) very little (a great deal of control) over valued resources in the company. Thus, Andrew does not have (has) influence over others, because of his limited access (access) to resources in the company.

Subsequently, in the low/high status conditions participants read:

In addition (however), Andrew is not very respected or admired (highly respected and admired) by other members of the company. As a result, Andrew does not have (has) influence over others, because these individuals do not value (value) Andrew's opinion.

After reading the role descriptions, participants responded to manipulation checks. Consistent with Study 1 and following the definition of interpersonal mistreatment (Cortina & Magley, 2003), we manipulated mistreatment as taking counter normative actions - participants read a workplace mistreatment scenario in which they presented Andrew's contribution to a project as their own contribution during a presentation in a meeting. Participants then received an email, ostensibly from Andrew. We adapted the forgiveness message from previous studies (Wallace et al., 2008; Adams et al., 2015), such that it would be suitable in the workplace context. Specifically the email indicated:

"Hi (participant's name), I am writing this email to tell you not to worry about what just happened. I forgive you and I hope we are good now."

Measures. Except when indicated otherwise, participants responded on 7-point scales

(1 = *not at all;* 7 = *completely*). Forgiver power was rated with "To what extent do you feel Andrew is in charge in the company?" (Galinsky et al., 2003). Forgiver status was rated with "To what extent do you feel Andrew is respected in the company?" (Blader & Chen, 2012).

We measured *forgiveness sincerity perceptions* with a 4-item scale. Because no existing scale measures forgiveness sincerity perceptions, we developed this scale based on items from previous studies (Mooney et al., 2015; Strelan, McKee, Calic, Cook, & Shaw, 2013). We specified items to the current situation. The items are "Andrew's expression of forgiveness reveals his true forgiving self", "Andrew shows consistency between his forgiving intention and the expression of forgiveness", "Andrew's expression of forgiveness is guided by a genuine forgiving intention", and "I perceive his forgiveness as sincere". We averaged these items into a reliable index (M = 4.70, SD = 1.15, α = .81).

Consistent with Study 1, we operationalized *relationship restoration* as the extent to which the transgressor recommits to the broken rule. Specifically, we adapted McNulty and Russell (2016)'s one-item measure of motivation to refrain from transgressions: "After seeing his forgiveness, I will try very hard not to offend him again in the future." (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*) (M = 5.62, SD = 1.57). Table S2 shows the correlations between the study variables.

Results

Manipulation checks. To check whether participants felt they mistreated, we asked: "To what extent do you think you committed a severe transgression?'' (*1 = not at all, 4 = to a moderate extent, 7 = very much so*). A t-test showed that mean severity perceptions (M = 5.20, SD = 1.42) were significantly higher than 4, t (116) = 9.07, p < .001, 95% CI: [.94,

1.46], d = .84, indicating that, on average, participants felt they mistreated more than to a moderate extent.

A Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status ANOVA on the power manipulation check revealed a significant main effect of forgiver power, $F(1, 113) = 101.80$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: [2.27, 3.38], d = 1.88. Participants in the high-power forgiver condition perceived the forgiver as having more power (M = 5.18, SD = 1.70) than participants in the low-power forgiver condition (M = 2.37, SD = 1.63). The Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 113) = .06$, $p = .80$, $d = .00$. Unexpectedly, the effect of forgiver status was also significant, although it was much weaker than the effect of forgiver power, $F(1, 113) = 26.88$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: [.90, 2.01], d = .98. Participants in the high-status forgiver condition perceived the forgiver as having more power (M = 4.54, SD = 2.02) than participants in the low-status forgiver condition (M = 3.12, SD = 2.12). This may be because we operationalized power in the manipulation check item as perceptions of whether Andrew was in charge in the company. This broad perception likely contains elements of forced and voluntary compliance (deriving from power and status, respectively).

A Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status ANOVA on the status check revealed a significant effect of forgiver status, $F(1, 113) = 341$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: [3.76, 4.66], d = 3.46. Participants in the high-status forgiver condition perceived the forgiver as having higher status (M = 6.23, SD = 1.04) than participants in the low-status forgiver condition (M = 2.02, SD = 1.40). The effects of forgiver power, $F(1, 113) = 2.29$, $p = .13$, $d = .29$, and the Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction were not significant, $F(1, 113) = .16$, $p = .70$, $d = .00$.

Hypotheses testing. We first tested H1. A Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status ANOVA

on relationship restoration revealed a significant interaction, $F(1, 113) = 4.35$, $p = .04$, $d = .39$ (see Figure 3). The effect of forgiver status was also significant, $F(1, 113) = 7.23$, $p = .01$, $d = .51$. The effect of forgiver power was not significant, $F(1, 113) = 1.45$, $p = .23$, $d = .23$.

In support of H1, simple effects analyses revealed that for low-status forgivers, having high power significantly reduced transgressors' relationship restoration efforts ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.89$) relative to having low power ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.33$), $F(1, 113) = 5.55$, $p = .02$, 95% CI: [-1.69, -.15], $d = .44$. For high-status forgivers, having high power did not affect transgressors' relationship restoration efforts ($M = 6.14$, $SD = 1.13$) compared to having low power ($M = 5.89$, $SD = 1.55$), $F(1, 113) = .38$, $p = .54$, 95% CI: [-.55, 1.04], $d = .11$.

We then tested H2. This hypothesis implies, first, that forgiveness will be perceived as relatively insincere when it is communicated by a high-power (rather than low-power) forgiver, who is at the same time low (rather than high) in status. To test this, we conducted a Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status ANOVA on forgiveness sincerity perceptions. This analysis revealed no significant effect of forgiver power, $F(1, 113) = .14$, $p = .71$, $d = .00$, or forgiver status, $F(1, 113) = .68$, $p = .41$, $d = .01$. However, a significant Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction effect emerged, $F(1, 113) = 5.67$, $p = .02$, $d = .45$ (Figure 3).

Consistent with H2, simple effects analyses showed that for low-status forgivers, having high power significantly reduced forgiveness sincerity perceptions ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.00$) compared to having low power ($M = 4.91$, $SD = .91$), $F(1, 113) = 3.88$, $p = .05$, 95% CI: [-1.15, .00], $d = .37$. For high-status forgivers, having high power did not affect forgiveness sincerity perceptions ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.24$) compared to having low power ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.34$), $F(1, 113) = 1.97$, $p = .16$, 95% CI: [-.17, 1.01], $d = .26$.

We tested the full model (Figure 1) with Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (model 8, 5,000 bootstrap samples). We used Model 8 because inclusion of the direct Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status effect (i.e., not mediated by forgiveness sincerity perceptions) in addition to its mediated effect provides an unbiased test, relative to a model that excludes the direct effect, although it does not solve endogeneity issues (Antonakis, Bendahan, Jacquart, & Lalive, 2014; Model 7, which excludes the direct effect revealed effects similar to those of Model 8; see Table S5). This analysis supported H2 (index of moderated mediation = .51, *SE* =.25, 95% CI: [.12, 1.10]). High (vs. low) forgiver power decreased transgressors' relationship restoration efforts via decreased forgiveness sincerity perceptions when the forgiver had low status: indirect effect = -.29, *SE* = .14, 95% CI: [-.63, -.07], but not when the forgiver had high status: indirect effect = .21, *SE* = .19, 95% CI: [-.10, .65] (see Figure S1). Conditional direct effects of power were not significant when the forgiver had low status (direct effect = -.63, *SE* = .37, 95% CI: [-1.35, .10]) or high status (direct effect = .03, *SE* = .37, 95% CI: [-.71, .77]).

Discussion of Study 2 and Introduction to Study 3

The results of Study 2 support H1 and H2. When transgressors received a forgiveness message from a high-power victim who also had low status, they were relatively unlikely to restore the relationship. This results because they perceived forgiveness from a high-power forgiver who simultaneously had low status as being less sincere. A limitation of Study 2 was that it measured transgressors' intention to restore the relationship. In addition, Study 2 (and Study 1) were both conducted in a laboratory context. In Study 3, we therefore tested our hypotheses on organization members' actual behaviors in existing work relationships.

Study 3

Method

Participants. We recruited participants via a professional Dutch research agency, Flycatcher. The Flycatcher panel has the ISO-26362 certification for access panels (i.e., it meets the qualitative ISO requirements for social scientific research, market research, or opinion polls) and consists of approximately 16,000 Dutch citizens. Prior research suggests that this and similar research panels (e.g., study response in the USA) are reliable methods for data collection (Hoogervorst et al., 2013). The agency contacted 350 employees who worked for at least 20 hours each week and stated that the inclusion criteria include the recollection of a specific workplace incident where they transgressed against a fellow colleague and this colleague expressed forgiveness to them. For their participation, they received credit points that allowed them to choose certain small gifts (e.g., movie tickets).

One hundred and twenty-two employees (52 females; M_{age} = 39.36 years, *SD* = 11.61) indicated they had such an experience and thus completed our online questionnaire. Two independent coders evaluated the recollections in terms of whether they described an incident specified in the instructions or not and agreed that all participants followed the instructions. As to highest completed education, 23% indicated having secondary education (high school); 35% had subsequent vocational education; 24% had a Bachelor degree, and 18% had a Master degree. Of all the participants, 66% worked for more than 5 years with their current organization. In terms of hierarchical position, 53% were line managers/supervisors and 47% had a non-management function.

Procedure. We used a critical incident technique to elicit salient experiences of

having enacted interpersonal mistreatment (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2006; Hershcovis et al., 2018; Karremans & Smith, 2010; Tepper & Henle, 2011). Specifically, participants read:

Please recall a specific incident that happened in the last six months where you did something that offended, harmed or hurt somebody in the company, and after the transgression, this person forgave you. By forgiveness, we mean this person either offered an explicit verbal statement or exhibited behaviors indicating that he/she does not have any negative emotions towards you and he/she will not cause you any harm.

Measures. To check whether participants indeed felt they committed interpersonal mistreatment, they answered one question after recalling the mistreatment: "To what extent do you think she/he is victimized by you?" (Aquino et al., 2006) (*1=Not at all, 2=to some extent, 3=to a moderate extent, 4=to a considerable extent, 5=completely*). A t-test showed that mean perceptions (M = 2.50, SD = 1.18) were significantly higher than 2, t (121) = 4.38, $p < .001$, 95% CI: [.26, .68], d = .80, indicating that, on average, participants felt they victimized the forgiver more than to some extent.

In addition, two independent coders coded the extent to which the victim felt mistreated (*1=Not at all to 5=completely).* A t-test showed that means (M = 2.41, SD = .80) were significantly higher than 2 (to some extent), t (121) = 5.64, $p < .001$, 95% CI: [.27, .56], d = 1.03, indicating that, on average, victims felt they were at least to some extent mistreated. The coders also coded types of mistreatment as incivility, aggression, and bullying based on the classification by Yang, Caughlin, Gazica, Truxillo, & Spector (2014). 65.5% were incivility, 29.4% were aggression, and 5% were bullying.

After participants recalled the incident, we measured *forgiver power* with a measure

developed by Aquino et al. (2006). Participants indicated whether the person whom they had transgressed against was a "subordinate," a "supervisor," a "manager," an "administrator," a "peer" or "other." Consistent with Study 2, we used structural power to capture asymmetrical outcome dependence. Participants who reported their victim's position as "other" were asked to specify their relationship with this person. Two independent coders classified participants who indicated "other" (N = 8) into one of the categories based on their specified relationship with the forgiver. There was no disagreement in terms of classification. Consistent with Aquino et al. (2006), we combined supervisor, manager, and administrator into a high-power forgiver category (N = 32); peer represents the equal power forgiver category (N = 58); subordinate represents the low-power forgiver category (N = 32).

We measured all other items on 5-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree;* 5 = *strongly agree*). We measured *forgiver status* with the 8-item organizational status scale (van Quaquebeke & Eckloff, 2010; Rogers & Ashforth, 2014). Sample items are: "Other employees respect him/her at the workplace" and "Other employees hold him/her in high regard" (M = 3.28, SD = .71, α = .84). *Forgiveness sincerity perceptions* was measured with the same 4-item scale as in Study 2 (M = 3.35, SD = .79, α = .87).

We measured *relationship restoration* using 6 items taken from Tabak, McCullough, Luna, Bono, and Berry (2012)'s transgression reconciliation checklist. We introduced the items as follows: "After he/she expressed forgiveness to you, to what extent do the following statements describe your interaction with him/her?" Item examples are: "I made redemption" and "I drew attention to my faults or weaknesses". We averaged responses to create a transgressor relationship restoration efforts index (M = 3.42, SD = .80, α = .87). Table S3

shows the correlations between the study variables.

Results

Hypotheses testing. We tested H1 with Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression in which transgressors' relationship restoration was the criterion variable. We included forgiver power (1 = high-power forgiver, 0 = equal-power forgiver, -1 = low-power forgiver), forgiver status, and their interaction (based on a mean centered version of forgiver status) as predictor variables. Table 1 shows the results. Most importantly, in step 2, the Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction significantly predicted relationship restoration (Figure 4).

Simple slopes analyses confirmed that for low-status forgivers (1 *SD* below the mean on forgiver status), high (vs. low) power was negatively associated with transgressors' relationship restoration (b = -.33, 95% CI: [-.57, -.08], t = -2.67, p = .01). For high-status forgivers (1 *SD* above the mean on forgiver status), forgiver power was not related to transgressors' relationship restoration (b = .21, 95% CI: [-.04, .47], t = 1.64, p = .10).

We tested H2 using OLS regression analyses with the same steps as above. Table 1 presents the results. Most importantly, in step 2, the Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction significantly predicted forgiveness sincerity perceptions (Figure 4).

Consistent with H2, simple slopes analyses showed that for low-status forgivers (1 *SD* below the mean), high (vs. low) forgiver power predicted lowered perceptions of forgiveness sincerity (b = -.19, 95% CI: [-.34, -.03], t = -2.40, p = .02). However, for high-status forgivers (1 *SD* above the mean), forgiver power did not predict forgiveness sincerity perceptions (b =.12, 95% CI: [-.04, .29], t = 1.46, p = .15).

We used Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (model 8, 5,000 bootstrap samples) to test

the full model. (See Table S5 for the similar model 7 results.) The index of moderated mediation was significant (index = .15, *SE* = .08, 95% CI: [.03, .34]). In support of H2, high (vs. low) forgiver power predicted lowered transgressor efforts to restore the relationship via decreased forgiveness sincerity perceptions, when the forgiver had low status: indirect effect = -.13, *SE* = .07, 95% CI: [-.30, -.01] but not when the forgiver had high status: indirect effect = .08, *SE* = .06, 95% CI: [-.03, .22] (see Figure S2). Conditional direct effects of power were not significant when the forgiver had low status (direct effect = -.20, *SE* = .11, 95% CI: [-.42, .03]) or high status (direct effect = .13, *SE* = .12, 95% CI: [-.10, .37]).

Discussion of Study 3 and Introduction to Study 4

The results of Study 3 provide further support for our hypotheses. Specifically, by operationalizing power as position power and status as organizational status, we again found that forgiveness from a victim who is high in power but low in status is perceived as less sincere, therefore facilitating less transgressor restoration effort. We conducted Study 4 to replicate these findings. We recruited participants using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). We did not expect to find many transgressors who were higher ranked than the forgiving victim at MTurk. Therefore we operationalized forgiver power in yet another way, as the control that they have over rewards that the transgressor values; that is, reward power (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989).

Study 4

Method

Participants. We recruited 199 US employees who worked for at least 20 hours per week in an organization (i.e., not self-employed) on MTurk. They completed an online

"workplace experience survey" and were paid $ 0.50. Based on criteria explained below (see: Procedure), we included 182 participants (87 males, 95 females) in our data analyses. The mean age was 35.38 years (*SD* = 11.15). The mean organizational tenure was 5.38 years (*SD* = 4.81). Of these participants, 78.9% were Caucasian, 6.1% were Asian, 9.4% were African American, 3.9% were Hispanic/Latino, and 1.7% indicated having "another" ethnic background. In terms of hierarchical position, 39% were line managers/supervisors and 61% had a non-management function. As to highest completed education, 21% indicated having secondary education (high school); 29% had subsequent vocational education; 33.5% had a Bachelor degree, and 16.8% had a Master degree.

Procedure. We used the same critical incident technique to elicit salient experiences of workplace mistreatments as in Study 3. Seventeen participants failed to recall an incident; we therefore included 182 participants (95 females, M_{age} = 35.38) in the analyses.

Measures. Consistent with Study 3, to check whether participants indeed felt they committed workplace mistreatment, they answered one question after recalling the mistreatment: "To what extent do you think she/he is victimized by you?" (Aquino et al., 2006) (*1=Not at all, 2=to a small extent, 3=to some extent, 4=to a moderate extent, 5=to a considerable extent, 6=to a great extent, 7=completely*). A t-test showed that mean perceptions (*M* = 3.16, *SD* = 1.80) were significantly higher than 2, *t* (181) = 8.70, *p* < .001, 95% CI: [.90, 1.42], *d* = 1.06, and not significantly different from 3, *t* (181) = 1.19, *p* = .23, 95% CI: [-.10, .42], *d* = .18, indicating that participants, on average, felt they at least victimized the person to some extent. In addition, two independent coders coded the extent to which the victim felt mistreated (*1=Not at all* to *7=completely)*. A t-test showed that means

(M = 3.90, SD = 1.32) were significantly higher than 3 (to some extent), t (181) = 9.13, p < .001, 95% CI: [.70, 1.09], d = 1.36. The coders also coded types of mistreatment. 63.7% were workplace incivility, 33% were aggression, and 3.3% were bullying.

Items were measured on 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree;* 7 = *strongly agree*). After recalling the incident, participants indicated forgiver power with Hinkin and Schriesheim's (1989) 4-item reward power scale (e.g., "He/she can increase my pay level"; M = 2.47, SD = 1.59; α = .92) and forgiver status with the 12-item organization status scale (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002, e.g., "The organization holds him/her in high regard"; M = 3.80, SD = 1.20; α = .91). We measured forgiveness sincerity perceptions (M = 5.14, SD = 1.36; α = .94) and relationship restoration (M = 5.00, SD = 1.21; α = .87) with the same scales as in Study 3. Table S4 shows the correlations between the study variables.

Results

We tested H1 with OLS regression analysis. The Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction predicted relationship restoration efforts. Table 1 shows the results. Consistent with H1, simple slopes analyses confirmed that for low-status forgivers (1 *SD* below the mean on forgiver status), high (vs. low) power was negatively associated with transgressors' relationship restoration (b = -.30, 95% CI: [-.54, -.05], t = -2.41, p = .02). For high-status forgivers (1 *SD* above the mean on forgiver status), forgiver power was not related to transgressors' relationship restoration (b = -.04, 95% CI: [-.17, .10], t = -.56, p = .58).

We proceeded to test H2 using OLS regression analyses. Table 1 presents the results. Most importantly, in step 2, the Forgiver Power × Forgiver Status interaction significantly

predicted forgiveness sincerity perceptions (Figure 4). Consistent with H2, simple slopes analyses showed that for low-status forgivers (1 *SD* below the mean), high (vs. low) forgiver power predicted lowered perceptions of forgiveness sincerity (b = -.40, 95% CI: [-.67, -.13], t = -2.90, $p < .01$). For high-status forgivers (1 *SD* above the mean), forgiver power did not predict forgiveness sincerity perceptions (b = -.07, 95% CI: [-.22, .09], t = -.86, p = .39).

Results from Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (model 8, 5,000 bootstrap samples) supported our full model (index of moderated mediation = .06, *SE* =.03, 95% CI: [.02, .12]). (See Table S5 for model 7 results.) High (vs. low) forgiver power predicted decreased transgressor relationship restoration efforts via decreased forgiveness sincerity perceptions when the forgiver had low status (1 *SD* below the mean): indirect effect = -.18, *SE* = .06, 95% CI: [-.32, -.06] but not when the forgiver had high status (1 *SD* above the mean): indirect effect = -.03, *SE* = .04, 95% CI: [-.11, .05] (see Figure S3). Conditional direct effects of power were not significant when the forgiver had low status (direct effect = -.19, *SE* = .17, 95% CI: [-.53, .16]) or high status (direct effect = -.01, *SE* = .10, 95% CI: [-.20, .17]).

General Discussion

Across four studies we found that following interpersonal mistreatment, forgiveness promotes less relationship restoration when the forgiver has high (vs. low) power. Moreover, we found this effect of forgiver power on relationship restoration in particular among forgivers who have low (rather than high) status. We obtained evidence for this effect in two laboratory experiments (Studies 1-2) and among employees in organizations (Studies 3-4). Studies 2-4 also showed that the effect results because transgressors perceive a forgiveness gesture of victims with high power and low status as relatively insincere. Importantly, we

found similar results in the US (Study 4) and the Netherlands (Studies 1-3), suggesting that the effect we identified generalizes across cultures that are at least somewhat different.

Theoretical Implications

Research has long focused on victim characteristics to explain the emergence of interpersonal mistreatment, overlooking the role of the transgressor and even running the risk of "blaming the victim" for a transgression (Cortina, Rabelo, & Holland, 2018; Dalal & Sheng, 2018). Scholars have called for studies that look at the transgressor's perspective (Cortina et al., 2018; Dalal & Sheng, 2018). Such a perspective holds that antecedents of victim mistreatment involve transgressors' appraisals of victims' characteristics and behavior (Cortina et al., 2018). Such appraisals have been argued to be tainted by contextual factors such as power disparities (Cortina et al., 2018; Hershcovis & Reich, 2013). Our research tests specific predictions about the role of power (and status). It also extends the transgressor focused perspective by focusing on transgressors' appraisals of victims' forgiveness and subsequent restorative behaviors in the *aftermath* of interpersonal mistreatment.

Our research contributes to the forgiveness literature by delineating contextual factors that make forgiveness effective. Past research revealed inconsistent findings for the effectiveness of forgiveness in promoting relationship restoration (Adams et al., 2015; Kelln & Ellard, 1999; Hannon et al., 2010; Leunissen et al., 2012; McNulty, 2011; McNulty & Russell, 2016; Mooney et al., 2015; Wallace et al., 2008). Our findings help reconcile this inconsistency by showing that not all forgiveness gestures are equally effective; the way they are perceived depends on the hierarchy within the victim-transgressor relationship.

Our research also contributes to the restorative justice literature by revealing

conditions under which victims' restorative attempts are more likely to promote transgressors' restorative responses. Research suggests that compared to punitive approaches, restorative approaches can effectively resolve workplace conflict because they concern "how the victim, transgressor, and broader community (e.g., the organization and stakeholders) collectively attempt to heal damaged relationships" (p.625; Goodstein & Aquino, 2010). However, scholars have raised concerns about using these practices in the workplace because their effectiveness may depend on organizational settings such as structure and power dynamics (Bies et al., 2016). Indeed, our findings revealed that the effectiveness of victims' restorative attempts in promoting transgressors' restorative responses is influenced by victims' power and status.

Finally, our research provides two contributions to the study of social exchange theory: First, our research provides first empirical support for the role of forgiveness sincerity perceptions in the social exchange between victims' forgiveness gesture and transgressors' restorative behaviors. Social exchange theory suggests that recipients of a beneficial gesture are less likely to reciprocate this gesture when they perceive it as insincere (Belmi & Pfeffer, 2015; Eilam & Suleiman, 2004; Flynn, 2006). To date, studies on the role of sincerity in social exchange between victims and transgressors have focused on victims' perceptions of apology sincerity (e.g., Zheng et al., 2016) and ignored that transgressors also need to perceive victims' gestures as sincere to decide upon relationship restoration.

Second, we provide first empirical evidence of the interactive effects of actors' power and status on the other party's perceptions and subsequent behaviors towards these actors in actual relationships. Power and status are theorized as distinct constructs that underlie social

exchange processes (Blau, 1964; Lovaglia, 1995; Thye, 2000). Given that they are two co-existing hierarchical dimensions and vary orthogonally in any exchange relationships, they should interact in shaping how others perceive and behave in these exchange relationships. To date, only a few studies have examined the interactive effects of power and status and they have only revealed one sided story – they focused on power and status holders' perspective and revealed that people with high power and low status are more likely to show demeaning and unfair behaviors towards others (Anicich et al., 2016; Blader & Chen, 2012; Fast, Halevy, & Galinsky, 2012). However, it is obvious that power and status of holders should also shape the other party's perceptions and behaviors towards them. To the best of our knowledge, only Fragale et al. (2011) took such an interpersonal perspective and showed that observers view actors with high power and low status as relatively "cold". However, this research focused only on perceptions and was conducted in lab settings. Our research revealed that power and status of victims interactively shape transgressors' sincerity perceptions and restorative actions.

Practical Implications

Our finding that forgivers' power and status "color" transgressors' perceptions of forgiveness sincerity, which influence their relationship restoration efforts, implies that sincerity perceptions are to some extent independent from a person's actual sincerity. In fact, previous studies show that high-power actors act more out of their sincere intentions (Hirsch, Galinsky & Zhong, 2011; Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, & Galinsky, 2013; Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008). Thus, although high-power victims' forgiveness may be driven by sincere intentions, ironically, low-power transgressors may interpret their

forgiveness as being insincere. This disconnect has implications for transgressors and victims. Transgressors should be aware that their perceptions of forgiveness sincerity may be biased. Indeed, studies have shown that perceivers can minimize bias effects in impression formation when they are made aware of such effects (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000).

Although victims may forgive a transgressor out of the best intentions, they should be aware that their position within the organization (i.e., a position of high power and low status) may cause their forgiveness to be perceived as insincere, thus failing to stimulate relationship restoration. High-power organization members should thus strive to be perceived as having high status. Status can be obtained by exhibiting actions that benefit the organization and its members (Van Vugt et al., 2008) such as ensuring that decisions and interpersonal treatment are perceived as fair (van Dijke, De Cremer, Mayer, & van Quaquebeke, 2012).

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite a number of contributions to the literature, our research has limitations that future work should address. First, future research should consider the effectiveness of victim behaviors other than forgiveness, such as reconciliation (i.e., extending acts of goodwill), peaceful co-existence (i.e., bearing hostility but resuming the work relationship), and détente (i.e., reducing tension through meetings and agreements prescribing future behaviors) in resolving workplace conflicts (Bies et al., 2016), and the mediating role of sincerity perceptions in explaining the effectiveness of such behaviors. Bies et al. (2016) suggested that forgiveness is viewed as a virtue among friends and family but as less appropriate in organizations. Indeed, our and others' research revealed that forgiveness in organizations sometimes is perceived negatively (Adams et al., 2015). For high power / low status victims,

reconciliation, peaceful co-existence, or détente may be perceived as being more professional and thus be more effective than forgiveness in restoring relationships.

Second, our findings and previous studies (Zheng et al., 2016) show that organization members perceive their interaction partner as less sincere when this partner has high (vs. low) power. This is because low-power people suspect that their behaviors may be driven by instrumental motives such as impression management. Interestingly, other research shows that in the specific context of receiving favors, people perceive low (vs. high) power actors as insincere. This results because people perceive favors from low power actors as driven by instrumental motives such as unsolicited influence attempts (Inesi, Gruenfeld, & Galinsky, 2012). Both streams of research are consistent with recent work showing that high- and low-power people can exhibit similar cognition and behaviors (which differ from those in equal power interaction partners) when instrumental goals are salient (Schaerer, Du Plessis, Yap, & Thau, 2018). In some social exchange contexts (e.g., favor exchange), high power people see low power interaction partners as insincere, while in other social exchange contexts (e.g., conflict resolution), low power people see high power interaction partners as insincere. To more fully understand how power shapes forgiveness sincerity perceptions, research should identify contextual factors that moderate such perceptions in unequal power relationships.

Finally, we focused on the transgressor's perspective and showed that the power and status of a victim interactively influence the sincerity of this victim's forgiveness in the eyes of the transgressor even in experiments in which transgressors always received the same forgiveness message (Studies 1-2). However, previous studies have revealed that high power/low status victims are more likely to actually behave in demeaning ways in conflict

situations (Anicich et al., 2016; Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2006; Kim, Smith, & Brigham, 1998). To achieve further integration of theory on person perception and theory on the effects of having status and power, future research should use dyadic designs to simultaneously examine the victim's actual forgiveness content and the transgressors' perceptions as a function of the victim's power and status.

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Table 1. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis in Studies 3 (upper half) and 4 (lower half)

Criterion Variable	Relationship restoration efforts										Forgiveness sincerity perceptions									
	Step 1					Step 2					Step 1					Step 2				
	b	*SE*	*CI*	*t*	*P*	*b*	*SE*	*CI*	*t*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*CI*	*t*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*CI*	*t*	*p*
Power (P)	-.07	.09	[-.25, .11]	-.79	.43	-.06	.09	[-.23, .12]	-.64	.53	-.06	.08	[-.22, .10]	-.73	.47	-.05	.08	[-.20, .11]	-.59	.56
Status (S)	.49	.09	[.30, .67]	5.16	.00	.45	.09	[.27, .63]	4.88	.00	.67	.08	[.51, .83]	8.07	.00	.64	.08	[.48, .80]	7.84	.00
P × S						.38	.13	[.13, .63]	3.03	.00						.30	.11	[.08, .52]	2.70	.01
R^2, ΔR^2, Adjusted R^2		.18,	.18,	.17			.24,	.06,	.22			.35,	.35,	.34			.39,	.04,	.38	
F, Sig. F change, df		13.31	.00	2,119			5.53	, .00	1, 118			32.58,	.00	2, 119			7.31,	.01	1, 118	
Power (P)	-.06	.07	[-.19, .08]	-.81	.42	-.17	.08	[-.33, -.004]	-2.02	.05	-.09	.08	[-.24, .06]	-1.15	.25	-.23	.09	[-.42, -.05]	-2.5	.01
Status (S)	.21	.09	[.03, .39]	2.26	.03	.26	.09	[.07, .44]	2.77	.01	.29	.10	[.09, .49]	2.80	.01	.35	.10	[.15, .56]	3.39	.00
P × S						.11	.05	[.02, .02]	2.35	.02						.14	.05	[.04, .24]	2.7	.01
R^2, ΔR^2, Adjusted R^2		.03,	.03,	.02			.06,	.03,	.04			.04,	.04,	.03			.08,	.04,	.07	
F, Sig. F change, df		2.77,	.07	2, 179			5.53,	.02	1, 178			4.12,	.02	2, 179			7.31,	.01	1, 178	

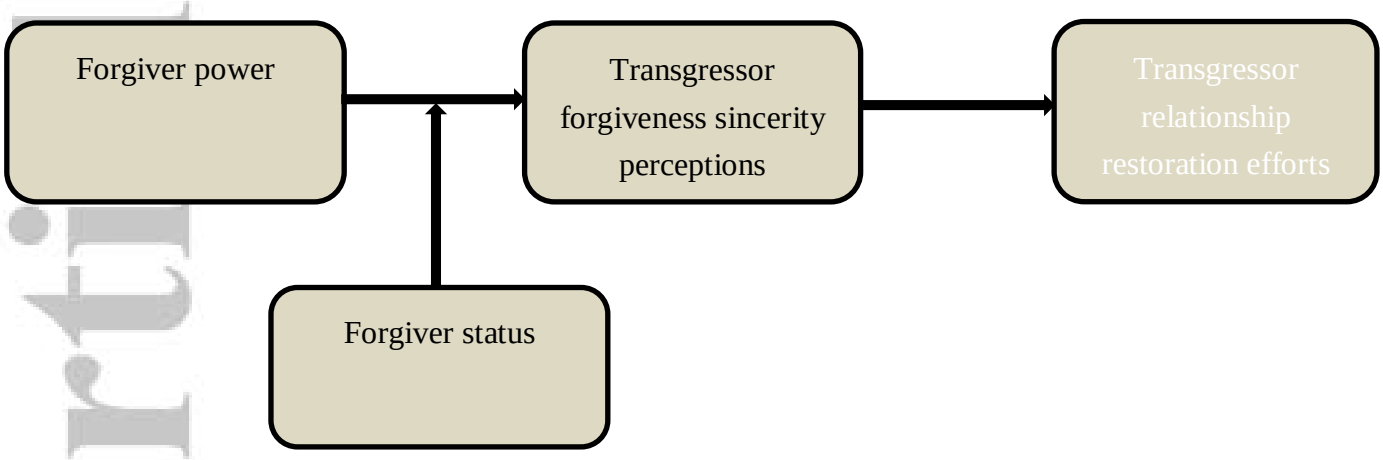

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

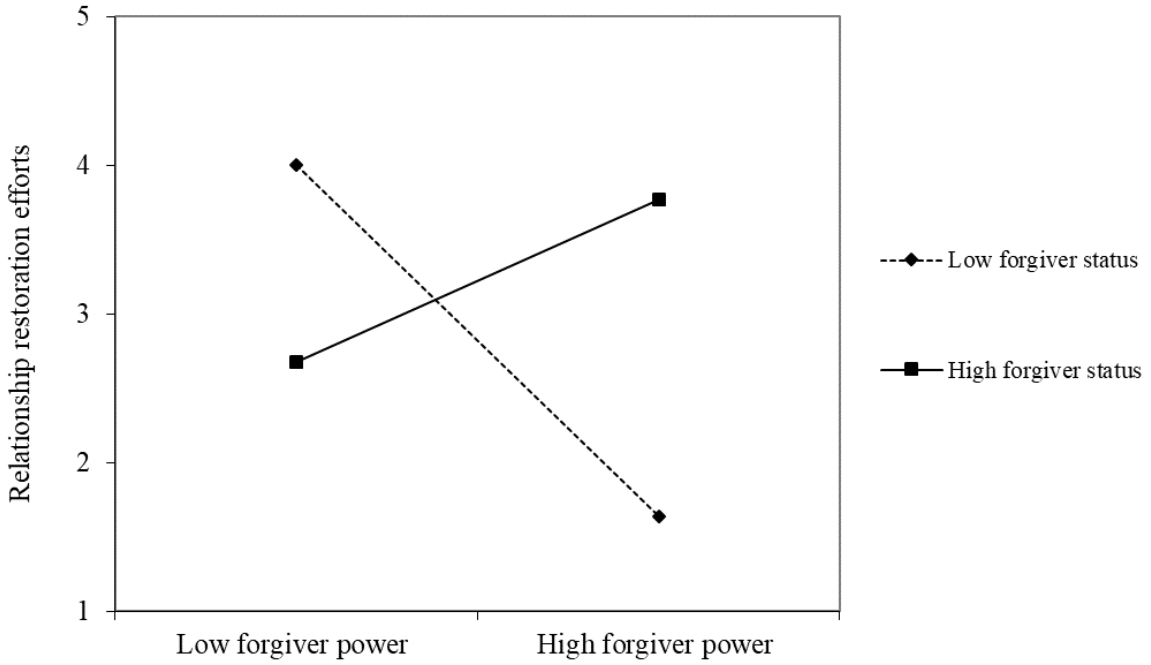

Figure 2. The Interactive Effect of Forgiver Power and Forgiver Status on Relationship Restoration Efforts in Study 1

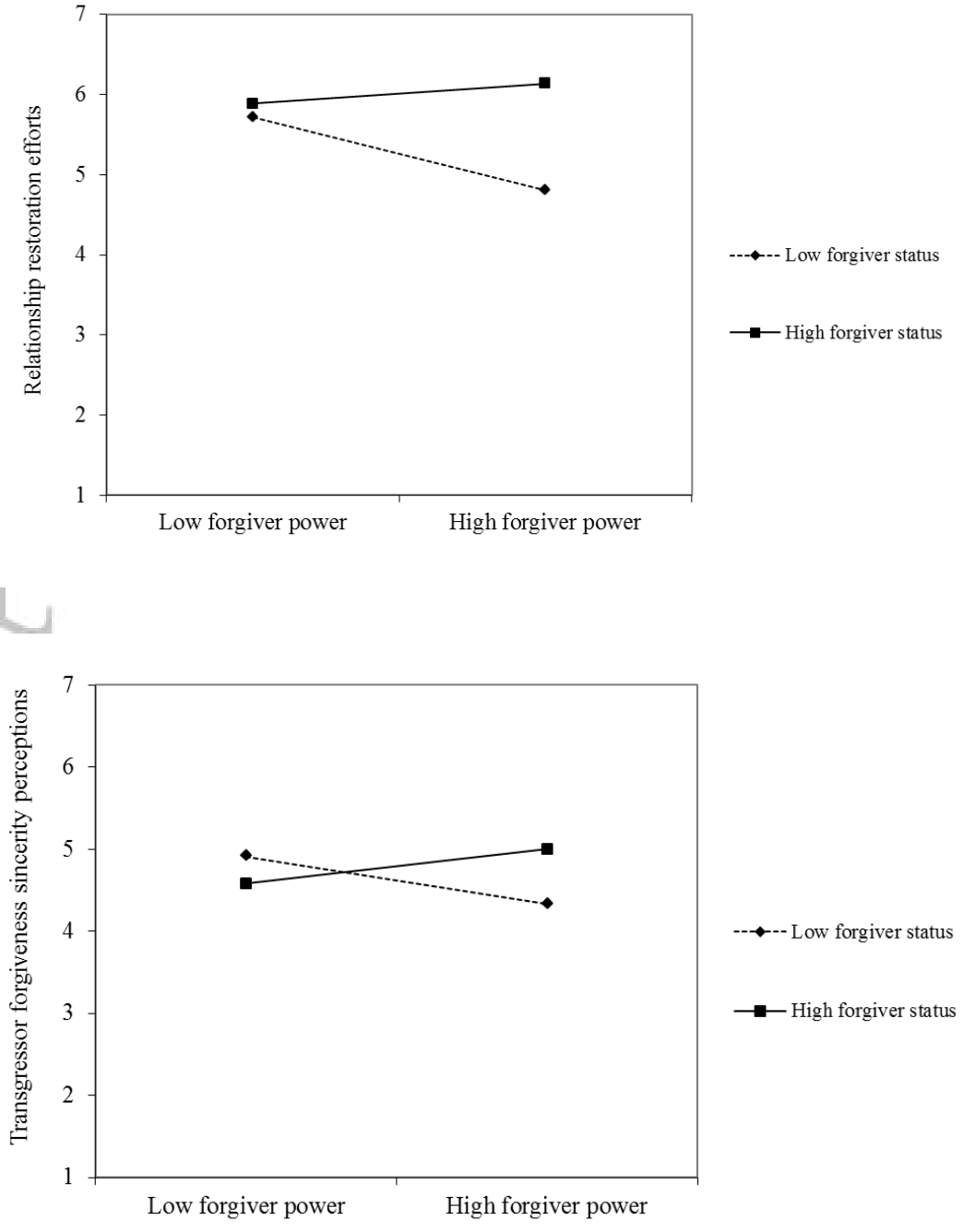

Figure 3. The Interactive Effect of Forgiver Power and Forgiver Status on Relationship Restoration Efforts (upper panel) and Forgiveness Sincerity Perceptions (lower panel) in Study 2

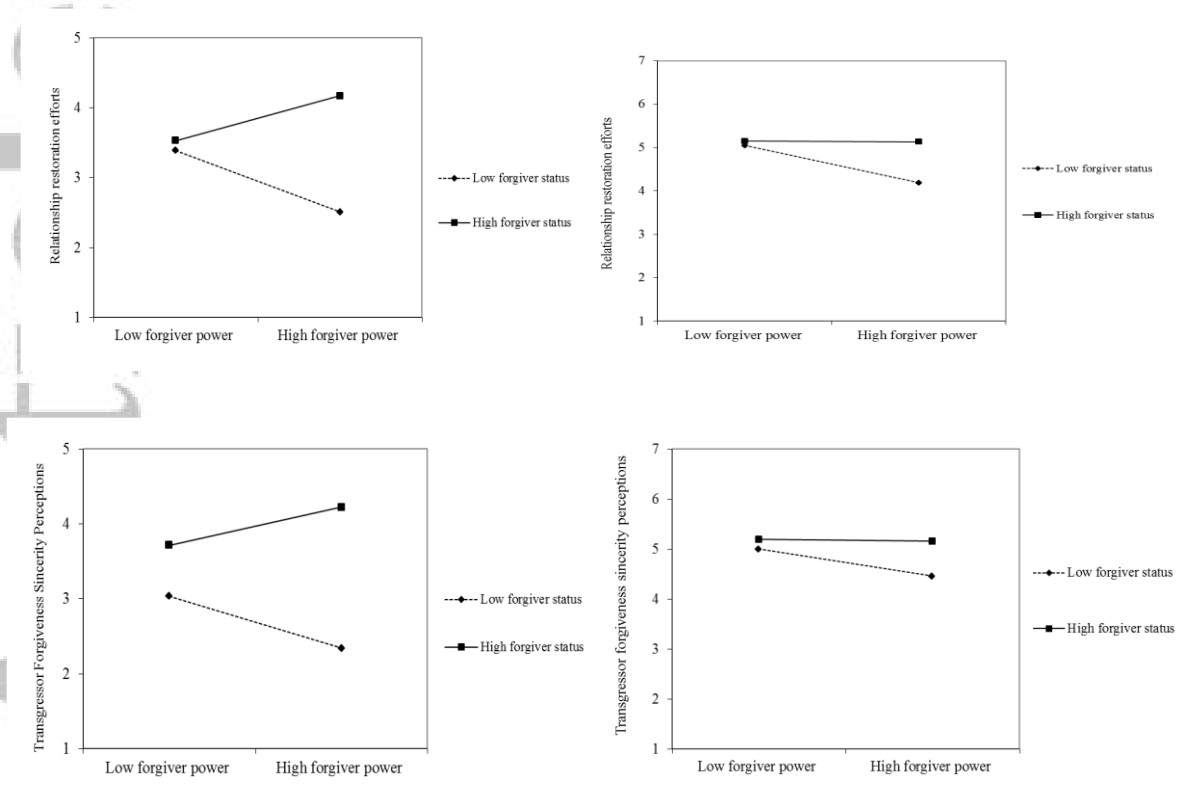

Figure 4 The Interactive Effect of Forgiver Power and Forgiver Status on Relationship Restoration Efforts (upper panel) and Forgiveness Sincerity Perceptions (lower panel) in Studies 3 (left panel) and 4 (right panel)