
SEEKING FORGIVENESS: CONSIDERING THE ROLE OF MORAL EMOTIONS

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Sandage, Worthington, Jr., Hight, and Berry (2000) pointed out that most of the research on forgiveness has focused on the process of granting forgiveness rather than seeking forgiveness. Therefore, in this project, college students were asked to recall a recent event from their past where they harmed someone with whom they had a relationship. They were then asked to rate their feelings following the transgression such that it was possible to determine the extent to which they experienced sorrow or guilt (Narramore, 1984). Participants also indicated how they responded to the situation. In addition, a few weeks later, these same students were invited to respond to a dispositional measure designed to tap their general tendencies toward experiencing sorrow or guilt. One of the particularly interesting findings from this study was that the efforts to measure sorrow seemed to split into two factors. One of these sorrow factors seemed to predict healthy patterns of seeking forgiveness while the other factor did not.

Most of the theorizing about forgiveness and almost all of the empirical work with forgiveness has focused on the granting of forgiveness rather than the seeking of forgiveness (Sandage, Worthington, Hight, & Berry, 2000; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Bauer, 2002). One empirical exception to this imbalance can be found in the accounts literature in social psychology. The accounts literature typically relies on the narrative method where an individual provides a subjective account of what happened during an event from that person's point of view. Zechmeister and Romero (2002) had participants write two narratives. The

instructions for these narratives varied along two factors. One factor involved asking participants to recall a situation where they hurt or angered someone else (offender perspective), or someone else hurt or angered the participant (victim perspective). The second factor involved the extent to which the situation involved forgiveness or not. The resulting narratives were then coded for: severity of the reported offense; moral responsibility; threat to self; time frame and consequences of the event; motives and intentions; emotional and behavioral responses, and empathy for the other person.

Interestingly, from the perspective of the offender, self-forgiveness was not related to reports of receiving forgiveness from the victim. Yet, offenders who forgave themselves were more likely to mention an apology and make amends. The focus of the reported results for the offender clearly emphasized the function of self-forgiveness. These results indicated that the perspective of the offender varied as a function of self-forgiveness. Those offenders who were forgiving of self were more likely to report: (a) The victim overreacted, (b) the victim provoked the offense, (c) the offender had feelings of anger about the offense, and (d) the offender having an improved relationship with the victim. Thus, self-forgiving offenders were those who viewed the victim as sharing blame.

A study by Witvliet, Ludwig, and Bauer (2002) also addressed the issue of offenders seeking forgiveness. Students were asked to think about a past situation where they significantly hurt the feelings of another person. Using a repeated measures design, participants contemplated the following: (a) Recalling the actual transgression, (b) imagining seeking forgiveness from the victim, (c) imagining the victim refusing forgiveness and holding a grudge, (d) imagining the victim forgiving the offender, and (e) imagining the victim and offender reconciling and restoring the relationship. During the imagery sessions,

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heart rate, skin conductance, and facial muscular data were collected. The facial muscular data involved monitoring furrowing of the brow (*corrugator* EMG) and smiling activity (*zygomatic* EMG). Following the imagery sessions, students rated themselves along various emotional dimensions and rated the vividness of their imagery.

Compared to simply recalling the transgression, imagining seeking forgiveness produced several beneficial effects with the emotional self-ratings. Offenders reported less sadness, anger, guilt, and shame. Yet, these benefits were relative. Even with the seeking forgiveness condition, self-ratings for these negatively valenced emotions were still fairly high. In addition, there were no differences between the two conditions with the self-ratings for fear and perceived control, and there were also no differences across conditions for the physiological measures. Interestingly, in an earlier paper (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Lann, 2001) significant positive physiological changes were reported on the part of victims when they imagined granting forgiveness.

When the imagery conditions focusing upon victim responses were analyzed, the emotional experience of the offender seemed to parallel that of the victim. Imagining the victim refusing to forgive and continuing to hold a grudge produced higher self-ratings for negative emotions like arousal, sadness, fear, anger, guilt, and shame. In contrast, when offenders imagined the victim forgiving or reconciling with the offender, offenders reported higher levels of control, gratitude, hope, and empathy. Again, with these conditions there were no meaningful differences for the physiological measures when compared to the condition of simply recalling the transgression.

Finally, Sandage et al. reported another effort to empirically study seeking forgiveness. The context for this study flowed from the researchers' definition of seeking forgiveness.

We define seeking forgiveness as a motivation to accept moral responsibility and to attempt interpersonal reparation following relational injury in which one is morally culpable. Seeking forgiveness is multi-dimensional and involves (a) cognitive social perspective-taking or empathy with those who suffer the effects of one's actions; (b) nondefensive moral emotions consistent with adaptive guilt (Tangney, 1995) or constructive sorrow (Narramore, 1984); and (c) behaviors of reparative action (Worthington & Drinkard, 2000), including apology, account strategies of confession (rather than excuses, justifications, or refusals), and restitution (where appropriate). (p. 22)

In a descriptive study, students who reported being in a troubled relationship where they trans-

gressed against their partner in the last year, completed a questionnaire. In the questionnaire, students were asked to report the nature of the transgression and their level of seeking forgiveness. In addition, measures of religiosity, narcissism, self-monitoring, and developmental level of reasoning about forgiveness were included in the questionnaire.

The researchers reported that neither religiosity nor age predicted seeking forgiveness. In contrast, higher levels of reasoning about forgiveness predicted higher levels of seeking forgiveness, and higher levels of narcissism and self-monitoring predicted lower levels of seeking forgiveness. The researchers interpreted the findings for narcissism and self-monitoring as providing support for their notion that a key factor predicting offenders seeking forgiveness is the capacity for taking the perspective of the victim.

Something that Sandage et al. did not empirically address is the proposed role of 'moral emotions' as a motivational key dimension when seeking forgiveness. For example, Tangney and her colleagues (e.g., Tangney, Wagner, Hill-Barlow, Marschall, & Gramzow, 1996) have differentiated between the emotional states of guilt and shame. Guilt and shame are both conceptualized as negatively valenced emotions that are activated when persons behave in a manner they view as morally and/or socially unacceptable. However, Tangney and her colleagues suggested that shame and guilt are "framed" in very different ways. When persons are shamed, the focus of attention is the entire self. The person feels worthless and powerless. There is a desire to flee or hide because the entire self feels that it is exposed. There is a clear suspicion that others disapprove. In contrast, when persons experience guilt, the focus of attention is the specific behavior (not the entire self). Thus the action may be deemed reprehensible, but the value of the person still remains intact. Rather than fleeing or hiding, the offender is motivated to repair whatever harm was done. Thus, shame is seen as toxic to social and psychological functioning while guilt is not. For example, Tangney et al. (1996) found that guilt proneness was related to constructive ways of handling anger while shame proneness was related to destructive ways of handling anger. Theoretically, it would seem to make sense that people who experience shame would find it more difficult to seek forgiveness from the victim and more difficult to forgive themselves than people who experience guilt (see Tangney, Boone, & Dearing, in press). After all, those who experience guilt should be dealing with an

offense that is viewed as more confined or limited and there should be less defensiveness about the offense.

An empirical test of some of these ideas was provided by Mitchell (2003). University students were given the Test of Self-Conscious Affect – Version 3 (TOSCA-3) developed by Tangney, Dearing, Wagner, and Gramzow (2000) as a measure of dispositional tendencies to experience shame or guilt. In addition, a subset of items from the TOSCA-3 was modified to produce a measure of the tendency to seek forgiveness and a measure of the perceptions of the severity of an offense. Partial support for the role of shame and guilt in seeking forgiveness was provided by a direct relationship between seeking forgiveness and the tendency to experience guilt. However, there was no relationship between seeking forgiveness and the tendency to experience shame. Another curious finding was that perceptions of the severity of an offense were directly related to both the dispositional tendencies to experience guilt and shame. This finding seems to raise some questions about the potential defensiveness resulting from shame.

An alternative approach to ‘moral emotions’ has been the work of Bruce Narramore (1984). Narramore’s distinction between sorrow and guilt roughly parallels Tangney et al.’s distinction between shame and guilt with the addition of a spiritual dimension. What Narramore identifies as ‘guilt’ roughly corresponds to Tangney’s notion of ‘shame.’ Narramore proposes that with guilt, the offender is primarily focused on self and the offender’s misbehavior. The offender is determined to navigate the situation autonomously (without relying upon God). Self-esteem is reduced. And, any efforts toward reparation will only be motivated by a desire to make the self feel better. In contrast, Narramore proposes that with ‘sorrow’ (which roughly corresponds to Tangney’s concept of ‘guilt’), the offender is primarily focused on the violated relationship and any damage done to the victim. The offender will rely upon God to help in navigating the situation. Self is not devalued. And, the offender will strive for reparation because of an honest concern for the well-being of the victim.

A two-part study was conducted to consider the role of the transgressor in a situation where someone was harmed or offended. The first part of the study considered the intrapsychic experience and the responses of the offender in the context of a specific situation. The second part of the study considered dispositional intrapsychic experiences when offending others. Both parts of the study were done

in the context of Narramore’s (1984) distinction between Godly sorrow and psychological guilt. A major goal of the project was to determine if Narramore’s distinction between sorrow and guilt would predict different outcomes in real-life transgressions.

METHODS

Participants

Phase 1. Students were recruited from a variety of undergraduate psychology classes at a small Christian liberal arts college. Students were informed that they could receive a small amount of extra credit by responding to a questionnaire. Participants knew in advance that they were being asked to write about a past situation where they harmed/offended another person. After recalling the situation students knew they would then be asked a series of questions about the situation. Participants were reassured that their responses would remain anonymous. Interested students took the questionnaire with them, completed it outside of class, and then returned the survey at a later class. Students were also reassured that if, at any point, they decided to discontinue responding to the survey, they would still receive extra credit for their participation. Students also realized that participating in this phase of the study might allow them to participate in the second phase.

One hundred and four students decided to return their questionnaires (60% of the potential number of participants). Of these respondents, 67 (64%) were female. The average age was 19.3 years. Fifty-eight percent were first year students, 14% were sophomores, 19% were juniors, and 9% were seniors. Participants also responded to a single item, “I am a Christian,” on a 6-point Likert-like scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*). The modal response to this item was “strongly agree” (75% of respondents) and the mean response was 5.6 ($SD = .87$).

Phase 2. A few weeks later, individuals who participated in the first phase of the study were invited to be a part of the second phase for a small amount of extra credit. Participation essentially involved anonymously responding to a single page of questions measuring participants’ dispositional tendencies in situations where they harmed or offended others. This questionnaire was simply administered to interested students at the end of class when other students had left the classroom.

Eighty students responded to this questionnaire (77% of the original cohort). Fifty of these participants

were female (63%). The average age was 19.0 years. Fifty-three (66%) of these participants were first year students, 10 (13%) were sophomores, 13 (14%) were juniors, and 6 (8%) were seniors. The modal response to the Christian identity item was still “strongly agree” ($M = 5.7, SD = .81$).

Procedures

Phase 1. The questionnaire students completed consisted of four parts. The first part was a cover page that reviewed the basic nature of the study and requested demographic information. In addition, there was a Christian identity item and four religious orientation items. Three of the religious orientation items were taken from the Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Revised Scale. The items were the three single items that they recommended for measuring intrinsic faith, extrinsic-personal faith, and extrinsic-social faith. The fourth item was a single item taken from the Batson and Schoenrade (1991) Quest Scale. The item we selected from this scale was, “My life experiences have led me to rethink my religious convictions.” This was one of the items the authors developed to tap the ‘existential questions’ aspect of quest faith. Unlike the other three religious orientation items, the quest item selected for this study had not been validated as a single item but only as part of an overall scale. Responses to all of these items were on a 6-point Likert-like scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*).

The second part of the questionnaire involved a page where students wrote about an event from their pasts where they offended and/or harmed another person. Students were further instructed that it would be helpful if they could recall an event where they harmed someone with whom they had a relationship (friend, family member, another employee at work, etc.). At the bottom of that page, participants had an opportunity to indicate how long ago was the experience, with whom was the experience, and how deeply they thought they hurt the other person.

The third part of the questionnaire contained 16 items designed to assess different aspects of the situation. Twelve of those items are presented in Table 1. The items were designed to capture Narramore’s notion of sorrow or guilt. The emphasis of these items focused on the intrapsychic aspects of the experience (e.g., perceptions of the event, emotional experiences, attributions of responsibility, and the spirituality of the offender). The fourth part of the questionnaire again

attempted to capture Narramore’s distinction between sorrow and guilt, but now the emphasis was upon how the offender responded. This section also contained 16 items, 12 of which are also presented in Table 1. For all the items in these two sections, the response format was a 6-point Likert-like scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*).

Phase 2. The second questionnaire contained a cover page reviewing the nature of the questionnaire and a second page on which participants were asked to indicate their dispositional tendencies when responding to a situation where they harmed and/or offended another person. Essentially, the response items from the previous questionnaire were reworded to assess dispositional tendencies rather than situation-specific tendencies. Fifteen of those sixteen items are presented in Table 4. Again, a 6-point Likert-like response format was used.

The cover pages for both questionnaires (phases 1 and 2) requested participants’ mothers’ maiden names and participants’ birthdays. This information allowed us to connect the questionnaires from both phases to the same people while protecting the identity of those persons. If participants were hesitant to share this information, then we requested that they “fake it.” We simply asked that they fake consistently.

RESULTS

Phase 1

In the questionnaire for this phase of the study, participants recalled an experience in which they offended and/or harmed another individual. Most of these recalled events occurred months (29%) or years (50%) earlier (“days ago” = 8%, “weeks ago” = 13%). The person most often offended was a friend (41%), relative (19%), or a romantic interest (17%). When estimating the severity of the harm done to the victim, the average estimate was 3.7 (“much hurt”) on a 5-point scale (1 = *no hurt*, 5 = *a great deal of hurt*).

After recalling and writing about that event, participants then responded to several Likert-like items in which they evaluated the experience and described their responses to the situation. The first step in the analyses involved determining whether the items measuring participant evaluations of the situation and participant responses to the situation were undergirded by a few key dimensions.

A principal component analysis was performed on the 16 items designed to assess participant evaluations of the situation. A Scree Test of the

TABLE 1
Factor Loadings for Study One

Evaluations of the Event			
Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
I became genuinely concerned about how I might have harmed or offended the other person.	.63		
I was really motivated to change my ways and not repeat this kind of behavior again.	.78		
I became mainly concerned with trying to repair the damage I had done to the other person and our relationship.	.74		
I was motivated to do something about the situation because I wanted to resolve my feelings of regret.	.71		
As I attempted to work through this situation I was guided by God.		.89	
As a result of this situation, I experienced spiritual growth.		.84	
This situation caused me to become more dependent upon God.		.90	
In trying to set things right, I depended more upon myself than upon God.		-.63	
I find that I have been able to move on and put this event behind me.			-.79
My initial feelings of sorrow and regret have been replaced with feelings of peace of mind and resolution.			-.58
I find that it is hard for me to let go of this situation. It often comes to my mind.			.83
My feelings of sorrow and regret have never gone away. My memories of that event are still painful for me.			.84
Responses to the Situation			
Since that situation, I have tended to avoid the other person.	.76		
We never really resolved anything.	.75		
Honestly, I think I have lost respect for the other person.	.78		
When the other person and I discussed what happened it only made things worse.	.68		
Responses to the Situation			
As I think back over the situation, it has become clear to me that I didn't do anything that was really wrong.	.62		
It seems to me that the other person overreacted.	.72		
I made efforts to repair any damage done to the other person and/or our relationship.		.82	
I offered a straight-forward and simple apology.		.82	
I really tried to make amends with the other person.		.70	
I admitted to the other person that I was wrong.		.71	
I confess that I shaded the truth in order to smooth over the situation.			-.63
I have tried to speak the truth to the other person in a caring fashion.			.72

TABLE 2

Significant Correlations among the Composite Variables and the Single-item Religiosity Measures for Study 1

	Christian Identity	Extrinsic Personal	Extrinsic Social	Intrinsic	Quest	Behavioral Sorrow
Christian Identity						
Extrinsic Personal	.29**					
Extrinsic Social		.26**				
Intrinsic	.51**	.21*				
Quest			.20*			
Behavioral Sorrow						
Spiritual Focus	.30**			.35**		
Lack of Resolution						
Hardness of Heart						-.47**
Seeking Forgiveness						.62**
Speaking the Truth	.30**			.23*		.22*

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$

(Table 2 continues next page)

resulting eigenvalues indicated that three factors should be extracted and rotated using factor analysis (total variance explained by these three factors = 54.5%). Thus, a factor analysis was performed extracting three factors and rotating those factors using a Varimax rotation. When interpreting the loadings on these factors the following criteria were used: (a) Only those loadings $> .50$ (or $< -.50$) were interpreted, and (b) cross-loaders were eliminated from interpretation if the next closest loading was $\leq .3$ of the loading being considered. The evaluation items (and the factor loadings) that met these criteria are presented in Table 1. A consideration of those loadings led the researchers to interpret the first factor as tapping *behavioral sorrow*, the second factor as tapping *spiritual focus*, and the third factor as tapping *lack of resolution*. When Cronbach's alphas were calculated for the items connected to these factors, the inter-item

reliabilities for those factors seemed quite good (behavioral sorrow alpha = .74, spiritual focus alpha = .85, and lack of resolution alpha = .82). Therefore, composite scores for each factor were created by first reverse-scoring any items that negatively loaded on a factor, and then averaging the item scores for each factor.

A principal component analysis was also performed on the 16 items that were designed to assess participant perceptions of how they responded to the situation. A Scree Test of the resulting eigenvalues indicated that a three-factor solution was appropriate for the factor analysis. Therefore, a factor analysis was performed extracting three factors and rotating those factors using a Varimax rotation. The same criteria as the previous factor analysis were used when interpreting the factor loadings. The response items (and the factor loadings) that met these criteria are also presented in

TABLE 2 (continued from previous page)
Significant Correlations among the Composite Variables and the Single-item Religiosity Measures for Study 1

	Spiritual Focus	Lack of Resolution	Hardness of Heart	Seeking Forgiveness	Speaking the Truth
Christian Identity					
Extrinsic Personal					
Extrinsic Social					
Intrinsic					
Quest					
Behavioral Sorrow					
Spiritual Focus					
Lack of Resolution					
Hardness of Heart		.24*			
Seeking Forgiveness		-.28**	-.49**		
Speaking the Truth		-.25*	-.20*	.24*	

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$

TABLE 3
Standardized Coefficients for the Regression Analyses Used to Predict Evaluation and Response Composite Variables

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variables				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Behavioral Sorrow			.50**	.03	-.23**
2. Lack of Resolution			-.18	-.19	.11
3. Seeking Forgiveness	.49**	-.15		.09	-.18*
4. Speaking the Truth	.06	-.18	.14		-.11
5. Hardness of Heart	-.32**	.11	-.23*	-.08	

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$

Table 1. A consideration of those loadings led the researchers to interpret the first factor as tapping *hardness of heart*, the second factor as tapping *seeking forgiveness*, and the third factor as tapping *speaking the truth*. When Cronbach's alphas were calculated for the items connected to these factors, the inter-item reliabilities were quite good for two of the three factors (hardness of heart alpha = .85, seeking forgiveness alpha = .82). The Cronbach's alpha for speaking the truth was adequate at .45. Of course, this factor included only two items and inter-item reliabilities generally go up with an increase in the number of items. Again, composite scores for each factor were created by first reverse-scoring any items that negatively loaded on a factor and then averaging the item scores for each factor.

It then becomes instructive to consider the relationships among the composite variables and the single item religiosity measures. The statistically significant correlations amongst these variables are presented in Table 2. Looking first within the religiosity measures, the strongest correlation was between *Christian identity* and *intrinsic faith* [$r(103) = .51, p \leq .001$]. Higher levels of Christian identity predicted higher levels of intrinsic faith. The other significant relationship with Christian identity was extrinsic-personal faith [$r(103) = .29, p \leq .005$]. Again, higher levels of Christian identity predicted higher levels of extrinsic-personal faith. Extrinsic-personal faith was also directly related to intrinsic faith [$r(103) = .21, p \leq .05$] and extrinsic-social faith [$r(103) = .26, p \leq .01$]. Increases with extrinsic-personal faith tended to predict increases with intrinsic and extrinsic-social faith. Finally, extrinsic-social faith was directly related to quest faith [$r(102) = .20, p < .05$] with higher levels of extrinsic-social faith tending to predict higher levels of quest faith.

Looking among the evaluations and responses to the situation, one result that especially stood out was the independent nature of *Spiritual Focus*. Spiritual Focus did not even come close to connecting in a significant fashion with any of the other evaluation or response factors. It was a different story for the other two evaluation factors, *Behavioral Sorrow* and *Lack of Resolution*. Behavioral sorrow was inversely related to *hardness of heart* [$r(100) = -.47, p \leq .001$] and directly related to *seeking forgiveness* [$r(100) = .62, p \leq .001$] and *speaking the truth* [$r(101) = .22, p \leq .05$]. Higher levels of Behavioral Sorrow predicted higher levels of seeking forgiveness and

speaking the truth along with lower levels of hardness of heart. The response of Lack of Resolution was directly related to hardness of heart [$r(101) = .24, p \leq .5$] and inversely related to seeking forgiveness [$r(101) = -.28, p \leq .005$] and speaking the truth [$r(102) = -.25, p \leq .01$]. Thus, increased feelings of Lack of Resolution accompanied an increased sense of hardness of heart. And, as feelings of lack of resolution increased, seeking forgiveness and speaking the truth decreased. Hardness of heart was inversely related to seeking forgiveness [$r(102) = -.49, p \leq .001$] and speaking the truth [$r(102) = -.20, p \leq .05$]. So, increased hardness of heart predicted less seeking forgiveness and speaking the truth. Finally, seeking forgiveness was directly related to speaking the truth [$r(102) = .24, p \leq .05$]. Higher levels of seeking forgiveness paralleled higher levels of speaking the truth.

Out of 30 possible correlations between the religiosity and situational measures, only four were statistically significant. Essentially, Christian identity and intrinsic faith revealed similar patterns of relationships with spiritual focus and speaking the truth. Christian identity was directly related to spiritual sorrow [$r(103) = .30, p \leq .05$] and speaking the truth [$r(103) = .30, p \leq .005$]. Intrinsic faith was also directly related to spiritual focus [$r(103) = .35, p \leq .001$] and speaking the truth [$r(103) = .23, p \leq .05$]. Increased levels of Christian identity and intrinsic faith both predicted increased levels of spiritual focus and speaking the truth.

The pattern of correlations among the evaluations of the situation and the responses to the situation suggested that some of the bivariate correlations probably shared common variability with some of the other variables. To statistically isolate the shared variance for each significant bivariate combination, multiple regression analyses were performed. Each analysis involved one of the composite variables as the criterion variable. The predictor variables for that equation included those composite variables that produced significant bivariate correlations with the criterion variable (the religiosity items were excluded from these analyses). A simultaneous (or forward) method was used for entering the predictor variables into the equation. The standardized partial regression coefficients for each analysis are presented in Table 3.

The significant predictors for Behavioral Sorrow were seeking forgiveness [$\beta = .50, p \leq .001$] and hardness of heart [$\beta = -.23, p < .01$]. For that regression equation, the R was .65 (R square = .42) and the standard error of the estimate was .78. Thus, the most meaningful predictor of Behavioral Sorrow was seek-

ing forgiveness. For the regression equation predicting Lack of Resolution, none of the predictors had coefficients that were statistically significant. The only predictor that was marginally significant was speaking the truth [$\beta = -.19, .05 \leq p < .10$]. The indications of goodness of fit were also rather poor for this regression equation [$R = .35, R \text{ square} = .13, \text{ standard error of the estimate} = 1.00$]. For the regression equation predicting seeking forgiveness, two out of four predictors had coefficient weights that were statistically significant. Behavioral Sorrow was directly related to forgiveness [$\beta = .49, p \leq .001$] and hardness of heart was inversely related to seeking forgiveness [$\beta = -.18, p \leq .05$]. The goodness of fit for this regression equation was stronger [$R = .67, R \text{ square} = .45, \text{ standard error of the estimate} = .82$]. Like the regression equation predicting Lack of Resolution, none of the four predictors for the equation predicting speaking the truth had coefficients that were statistically significant. The only predictor for that equation that had a coefficient that was even marginally significant was the coefficient for Lack of Resolution [$\beta = -.18, .05 \leq p \leq .10$]. The indications of goodness of fit for this equation were also rather poor [$R = .35, R \text{ square} = .12, \text{ standard estimate of the error} = 1.03$]. Finally, the regression equation predicting hardness of heart had two out of four predictors with statistically significant coefficients. Behavioral Sorrow [$\beta = -.32, p \leq .005$] and seeking forgiveness [$\beta = -.23, p \leq .05$] were both inversely related to hardness of heart. The goodness of fit indicators for this regression equation were reasonable [$R = .56, R \text{ square} = .31, \text{ standard error of the estimate} = .96$].

Phase 2

A few weeks after participating in the first study, the same students were invited to participate in a second survey that involved responding to essentially the same 16 items that assessed the students' evaluations to a situation in which they harmed someone. However, this time the context for the items was not a specific situation but rather a variety of situations. Therefore, the wording of the items was modified to capture "typical" or "general" tendencies when the participant harmed and/or offended someone. Thus, the goal of this survey was to assess dispositional evaluative tendencies rather than situation specific tendencies.

A principal component analysis was performed on the 16 items designed to assess dispositional evaluative tendencies when offending or harming someone. A Scree Test of the resulting eigenvalues indicat-

ed that three factors should be extracted and rotated using factor analysis (total variance explained by these three factors = 55.4%). Thus, a factor analysis was performed extracting three factors and rotating those factors using a Varimax rotation. When interpreting the loadings, the same criteria were used as in the previous factor analyses. The dispositional response items (and the factor loadings) that met these criteria are presented in Table 4.

Attempting to interpret the factor loadings for the dispositional items led to generally similar conclusions as the interpretation of the earlier situational items. Factor one seemed to tap Dispositional Lack of Resolution. Factor two seemed to tap Dispositional Spiritual Focus. And, factor three seemed to tap Dispositional Behavioral Sorrow. A comparison of the results from the factor analyses of the dispositional and situational items leads to the following observations: (a) Dispositional Lack of Resolution (factor one) and Dispositional Behavioral Sorrow (factor three) switched order from the situational analysis (Behavioral Sorrow was factor one and Lack of Resolution was factor three); (b) dispositional lack of resolution added two new items ("being motivated to do something because of a desire to resolve feelings of regret" had previously loaded on Behavioral Sorrow); (c) Dispositional Spiritual Focus and Spiritual Focus were essentially the same, and (d) Dispositional Behavioral Sorrow lost a positive loader to Dispositional Lack of Resolution and gained two new negative loaders.

Correlations among the situational evaluative variables, the dispositional evaluative variables, and the other variables in the study are reported in Table 5. (Please note that most of the situational evaluative correlations were also reported in Table 2. However, these correlations are also reported in Table 5 for comparison purposes between the situational and dispositional evaluative variables.) The correlations between the situational and dispositional evaluative counterparts were positive and fairly large: (a) Behavioral Sorrow and Dispositional Behavioral Sorrow [$r(78) = .48, p \leq .001$], (b) Spiritual Focus and Dispositional Spiritual Focus [$r(78) = .66, p \leq .001$], and (c) Lack of Resolution and Dispositional Lack of Resolution [$r(79) = .65, p \leq .001$]. What stands out in the pattern of correlations between each pair of situational and dispositional variables are the similarities. If a situational version of the variable correlated with another variable, then the dispositional version tended to show

TABLE 4
Factor Loadings for Study Two

Dispositional Evaluative Tendencies			
Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Generally, I find that I am able to move on and put the event behind me.	-.69		
My initial feelings of sorrow and regret are replaced with feelings of peace of mind and resolution.	-.53		
I am motivated to do something about these situations because I want to resolve my feelings of regret.	.57		
I find that it is hard for me to let go of these situations. They often come to my mind.	.83		
I become concerned with what other people outside the situation think of me.	.62		
My feelings of sorrow and regret never really go away. Recalling these events are still painful for me.	.82		
Generally, as I attempt to work through the situation I am guided by God.		.88	
Often, as a result of these situations, I experience spiritual growth.		.81	
This type of situation causes me to become more dependent upon God.		.86	
In trying to set things right, I depend more upon myself than upon God.		-.74	
Most of the time, I become genuinely concerned about how I might have harmed or offended the other person.			.74
Typically I am really motivated to change my ways and not repeat that kind of behavior again.			.68
I become mainly concerned with trying to repair the damage I have done to the other person and our relationship.			.80
As a result of this type of situation, I don't really make any changes in my actions.			-.65
I think it is important to keep in mind that it "takes two to tango." In reality, the other person often contributed more to the problem than to the solution.			-.62

a similar pattern. However, Table 5 does reveal some differences. Dispositional Behavioral Sorrow was directly related to intrinsic faith [$r(79) = .22, p \leq .05$] while Behavioral Sorrow exhibited no such relationship. Dispositional Spiritual Focus connected more strongly with Christian identity [$r(78) = .57, p \leq .001$] and intrinsic faith [$r(78) = .58, p \leq .001$] than Spiritual Focus (the correlations were in the 30's). And finally, Dispositional Lack

of Resolution was directly related to hardness of heart [$r(78) = .29, p \leq .01$] while Lack of Resolution exhibited no such relationship.

DISCUSSION

In both parts of the study, the factor analyses of the items confirmed Narramore's distinction between sorrow and guilt. Typically, items framed

TABLE 5
Correlations for Situation Specific and Dispositional Evaluative Variables from Study One and Study Two

Variables	Situation Specific			Dispositional		
	Behavior Sorrow	Spiritual Focus	Lack of Resolution	Behavior Sorrow	Spiritual Focus	Lack of Resolution
Christian Identity		.30**			.57**	-.27*
Extrinsic Personal						
Extrinsic Social						
Intrinsic		.35**		.22**	.58**	
Quest						
Behavioral Sorrow				.48**		
Spiritual Focus					.66**	
Lack of Resolution					-.27	.65**
Hardness of Heart	-.47**			-.46**		.29**
Forgiveness	.62**		-.28**	.48**		-.25*
Speaking the Truth	.22*		-.25**	.24*		-.28*
Disposition Behavior Sorrow	.48**					
Disposition Spiritual Focus		.66**	-.27*			-.24*
Disposition Lack of Resolution			.65**		-.24*	

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$

Note: The correlations for each pair of situational and dispositional variables (e.g., dispositional lack of resolution and lack of resolution) appear twice in this table.

from a sorrow perspective did not load with items framed from a guilt perspective. Interestingly, with both situational and dispositional items, those items framed from a guilt perspective tended to load on a single factor while those items framed from a sorrow perspective seemed to split between two factors. The split for the intrapsychic/evaluative items into “behavioral” and “spiritual” factors seems straightforward. The Spiritual Focus items all explicitly

involve God, the Behavioral Sorrow items do not. Confirmation for this explanation is provided by the positive correlations between Spiritual Focus and Christian identity and intrinsic faith (Behavioral Sorrow correlated with none of the religiosity items). However, interpreting the split between the response items into “forgiveness” and “speaking the truth” seems less straightforward. What further complicates the interpretation of this split is that only

two items loaded on the Speaking the Truth factor. One “shot in the dark” explanation might be the following. Perhaps, in American culture, the Christian value of forgiveness has been generally embraced by the culture. However, the Christian value of “speaking the truth in love” may not be so widely affirmed (shading the truth or ‘keeping your head down’ may be the cultural norm). If so, Christian identity and intrinsic faith should not correlate with forgiveness while there should be meaningful connections with speaking the truth. That was the pattern of correlations produced in this study.

What makes this splitting of the sorrow items especially perplexing is that Behavioral Sorrow was directly related to both forgiveness and speaking the truth, while spiritual focus was independent of both forgiveness and speaking the truth. It is true that the Behavioral Sorrow items tended to focus on damage done to the victim and efforts or desires to repair that damage. And, seeking forgiveness and speaking the truth in love would certainly fit with that focus. But, the Spiritual Focus items tended to measure depending upon God and growing in relationship with God as the transgressor navigated this situation. And, it is hard to imagine that seeking forgiveness and speaking the truth in love would not naturally flow from the transgressor depending upon God and having a growing relationship with God.

In attempting to explain the apparent independence between Spiritual Focus and forgiveness/speaking the truth, at least a couple of possibilities come to mind. For example, some transgressors may emphasize Spiritual Focus when reparative options with the victim, are for some reason, impractical. On a higher plain, this might include the victim moving away, the victim cutting off all contact, or the victim dying. Under those conditions, seeking forgiveness and speaking the truth in love simply would not be possible. On a lower plain, reparative action might be difficult because of stubbornness, self-serving bias, and/or the inability to apologize to another person. Such a person might maximize Spiritual Focus because Behavioral Sorrow is not an option. Another possibility could be that emphasizing Spiritual Focus may allow some persons to side-step the hard and messy work involved in seeking forgiveness and speaking the truth in love. In a sense, such transgressors get the best of both worlds. Because they have “relied on the Lord” and “grown spiritually,” they can once again see themselves as “good persons.” Conveniently, they may have been able to accomplish this restoration of

self-worth without having to also do the painful work of reparation.

Another interesting finding in this study was the strong connection between situational and dispositional intrapsychic or evaluative tendencies for offenders. One explanation for that connectedness might be that dispositional tendencies really do predict situational experiences – akin to the classic notion in social psychology that under some conditions attitudes predict behavior e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein (1977). A second explanation might be that when participants were asked to recall a past transgression they recalled the most cognitively salient transgression memory. When addressing dispositional tendencies, they may have recalled the same salient transgression and generalized from that specific event. This might be especially likely if the memory of the transgression was what has been called a “flashbulb memory.” Flashbulb memories tend to be vivid and detailed and flow from an intensely emotional experience (Brown & Kulik, 1977; McCloskey, Wible, & Cohen, 1988). A third possibility, similar to the second, would suggest that whatever memory was recalled in the first part of the study became salient in the second part of the study (after all, it was still part of the same study). Dispositional tendencies may have then been generalized from that recalled event. What separates the last two explanations is the reason for the salience of the memory of a transgression event. The second explanation proposes the salience of a memory may be intrinsic to the memory system while the third explanation proposes the salience of a memory may be an artifact of the research procedures.

At least one other pattern within the data is worth noting. The relationship between forgiveness and hardness of heart was strong and inverse [$r(102) = -.49, p \leq .001$]. To the extent that transgressors did not seek forgiveness they tended to justify their own actions, to denigrate the victim, and to avoid the victim. Such a pattern is certainly consistent with the self-justification that can occur during dissonance reduction (see Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999). And, if transgressions are perceived as a form of failure, then this pattern would fit with the self-serving tendency to blame others (including the victim) and the situation when explaining failures (see Campbell & Sedikides, 1999).

Another interesting issue is possible directions for future research. In that regard, the definition of seeking forgiveness provided by Sandage, Worthington, Hight, and Berry (2000) provides an excellent

platform for launching future research. The definition suggests that seeking forgiveness is multidimensional and involves: (a) Ability to assume the perspective of the victim, (b) nondefensive moral emotions, and (c) reparative actions. Sandage et al. explored the role of perspective taking in their project. This project focused on the role of nondefensive moral emotions (Godly sorrow vs. psychological guilt). And, Worthington and Drinkard (2000) have proposed a six-step model for promoting reconciliation in couples. But, much remains to be done. For example, each of these Sandage et al. dimensions can be explored in greater empirical and conceptual depth. But, at a broader level, there is the question of the extent to which these dimensions function in relatively autonomous or interactive fashions.

Another potentially fertile area for research concerns the implications of transgressor self-forgiveness and seeking forgiveness. Some of the early research presents a rather conflicted picture. Tangney and her colleagues (see Tangney, Boone, & Dearing, *in press*) report that transgressors dispositionally predisposed toward self-forgiveness, show lower levels of shame, guilt, and being able to empathize with the victim. Self-forgivers experience little remorse for their transgressions, while being particularly angered when others transgress against them. This is not the picture of someone who is likely to seek forgiveness following a transgression. Yet, Witvliet, Ludwig, and Bauer (2002) reported that perceptions of self-forgiveness increased when students imagined seeking forgiveness following a transgression. Certainly, this is a finding that suggests a natural link between self-forgiveness and seeking forgiveness. So, what is the connection between self-forgiveness and seeking forgiveness? Could the connection between self-forgiveness and seeking forgiveness depend upon the timing of each? For example, if a transgressor seeks forgiveness, does that naturally open the possibility of self-forgiveness? But, if someone first experiences self-forgiveness, does that naturally foreclose the option of then seeking forgiveness?

Another potential direction for future research might involve studying the extent to which personality factors moderate or mediate the process of seeking forgiveness. For example, Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, and Nitzberg (*in press*) report that dispositional and situationally induced secure attachments predict higher levels of empathy and a strengthening of self-transcendent values. Conversely, dispositional attach-

ment-related anxiety and avoidance predicted diminished compassion and altruistic behavior. To the extent that the desire to seek forgiveness is mediated by compassion and self-transcendent values, secure attachment would seem to predict an increased desire, on the part of transgressors, to seek forgiveness. Secure attachment might also mediate seeking forgiveness on the part of the transgressor by minimizing self-defensive tendencies (like a self-serving bias in attributing blame) in the situation. As another indication that personality factors might moderate or mediate seeking forgiveness, Rourke-Marchette (2003) reported that extraverted transgressors were initially inclined to seek forgiveness from the victim while introverted transgressors were initially inclined to seek self-forgiveness. The definition of seeking forgiveness provided by Sandage, Worthington, Hight, and Berry (2000) suggests that in regards to seeking forgiveness, the most interesting personality traits are those that will enhance other-perspective taking, moral emotions, and reparative actions.

To the extent that seeking forgiveness can be conceptualized as prosocial behavior, then Batson's views on egoistic and altruistic helping behavior (Batson, Fultz, & Schoenrade, 1987) may provide useful insights into seeking forgiveness. Batson proposes that seeing someone in need can activate two different routes to possible helping. One route is motivated by an egoistic focus on diminishing personal distress. This route will lead to behaviors that will make the observer feel better (those behaviors may include helping). The other route is motivated by empathy and compassion for the person in need. This route will lead to behavior that should benefit the victim (and will typically involve helping). Certainly, seeking forgiveness may be motivated by egoistic or altruistic factors. The first may simply produce a version of seeking forgiveness that is not much more than impression management. The second should produce a version of seeking forgiveness that is more focused on helping the victim and repairing damage done during the transgression. The inverse relationship between both narcissism or self-monitoring and seeking forgiveness, reported by Sandage, Worthington, Hight, and Berry (2000), seems to touch upon the idea that egoistic motives can impact seeking forgiveness.

Finally, careful consideration should be given to connections between the Narramore (1984) and Tangney et al. (1996) perspectives on moral emotions. Certainly, Tangney's concept of "guilt" seems

to overlap Narramore's concept of "sorrow." The most obvious discrepancy in these conceptualizations seems to be Narramore's inclusion of a spiritual dimension with sorrow. The splitting of our items designed to measure sorrow into Behavioral Sorrow and Spiritual Focus may help to clarify some of that common ground (Behavioral Sorrow) and some of that uncommon ground (Spiritual Focus) with Tangney's concept of guilt.

Tangney's concept of "shame" seems to overlap Narramore's concept of "guilt." Other than noting the unfortunate outcome that Tangney and Narramore use the term "guilt" in diametrically opposed ways, it is also interesting to note that Narramore invokes a spiritual element while Tangney does not. The introduction of a spiritual element also raises the interesting question of seeking and receiving forgiveness from God. The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-15) indicates there is a natural connection between forgiving others and receiving Godly forgiveness. Thus, what are the connections between seeking forgiveness from the victim, seeking forgiveness from God, and granting self-forgiveness?

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