A Dual Conceptualisation of Personal Authenticity and its Relationship with Offender Defensiveness and Moral Repair

Lara Rose King
BPsychSc (Hons)

Thesis
Submitted to Flinders University
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology)
College of Education, Psychology and Social Work
19th April 2023

Table of Contents

Summary....................v

Declaration....................vii

Acknowledgements....................viii

Introduction....................1

CHAPTER 1. The I and Me in Authenticity: A Theoretical Framework....................6

Prominent Conflicts in the Research Field....................7

The Proposed Framework....................10

Perceptions of Others' Authenticity....................29

Implications for the Research Field....................30

Future Directions....................32

Concluding Remarks....................37

CHAPTER 2. Offenders' Need for Present-State Authenticity as an Antidote to Defensiveness....................38

Understanding Offender Defensiveness: The Threat of Responsibility....................40

Present-State Authenticity as Antithetical to Defensiveness....................42

The Denial of Self-Concept Authenticity as a Defensive Response....................44

Study 1....................45

Method....................47

Results....................53

Discussion....................60

CHAPTER 3. Preliminary Development of a Differentiated Measure of Personal Authenticity....................68

A Dual Authenticity Framework....................69

Present-State Authenticity as a Facilitator of Constructive Transgression Processing....................71

Self-Concept Authenticity in the Context of Wrongdoing....................74

Limitations in the Measurement of Authenticity....................75

Study 2....................77

Method....................78

Results....................81

Discussion....................100

CHAPTER 4. An Examination of the Reciprocal Associations Between Personal Authenticity, Defensiveness and Moral Repair......109
Present-State Authenticity as a Context-Sensitive Process......110
Self-Concept Authenticity as a Barrier to Transgression Processing......112
Dual Authenticity Scale Validation......114
Analytic Approach......114
Study 3......116
Method......118
Results......123
Discussion......151
CHAPTER 5. Self-Concept Authenticity as an Outcome of Defensiveness and a Potential Barrier to Moral Repair......162
Self-Concept Inauthenticity as a Psychological Signal in Moral Transgressions......163
Overview of the Present Studies......166
Study 4.1......167
Method......168
Results......173
Discussion......180
Study 4.2......182
Method......183
Results......185
Discussion......187
General Discussion......188
CHAPTER 6. General Discussion......193
What is Personal Authenticity?......193
How does Personal Authenticity Relate to Offender Defensiveness and Moral Repair?......196
What Strategies Might Support Offenders' Capacities to Engage in Authentic Processes to Facilitate Personal and Interpersonal Restorative Outcomes?......203
Implications and Future Directions......205
Limitations......207
Conclusion......209
References......211

Appendices......240
  Appendix A. Blog Manipulations (Study 1)......240
  Appendix B. Additional Measures (Study 3)......244
  Appendix C. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) for the Authenticity Scale at Time 2 and Time 3 (Study 3)......245
  Appendix D. Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Models (RI-CLPM) for Proposed Mediators for Relationship between Pseudo Self-Forgiveness and Self-Concept Authenticity (Study 3)......249
  Appendix E. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) for Authenticity Scale (Studies 4.1 and 4.2)......253

Summary

The consequences of violating standards of appropriate behaviour at another's expense (i.e., interpersonal transgressions) can be substantial. In addition to any material damages, committing a transgression draws to question offenders' moral integrity and social acceptability. Accordingly, offenders may be motivated to defensively downplay, distort, or deny their responsibility to self-protect; however, this is not without potential costs. Offender defensiveness may escalate the conflict, create a barrier to reconciliation and cause further psychological harm to all involved parties. Rather, effective restoration processes require moral repair, through which offenders restore their self-integrity and recommit to the values violated in the offence. Supporting offenders to overcome defensiveness and engage in moral repair is therefore important for both individual and interpersonal outcomes.

This thesis explores authenticity as a novel factor that may be involved in offenders' processing of their wrongdoings. However, personal authenticity (i.e., the authenticity of people) has been conceptualised in different ways, so insights from this rich but complex literature are difficult to integrate and apply to specific contexts. In response to this challenge, this thesis first presents a theoretical framework that synthesises the literature, and two dimensions of personal authenticity are identified. Present-state authenticity involves feeling connected to and truthfully representing one's present-state experiences (i.e., thoughts, emotions), and thus, feeling true to one's present-state self. Self-concept authenticity involves experiential validation of valued aspects of one's salient self-concept, or true-self concept, and thus, feeling true to conceptual notions of who one is.

These two dimensions of authenticity are then explored within the context of real-life transgressions. Across five studies, using a combination of experimental, cross-sectional, and longitudinal methodologies, the conceptualisation is tested and differentiated relationships with defensiveness and moral repair are explored. Three questions guided this research.

Firstly, what is personal authenticity? Secondly, how does personal authenticity relate to offenders' engagement in defensiveness and moral repair? Finally, if authenticity was found to assist offenders to adaptively process their moral failures, what strategies may support an individual's capacity to engage in authentic processes to facilitate better outcomes for individual and interpersonal restoration?

Overall, findings suggest initial evidence for the viability and importance of distinguishing the two authenticity dimensions. Challenging notions of authenticity as a wholly positive construct, results suggest that self-concept *inauthenticity* may have a role in moral self-regulation and may therefore be adaptive following wrongdoing, and present-state authenticity may reflect feelings of self-justification that share associations with defensiveness. Given that authenticity has generally only been considered in terms of its positive functions, this may need to be reassessed. However, authentic motives or goals may have positive implications for how offenders process their wrongdoings and behave moving forward. This work therefore provides new insights into the processing of moral failures and our conceptions of authenticity. In providing a means of integrating the literature, it is hoped that the dual authenticity model may have broader utility within future research.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis:

1. does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university
2. and the research within will not be submitted for any other future degree or diploma without the permission of Flinders University; and
3. to the best of my knowledge and belief does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Additionally, I confirm that I received an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship to support the completion of this thesis (2019-2022).

Lara King

Date: 1st March 2023

Acknowledgements

It is difficult to capture my gratitude to my supervisor, Michael Wenzel. Thank you for the breadth of your support prior to and throughout my PhD. My growth as an academic owes to your incredible generosity with your time and mentorship whenever I have needed it, balanced with the trust and freedom to make mistakes and explore my own ideas. I have always walked out of your office feeling inspired to keep pushing forward, irrespective of how lost I felt walking in. Thank you to Lydia Woodyatt, for your warmth, energy, and infectious intellectual curiosity, and for helping me to look at the world through a social-psychological lens. I stumbled into the world of research feeling like a wide-eyed child balancing beneath a trench coat, and the gentle guidance you have both provided has helped me to feel like I have a home here.

Thank you to the past and present members of the Justice, Emotions and Morality lab; it has been a joy to be a part of this team. You are brilliant people and academics, and I cannot wait to follow your careers. Thank you also to the wider PhD cohort for the sense of community you have provided, for the debriefs and validation, and for making this journey fun. A notable mention to Christiana, for your friendship over the past few months, and to Zoe and Cam, who have helped me achieve no work, but who have made me laugh lots.

I am grateful to the wider Psychology department who have facilitated my learning throughout my nine years of education, and to the clinical psychology staff who have helped me to develop my skills as a clinician. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship, which has enabled me to dedicate my time to this work.

To the people who are my world outside of work and academia – thank you for your endless love and support of everything I do. I am immeasurably lucky to have too many special people to name individually, but I am a better person in all ways for having you in my

life. To my wonderful partner, Calen, thank you for your boundless support and for the genuine interest you have always taken in my work. Your love and kindness have helped to carry me through the past few months. And thank you to my brother, Darcy, for being who you are.

Finally, I am immensely grateful to my parents for their love and support throughout my life, which has been foundational in affording me the immense privilege of pursuing higher education. Mum – from the earliest age, you taught me the power of words and the joys of reading, and that I could do anything I set my mind to. I dedicate this thesis to you.

Introduction

"Know thyself"

The pursuit of authenticity, or being true to oneself, has long been valued as an important aspect of living a good and fulfilling life (see Kernis & Goldman, 2006 for historical review). Although the maxim "*know thyself"* dates to ancient Greek philosophy, authenticity's value continues to be evident across contemporary society and popular culture. We seek authenticity in art (Newman & Bloom, 2012), entertainment (Rose & Wood, 2005), tourism (Castéran, & Roederer, 2013), consumer products and experiences (Beverland, 2005; Kovács et al., 2014), politics (Pillow et al., 2018; Theye & Melling, 2018) and leadership (Umbach & Humphrey, 2017). Within psychology, there has been a resurgence of interest in what it means to be an authentic person (Beer & Brandler, 2021; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Wood et al., 2008), to have authentic experiences (Cooper et al., 2018; Smallenbroek et al., 2017; Wilt et al., 2019), and to be perceived as authentic by others (Bailey & Levy, 2022; Garrison et al., 2022; Oktar & Lombrozo, 2022; Slepian & Carr, 2019). However, despite the empirical momentum, authenticity's conceptualisation has been contentious. Although it is widely acknowledged that authenticity is highly valued, there is less consensus about what authenticity *is.*

The broader aims of the current research are to consider how authenticity may assist individuals (subsequently termed offenders) to appropriately process their wrongdoings. Violating shared standards of appropriate behaviour at another's expense (i.e., interpersonal transgressions) may carry heavy consequences for offenders. In addition to any material damages, transgressions psychologically threaten offenders' moral integrity and social acceptability as members of their moral community (Shnabel et al., 2009; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Effective restoration processes therefore require moral repair, through which offenders constructively process their responsibility to restore self-integrity, recommit to the values violated in the offence, and the shared identity these values define (Wenzel et al., 2021; Woodyatt et al., 2017). However, to the extent that offenders displace, distort or deny their responsibility via defensiveness, restoration may be undermined (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a, 2013b). Supporting offenders to appropriately process their wrongdoings therefore involves both overcoming defensiveness and facilitating moral repair.

An effective exploration of authenticity's relationship with defensiveness and moral repair is not possible without also responding to authenticity's conceptual complexities. On the one hand, where authenticity has been conceptualised to involve unbiased awareness of present-state experiences and open communication with others (e.g. Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008), as well as owning one's thoughts and actions (e.g., Harter, 2002; Vess, 2019), it may represent an independent process that opposes defensiveness and facilitates moral repair. On the other hand, authenticity conceptualisations that invoke a notion of a true-self concept (i.e., the mental representation of one's true or core identity; e.g., Newman et al., 2015; Schlegel et al., 2009; Strohminger et al., 2017) may function differently. In the context of transgressions, offenders may claim *"I was not my true self"*, which may reflect a strategy of psychological disengagement and distancing from the offence. Under these conditions, an offender may contend that no wrongdoing has occurred, or that they are not blameworthy. So, on the other hand, the denial of authenticity may be a vehicle for defensiveness and a barrier to moral repair. Within this thesis, I therefore begin by proposing a theoretical framework for authenticity. I then apply this framework to transgression processing to consider how authenticity may relate to offender defensiveness and moral repair.

Although conceptual consensus is yet to be established, a number of frameworks (e.g., Dammann et al., 2021; Lehman et al., 2019; Newman, 2019; Newman, & Smith, 2016) and theoretical models (e.g. Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Rivera et al., 2019; Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018; Vess, 2019; Wood et al., 2008) for authenticity have been proposed, which may make the need for another appear questionable. The current work does not aim to compete, but instead advances a framework specific to personal authenticity (i.e., the authenticity of individuals) that synthesises the literature. Prior works have contributed invaluable pieces to an understanding of authenticity, although have each approached the problem through their own theoretical lens. This has contributed to a rich but complex literature, with diverse research streams that are difficult to reconcile. Prior frameworks have taken a broad approach, taking on the enormous task of developing an expansive framework for authenticity in diverse contexts (e.g., the authenticity of objects, brands, norms, organisations, institutions, professions, and traditions). Whilst this is essential work, broad frameworks are less equipped to speak to the complexity within specific contexts, and so I argue that a framework specific to personal authenticity may be valuable.

The Cost of Defensiveness following Interpersonal Transgressions

Considering how offenders process their wrongdoings and engage in effective moral repair is important in its own right. Given the complexity of social relationships, interpersonal transgressions are arguably inevitable. These can range from very low-level indiscretions, including acts that may have been unintended or accidental, to very serious or criminal offences, such as abuse. Although these may be relatively common occurrences (specifically at the lower end of the spectrum), all transgressions can be damaging when the subsequent repair is ineffective, with distress also accumulating across repeated incidents (Bolger et al., 1989). To the extent that we can understand the factors that may facilitate or hinder reconciliation and repair, the harms of conflict may be able to be reduced.

Following wrongdoing, an offender's defensiveness may have intrapersonal and interpersonal consequences. Although defensiveness is not inherently pathological or problematic (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a; Hart, 2014), it may be costly when it impedes an offender’s acceptance of responsibility following wrongdoing. Offenders’ appropriate acceptance of responsibility is regarded as central to individual moral repair and relationship restoration (Hall & Fincham, 2005; Wenzel et al., 2012; Woodyatt, & Wenzel, 2013b). Intrapersonally, defensive offenders may miss an opportunity for self-corrective growth, and a balanced self-understanding that comes from processing negatively valenced self-relevant information. They may remain on guard, exerting mental energy to protect themselves from slip-ups or admissions, while potentially harbouring an uncomfortable implicit understanding of their guilt (Wenzel et al, 2020), or an ongoing sense of unacknowledged shame (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). An offender’s inability to effectively reconcile with themselves may then have significant implications in terms of their psychological functioning and wellbeing over time. Interpersonally, offender defensiveness is associated with neglect of victim needs, lack of amend-making and restorative action, and the risk of exacerbation of harm (Noor et al., 2012; Schumann & Orehek, 2019; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b). For example, offenders may avoid the issue and the harmed other(s) and show a decline in empathy, which makes relationship repair more unlikely (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b). Due to diverging perspectives and mutually unfulfilled needs, the conflict may escalate or be prolonged, and both parties may suffer further psychological damage (Shnabel et al., 2008). Assisting offenders to appropriately process their wrongdoings is therefore an important goal at all levels of offence severity, and has implications across clinical, educational, organisational, and legal settings.

Research Overview

Three main questions have guided this research. Firstly, what is personal authenticity? Secondly, how does personal authenticity relate to offenders’ engagement in defensiveness and moral repair? Finally, if authenticity were found to assist offenders to appropriately and adaptively process their moral failures, what strategies may support an individual’s capacity to engage in authentic processes to facilitate better outcomes for personal and interpersonal restoration?

In responding to the question of conceptualising authenticity, Chapter 1 presents a framework for personal authenticity based on theory, literature review, and a deconstruction of the authenticity construct. It also discusses how this conceptualisation may account for disparities in the literature and offers new cross-disciplinary research directions. A variety of empirical approaches and research designs were then employed to consider authenticity in the context of wrongdoing. In all studies, participants recalled recent real-life transgressions they had committed against another person. The study reported in Chapter 2 aimed to use an experimental approach to manipulate authenticity aspirations. The study reported in Chapter 3 develops a more refined measurement in line with the proposed conceptualisation, and tests relationships with defensive and non-defensive transgression responding in a cross-sectional correlational design. The study reported in Chapter 4 tests cross-lagged associations in a longitudinal design, and considers the prospective effects of authenticity, defensiveness, and moral repair over time. In Chapter 5 I adopted an experimental casual-chain design (Spencer et al., 2005) and tested the predicted causal links between defensiveness, authenticity, and genuine transgression processing in two experiments. Finally, Chapter 6 integrates the findings from this research, discusses its implications for our understanding of authenticity and transgression processing, and considers future research that could continue from the findings this thesis has contributed.

CHAPTER 1

The ‘I’ and ‘Me’ in Authenticity: A Theoretical Framework

The authenticity literature appears to be in need of a unifying structure. Although authenticity has long been considered an important psychological phenomenon, with the roots of its exploration in philosophy, and existential and humanistic psychology (for a historical review, see Harter, 2002; Kernis & Goldman, 2006), its conceptualisation remains contentious. Commentators have noted that the literature is contending with conceptual difficulties and the determination of a clear empirical approach (Baumeister, 2019; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019; Kovács, 2019) and that the greatest consensus has, at times, appeared to be a lack of consensus for this ‘elusive’ construct (Hicks et al., 2019). Unintegrated research is problematic as it creates unnecessary complexity and confusion, conceals insights and gaps, may lead variable relationships to be misinterpreted or overlooked, and impairs research communication. An organising framework is therefore needed to continue to advance the empirical agenda.

The current work focuses specifically on the authenticity of individuals (“personal authenticity”). Prior works have made considerable contributions in developing frameworks for understanding the various dimensions, meanings and applications of authenticity as a broad construct, in the wide and diverse contexts in which authenticity is studied (e.g., Lehman et al., 2019; Newman, 2019; Newman, & Smith, 2016). Given the complexity of the authenticity construct, I contend that a targeted framework is needed to speak the challenges specific to personal authenticity. The current work does not seek to compete with prior contributions but aims to meaningfully synthesise the literature in this area.

The current work takes a similar approach to Lehman and colleagues (2019) to deconstruct the authenticity construct and provide a framework. It is proposed that authenticity may be broadly defined as a judgement or verification that a given entity is what it is claimed to be (Trilling, 1972) in a particular way. Defining authenticity in context therefore depends upon clarifying the entity (or referent, Dutton, 2003) in question (i.e., an authentic *what*?), as well as which dimension of that entity is being assessed (i.e., authentic in *what way*?). Regarding personal authenticity, a review of the literature finds convergence on an agreement that the relevant entity is the self. The self, however, is comprised of two dimensions (James, 1890): a subjective sense of self (I-self), relating to one's present-state phenomenological experiences, and an objective sense of self, or self-concept (me-self). Two analogous ways that personal authenticity has been conceptualised are identifiable from the literature: on one hand, as being aware of, owning, and accurately expressing one's present-state experiences; on the other hand, as experiencing validation of valued, contextually-dependent self-concept features (or specifically, 'true self' concept features). These two dimensions of personal authenticity will be termed present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity, respectively.

In this Chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the prominent empirical and theoretical conflicts in the literature before detailing the proposed framework. The implications of the dual model will then be discussed in regard to the conflicts. Finally, future research directions will be proposed.

Prominent Conflicts in the Research Field

There may be a multiplicity of understandings of authenticity held by both researchers and lay people (Kovács, 2019; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019), made more challenging through the use of varied terminology. In exploring lay conceptualisations, Kovács (2019) determined that there may be more than 15 independent authenticity sub-concepts. An added complexity in the study of personal authenticity has been the notion of a 'true self'. As a term, true self has been used synonymously with authenticity and features widely in its definition, for both dispositional authenticity (e.g., authenticity as the "unimpeded operation of the true or core self in one's daily enterprise", Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 344) and state authenticity (e.g., "the sense or feeling that one is currently in alignment with one's true or genuine self", Sedikides et al., 2017, p. 521). Although consensus appears to be emerging over the terminological use of 'true self', many overlapping and sometimes interchangeable terms such as *real self*, *intrinsic self*, *authentic self*, *ideal self*, *essential self,* and *deep self* (Strohminger et al., 2017) have contributed further ambiguity. It is apparent that authenticity is a complex construct that would benefit from terminological unity and structure.

Further complicating matters, the terms authenticity and true self have inconsistent meanings across the literature. On one hand, these terms are used to reference consistency between one's actual *present-state experience* (which, within these perspectives is the 'true self') and that which is personally acknowledged, owned and expressed (e.g., Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Wood et al., 2008; Vess, 2019). On the other hand, both are defined in relation to a *self-concept* (e.g., Baumeister, 2019; Chen, 2019; Schlegel et al., 2009; Strohminger et al., 2017), often specifically a true-self concept; notions of who someone *really* is, which may be distinct from the more publicly displayed 'surface' self (also termed a superficial or peripheral self; Strohminger et al., 2017). The distinction between these two approaches is not clearly acknowledged or delineated, and it can be difficult to determine which aspect is theoretically or empirically implicated in a given study.

A lack of distinction between these two elements may also be present empirically. Whilst Wood et al. (2008) conceptualise the true self as one's actual present-state experience (comprised of one's true physiological states, emotions, and schematic beliefs), their scale is also used within research that seeks to investigate authenticity in terms of a self-concept (e.g., Christy et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2018). Items within the scale may be variably interpreted by respondents; for example, "*I feel out of touch with the 'real me", "I don't know how I feel inside"*, may be responded to regarding different self-aspects. Similarly, Kernis and

Goldman's (2006) scale explicitly contains items within the awareness subscale that relate to present states, such as *"I am in touch with my motives and desires",* and items that relate to a self-concept, such as *"I actively try to understand which of my self-aspects fit together to form my core- or true-self".* The conflation of these two perspectives may contribute to interpretational ambiguities, and research designs may unintentionally tap into different aspects of self.

A number of theoretical and empirical conflicts have raised further questions about our understanding of authenticity and its validity. Prominent among these are interrelated concerns regarding whether it is more authentic to accept or reject external influence, and whether normative or distinctive actions (i.e., consistent with one's own traits and dispositions) are more authentic. Theorising on authenticity has broadly assumed that resisting external influence would be a necessary condition. Authenticity as personal self expression and the rejection of external influence is reflected in conceptualisations that have been foundational in the literature (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al. 2008), as well as through the notable contributions of self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Ryan & Ryan, 2019). In this sense, authentic individuals are assumed to act autonomously, in a manner consistent with their own experiences. However, a pervasive confound has been noted in juxtaposition to this theorising (e.g., Baumeister, 2019, Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019; Sedikides et al., 2019; Rivera et al., 2019), that feelings of authenticity are distorted towards what is normative and socially desirable (Cooper et al., 2018; Fleeson & Wilt, 2010; Harter, 2002; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2016; Sheldon et al., 1997), and are heightened when experiencing positive mood states (Lenton, Bruder, et al., 2013; Lenton, Slabu et al., 2013; Lenton et al., 2016) and when acting in socially valued ways, rather than in ways that accurately reflect one's actual traits (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). Further, it was found that greater situational motivation to be one's 'real self' was associated with greater reported acceptance of external influence (Lenton et al., 2016, Study 1). Given the above contradictions, the current operationalisations of authenticity do not clearly account for the empirical landscape.

An additional confound is that authenticity is considered to be a virtue, whereby authentic expressions are assumed to be “good” (Bailey & Levy, 2022; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2016, 2019, 2020). Authenticity has been found to be associated with feelings of morality (Gino et al., 2015), and a pervasive belief exists that people’s own true selves and the true selves of others are fundamentally morally good (Christy et al., 2017; De Freitas, Cikara, et al., 2017; Strohminger et al., 2017; Strohminger & Nichols, 2014). In reality, however, people are not always good and virtuous, and genuinely possess both good and bad personality traits and qualities. Jongman-Sereno and Leary (2019) raise the issue of inevitable authenticity, in that all intentional or goal-directed behaviours, not excluding those influenced by strong external forces, arise genuinely from some inner process (e.g., dispositions, values, attitudes, motives, or beliefs). It is argued that even behaviours generally conceived as “inauthentic” such as lying, cheating, or deceiving may be considered authentic, having been a genuine expression of some inner motive within a given situation. For example, a person may display unfelt warmth to an obnoxious relative as they genuinely, authentically, wish to avoid conflict or reprimand. In having broadly treated authenticity as an attribute that is always “good”, there is currently little scope to incorporate the possibility of authentic negative expressions of self.

The Proposed Framework

In order to articulate a framework for personal authenticity, it is critical to interrogate the nuances of the authenticity construct. As first identified by Austin (1962), authenticity is a dimension word: a word that relates to an abstract dimension, and that belongs to a family of semantically similar and opposing words that relate to the extent that dimension is possessed. Austin notes that the term ‘authentic’ relates to being ‘real’, ‘genuine’ and ‘true’, as opposed to ‘artificial’ or ‘fake’; a consensus that is also shared among researchers (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010; Hopwood et al., 2021; O’Connor et al., 2017) and lay people (Kovács, 2019). Although belonging to an abstract class, dimension words have specific, context-dependent meanings. Authenticity may be broadly defined as an assessment or verification that a given entity is what it is claimed to be (Trilling, 1972) in a particular way. Defining authenticity in context then requires clarification of the given entity (i.e., an authentic *what*?), as well as which aspect (or dimension; Dutton, 2003) of that entity is being assessed (i.e., authentic in *what way*?). To illustrate the importance of this clarification, Dutton (2003) offers the example that counterfeit money is at the same time fraudulent legal tender and an authentic piece of paper. Acknowledging these nuances elucidates why so many frameworks (e.g., Dammann et al., 2021; Lehman et al., 2019; Newman, 2019; Newman, & Smith, 2016) and theoretical models (e.g. Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Rivera et al., 2019; Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018; Vess, 2019; Wood et al., 2008) have been proposed, as the authenticity of many entities may be assessed in many ways. These parameters offer some guidance in mapping the topography of this construct.

When considering the authenticity of people, the literature converges on an agreement that the relevant entity is the self. Personal authenticity thus involves an assessment that one is consistently or truthfully representing one’s self, whilst inauthenticity involves an assessment that one’s self is misrepresented. These judgements may be made by an individual assessing their own authenticity, or may be socially assessed by others. When judging one’s own authenticity (versus inauthenticity), an individual must have a phenomenological sense that their words, actions or experience accurately (versus inaccurately) reflects their experience or conception of their self. Similarly, perceptions of others’ authenticity reflect a judgement that the target person’s self-expressions reflect an accurate (versus distorted) representation of their self as the perceiver conceives it. Accordingly, assessments of authenticity do not appear to apply to mundane or necessary behaviours that do not convey information about the self (Stevenson, 2020). For example, it would be strange to consider the authenticity of showering or doing the dishes. Whilst the present analysis will focus on the subjective experience of authenticity, some thoughts will also be offered on how authenticity judgments may be constructed by others.

It is instructive to then consider the two ways a sense of self is experienced. As first proposed by James (1890), the cognition literature distinguishes between the self as *subject* of experience (I-self), and the self as *object* of experience (me-self). The I-self encompasses the phenomenological sense of ownership one has over their conscious experience. It is reflected in people's sense of having an "experiencing 'thing' inside their heads" (Leary & Tangney, 2012, p. 5); such that *I* am the one thinking my thoughts, feeling my feelings, and committing my actions. McAdams (1996) suggests conceiving of the 'I' as a process of ''selfing", which is to locate one's experiences as originating from and belonging to oneself, thus encompassing agency (i.e., I caused my thoughts and actions) and ownership (i.e., my thoughts and actions belong to me; Prebble et al., 2013). In contrast, the me-self is a product of the "selfing" process (McAdams, 1996), involving a constructed mental representation of who one is (i.e., one's self-concept). The self-concept encompasses a person's beliefs about themselves developed out of their experiences in the world (Baumeister, 1999), and so involves perceptions of traits, social status, group memberships, values, life stories, experiences, and other self-attributes, to the extent that these are all perceived to be their own (Oyserman, 2001; Prebble et al, 2013). The I and the me thus represent two related, albeit distinct, dimensions of a sense of self which have implications for personal authenticity.

The two ways a sense of self is experienced map onto two approaches to conceptualising personal authenticity in the literature. The first approach centres upon one's present-moment experience. It highlights awareness of one’s actual thoughts, feelings, and self-relevant cognitions, and the congruent expression of these states (e.g., Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al, 2008), and the phenomenological sense that this experience has been one’s own (e.g., Vess, 2019). In this way, one may be authentic to one’s present state (‘I’) self and experience a sense of authenticity. The second approach involves the self-concept. A sense of authenticity is produced when aspects of one’s experience or the environment (particularly the social environment) validate valued aspects of one’s self-concept (e.g., Chen, 2019; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018), which produces a self-recognition experience akin to “me” or “not me”. I refer to these two dimensions of personal authenticity, informed through the I-self and me-self distinction, as present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity, respectively (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

The Personal Authenticity Framework

	Present-State Authenticity	**Self-Concept Authenticity**
Implicated Dimension of Self	I-self (James, 1890) Subjective sense of self Present-state experience: thoughts, emotions, self-relevant cognitions, e.g., desires, preferences	Me-self (James, 1890) Objective sense of self Self-concept Often specifically, a true-self concept
Components	Subjective *awareness* of present-state experience *Expressive consistency* Phenomenological *ownership*	Perceived validation of salient, valued self-concept features (often specifically, true-self concept features)

The current work conceptualises authenticity as a state, rather than a temporally stable personality dimension. Indeed, considerations of the experience of authenticity find that there may be greater within-person than between-person variability in authenticity, which does not appear to differ based on one's trait standing (Lenton, Bruder, et al., 2013, Study 1). Further, people report strong motivations to experience authenticity and avoid inauthenticity, however, the experience of authenticity does not appear to be driven by motives, and therefore may occur on the basis of situational factors outside of individual control (Lenton, Bruder et al., Study 1). Aligning with this, theory is increasingly accounting for how one's environment may provide the conditions and context for authenticity's experience (Chen, 2019; Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018). Literature pertaining to both trait and state authenticity will however be reviewed as both provide valuable insights, and trait measures (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008) have predominated the empirical literature. Present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity will subsequently be reviewed in turn.

Present-State Authenticity (Informed by the I-Self)

The I-self is a meaningful lens for capturing the authenticity of present-moment experiences. Importantly, this conceptualisation allows the incorporation of theorising which does not relate to a self-concept. In explicating the components of present-state authenticity, it is notable that the I-self is a process ("*selfing"*) whereby one's phenomenological experiences are located as belonging to one's self. These conditions suggest both an awareness of experience, as well as a sense that the experience is one's own, such that there is a phenomenological sense of '*mineness'* over one's mental states, physiological states, and actions. As personal authenticity involves appraising a true representation of self, this implies that one's internal experience must be represented in some way. It is therefore proposed that to the extent that one is *aware* of their experience, *expresses* or represents this experience congruently, and feels a sense of *ownership* over the process (such that it is felt to be self-authored and agentic), one will experience present-state authenticity. The proposed dimensions of awareness, expression and ownership will be explored in turn.

Awareness. Awareness involves the subjective sense of being conscious of one's present-state experiences, such as one's emotions, cognitions, attitudes and desires. It may be conceptually contrasted with a subjective sense of mindlessness, or confusion about what one is experiencing. Such breakdowns to awareness may reflect difficulties using relevant skills (e.g., recognising and labelling one's emotions) or motivational processes (e.g., avoiding or distorting unflattering or self-threatening information; Kernis & Goldman, 2005). A vast body of literature suggests that perfect awareness of present states is not possible, as many mental processes occur outside of awareness (i.e., non-consciously; Bargh, & Williams, 2006; Nisbett, & Wilson, 1977; Wilson, 2004; Wilson & Dunn, 2004), and are thus not possible to access or evaluate. The *subjective* sense of awareness, rather than its objective accuracy, is therefore key to these assessments.

Awareness features as a primary component in two predominate models which both theoretically align with a present-state authenticity conceptualisation. Kernis and Goldman (2006) situate *awareness* as the first aspect of their multicomponent conceptualisation, describing it as "awareness of, and trust in, one's motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant cognitions" (p. 347). It is also reflected in *unbiased processing,* which qualifies the nature of awareness, such that it is objective and non-distortive of one's experiences. Wood and colleagues (2008) propose a model based on person-centred theorising (Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Rogers, 1961, 1980), which also situates awareness as a primary component, although they operationalise this as *lack* of awareness in a state of *self-alienation*. In acknowledging that perfect awareness of inner states is not possible, self-alienation is proposed to occur to the extent that one senses discrepancy between one's actual physiological states, emotions, and schematic beliefs (termed the 'true self' within this theorising) and one's conscious awareness of these experiences. Such a discrepancy produces an inherently aversive sense of disconnect from oneself (i.e., self-alienation). These conceptualisations reflect a theoretical intuition that awareness is a necessary precondition for a present-state authenticity experience. That is, a sense of awareness of one's present-state experience seems required for one to represent this experience consistently and feel that it is one's own.

The empirical literature suggests that awareness and ownership may be entwined. In first making a conceptual link between authenticity and the I-self, Vess (2019) argues that the self-alienation subscale (Wood et al., 2008) may better reflect an impaired sense of ownership. In evidencing this, mind wandering (Vess et al., 2016; Vess et al., 2019) and some forms of daydreaming (Williams & Vess, 2016) have been found to be positively associated with self-alienation. Initially, these findings appear to suggest that disrupted awareness results in self-alienation as theorised, as mind-wandering and daydreaming may both represent examples of task-unrelated thought disrupting present-state attention.

However, intentional mind-wandering has been found to be negatively associated with self-alienation (Vess & Maffly-Kipp, 2022) suggesting that volition and connection to one's experience (i.e., ownership) play a key role. Similarly, whilst negatively valenced daydreaming and poor attentional control were associated with greater self-alienation, positive constructive daydreaming predicted lower feelings of self-alienation (Williams & Vess, 2016), further alluding to the importance of intentionality (as well as valence). These results suggest a dialectical relationship between awareness and ownership: when inattention is volitional, self-initiated and conducive to self-relevant goals, one is aware of their lack of awareness, one owns it, and self-alienation is reduced.

Awareness may further provide a link to a sense of ownership. Positive reciprocal associations have been found between mind-wandering and self-alienation across 24-hour periods (Vess et al., 2019, Study 2). That is, mind-wandering has been found to predict self-alienation, which in turn predicts subsequent mind-wandering. These findings suggest that when a sense of ownership is disrupted, awareness may be required to re-orient individuals to the present moment and restore a sense of ownership. Research into mindfulness (an active awareness and attentiveness to the present moment) further alludes to this potential link. Mindfulness was consistently found to be positively associated with a sense of autonomy and more autonomous functioning across multiple weeks in experience-sampling studies (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Awareness may therefore provide a necessary connection to a sense of ownership.

Awareness may also be an important precondition for authentic expression. Self-determination theory suggests that an open awareness may be important for permitting behavioural decisions that are consistent with one's own needs, values and interests (compared to decision making which is automatic or controlled); as such, awareness may relate to greater congruence with one's own self (Deci & Ryan, 1980). Suggesting evidence of this, mindfulness has been found to be positively associated with Kernis & Goldman's (2006) *behavior* (*r* = .40) and *relational orientation* (*r* = .28) subscales (Lakey et al., 2008). These subscales capture the extent to which one acts consistently with personal values, preferences and needs (as opposed to external influences and social consequences, whether positive or negative), and the extent to which one values and reflects an open and genuine self-presentational style in relationships, respectively. Subjective awareness may therefore support behavioural consistency. It is possible that at a state level, this relationship is cyclical, such that expressing one's thoughts may conversely lead to increased insight and clarity, improving one's awareness and subsequent ownership.

Expression. Expression involves the consistent outward representation of one's inner states thoughts, feelings, motives and desires, and may be considered as a behavioural output of awareness. Frameworks that align with present-state authenticity theorising emphasise the centrality of expressive consistency. Person-centred conceptualisations of authenticity (Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Rogers, 1961, 1980; Wood et al, 2008) highlight the role of expression as congruence between actual experience (that is, one's true physiological states, emotions and beliefs), conscious awareness of this experience, and its accurate expression. As previously noted, the final two components in Kernis and Goldman's (2006) multicomponent conceptualisation, *behaviour* (acting in self-determined ways, rather than based upon external motives) and *relational orientation* (representing oneself accurately and being genuine in interactions with others) emphasise the importance of expression of self. Further, building upon self-determination theory's proposition that autonomy is a key component of personal authenticity, Ryan and Ryan (2019) highlight the importance of 'genuineness', that in addition to feeling self-authored, authentic actions are those that convey one's actual experience, rather than a deception, distortion or pretence.

There is evidence to suggest that the suppression of states (suggesting incongruence between inner experiences and expressed behaviour) is negatively associated with subjective authenticity. Within samples of American undergraduates (Study 1), Chinese undergraduates (Study 2) and older adults (Study 3), English and John (2013) found that the suppression of emotions was associated with feelings of inauthenticity (measured with reverse-coded items capturing *"feeling like one's self with others"* and *"not feeling artificial"*). These findings have also been replicated in an experimental paradigm. Participants presented with a hypothetical scenario in which they were behaviourally consistent (that is, there was a "match" between the desire to commit a behaviour and actually doing so, compared to a "mismatch") rated the actions as more authentic than when they were behaviourally inconsistent (although this was also impacted by the valence the behaviour; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2016, Study 2). Further, in a sample of individuals with social anxiety disorder, those manipulated to engage in fewer self-concealment behaviours (e.g., avoiding expressing one's opinion) experienced greater increases in subjective authenticity, compared with a manipulation that did not affect these behaviours (and compared to baseline levels; Plasencia et al., 2016). Expressing one's true inner states may therefore increase feelings of authenticity, whereas the non-expression of inner states may be related to an inauthenticity experience.

Ownership. Ownership relates to the phenomenological sense that one is the originator of their experience, and that behaviour has been enacted with personal authorship and control. The contributions of self-determination theory to authenticity theorising specifically emphasise the importance of ownership, proposing that individuals are authentic when their behaviour is autonomously motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2004, 2006). Authentic actions are those that are experienced as self-authored, that is, "willingly enacted, owned, and self-endorsed" (Ryan & Ryan, 2019, p. 99), in addition to genuineness, as previously discussed. That is, behaviour is proposed to be experienced as authentic to the extent that it is volitionally and autonomously engaged (thus reflecting one's own current desires and motives), as contrasted with behaviours that are felt to be enforced or self-alien (i.e., heteronomous; Ryan & Deci, 2006). The term 'ownership' has been intentionally elected to also capture a cognitive element: the sense that one has authorship over their thoughts and feelings (as consistent with the I-self conceptualisation). Ownership thus captures the broad sense that one is the originator of one's experience, both cognitive and behavioural.

Additional evidence for the importance of ownership for present-state authenticity is suggested by associations between autonomy and authenticity. That is, when decisions and actions are felt to have arisen from one's own motives, evidence suggests that they are felt to be more authentic. In a workplace context, authenticity (measured using an adapted version of Wood et al.'s scale) was found to be positively associated with autonomous motivations, and negatively associated with controlled (externally regulated) motivations and amotivation (Van den Bosch & Taris, 2018). Some causality can also be inferred, as the satisfaction of autonomy needs (manipulated via writing tasks, e.g., recalling a time when participants had independently made an important decision) was found to increase feelings of state authenticity, compared to a control writing task (whereas satisfaction of competence and relatedness needs did not; Thomaes et al., 2017, Study 3). Further, those manipulated to have lower (vs. higher) belief in free will reported greater self-alienation, reduced self-knowledge and judged their behaviour to be less authentic in a decision-making task (Seto & Hicks, 2016). A diminished sense of free will implies external introjection (through a metaphorical other governing one's behaviour), thus undermining personal agency. The sense that the self is the agent for actions and decisions appears important for subjective authenticity.

Acceptance of others' influence may not necessarily be antithetical to authenticity. Accepting external influence may only undermine phenomenological ownership when it is experienced as incongruent with one’s own motives and desires. The self-concordance model (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998, 1999) proposes that accepting another’s influence at a given time does not reflect conformity if the parties share the same goal or if doing so assists in achieving a higher-order goal, and is thus still consistent with the phenomenological self’s values and interests. As previously noted, when Wood and colleagues’ (2008) trait model was considered at a state level, it was found that situational acceptance of external influence was associated with an increase, rather than decrease, in authentic living (acting in accordance with one’s values and beliefs) and was not related to self-alienation (Lenton et al., 2016). These findings are in opposition to the trait model’s proposition that acceptance of external influence indicates inauthenticity. At a momentary level, the impact of social influence appears to be contingent on whether it is inconsistent with one’s own conscious states (i.e., awareness) and undermines ownership. If situationally accepted external influence is in accordance with one’s present motives and desires, one may continue to experience the self as the active agent or originator of that experience, thereby not undermining authenticity.

Summary. Elucidated by the I-self, the present-state authenticity conceptualisation concerns being true to one’s present-moment experiences. Present-state authenticity is proposed to consist of three interrelated processes, (1) subjective awareness, or consciousness of one’s present states and inner experiences, (2) congruent expressive representation of these inner states, and (3) a phenomenological sense of ownership, in that one has been true to one’s own present-state self-experience. As informed by the ‘I self’, the present-state authenticity framework synthesises authenticity conceptualisations that have involved one’s present-state experiences or a phenomenological sense of self. It therefore integrates the contributions of person-centred theorising (Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Rogers, 1961, 1980; Wood et al., 2008), self-determination theory (e.g., Ryan & Ryan, 2019) and conceptualisations informed by these perspectives (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; see also Harter, 2002; Hopwood et al., 2021; Vess, 2019). Through consideration of the I-self as a foundation for conceptualising present-state authenticity, these seemingly disparate conceptualisations may be meaningfully synthesised for a more integrated body of knowledge.

Whilst future research is required to substantiate the relationships between these factors, theoretical explanations have been offered. Conceptually, awareness may be a precondition for ownership and expression, in that it is the means through which one's inner experiences are accessed. It may be argued that one must have a subjective sense that they know their thoughts and feelings to be able to feel connected to these experiences (ownership) and express these congruently (expression). However, these relationships are likely cyclical, as expression may feed back and enhance awareness and ownership (see Tice, 1992). Future research should seek to validate these dimensions and consider their relationships with one another.

Self-Concept Authenticity (Informed by the Me-Self)

The me-self provides a device for capturing theorising on authenticity that implicates a self-concept. As previously discussed, the self-concept involves a mental representation of who we know ourselves to be, and is comprised of all of the things we know about ourselves (the 'contents' of the self; Prebble et al., 2013). The subjective perception of possessing self-knowledge is central to these judgements, with the metacognitive feeling of knowing oneself being more impactful than objective markers (such as the amount of information generated about the self; Schlegel et al., 2011; Schlegel & Hicks, 2011). Within the self-concept authenticity framework, experiences that are consistent with or validate (versus invalidate) important aspects of one's salient self-concept (or true-self concept) are likely to be experienced as authentic. As will be explored further, different aspects of the self-concept may be implicated, including contextually-dependent and valued aspects of one's unique self-concept, and more essentialist qualities of the 'true self' concept generally.

The Importance of Treating the True Self as a Concept. The true self has not always been expressly treated as a concept. Following the contributions of humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1961), some theorising has considered the true self as a discoverable aspect of self that individuals should strive to uncover and accept. This notion of a discoverable true self has presented a problem due to its implicit assumption that the self is concrete and knowable. Considerable evidence suggests that we cannot obtain complete and accurate self-knowledge (Bargh, & Williams, 2006; Nisbett, & Wilson, 1977; Wilson, 2004; Wilson & Dunn, 2004) and that people's intentions are often, if not always, influenced by processes of which they are unaware (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000). Notions of an unchanging true self also conflict with research that suggests that identity is constituted of a collection of possible selves that reflect (in part) the social and relational context that one is in (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Chen et al., 2006). For example, one may be a genuine version of one's self as both a nurturing friend and an uncompromising boss. The empirical literature therefore does not support the notion of a discoverable, true self.

The literature however suggests that a true self does not need to exist to be meaningful. A subjective sense of knowing one's true self is meaningful and consequential (Gan et al., 2018; Rivera et al., 2019; Schlegel et al., 2013; Schlegel, & Hicks, 2011; Sheldon et al., 1997; Wood et al., 2008) and may play a role in healthy psychological functioning irrespective of whether that subjective self-knowledge is accurate (Schlegel & Hicks, 2011; Sheldon et al, 1997; Rivera et al., 2019). By extension, perceptions of proximity to one's true self remain psychologically meaningful without true selves needing to exist. Echoing other authors (e.g., Baumeister, 2019; Strohminger et al., 2017), the current theorising therefore explicitly positions the true self as a subjective construct rather than a discoverable aspect of self.

Valued, Contextually-Dependent Self-Concept Features. Self-concept authenticity may be experienced when the environment validates valued aspects of one's self-concept. The State Authenticity as Fit to Environment (SAFE) model (Schmader & Sedikides, 2018) presents a conceptual account of how authenticity may be experienced on the basis of person-environment "fit" and accompanying feelings of perceptual fluency. Fit is defined as a match between valued aspects of one's identity and aspects of the environment. To the extent that the social or environmental context provides cues that affirms important aspects of one's identity, one will experience a sense of authenticity. Conversely, conflict or mismatch (i.e., a lack of fluency) between one's identity and social or environmental cues may elicit inauthenticity. For example, someone who holds a valued identity as a musician may feel authentic when that identity is affirmed, such as when attending a gig, writing songs, or discussing music with others. The central premise of the SAFE model provides a good foundation for self-concept authenticity as experienced on the basis of validation of aspects of identity.

Whilst the central tenants of the SAFE model align with a self-concept authenticity conceptualisation (insofar as it implicates identity and a self-concept) it should be briefly noted that it does not neatly fit within this conceptualisation. The model proposes three dimensions of fit: self-concept fit, goal fit, and interpersonal fit. Conceptually, goal fit and interpersonal fit may afford either self-concept authenticity or present-state authenticity. Goal fit is proposed to occur when institutional structures and norms allow unimpeded pursuit of internalised goals, which has the effect of making one's actions feel self-determined. Environments that support goal pursuit and autonomy may therefore be associated with present-state authenticity experiences (i.e., feeling connected to and freely expressing one's present-state experience). However, as noted by the authors, this may also have implications for self-concept fit if a valued identity is simultaneously affirmed. For example, for a person who has a valued identity as a researcher, job roles that support one’s pursuit of research interests may afford present-state authenticity (i.e., self-determined action) and affirm self-concept authenticity (i.e., I am an academic). Social fit is associated with being in social environments that feel free of the constraints of social expectations and pressures. Similarly, socially validating environments may provide conditions that enable present-state authenticity, but may also affirm self-concept authenticity, as social cues may validate or devalue one’s social identity. Conceptually, only self-concept fit uniquely supports self-concept authenticity.

Given that self-concepts are strongly influenced by the salient social context, self-concept authenticity may require consideration on a contextual level (Chen, 2019). Identity is largely derived from group membership, and the social groups and categories people share with others (Brewer, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Relationships with significant others (with whom one has been emotionally invested or who have had deep influence) may also invoke a relational self; a version of self defined through the relationship (for review, see Andersen & Chen, 2002). Different versions of self may therefore be activated in different contexts, inducing corresponding aspects of self that vary as a function of group memberships and relationships. Given that individuals genuinely behave differently across relational contexts and in different roles, cross-role or cross-situational consistency is not a valid indicator of authenticity (Chen, 2019). Self-concept authenticity may therefore depend on the social context one is in, and the important self-concept features it activates.

As Schmader and Sedikides (2018) note, feelings of fluency may account for perceptions of true-self consistency when valued self-concept features are validated. Cognitive processes (including thought generation, information processing and retrieval) are experienced on a continuum from easy to difficult. Feelings of metacognitive ease arise when stimuli can be processed easily (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). Familiar information is more easily processed than novel information, and the resulting cognitive fluency may produce the sense that familiar content is true (the illusory truth effect; Begg et al., 1992). It has also been well established that familiarity and processing fluency are associated with greater positive affect regarding a stimulus (Bornstein, 1989; Reber et al., 2004). That is, we are inclined to like stimuli or experiences associated with fluent, easy processing, and dislike difficult, disfluent processing. A sense of fluency produced when the environment validates contextually dependent self-concept features may account for one manner in which self-concept authenticity is experienced.

Desired Self-Concept Features. Rather than exclusively involving actual self-concept features, self-concept authenticity may also implicate the validation of desired qualities, attributes, or identities. Lenton, Bruder, et al. (2013) found that participant narratives depicting a time when feeling most (vs. least) "like [their] true or real self" was associated with greater ideal-self overlap, as rated by independent assessors (Study 2) and self-ratings (Study 3). Whilst the prevailing lay belief was that feelings of authenticity in romantic relationships are associated with being one's actual self (70% respondents), Gan and Chen (2017) found that overlap between relational and *ideal* self-concepts, rather than relational and *actual* self-concepts, uniquely predicted feelings of authenticity in the relationship (i.e., relational authenticity). Such a possibility may account for why people have been found to feel more authentic when displaying socially valued personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and intelligence) than when acting in ways that better reflected their own trait profiles (Fleeson & Wilt, 2010). Self-concept authenticity may therefore also implicate the validation of features or identities that one wishes to attain.

Activation of Moral and Good True Self Features. Qualities of goodness and morality have been found to be characteristic of true-self concepts broadly, and may therefore be relevant for the experience of self-concept authenticity. A growing body of evidence suggests that there is a robust tendency to believe that the 'true self' at the core of individuals is fundamentally morally good (Christy et al., 2016, 2017; De Freitas et al., 2017, 2018; Gino et al., 2015; Newman et al., 2014, 2015; Strohminger et al., 2017). Although cross-cultural differences in self-conceptions have been demonstrated across a large body of work (e.g., Kim et al., 1994), a belief in morally good true selves has been found across samples from the USA, Russia, Singapore and Colombia, suggesting cross-cultural stability in this belief (De Freitas et al., 2018, Study 2)[1]. It has also been found to hold equally for judgements of in- and out-group members. De Freitas and Cikara (2018) found that white American participants perceived stereotypically threatening out-group members (Arab citizens and immigrants) to have a morally good true self, no different from in-group members, despite showing biases in attitudes and threat perception, and identifying with these groups less. It is further suggested that optimism does not explain this bias as individual differences in misanthropy were found to have no effect on a belief in morally good true selves, suggesting stability even amongst those with an explicitly pessimistic regard for others (De Freitas et al., 2018, Study 1). Although we may be willing to conceive of people as bad, there appears to be a consistent belief that their true selves are good.

Self-concept authenticity may be elicited through morally good acts and undermined by threats to one's moral image. True-self concepts appear to show the greatest disruption when moral characteristics are altered or removed, suggesting the centrality of moral goodness as a defining feature. Across five studies, Strohminger and Nichols (2014) found consistent support that moral traits were more constitutive of identity judgements than any other mental faculty, including personality, memory, and desires. Converging evidence also suggests the valence of moral change is important in making determinations of true self. Moral deterioration has been found to lead to greater perceived identity disruption than moral improvement for judgements of personal self (Molouki & Bartels, 2017) and others' self (Heiphetz et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2014); this is an intuition shared by children, adolescents and adults (Lefebvre & Krettenauer, 2020). Being reminded of past immoral actions leads to feelings of knowing oneself less (Christy et al., 2016). Even when participants were instructed to imagine an individual who is "different from you in almost every way", Newman et al. (2014, Study 1) found that the true self (vs. "surface self") was thought to be significantly more likely to be responsible for morally good changes than morally bad changes, and morally good changes were reflective of the true self. Thus, it seems when people act in morally positive ways, they perceive themselves to be more like their true selves and may experience greater subjective authenticity; when people behave in morally reprehensible ways, they perceive themselves to be less like their true selves.

---

[1] As Strohminger and colleagues (2017) acknowledge, different cultures are likely to have different views on what constitutes morally goodness, therefore the commonality of this view is likely to be at an abstract level. That is, whilst the relevant moral/social groups may define what constitutes morally good acts, there appears to be consistency in the belief that a true self is at the core of these actions.

Summary. Self-concept authenticity, as informed by the me-self, provides a device for capturing perspectives on personal authenticity that implicate a self-concept. A review of the literature reveals that self-concept authenticity is intimately tied to the concept of a true self, and that there are specific features of the true-self concept that may be particularly relevant for self-concept authenticity. Specifically, these features include morality and positive valence, which suggests a strong positivity bias. Subjective self-concept authenticity may also implicate the recognition and validation of valued self-concept features. Feelings of metacognitive ease may further account for subjective self-concept authenticity feelings, whereby the recognition of valued aspects of one's identity, made salient and reinforced by the environment, may produce a sense of processing fluency and a self-recognition appraisal akin to “that’s me”. Cognitive fluency versus disruption regarding the processing of self-relevant information may therefore be central to self-concept authenticity.

Perceptions of Others’ Authenticity

Although not a focus of the present paper, the two dimensions of authenticity may also be relevant for perceptions of the authenticity of others. Through the lens of present-state authenticity, others may be perceived to be authentic when the following conditions are met: (1) they appear to be aware of their experiences, (2) their behaviour seems to reflect how they actually think and feel, rather than being distorted or misrepresented, (3) their expressions appear self-authored and autonomous (irrespective of whether this is objectively the case). Perceptions of expressing one’s self without filtering, self-monitoring or with regard to social inhibitions may therefore be relevant for present-state authenticity attributions. Through the lens of self-concept authenticity, others may be perceived to be authentic to the extent that their actions align with the important aspects of the perceiver’s concept of who that person is. In this respect, although cross-situational behavioural consistency does not relate to subjective authenticity experiences, it may weigh on perceptions of the authenticity of others. As has been previously found (Newman et al., 2014), there is also likely to be a bias towards seeing others as more self-concept authentic and like their ‘true selves’ when acting in morally good, as opposed to morally bad, ways.

These two possibilities for perceptions of others’ authenticity are evident in the context of the US Presidential election of 2016. The public perception that Donald Trump was more authentic than Hilary Clinton became a factor in voter preferences (Pillow et al., 2017; Theye & Melling, 2018). Trump’s authenticity was associated with perceptions that he expressed himself genuinely, free of external influence, as signalled by his subversion of political norms, political incorrectness, and unfiltered speech (Pillow et al., 2017). In contrast, Hilary Clinton’s campaign was viewed as highly curated and controlled, which was seen to undermine her authenticity. These assessments may be seen as reflective of present-state authenticity judgements. A second contributor to perceptions of Trump's authenticity was noted to be his consistent presentation across media and public forums, which reflected a familiar public persona from tabloids and reality television (Theye & Melling, 2018). Perceived consistency with the public's concept of Trump may therefore have resulted in self-concept authenticity appraisals. The two dimensions of personal authenticity are therefore visible within this context, with authenticity perceptions seemingly arising from consistency with the perceiver's concept of the target person (self-concept authenticity), as well as the rejection of norms and external influence and genuine expression (present-state authenticity).

Implications for the Research Field

The proposed framework provides a tool for unifying broad theoretical perspectives and distinguishing between works that implicate the present-state self and those that implicate a self-concept. As previously noted, unclear signposting of which aspect of authenticity is implicated has been a challenge in the literature, which may have been compounded by measurement that confounds the two authenticity dimensions. A differentiated approach allows for a more nuanced exploration of authenticity which may assist in disentangling effects within the literature. A differentiated measure will be needed. In making clear the distinction between two facets of self that underpin two forms of authenticity, the current conceptualisation provides the theoretical template for it.

The conceptual distinction may serve to navigate criticisms regarding authenticity being viewed as virtuous and of "inevitable authenticity" (Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019). Returning to the earlier example, a disingenuous expression of warmth to a disliked relative may represent a self-concept authentic act as it validates valued self-concept features (e.g., being a kind and mature person) and reflects the positivity bias. However, in misrepresenting one's experiences, one is present-state *in*authentic in this respect, which satisfies our intuition that such an action cannot be wholly authentic. Interesting questions then arise about how such a conflict may be experienced or perceived by others, pointing to avenues for future investigation. Distinguishing between present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity thus provides room for individuals to "authentically" act in ways which are not necessarily good or virtuous (or are even outright hurtful), and yet represent a genuine and autonomous expression of present-moment experience. The distinction thus permits a move away from the unrealistically optimistic framing that has attracted criticism.

A differentiated conceptualisation offers a response to conceptual problems relating to authenticity's associations with positively valenced emotions and socially desirable behaviours. Through the lens of self-concept authenticity, which is content-specific (insofar as a true-self concept is implicated), these associations are interpretable. Positively valenced experiences are more likely to affirm a positively biased true-self concept; and as social groups construct what is socially desirable and contextually moral (Aquino & Reed, 2002), socially desirable behaviours would similarly affirm a true-self concept biased to be seen as good and moral. If feelings of metacognitive ease were found to be associated with self-concept authenticity, this may offer an additional explanation, as fluent experiences are liked (Bornstein, 1989; Reber et al., 2004). These relationships may be reciprocal: if experiences that affirm one's true-self concept are positive and fluent, then positive and fluent experiences may be interpreted as reflecting one's true self (which may provide an account for why people feel more authentic after positive mood inductions, e.g., Lenton, Slabu et al., 2013). Conversely, present-state authenticity is likely to be content-independent. To the extent that one feels aware of and connected to their experience, and represents it accurately, this may be experienced as present-state authentic regardless of its content or valence. The conundrum therefore only presents when present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity are conflated; once they are distinguished, these associations may no longer be theoretically inconsistent.

Future Directions

The dual model of present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity provides theoretical links between existing research and opens new research directions in applied areas, such as for psychological wellbeing, marketing, organisational psychology, educational psychology, clinical psychology, and social psychology. Avenues for future research are offered below.

Investigating the Relationships between the two Authenticity Dimensions

The greatest contribution of this model is that it provides a theoretically grounded account for two forms of personal authenticity, which implies questions about their respective relationships. It is likely that the two aspects of authenticity share functional relationships. For example, situations that affirm valued aspects of one's self-concept (and produce a sense of fluency and ease) may allow present-state authenticity to be more easily experienced. Metacognitive ease has been found to promote greater self-disclosure in lab-controlled studies, and in a more ecologically valid online paradigm (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). Conversely, perceptual disfluency was found to prime thoughts and feelings associated with risk. Situations in which one's self-concept is validated may therefore enable people to also feel more present-state authentic.

Questions also arise regarding the relative importance of each dimension and how they may interact, particularly when they may be in conflict. For example, what happens when present-state experiences are acknowledged, expressed, and felt to be self-determined (i.e., present-state authentic), but conflict with valued aspects of one's self-concept? Alternatively, what is experienced when one is inauthentic to one's present-state experiences in order to affirm a valued self-concept feature? Factors that are likely to be relevant to these considerations are the moral valence of the behaviour, its centrality of the experience to one's self-concept, and the degree of affective discomfort experienced on the basis of self-incongruence given authenticity's associations with emotional states (Cooper et al., 2018; Lenton, Bruder, et al., 2013; Lenton, Slabu et al., 2013).

Psychological wellbeing

Authenticity has been found to be substantively associated with wellbeing. In a meta-analysis of 51 papers with 75 independent samples, Sutton (2020) found a medium-to-large positive relationship between authenticity and wellbeing (a composite satisfaction in life measure; $r = .40$). Understanding this relationship is however still in progress. Acknowledging that the self is at the core of personal authenticity provides an initial insight into this relationship: it is psychologically meaningful to have a sense of connection to one's self, and psychologically damaging to feel self-alienated. The differentiated conceptualisation offers two avenues for exploring this relationship: is wellbeing fostered by validation (versus invalidation) of valued aspects of one's identity (self-concept authenticity), or through feeling connected to and able to express one's present-state experience, and feeling self-determined (present-state authenticity)? Both are likely, and the dual conceptualisation provides theoretical links between literature that already speaks to these ideas. For example, those who feel their true self is highly accessible report greater meaning in their lives (Schlegel et al., 2009, 2011; see also, Rivera et al., 2019), and autonomy-supportive environments may enable people to feel autonomous and express themselves genuinely (Ryan & Ryan, 2019). Establishing the respective roles of present-state and self-concept authenticity for wellbeing may assist a deeper understanding and the development of interventions.

Clinical Psychology

Models of Disorders and their Treatment. Identity and the self are beginning to be explored as factors that have a role in mental health disorders and their treatment (e.g., Kyrios et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021). Exploring the dual authenticity conceptualisation in this context may offer new insights. Future research may seek to answer how the two aspects of authenticity affect or are affected by mental illness broadly, or within the context of specific disorders (as in Asher & Aderka, 2021; Plasencia et al., 2016). For example, experiencing a mental health disorder may conflict with important aspects of one's self-concept (e.g., viewing oneself as "self-reliant" and "strong"), therefore increasing the experience of self-concept inauthenticity, and may also alter one's ability to access, understand and express present-state experiences, therefore increasing the experience of present-state inauthenticity. Future research may therefore seek to consider each aspect of authenticity in regard to models of disorders, symptomology, and whether these may be targeted in interventions.

Client Engagement. Therapeutic outcomes depend upon the client's willingness to self-disclose, share openly, and build a strong therapeutic alliance (Farber, 2003; Flückiger et al., 2018). Authenticity may have implications for the therapeutic alliance, engagement and drop-out. How does being a client threaten self-concept authenticity, and what impacts does this have on the client's willingness to be present-state authentic (i.e., openness, willingness to disclose, ability to access feelings)? How might the environment be modified to support self-concept authenticity and present-state authenticity?

Authenticity as a Protective Factor. Finally, future research may seek to consider how each aspect of authenticity may be harnessed as a resilience factor. Authenticity has been found to be a protective factor in motherhood (Luthar & Ciciolla, 2015), for those in the lesbian, gay and bisexual community (LGB; Riggle et al., 2017) and for those who hold an immigrant identity, so it may also be most meaningful for those who may be the most marginalised. Future research may seek to consider how each aspect of authenticity may be harnessed and supported.

Marketing

Authenticity appraisals have been found to be significant to consumer perceptions of products, contributing to perceptions of value (Beverland, 2005; Kovács et al. 2014). Influencer marketing has been a growing means of promoting products (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Future research may seek to consider whether perceptions of self-concept and present-state authenticity are implicated in the effectiveness of influencer marketing. How might consumer perceptions of self-concept authenticity (e.g., perceptions of 'fit' between the message or product and the influencer's personal brand) and present-state authenticity (e.g., the perceived self-authorship of the message) affect consumers' engagement, brand trust, and purchasing behaviours?

Organisational Psychology

Authenticity has been found to be associated with important organisational outcomes, including improved employee wellbeing, performance and productivity, job satisfaction, and reduced employee turnover (Cable et al., 2013; Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014). The differentiated conceptualisation may support investigations into whether interventions that support (or do not undermine) autonomy and open expression (present-state authenticity) or that support individual identities (as opposed to driving enculturation into an organisational identity; e.g., Cable et al, 2013) facilitate authenticity in a workplace context. These considerations may have particular importance for those who may experience marginalisation within a workplace environment (e.g., women and ethnic minorities).

Educational Psychology

Considerations of authenticity in an educational context may seek to answer questions relating to how the differentiated conceptualisation may relate to student identities, affect behaviour in the classroom, and relate to learning and engagement. Does supporting either aspect of authenticity facilitate the other? How might each aspect of authenticity relate to the experience of imposter syndrome? How could either aspect of authenticity be harnessed as a resilience factor?

Lifespan and Transitions

Authenticity may support wellbeing at transition times in life. Authenticity has been found to be associated with wellbeing in an adolescent sample (Thomaes et al., 2017). Authenticity has also been found to attenuate the relationship between limited time perspective and hope (Davis & Hicks, 2013); authentic individuals may be more likely to pursue goals regardless of the time left to achieve them, and this may have implications for older adults. Future research may therefore seek to consider how either both aspects of authenticity may support or be impacted by ageing and transition. How is self-concept authenticity impacted as people move into new roles and times in life when important identities may change or be lost? How might self-concept authenticity be preserved? In turn, how do these changes impact present-state authenticity? Could present-state authenticity be harnessed to compensate for such loss?

Social Psychology

Social psychology may consider how the presence of others impacts authenticity. How might authenticity be dyadic? How might partners facilitate or "shape" each other's authenticity (e.g., supporting autonomy, or validating self-concepts)? How does feeling self-concept (in)authentic in a relationship affect present-state (in)authenticity, and vice versa? How do these experiences affect relationship satisfaction?

Finally, as relevant to the subsequent research that follows within this thesis, how does the differentiated conceptualisation play out in a transgression context? On the one hand, present-state authenticity may be a process through which offenders confront their wrongdoings openly and engage in effective repair (e.g., Brunell et al., 2010; Neff & Harter, 2002; Tou et al., 2015; Wickham, 2013). However, transgressors may claim *"I was not my* *true self"* following wrongdoing, which may reflect a strategy of psychological disengagement and distancing from the offence. So, on the other hand, self-concept authenticity may a vehicle for ego-defensive responding.

Concluding Remarks

Although there is little dispute about authenticity's value, the controversy surrounding its conceptualisation has been widely acknowledged. The current work has sought to understand these challenges in proposing a model for personal authenticity that synthesises the literature. Defining authenticity depends upon clarifying the relevant entity (or referent, Dutton, 2003) in question (i.e., an authentic what?), as well as which dimension of that entity is being assessed (i.e., authentic in what way?). There may therefore be many valid ways of assessing authenticity across the diverse contexts in which it is studied. That is to say, there may be many "kinds of authenticity" (Newman, 2019; see also, Dammann et al., 2021; Newman & Smith, 2016; Lehman et al., 2019) given that many different things may be authentic in many different ways. The controversy that has surrounded authenticity's conceptualisation may therefore seem inevitable.

For personal authenticity, which refers to the self, two different facets of the self can be considered; "I" and "me". This distinction leads to a dual conceptualisation of personal authenticity. Present-state authenticity involves awareness, ownership, and consistent expression of the present moment self (one's feelings, thoughts, desires, and other self-relevant cognitions), and self-concept authenticity implicates perceived validation of our conceptual notions of who we are, and in particular, who we are at our core. It is hoped that the conceptual distinction within this framework provides researchers with tools to facilitate communication, and structure a clearer way forward through the reduction of complexity, improved understanding of existing findings, and the potential for generating new research directions.

CHAPTER 2

Offenders' Need for Present-State Authenticity as an Antidote to Defensiveness

Accepting responsibility for wrongdoing is hard. Violating standards of acceptable behaviour (such as committing an interpersonal transgression) psychologically threatens offenders' moral integrity and acceptance from others (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014), and so offenders may be motivated to self-protect via engaging in defensiveness. In the context of transgressions, psychological defensiveness represents motivated strategies offenders use to downplay their responsibility and lessen the moral/social self-threats associated with their actions (Wenzel et al., 2020). Defensiveness may therefore be adaptive in protecting, at times non-consciously, individuals' sense of self (DeWall et al., 2011); however, following transgressions, it may be at a cost. Responsibility acceptance is widely regarded as key to offenders' moral repair and the restoration of the relationship (Fisher & Exline, 2006; Hall, & Fincham, 2005; Hosser et al., 2008; Wenzel et al., 2012; Woodyatt, & Wenzel, 2013a). In impeding the offence from being worked through and resolved, defensiveness may escalate the conflict, create barriers to reconciliation, and cause further psychological harm to all parties involved. Supporting offenders to curtail defensiveness is therefore in the interest of both individual and interpersonal outcomes.

One factor that may be implicated in offender defensiveness is their feelings of, or motive for, authenticity. However, the issue of defining and conceptualising authenticity has been contentious, and the relationship may be complex. On the one hand, where authenticity has been conceptualised to involve unbiased awareness of one's present-state experiences and open communication with others (e.g. Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008), as well as owning one's thoughts and actions (e.g., Harter, 2002; Vess, 2019), it may represent an independent process that opposes defensiveness. On the other hand, authenticity conceptualisations that invoke a notion of a true-self concept (i.e., the mental representation of one's true or core identity; e.g., Schlegel et al., 2009; Strohminger et al., 2017) may function differently. It is not uncommon to hear offenders, particularly in the public eye, claim "*I was not my true self*" as an apparent self-excusing strategy following a transgression. Through these claims, offenders seemingly symbolically distance themselves from their actions and the version of self these actions imply (Baumeister, 2019). In this sense, the denial of authenticity is also seemingly implicated in a defensive response. In exploring authenticity as a factor that may affect offender defensiveness, it is therefore important to also address this nuance.

Chapter 1 aimed to provide a framework for personal authenticity that synthesises the literature, and two types of personal authenticity were identified that reflect two dimensions of a sense of self. Present-state authenticity regards one's present-state self, and incorporates processes of awareness, consistent expression, and a phenomenological sense of ownership over present-state experience. Self-concept authenticity regards one's self-concept (and often, specifically a 'true self' concept), and involves the perception that one's experience is consistent (versus inconsistent) with valued, contextually-dependent self-concept features. Following committing a transgression, present-state authenticity motivations may imply a process of genuine engagement with one's wrongdoing that opposes defensiveness. The present study therefore aims to manipulate a present-state authenticity motive following a recent wrongdoing to consider the effect on defensiveness, compared with other forms of non-defensive responding. While the experimental focus of the study is on present-state authenticity, additional correlational analyses will also consider self-concept authenticity effects. The current research therefore aims to present the first exploration of a dual conceptualisation of authenticity and its potentially nuanced relationship with offender defensiveness following an interpersonal transgression.

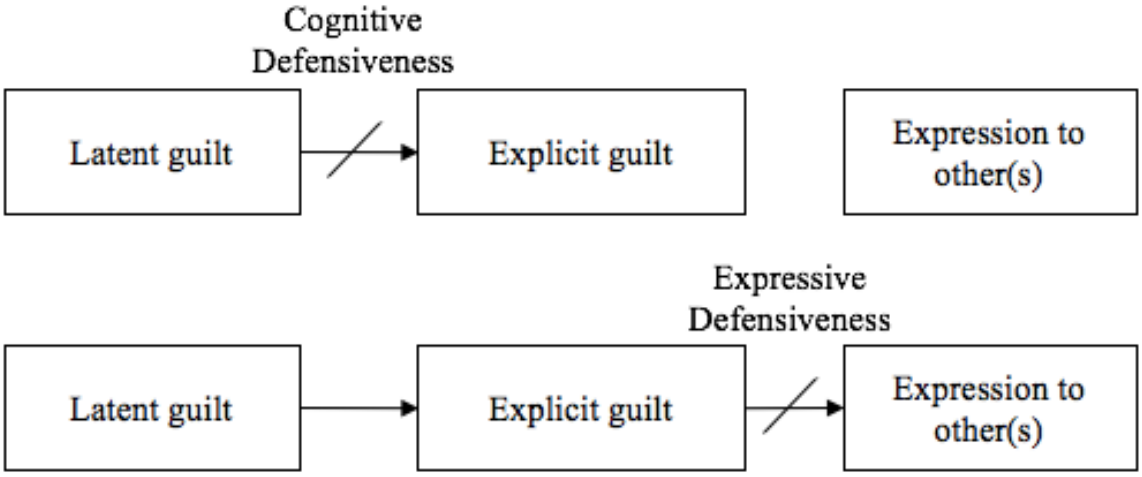
Understanding Offender Defensiveness: The Threat of Responsibility

Offenders may use a multitude of defensive strategies to protect against the consequences of their behaviour. They may morally disengage from their actions by downplaying the severity of the wrongdoing, deflecting their culpability, and derogating or dehumanising the victim (Bandura, 1999). They may attribute blame to the victim for their negative emotional experience rather than confronting their own responsibility ("victim blaming", Lerner, 1980), or may claim victim status themselves ("competitive victimhood", Noor et al., 2012). Although these strategies are diverse, at their heart is the deflection, downplaying or denial of responsibility for wrongdoing which would threaten offenders' moral and social image; related threats insofar as moral values are shared amongst the social groups to which individuals belong (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Moral values provide a code of appropriate social behaviour which individuals adhere to with the expectation that others will do the same (Aquino & Reed, 2002), and given that violating a moral value challenges a social consensus (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008), offenders risk social rejection. Defensiveness thus functions as a psychological security system (Hart, 2014), operating to decrease awareness (both own and others') of self-threatening information, and reduce vulnerability to uncomfortable or distressing emotions, deleterious impacts on self-image, and social rejection.

Conceptually, defensiveness may be conceived of as functioning on two levels to serve personal and social remedial functions, as illustrated in Figure 2.1. When an offender intuits that they have committed a wrongdoing, defensiveness can occur at a cognitive and/or expressive level to serve self-protection needs. At a cognitive level, defensive strategies are employed to limit personal awareness of threatening cognitions and uncomfortable or distressing emotions, such as guilt and shame. Through cognitive defensiveness, an offender may avoid thoughts or distort their content to alleviate personal distress and protect a positive self-image. At an expressive level, an offender is actively cognisant of their responsibility but does not endorse this to others. At this level, defensiveness functions in explicit service of impression management and the protection of a positive social image. It should be noted that whilst defensiveness may also occur when an individual is falsely accused and is responding to this threat, the current research focuses solely on incidents where the individual is responsible for harm.

Figure 2.1

A Conceptual Illustration of the Functions of Offender Defensiveness


Cognitive Defensiveness
Latent guilt
Explicit guilt
Expression to other(s)
Expressive Defensiveness
Latent guilt
Explicit guilt
Expression to other(s)

Note. The figure depicts that cognitive defensiveness functions to reduce explicit acknowledgement of transgression-related cognitions and emotions (such as guilt) to alleviate personal distress and protect a positive self-image, and expressive defensiveness functions to reduce others' awareness of offenders' responsibility to protect a positive social image**.**

Offenders may process their responsibility for wrongdoing in three ways. The defensive process that allows offenders to protect positive self-regard in the context of transgressions (via many of the aforementioned strategies) has been termed pseudo self-forgiveness (so named as true forgiveness does not involve the negation or minimisation of responsibility; Fisher & Exline, 2006; Hall & Fincham, 2005; Wenzel et al., 2012; Woodyatt

& Wenzel, 2013a). Pseudo self-forgiveness presents in contrast to genuine self-forgiveness. Through genuine self-forgiveness, offenders accept an appropriate level of responsibility and constructively work through their wrongdoing to arrive at a renewed state of positive self-regard. These processes may also be distinguished from self-punitiveness, involving self-condemnation, an internalisation of blame and a potentially excessive, albeit cursory acceptance of responsibility (Cornish et al., 2018; de Vel-Palumbo et al., 2018). Genuine self-forgiveness is the only process associated with both individual (e.g., self-trust, self-esteem) and interpersonal (e.g., victim empathy, desire to reconcile) restorative outcomes following wrongdoing (Wenzel et al., 2012; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b; Woodyatt, Wenzel & Ferber, 2017). It is therefore important that offenders not only reduce defensiveness but also engage in genuine moral repair. The current study therefore investigates the relationship between authenticity, pseudo self-forgiveness and genuine self-forgiveness as central processes, but includes self-punitiveness as an adjunct exploratory consideration.

Present-State Authenticity as Antithetical to Defensiveness

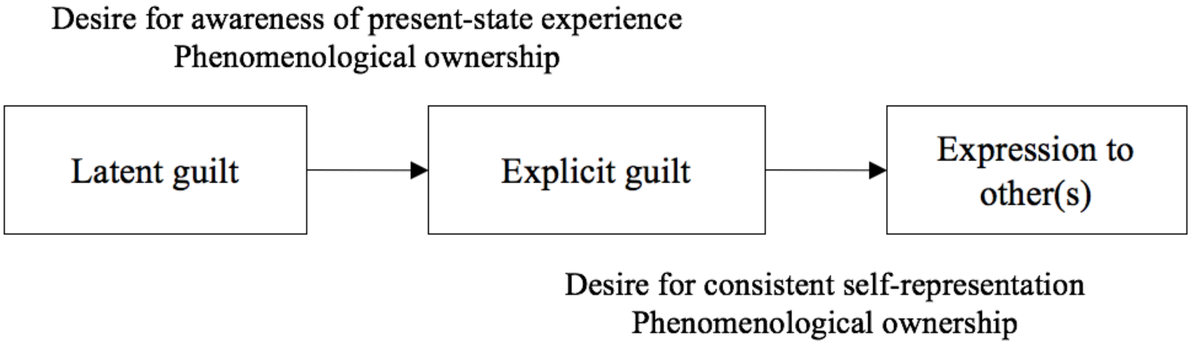
Research that invokes a present-state authenticity conceptualisation finds that it may be a counter process to defensiveness. The AI-3 (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) is a measure of trait authenticity that emphasises an orientation towards unbiased awareness of one's experiences and the open communication of these experiences to others. Using the AI-3, authenticity was found to be associated with fewer indicators of verbal defensiveness (e.g., self-distancing, distortion) when participants were prompted with questions designed to elicit self-image threat (e.g., "tell me about a time when you've done something unethical on an assignment"; Lakey et al., 2008). In interpersonal contexts, authenticity (as measured with the AI-3) was found to be associated with an orientation to conflict resolution strategies that emphasise concern for both parties (Tou et al., 2015) and may attenuate the negative effects of conflict on wellbeing (Wickham et al., 2016) to reduce defence motivations. As defensiveness is characterised by the denial, concealment and distortion of self-threatening information, present-state authenticity may represent a process of open and unbiased engagement that is antithetical to this response.

Conceptually, a present-state authenticity motive may disrupt defensiveness at both a cognitive and expressive level, as illustrated in Figure 2.2. Where an offender intuits a sense of guilt and responsibility following wrongdoing, a salient motive for present-state authenticity may promote greater engagement with these feelings via a desire for awareness, which reduces cognitive defensiveness. The motive may also engage a value for consistent self-representation, to promote the expression of these feelings to the affected other(s), which reduces expressive defensiveness. At both stages, an increased sense of phenomenological ownership over one's experiences, relating to the desire for awareness and expressive consistency, may represent a process of responsibility engagement. In this way, when a motive for present-state authenticity (comprised of a desire for awareness and expressive consistency, and the resulting sense of ownership) is activated, it may comprehensively inhibit defensiveness.

When a present-state authenticity motive is activated, it should also relate to increased genuine self-forgiveness given the implied engagement with one's transgression-related experiences. As previously described, the restorative process of genuine self-forgiveness is characterised by an appropriate acknowledgement of guilt and responsibility when working through one's offence. In a study of implicit guilt, Wenzel et al. (2020) found that to the extent that self-threat was made salient, those who indicated guilt implicitly were more likely to explicitly deny guilt. These individuals were thus less likely to engage in genuine self-forgiveness. If offenders were more attuned to their latent feelings of guilt and more willing to express these via a present-state authenticity motive, they should also engage in greater genuine self-forgiveness.

Figure 2.2

A Conceptual Diagram of how Present-State Authenticity may Interfere with Defensiveness at Both a Cognitive and Expressive Level


Desire for awareness of present-state experience
Phenomenological ownership
Latent guilt
Explicit guilt
Expression to other(s)
Desire for consistent self-representation
Phenomenological ownership

Note. The figure depicts how a desire for present-state awareness facilitates engagement with transgression-related information (such as latent feelings of guilt) to disrupt defensiveness at a cognitive level, and the desire for consistent self-representation facilitates the expression of this information to others to disrupt defensiveness at an expressive level. At both stages, an associated phenomenological sense of ownership facilitates engagement (with transgression-related information and with others).

The Denial of Self-Concept Authenticity as a Defensive Response

Self-concept authenticity may function differently in the context of wrongdoing owing to specific features of true-self concepts. Whilst self-concepts (conceptual notions of who we are) have individual features (e.g., group memberships, likes and dislikes), true-self concepts (i.e., conceptual notions of who we *really* are, deep down) are strongly biased towards being viewed as moral and good (De Freitas et al., 2017; Strohminger et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2014). When acting in morally positive ways, we are judged to be more like our true selves, and when we are acting in morally reprehensible ways, we are judged to be less like our true selves (Molouki & Bartels, 2017; Newman et al., 2014). It is not uncommon to hear offenders, particularly in the public eye, claim that they were not their true selves in the context of a transgression. Given that transgressions represent violations of socially shared moral values and are self-threatening, such a statement may represent a defensive strategy to disown one’s immoral behaviours and the version of self these behaviours imply, thus defending one’s self (i.e., one’s *true* self) as good and moral. In implying that a false, non-representational self was responsible for their actions, offenders may seek to reduce their culpability and the moral and social threats their actions present. Under conditions where an offender distances themselves from their actions through the denial of self-concept authenticity, it may also follow that there is nothing left to process. The denial of self-concept authenticity may therefore both constitute a defensive response, as well as be a barrier to restorative processing.

Study 1

The present study aimed to prime the positive aspects of authenticity to engage a present-state authenticity motive. It was thought that to the extent that individuals had a salient value for authenticity, this would engage a desire for present-state awareness (as characterised by a mindful reflection on “what am I truly thinking and feeling about this event?”) and a desire to be open and truthful about these experiences, as both represent active processes. It was further thought that the desire for awareness and expressive consistency should both relate to an increased sense of ownership regarding one’s transgression (i.e., a sense of authorship and agency). In support of these hypothesised effects, Gino et al., (2010) found that participants primed with feelings of authenticity (via wearing designer glasses) were more likely to respond honestly, despite a financial disincentive, than those primed with inauthenticity (“knock-off” glasses; although it should be noted that there was no control condition, so it is not possible to ascertain the direction of this effect). In summary, when primed in the context of wrongdoing, it was thought that the desire for awareness and consistent expression would both relate to increased ownership, and all three present-state authenticity dimensions would relate to reduced pseudo self-forgiveness and increased genuine self-forgiveness.

Authenticity may have a particular influence when its benefits are highlighted due to its association with value. Authenticity appraisals are associated with value ratings across a wide range of products and services (e.g., Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Frake, 2017; Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis; 2019; Kovács et al., 2014; Newman & Bloom, 2012), and have been found to activate areas of the brain associated with reward (Huang et al., 2011). Authenticity confers both individual and social benefits that may further drive a desire to be authentic. On an individual level, authenticity is associated with psychological wellbeing (Heppner et al., 2008; Rivera et al., 2019; Sutton, 2020), and people experience valenced phenomenological states of inauthenticity and authenticity, which leads to strong motivations to direct behaviour in their respective avoidance and pursuit (Lenton, Bruder, et al., 2013). Interpersonally, authenticity is associated with positive relational outcomes (Brunell et al, 2010; Lopez & Rice, 2006), and people are motivated to be perceived as authentic by others (Hart et al., 2020). Although the manipulation aims to prime the positive aspects of authenticity, as an exploratory consideration, it will be considered whether priming personal or social benefits offers a stronger manipulation.

While the experimental manipulation in the present study was designed to vary present-state motives (and these were the centre of the present investigation), self-concept authenticity was also measured to explore its correlational relationships with pseudo and genuine self-forgiveness. It was expected that measured self-concept authenticity would be negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness: to the extent that an offender claimed to have not been their true self, they would endorse greater pseudo self-forgiveness. In contrast, given that such a response may be associated with disengagement from the offence, self-concept authenticity should be positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness. That is, to the extent that offenders deny self-concept authenticity, they should also endorse lesser engagement with genuine self-forgiveness.

Hypotheses

1. A salient (versus less salient) value for authenticity will lead offenders to desire (a) an awareness of inner states, and (b) expressive consistency (i.e., accurately representing these inner states to others).
2. The value that the offenders placed on (a) awareness and (b) expressive consistency will be positively related to a sense of personal ownership over their past actions.
3. All three dimensions of present-state authenticity will be (a) negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness, and (b) positively related to genuine self-forgiveness.
4. As a consequence of these hypotheses, a salient (versus less salient) value for authenticity will lead offenders to report (a) lower levels of pseudo self-forgiveness and (b) greater levels of genuine self-forgiveness, mediated via the value the offender places on awareness and consistency, and their sense of ownership over their actions.
5. Claiming one was not their "true self" in the context of the transgression (i.e., low self-concept inauthenticity) will be (a) negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness, and (b) positively related to genuine self-forgiveness.

Method

Study Overview

The present study aimed to test the hypotheses using an online sample. The experimental manipulation was designed to encourage a motive towards authenticity by making the value and benefits of authenticity salient. Befitting the online sample, texts were presented in the format of a pop-science psychology blog extolling the benefits (personal vs. social) of authenticity (vs. gratitude in the control conditions). Framing the benefits in terms of social or wellbeing outcomes was exploratory, to consider whether one offered a stronger manipulation than the other. Gratitude was selected for a control condition due to its similar associations with positive psychology, and was also framed in terms of its individual or social benefits. Other than depicting different values, the blogs were otherwise equivalent in all ways (see Appendix A).

Given that authenticity has been a complex and highly debated construct, concern has been raised about relying on a provided definition in its experimental manipulation (Kovács, 2019). In a study of lay word associations with "authenticity", those who regarded authenticity as more important were found to have more complex representations of the construct, listing more words with more distant semantic associations (Kovács, 2019). As such, it has been suggested that the individuals most likely to respond to a manipulation are also those for whom a simple experimental manipulation (e.g., reflecting upon a provided definition) may not effectively activate the entire construct. A blog format was therefore selected to refer to authenticity broadly, without a specific definition, to allow for greater interpretive complexity. Given that authenticity may be conflated with other attributes, however, the manipulation check involved ranking a series of ten attributes (including authenticity and gratitude) to assess their relative ranking and to confirm that similar attributes were not also activated.

Design

The study employed a 2 (attribute: authenticity; gratitude) x 2 (framing: personal wellbeing; social benefits) design testing the effects of primed authenticity on offenders' defensiveness following interpersonal transgression. A priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power (Faul & Erdfelder, 1992). Assuming a small effect size, $f = 0.15$, for an effect within a 2x2 ANOVA with an alpha of .05 and power of .80, a sample of 352 participants was required.

Participants

An initial sample of 587 participants were recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Of this sample, $n = 93$ indicated that they had not committed a transgression within the past two weeks and so were not eligible. After removing incomplete surveys ($n = 85$[2]) and those who had failed the attention checks ($n = 80$), the final sample consisted of 329 participants (53.8% women, 45.6% men, 0.6% non-binary), aged between 20 and 69 ($M = 39.57$, $SD = 10.94$). Participants were randomly allocated to the authenticity ($n = 166$) or gratitude ($n = 163$) conditions. A sensitivity analysis conducted using G^*Power (Faul & Erdfelder, 1992) revealed that the minimum effect size detectable with 329 participants was still $f = .15$ ($\alpha = 0.05$, $\beta = 0.80$).

Procedure

The study advertisement specified that the study was investigating how people respond after recently (< 2 weeks ago) committing a transgression against another person. All measures were administered using Qualtrics survey software. To assess eligibility, participants were asked whether they had *“hurt, offended or done wrong by another person”* in the past day. If participants indicated no, this procedure was repeated for the past two days, three days, past week, and past two weeks. Participants who indicated that they had not committed a transgression within the past two weeks were informed of their ineligibility.

Eligible participants were asked to provide transgression details. These involved rating the offence severity (1 = *very minor,* 7 = *very severe*), classifying the type of offence (e.g., betrayal of trust, infidelity) and the relationship shared with the other person involved

---

[2] $n = 43$ participants withdrew prior to reporting any transgression details (i.e., prior to being allocated a condition or engaging with any measures), $n = 40$ withdrew prior to the manipulation check, $n = 2$ withdrew prior to answering any dependent measures. It is possible that the inflated withdrawal rate reflected the instruction that the blog stimuli was a preliminary comprehension test, making the study appear to be of high cognitive load.

(e.g., family member, work colleague), and providing an open-ended description of "what happened" in as much detail as they chose. Participants were asked to indicate how many days had passed since the incident as a final check that it had occurred within the past 2-weeks.

The manipulation was presented as a comprehension task to disguise its purpose. Participants were asked to read the short blog about a personality attribute carefully as they would be asked some brief questions which needed to be answered correctly to progress. These questions formed the attention check, as well as aiming to encourage engagement with the text. Participants were presented with one of four randomly allocated blogs depicting an attribute (gratitude vs. authenticity) and its benefits (personal vs. social), which were otherwise equivalent in all ways (see Appendix A). Participants then completed the attention check, manipulation check, and dependent measures.

Engagement Prompts and Attention Check

After reading the blog, participants were asked to indicate in an open text-box, *"what personality attribute was discussed in the blog?*" and *"what was one of the listed benefits?".* A single multiple-choice question constituted the attention check, which asked participants to identify which researcher was named (only one was mentioned, displayed in highlighted text to mimic hyperlink formatting). If participants did not identify the correct answer, they were provided with feedback and shown the text again. A second multiple-choice question asked participants to indicate the journal named (only one was mentioned, similarly formatted to mimic a hyperlink). Those who responded to both questions incorrectly were provided with feedback and informed of their ineligibility.

Manipulation Check

Participants were asked to rank a series of ten attributes in order of their self-rated importance, from (1) *most important*, to (10) *least important.* In addition to the key variables, authenticity and gratitude, these were humility, honesty, courage, kindness, patience, integrity, confidence, and compassion.

Dependent Measures

All dependent variables were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagree,* through (4) *neither agree nor disagree*, to (7) *strongly agree.* Items were presented randomly within each measure. For all scales, unless otherwise stated, individual items were averaged to obtain full-scale scores.

Desire for Awareness. A four-item measure capturing offenders' desire to understand themselves and their experience was adapted for the purpose of this study, informed by the Awareness subscale of the Authenticity Inventory (AI-3; Kernis & Goldman, 2006): *I want to be in touch with my deepest thoughts and feelings; I am actively attempting to understand myself as best as possible; For better or worse I want to be aware of who I truly am; I want to be aware of how I truly think and feel* (α = .85).

Desire for Consistent Expression. A four-item measure capturing offenders' desire to genuinely convey their inner experiences to others was developed for the purpose of the study: *I want to be open to others about my inner feelings; I want to hide my true thoughts and feelings from others* (reverse coded); *I do not want to reveal my inner experiences to others* (reverse coded); *I want to express to others how I truly think and feel* (α = .83).

Ownership. A four-item measure was developed for the purpose of this study, capturing feelings of personal agency and authorship of past actions: *I feel that I was in full control of what I did; I feel that I was the author of my own actions; I feel that what I did was subject only to my free will; I feel that my actions were driven by something or someone else* (reverse coded). A full-scale measure was formed by dropping the final item as it was found to correlate poorly with the other items (*r*s = .17, .18, .23). The remaining three items showed acceptable internal consistency (α = .74).

Self-Concept Authenticity. Two items were used to measure offenders' subjective feelings of proximity or distance from their true self; a direct measure: "*My actions were representative of my true self (that is, the core, most essential parts of my being)",* and an adaptation of the Real-Self Overlap Scale (Lenton, Slabu, et al., 2013). The latter involved a pictorial scale depicting eight pairs of circles in varying degrees of overlap, one representing the true self (*"the core of who you really are"*) and the other representing the actual self (*"who you actually were in this situation"*). Participants were instructed to select the picture that best represented the relationship between their true and actual selves in the event, from 1 (non-touching circles), through greater degrees of overlap, to 8 (totally overlapped; $M = 4.44$, $SD = 2.09$). The items were sufficiently correlated to form a single scale ($r = .51$; $\alpha = .67$).

Pseudo Self-Forgiveness. A measure of defensiveness was obtained from the Differentiated Process Scale of Self-Forgiveness (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b), which distinguishes the defensive process of pseudo self-forgiveness from other transgression processes (genuine self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness, detailed below). The six-item scale reflects an offender's negation of wrongdoing, deflection of blame or responsibility, victim derogation and anger, e.g., *I think the other person was really to blame for what I did; I'm not really sure whether what I did was wrong; I feel that what happened was my fault* (reverse-coded; $\alpha = .84$).

Genuine Self-Forgiveness. A seven-item measure of genuine self-forgiveness (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) captured offenders' constructive working through of the transgression through an acceptance of guilt and responsibility, and a determination to change for the better. The items were adapted to reflect an ongoing process, e.g., *I am spending time working through my guilt; I am trying to learn from my wrongdoing; I am trying to change the parts of me that led to this offence* ($\alpha = .84$).

Self-Punitiveness. A seven-item measure of self-punitiveness (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) captured offenders' self-condemnation, perceived deservingness of punishment and inability to let go following wrongdoing, e.g., *I can't seem to get over what I have done; I want to punish myself for what I have done; what I have done is unforgivable* (α = .89).

Results

Transgression Details and Severity Check

Independent samples *t*-tests revealed that prior to the experimental manipulation, there were no significant differences in offence severity ratings between the authenticity and gratitude conditions, $t(327) = 1.21$, $p = .21$, as would be expected of a randomised design. On average, participants rated their transgressions as low-to-moderately severe ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.37$); however, the full range of severity ratings were represented. Most offences were relationship violations such as insults (24.0%), fights or arguments (20.7%), and betrayals of trust (12.8%), committed against a romantic partner (26.4%), family member (25.2%), friend (21.3%) or work colleague (19.1%).

Manipulation Check

Two-way ANOVAs were used to consider the effect of attribute (authenticity, gratitude) and framing (personal benefit, social desirability) on the valuing of authenticity and gratitude. Regarding the value of authenticity, the analysis revealed a main effect of blog type, $F(1, 325) = 10.88$, $p < .001$. Those who read a blog depicting authenticity ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 2.79$) ranked authenticity as more important than those who read a blog depicting the value of gratitude ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 2.84$), $d = 0.36$. There was no main effect of framing, $F(1, 325) = .36$, $p = .55$, and no interaction, $F(1, 325) = 1.12$, $p = .29$. Similarly, regarding the value of gratitude, there was a main effect of blog type only, $F(1, 325) = 32.26$, $p < .001$; those who read a blog depicting gratitude ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 2.44$) ranked gratitude as more important than those who read a blog on authenticity ($M = 6.51$, $SD = 2.54$), $d = 0.61$. There was no main effect of framing *F*(1, 325) = 22.57, *p* = .06, and no interaction, *F*(1, 325) = .27, p = .60. Subsequent two-way ANOVAs confirmed that there were no differences between groups in how much any other attribute was valued (i.e., humility, honesty, courage, kindness, patience, integrity, confidence, compassion), suggesting that the manipulation was successful in leading to valuing for the depicted attribute only.

As there were 10 values that needed to be ranked, these rankings were relatively independent from each other. Nevertheless, preconditions for an ANOVA were, strictly speaking, not met due to the ordinal nature of the data. The manipulation check was therefore analysed further using a two-independent samples median test between authenticity and gratitude conditions (ignoring the personal versus social benefit distinction). A Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference in the ranking of authenticity depending on the presented attribute (authenticity vs. gratitude), with those exposed to a blog depicting authenticity (mean rank = 148.28) ranking it more highly than those exposed to a blog depicting gratitude (mean rank = 182.03), Mann-Whitney U = 10753, SE = 857.43, *p* = .001. The ranking of gratitude was also significantly different between conditions, with those exposed to a blog depicting gratitude (mean rank = 136.18) ranking it more highly than those exposed to a blog depicting authenticity (mean rank = 193.30), Mann-Whitney U = 18227, SE = 857.09, *p* < .001. These results confirm the ANOVA findings.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 provides the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the dependent variables. As hypothesised, a desire for awareness and for expressive consistency were both positively associated with a greater sense of ownership over transgression behaviour. Further, awareness, expressive consistency and ownership were all negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness and positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness. Unexpectedly, self-concept authenticity was found to be positively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness, suggesting that a greater propensity to claim one *was* their true self in the context of transgression was associated with more defensiveness. Contrary to predictions, self-concept authenticity was also negatively associated with genuine self-forgiveness. Regarding the exploratory consideration of self-punitiveness, the results revealed no significant associations with the present-state authenticity subscales, however, it was negatively correlated with self-concept authenticity.

Analysis of Between Groups Differences

Given that prior results revealed a main effect of attribute and no effect of framing, *t*-tests[3] were performed to consider whether a salient value for authenticity (vs gratitude) would lead offenders to desire (a) awareness of inner states and (b) expressive consistency. No group differences were found in a desire for awareness, $t(327) = .80$, $p =.42$, nor expressive consistency, $t(327) = .08$, $p = .94$. Means are shown in Table 2.1. Follow-up *t*-tests also revealed no between-group differences on any dependent measure (all *ts* ≤ .82, all *p*s ≥ .41), nor in how they felt about their actions on any measured emotion (ashamed, guilty, remorseful, regretful, sad, disappointed, embarrassed, angry, frustrated, resentful; all *ts* ≤ 1.15, all *p*s ≥ .21).

---

[3] T-test results are reported for ease and brevity. Two-way ANOVAs also confirmed that there were no differences between groups on any dependent variable.

Table 2.1

Means (Standard Deviations) and Zero Order Correlations for all Dependent Variables

Variable	Authenticity (*n* =166)	Gratitude (*n* = 163)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Aware	5.66 (1.03)	5.74 (0.98)	*					
2. Express	4.75 (1.24)	4.76 (1.36)	.36***	*				
3. Own	5.35 (1.05)	5.38 (1.13)	.32***	.12*	*			
4. SCA	4.05 (1.59)	4.19 (1.69)	-.14*	-.06	-.02	*		
5. PSF	3.20 (1.37)	3.24 (1.43)	-.20***	-.14**	-.22***	.43***	*	
6. GSF	4.77 (1.12)	4.74 (1.21)	.33***	.14**	.23***	-.34***	-.38***	*
7. SP	3.11 (1.31)	3.20 (1.37)	-.04	-.04	.05	-.21***	-.17**	.59***

Note. Aware = desire for awareness; Express = desire for expressive consistency; Own = ownership; SCA = self-concept authenticity; PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness; GSF = genuine self-forgiveness; SP = self-punitiveness. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * <.05.

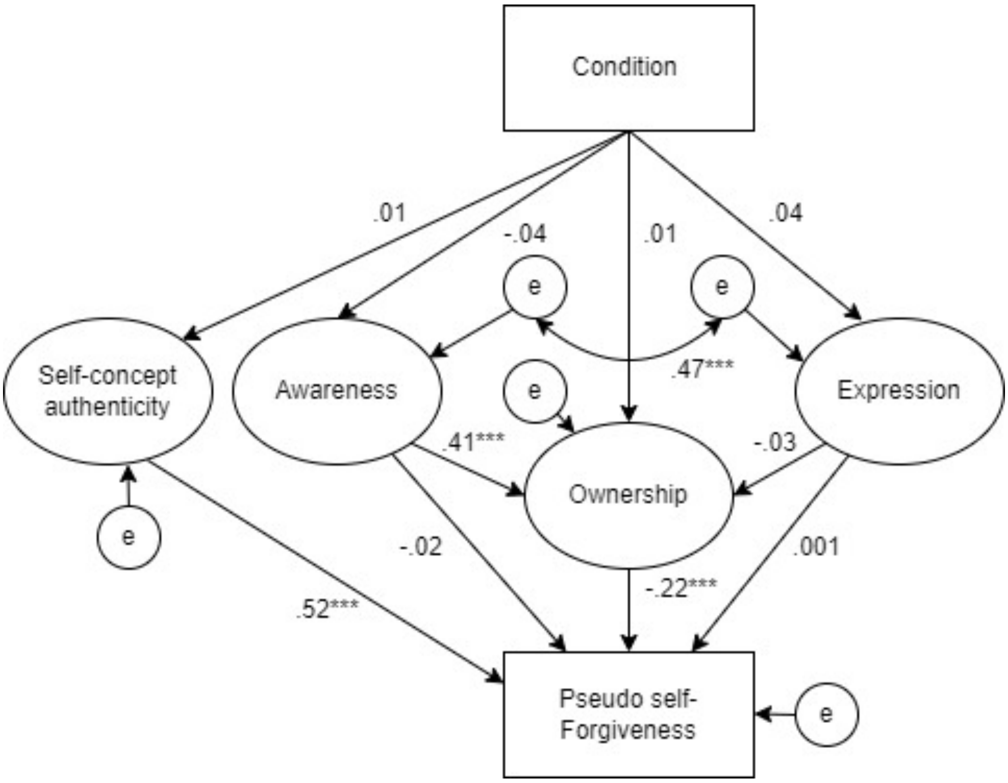
Structural Equation Modelling

Although there were no differences between groups, the predicted structural model was still investigated using the structural equation modelling (SEM) software AMOS, with the two dimensions of personal authenticity predicting defensiveness. The experimental factor was represented using dummy code (1 = gratitude, 2 = authenticity) for completeness; however, consistent with the previous results, it showed no statistically significant effects. The different facets of present-state and self-concept authenticity were represented as latent variables, and the outcome variables as observed variables (to limit the complexity of the model). The disturbances for desire for awareness and desire for expressive consistency were allowed to be correlated given their equivalent wording as aspirational desires. Model fit was assessed using three different indices (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019): χ^2/df ratio ≤ 2 indicates good fit, and between 2 and 3 acceptable fit; comparative fit index (CFI) $\geq$ .95 indicates good fit, and between .90 and .95 marginal fit; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) $\leq$ .06 represents good fit, between .06 and .08 acceptable fit, and between .08 and .10 marginal fit.

Fit indices indicated that the model, depicted in Figure 2.3, was an acceptable fit to the data, χ^2 (80) = 167.19, p <.001, χ^2/df = 2.09, CFI = .95, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06. It should be noted that the chi-square was statistically significant, however, this statistic is known to be overly sensitive with larger samples (Kenny & McCoach, 2003). Focusing first on the present-state authenticity items, statistically significant and positive paths were found from awareness to ownership as predicted, however, not from expression to ownership. There was a negative path from ownership to pseudo self-forgiveness, however, no direct effect of either a desire for awareness or desire for expression. The indirect pathways were then considered using AMOS. The indirect effect of awareness on defensiveness via ownership was significant, b = -.11, $CI_{95\%}$ [-.22, -.05], p = .001, suggesting a process of engagement with feelings of guilt and responsibility to decrease defensiveness. The indirect effect of expression on pseudo self-forgiveness was however not significant, b =.01, $CI_{95\%}$ [-.04, .06], p = 69. Regarding self-concept authenticity, the relationship was again found to be in the opposite direction from predicted. Self-concept authenticity was found to negatively predict pseudo self-forgiveness, suggesting that claiming one *was* (rather than was *not*) one's true self was related to defensive responding.

Figure 2.3

Structural Equation Model for the Two Dimensions of Personal Authenticity Predicting Pseudo Self-Forgiveness

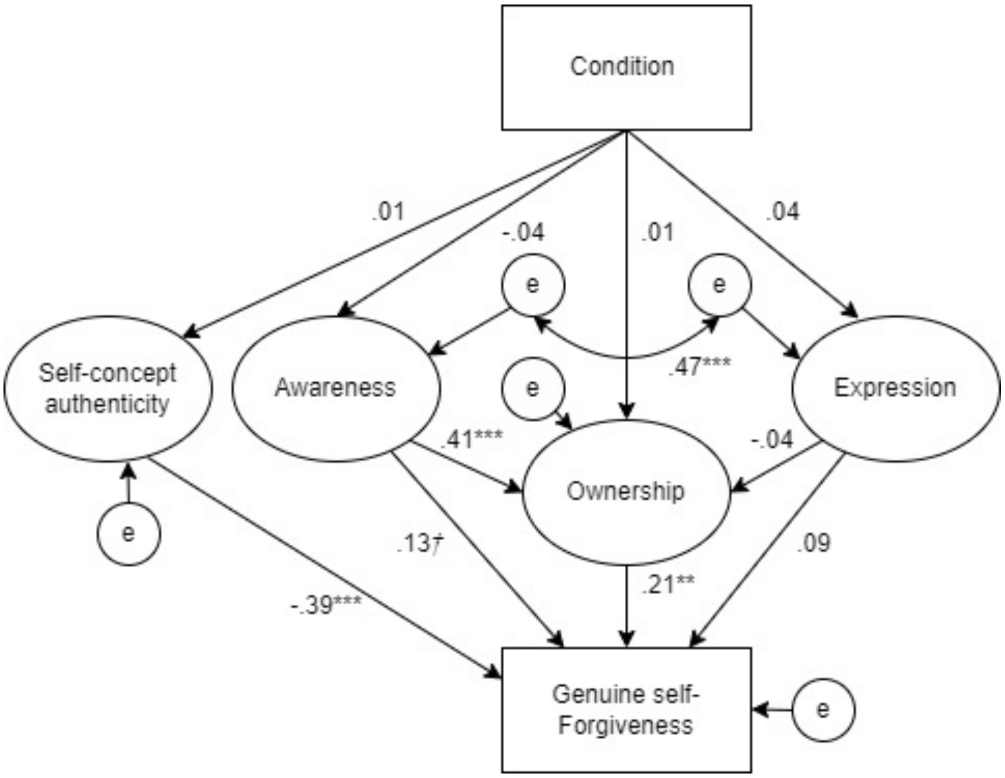

Condition
.01
-.04
.01
.04
e
e
Self-concept authenticity
Awareness
e
.47***
Expression
.41***
-.03
Ownership
e
-.02
.001
-.22***
.52***
Pseudo self-Forgiveness
e

Note. Standardized coefficients depicted. ***p <.001

The structural model was next considered with the two dimensions of personal authenticity predicting genuine self-forgiveness. Model fit statistics indicated that the model, depicted in Figure 2.4, was an acceptable fit, χ^2 (80) = 187.89, $p < .001$, $\chi^2/df = 2.35$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06. Further support was found for the effect of a desire for awareness and ownership operating as a process of engagement with one's wrongdoing, as these were both positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness (albeit, awareness marginally so). There was no significant effect of a desire for expressive consistency on genuine self-forgiveness. In next considering the indirect effects, the results revealed a positive indirect effect of awareness on genuine self-forgiveness via ownership, $b = .09$, $CI_{95\%}$ [.04, .18], $p = .006$. Once again, the indirect effect of desire for expressive consistency was not significant, *b* = -.01, CI$_{95\%}$ [-.05, .03], *p* = 59. Contrary to predictions, self-concept authenticity was found to be negatively associated with genuine self-forgiveness. That is, claims of having *not* been one's true self were associated with a prosocial process of responsibility acceptance and working through.

Figure 2.4

Structural Equation Model for the Two Dimensions of Personal Authenticity Predicting Genuine Self-Forgiveness

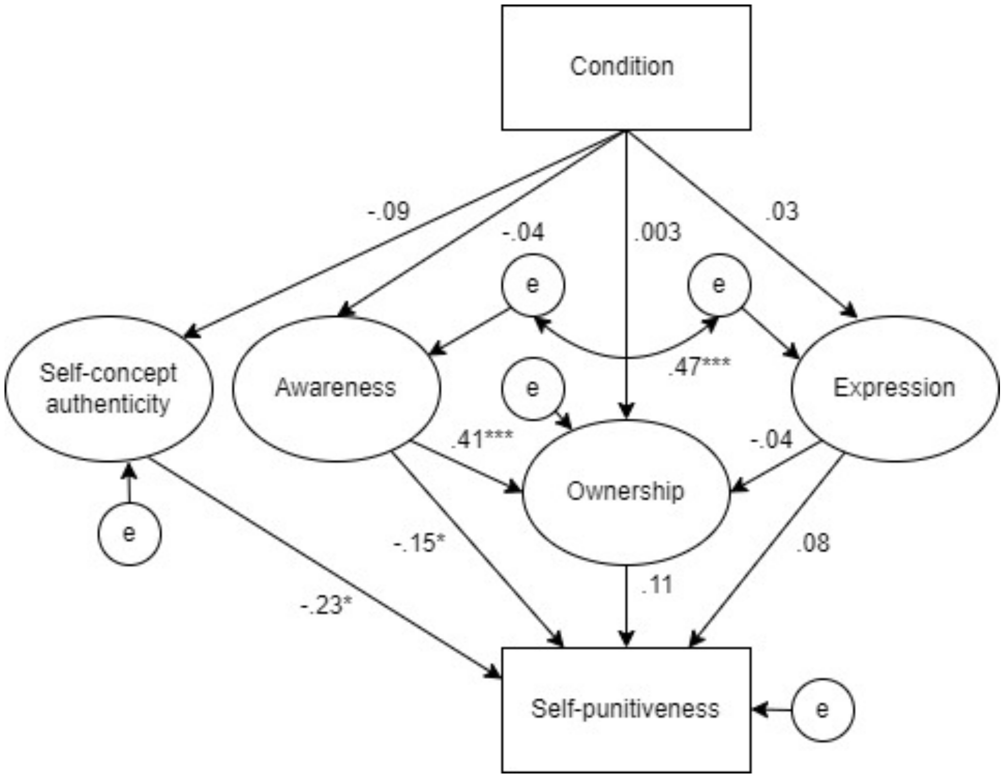

Condition
.01
-.04
.01
.04
e
e
Self-concept authenticity
Awareness
e
.47***
Expression
.41***
-.04
Ownership
e
.13†
.09
.21**
-.39***
Genuine self-Forgiveness
e

Note. Standardized coefficients depicted. ***p* <.001, **p* < .05, †*p* = .06.

Finally, the relationships with self-punitiveness were also considered for exploratory purposes. Model fit statistics indicated that the model, depicted in Figure 2.5, was an acceptable fit to the data, χ^2 (80) = 179.94, *p* < .001, χ^2/df = 2.25, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06. Of the present-state authenticity subscales, only awareness was found to have a significant relationship with self-punitiveness, which was negative. The indirect effect of awareness through ownership was marginal, *b* = .06, CI$_{95\%}$ [<.01, .15], *p* = .09. The indirect effect of expression through ownership was non-significant, *b* = -.004, $CI_{95\%}$ [-.04, .02], *p* = .56. Self-concept authenticity was found to have a significant negative relationship with self-punitiveness, such that the more participants considered their behaviour as representative of their true self, the less self-condemning they were.

Figure 2.5

Structural Equation Model for the Two Dimensions of Personal Authenticity Predicting Self-Punitiveness


Condition
-.09
-.04
.003
.03
e
e
Self-concept authenticity
Awareness
.47***
Expression
e
.41***
-.04
Ownership
e
-.15*
.08
.11
-.23*
Self-punitiveness
e

Note. Standardized coefficients depicted. ***p* <.001, **p* < .05

Discussion

The current research presents a first exploration of two proposed dimensions of personal authenticity – present-state and self-concept authenticity – and their relationship with offender defensiveness in a post-transgression context. Whilst priming the positive aspects of authenticity was not found to affect a present-state authenticity motive, correlational analyses suggested preliminary support for the theoretical hypothesis that the two authenticity dimensions may function differently. To the extent that offenders desired an unbiased awareness of their inner states, and this led to an increased sense of ownership over their behaviour, they also indicated less defensive responding. Surprising results were found for self-concept authenticity; the extent to which offenders claimed they *were* their true selves (rather than were not) was associated with greater defensiveness. These results suggest greater contrast between the two proposed authenticity dimensions than was initially hypothesised, given that offenders' experience of authenticity may evoke either reduced *or* increased defensiveness depending upon which dimension is implicated.

The Relationship between Present-State Authenticity and Offender Responses

Partial support was found for the hypothesis that present-state authenticity motives (comprised of a desire for awareness and open expression, leading to a sense of ownership) would be associated with more constructive, non-defensive transgression processing. A desire for awareness was found to be related to increased ownership over past actions, which in turn, related to reduced defensiveness and greater genuine self-forgiveness. These findings suggest the hypothesised process of awareness, relating to greater engagement with latent feelings of guilt and responsibility, and a restoration of a sense of agency, assists offenders to confront and process the wrongdoing. A desire for awareness was however not found to alter transgression processing directly, as had been hypothesised, which suggests that the motive may only be beneficial insofar as it translates to offenders successfully accessing (and owning) their latent feelings. Although these are early findings, there are consistencies within the literature with closely related constructs. Research into mindfulness, an active awareness and attentiveness to the present moment, has been found to be positively associated with more autonomous, self-determined functioning (Brown & Ryan, 2003). In turn, autonomous functioning has been found to be associated with less defensiveness and greater understanding in response to conflict (Knee et al., 2005). Where offenders' motive for awareness leads to greater engagement with transgression-related experiences, and restores a sense of ownership over past behaviour, it may offer an independent pathway to reducing offender defensiveness.

Whilst the desire for open expression demonstrated the hypothesised correlational relationships, it was not found to relate to an increased sense of ownership nor prosocial responding in the structural models. In accounting for these results, there may be important differences between the desire for open awareness and the desire to express these experiences to others. It was considered that a salient desire to be aware of one's experience may relate to increased tuning to one's transgression-related thoughts and feelings, effectively increasing one's present-moment awareness of these experiences. The linking of motive to action was not mirrored by the desire to be open with others, given that the task involved no expression of thoughts or feelings. It may be that the desire to be open is, in itself, insufficient to changes in processing, but rather requires the presence of others in a literal or symbolic way (such as when anticipating an interaction). This possibility presents an area for further investigation.

Interesting results were found concerning the exploratory consideration of present-state authenticity and self-punitiveness. Whilst the correlational relationships revealed no significant associations between these variables, when considered within the structural model, a desire for awareness was found to be related to reductions in an overly self-condemning response. However, awareness trended towards being associated with greater self-punitiveness through ownership, therefore, demonstrating a different pattern of effects. Given the non-significant correlational relationships and small effect sizes, these relationships should be interpreted with caution. Some speculative explanations may however be offered. At a theoretical level, it is possible that the desire for awareness may relate to reductions in self-punitiveness as it implies more active, constructive processing, rather than ruminative dwelling upon the event. As ownership over behaviour suggests a sense of responsibility acceptance, it may show a positive trend towards self-punitiveness insofar as there is an implied acceptance of guilt. It is further likely that statistical suppression is occurring amongst the authenticity variables, and further research will be required to ascertain these relationships.

The Relationship between Self-Concept Authenticity and Offender Responses

Counter to hypotheses, the results suggested that feeling one *was* one's true self, rather than was not*,* was associated with greater defensive responding in the context of wrongdoing. In contextualising these results, it bears remembering that the true self has been found to be strongly biased towards being viewed as moral and good (De Freitas et al., 2017; Strohminger et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2014). As transgressions are acts that may be socially and morally sanctioned, regarding one's behaviour as true-self consistent within this context appears to imply a denial or avoidance of self-image threat, which may be comparable to claiming that wrongdoing has not occurred. As the feeling of not knowing one's self is an aversive experience that predicts negative emotional states (Wood et al., 2008), the desire to maintain self-concept consistency when a threat is intuited may motivate defensive responding. It is important to note, however, that these results are correlational. It is also possible that defensiveness may buffer self-image threats to allow self-concept consistency to be maintained. In this sense, offenders may effectively deny their wrongdoing or its severity, and attenuate a moral self-image threat that would challenge true-self perceptions. In not engaging with one's responsibility for wrongdoing, there would be no reason for one to have not been their true self in the interaction. Exploring these associations over time would allow for the assessment of the potentially reciprocal relationships between these variables.

Support was not found for the hypothesis that offender claims of not being their true self following wrongdoing indicates defensiveness. There are a couple of considerations that may account for this finding. As this claim is often heard in the public realm, it is possible that it may solely serve a communicative function (i.e., expressive defensiveness) aimed at impression management, and may therefore not arise without an interaction partner. Further, it may only arise under certain conditions, such as when one's motivation for defensiveness is high, but blame is unequivocal and the rejection of responsibility is not possible. Under these conditions, an offender who cannot reject responsibility may be motivated to claim diminished agency (e.g., claim they *were not* their true self) to ameliorate their moral/social image threat. However, when the rejection of responsibility is possible, offenders may be in the position to simultaneously preserve agency and protect themselves from moral/social threats by denying the wrongdoing (i.e., claim they *were* their true self). These possibilities bear on the challenge of maintaining a sense of agency for offenders whilst balancing the protection of their moral/social needs (Woodyatt et al., 2017). Within the current study, offenders self-reported a transgression, and were therefore cognisant of wrongdoing. Accordingly, mean defensiveness was relatively low. Future research could consider instances where blame is ambiguous versus clear, under conditions where defensiveness motivation is high, to consider whether true-self claims and denial may both reflect defensive responding.

The relationships between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness, and the exploratory consideration of self-punitiveness, also suggest that offender feelings of having been their true self reflect a denial or rejection of responsibility. Contrary to predictions, claims of having not been one's true self were related to greater, rather than lesser, genuine self-forgiveness. The uncomfortable experience of perceiving that one has acted in a self-concept inconsistent manner may therefore be required to help motivate engagement with the difficult process of accepting responsibility and working through one's wrongdoing. Where an offender rejects responsibility and maintains their sense of having been their true self, it may follow that there is nothing left to process. The negative association between self-concept authenticity and self-punitiveness adds depth to this proposition as, like genuine self-forgiveness, self-punitiveness involves taking responsibility and accepting guilt. This further suggest that offenders who claim self-concept authenticity have been released from difficult transgression-related emotions. These relationships suggest that to the extent that offenders perceive they were *not* their true selves, transgression processing was ongoing – either constructively (i.e., genuine self-forgiveness) or through ruminative thought (i.e., self-punitiveness).

The aversive experience of self-concept inauthenticity following wrongdoing may have important implications for offender's processing of the offence, signalling that further processing and restoration needs to occur. Practically, invoking an awareness of the self-concept inconsistency of offender actions may provide a tool to help motivate offenders to process their offence, although further research may be required to understand how to invoke constructive rather than ruminative processing. Prior research has found that validation of valued, core aspects of self-concept (termed the 'intrinsic self' within this literature) reduces a range of defensive responses (Arndt, et al., 2002; Schimel et al., 2001, 2004). The extent to which offenders can recognise their deficiencies and connect to positive aspects of self-concept in other contexts may offer one possibility for eliciting constructive processing.

Limitations and Future Directions

Practically, the results provide partial support for the possibility that a present-state motive may be adaptive; if offenders can be supported to engage with how they are truly feeling and assume ownership over their past actions, this may represent a process opposing defensiveness. Priming positive aspects of authenticity in the time following the incident was however not found to be an effective means of engaging this motive. There was also no indication that either personal wellbeing or social benefits offered a stronger manipulation.

The manipulation did however reveal a stronger valuing for authenticity following exposure to the blog. Within the current study, the reported transgressions occurred within a two-week window. As the reported transgressions were on average of low to moderate severity, which tend to resolve more quickly, it remains possible that the manipulation came too late to alter processing that had already occurred. Future studies should therefore consider manipulations in closer temporal proximity to the transgression, where greatest processing occurs, to ascertain whether this may offer benefit.

As the current study presented a first exploration of the two proposed dimensions of authenticity, the employed measures were ad hoc. Whilst the results offer preliminary support for differences between present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity, it should be noted that these may have been artificially separated. The proposed present-state authenticity subcomponents of awareness and expression were formulated as future-focused desires, whereas the ownership and self-concept authenticity measures were anchored to the incident. These differences were purposeful within the present study, as it was thought that a prime would specifically engage awareness and expression motives (which are both active processes), however, anchoring all authenticity subscales to the same referent point (e.g., at the time of the transgression) may allow for clearer exploration of these factors. A differentiated scale is needed to further this investigation. Study 2 will seek to build upon these early findings using a more complete and refined scale.

As with all correlational research, future investigation is required to further consider these relationships. The results of this preliminary investigation reveal that manipulating authenticity may be challenging. Another means of effectively exploring these relationships in a naturalistic context may therefore be to consider the longitudinal relationships, and explore how the variables may relate over time. Such an investigation would also allow for disentanglement of the direction of effects, for example, whether self-concept authenticity predicts defensiveness, defensiveness predicts self-concept authenticity, or whether the relationships are reciprocal.

Conclusion

The present study's findings provide an early insight into the role that authenticity may play in how offenders deal with their wrongdoing and engage in moral repair. This role may however be complex, with the two dimensions of authenticity potentially playing different roles. Whilst present-state authenticity may operate to reduce defensiveness, self-concept authenticity may be implicated in a defensive response. Although these findings are preliminary, they suggest the importance of distinguishing between these two authenticity dimensions within the context of repair following wrongdoing. These findings may offer a promising direction for further understanding defensive processes to assist offenders in the difficult, but necessary, process of confronting responsibility.

CHAPTER 3

Preliminary Development of a Differentiated Measure of Personal Authenticity

Authenticity may be a valuable attribute in interpersonal contexts. Authenticity has been found to have important implications for interpersonal functioning and wellbeing (Brunell et al., 2010; English & John, 2013; Gillath et al., 2010; Heppner et al., 2008; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Neff & Suizzo, 2006; Wickham, 2013), and conflict and its repair (Brunell et al., 2010; Tou et al., 2015; Wickham et al., 2016). However, empirical progress has been slowed by a lack of consensus about what authenticity is, and various approaches to its conceptualisation have produced a diffuse body of literature characterized by seemingly incongruous findings. As discussed in Chapter 1, a key disparity has been that authenticity has been inconsistently conceptualized to either involve one's present-state experience (i.e., cognitions, feelings, and physiological states; e.g., Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Vess, 2019; Wood et al., 2008), or one's self-concept (e.g., Chen, 2019; Schlegel et al., 2009; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018; Strohminger et al., 2017). Without clearly differentiating these constructs, it has not been possible to examine how they might relate or diverge. The current chapter builds upon the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 1 to distinguish present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity empirically, and examine how they may differentially relate to defensiveness and moral repair.

Chapter 2 (Study 1) suggested that present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity may function in opposing ways following committing a wrongdoing. Present-state authenticity may be a possible counter process to defensiveness and a facilitator of restorative processing, and self-concept authenticity may be implicated in defensive responding and act as a barrier to moral repair. However, the measures of authenticity used within this study were ad hoc and presented limitations. The present research therefore aims to advance a dual authenticity scale. In the current study, I explore initial scale properties and assess whether the two proposed dimensions of authenticity are differently associated with offender defensiveness and moral repair. This work therefore serves to explore whether the conceptualisation is promising and theory consistent before investing further in future research in the comprehensive development and refinement of a measurement tool.

A Dual Authenticity Framework

As proposed in Chapter 1, a framework for conceptualising personal authenticity may be provided by deconstructing the authenticity construct. At their core, assessments of authenticity represent a process of verifying whether (or to what extent) a given entity is what it is purported to be (Trilling, 1972). Like related words such as genuine or real (Hopwood et al., 2021; Kovács, 2019) its meaning therefore depends upon clarifying the relevant entity (or referent; Dutton, 2006), as well as what specific dimension of that entity is being assessed. Otherwise put, an authentic *what?*[4] Regarding personal authenticity (the authenticity of people, as opposed to objects, brands, organisations, or leadership) the literature converges on an agreement that the relevant entity is the self. As first proposed by James (1890), there are two dimensions of a sense of self: the present-state 'I-self', involving the phenomenological sense of being in the proverbial driver's seat for one's experiences (e.g., the subjective sense that *I* am the one thinking my thoughts and feeling my feelings), and the self-concept or 'me-self', involving one's conceptual understanding of who they are (e.g., funny, a musician, tall). Two distinct dimensions of authenticity may therefore be differentiated on the basis of the implicated dimension of self, as these represent two ways personal authenticity may be experienced and assessed. A brief overview of present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity is provided in turn.

---

[4] Establishing that the meaning of authenticity hinges upon clarification of the relevant referent (and its dimensions) immediately contextualises why there has so many approaches to conceptualising authenticity (e.g., Dammann et al., 2021; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Lehman et al., 2019; Newman, 2019; Newman, & Smith, 2016; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018; Wood et al., 2008) as there are many things that can be assessed, with many specific ways to assess them. For example, is an 'authentic Italian chef' a chef who originates from Italy, or a chef who cooks traditional Italian food?

Present-state authenticity involves being true to one's present-state experience, which is comprised of one's conscious thoughts, feelings, desires, preferences, and other self-relevant experiences. It is proposed to consist of three interrelated processes: a subjective awareness[5] of one's present-state experience, its accurate expression or behavioural representation, and a phenomenological sense of ownership, such that one experiences a sense of *'mineness'* over their mental states, physiological states, and actions. To the extent that these three processes are engaged, one may experience a sense of present-state authenticity. To the extent that any of these components are undermined, one may experience a sense of present-state inauthenticity, which may be characterised by feelings of confusion or alienation regarding one's experience, or a sense that one's experience is distorted, misrepresented, or externally controlled. One may reflect on their current present-state experience, their experience in the past (e.g., mentally reliving a past event), or imagine how they might feel in a future event (Prebble et al., 2013). Individuals may therefore be able to reflect on their current experiences of present-state authenticity, their experiences retrospectively (how present-state authentic they felt in a past situation) or prospectively (how present-state authentic they expect to feel in a future situation).

Self-concept authenticity involves one's self-concept (representing all the conceptual knowledge one has about one's self), and often specifically implicates a 'true self' concept (notions of who one *really* is, deep down). It is proposed that, based on conscious experience, an individual may perceive validation (or ‘fit’; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018) with valued, salient self-concept features, producing a sense of authenticity. Alternatively, self-relevant information that is inconsistent with or threatens valued self-conceptions may result in feelings of inauthenticity. The ‘me self’ informed self-concept authenticity conceptualisation therefore provides a device for capturing broad authenticity theorising that references a self-concept (e.g., Baumeister, 2019; Chen, 2019; Rivera et al., 2019; Schlegel et al., 2009; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018; Strohminger et al., 2017). The notion of a ‘true self’ concept, the conceptual understanding of our true or core identity, is also central in this theorising and may have specific implications for self-concept authenticity. A growing literature suggest that we are biased to view people’s core identities (‘true self’ concepts) as morally good (Christy et al., 2017; De Freitas et al., 2017, 2018; Newman et al., 2014; Lefebvre & Krettenauer, 2020; Strohminger et al., 2017; Strohminger & Nichols, 2014). Accordingly, moral deterioration (e.g., via acting in morally reprehensible ways) has been found to lead to perceived identity disruptions in judgements of both personal self (Molouki & Bartels, 2017) and others (Heiphetz et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2014; Strohminger & Nichols 2014). Features of morality and goodness may therefore be particularly relevant of self-concept authenticity feelings. In addition to instances where one’s experience or environment validates important self-concept features, it seems that when acting in positive ways, people are biased to feel more like their true selves and when acting in negative ways, they are biased to feel less like their true selves.

---

[5] A vast literature suggests accurate, objective awareness is not possible (Bargh, & Williams, 2006; Nisbett, & Wilson, 1977; Wilson & Dunn, 2004; Wilson, 2004) and so the subjective nature of this awareness is central.

Present-State Authenticity as a Facilitator of Constructive Transgression Processing

Present-state authenticity may be antithetical to defensiveness in the context of wrongdoing. The subcomponents of present-state awareness, consistent expression, and phenomenological ownership seem to imply an engagement with one’s true feelings, motives and actions, which seemingly opposes the motivated distortion, self-distancing and denial of responsibility that characterises defensiveness. Research that considers aspects of present-state authenticity in the context of conflict suggests negative associations with defensiveness. The Authenticity Inventory (AI-3; Kernis & Goldman, 2006) is a measure of authenticity that emphasises unbiased awareness of one's experiences and open communication with others. Using the AI-3, authenticity has been found to be negatively associated with avoidance and retaliatory behaviours in response to conflict (Tou et al., 2015; Brunell et al., 2010), which may be used to defend against rather than confront the incident. Research into autonomy (i.e., the full personal endorsement of one's actions; a closely related construct to ownership) has found it to be associated with less defensiveness and a more understanding response to conflict (e.g., exploring other points of view; seeking to understand one's relationship and partner better; Knee et al., 2005, Study 2). An orientation towards autonomy in the context of conflict has also been found to be associated with fewer attempts to defensively protect one's personal image or shift blame onto others (Hodgins et al., 1996; Hodgins & Liebeskind, 2003). Given that autonomy is a psychological need (according to self-determination theory; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 2000), having this need met may result in the incident feeling less self-threatening, so the individual is less invested in defending against threat. Therefore, to the extent that offenders are oriented towards and engage in present-state authenticity, they may be more open to processing self-relevant information, regardless of its valence, and more willing to openly communicate with the affected other(s). In this way, present-state authenticity may buffer defensiveness.

An offender's engagement with present-state authenticity may further act as a facilitator of genuine moral repair. As measured using the AI-3 (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), authenticity has been found to be positively associated with constructive relationship behaviours, including greater self-disclosure and trust in one's partner (Brunell et al., 2010), and is associated with approaches to conflict that equally emphasise personal and partner needs (Tou et al., 2015). In a diary study, individuals with higher trait levels of awareness and unbiased processing (AI-3 subscales capturing awareness of and trust in one's self-related experiences, and an orientation towards processing self-relevant information objectively) did not experience a decrease in wellbeing (a composite measure of self-esteem and life satisfaction) following conflict, whilst those with lower levels showed a strong negative relationship between conflict and wellbeing. Separately, fluctuations in autonomy have also been found to predict daily wellbeing (Reis et al., 2000; Sheldon et al., 1996), suggesting it too may help in buffering the effects of conflict. To the extent that offenders are present-state authentic, it may relate to an ability to objectively appraise and process their personal contribution to conflict, resulting in greater genuine self-forgiveness and less self-punitiveness.

Chapter 2 primarily considered whether a *desire* to be present-state authentic was related to reduced defensiveness. For these aims, awareness and expression were operationalised as the desire for unbiased awareness and consistent self-representation, with ownership over past behaviour modelled as an outcome of these processes. It was found that the desire for awareness increased ownership as predicted, which then functioned to reduce pseudo self-forgiveness and increase genuine self-forgiveness. The desire for consistent expression was however found to be unrelated to transgression processing. It was considered that this may be due to differences between these constructs within the study confines: a salient desire for present-state awareness may have prompted greater awareness, but a desire for expression did not lead to an interaction with a real or imagined other. It was thought that when considering offenders' *actual* experiences of present-state authenticity regarding the transgression (where interaction is possible), the subscales may function in the same direction. In support of this theorizing, self-disclosure and open communication are understood to be central to individual and relational functioning (Laurenceau et al., 1998;

Meeks et al., 1998). As such, the elements of awareness, expression and ownership would be negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness, and positively related to genuine self-forgiveness.

Self-Concept Authenticity in the Context of Wrongdoing

In contextualising the relationship between self-concept authenticity and offender responses to their wrongdoings, it is notable that transgressions are likely to be viewed as self-incongruent acts. Lenton, Bruder, and colleagues (2013) found that “least-me” experiences were likely to capture themes of social evaluation, failing standards and expectations, and facing difficulty, as well as experiencing negative emotions such as anxiety, shame, and disappointment with one’s self. Interpersonal transgressions fall directly within these themes as they represent instances where one has failed to uphold the standards and expectations of one’s social group, and failed to act with integrity on the basis of a shared moral code (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008; Schnabel & Nadler, 2008).

It was initially hypothesised that offender claims of having not been their true self in the context of wrongdoing may reflect a defensive strategy. This hypothesis was based on an assumption that claims of having not been one’s true self enable offenders to disown their behaviour and the version of self it implies, thus defending themselves (i.e., their *true* selves) as positive and moral. The opposite relation was however found in Chapter 2; that is, self-concept authenticity claims were positively associated with defensiveness. This raises an alternate hypothesis. Given the observation that the true self is biased to be seen as moral and good, it is possible that an admission that one acted inauthentically amounts to an admission of immoral conduct. The more effective defence may therefore be to claim that one was authentic and true-self consistent, which has the implication that nothing wrong occurred. As such, self-concept authenticity in the context of wrongdoing may be positively associated with a defensive response.

The negative associations found between self-concept authenticity, genuine self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness in Chapter 2 suggested that self-concept authenticity may have a role in transgression processing. Inauthenticity is an aversive phenomenological experience, and people report strong motivations to avoid experiencing it (Lenton, Bruder, et al., 2013). A desire to resolve the uncomfortable experience of inauthenticity following wrongdoing may therefore assist in the difficult work of processing the incident. Suggesting a negative association between self-concept authenticity and moral repair, Gino and colleagues (2015) found that feelings of inauthenticity (manipulated via recalling an instance when one acted in a manner that felt untrue to one's core self) led to a desire to compensate by engaging in prosocial behaviours, such as helping with additional study tasks (Study 3) and donating money (Study 5). Conversely, to the extent that an offender reports that they *were* their true self in the context of wrongdoing, the more they disengage from further processing it – either in a restorative manner (genuine self-forgiveness) or through rumination (self-punitiveness). It is therefore hypothesised that self-concept authenticity will be negatively associated with both genuine self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness.

Limitations in the Measurement of Authenticity

Limitations were present in the ad hoc measurement used in Chapter 2. Firstly, the dimensions of authenticity were artificially separated due to the research interests and experimental design. The study aimed to manipulate a present-state authenticity motive, and therefore operationalised awareness and expression as future-focused desires (e.g., awareness: "*I want to be aware of how I truly think and feel"*), whilst appraisals of ownership and self-concept authenticity were anchored to the incident (e.g., ownership: *"I feel that I was the author of my own actions*"). Item phrasing was therefore confounded as being either past or future-focused. Secondly, the study involved theoretically implied ordering which has yet to be empirically substantiated. It was hypothesised that a present-state authenticity motive would engage a desire for awareness and expression as both represent active processes (that is, you can seek to be aware and to communicate consistently), and that both would increase a sense of ownership over past actions. Awareness and expression were therefore modelled as predicting ownership. Given that the theorising is still in its early stages, the current study does not assume ordering and models these factors as correlated. Finally, the self-concept authenticity scale included only two items, which had modest internal consistency ($r = .51$; $\alpha = .67$). The current study therefore aimed to develop a consistent, working scale to continue to explore the relationship between authenticity and offender responses to conflict.

No currently existing scale makes a distinction between present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity. Whilst the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008) was developed based upon theory considering present-state experience as the relevant dimension of self, the resulting measure is also used within research considering self-concept effects (e.g., Christy et al., 2016, Kim et al., 2018). Items within the scale may be variably interpreted by respondents. For example, the items *"I feel out of touch with the 'real me'; I don't know how I really feel inside; I am true to myself in most situations"* may be responded to regarding different self-aspects. The Authenticity Inventory (AI-3; Kernis & Goldman, 2006) contains items that explicitly tap present states (e.g., *"I am in touch with my motives and desires"*), and items that relate to a self-concept (e.g., *"I actively try to understand which of my self-aspects fit together to form my core- or true-self"*) within the same subscale. In addition to not separately considering the two authenticity dimensions, these may also be confounded within the two validated scales that are most frequently used within the literature.

There is also a gap regarding a measure for self-concept authenticity, and authenticity measured at a state level. There is currently no validated scale for assessing authenticity at a state or momentary level, as both the Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008) and the

Authenticity Inventory (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) are trait-based measures. The Authenticity Scale has been found to not easily adapt to a state or event-based level (item stems preceded with *"right now"*, e.g., *"right now, I feel out of touch with the 'real me'"*) as the dimensions do not relate in the predicted ways (Lenton et al., 2016). No validated scale currently exists for self-concept authenticity. Prior measures have included indirect measures (e.g., the extent to which people's behaviour varies across social roles; Sheldon et al., 1997), pictorial scales depicting degrees of overlap between one's current and "real self" (the Real-Self Overlap Scale; Lenton, Slabu, et al. 2013; also adapted in Chapter 2), measures of true-self accessibility (response time to 'me' vs. 'not me' descriptors; Bargh et al., 2002; Schlegel et al., 2009, 2011; Lenton, Slabu et al., 2013, Study 3), false-self to true-self rating continuums (e.g. Harter et al., 1996; e.g., *"Some kids feel that they can be their 'true self' around their mothers BUT Other kids feel that they can't be their 'true self' around their mothers."*), and ad hoc scales that may not clearly and directly implicate a self-concept as intended (e.g., items such as "I can be myself with others"; Kraus et al., 2011). There is therefore a need for a scale that captures self-concept authenticity and present-state authenticity separately, and at a state-based level.

Study 2

The present study aimed to begin developing a differentiated authenticity scale using standard psychometric guidelines (Clark & Watson, 2016; Furr, 2011). A central aim was to develop a scale that addressed the prior confounds and included an expanded number of items. The two scales were therefore designed to explicitly consider the two aspects of self (present-state experience and self-concept) separately, and were both anchored to a recent transgression (< 2 weeks) for consistency. The predictive relationships with pseudo self-forgiveness, genuine self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness (subscales of the Differentiated Process Scale of Self-Forgiveness; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) were considered. The key objective was to seek empirical support for the proposed conceptualisation in terms of its factor structure, and to further explore the relationships with offender defensiveness, as contrasted with non-defensive responding. Based on these investigations, future research will seek to invest in further scale refinement and validation.

Hypotheses

1. Self-concept authenticity will be (a) positively related to pseudo self-forgiveness (i.e., defensiveness), and (b) negatively related to genuine self-forgiveness and (c) self-punitiveness.
2. The proposed dimensions of present-state authenticity (present-state awareness, consistent expression, and ownership) will be (a) negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness, and (b) positively related to genuine self-forgiveness. Additionally, it was thought that the three dimensions would be (c) negatively related to self-punitiveness.

Method

Development of the Item Pool

The literature review and theoretical conceptualisation in Chapter 1 informed item generation. An initial pool of 44 items were drafted (present-state authenticity: awareness 10-items, expression 13-items, ownership 11-items; self-concept authenticity: 10-items). The items were reviewed and feedback was solicited from independent researchers in the area of social psychology for clarity, parsimony, and construct coverage based upon construct definitions. The final pool consisted of 29 items and contained predominantly positively worded statements as research suggests negatively worded (reverse-scored) items may introduce systematic error (Schmitt & Stultz, 1985). Items generated for each scale are presented in Table 1. Instructions directed respondents to consider each item on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree,* through 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree,* to 7 = *Strongly Agree.*

Participants

Sample size was predetermined using an item-to-response ratio of at least 1:10 for factor analysis (Schwab, 1980), meaning a minimum sample of 290 was required. A total of 312 participants were sought from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to account for potential exclusions. Based on a priori exclusion criteria, participants who failed both attention check items were removed (n = 3). The final sample (N = 309) were aged between 18 and 73 (M_{age} = 38.29, SD = 12.41), and consisted of 173 (56%) women, 134 (43.4%) men, and 2 (0.6%) non-binary participants from the United States. Participants identified as White/Caucasian (74.1%), Asian (9.7%), Black/African-American (7.8%), Hispanic/Latinx (6.1%), and Multiracial (1.9%).

Procedure

The study advertisement sought participants who had recently (< 2 weeks) committed a transgression against a person they shared a relationship with, and who were proficient in English. Potential participants were screened with 5 basic multiple-choice English grammar questions to screen for bots (e.g., *"When do you study? At school, in the evenings, in the library'*). An ineligibility screen was shown to participants if fewer than 4 questions were answered correctly. Participants were then asked if they had *"hurt, offended or done wrong by another person"* in the past day. If participants indicated no, this procedure was repeated for the past two days, three days, past week, and past two weeks. Participants who indicated that they had not committed a transgression within the past two weeks were informed of their ineligibility.

Eligible participants were asked to provide transgression details. Participants were asked to *"briefly describe what happened"* in an open textbox, classify the type of offence (e.g., *betrayal of trust; infidelity*) and the relationship shared with the victim party (e.g., *friend, spouse*), rate the relationship importance and the offence severity, and state how many days had passed since the transgression had occurred.

All subsequent items were framed in the context of the reported transgression. Two items prompting selection of a particular response option (e.g., *"select disagree for this question"*) were embedded within the other measures to serve as attention checks. The sequencing of key dependent measures was randomised to control for possible order effects. The present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity items were presented separately due to the theoretical rationale that these two authenticity dimensions relate to distinct experiences of selfhood ('I self' and 'me self', respectively; James, 1890), and therefore require different instruction to orient participants. The present-state authenticity items were however randomised together rather than presented within discrete subscales. The specific instructions are provided below:

Present-state authenticity: *"The following questions relate to your thoughts and feelings at the time of the incident you reported. Try to think back on your thoughts, feelings and experiences. For each statement, indicate how much it applied to you regarding the incident you reported."*

Self-concept authenticity: *"The following questions relate to your understanding of who you are. Specifically, who you truly know yourself to be, deep down. For each statement, indicate how much it applied to you regarding the incident you reported."*

Participants then made ratings of how they felt when they thought about the transgression: *ashamed; guilty; remorseful; regretful; sad; disappointed; embarrassed; angry; frustrated; and resentful.* They then completed demographic questions.

Measures for Predictive Validity

All items were randomised together within a single block, and were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree,* through 4 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree,* to 7 = *Strongly Agree.*

Pseudo Self-Forgiveness. A six-item scale (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) assessed offenders' defensive responding to the transgression via an abrogation of responsibility, displacement of blame onto the affected other, and rationalisation of their offence (e.g., "I feel those involved got what they deserved", α = .85).

Genuine Self-Forgiveness. A seven-item scale (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) assessed offenders' engagement with a process of accepting appropriate levels of responsibility to process their wrongdoing, reconcile with their immoral/antisocial actions, and restore a sense of positive self-regard (e.g., "I have put energy into processing my wrongdoing", α = 87).

Self-Punitiveness. Seven items (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) assessed offenders' excessive self-blame and self-punishment following wrongdoing (e.g., "What I have done is unforgivable", α = .88).

Results

Transgression Details

Participants predominantly reported a transgression involving insult (25.6%), a fight or argument (22.7%), neglect (11.3%), or betrayal of trust (7.4%), which was predominantly perpetrated against family members (23.6%), friends (22.7%), a spouse (18.1%) or boyfriend/girlfriend (15.9%). On average, participants rated the severity of the transgression at a low-moderate range ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.47$), however, the full range (1-7) of severity ratings were represented. On average, participants rated the relationship as important ($M = 5.78$, $SD = 1.72$), with only 12.3% rating the relationship importance below the midpoint.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

An EFA using Principal Components Analysis was conducted to explore the initial factor structure of the proposed 29 items comprising the authenticity scale. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy, KMO = .95, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, $\chi^2(406) = 6779.38$, $p < .001$, indicated that the items were appropriate for factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). The number of factors for extraction were identified based on the scree plot and correspondence to theory. Oblique rotations were used as the components were theoretically related and anticipated to be correlated (Furr, 2011). Item-retention criteria included high to moderate factor loadings (above .50), a lack of cross-loading onto multiple factors (above .30), and correspondence to theory.

Four factors emerged from the initial extraction, as shown in Table 3.1. Two factors corresponded to constructs the scale intended to measure (self-concept authenticity and the expression subscale). A third factor was comprised of the ownership items and several awareness items, suggesting that they may represent a single factor, however these items were all retained at this stage. A final factor was comprised of all the negatively worded items from the present state authenticity subscales ($n = 4$) and one additional item intended to measure awareness ("*I was attuned to changes within my body, e.g., heartbeat, breathing)",* and appeared to be an artefactual response factor produced by the negatively worded items (Schmitt & Stultz, 1985), so these items were removed. One item intended to measure ownership (*"I had a sense of connection to my experiences")* cross-loaded with expression and was removed, as was an item intended to measure awareness (*"I attended to my innermost thoughts")* which loaded with expression without being conceptually consistent. To further refine the scale and limit redundancy, the top loading 6 items were retained from the self-concept authenticity scale and expression subscale for a final scale of 20 items (ownership $n = 5$; awareness $n = 3$).

A subsequent EFA on the remaining 20 items resulted in a three-factor solution accounting for 69.6% of the variance, with standardized factor loadings ranging from .57 to .94, as shown in Table 2. Two factors reflected the proposed constructs of self-concept authenticity (α = .94) and the expression subscale of present-state authenticity (α = .93). The final factor comprised the proposed awareness (α =.82) and ownership (α =.83) items which loaded together. As there were only 3 remaining awareness items, it was determined that this scale showed measurement problems, with items failing to differentiate from the other factors. Although this suggested that the remaining items appeared to represent a single factor with ownership, awareness and ownership had been found to demonstrate a different pattern of effects in the prior study. Given the theoretical underpinnings of these subscales as non-redundant separate factors, these were considered further rather than immediately dropped or made into a composite scale. Both the suggested three-factor model and the proposed four-factor model were therefore considered further using confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 3.1

EFA Factor Loadings for all Proposed Scale Items

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Awareness				
I was aware of my inner experiences. *	.19	**.59**	.08	.08
I was conscious of what I really thought. *	.18	**.63**	.02	-.07
I was in touch with how I felt. *	.14	**.69**	.09	-.05
I attended to my innermost thoughts.	**.62**	**.32**	-.01	.07
I was attuned to changes within my body (e.g., heartbeat, breathing).	.28	**.52**	-.10	**.37**
I avoided my feelings. *(reverse)*	-.27	-.03	.08	**.59**
I disregarded what I truly thought. *(reverse)*	-.29	.02	-.06	**.66**
Ownership				
My thoughts were my own. *	.03	**.70**	.02	-.14
I determined my emotional reactions. *	.07	**.65**	-.03	.06
I had a sense of ownership over my thoughts and feelings. *	.04	**.76**	-.05	-.05
I had a sense of connection to my experiences.	**.33**	**.53**	-.03	.03
I had a sense of authorship over my actions. *	-.07	**.82**	-.07	-.15
I was in charge of how I responded to the situation. *	-.20	**.80**	.01	.01
My inner experiences were not my own. *(reverse)*	**.35**	**-.32**	-.04	**.71**

Expression				
I expressed what I really thought. *	**.79**	.01	.03	-.17
I expressed my true feelings. *	**.80**	-.01	.07	-.14
My behaviour reflected how I really felt. *	**.74**	-.04	.16	-.05
I expressed my thoughts and feelings accurately. *	**.75**	-.01	.06	-.18
I openly shared my inner experiences. *	**.88**	.04	-.12	.13
I communicated my true inner experience (through words or actions).	**.76**	.13	.06	-.01
I genuinely conveyed my feelings to others. *	**.86**	-.02	-.02	-.12
I pretended that I felt differently than I really did. *(reverse)*	**-.35**	.23	.14	**.72**
Self-Concept				
I was my true self. *	.10	.03	**.89**	.13
I acted in line with my true self. *	.11	-.05	**.93**	.17
My actions were consistent with the core of who I am. *	.09	.03	**.84**	.22
I regarded myself as being true to who I really am. *	.15	-.04	**.84**	.12
I acted as someone else, rather than my true self. *(reverse)* *	.19	-.04	**-.87**	.18
My actions were inconsistent with who I truly know myself to be. *(reverse)* *	-.04	.18	**-.85**	.15
I did not recognise myself. *(reverse)*.	.23	-.16	**-.77**	.25

Note. * Items retained in the final scale. Bolded values higher than .30.

Table 3.2

EFA Factor Loadings for Final Scale Items

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Self-Concept Authenticity			
I was my true self.	**.92**	.04	.001
I acted in line with my true self.	**.94**	-.04	.02
My actions were consistent with the core of who I am.	**.87**	.02	-.03
I regarded myself as being true to who I really am.	**.86**	-.02	.06
I acted as someone else, rather than my true self. *(R)*	**-.85**	-.11	.15
My actions were inconsistent with who I truly know myself to be. *(R)*	**-.85**	.13	-.05
Present-State Authenticity			
Awareness subscale			
I was aware of my inner experiences.	.09	**.57**	.14
I was conscious of what I really thought.	.03	**.65**	.18
I was in touch with how I felt.	.08	**.70**	.16
Expression subscale			
I expressed what I really thought.	.01	.05	**.86**
I expressed my true feelings.	.04	.02	**.87**
My behaviour reflected how I really felt.	.13	-.05	**.80**
I expressed my thoughts and feelings accurately.	.03	.03	**.84**
I openly shared my inner experiences.	-.14	-.03	**.87**
I genuinely conveyed my feelings to others.	-.04	-.01	**.92**
Ownership subscale			
My thoughts were my own.	.01	**.74**	.08
I determined my emotional reactions.	-.04	**.67**	.02
I had a sense of ownership over my thoughts and feelings.	-.05	**.79**	.03
I had a sense of authorship over my actions.	-.07	**.89**	-.07
I was in charge of how I responded to the situation.	.01	**.84**	-.23

Note. Bolded values higher than .30.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) performed using the structural equation modelling software AMOS was used to directly compare a three-factor model (with awareness and ownership as a composite scale) and the proposed four-factor model, to assess which provided a better fit and parsimony. The two negatively worded self-concept authenticity items were allowed to be correlated. The factor structure's fit to the data was evaluated using the following indicators of good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999): comparative fit index (CFI; cut off >.95), root mean square error approximation (RMSEA; cut off < .06) and standard root mean square residual (SRMR; cut off < .08). Model fit statistics are presented in Table 3.3. It should be noted that whilst the chi-square was statistically significant, it is known to be overly sensitive with larger samples (Kenny & McCoach, 2003). Model fit indicators showed that both models were of good fit, with no substantial differences. The Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), used to compare non-nested models, suggested the four-factor model had better relative fit and parsimony (Burnham & Anderson, 2004). The four-factor model was thus retained, given also its theoretical basis.

Table 3.3

Summary Model Fit Statistics for Measurement Models

Model	$\chi^2(df)$	p	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA $CI_{90\%}$	SRMR	AIC
2-factor	753.51 (168)	<.001	4.49	.877	.11 [.10, .11]	.08	837.51
3-factor	293.40 (166)	<.001	1.78	.973	.05 [.04, .06]	.04	381.40
4-factor	259.58 (163)	<.001	1.59	.980	.04 [.03, .05]	.04	353.58

Note: 2-factor model: all present-state authenticity items as a single composite measure. 3-factor model: composite awareness and ownership items. 4-factor: all subscales represented separately. CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error approximation

Scale correlations for the four-factor model are shown in Table 3.4. As expected from the EFA results, awareness and ownership were very strongly correlated, indicating problems of multicollinearity in the data. Suggestions for dealing with multicollinearity involve creating a composite measure of the two highly correlated independent variables or removing one of the two variables from the analysis, however, both strategies operate on the presumption that these are redundant measures of the same underlying theoretical construct (Allen, 1997). As a composite measure had been considered and rejected on the basis of comparable model fit and poorer correspondence to theory, the stability of results was next investigated by removing either one of the two scales (i.e., removing awareness, then removing ownership) when considering the predictive relationships. Such a procedure was considered to provide further evidence about how the factors may affect the outcome variables, whilst also navigating the multicollinearity producing instability of the regression coefficient.

Table 3.4

Scale Correlations for the 4-Factor Model

Factor	1	2	3
1. Awareness	-		
2. Expression	.74***	-	
3. Ownership	.92***	.65***	-
4. Self-Concept Authenticity	.49***	.54***	.36***

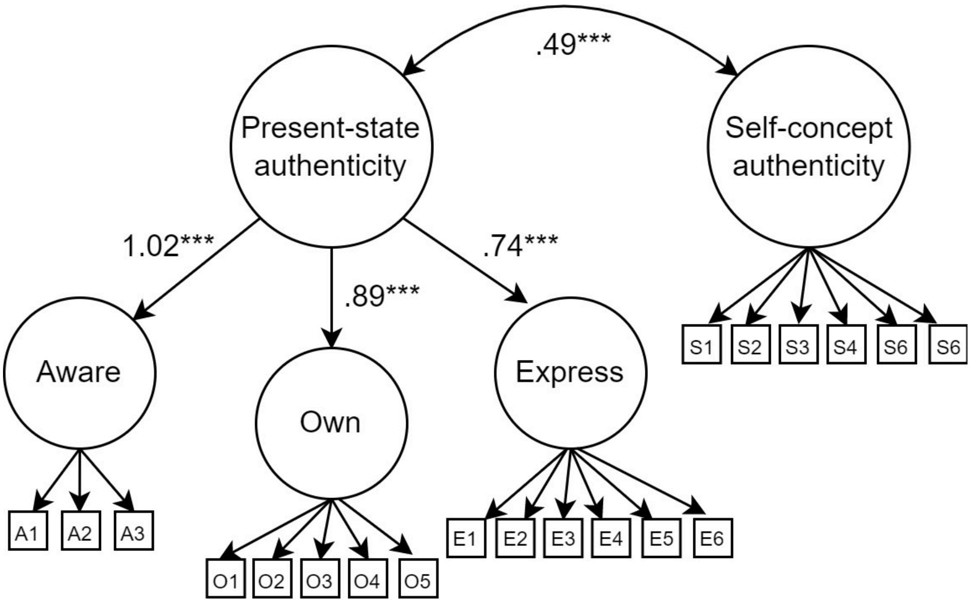
Note. *** $p < .001$

As an alternative way of representing the model, it was also investigated whether the present-state authenticity subscales loaded onto a higher-order present-state authenticity construct, represented in Figure 3.1. Model fit statistics indicated that the model was a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(df) = 289.52\ (165)$, $p < .001$, $\chi/df = .176$, CFI = .974, RMSEA $CI_{90\%} = .05$

[.04, .06], SRMR = .06. All three present-state authenticity subscales strongly loaded onto the latent factor, as consistent with the proposition that each factor is representative of present-state authenticity. Although not intended to be considered as a composite measure in the present analyses (given CFA confirmed these are better represented as separate dimensions), a combined present-state authenticity scale was also found to have high internal consistency (α = .93). The latent present-state authenticity factor was found to be moderately positively correlated with self-concept authenticity, suggesting evidence for convergent validity. It should be noted that, as seen in Figure 1, the standardized regression coefficient for awareness was greater than 1, which may indicate an issue. Deegan (1978) demonstrates that coefficients larger than 1 may arise genuinely and may reflect multicollinearity (as has been noted within these data), but are not problematic for interpretation.

Figure 3.1

Diagram of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis for a Latent Present-State Authenticity Construct, and its Correlation with Self-Concept Authenticity



Note. Standardized item loadings and error variances omitted for clarity. ***$p < .001$.

Predictive Relationships

The predictive relationships with the outcome measures were considered in AMOS using the proposed four-factor model. To account for the multicollinearity issues, the stability of the results was considered via running each model three times. First, with all four factors represented, and then as two three-factor models with awareness or ownership removed from the analysis. Standardized regression coefficients and model fit statistics for the predictive relationships with pseudo self-forgiveness are shown in Table 3.5. Model fit statistics indicated that all three tested models were of good fit. Notably, when considering the four-factor model, awareness and ownership demonstrated opposing relationships with pseudo self-forgiveness. Although the path from awareness to pseudo self-forgiveness was statistically non-significant due to the large standard error (likely reflective of multicollinearity; the coefficients and standard errors for both scales were noted to be inflated), the relationship trend was positive, whilst ownership was negatively related. Despite being very highly correlated, awareness and ownership therefore tended to have opposing relationships with pseudo self-forgiveness, suggesting further support for the separability of these factors. The final present-state authenticity subscale, expression, was found to be a significant positive predictor of pseudo self-forgiveness, as was self-concept authenticity.

Table 3.5

Standardised Regression Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for the Authenticity Scale Predicting Pseudo Self-Forgiveness, considering a 4-Factor Model and Two 3-Factor Models Removing Awareness, and then Ownership

Model	β	SE	*p*
4-factor model			
Awareness	.52	.37	.10
Expression	**.20**	**.08**	**.05**
Ownership	**-.64**	**.31**	**.02**
Self-concept Auth.	**.39**	**.05**	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(288) = 446.96, p < .001; \chi^2/df = 1.55$, CFI = .97, RMSEA $CI_{90\%}$ = .04 [.04, .05], SRMR = .05			
Awareness removed			
Expression	**.30**	**.06**	**<.001**
Ownership	**-.25**	**.09**	**.003**
Self-concept Auth.	**.45**	**.04**	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(223) = 349.49, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.57$, CFI = .97, RMSEA $CI_{90\%}$ = .04 [.03, .05], SRMR = .05			
Ownership removed			
Awareness	-.11	.11	.24
Expression	**.22**	**.07**	**.02**
Self-concept Auth.	**.46**	**.05**	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(182) = 308.45, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.70$, CFI = .97, RMSEA $CI_{90\%}$= .05 [.04, .06], SRMR = .05			

Note: β = standardised coefficients; SE = standard error; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error approximation; bolded values indicate statistically significant relationships ($p < .05$).

There was some variability in the results when the relationships were considered across the three-factor models. Expression showed the greatest stability, and was found to have a significant positive relationship with pseudo self-forgiveness across all models. Counter to hypotheses, ratings of having expressed one's thoughts and feelings openly and accurately in the context of wrongdoing were therefore related to greater, rather than lesser, defensiveness. Regarding awareness and ownership, the results suggested suppression was occurring between these variables. For ownership, the results were consistent irrespective of whether awareness was included in the model, however, the results differed for awareness depending on whether ownership was included in the model or not, which may suggest that ownership is the more proximal predictor of the two. Ownership was consistently negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness, thus a greater sense of authorship and agency during the incident was related to less defensiveness. In contrast, when ownership was removed from the model, awareness trended towards being negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness (albeit non-significantly so), as compared with trending towards a positive relationship when ownership was also represented. Ownership thus appeared to suppress variance in awareness, leading it to be a positive predictor when ownership was included in the model. Self-concept authenticity showed a consistent negative relationship with pseudo self-forgiveness across all three models, suggesting that offender perceptions of having acted in a manner consistent with their true or core self during the wrongdoing was associated with greater defensiveness as predicted.

Table 3.6

Standardised Regression Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for the Authenticity Scale Predicting Genuine Self-Forgiveness, considering a 4-Factor Model and Two 3-Factor Models Removing Awareness, and then Ownership

Model	β	SE	*p*
4-factor model			
Awareness	-.13	.36	.66
Expression	-.02	.08	.82
Ownership	.22	.30	.39
Self-concept Auth.	**-.49**	**.05**	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(313) = 531.11, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.57$, CFI = .96, RMSEA $\text{CI}_{90\%}$= .05 [.04, 05], SRMR = .06			
Awareness removed			
Expression	-.05	.07	.60
Ownership	.12	.10	.15
Self-concept Auth.	**-.50**	**.05**	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(245) = 423.13, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.73$, CFI = .97, RMSEA $\text{CI}_{90\%}$ =.05 [.04, .06] SRMR = .06			
Ownership removed			
Awareness	.09	.12	.39
Expression	-.03	.08	.78
Self-concept Auth.	**-.51**	**.05**	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(202) = 384.40, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.90$, CFI = .96, RMSEA $\text{CI}_{90\%}$= .05 [.05, .06], SRMR = .06			

Note: β = standardised coefficients; SE = standard error; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error approximation; bolded values indicate statistically significant relationships ($p < .05$).

The standardised regression coefficients and model fit statistics for the predictive relationships with genuine self-forgiveness are shown in Table 3.6. As in the previous analyses, the model was run three times. Model fit statistics indicated good fit for all three models. Contrary to hypotheses, all three present-state authenticity scales were found to be unrelated to genuine self-forgiveness. It was noted that the magnitude of the standardized coefficients remained relatively consistent, therefore demonstrating greater stability across the three models than in the previous analyses with pseudo self-forgiveness. Self-concept authenticity was a consistent negative predictor of genuine self-forgiveness across all three models. Feelings of having been one's true or core self during the wrongdoing were therefore found to be related to less genuine processing of the wrongdoing.

Finally, the predictive relationships with self-punitiveness were considered. Standardized regression coefficients and model fit statistics are shown in Table 3.7. It was apparent that suppression was occurring between the present-state authenticity subscales. When all factors were represented in the model, awareness, expression and ownership were all non-significantly related to self-punitiveness. However, high standard errors for the estimates for awareness and ownership point again to multicollinearity issues. When awareness was removed, expression became a significant positive predictor, and ownership a significant negative predictor. When ownership was removed, expression became a marginal positive predictor (although the size of the standardised coefficient was consistent), and awareness became a negative predictor. Self-concept authenticity remained a stable negative predictor across all three models, with perceptions of having acted in a manner consistent with one's true or core self in the context of wrongdoing being related to less self-condemning and ruminative processing.

Table 3.7

Standardised Regression Coefficients and Model Fit Statistics for the Authenticity Scale Predicting Self-Punitiveness, considering a 4-Factor Model and Two 3-Factor Models Removing Awareness, and then Ownership

Model	β	SE	*p*
4-factor model			
Awareness	.11	.36	.72
Expression	.17	.08	.11
Ownership	-.46	.30	.09
Self-concept Auth.	**-.32**	**.05**	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(313) = 621.51, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 1.99$, CFI = .95, RMSEA $CI_{90\%}$ = .06 [.05, .06], SRMR = .06			
Awareness removed			
Expression	**.18**	**.07**	**.05**
Ownership	**-.36**	**.10**	**<.001**
Self-concept Auth.	**-.31**	**.04**	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(245) = 509.56, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 2.08$, CFI = .95, RMSEA $CI_{90\%}$ = .06, [.05, .07], SRMR = .07			
Ownership removed			
Awareness	**-.34**	**.12**	**.002**
Expression	.18	.08	.09
Self-concept Auth.	**-.27**	.05	**<.001**
Model fit: $\chi^2(202) = 457.63, p < .001. \chi^2/df = 2.27$, CFI = .95, RMSEA $CI_{90\%}$ = .06 [.06, .07], SRMR = .07			

Note: β = standardised coefficients; SE = standard error; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error approximation; bolded values indicate statistically significant relationships ($p < .05$).

Analyses using Scale Scores

To further investigate the relationships between the authenticity scale and transgression-related responding, additional analyses were run using scale scores. Table 3.8 contains descriptive statistics and correlations between variables. As can be seen in Table 3.8, awareness and ownership were less strongly correlated than when using the latent variables, suggesting multicollinearity was no longer a problem for item averages treated as observed variables. To confirm this, collinearity diagnostics were run to consider the Variable Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance statistics. Whilst there is no formal cut-off for these statistics, it has been suggested that VIF greater than 10 or Tolerance less than 0.2 may indicate multicollinearity (Field, 2009, p.224). The tests indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern (awareness: VIF = 2.93, Tolerance = .34; expression: VIF = 1.81, Tolerance = .55; ownership: VIF = 2.47, Tolerance = .40).

Table 3.8

Means and Standard Deviations (SD) and Correlations between Variables

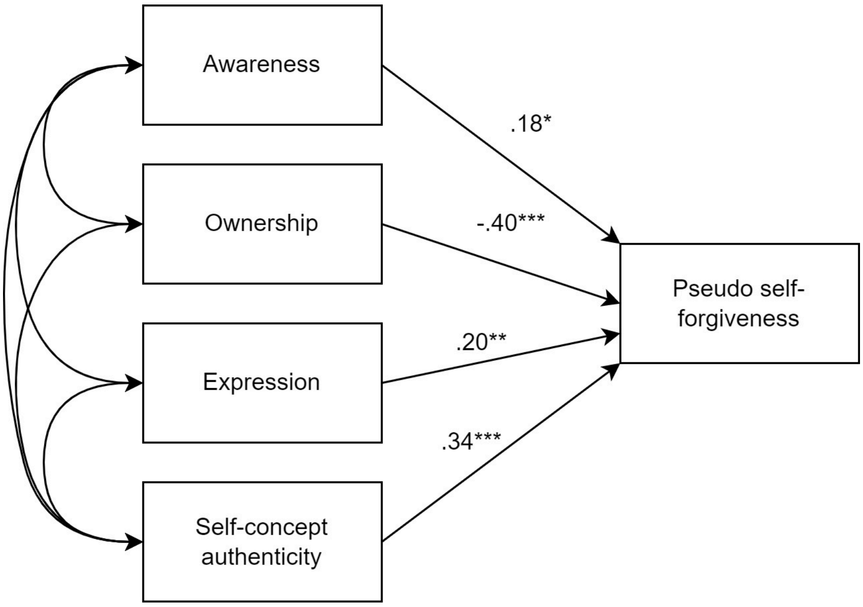
Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Aware	5.17	1.19	-					
2. Express	4.78	1.43	.66***	-				
3. Own	5.33	1.03	.77***	.58***	-			
4. SCA	3.98	1.60	.44***	.50***	.32***	-		
5. PSF	3.25	1.42	.26***	.34***	.09	.47***	-	
6. GSF	4.81	1.13	-.12*	-.19***	-.05	-.44***	-.48***	-
7. SP	3.05	1.30	-.29***	-.20***	-.31***	-.38***	-.17**	.49***

Note. Aware = awareness; Express = expression; Own = ownership; SCA = self-concept authenticity; PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness; GSF = genuine self-forgiveness; SP = self-punitiveness. ****p* < .001, ***p* <.01, **p* < .05

Given that the scale scores were not demonstrating problems with multicollinearity, the predictive relationships were considered again in AMOS using scale scores rather than latent measures. The four-factor model's predictive relationships with pseudo self-forgiveness are depicted in Figure 3.2. Awareness and expression were both found to be significant positive predictors, whilst ownership was a negative predictor. Self-concept authenticity was also a positive predictor. Compared with the model using latent variables, awareness was found to be statistically significant, whereas it previously was not. The direction of the relationships and the strength of the effects was otherwise roughly consistent.

Figure 3.2

Standardized Coefficients for a 4-Factor Model for Authenticity Using Scale Scores, Predicting Pseudo Self-Forgiveness

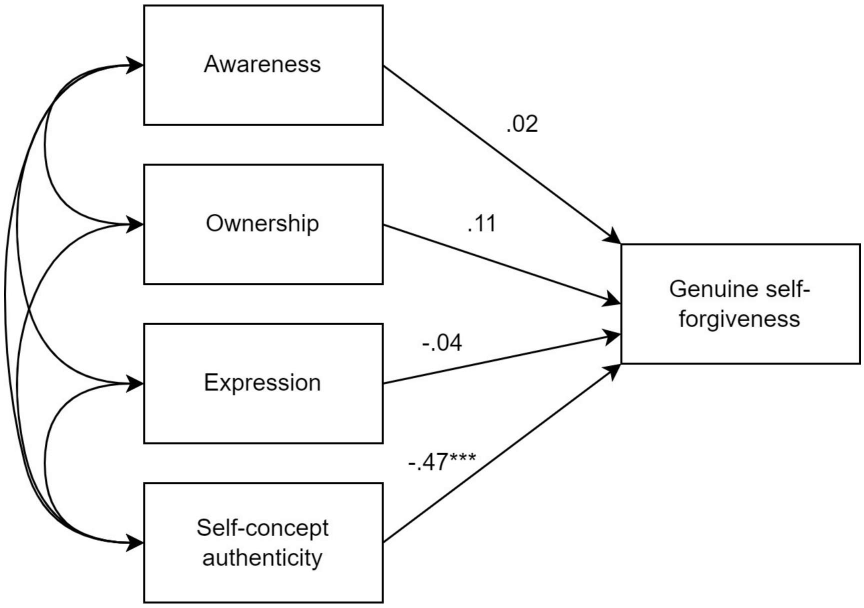

Awareness
Ownership
Expression
Self-concept authenticity
Pseudo self-forgiveness
.18*
-.40***
.20**
.34***

Note. The graph depicts observed variables with error variances omitted for clarity. ****p* < .001, ***p* <.01, **p* < .05.

The four-factor model's predictive relationships with genuine self-forgiveness are depicted in Figure 3.3. Consistent with the prior model, it was found that awareness, expression and ownership were all non-significant predictors of genuine self-forgiveness. Feelings of having been aware of one's experiences, expressed these consistently to others and a sense of ownership over one's actions was therefore found to have no relationship with genuine processing of one's wrongdoing. Self-concept authenticity was again found to be a significant negative predictor, as in the previous models.

Figure 3.3

Standardized Coefficients for 4-Factor Model of Authenticity Using Scale Scores, Predicting Genuine Self-Forgiveness

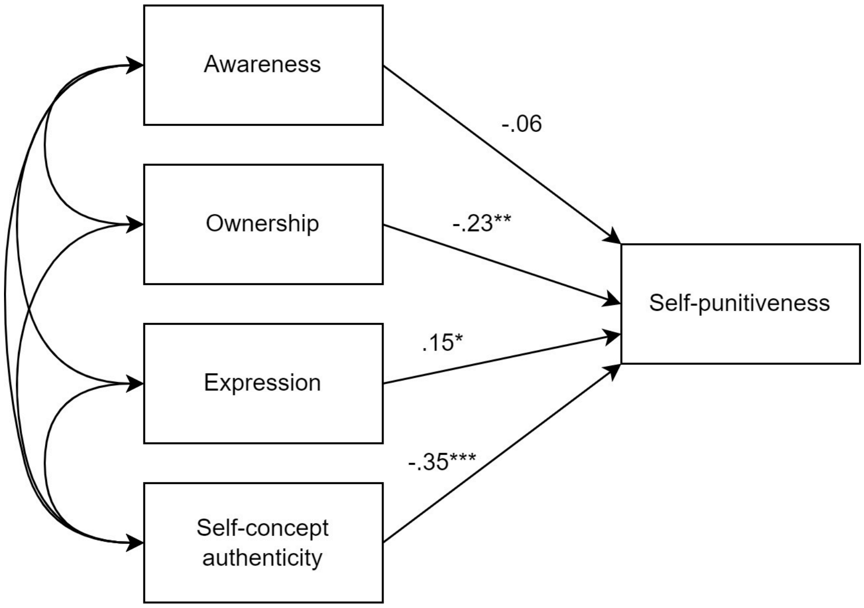


Note. The graph depicts observed variables with error variances omitted for clarity. ****p* < .001, ***p* <.01, **p* < .05.

Finally, the model was considered as predicting self-punitiveness. The model is depicted in Figure 3.4. Awareness was found to be unrelated to self-punitiveness. Ownership was a significant negative predictor, such that a greater sense of agency and authorship over one's behaviour at the time of the wrongdoing was associated with less self-condemnation regarding the event. Expression was found to be a positive predictor. Expressing one's thoughts and feelings openly and honestly at the time of the wrongdoing was thus associated with greater self-punitiveness. Self-concept authenticity was a negative predictor. As compared with the previous analyses, expression and ownership were previously found to only be significant predictors when awareness was removed from the model, and awareness was a negative predictor when ownership was removed.

Figure 3.4

Standardized coefficients for a 4-factor model of authenticity using scale scores, predicting self-punitiveness



Note. The graph depicts observed variables with error variances omitted for clarity. ****p* < .001, ***p* <.01, **p* < .05.

Discussion

The current study presents the first stage of development for a dual personal authenticity scale. The scale captures two aspects of personal authenticity that relate to separate dimensions of a sense of self. The present-state authenticity scale captures feeling true to one's present-state experience and is comprised of three subscales: subjective *awareness* of one's momentary experience (including thoughts, feelings, and self-relevant cognitions such as preferences and desires), the consistent *expression* or behavioural representation of this experience, and a phenomenological sense of *ownership* (such that this process feels self-authored and autonomous). The self-concept authenticity scale captures perceptions that one's experience validates, or is representational of, one's true- or core-self concept. Whilst these two dimensions of authenticity have been represented in the literature, the current study presents the first investigation which clearly and comprehensively differentiates these constructs in a manner that allows their respective relationships to be explored simultaneously.

Preliminary evidence was found for the scale's properties, which suggests support for the differentiated conceptualisation. Firstly, support was found for the proposed factorial structure. Whilst the awareness subscale demonstrated measurement overlap with ownership in exploratory factor analysis (EFA), analyses otherwise suggested that these represent distinct constructs. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) revealed that the proposed four-factor model demonstrated a better relative fit to the data than a three-factor model (with awareness and ownership represented as a composite scale). Despite being strongly correlated, awareness and ownership demonstrated different relationships with the outcome variables, which suggests further evidence for their differentiation. Secondly, consistent with the theoretical proposition that awareness, expression, and ownership are subcomponents of present-state authenticity, all three subscales were found to comprise a higher-order latent authenticity factor. Finally, present-state authenticity (represented as a latent factor and as separate subscales) was significantly moderately correlated with self-concept authenticity, suggesting evidence of convergent and divergent validity. These results provide promising support for the differentiated conceptualisation and future research should seek to invest in the continued development, refinement, and validation of the scale.

Predictive Relationships: Self-Concept Authenticity

As hypothesised, it was found that to the extent that offenders felt their wrongdoing was self-concept authentic, they reported more defensiveness. This result replicates findings from Chapter 1 and lends greater confidence to this association. Given the correlational nature of the data, inquiry now turns to consider the direction of this relationship and its mechanisms. As has been discussed, self-concept authenticity following wrongdoing may represent a defensive strategy. That is, by claiming self-concept authenticity, an offender may be able to attenuate threats to self-image by effectively claiming that they have been their moral self and acted in line with what was right by them. It is possible that this then predicts further defensiveness (e.g., attributing blame to others; expressing anger about how one has been treated) as a post hoc rationalisation for one's authenticity, given that we are fundamentally motivated to protect against threats to our self-image (e.g., Sherman & Cohen, 2006). However, it is also possible that this relationship functions in the opposite direction or is cyclic. An offender's engagement in defensive processing may provide the conditions for self-concept authenticity to be maintained. Through defensive processing, an offender may alter appraisals of the offence, making their actions seem less severe or themselves less responsible, or otherwise buffer threats to their moral-social image. Under conditions where an offender perceives that they have "done nothing wrong" or at least, "nothing *that* bad", self-concept authenticity may not be disrupted. These possibilities will be investigated in Chapter 4.

Self-concept authenticity was also found to be negatively associated with both genuine self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness as predicted, and as found in Chapter 2. These findings lend additional support to the theoretical hypothesis that feeling one was self-concept authentic in the context of wrongdoing is associated with less engagement in transgression processing. Although genuine self-forgiveness and self-punitiveness represent separate transgression-related responses associated with different outcomes, both involve responsibility acknowledgement and continued processing of the event. In genuine self-forgiveness, this processing is constructive and focused on growth. Accordingly, genuine self-forgiveness is associated with both intra- and interpersonal restoration (Wenzel et al., 2012; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b; Woodyatt, Wenzel & de Vel-Palumbo, 2017). In self-punitiveness, event processing is ruminative and self-condemning, and does not have the same positive implications for restoration (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b). It thus appears that the experience of self-concept authenticity may represent a resolution of the event, as offenders are less likely to engage in processing it further, either constructively or ruminatively. These results jointly suggest that the uncomfortable experience of true-self inconsistency may help to motivate the difficult work of event processing, and that self-concept inauthenticity may be functional in a transgression context.

Predictive Relationships: Present-State Authenticity

It was hypothesised that all three present-state authenticity subscales would be negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness. Only ownership was found to function as predicted, whereas awareness (in the model using scale scores) and expression were positive predictors. Whilst subjective awareness and expression were positively related to ownership because these imply that one’s experience is felt to be representational of one’s present-state self, and are thus acknowledged as one’s own, these components appear to have different implications for defensiveness. On the one hand, awareness and expression seem to suggest that the experience was in line with how one thought and felt at the time, hence it feels psychologically “right”, and is thus defensible. On the other hand, to the extent that the experience is felt to be self-authored and agentic (i.e., ownership), it implies that one’s experience is not rejected, displaced, or downplayed, and is thus negatively associated with defensiveness. Despite the positive associations between the present-state authenticity sub-factors (as was hypothesised), it therefore appears that these elements may have contradictory effects for defensiveness, which further suggests that they should be considered separately.

Counter to hypotheses, all three present-state authenticity subscales were found to be unrelated to genuine self-forgiveness. It is unclear why these variables were unrelated given that the literature suggests present-state authenticity should have a constructive function in a relational context. This finding may pertain to the fact that present-state authenticity was considered at the time of wrongdoing in the current study. As discussed above, it may be that the extent to which one feels one's wrongdoing was present-state authentic, it was justified, and is not required to be processed further. It may also be that there are moderators or mediators for this relationship that are outside of the scope of the current study to consider. The present study however found no evidence that present-state authenticity at the time of wrongdoing is directly associated with genuine self-forgiveness.

The present-state authenticity subscales were found to function in different ways in their relationships with self-punitiveness. Only ownership was found to be negatively associated with self-punitiveness as predicted, whilst expression was associated with greater punitiveness, and awareness was found to fluctuate depending upon whether ownership was also represented in the model. The components of present-state authenticity may therefore have conflicting effects on self-punitiveness. On the one hand, if one feels their actions were representational of their experience (i.e., expression), it may reflect more poorly upon the self, leading to greater self-condemnation. However, in feeling that one can account for their actions, and experiencing a comfortable sense of ownership (and thus possibly, agency), they may be less self-condemning. Awareness does not seem to be related to self-punitiveness when accounting for shared relations with ownership. Without ownership in the model, the negative relation of awareness to self-punitiveness mirrors arguments that self-alienation reflects a breakdown of awareness (Wood et al. 2008). Self-alienation may include feelings of not being able to come to terms with a wrongdoing; not knowing how one could have behaved that way, not being able to face oneself, which are all aspects of self-punitiveness (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b).

Implications and Future Directions

The Present-State Authenticity Scale

The measurement overlap found between awareness and ownership, and expression (but to a lesser extent), may be conceptually meaningful. Although the direction of these relationships is yet to be empirically established, awareness may be a precondition for phenomenological ownership (see Chapter 1) as these results imply. Logically, it does not seem possible for experiences to feel self-authored and autonomous if one is not also mindfully connected to the experience (as conceptually contrasted with a sense of mindlessness or confusion about how one feels). Research into mindfulness (i.e., active attention to the present moment) supports this proposition, as it has been found to support autonomous functioning (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Separately, awareness also provides the content for consistent present-state expression, providing an explanation for this overlap (however, this relationship is likely to be cyclical, as will be argued below). Given that awareness may be implied in ownership, it will likely be difficult to differentiate these constructs at a measurement level. Nonetheless, it is argued that awareness should not be dropped from the scale. Although it appears a sense of ownership implies awareness, examples can be generated for the possibility of awareness *without* ownership. At its most extreme, this may be implicated in mental illness, where an individual may be aware of unwanted or intrusive thoughts which feel self-alien. Alternatively, immoral or socially undesirable thoughts may not feel self-authored, and the person may find themselves surprised at where they came from. Whilst awareness is therefore argued to be non-redundant, its conceptual overlap with ownership offers challenges in developing a scale.

Although awareness may be a precondition for ownership and, to a lesser extent, expression, these relationships are likely to be reciprocal. Although present-state awareness may provide the content for accurate present-state expression, it is likely that talking about one's experience leads to greater insight and clarity, which in turn, shapes awareness and ownership. This may be particularly relevant in interpersonal contexts such as transgressions, where meaning-making, moral repair and restoration are dyadic processes (Wenzel et al., 2021, 2022; Woodyatt et al., 2022). In discussing the event with the victim party or third parties, offenders may shape their understanding of the event, accept appropriate levels of responsibility, and restore a sense of agency. The current study modelled the relationships between the present-state authenticity subscales as correlated as theorising is in its early stages, so exploring the directionality of these relationships presents a future direction.

Present-state Authenticity as a Context-Sensitive Process

Present-state authenticity was found to function differently from Chapter 2. Study 1 found that a desire for awareness, leading to a sense of ownership, may have positive implications for genuine self-forgiveness and negative implications for pseudo self-forgiveness. Differences between these studies may be accounted for by how present-state authenticity was measured. As compared with Study 1, which considered a desire to be present-state authentic (a future-focused process), the current study considered retrospectively recalled present-state authenticity at the time of the transgression. The point at which present-state authenticity is considered may therefore be key to how it functions. Subjective present-state authenticity during wrongdoing (as in the current study) may not have a clear constructive function; it suggests, in part, that the event was felt to be consistent with how one was genuinely feeling at the time. This appraisal may have the implication that the incident was therefore justified. However, present-state authenticity during event processing may be more consistently associated with restorative processes, as it may relate to more open and objective processing of transgression-relevant information (including assumedly, an acknowledgement of responsibility). Chapter 4 will therefore investigate how present-state authenticity may evolve across the course of transgression processing.

Exploring the Relationship Between the Two Dimensions of Authenticity

The current study is the first to provide evidence for two distinct aspects of personal authenticity that relate to separate dimensions of a sense of self. This opens up the possibility for rich future directions where, with future validation, the differentiated scale may be adapted for different contexts in other empirical work. Given that the current study suggested these two aspects of authenticity may function in different ways, a differentiated conceptualisation may assist in disentangling divergent effects within the literature. It also allows for the consideration of theoretical questions which emerge from these being separate factors. For example, when someone experiences (in)authenticity in one dimension, how does it impact upon the other? It is likely that these two forms of authenticity share functional relationships, given that one's present-state experiences shape one's self-concept. In circumstances where one feels present-state inauthentic (e.g., due to being unable to express themselves openly) one may feel self-concept inauthentic, even in environments that would usually invoke feelings of validation. The present work therefore opens up new avenues for a more nuanced exploration of personal authenticity.

Limitations

As has been discussed throughout, the awareness subscale caused measurement problems due to its overlap with ownership. The awareness subscale was also reduced to only three items based on a priori item retention criteria. Although the measurement overlap was analysed rigorously, further investigation will be required to build further confidence in the relationships found within this study. In developing the scale further, it is anticipated that awareness will present challenges given that it may be implied in ownership, and expression to a lesser extent. However, as has been argued, it remains a non-redundant and theoretically relevant aspect of present-state authenticity. Chapter 4 will aim to expand upon the items and continue to investigate the scale's factor structure to build confidence in these initial findings.

A further limitation is that participants recounted feelings of authenticity from an incident that occurred up to two weeks prior. This limitation is more likely to affect present-state authenticity as participants were required to retrospectively recall their present-state experience. Subsequent processing may have shaped or altered these memories. For example, it is possible that those defending the incident as self-concept authentic may also retrospectively recall feeling more present-state authentic than they may have at the time. This limitation may be less pertinent for the measure of self-concept authenticity as it represents a current appraisal of self-concept consistency, rather than recall of past experience. Present-state authenticity may therefore be more accurately assessed in closer proximity to the event.

As has been noted, the cross-sectional approach meant that the directionality of relationships could not be established in the current study. Although authenticity was modelled as predicting transgression-related responses, these relationships may function in the opposite direction (i.e., transgression responses predicting authenticity) or there may be reciprocal associations. It is of particular interest as to whether self-concept authenticity predicts defensiveness, or the inverse. Chapter 4 therefore employs a longitudinal design to assess how these variables may interact across time.

Concluding Remarks

The current study is the first to provide evidence for two distinct authenticity constructs that relate to separate dimensions of a sense of self. In the current study, operational definitions were presented, a scale was developed, and preliminary evidence of psychometric properties was sought. The predictive relationships with offenders' responses to their wrongdoings were then considered to continue to advance an understanding of authenticity's relationship with defensiveness and moral repair. The scale provides a promising start in developing a differentiated scale for present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity. These preliminary findings suggest a more complex understanding of personal authenticity may be enabled by the conceptual and empirical differentiation of these constructs.

CHAPTER 4

An Examination of the Reciprocal Associations Between Personal Authenticity, Defensiveness and Moral Repair

"*To thine own self be true" – Hamlet; Shakespeare*

The imperatives of knowing and being true to one's self have a long-spanning history (see Harter, 2002; Kernis & Goldman, 2006), with calls to "*just be yourself"* still featuring prominently in contemporary advice. This counsel is understandable when contextualised within the apparent bias towards viewing authenticity as an inherently positive quality. Authentic actions are seen to be "good" (Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019), and "good" actions may be assumed to be authentic (Bailey & Levy, 2022; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2016, 2020). However, the notion of authenticity as a uniformly positive attribute appears to conflict with reality; people also possess maladaptive or socially devalued attributes, and may act based on genuine self-interest in ways that harm others. So, whilst we may be called to be authentic – is it really always a good thing?

The presence of unaccounted for findings, such as the above contradictions, has pointed to a need to refine authenticity theory. In this thesis, I have identified two dimensions of personal authenticity that may account for discrepant findings. Present-state authenticity exists in whether we are aware of and convey our momentary experiences (what we are actually thinking and feeling; our current wants and desires), and feel a sense of ownership over our experience (such that it is felt to be self-authored and agentic). Self-concept authenticity involves perceptions that one's experience is consistent with or affirms important features of one's self-concept (which is often specifically, a 'true self' concept; the conceptual understanding of who someone *really* is). These dimensions have been operationalised and empirical evidence has been found that support their differentiation.

Within this thesis, I have found that present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity may have implications for defensiveness and moral repair that challenge the narrative of authenticity as a wholly positive construct. Though, it may need to be cautioned that the prior studies within this research program have been cross-sectional, leaving many questions about the nature of these relationships unanswered. Self-concept authenticity has been found to be positively associated with defensive responding, although the direction of this relationship and its mechanisms are yet to be explored. Present-state authenticity may be associated with a prosocial response; however, this relationship may be nuanced, potentially depending on which aspect of the incident is captured. Whilst present-state authenticity *during* the transgression may be associated with defensiveness and have no implications for moral repair, present-state authenticity during the *subsequent* processing of the transgression may be associated with a more prosocial response. The current study therefore aims to explore authenticity processes over time following a recent transgression, to continue to develop a more nuanced understanding of authenticity and its relationship with defensiveness and moral repair.

Present-State Authenticity as a Context-Sensitive Process

Early in this thesis, it was predicted that all facets of present-state authenticity would be uniformly associated with restorative processing. It was thought that the subcomponents of subjective awareness, accurate expression of present states and phenomenological ownership all implied an open and honest engagement with potentially self-threatening information, and as such would reduce defensiveness and increase engagement in moral repair. In partial support of this theorizing, Chapter 2 found that the desire to be aware of one's true transgression-related thoughts and feelings (including, presumably, some regret or guilt), via an increased sense of ownership over one's past actions, predicted reductions in pseudo self-forgiveness (defensively processing one's transgression via the negation and displacement of responsibility; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) and increased genuine self-forgiveness (growth-oriented processing involving an appropriate engagement with responsibility; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b). These relationships suggested that when offenders are motivated to engage in present-state authenticity during transgression processing, it may have a constructive function.

However, this was not found to be the case when present-state authenticity was considered in the context of committing wrongdoing. When asked to consider their subjective authenticity *during* a transgression that had occurred within the past two weeks (Chapter 3), it was found that self-rated awareness of present-state experience and its authentic expression were positively related to pseudo self-forgiveness, whereas a sense of ownership over past behaviour was negatively related. Further, the present-state authenticity subscales were all unrelated to genuine self-forgiveness. These results presented a mixed picture; awareness and consistent expression at the time of the wrongdoing may reflect an insistence or defiance that one’s actions were self-reflective, leading offenders to defend them as such, whereas ownership may reduce defensiveness given that it implies that is not distancing from their behaviour. Nonetheless, the initial hypothesis that present-state authenticity would be adaptive was not clearly supported within this context. It may have been that the initial assumption that present-state authenticity would be uniformly constructive also reflected a positivity bias, as it failed to account for the reality that people may authentically act (based on genuine present-state experience) in socially devalued ways. The point of the transgression at which present-state authenticity is captured (during the incident versus subsequent processing) may therefore be central to considering its effects.

The current study therefore aims to clearly distinguish between present-state authenticity at the time of the transgression versus during the subsequent processing of the transgression. A limitation of the Chapter 2 was that participants recounted feelings of authenticity during a past incident that occurred up to two weeks prior, and it may therefore reflect current perceptions more so than feelings at that time. The present study design therefore involves the recall of a very recent wrongdoing (< 48 hours) and hence permit the measurement of present-state authenticity as proximal to the transgression as possible; and it will involve the measurement of present-state authenticity over subsequent days during which the processing transgression would be expected to occur. Present-state authenticity at the time of the transgression, where one might be genuinely experiencing negative or antisocial emotions, may not reflect a positive process. However, during the processing of the event, latent transgression-related feelings may be recognised and processed (rather than suppressed or distorted), given additional opportunity to reflect upon the incident and openly disclose these (e.g., regret or guilt) to the victim or third parties. It was therefore thought that present-state authenticity during the transgression may be related to increased defensiveness and unrelated to genuine self-forgiveness, but in the processing of the event, it may reflect greater genuine self-forgiveness and a reduction in defensive responding. In this sense, considerations of present-state authenticity may be particularly influenced by the context in which they are considered.

Self-Concept Authenticity as a Barrier to Transgression Processing

As transgressions represent a violation of socially shared values (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008), it was expected that they would represent a true-self discordant act and, accordingly, reduce self-concept authenticity. Self-concept authenticity is experienced to the extent that one's experience is appraised to be consistent (versus inconsistent) with salient, valued self-concept features or specifically, true-self concept features. The literature suggests that features of morality and goodness may be particularly constitutive of perceptions of true self, for judgements of both our own selves and the true selves of others (Christy et al., 2016, 2017; De Freitas et al., 2017, 2018; Gino et al., 2015; Newman et al., 2014, 2015;

Strohminger et al., 2017), and so when acting in ‘bad’ ways, it would be expected that offenders would feel less like their true or core selves. Offenders who feel their transgressive actions were reflective of their true selves may therefore be defending that no wrongdoing has occurred. In Chapter 2 and 3 consistent positive associations were found between self-concept authenticity and pseudo self-forgiveness in a post-transgression context, and positive associations were found with genuine self-forgiveness. That is, greater perceptions of self-concept authenticity are related to engagement in pseudo self-forgiveness, and a lower likelihood of engaging in moral repair.

However, the direction and mechanisms of these relationships are yet to be explored. On the one hand, self-concept authenticity may lead to prospective increases in pseudo self-forgiveness. We are fundamentally motivated to protect against threats to our self-image (e.g., Sherman & Cohen, 2006) and maintain a sense of being a good and socially acceptable person (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In claiming self-concept authenticity following wrongdoing, an offender may seek to further verify their moral standing by engaging in defensive strategies, as a post hoc rationalisation for their authenticity (e.g., attributing blame to others; expressing anger about how they have been treated). In this way, pseudo self-forgiveness may arise as a consequence of claiming self-concept authenticity when a threat to one’s self-image is intuited.

On the other hand, defensiveness may buffer self-concept authenticity threat. Defensiveness operates as a psychological security system (Hart, 2014) to protect offenders from the psychological consequences of their actions, which are experienced as interrelated threats to their moral integrity and their sense of acceptance by others (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). Through pseudo self-forgiveness, offenders may deflect blame and responsibility, derogate the victim and negate wrongdoing. By denying responsibility and harm, offenders may attenuate threats to their moral self-image (Bandura,

1999) and reduce threats to self-concept consistency. If one has “done nothing wrong”, it follows that there may be no reason to feel self-concept inconsistent. In this way, offenders’ defensive distortion of experience may act to maintain a positive self-image. Pseudo self-forgiveness may therefore also be prospectively associated with greater self-concept authenticity.

Dual Authenticity Scale Validation

An additional aim of the current study is to continue validation and refinement of the Dual Authenticity Scale. Chapter 3 found preliminary support for the scale’s factorial structure and internal consistency. The results suggested a clear operationalisation of self-concept authenticity, however, the present-state authenticity awareness subscale requires further consideration. Exploratory factor analysis in Chapter 3 revealed that the awareness subscale did not differentiate from the ownership subscale at a measurement level, and the scale was reduced to three items following a priori item retention criteria. The measurement overlap was interpreted as theoretically meaningful, given that present-moment awareness is a logical precondition for a sense of phenomenological ownership over one’s experiences. Further investigation showed that despite strong statistical overlap, the two subscales differently predicted the outcome variables, suggesting further evidence for their differentiation. The current study seeks to investigate the scale’s factor structure further and extend the awareness subscale.

Analytic Approach

The present study’s design involves a panel design of repeated measurements; the first reflecting on the time of the transgression (which had occurred within the preceding 48 hours) and two subsequent measurements points (separated by 24 hours) during the period of post-transgression processing. As such, there were three measurement points in total. These data allow the use of cross-lagged panel models to assess the prospective (lagged) relationships between variables while controlling for auto-regressive effects (stability of a variable over time). The analysis thus regresses change in variables onto one or more predictor variables measured at the preceding time-point. As the predictors temporally precede change in the predicted variable, it is possible – with caution, due to the possible effects of unmeasured third variables – to interpret the prospective effects as directional influence (see Selig & Little, 2012).

Traditional cross-lagged panel models (CLPM) use this approach of modelling the prediction of change, however, conflate intra- and inter-individual sources of change; that is, change that is due to individuals changing relative to how they were before versus change due to individuals changing relative to each other (i.e., their relative ranking on the variable in question). Random intercept cross-lagged panel models (RI-CLPM; Hamaker et al., 2015; Orth et al., 2021) were therefore proposed as an alternative to the CLPM, to model prospective effects for within-person change. RI-CLPMs allow for consideration of within-person change as they partition observed variance into stable, time-invariant factors (called random intercept factors) that account for between-person variation in each construct, and time-varying within-person factors that account for deviation from the baseline average (trait) level at each measurement point. The RI-CLPM analysis therefore also allows consideration of whether people who, for example, experience greater present-state authenticity than usual (i.e., compared to their baseline) at a particular time point will subsequently show a greater-than-usual level of genuine self-forgiveness at the next time point. In contrast, the traditional CLPM would additionally (but confounded with this) test whether individuals who experience greater present-state authenticity than other individuals at a particular time point subsequently show a greater level of genuine self-forgiveness than other individuals at the next time point. As current theory is still in early stages I am agnostic about which form of change is involved, though it is conceivable for either or both intra- and inter-individual change to be implicated in the processes. Therefore, both analyses were considered.

Study 3

The present study sought to capture the initial period following wrongdoing (within 48 hours) and the subsequent couple of days. It is likely that most processing occurs in the period immediately following the wrongdoing, and therefore this period was selected as the time in which individuals are most affected by the incident and seeking to resolve the issue, either independently or with others (Wenzel et al, 2022). Prior studies have found that participants tend to report low-moderate severity transgressions when recalling recent transgressions (Study 1, severity: $M = 3.64$, SD = 1.37; Study 2, severity: $M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.47$). Given that a central aim was to consider transgression processing, non-trivial transgressions were considered for the best chance that offenders would still be processing the event, given that minor events are more likely to be resolved quickly. It was thought that defensiveness may be greater for more proximal and serious incidents. Given these aims, a novel methodology was trialled, where participation criteria specified that individuals had committed an interpersonal transgression within the preceding 48 hours which they considered to be relatively serious (i.e., non-trivial).

As time was considered a crucial consideration for present-state authenticity, the present study aimed to investigate how its predictive relationships may compare between the time of the wrongdoing and its processing. Therefore Time 1 present-state authenticity was anchored to the time of the offence, which occurred within the past 48 hours. Time 2 and Time 3 measurement points regarded how the event was being processed. It was expected that Time 1 awareness and expression (but not ownership) would reflect defensiveness, but at Time 2 and Time 3, all three subscales may reflect an open engagement with transgression related feelings to be negatively associated with defensiveness. Regarding self-concept authenticity, the referent was kept anchored to appraisals of one's transgression behaviour, to measure offender appraisals of the transgression behaviour as being self-concept consistent, and to investigate whether the self-concept consistency of the behaviour would be re-appraised as defensiveness changes over time.

In further exploring the relationship between defensiveness and self-concept authenticity, several mediators were considered. Through defensiveness, offenders downplay their responsibility and the harmfulness of their actions (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a), and ameliorate the threat to their moral self-image (Wenzel et al., 2020). Possible mediators for the relationship between defensiveness and self-concept authenticity were therefore (1) perceived responsibility, (2) perceived wrongfulness, which both mitigate the gravity of one's actions, and (3) moral threat, the interpreted threat one's actions represents to one's moral and social image as an acceptable group member.

Hypotheses

1. Awareness and expression at the time of the transgression (Time 1) will be positively related to pseudo self-forgiveness at Time 2, but a sense of ownership (Time 1) will be negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness.
2. Present-state awareness, ownership, and expression (i.e., present-state authenticity) during the processing of the transgression (Time 2) will be (a) negatively related to pseudo self-forgiveness, and (b) positively related to genuine self-forgiveness (Time 3).
3. Self-concept authenticity will be (a) negatively prospectively related to genuine self-forgiveness, and (b) positively prospectively related to pseudo self-forgiveness.

The alternative direction is also theoretically possible:

4. Pseudo self-forgiveness will be prospectively positively related to self-concept authenticity.

5. (a) Perceived responsibility, (b) perceived wrongfulness, and (c) moral-social threat will mediate the relationship between pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity, such that greater pseudo self-forgiveness (Time 1) will be negatively related to (a) responsibility, (b) perceived wrongfulness, and (c) moral-social image threat (Time 2), which will be related to increased self-concept authenticity (Time 3).

Method

Participants

Sample size was predetermined using a Monte Carlo simulation conducted in MPlus with 500 replications, based upon a generic four variable model with three time-lags. The analysis was tested with different sample size options based on available resources. Assuming within lag correlations of $r = .40$ and stabilities of beta = .80, power to detect cross-lagged relationships with a small-to-medium effect size beta = .20 within a sample of 150 across all three time points ranged from .55 to .72, and power to detect a medium-sized effect size of beta = .30, ranged from .87 to .95. An effective sample of 150 was therefore determined to be sufficient. However, assuming a drop-out rate of about 25% across the four time points, a sample of 200 participants was recruited. Exclusion criteria were predetermined to be inattentive responding (incorrectly responding to both of 2 embedded attention checks) or failing to follow given instruction (failing to report a transgression; reporting a transgression from more than 48 hours ago).

Cloud Research was used to recruit participants from MTurk who had committed a non-trivial transgression within the past 48 hours. After excluding participants who failed the attention checks ($n = 2$) or who did not report a transgression as instructed ($n = 2$), a total of 208 participants (women 53.4%, men 45.2% and non-binary 1.4%), aged between 19 and 89 ($M = 37.34$, $SD = 11.78$) completed the survey at Time 1. Participants identified as White/Caucasian (76.4%), Black/African American (9.1%), Asian (8.2%), Hispanic/Latino (3.4%), Multiracial (2.4%) and Middle Eastern (0.5%). Of this sample, 178 participants completed the Time 2 survey (failed attention check, *n* = 1; incomplete response[6], *n* = 8), and 166 participants completed Time 3 (failed attention check *n* = 1; incomplete response, *n* = 2). Hence, 85.6% of participants were retained from Time 1 to Time 2, and 93% from Time 2 to Time 3 (overall, 79.8% were retained from Time 1 to Time 3). All the data were included in the analyses (using full information maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS).

Procedure

The study advertisement specified that the three-part study was investigating how people process their recent wrongdoings, and was seeking people who felt they had wronged someone they share a relationship with in a relatively serious (i.e., non-trivial) manner, within the past 48 hours. It was clarified that this could involve, for example, a trust violation, an act of disrespect, an act of infidelity, or a psychological hurt or physical harm, and that the other person could be a spouse or partner, family member, friend, acquaintance or work colleague.

All surveys were administered online using Qualtrics survey software. Time 1 surveys were launched in small batches to ensure completion within a discrete time window, and to enable the subsequent questionnaires to be completed at approximately the same time. Following completion of Time 1, participants were sent an email 24 hours later inviting them to complete the Time 2 survey. Participants were instructed that the survey would only be available for a short period, and they were prompted with a second email one hour before it closed. Participants were emailed in the same manner 24 hours later for the final Time 3 survey, such that Time 3 occurred approximately 48 hours after Time 1.

Eligibility was assessed at Time 1 via two direct screening questions assessing whether a wrongdoing had been personally committed within the past 48 hours, and whether it was considered to be relatively serious (i.e., non-trivial). English proficiency was also screened at Time 1 using five multiple choice questions (e.g., *When do you study? At school; In the evenings; In the library*). Participants who responded *no* to either screening question or who incorrectly responded to a multiple-choice question were thanked for their interest and informed of their ineligibility. Two single items imbedded within the dependent measures for each survey served as attention checks, and asked participants to select a specific response option (e.g., "*please select somewhat disagree for this question"*).

---

[6] At both Time 2 and 3, these participants had responded to no dependent measures and were thus removed.

Transgression details were collected at Time 1. Participants were asked to describe "*what happened"* in an open text box; clarify the nature of the relationship shared with the affected other (e.g., *friend*; *family member*); rate the importance of the relationship; classify the transgression type (e.g., *disrespect; insult*); report when the incident had occurred specifically; and rate the incident severity on a scale from (1) *very minor* to (7) *very serious.* As an additional check, participants who reported an incident from more than 48 hours previously or who rated the transgression as (1) *very minor* were planned to be excluded, however no participants met these criteria.

Dependent Measures

The surveys participants completed contained a larger battery of questions for exploratory purposes that are outside of the scope of the present paper (see Appendix B). The measures detailed below are those relevant for the present investigation. With the exception of measures of transgression details described above (i.e., categorizations, severity, relationship closeness), which were assessed at Time 1 only, all measures were repeated at each time point. Participants were asked to provide a brief incident description at Time 2 and 3 in order to ensure they were reflecting upon the same incident. All items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale with labelled anchors, from (1) *strongly disagree*, through (4) *neither agree nor disagree*, to (7) *strongly agree*. Full scale scores were computed by averaging item responses for multi-item scales.

Self-Concept Authenticity. The following text was provided with emphasis as below to contextualise the self-concept authenticity items at each time point:

"The following questions relate to your understanding of who you are. Specifically, who you truly know yourself to be, deep down. For each statement, indicate how much it applied to you regarding the incident you reported."

Six items captured participants' sense of acting in a manner which was consistent with their concept of their core or true self, e.g., "*I acted in line with my true self; My actions were inconsistent with who I truly know myself to be* (R)". (Time 1, α = .94; Time 2, α = .94; Time 3, α = .93).

Present-State Authenticity. Items for the present-state authenticity subcomponents of awareness, expression and ownership were randomized within the same block. The following instructions were provided for the present-state authenticity items at Time 1 only, prompting participants to reflect upon their experiences at the time of the transgression:

The following questions relate to your thoughts and feelings during the incident you reported. Think about your immediate thoughts, feelings, actions and experiences at that time. For each statement, indicate how much it applied to you during that incident.

At Time 2 and Time 3, participants were provided with instruction to reflect upon their processing since the transgression, as below:

The following questions relate to how you've reacted to the incident you reported in the past 24-hours. That is, your thoughts, feelings, actions and experiences specifically regarding that incident in the time since you completed the last questionnaire. For each statement, indicate how much it has applied to you.

Awareness. Six items measured subjective awareness of inner states, feelings and cognitions, with the addition of three new items (in addition to the three developed in Chapter 3) to attempt to comprise a full scale: "*I attended to any difficult feelings I had; I was open to* *the emotions I was experiencing; I can recount what my true thoughts were."* (Time 1, α = .89; Time 2, α = .91; Time 3, α = .91). However, as will be detailed, exploring the factor structure of the present-state authenticity subcomponents showed that the awareness items poorly differentiated from the expression and ownership scales, and so awareness was not considered within subsequent analysis.

Expression. Six items, developed in Chapter 3, measured participants' subjective sense that their inner states were expressed consistently and genuinely, *e.g., "My behaviour reflected how I really felt; I expressed my thoughts and feelings accurately".* (Time 1, α = .94; Time 2, α = .94; Time 3, α = .94).

Ownership. Five items, developed in Chapter 3, measured participants' subjective feelings that their experiences were self-authored and autonomous, e.g., "*I had a sense of ownership over my thoughts and feelings; I was in charge of how I responded to the situation".* (Time 1, α = .92; Time 2, α = .89; Time 3, α = .92).

Pseudo Self-Forgiveness. Participant's defensive responding to the transgression was measured with a six-item scale, reflecting victim derogation, denial of wrongdoing and minimization of personal responsibility (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b); e.g., "*I think the other person was really to blame for what happened".* (Time 1, α = .83; Time 2, α = .86; Time 3, α = .87).

Genuine Self-Forgiveness. Seven items assessed offenders' engagement with a genuine and restorative forgiveness process, involving responsibility acceptance, working through the offence, and seeking to learn from one's wrongdoing (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b), e.g., "*I have put energy into processing my wrongdoing".* (Time 1, α = .88; Time 2, α = .88; Time 3, α = .91).

Responsibility. Two items directly assessed feelings of responsibility for the incident, "*I feel responsible for what happened; I feel responsible for my actions".* (Time 1, *r* = .55, α = .71; Time 2, *r* = .39, α = .54; Time 3, *r* = .68, α = .78).

Wrongfulness. A three-item scale measured participants' perceived wrongfulness of their actions: "*To what degree do you think your actions were... wrong, serious, hurtful".* (Time 1, α = .71; Time 2, α = .71; Time 3, α = .77).

Moral-social threat. Eight items assessed participants' concern about their moral image, as perceived by self and others, e.g., *"I feel I have acted against my own moral code; I am worried this incident may lead others to have a negative view of me".* Given the scale was designed ad hoc, an EFA using Principal Components Analysis and Oblique rotations was used to investigate the factor loading at each time point. One factor was extracted at each time point, explaining 69.80% at Time 1, 70.77% at Time 2, and 77.01% at Time 3. All items loaded strongly at ≥ .77 at each time point, demonstrating good reliability (Time 1, α = .94; Time 2, α = .94; Time 3, α = .96).

Results

Transgression Details

On average, participants rated the severity of the transgression as severe (*M* = 5.49, *SD* = .92), with 88% of participants classifying the severity above the midpoint (> 4). Predominantly, the incidents were classified as an act of disrespect (18.8%), betrayal of trust (18.3%), insult or verbal abuse (16.8%), dishonesty or lying (14.4%) or involvement with another person (e.g., flirting, infidelity; 9.6%), and the other person involved was a boyfriend/girlfriend (28.8%), spouse (23.5%), family member (20.7%) friend (16.9%), work colleague (6.7%), acquaintance (2.4%) or ex-partner (1%). On average, these relationships were rated as very important (*M* = 6.29, *SD* = 1.15), with only 4.8% rating the relationship importance below the midpoint. 34.1% of the incidents occurred between 24 and 48 hours prior to reporting, 49.1% between 12 and 24 hours prior, and 16.8% from less than 12 hours prior.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

An EFA using Principal Components Analysis with Oblique rotations was conducted for the Authenticity Scale at each time point to continue scale validation. The number of factors for extraction were identified based on the Scree plot and correspondence to theory. Item-retention criteria included moderate to high factor loadings (above. 50) and a lack of cross-loading onto multiple factors (above .30).

All three time points yielded equivalent results. Time 1 results are reported for brevity (for Time 2 and Time 3, see Appendix C). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's measure of sampling adequacy, KMO = .94, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, χ^2 (253) = 4393.26, $p < .001$, indicated that the items were appropriate for factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). Three factors emerged from the initial extraction. The factors corresponded to the intended self-concept authenticity scale and the present-state authenticity subscales of expression and ownership. The awareness items were found to split across expression and ownership, rather than differentiating to a separate factor. The items: "*I was aware of my inner experiences; I was conscious of what I really thought; I can recount what my true thoughts were*" loaded with the ownership items at .81, .71 and .65, respectively. The item: "*I attended to any difficult feelings I had*" loaded with the expression items at .62. The item "*I was in touch with how I truly felt"* cross-loaded with expression/ownership at .58/.33, and "*I was open to the emotions I was experiencing"* cross-loaded with expression/ownership at .43/.41. It therefore appeared that awareness was implied in both factors, and at a measurement level, did not appear able to be distinguished. Awareness was therefore no longer included as a separate scale in the investigation and these 6 items were removed.

Table 4.1

EFA Factor Loadings for the 17-item Authenticity Scale at Time 1

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Expression			
I expressed what I really thought	**.92**	-.05	-.004
I expressed my true feelings	**.92**	-.06	.03
My behaviour reflected how I really felt	**.70**	.13	.10
I expressed my thoughts and feelings accurately	**.82**	-.04	.11
I openly shared my inner experiences	**.89**	-.02	-.07
I genuinely conveyed my feelings to others	**.97**	-.02	-.10
Ownership			
My thoughts were my own	.13	-.08	**.84**
I determined my emotional reactions	.18	.10	**.65**
I had a sense of ownership over my thoughts and feelings	.05	.01	**.86**
I had a sense of authorship over my actions	-.008	.004	**.92**
I was in charge of how I responded to the situation	-.20	.01	**.98**
Self-concept Authenticity			
I was my true self	.07	**.88**	.02
I acted in line with my true self	.13	**.89**	-.03
My actions were consistent with the core of who I am	.14	**.86**	-.03
I regarded myself as being true to who I really am	.11	**.86**	-.03
I acted as someone else, rather than my true self (R)	.22	**-.89**	-.06
My actions were inconsistent with who I truly know myself to be (R)	.21	**-.83**	-.007

Note. *N* = 208. Loadings above .30 in bold type.

A subsequent EFA on the remaining 17 items resulted in a three-factor solution accounting for 77.28% of the variance. The three factors reflected the proposed self-concept authenticity scale, and the present-state authenticity subscales of expression and ownership. The standardized factor loadings are shown in Table 4.1. All retained items loaded strongly on their respective factors from .70 to .97 for expression, .65 to .98 for ownership, and .83 to .89 for self-concept authenticity.

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations and zero-order correlations for the authenticity variables are presented in Table 4.2. The three factors were positively correlated at all time points. It is notable that on average, participants reported that the transgression did not reflect their true or core self (i.e., self-concept authenticity). Participants also rated a relatively high sense of ownership over their feelings and actions, and moderately high authentic expression, both at the time of the transgression (Time 1) and in their subsequent reactions to the incident (Time 2 and 3). One-sample *t*-tests confirmed that the variable means at each time point were significantly different from the scale midpoint (4), *t*s = 3.62 to 14.34, all *p*s < .001.

Table 4.2

Means (Standard Deviations) and Intercorrelations for Authenticity Variables

Variable	*M* (*SD*)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Ownership T1	5.25 (1.37)	-							
2. Expression T1	4.65 (1.65)	.55	-						
3. Self-concept Auth T1	3.48 (1.69)	.43	.47	-					
4. Ownership T2	5.35 (1.26)	.68	.28	.36	-				
5. Expression T2	4.78 (1.58)	.43	.62	.42	.63	-			
6. Self-concept Auth T2	3.52 (1.77)	.39	.43	.77	.38	.49	-		
7. Ownership T3	5.36 (1.25)	.53	.22	.36	.81	.50	.36	-	
8. Expression T3	4.76 (1.56)	.30	.47	.41	.49	.67	.47	.60	-
9. Self-concept Auth T3	3.36 (1.72)	.31	.42	.71	.32	.42	.80	.32	.46

Note. All relationships significant at $p < .001$. Self-concept Auth = self-concept authenticity.

The means and standard deviations for all other key variables and their correlations with the authenticity variables are reported in Table 4.3. The correlations with self-concept authenticity were all in the expected direction. At each time point, self-concept authenticity was positively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness and negatively associated with genuine self-forgiveness. Claiming one's transgressive behaviour was representative of one's true or core self was therefore associated with more defensive responding, and less engagement with a genuine working-through of the offence. Self-concept authenticity was also negatively associated with the proposed mediators, moral-social image threat, perceived wrongfulness, and perceived responsibility. Claims that the transgression represented one's true or core self was thus associated with less responsibility acceptance, lesser perceptions of the harm and gravity of one's actions, and ameliorated concern for one's personally and socially perceived moral image.

The correlations with the present-state authenticity subscales of ownership and expression were less expected. Ownership and expression at the time of the transgression (Time 1) did not appear to be differently associated with the transgression-related variables than when processing the incident in the subsequent days (Time 2 and Time 3). There were no significant relationships between ownership or expression and genuine self-forgiveness. There were also no significant correlations between ownership and responsibility acceptance. Expression was negatively associated with responsibility at Time 1 and Time 2. Across time points, expression was consistently positively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness, such that feeling one expressed one's self openly and accurately was associated with a more defensive response. Time 1 ownership, the perception that one's experiences were self-authored and autonomous during the wrongdoing, was associated with greater defensiveness at Time 1. This effect was non-significant across subsequent time points, albeit trended to being positive. As an additional finding, ownership and expression were found to be negatively associated with wrongfulness, the perception that one's actions were wrong and harmful, and moral/social treat, the perception that the incident threatens one's moral and social image.

Table 4.3

Means (Standard Deviations) of Dependent Variables and Intercorrelations with Authenticity Variables

		Ownership			Expression			Self-Concept Authenticity		
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3
Pseudo SF T1	3.02 (1.35)	.14*	.14†	.13	.46***	.37***	.28***	.49***	.49***	.49***
Genuine SF T1	5.29 (1.09)	.05	.07	.01	-.07	-.07	.01	-.35***	-.34***	-.39***
Responsibility T1	5.89 (1.10)	.05	.05	.03	-.19**	-.17*	-.08	-.35***	-.35***	-.35***
Moral threat T1	4.68 (1.55)	-.17*	-.15*	-.22**	-.28***	-.27***	-.27***	-.49***	-.49***	-.52***
Wrongfulness T1	5.89 (0.89)	-.21**	-.16*	-.21**	-.18*	-.16*	-.15*	-.42***	-.40***	-.35***
Pseudo SF T2	2.89 (1.41)	.14†	.12	.10	.36***	.32***	.21**	.43***	.49***	.50***
Genuine SF T2	5.36 (1.08)	-.06	<.001	-.04	-.13†	-.11	-.04	-.41***	-.41***	-.46***
Responsibility T2	6.02 (1.08)	-.03	-.04	-.06	-.23**	-.25***	-.10	-.41***	-.39***	-.39***
Moral threat T2	4.58 (1.57)	-.22**	-.20**	-.21**	-.32***	-.33***	-.24**	-.51***	-.51***	-.54***
Wrongfulness T2	5.85 (0.94)	-.15*	-.12	-.15†	-.23**	-.25***	-.16*	-.39***	-.47***	-.42***
Pseudo SF T3	2.84 (1.44)	.09	.12	.11	.33***	.30***	.22**	.44***	.48***	.53***
Genuine SF T3	5.47 (1.18)	-.06	-.01	-.03	-.20**	-.20*	-.09	-.42***	-.44***	-.48***
Responsibility T3	5.84 (1.22)	.04	.04	.02	-.14†	-.14†	-.02	-.32***	-.33***	-.32***
Moral threat T3	4.55 (1.69)	-.21**	-.17*	-.23**	-.27***	-.22**	-.26***	-.50***	-.48***	-.51***
Wrongfulness T3	5.72 (1.10)	-.16*	-.17*	-.17*	-.22**	-.25**	-.18*	-.38***	-.45***	-.45***

Note. ***p < 001, **p < .01, *p < .05, † p < .08

Cross-lagged Panel Model Analyses

A primary aim of the current study was to investigate the authenticity processes across time. Conventional cross-lagged panel designs were used to test the cross-lagged relationships between the authenticity variables at one time point, and the outcome measure at the subsequent time point, while controlling for the cross-time stabilities within these variables. All analyses were conducted using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) software AMOS 25. Full-information maximum likelihood estimation to fit the models directly to the data was used to deal with missing data, as it produces less biased results than other methods, such as listwise deletion (Enders et al., 2001). Model fit was assessed using three different indices (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019): χ^2/df ratio ≤ 2 indicates good fit, and between 2 and 3 acceptable fit; comparative fit index (CFI) $\geq .95$ indicates good fit, and between .90 and .95 marginal fit; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) $\leq .06$ represents good fit, between .06 and .08 acceptable fit, and between .08 and .10 marginal fit.

Present-State Authenticity

The cross-lagged relationships between the present-state authenticity subscales, expression and ownership, and the outcome measures were first considered. Two separate models were run; one considering genuine self-forgiveness, and one considering pseudo self-forgiveness. It was tested whether present-state authenticity at the time of the transgression (Time 1) related to change in the outcome measure from Time 1 to Time 2, and whether levels in present-state authenticity during the processing of the transgression (Time 2) was related to change in the outcome measure from Time 2 to Time 3. It was predicted that the cross-lagged relationships across the waves would be different. It was predicted that ownership and expression at Time 1 (i.e., relating to the transgression situation) would be unrelated to genuine self-forgiveness, replicating the results of the previous study, but ownership and expression at Time 2 (i.e., relating to the processing of the transgression) would be positively prospectively related to genuine self-forgiveness. It was also predicted that at Time 1, expression would be positively prospectively related to pseudo self-forgiveness and ownership negatively related, but would both be negatively prospectively related to pseudo self-forgiveness from Time 2 to Time 3.

To test whether the relationships differed between the two time-lags, and in line with recommendations (Orth et al., 2021), models with two sets of equality constraints were tested: (1) equality of the stabilities of variables (auto-regressive effects) across the two lags and (2), in addition, equality of corresponding cross-lag effects across time-lags. Model fit statistics are summarized in Table 4.4. The default model (i.e., all factor loadings freely estimated, with no constraints placed upon variables from Time 1 to Time 3) was used as a baseline to which models with constrained stability coefficients were compared. It was found that constraining all stabilities significantly reduced the fit of the model with expression and ownership (present-state authenticity) and genuine self-forgiveness. Inspection of the default model showed discrepancies between the stability coefficients for both ownership and expression from Time 2 to Time 3, compared with Time 1 to Time 2, and both were required to be freed to not deteriorate the model fit. Finally, cross-lagged coefficients were additionally constrained to be equal across the three waves, which (compared to constraining stabilities only) did not result in significantly worse fit for either model. These final models showed adequate fit based upon the aforementioned criteria. It was noted that the RMSEA confidence intervals were wide, as is typical for models with small *df* and more modest sample sizes (Kenny et al., 2015), and thus the RMSEA may have less utility as a fit indicator for these data.

Table 4.4

Fit Statistics of Tested Cross-Lagged Panel Models (CLPM) as Compared with the Default (Unconstrained) Model

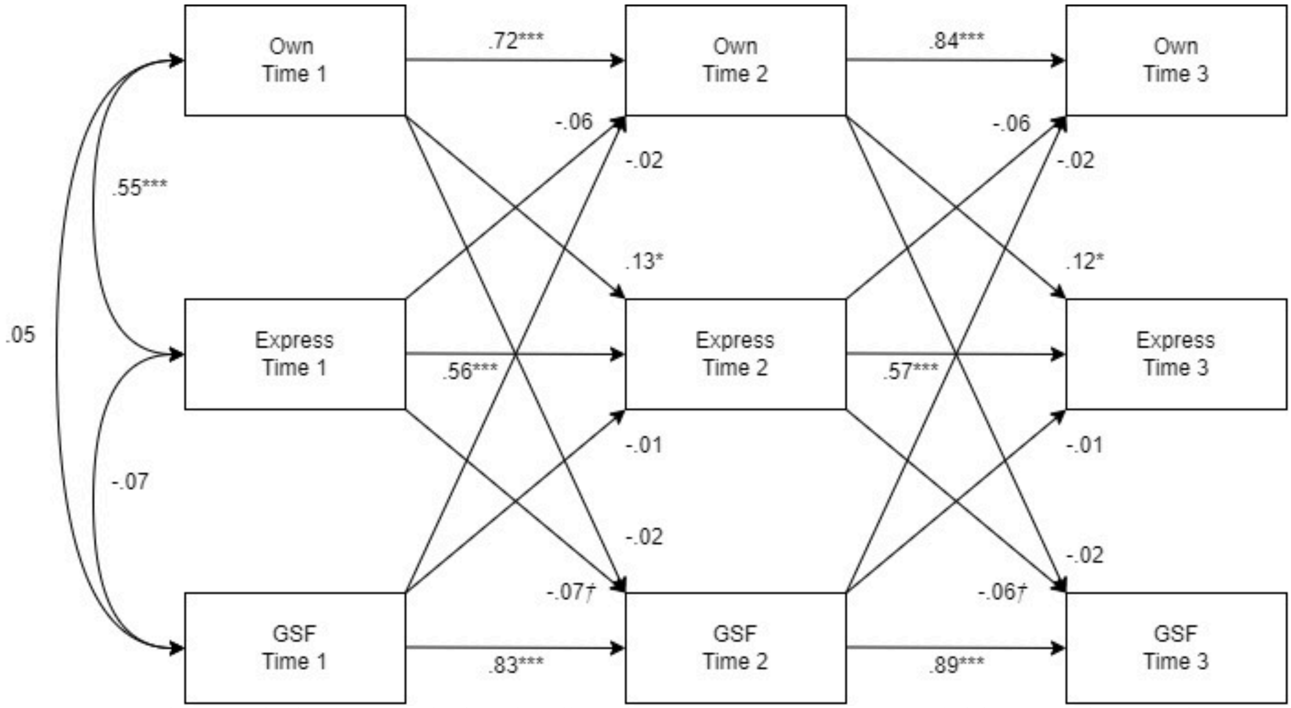
Model	$\chi2$ (*df*)	*Sig.*	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA [$CI_{90\%}$]	$\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*)[a]	*Sig.*
PSA and GSF							
1. Equal Stability Coefficients	28.18 (12)	.005	2.35	.986	.08 [.04, .12]	9.64 (3)	.02
* Freed Ownership + Expression Stabilities	19.47 (10)	.04	1.95	.992	.07 [.02, .11]	0.94 (1)	.33
2. Equal Stabilities (*adjusted) + Equal Cross-Lags	30.46 (16)	.02	1.90	.988	.07 [.03, .10]	11.93 (7)	.10
PSA and PSF							
1. Equal Stability Coefficients	29.14 (12)	.004	2.43	.986	.08 [.05, .12]	5.25 (2)	.15
2. Equal Stabilities + Equal Cross-Lags	38.28 (18)	.004	2.13	.984	.07 [.04, .11]	14.39 (9)	.11
SCA and GSF							
1. Equal Stability Coefficients	21.84 (6)	.001	3.64	.982	.11 [.06, .17]	7.77 (2)	.02
* Freed GSF Stability	14.21 (5)	.01	2.84	.989	.07 [.01, .12]	0.14 (1)	.71
2. Equal Stabilities (*adjusted) + Equal Cross-Lags	16.07 (7)	.02	2.30	.990	.08 [.03, .13]	2.00 (3)	.57
SCA and PSF							
1. Equal Stability Coefficients	16.75 (6)	.01	2.79	.988	.09 [.04, .15]	0.19 (2)	.91
2. Equal Stabilities + Equal Cross-Lags	17.85 (8)	.02	2.23	.989	.08 [.03, .13]	1.30 (4)	.86

Note. PSA = Present-state authenticity. SCA = Self-concept authenticity. GSF = Genuine self-forgiveness. PSF = Pseudo self-forgiveness. CFI = Comparative Fit Index. [a] The chi-square difference for the Equal Stabilities model (or adjusted models) is in comparison to the unconstrained, default model; for the Equal Cross-Lags models it is in comparison to the Equal Stabilities only models (or their adjusted version).

Based on these model comparisons, a first finding is that, contrary to predictions, ownership and expression relating to the time of transgression, compared the time of processing the transgression, were not significantly differently prospectively associated to genuine (or pseudo) self-forgiveness, as imposing equality constraints on cross-lags did not significantly worsen model fit. The cross-lagged effects (equal for the two lags) showed (Figure 4.1) no significant prospective effect of ownership on genuine self-forgiveness. Expression had a marginally significant negative prospective effect on genuine self-forgiveness. Regarding the relationship between the authenticity variables, ownership positively predicted expression over time, but expression did not predict ownership. There was an implied mediation pattern, in that ownership prospectively predicted expression at Time 2, which in turn, had a marginal negative effect on genuine self-forgiveness. The results did not support predictions that ownership and expression during the processing of the transgression would function to increase genuine self-forgiveness over time.

Figure 4.1

Standardized Coefficients for the Cross-Lagged Panel Model (CLPM) for Ownership, Expression and Genuine Self-Forgiveness

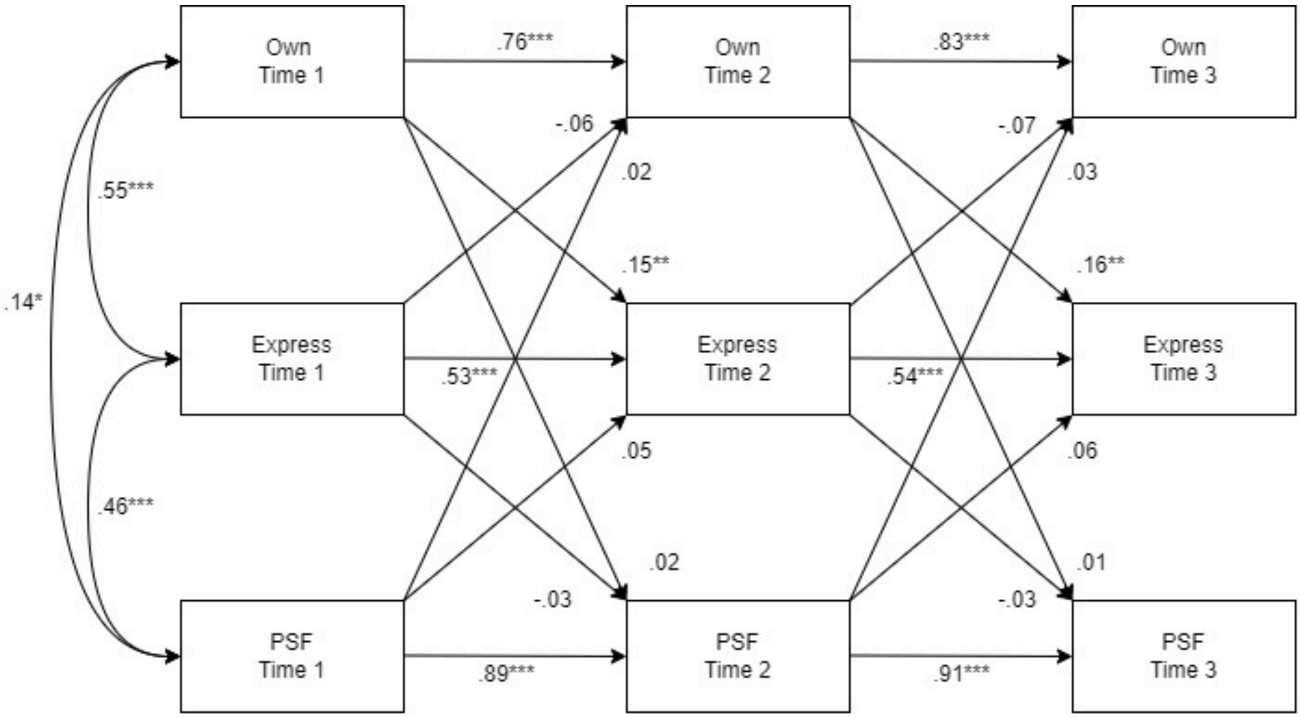

Own Time 1
Own Time 2
Own Time 3
Express Time 1
Express Time 2
Express Time 3
GSF Time 1
GSF Time 2
GSF Time 3
.72***
.84***
.55***
.05
-.07
-.06
-.02
.13*
.56***
-.01
-.02
-.07†
.83***
-.06
-.02
.12*
.57***
-.01
-.02
-.06†
.89***

Note. The graph depicts excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations. Own = ownership; Express = expression; GSF = genuine self-forgiveness. ****p* < .001, ***p* < .01, **p* < .05, † *p* = .06

It was next considered whether there was a prospective effect of ownership and expression on pseudo self-forgiveness (Figure 4.2). The observed lagged effects did not support the predictions. There were no significant cross-lagged effects between ownership or expression and pseudo self-forgiveness. Once again, ownership positively prospectively predicted expression at the following time point, but expression did not predict ownership.

Figure 4.2

Standardized Coefficients for the Cross-Lagged Panel Model (CLPM) for Ownership, Expression and Pseudo Self-Forgiveness


Own Time 1
Own Time 2
Own Time 3
Express Time 1
Express Time 2
Express Time 3
PSF Time 1
PSF Time 2
PSF Time 3
.76***
.83***
-.06
-.07
.02
.03
.55***
.14*
.15**
.16**
.53***
.54***
.05
.06
.46***
.02
.01
-.03
-.03
.89***
.91***

Note. The graph excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations. Own = ownership; Express = expression; PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness. *** *p* < .001, * *p* < .05.

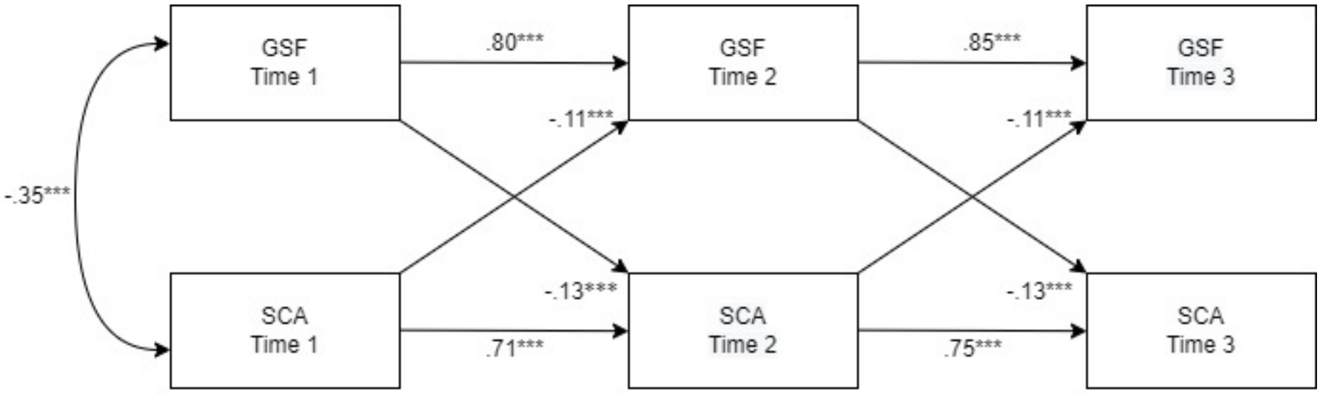
Self-Concept Authenticity

The cross-lagged relationships between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness, and pseudo self-forgiveness, were next considered. Model fit statistics are summarized in Table 4.4. The models were first considered with stability coefficients constrained to be equal for the two time-lags, which was found to significantly deteriorate the fit of the model with genuine self-forgiveness (compared to default model). Further inspection revealed that the stability of genuine self-forgiveness showed an increase over time and when this parameter was freed, the model fit was found to not significantly differ from the default model. Finally, cross-lagged coefficients were also constrained which did not deteriorate the fit of either model (compared to constraining stabilities only). These were the final models, which both showed adequate model fit.

The cross-lagged relationships between genuine self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity are shown in Figure 4.3. Genuine self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity were found to have reciprocal negative cross-lagged effects. That is, meaningfully engaging with and working through one's wrongdoing was prospectively related to feeling less like the wrongdoing was representative of one's true or core self. In turn, feeling like one was (vs. was not) one's true self in the transgression was prospectively related to less (vs. more) genuine engagement with the transgression.

Figure 4.3

Standardized Coefficients for the Cross-Lagged Panel Model (CLPM) for Self-Concept Authenticity and Genuine Self-Forgiveness

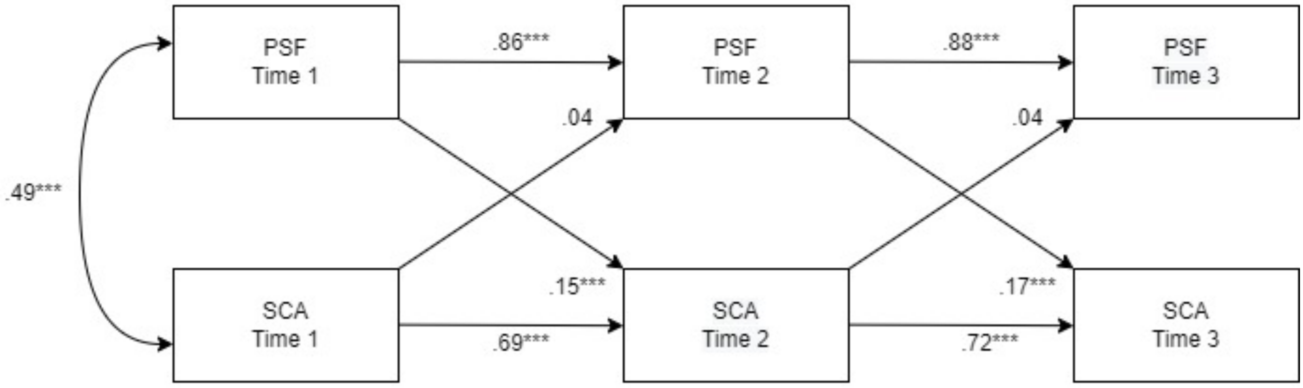


Note. Graph excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations. GSF = Genuine self-forgiveness. SCA = Self-concept authenticity. ***$p < .001$.

The cross-lagged relationships between pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity are shown in Figure 4.4. It was found that pseudo self-forgiveness positively predicted self-concept authenticity over time. That is, offenders' defensiveness was related to an increase in feeling that the transgression was representative of one's true or core self. There were no prospective effects of self-concept authenticity on pseudo self-forgiveness.

Figure 4.4

Standardized Coefficients for the Cross-Lagged Panel Model (CLPM) for Self-Concept Authenticity and Pseudo Self-Forgiveness



Note. Graph excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations. PSF = Pseudo self-forgiveness. SCA = Self-concept authenticity. ***$p < .001$.

Three potential mediators were separately considered for the relationship between pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity; moral image threat, perceived wrongfulness and perceived responsibility. Model fit statistics are summarized in Table 4.5. As in previous analyses, first, stability coefficients were constrained, which lead to a significant decrease in model fit. Inspection revealed that in each model, the mediating variable showed an increase in stability over time and was required to be freed for all three models. Cross-lagged effects were then also constrained to be equal across lags, without effecting a deterioration in model fit. Based on the aforementioned criteria, model fit was found to be adequate for the models with moral image threat and perceived wrongfulness as mediators, and was marginal for the model depicting responsibility.

Table 4.5

Fit Statistics of Tested Models as Compared with the Default (Unconstrained) Model, considering Proposed Mediators for the Relationship between Self-Concept Authenticity and Pseudo Self-Forgiveness

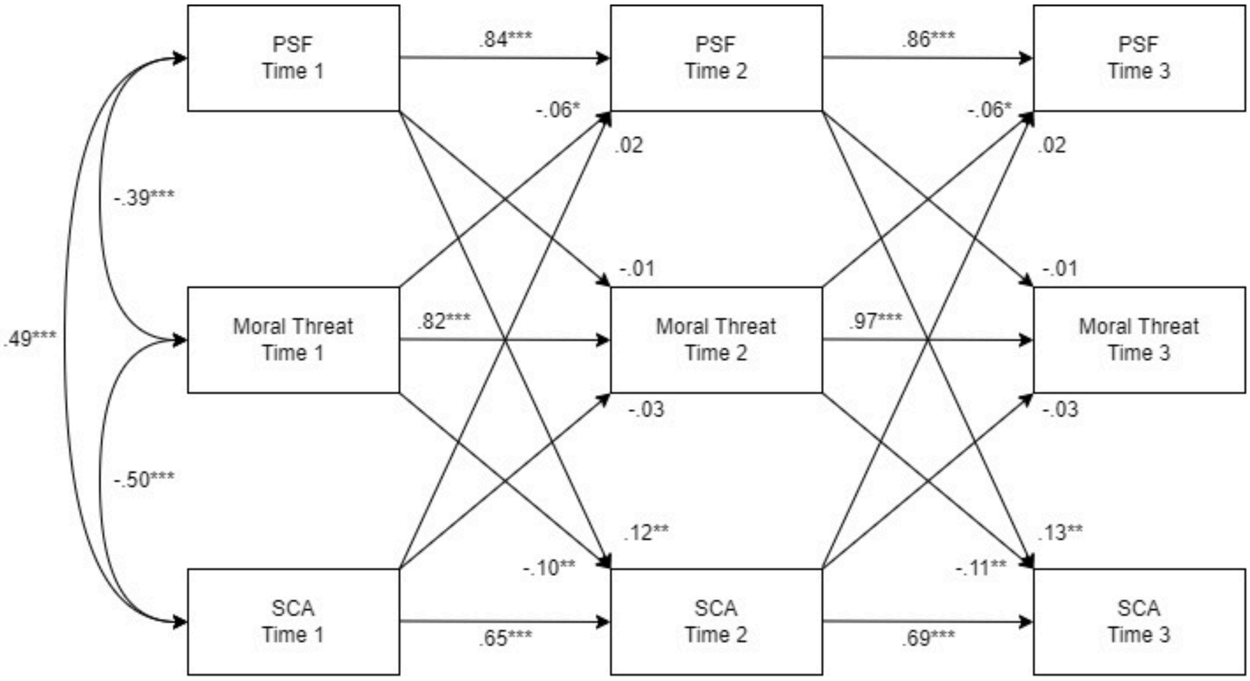
Model	$\chi2$ (*df*)	*Sig.*	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA [$CI_{90\%}$]	$\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*) [a]	*Sig.*
Mediator: Moral Threat							
1. Equal Stabilities	34.59 (11)	<.001	3.15	.984	.10 [.06, .14]	17.63 (3)	.001
* Freed Mediator Stability	17.12 (10)	.07	1.71	.995	.06 [<.001, .10]	0.16 (2)	.92
2. Equal Stabilities (*adjusted) + Equal Cross-Lags	31.13 (16)	.01	1.95	.990	.07 [.03, .10]	14.17 (8)	.08
Mediator: Wrongfulness							
1. Equal Stabilities	25.95 (11)	.007	2.36	.988	.08 [.04, .12]	7.42 (3)	.06
* Freed Mediator Stability	18.87 (10)	.04	1.89	.993	.07 [.01, .11]	0.33 (2)	.85
2. Equal Stabilities (*adjusted) + Equal Cross-Lags	28.31 (16)	.03	1.77	.990	.06 [.02, .10]	9.78 (8)	.28
Mediator: Responsibility							
1. Equal Stabilities	44.85 (11)	<.001	4.08	.975	.12 [.09, .16]	17.78 (3)	<.001
* Freed Mediator Stability	27.15 (10)	.002	2.72	.987	.09 [.05, .13]	0.07 (2)	.97
2. Equal Stabilities (*adjusted) + Equal Cross-Lags	36.41 (16)	.003	2.28	.985	.08 [.05, .11]	9.33 (8)	.32

Note. CFI = comparative fit index. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. SCA = self-concept authenticity. PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness. [a] The chi-square difference for the Equal Stabilities model (or adjusted models) is in comparison to the unconstrained, default model; for the Equal Cross-Lags models it is in comparison to the Equal Stabilities only models (or their adjusted version).

The cross-lagged relationships between self-concept authenticity, moral image threat and pseudo self-forgiveness are shown in Figure 4.5. There was no cross-lagged effect of pseudo self-forgiveness on moral image threat. There was however a significant negative prospective effect of moral image threat on self-concept authenticity. The greater the perceived threat to personal and social moral image, the less participants reported they were their true or core self in the transgression over time. There were no reciprocal effects of self-concept authenticity on moral image threat.

Figure 4.5

Standardized Coefficients for the Cross-Lagged Panel Model (CLPM) with Self-Concept Authenticity, Moral Image Threat and Pseudo Self-Forgiveness

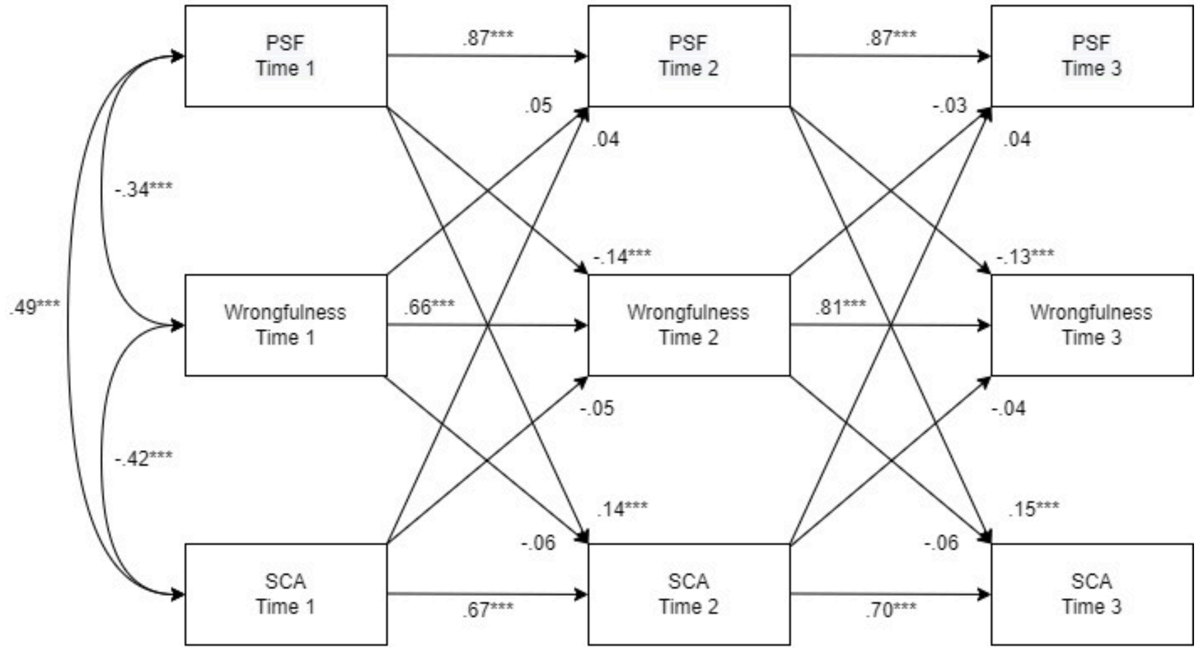

PSF Time 1
PSF Time 2
PSF Time 3
Moral Threat Time 1
Moral Threat Time 2
Moral Threat Time 3
SCA Time 1
SCA Time 2
SCA Time 3
.84***
.86***
.82***
.97***
.65***
.69***
-.06*
-.06*
.02
.02
-.01
-.01
-.03
-.03
.12**
.13**
-.10**
-.11**
-.39***
-.50***
.49***

Note. The graph depicts observed variables and excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within wave-correlations. PSF = Pseudo Self-Forgiveness. SCA = Self-Concept Authenticity. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

The model was repeated with perceived wrongfulness as a mediator (Figure 4.6). There was a significant prospective negative effect of pseudo self-forgiveness on perceived wrongfulness. A more (less) defensive response was related to lesser (greater) perceptions of the harm and severity of one's actions at the subsequent time point. There were no prospective effects of wrongfulness on self-concept authenticity, or self-concept authenticity on wrongfulness.

Figure 4.6

Standardized Coefficients for the Cross-Lagged Panel Model (CLPM) with Self-Concept Authenticity, Perceived Wrongfulness and Pseudo Self-Forgiveness

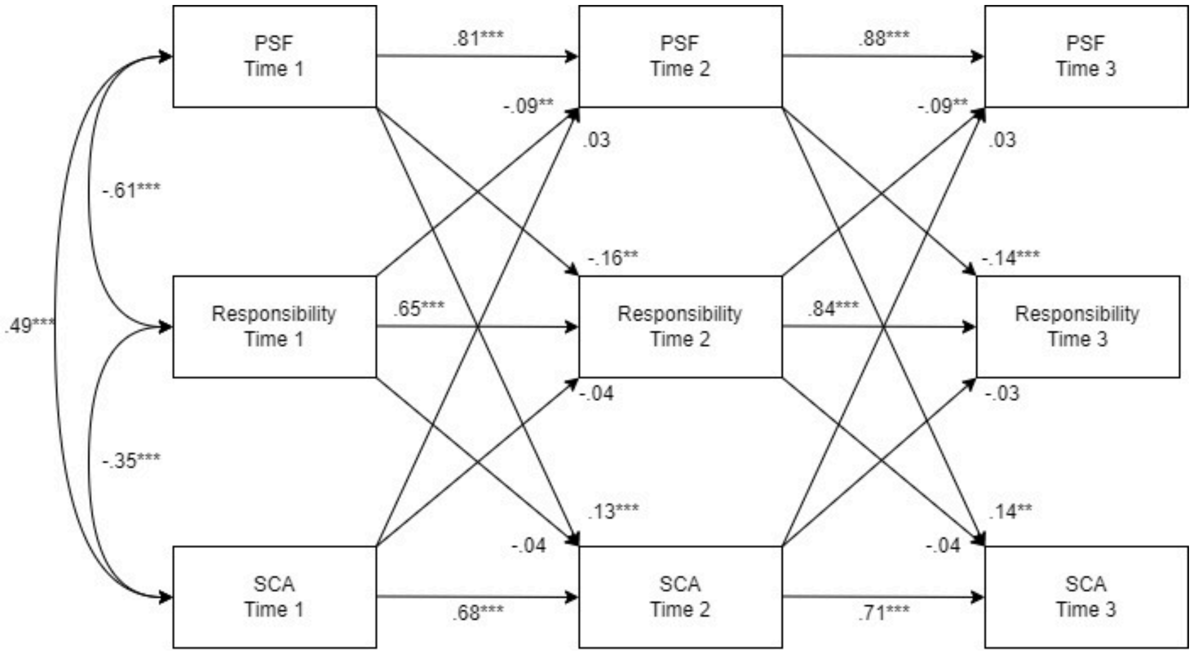

PSF Time 1
.87***
PSF Time 2
.87***
PSF Time 3
.05
.04
-.03
.04
-.34***
-.14***
-.13***
.49***
Wrongfulness Time 1
.66***
Wrongfulness Time 2
.81***
Wrongfulness Time 3
-.05
-.04
-.42***
.14***
.15***
-.06
-.06
SCA Time 1
.67***
SCA Time 2
.70***
SCA Time 3

Note. The graph depicts observed variables and excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations. PSF = Pseudo Self-Forgiveness. SCA = Self-Concept Authenticity. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

Perceived responsibility was considered as a mediator in the final model (Figure 4.7). There was a negative prospective effect of pseudo self-forgiveness on perceived responsibility, and vice versa, of responsibility on pseudo self-forgiveness. There were no prospective effects of responsibility on self-concept authenticity, nor self-concept authenticity on responsibility.

Figure 4.7

Standardized Coefficients for Self-Concept Authenticity and Pseudo Self-Forgiveness, with the Proposed Mediator Perceived Responsibility


PSF
Time 1
Responsibility
Time 1
SCA
Time 1
PSF
Time 2
Responsibility
Time 2
SCA
Time 2
PSF
Time 3
Responsibility
Time 3
SCA
Time 3
.81***
.88***
-.09**
-.09**
.03
.03
-.61***
.49***
-.35***
-.16**
-.14***
.65***
.84***
-.04
-.03
.13***
.14**
-.04
-.04
.68***
.71***

Note. The graph depicts observed variables and excludes disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations of residual variances. PSF = Pseudo Self-Forgiveness. SCA = Self-Concept Authenticity. ****p* < .001, ***p* <.01, **p* < .05.

Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Analysis

The previous analyses considered interpersonal variation in authenticity and its effect on interpersonal variation in the outcome variables. That is, whether a person's greater or lesser levels of authenticity compared to others was related to subsequent greater or lesser levels of the outcome variable compared to others. It was additionally considered whether within-person changes in the predictors were related to within-person changes in the outcome variables. Random intercept cross-lagged panel analyses (RI-CLPM; Hamaker et al., 2015; Orth et al., 2021) were conducted using AMOS 25.

As with the standard CLPMs, constrained models were compared with the unconstrained (default) model. Model fit statistics are summarized in Table 4.6. Constraints were conducted stepwise. The autoregressive stabilities were constrained first, and then the cross-lagged coefficients were also constrained. Regarding the model with self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness, the equality constraints were found to deteriorate the fit, and inspection of the default model revealed that the stability constraint for genuine self-forgiveness was required to be freed. Constraining cross-lagged coefficients led to no significant change in model fit. Problems arose when fitting models for present-state authenticity. The variance of the random intercepts for ownership and expression was non-significant, and at times negative, creating model estimation problems (for example, ownership and pseudo self-forgiveness were correlated at $r = 1.60$). The non-significant variance of the random intercept implied a lack of evidence for individual differences in these terms. These findings are theoretically meaningful given the different referent points of the Time 1 versus Time 2 and Time 3 measures (i.e., authenticity in relation to the incident versus the processing of the incident, respectively), meaning that there are not enduring, (trait-like) aspects to these components. It was determined that an appropriate solution would be to remove the trait components from these models. The revised models therefore did not include stable, time-invariant differences between individuals on ownership or expression, but still captured time-invariant trait-like individual differences on genuine self-forgiveness and pseudo self-forgiveness through the remaining random intercept. The autoregressive stability for genuine self-forgiveness was again required to be freed to not deteriorate model fit when modelled with present-state authenticity. There were otherwise no differences in model fit in further constraining the models. In all instances, the most constrained model was selected for parsimony. All models were found to be a good fit to the data.

The cross-lagged effects of ownership and expression on within-person change in genuine self-forgiveness are shown in Figure 4.8. As in the previous standard-CLPM analyses, ownership had a positive cross-lagged effect on expression over time. Expression had a negative cross-lagged effect on within-person change in genuine self-forgiveness from at Time 1 to Time 2, and Time 2 to Time 3. Authentic expression at both the time of the transgression and the feeling following was related to a person's reduced genuine engagement and processing of one's wrongdoing. There was also a marginally significant cross-lagged effect of ownership on genuine self-forgiveness, suggesting that feeling one engaged in self-authored and autonomous action during the transgression and in subsequent processing trended towards being positively related to increased genuine engagement with one's offence.

The cross-lagged effects of ownership and expression on within-person changes in pseudo self-forgiveness are depicted in Figure 4.9. There were no significant cross-lagged effects between present-state authenticity (ownership and expression) and pseudo self-forgiveness.

Table 4.6

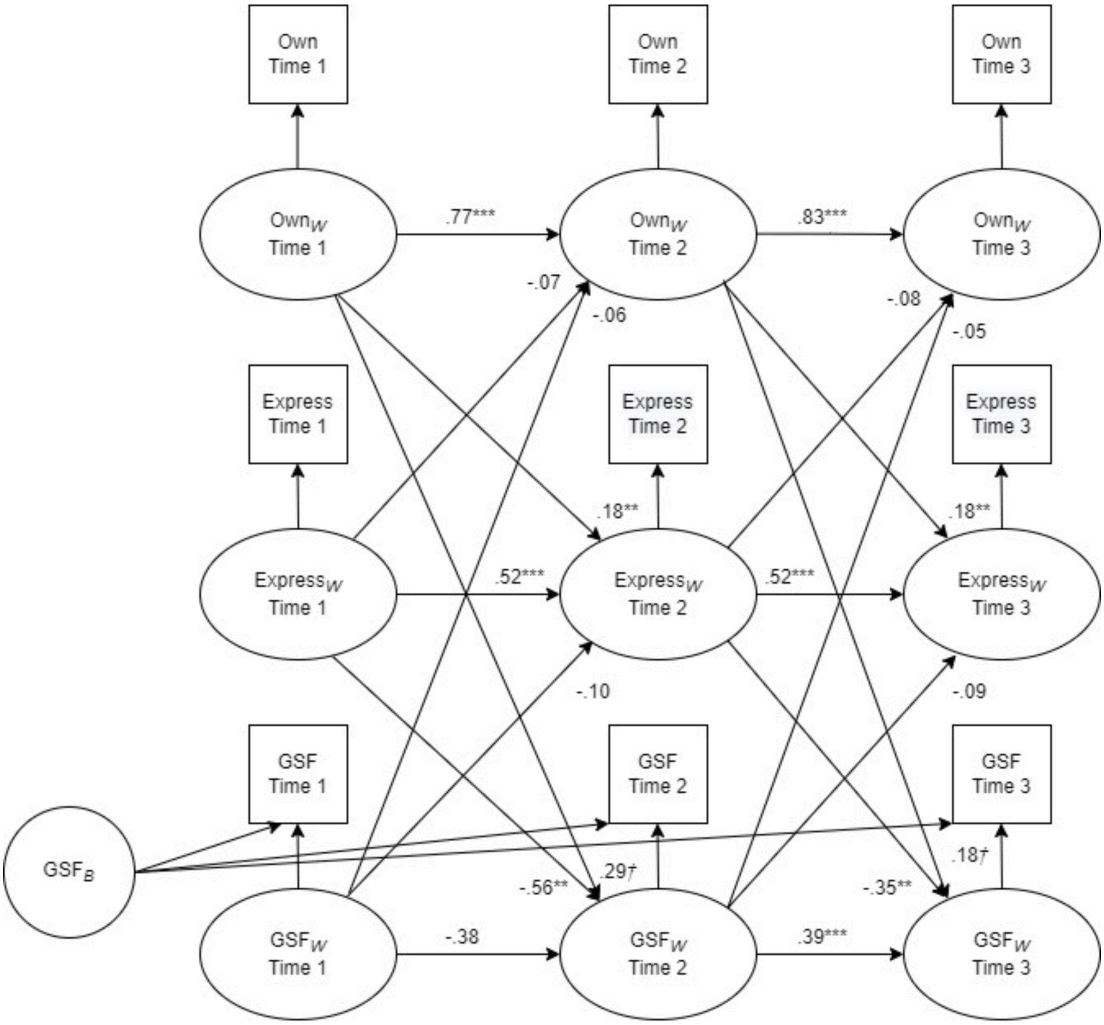
Fit Statistics for Tested Random Intercept Cross Lagged Panel Models (RI-CLPM), Compared with the Default Model

Model	$\chi 2$ (*df*)	*Sig.*	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA [CI$_{90\%}$]	$\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*)[a]	*Sig.*
SCA and GSF							
1. Equal Stabilities	7.26 (4)	.12	1.82	.996	.06 [<.001, 13]	7.26 (2)	.03
* Freed GSF Stability	0.50 (3)	.92	0.17	1.00	<.001 [<.001, .04]	0.50 (1)	.48
2. Equal Stabilities (*adjusted) + Equal Cross-Lags	2.28 (5)	.81	0.46	1.00	<.001 [<.001, .06]	2.28 (3)	.52
SCA and PSF							
1. Equal Stabilities	0.56 (4)	.97	0.14	1.00	<.001 [<.001, <.001]	0.54 (2)	.76
2. Equal Stabilities + Equal Cross-Lags	1.72 (6)	.94	0.29	1.00	<.001 [<.001, .02]	1.70 (4)	.79
PSA and GSF (random intercept for GSF only)							
1. Equal Stabilities	24.63 (11)	.01	2.24	.988	.08 [.04, .12]	10.14 (3)	.02
* Freed GSF Stability	15.71 (10)	.12	1.57	.995	.05 [<.001, .10]	1.22 (2)	.54
2. Equal Stabilities (*adjusted) + Equal Cross-Lags	24.96 (16)	.07	1.56	.992	.05 [<.001, .09]	10.47 (8)	.23
PSA and PSF (random intercept for PSF only)							
1. Equal Stabilities	20.11 (11)	.04	1.83	.993	.06 [.01, .11]	4.03 (3)	.26
2. Equal Stabilities + Equal Cross-Lags	29.30 (17)	.03	1.72	.990	.06 [.02, .09]	13.22 (9)	.15

Note. SCA = self-concept authenticity; GSF = genuine self-forgiveness; PSA = present-state authenticity. *CFI* = comparative fit index. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation. [a] The chi-square difference for the Equal Stabilities model (or adjusted models) is in comparison to the unconstrained, default model; for the Equal Cross-Lags models it is in comparison to the Equal Stabilities only models (or their adjusted version).

Figure 4.8

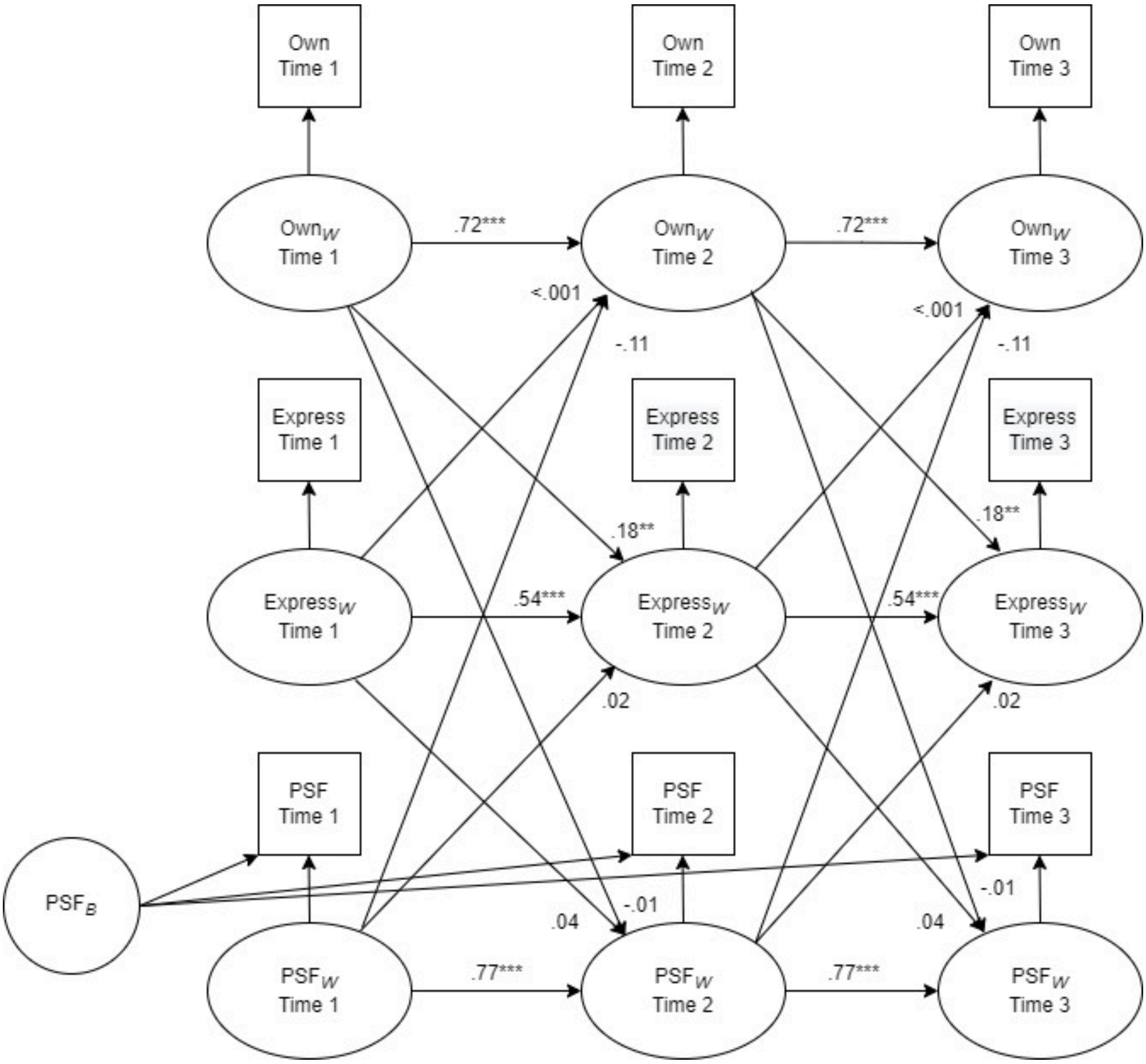
Standardised Coefficients for the Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM) for Ownership, Expression (i.e., Present-State Authenticity) and Genuine Self-Forgiveness


Own Time 1
Own Time 2
Own Time 3
Own_W Time 1
.77***
Own_W Time 2
.83***
Own_W Time 3
-.07
-.06
-.08
-.05
Express Time 1
Express Time 2
Express Time 3
.18**
.18**
$Express_W$ Time 1
.52***
$Express_W$ Time 2
.52***
$Express_W$ Time 3
-.10
-.09
GSF Time 1
GSF Time 2
GSF Time 3
GSF_B
.18†
-.56**
.29†
-.35**
GSF_W Time 1
-.38
GSF_W Time 2
.39***
GSF_W Time 3

Note. Squares represent observed variables, and circles/ellipses denote latent variables. The figure excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations of residual variances. B = between components (intercept). W = Within components. PSF = Pseudo self-forgiveness. SCA = Self-concept authenticity. ***p <.001, **p < .01, †p = .08.

Figure 4.9

Standardised Coefficients for the Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM) for Ownership, Expression (i.e., Present-State Authenticity) and Pseudo Self-Forgiveness


Own Time 1
Own Time 2
Own Time 3
Own$_W$ Time 1
Own$_W$ Time 2
Own$_W$ Time 3
.72***
.72***
<.001
-.11
<.001
-.11
Express Time 1
Express Time 2
Express Time 3
.18**
.18**
Express$_W$ Time 1
Express$_W$ Time 2
Express$_W$ Time 3
.54***
.54***
.02
.02
PSF Time 1
PSF Time 2
PSF Time 3
PSF$_B$
.04
-.01
.04
-.01
PSF$_W$ Time 1
PSF$_W$ Time 2
PSF$_W$ Time 3
.77***
.77***

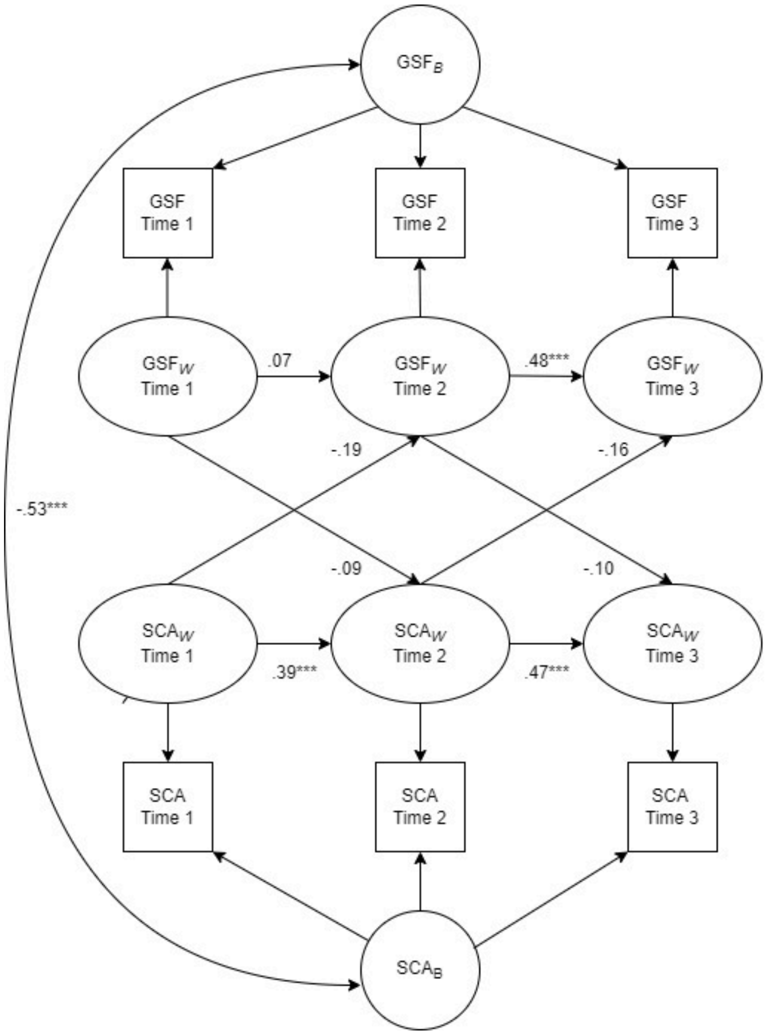
Note. Squares represent observed variables, and circles/ellipses denote latent variables. The figure excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations of residual variances. B = Between-components (intercept). W = Within-components. Own = Ownership; Express = Expression; PSF = Pseudo Self-Forgiveness. ***$p < .001$, **$p <.01$, *$p < .05$.

The cross-lagged effects representing the within-person changes in self-concept authenticity on genuine self-forgiveness are shown in Figure 4.10. There was no effect of within-person changes in self-concept authenticity on genuine self-forgiveness over time, nor an effect of within-person changes in genuine self-forgiveness on self-concept authenticity.

The results of the model considering self-concept authenticity and pseudo self-forgiveness are shown in Figure 4.11. As in the standard CLPM analyses, pseudo self-forgiveness was found to be positively related to an increase in self-concept authenticity over time. Conversely, within-person changes in self-concept authenticity were not related to changes in pseudo self-forgiveness.

Figure 4.10

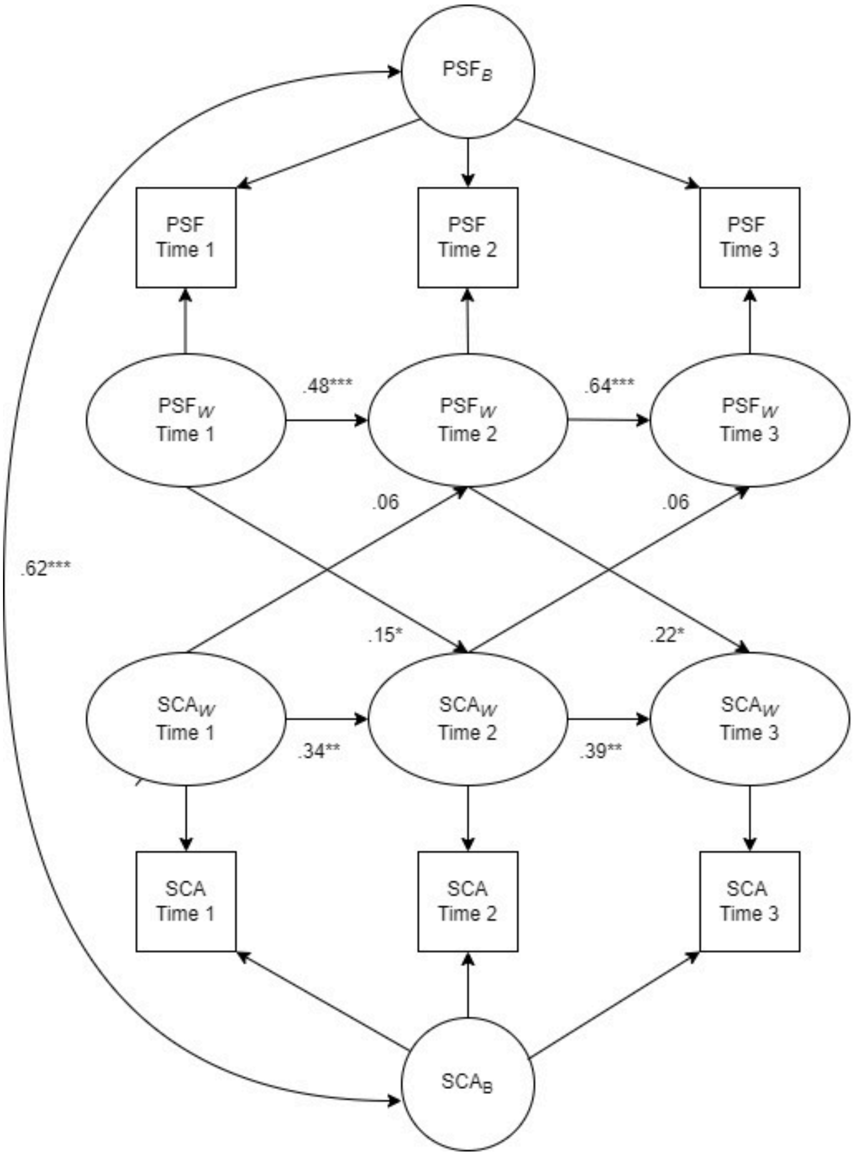
Standardised Coefficients for the Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM) for Self-Concept Authenticity and Genuine Self-Forgiveness


GSF$_B$
GSF Time 1
GSF Time 2
GSF Time 3
GSF$_W$ Time 1
GSF$_W$ Time 2
GSF$_W$ Time 3
.07
.48***
-.19
-.16
-.53***
-.09
-.10
SCA$_W$ Time 1
SCA$_W$ Time 2
SCA$_W$ Time 3
.39***
.47***
SCA Time 1
SCA Time 2
SCA Time 3
SCA$_B$

Note. Squares represent observed variables, and circles/ellipses denote latent variables. The figure excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations of residual variances. B = Between-components (intercept). W = Within-components. GSF = Genuine self-forgiveness. SCA = Self-concept authenticity. ***p <.001.

Figure 4.11

Standardised Coefficients for Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM) for Self-Concept Authenticity and Pseudo Self-Forgiveness


PSF$_B$
PSF Time 1
PSF Time 2
PSF Time 3
PSF$_W$ Time 1
.48***
PSF$_W$ Time 2
.64***
PSF$_W$ Time 3
.06
.06
.62***
.15*
.22*
SCA$_W$ Time 1
SCA$_W$ Time 2
SCA$_W$ Time 3
.34**
.39**
SCA Time 1
SCA Time 2
SCA Time 3
SCA$_B$

Note. Squares represent observed variables, and circles/ellipses denote latent variables. The figure excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within-wave correlations of residual variances. B = between components (intercept). W = Within components. PSF = Pseudo self-forgiveness. SCA = Self-concept authenticity. ***p <.001, **p < .01, *p < .05.

Supplementary analyses were also conducted to explore whether within-person change in moral image threat, perceived wrongfulness or responsibility acted as mediators in the relationship between pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity. Results are available in Appendix D, however there were no cross-lagged relationships between self-concept authenticity and these variables. Within-person changes in self-concept authenticity did not significantly predict moral image threat, perceived wrongfulness or responsibility over time. Neither did within-person changes in these variables significantly predict self-concept authenticity across time. Pseudo self-forgiveness predicted a significant decrease in perceptions of responsibility, and there was a small reciprocal negative effect of responsibility on pseudo self-forgiveness. Unlike in the CLPM models, pseudo self-forgiveness significantly decreased moral-social threat over time, and had no significant cross-lagged effect on perceived wrongfulness.

Cross-Sectional Relationships for Authenticity and Transgression Processing at Time 1

As an exploratory consideration, multiple regression was used to consider the cross-sectional relationships between the authenticity variables and pseudo and genuine self-forgiveness at Time 1 only, for purposes of comparison with Study 2. Results are shown in Table 4.7. Consistent with Study 2, ownership was negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness, and expression was positively associated. Ownership was a significant positive predictor of genuine self-forgiveness, whilst expression was unrelated. Self-concept authenticity was positively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness, and negatively associated with genuine self-forgiveness.

Table 4.7

Standardized Coefficients from Multiple Regression for Authenticity Predicting Pseudo Self-Forgiveness and Genuine Self-Forgiveness at Time 1

	Pseudo self-forgiveness T1		Genuine self-forgiveness T1	
Authenticity Dimension	β	*p*	β	*p*
Ownership	-.26	<.001	.25	.002
Expression	.41	<.001	.01	.90
Self-Concept Authenticity	.41	<.001	-.46	<.001

Discussion

The current study sought to build upon prior cross-sectional research to consider the relationship between offenders' experience of authenticity and transgression processing across time. Two types of models were used to investigate these relationships; traditional cross-lagged panel models (CLPM) which consider between-subject rank order change relative to other participants (but conflate inter- and intra-personal sources of change), and random-intercept cross-lagged panel models (RI-CLPM; Hamaker et al., 2015; Orth et al., 2021), which partial out between-person variability to consider relative intrapersonal change compared to one's 'usual' standing on a variable. The methodology allowed for consideration of the impact of subjective authenticity on an individual after committing a real-life transgression and during its immediate processing, rather than through recall of an autobiographical event, to allow for an ecologically valid insight into authenticity's role in a transgression context.

Present-State Authenticity, Pseudo Self-Forgiveness, and Genuine Self-Forgiveness

A key aim was to investigate whether present-state authenticity affected different outcomes at different stages of transgression processing. The data did not support this hypothesis. A sense of ownership over one’s experiences and the accurate expression of present states did not relate differently to pseudo self-forgiveness or genuine self-forgiveness when considered in the context of the transgression versus during subsequent event processing. It is notable that the RI-CLPMs suggested a lack of evidence for enduring (trait-like) aspects to present-state authenticity as including intercepts for ownership and expression created model estimation problems (with the variance being non-significant and at times negative). As the reference point changed from Time 1 to Time 2 and 3, it is unclear whether this is informative of present-state authenticity (e.g., that there is significant within-person variability in its experience, and thus no trait component) or if this was due to inconsistent measurement. Whilst no support was found for ownership and expression affecting different outcomes across transgression processing, whether these processes are context-sensitive remains an empirical question.

Contrary to hypotheses, there were no significant cross-lagged effects between ownership or expression and pseudo self-forgiveness. Present-state authenticity was therefore found to neither predict defensiveness prospectively, nor be predicted by defensiveness. These findings conflict with prior studies within this research program. Study 1 and Study 2 found negative associations between ownership and pseudo self-forgiveness, and positive associations between expression and pseudo self-forgiveness were found in Study 2. Exploratory consideration of the cross-sectional relationships at Time 1 however replicated these findings; ownership was negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness and expression positively associated. Evidence has therefore only been found for associations between these variables at a cross-sectional level.

The lack of cross-lagged associations between ownership, expression and pseudo self-forgiveness casts doubt on these associations reflecting any causal relationship. Rather, these findings are to be interpreted in an associative way. It may be that the sense of having accurately expressed one’s experiences consistently is indicative of a defensive justification of one’s actions, which shares similar features of pseudo self-forgiveness but does not predict it. Consistent with this idea, the negative correlations between expression and perceived wrongfulness, responsibility, and moral-social threat allude to a defensive function. Similarly, ownership was found to be negatively correlated with wrongfulness and moral-social threat (suggesting defensiveness). Greater ownership may thus mean that the behaviour feels less wrong and threatening, or to the extent that it is wrong and threatening, offenders own their behaviour less. However, exploratory cross-sectional regression analysis showed that ownership, controlling for expression, was negatively related to defensiveness. As ownership was found to be positively prospectively predictive of expression, it may be that it shares similar defensive associations via expression. It should also be noted that third-variable effects may account for these relationships. Whilst these variables may therefore be indicative of each other, or share aspects that make them similar, it may not be that present-state authenticity has an instrumental effect on defensiveness (at least over 24-hour periods).

Different associations were also found between expression and ownership and genuine self-forgiveness. In the CLPM, expression was a marginal negative predictor of genuine self-forgiveness across both time waves, and ownership was unrelated. In the RI-CLPM, expression was a significant negative predictor and ownership a marginal positive predictor. In first accounting for the difference between these models, the RI-CLPM controlled for a trait component in genuine self-forgiveness, which appeared to strengthen the relationships. This suggests that present-state authenticity may better predict intra-individual changes in genuine self-forgiveness (increasing or decreasing over time) rather than at a relative, inter-individual level. However, in exploratory consideration of cross-sectional relationships at Time 1, expression was found to be unrelated to genuine self-forgiveness (as in Study 1 and 2) and ownership was a positive predictor (as in Study 1). The results suggest that for expression (but not ownership), these associations may only develop across time.

The models suggest that offenders' subjective sense of expressing their experience consistently predicted less intra-individual engagement with genuine self-forgiveness over time. This may be due to what expression shares with defensiveness at a cross-sectional level. That is, individuals who feel they have behaved authentically with their inner thoughts and feelings potentially feel self-justified (which also relates to reductions in perceptions of severity and threat), so there is no motive for ongoing event processing. Alternatively, compared with prior studies, the consideration of longitudinal associations in the present study means offenders have the opportunity to interact with others involved in the incident (or at least anticipate interacting with others). It could therefore be that, to the extent offenders feel they have shared their experience, there is no need to continue to process what occurred; they have said what they needed to, and the incident has been resolved. Future research may seek to consider the outcomes further to determine whether this process reflects engagement with others or disengagement from the offence.

Given that the positive trend for ownership predicting intra-individual change in genuine self-forgiveness was a marginal effect, it should be interpreted cautiously. The positive association between these variables at a cross-sectional level is again consistent with the idea of ownership as a process of engagement, which may be associated with genuinely processing the event. However, the CLPM and RI-CLPM both suggested that ownership increases expression over time. Given that expression has a negative relation to genuine self-forgiveness, it is unclear whether ownership's role is a net positive process. It this sense, it again remains to be established whether present-state authenticity in a transgression context reflects a constructive or self-justifying response.

Self-Concept Authenticity as the Endpoint of Processing

Two explanations for the positive relationship between self-concept authenticity and pseudo self-forgiveness were explored; specifically, whether pseudo self-forgiveness provides a buffer for self-concept authenticity to be maintained, and/or whether threatened self-concept authenticity motivates subsequent pseudo self-forgiveness. Consistent support was found for the former hypothesis. Pseudo self-forgiveness prospectively predicted self-concept authenticity in both CLPM and RI-CLPM. No evidence was found for the inverse relationship. These findings suggest that offenders' relative level of defensiveness and/or intra-individual changes in defensiveness over time (increasing or decreasing) predict self-concept authenticity changes (relative to others and/or within-person over time)[7]. The experience of self-concept authenticity following wrongdoing appears to result from defensive processing.

The current study considered transgressions that were self-identified as relatively serious. Descriptive statistics supported the theoretical notion that transgressions would generally be viewed as self-concept discrepant acts, given that features of morality and goodness appear to characterise true-self concepts. It therefore appears that defensiveness protects against disruptions to self-concept authenticity that may ordinarily occur after wrongdoings (particularly those self-identified to be more serious in nature). It did not appear that pseudo self-forgiveness mitigated disruptions to self-concept authenticity via altering appraisals of the wrongdoing, however. Across both models, pseudo self-forgiveness was found to consistently predict a decrease in perceptions of responsibility only, however, this was unrelated to self-concept authenticity. In the RI-CLPM, pseudo self-forgiveness predicted reductions in moral-social threat (though, not so in the CLPM), but moral-social threat was not prospectively related to self-concept authenticity (though, negatively prospectively related in the CLPM). In the CLPM, pseudo self-forgiveness predicted reductions in perceived wrongfulness (though, not so in the RI-CLPM), but wrongfulness was not prospectively related to self-concept authenticity. Thus, while the prospective positive effect of pseudo self-forgiveness on self-concept authenticity seems reliable, the mechanism for this relationship is therefore still unclear.

---

[7] It should be noted that as the CLPM confounds inter- and intrapersonal variance, the relationship found in both models may be due to intrapersonal change.

Unexpectedly, the analyses suggested reciprocal negative relationships between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness. That is, self-concept authenticity was prospectively associated with lesser engagement with the genuine self-forgiveness process as predicted, however, engagement in genuine self-forgiveness was also prospectively associated with lesser perceptions of self-concept authenticity. A degree of caution should however be exercised as to whether these are reliable effects. Whilst the CLPM (conflating between and within-subject change) showed small, reciprocal relationships between genuine self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity, these relationships were non-significant in the within-subjects model. Nonetheless, the relationships trended in the same direction without changes in the apparent size of the effects. The differences between the models therefore trended towards consistency, however, may suggest that the relationships better explain change relative to others than intra-individual change (as the results are less pronounced when a trait component is accounted for). These relationships need to be interpreted cautiously.

Reciprocal negative relationships between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness may further allude to a moral regulation process. As has been theoretically hypothesised, the discomfort associated with self-concept inauthenticity may be required to motivate engagement with the difficult work of accepting responsibility and processing the incident. As offenders engage in genuine self-forgiveness, seriously considering their role in the incident may again question self-concept authenticity. In which case, it may be maintained as a further resource for working through. As genuine self-forgiveness is a process of restoration, the incident may be viewed as self-concept inauthentic as a signal (to self or others) that the event is inconsistent with one's morals. In this way, self-concept inauthenticity may act as a resource for further working through and as a reminder to uphold the violated value in the future. Experimental research will be needed to substantiate causal relationships.

Ongoing Scale Validation

An additional aim of the present study was to continue development of the dual authenticity scale. All three time points yielded equivalent results, with self-concept authenticity and the present-state authenticity subscales of expression and ownership showing a clear factor structure and good internal consistency. The awareness items (including 3 new trialled items) did not differentiate into a separate factor, but again spilt across ownership and expression at each wave of measurement. Cumulative evidence therefore suggests that awareness is not distinguishable at a measurement level given that it may be implied in the other factors, and so it was dropped from the scale.

Although awareness may be implied in expression and ownership (which presents problems for scale design), it remains theoretically relevant. Given that awareness may be a component or precondition of both factors, it may be a key target for authenticity interventions. Mindfulness training to develop an awareness of one's present experience may assist in increasing a sense of self-authorship and agency and support the consistent expression of inner states. Despite awareness being dropped from analyses, it is argued that ongoing investigations should continue theoretically considering its role.

Implications and Future Directions

The current findings extent an understanding of the potential role of self-concept authenticity in moral self-regulation. Consistent with theory, the current study suggests that transgressions (which represent violations of socially shared moral standards) are experienced as self-concept inauthentic events; that is, they are viewed as inconsistent with one's true or core self-concept. Self-concept inauthenticity, experienced on the basis of perceived discrepancy between one's transgressive actions and a positive self-image, may therefore assist in signalling a need to address a problem. The uncomfortable emotional experience associated with inauthenticity may therefore motivate genuine self-forgiveness as a process through which offenders are able to reconcile their actions with a positive self-image. It seems that genuine self-forgiveness may further downregulate self-concept authenticity as a motive for further working through. However, given that self-concept authenticity may be restored via defensiveness, this raises a potential problem. Where offenders' experience of self-concept inauthenticity is prematurely cut short, either via their own defensiveness or reassurance from others, it may intervene with their opportunity for restoration and growth. Accordingly, self-concept inauthenticity may have an instrumental function for offenders. Given the correlational nature of the data and the inconsistent relationships with genuine self-forgiveness, empirical research would assist in building further confidence in these relationships.

The present research was unable to identify a mediator for the relationship between pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity, so future research may seek to investigate this further. The reduction or resolution of negative transgression-related emotions, such as guilt and shame, may be a possible candidate. These emotions act as a "moral barometer", providing feedback on our moral behaviours (Tangney et al. 2007), and so may be associated with cueing self-concept inauthenticity following moral transgressions.

Although not considering these emotions specifically, induced negative affect has been found to downregulate feelings of state authenticity (Lenton, Slabu et al., 2013). Defensive responding has also been found to downregulate shame (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). This represents a possible future direction.

Contrary to hypotheses, present-state authenticity did not affect processing differently across the course of the transgression. The role of present-state authenticity in a transgression context was also unclear and somewhat contradictory, with expression and ownership again showing a different pattern of effects. Ownerships may share associations with working through, whereas expression may more closely reflect a sense of justification that implies an endpoint of processing. These relationships suggest that present-state authenticity is less of a unitary concept than assumed in its relationships with transgression processing. It is interesting that ownership was prospectively positively related to expression, so there is some alignment or functional relationship. But the results show that it is still important to differentiate these facets; that while they may be positively related, they may still have very different implications.

Practically, the current study presents a methodology for considering transgressions that are more serious in nature. Within transgression research, considering recent transgressions (rather than, for example, the worst autobiographical incidents) often means that the reported incidents are within the low-moderate severity range, as was found in prior studies within this research program. This presents a challenge in selecting the appropriate follow-up period to consider the impacts of these incidents over time. The personal and relational consequences of minor transgressions are more likely to be correspondingly minor and short-lasting, with limited processing periods before resolution (for example, minor infractions may be resolved within the same interaction). The current study suggests that incidents of greater severity can be considered in a manner that does not raise ethical questions or restrict generalisability to within a particular sample (such as recruiting relational partners with abuse histories). This may be beneficial in providing a wider window for transgression research seeking to explore more complex and dynamic processes during restoration and repair.

Limitations and Future Directions

Aspects of the study design may have presented limitations for the consideration of present-state authenticity. Firstly, although varying the referent point for present-state authenticity (from the time of the transgression to subsequent processing) was a purpose of the investigation, this may have presented a methodological problem. There was only one consistent time wave (Time 2 to Time 3), which may have accounted for model fit problems for the RI-CLPM (resulting in the removal of trait components for ownership and expression in the model). Future research will be required to substantiate whether there are truly no trait-like components in the present-state authenticity experience or if this was due to the study design. Secondly, the 24-hour time intervals may have been too wide to consider present-state authenticity processes. Selecting a time interval is a challenge of longitudinal research (Selig & Preacher, 2009), and the selected intervals did not have a theoretical basis. Although a strength of the present investigation was that it sought to consider offenders' thoughts and feelings as they unfolded in real-time, there was a limited number of measurement points and the intervals may have been limited in providing insight to more short-lived processes. Momentary sampling studies may be able to elucidate this further.

Whilst the present investigation suggests directional influence between variables, experimental research will be required to substantiate causation. As the data is correlational, the relationships need to be interpreted with caution given the possibility of confounding third variable effects. Some relationships were also unclear. The reciprocal negative associations between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness were small and inconsistent effects. The relationships between present state-authenticity and pseudo self-forgiveness were present in cross-sectional analysis, but did not emerge as cross-lagged effects. Whilst the present research provides valuable insight into these relationships, future research will be required to establish causal effects.

Conclusion

The current research began with a question as to whether being authentic is always desirable. The present research adds nuance to the literature in suggesting that the answer may be no. Counterintuitively, the experience of self-concept inauthenticity may be appropriate and desirable, given its possible role in moral regulation, and where this is cut short by defensiveness, offenders may miss an opportunity for restoration and growth. The results also do not clearly support the hypothesis that present-state authenticity would be associated with restorative processing, as implied by the literature, but may in part speak to the reality that people may authentically express their experiences in socially devalued ways. Jointly, these insights challenge our understanding of authenticity as a wholly positive construct.

CHAPTER 5

Self-Concept Authenticity as an Outcome of Defensiveness and a Potential Barrier to Moral Repair

Authenticity has generally been regarded as a positive attribute, whereas inauthenticity is considered to be aversive and damaging. For example, authenticity has been found to confer interpersonal benefits and is associated with healthy relationship functioning (Brunell et al., 2010; Lopez & Rice, 2006), and is robustly associated with personal wellbeing, self-esteem, and positive affect (Heppner et al., 2008; Neff & Suizzo, 2006; Robinson, et al., 2013; Smallenbroek et al., 2017; Sutton, 2020; Thomaes et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2008). In contrast, inauthenticity is associated with maladaptive outcomes, such as poor wellbeing and social functioning, and negative affect (English & John, 2013; Lenton, Bruder, et al., 2013; Neff & Suizzo, 2006; Wickham et al., 2016). Given these associations, it could reasonably be assumed that authenticity would be desirable and adaptive in difficult interpersonal situations, such as following harm or wrongdoing committed against another person. However, studies within this research program have suggested that the inverse may be true. Feeling inauthentic to one's true- or core-self concept may be an appropriate and adaptive response, whereas feeling authentic may be both intrapersonally and interpersonally costly.

Across this thesis, study results have suggested that disruptions to self-concept authenticity (i.e., feeling one's actions were inconsistent with one's true- or core-self concept) may be involved in transgression processing and moral repair. Consistent positive associations have been found between self-concept inauthenticity and genuine self-forgiveness, and Study 3 suggested that self-concept inauthenticity may prospectively predict engagement in genuine self-forgiveness. However, given that self-concept authenticity following wrongdoing may be restored via defensiveness (pseudo self-forgiveness; Study 3), this presents a problem; if offenders come to view their transgression as self-concept authentic as a result of defensiveness, they may then fail to engage in moral repair. It should be noted, however, whilst the prospective associations found in Study 3 implied casual associations, these are yet to be established. Across two studies, I aim to experimentally investigate whether pseudo self-forgiveness increases self-concept authenticity, and whether this, in turn, reduces genuine self-forgiveness.

Self-Concept Inauthenticity as a Psychological Signal for Moral Transgressions

Non-trivial interpersonal transgressions are likely to be experienced as self-concept inauthentic events. Self-concept inauthenticity is proposed to arise when a valued self-image is threatened via perceived conflict or discrepancy between one's experience and important aspects of one's salient self-concept (or true-self concept, specifically). Perceptions of true-self concepts tend to be biased towards being moral and positively valenced (De Freitas et al., 2018; Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2016; Newman et al., 2015; Strohminger et al., 2017; Strohminger & Nichols, 2014). Given that our notion of what it is to be "good" is founded on conformity to internalised social rules (Woodyatt et al., 2017), transgressing against socially shared values at another person's expense (i.e., committing an interpersonal transgression) is likely to be a potent challenge to true self conceptions, as they threaten offenders' moral-social image (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008, 2015; Wenzel et al., 2021). To the extent that offenders engage with having committed a wrongdoing and experience the associated threats to their moral-social image, it is therefore likely that they will view their actions as self-concept inauthentic.

Offenders' experience of self-concept inauthenticity is likely to be aversive and self-threatening; however, it may also be functional. We are fundamentally motivated to protect against self-image threats, to maintain a sense of self-consistency and self-integrity, and to think of ourselves as good and moral people (Aronson, 2019; Festinger, 1957; Sherman &

Cohen, 2006; Steele et al., 1993). Inauthenticity is also associated with negative affect, and people report strong motivations to avoid experiencing it (Lenton, Bruder, et al., 2013). When self-concept authenticity is threatened or depleted as a result of wrongdoing, it may therefore act as a cognitive and emotional indicator for norm or value violating behaviour.

Self-Concept Inauthenticity as a Motivator for Genuine Self-Forgiveness

The challenge for offenders following wrongdoing is to reconcile their wrongful actions with their positive self-image. Motives to self-verify arise when self-knowledge is threatened (e.g., Swann & Brooks, 2012), so, offenders may seek to repair their image and verify their integrity and acceptability as someone who upholds group values. Through the effortful process of genuine self-forgiveness, offenders accept and work through their responsibility for wrongdoing, affirming the values they violated and the importance of the shared identity these values define (Wenzel et al. 2012; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014). However, whilst responsibility acceptance is key to genuine self-forgiveness (Wenzel et al., 2012) and is generally considered an essential aspect of processing for restoration (Hall & Fincham, 2005; Wenzel et al., 2012; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b), it can be difficult and painful. In the short term, responsibility acceptance may be associated with an increase in negative emotions and moral-social threats.

The desire to resolve the uncomfortable or aversive experience of self-concept inauthenticity via reaffirming one's positive moral identity may be involved in motivating the emotional labour required to work through the offence. Chapter 4 suggested reciprocal negative prospective associations between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness. That is, self-concept inauthenticity may predict engagement in genuine self-forgiveness, and genuine self-forgiveness maintains a sense of self-concept inauthenticity, which acts as a resource or motive for further working through. If a sense of self-concept authenticity is restored prematurely, it may interfere with engagement in moral repair processes.

Offenders who do not experience self-concept inauthenticity or for whom this is disrupted may miss out on an opportunity for restoration and growth. Given its ability to address both offender concerns and promote relationship repair, genuine self-forgiveness is recognised as the only forgiveness process that is effective for individual and interpersonal restoration (Wenzel et al., 2012; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b; Woodyatt, Wenzel & de Vel-Palumbo, 2017). As ineffective repair can have deleterious impacts on personal wellbeing and relationships (e.g., Bolger et al., 1989), this may have individual and interpersonal repercussions. However, as the reciprocal negative relationships found in Chapter 4 were inconsistent and were small effects, the associations between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness require further investigation. The current study aims to expand upon Chapter 4 to experimentally investigate whether self-concept authenticity (compared to self-concept inauthenticity, and a control condition) predicts less engagement in genuine self-forgiveness.

Pseudo Self-Forgiveness as Protecting Self-Concept Authenticity

Rather than processing the wrongdoing, an offender may ameliorate self-threats by denying that wrongdoing has occurred, so that self-concept authenticity is not disrupted in the first place. Study 3 found that the more defensive the wrongdoer was in processing their offence, the more likely they were to subsequently feel they were authentic to their true or core self in the incident. This may present a problem for engagement in moral repair; if offenders' defensiveness prevents disruptions to self-concept authenticity, offenders may be less motivated for genuine self-forgiveness. The risks of prematurely restoring self-concept authenticity following wrongdoing are suggested in research that has considered self-focused interventions in the context of interpersonal transgressions (i.e., self-compassion, affirmation of belongingness, affirmation of unrelated values; see Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014; Woodyatt, Wenzel & Ferber, 2017). These interventions may restore positive self-regard (and reduce self-threats and negative emotions), but in doing so, bypass processing responsibility and do not lead to moral repair processes. Offenders' engagement in pseudo self-forgiveness may therefore have negative implications for genuine self-forgiveness via restored self-concept authenticity.

Overview of the Present Studies

Two preregistered studies were conducted to test the overarching hypothesis that pseudo self-forgiveness may reduce genuine self-forgiveness via self-concept authenticity (i.e., perceptions that one was their true- or core-self). Since a limitation of traditional mediation analysis is that the mediator-outcome relationship is correlational only, two studies were conducted; the first manipulating pseudo self-forgiveness to test its causal effect on the mediator, self-concept authenticity; and the second manipulating self-concept authenticity to test the causal effect of the mediator on the outcome, genuine self-forgiveness (see Fiedler et al., 2011; Spencer et al., 2005). Study 4.1 utilised a hypothetical apology rejection (vs. acceptance) task to manipulate pseudo self-forgiveness (via belongingness threat; see Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). Study 4.2 aimed to directly manipulate self-concept authenticity by directing offenders to reflect upon aspects of the wrongdoing that were consistent (versus inconsistent) with their true- or core-self concept (versus a control reflection task).

In both studies, participants were recruited on the basis of having committed a recent (< 48 hours) wrongdoing which they considered to be non-trivial. Non-trivial transgressions were selected to increase the likelihood that the events would generally be perceived as self-concept inauthentic events. However, the qualification for these to be "relatively serious" (as in Study 3) was removed to investigate whether this increased mean defensiveness. Self-identifying an event to be "serious" may imply greater responsibility engagement and thus less defensiveness. Transgressions from within a 48-hour window were selected to assure that event processing was still current.

Study 4.1

Study 4.1 aimed to manipulate defensiveness via social acceptance threat, using the hypothetical rejection of an apology to the victim. As interpersonal transgressions represent violations of socially shared values, offenders face the potential threat of rejection from their moral community, and thus experience a psychological need to be accepted (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; 2015). Social rejection is highly threatening (Stillman et al., 2009) as humans have a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Given that we are motivated to minimise self-threats, offenders may engage in greater levels of defensiveness to protect the self in the presence of greater belongingness threats. Social threat manipulations have previously been found to increase defensive processing in the context of wrongdoing. In a vignette study (thereby controlling for objective features of the wrongdoing), those with a greater threat to belonging rated the offence as causing significantly lower harm to the victim, experienced less shame and regret, and had a lower desire to reconcile than those who had their belongingness assured (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a, Study 1).

Following wrongdoing, offenders may seek forgiveness from the victim to restore their symbolic need for acceptance (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). The interpersonal function of a victim's forgiveness may be to signal that the relationship can return to normal (Baumeister et al. 1998), and so non-forgiveness may signal further rejection. In the context of real-life transgressions, perceived hostility and non-forgiveness from the victim (e.g., *the other person will not forgive me; I feel the other person is mad at me*) were found to be associated with greater pseudo self-forgiveness over time (as were general feelings of social rejection; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a, Study 2). Study 4.1 therefore aimed to experimentally manipulate offender defensiveness indirectly via social acceptance threat brought on by the hypothetical rejection (vs acceptance) of an apology to the victim. That is, as defensiveness cannot be manipulated directly, a defensiveness trigger was manipulated instead. In an imaginal task, participants were asked to apologise to the victim and write a brief apology message. Depending upon randomised condition assignment, participants either received a hypothetical response from the victim communicating apology acceptance (low social acceptance threat) or apology rejection (high social acceptance threat). The methodology, hypotheses and analysis plan for this study were pre-registered at: https://osf.io/x4v7n

Hypotheses

1. There will be an effect of high (vs low) social acceptance threat on defensiveness, such that an offender who has an apology rejected (high threat) will report greater defensiveness than an offender who has their apology accepted (low threat).
2. Given H1, there will be an effect of high (versus low) acceptance threat on self-concept authenticity, such that an offender who has an apology rejected (high threat) will report greater self-concept authenticity than an offender who has their apology accepted (low threat).
3. Self-concept authenticity will be negatively associated with genuine self-forgiveness, and given H2, will mediate a negative effect of apology rejection on genuine self-forgiveness.

Method

Participants

A priori power analysis was conducted using Monte Carlo simulation in MPlus v8. Assuming a small to medium-sized experimental effect on the mediator (self-concept authenticity) of $\beta = .30$, and a moderate relationship between mediator and outcome (genuine self-forgiveness) of $\beta = .30$, it was determined that a sample size of $N = 185$ would be required to detect the implied indirect effect (and all implied links) with a power of > .80. To account for possible exclusions, a total sample of 200 was collected. Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Based on a priori exclusion criteria, *n* = 4 participants were excluded (*n* = 2 for failing 2/3 embedded attention checks; *n* = 2 for completing no dependent measures). The final sample consisted of 196 participants (women 58.2%, men 40.3%, non-binary 1.5%), aged between 21 and 74 (*M* = 39.04, *SD* = 11.61). Participant ethnicity was white/Caucasian (75%), Asian (9.7%), black/African-American (6.6%), Hispanic/Latinx (4.6%), multiracial (3.1%), and Native American or Alaska Native (1%). Participants were randomised to receive apology rejection (*n* = 98) or acceptance (*n* = 98).

Design and Procedure

The study used a two-cell (apology acceptance vs. rejection) between-groups design. Participants were recruited on the basis of having committed an interpersonal transgression within the last 48 hours. Prior to exposure to the manipulation, participants were asked to provide brief transgression details: an open-ended description of the incident, classify the offence type, classify the relationship shared with the victim, rate the relationship importance, rate the perceived severity of the incident, and report when the event specifically occurred. Participants also completed measures of social acceptance from the victim and third-parties. Third-party acceptance was included as third-parties may also seek to punish or exclude offenders for value-violating behaviour (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2009), which may therefore also present a significant threat to a sense of belonging.

Acceptance from the Victim. Two items, developed for the purpose of this study, captured offenders' sense of being understood and accepted by the victim since the event occurred (e.g., *how accepted have you felt from the other person since this happened?)*. A brief instructional text clarified that these questions related to the person who had been affected by the incident, and if multiple people were affected, to consider the person who had been affected the most. (α = .75, *r* = .60).

Acceptance from Third-Parties. A measure of third-party acceptance was created by combining two preregistered scales that were developed for the purpose of this study, based upon the results from exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Two items were intended to measure feelings of acceptance from third-parties, i.e., "people who were not directly involved in what happened" (e.g., *how accepted have you felt from other people since this happened?*) and two items were intended to measure general feelings of acceptance (*I feel accepted by others in spite of my behaviour; I feel regarded by others as a good person;* adapted from Wenzel et al., 2020). A principal component analysis with Varimax rotation of all acceptance items (i.e., victim acceptance, and the intended third-party and general acceptance measures) yielded two factors, explaining 74.9% of the variance. The first factor included the items intended to measure third-party acceptance and general acceptance (loadings >.68), whilst the second factor comprised the victim items (loadings >.84). Hence, the third-party and general acceptance items were averaged to create a total acceptance from others scale (α = .86).

Manipulation. Participants were instructed that they would be presented with an imaginal scenario and were asked to engage with the scenario as if it were actually happening. Participants were asked to imagine apologising to the victim and wrote a brief apology message. Depending upon randomized condition assignment, participants then received a hypothetical response from the victim in which their apology was either accepted or rejected. The messages were as follows:

Apology accepted (i.e., low acceptance threat): *Hey, I got your message. I'm upset about what's happened, but I'd like to put this behind us and move on. Thank you for your apology.*

Apology rejected (i.e., high acceptance threat). *Hey, I got your message. I'm angry about what's happened. I've been thinking about it, and your actions were unacceptable. I don't accept your apology.*

Participants were then asked to respond to a series of prompts to elicit further engagement with the task, before responding to the dependent measures.

Engagement Prompt and Manipulation Check. Following exposure to the manipulation, five items assessed participants' reactions to the message they received (e.g., *I feel misunderstood by the other person (R)*, *I feel cared for by the other person*; α = .94).

Key Dependent Measures

All measures were captured on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with anchors from (1) *strongly disagree*, through (4) *neither agree nor disagree,* to (7) *strongly agree.* Items on multi-item scales were averaged to form a scale index.

Pseudo Self-Forgiveness. A 6-item measure (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) captured defensive responding via displacement of blame and responsibility, moral disengagement, and anger (e.g., *I wasn't the only one to blame for what happened; I feel those involved got what they deserved;* α = .82).

Self-Concept Authenticity. A 6-item scale measured participants' perceptions that the wrongdoing was consistent with their conceptions of their true- or core-self (e.g., *my actions were inconsistent with who I truly know myself to be* (R); *I acted in line with my true self;* α = .93).

Genuine Self-Forgiveness. A 7-item scale (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) captured offenders' engagement with active and effortful processing of the wrongdoing, without deflection of responsibility (e.g., *I am trying to learn from my wrongdoing; I don't take what I have done lightly;* α = .88).

Exploratory Measures

Present-State Authenticity. Participants' feelings of having been true to their present-state experiences were captured with an 11-item scale, comprised of the ownership (5-item) and expression (6-items) subscales. Ownership captured feelings of having been agentic and self-determining (e.g., *I had a sense of ownership over my thoughts and feelings; I was in charge of how I responded to the situation*; $\alpha = .92$). Expression captured feelings of having represented one's present-state experiences accurately (e.g., *I expressed what I really thought; My behaviour reflected how I really felt;* $\alpha = .90$).

Moral-Social Threat. An 8-item scale measured the extent to which participants felt their sense of moral integrity and social image was threatened by their wrongdoing (e.g., *I am worried what others will think of me because of this incident; given my behaviour, my moral image feels tarnished;* $\alpha = .95$).

Self-Punitiveness. A 7-item scale from Woodyatt and Wenzel (2013b) measured the extent to which participants were engaged in a self-condemning response, involving excessive self-blame and ruminative thought, (e.g., *I keep going over what I have done in my head; I deserve to suffer for what I have done*; $\alpha = .87$).

Transgression-Related Emotions. Participants indicate the extent to which they currently felt guilty, ashamed, embarrassed, resentful, regretful, sad, disappointed and angry about their actions.

Results

Transgression Details

On average, participants rated the transgression as moderately severe ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.31$). The incidents were predominately classified as acts of disrespect (23%), dishonesty or lying (17.3%), betrayals of trust (10.7%), neglect (10.2%), and insults or verbal abuse (8.7%), committed against friends (28.6%), spouses (22.4%), family members (20.4%), or a boyfriend/girlfriend (18.4%). On average, these relationships were rated as very important (*M* = 6.16, *SD* = 1.16), with only 2% rating the relationship importance below the midpoint (<4). *T*-tests confirmed that there were no differences between groups in how accepted participants felt from the victim party, *t*(194) = -.73, *p* = .47, or third parties, *t* (194) = -.98, *p* = .33, prior to exposure to the manipulation, as expected of a randomised design.

Manipulation Check

A *t*-test confirmed that those who had their apology rejected felt less understood, accepted, and cared for (*M* = 2.58, *SD* = 1.06) than those who had their apology accepted (*M* = 5.71, *SD* = 1.06), *t*(194) = 20.73, *p* < .001. This difference represented a large effect, *d* = 2.96.

Mean Difference Analyses

Cell means and *t*-test statistics are presented in Table 5.1. The analysis revealed a marginal between-group difference in pseudo self-forgiveness. Those in the high threat condition (apology rejected) were marginally more defensive than those in the low threat condition (apology accepted). Cell means however revealed that on average, defensiveness was low across the entire sample. Contrary to hypotheses, there were no significant differences between the high and low threat conditions in self-concept authenticity or genuine self-forgiveness. There were no between-group differences on any of the exploratory variables.

Table 5.1

Cell Means (Standard Deviations) as a Function of Acceptance Threat, with Mean Difference Tests (Study 1).

Dependent Variable	Low threat (n = 98)	High threat (n = 98)	t(194)	p	d [95% CI]
Pseudo self-forgiveness	2.78 (1.21)	3.11 (1.30)	-1.79	.075	-.26 [-.54, .03]
Self-concept authenticity	3.80 (1.54)	3.73 (1.50)	.28	.779	.04 [-.24, .32]
Genuine self-forgiveness	5.06 (1.12)	5.12 (1.12)	-.37	.709	-.05 [-.33, .23]
Expression	4.95 (1.29)	4.94 (1.42)	.07	.944	.01 [-.27, .29]
Ownership	5.43 (1.08)	5.37 (1.14)	.40	.691	.06 [-.22, .34]
Self-punitiveness	3.48 (1.39)	3.60 (1.26)	-.66	.513	-.09 [-.37, .19]
Moral/social threat	4.23 (1.56)	4.02 (1.52)	.92	.358	.13 [-.15, .41]

Note. CI = confidence interval.

An exploratory one-way ANCOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a difference between high acceptance threat and low acceptance threat on pseudo self-forgiveness after controlling for the effect of victim and third-party acceptance experienced in relation to the transgression prior to the manipulation. There was a marginal effect of acceptance threat on pseudo self-forgiveness after controlling for the effect of victim and other acceptance, $F(1, 192) = 3.53$, $p = .062$, with those in the high threat condition, M = 3.11, SE = 0.12, 95% CI [2.54, 3.02], reporting marginally greater pseudo self-forgiveness than those in the low threat condition, M = 2.78, SE = 0.12, 95% CI [2.87, 3.35], $\eta p^2 = .02$. These findings were equivalent to those found in *t*-tests. The covariate, victim acceptance, was significantly related to pseudo self-forgiveness, $b = -.23$, SE = .08, $p = .003$, whereas other acceptance was not, $b = .14$, SE = .11, $p = .19$. Measured victim acceptance therefore functioned like the intended manipulation, leading to a decrease in defensiveness. This result suggests that real-life interactions also impacted responding, and this may have limited the responsiveness of the dependent variables to the manipulation.

Correlations

Intercorrelations between variables are shown in Table 5.2, and were conducted to explore variable relationships further. Whilst the manipulation was not found to significantly affect pseudo self-forgiveness, the predicted correlational patterns were found. Pseudo self-forgiveness was positively associated with self-concept authenticity and negatively associated with genuine self-forgiveness. Self-concept authenticity was negatively associated with genuine self-forgiveness.

Notably, the measured acceptance variables, perceived acceptance from the victim and third parties, showed different patterns of relationships. Perceived acceptance from the victim was negatively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness and positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness, however, was not related to the other measured variables. Perceived acceptance from third parties was positively associated with self-concept authenticity, but had no significant association with either pseudo self-forgiveness or genuine self-forgiveness.

Table 5.2

Intercorrelations between all Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Victim	*							
2. Other	.35***	*						
3. PSF	-.20**	.06	*					
4. SCA	-.05	.18*	.43***	*				
5. GSF	.21**	.05	-.39***	-.33***	*			
6. Express	-.06	.24***	.22**	.42***	-.06	*		
7. Own	-.06	.29***	.05	.32***	.08	.61***	*	
8. SP	.05	-.31***	-.22**	-.43***	.50***	-.22**	-.25***	*
9. Moral	-.01	-.35***	-.32***	-.54***	.44***	-.25***	-.23**	.73***

Note. Victim = victim acceptance; Others = third-party acceptance; PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness; SCA = self-concept authenticity; GSF = genuine self-forgiveness; Express = expression; Own = ownership; SP = self-punitiveness; Moral = moral/social threat. ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05.

Regression Analysis

Although between-condition analyses revealed no significant differences, mediation analysis was still considered for complete hypothesis testing. The manipulation did not appear strong enough to surpass interaction dynamics that had already occurred between parties in real life (e.g., whether forgiveness had already been granted), however, correlational relationships aligned with the hypotheses. Given that the manipulated acceptance variable (apology accepted vs. rejected) was not found to produce an effect, I diverted from the preregistered analysis by considering the measured variables as predictors. Hayes' (2018) bootstrapping method was used to perform tests of indirect effects, using bootstrap confidence intervals with 10,000 samples. The experimental factors were coded as 1 and 0.

First, victim acceptance was considered as a predictor, with third-party acceptance and the manipulated acceptance threat variable (apology accepted vs. rejected) as covariates. It was considered whether pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity sequentially mediated the relationship between victim acceptance and genuine self-forgiveness. There was a total effect of victim acceptance on genuine self-forgiveness, $b = .14$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.24], $p = .004$. Direct effects are shown in Table 5.3, and mirror patterns found in previous analyses. Victim acceptance had a negative direct effect on pseudo self-forgiveness. The more accepted offenders felt victim party, the less defensive they were. Pseudo self-forgiveness had a positive direct effect on self-concept authenticity in the second stage of the mediation, and then self-concept authenticity was negatively related to genuine self-forgiveness. As such, there was a significant (sequentially mediated) indirect effect of victim acceptance on genuine self-forgiveness, $b = 0.01$, 95% CI [.003, .03] through pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity as mediators.

Third-party acceptance was then considered as a predictor, with victim acceptance and the manipulated acceptance threat variable as covariates. There was no total effect of third-party acceptance on genuine self-forgiveness, $b = -0.02$, 95% CI [-0.14, 0.10], $p = .73$. Direct effects are again shown in Table 5.3. As in previous analyses, the effect of third-party acceptance on defensiveness was marginal, but trended in the opposite direction from victim acceptance; third-party acceptance had a positive relationship with pseudo self-forgiveness. The more offenders felt accepted by people other than the victim, the more defensive they were. Pseudo self-forgiveness again had a positive direct effect on self-concept authenticity in the second stage of the mediation, and self-concept authenticity was negatively related to genuine self-forgiveness. The manipulated acceptance threat variable was found to have a marginal effect on pseudo self-forgiveness, and no effect on either self-concept authenticity or genuine self-forgiveness in presence of the other variables.

Pathways of indirect effects are shown in Table 5.4 for victim acceptance, and Table 5.5 for third-party acceptance. It was found that pseudo self-forgiveness alone, as well as in subsequently predicting greater self-concept authenticity, mediated a positive relationship between victim acceptance (i.e., low acceptance threat) and genuine self-forgiveness. Indirect effects were not significant for self-concept authenticity alone, suggesting that the effect of defensiveness is central to this process. As can be seen in Table 6, there was a significant negative indirect effect of third-party acceptance on genuine self-forgiveness via self-concept authenticity, resulting in a decrease in genuine self-forgiveness. The indirect effects via pseudo self-forgiveness, as only mediator or in sequence with self-concept authenticity, were not significant.

Table 5.3

Model Coefficients (Direct Effects) for the Mediated Regression Analysis of the Effect of Victim Acceptance on Genuine Self-Forgiveness, via Pseudo Self-Forgiveness and Self-Concept Authenticity, with Acceptance Threat and Third-Party Acceptance as Covariates

Predictor	*b*	95% CI	*t*	*p*
DV: pseudo self-forgiveness				
Victim acceptance	-0.18	[-0.29, -0.08]	-3.36	<.001*
Third party acceptance	0.13	[-0.01, 0.27]	1.84	.068
Apology Rejection	0.33	[-0.02, 0.68]	1.88	.062
DV: self-concept authenticity				
Victim acceptance	-0.02	[-0.14, 0.10]	-0.34	.736
Pseudo self-forgiveness	0.52	[0.36, 0.67]	6.46	<.001*
Third party acceptance	0.19	[0.03, 0.34]	2.40	.017*
Apology Rejection	-0.26	[-0.65, 0.13]	-1.32	.189
DV: genuine self-forgiveness				
Victim acceptance	0.80	[-0.01, 0.17]	1.74	.084
Pseudo self-forgiveness	-0.25	[-0.39, -0.12]	-3.82	<.001*
Self-concept authenticity	-0.16	[-0.26, -0.05]	-2.91	.004*
Third party acceptance	0.05	[-0.07, 0.17]	0.86	.392
Apology Rejection	0.11	[-0.18, 0.39]	0.73	.466

*Note. b*s are unstandardized regression coefficients. PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness; Threat = acceptance threat. SCA = self-concept authenticity; GSF = genuine self-forgiveness. **p* < .05.

Table 5.4

Pathways of Indirect Effects for Victim Acceptance on Genuine Self-Forgiveness, via Pseudo Self-Forgiveness and Self-Concept Authenticity

Mediator(s)	*b*	95% CI for *b*
Pseudo self-forgiveness	0.05	[0.01, 0.09]*
Self-concept authenticity	0.003	[-0.01, 0.03]
Pseudo self-forgiveness → self-concept authenticity	0.01	[0.003, 0.03]*

Note. *b*s are unstandardized coefficients. *p < 05.

Table 5.5

Pathways of Indirect Effects for Third Party Acceptance on Genuine Self-Forgiveness, via Pseudo Self-Forgiveness and Self-Concept Authenticity

Mediator(s)	*b*	95% CI for *b*
Pseudo self-forgiveness	-0.03	[-0.08, 0.01]
Self-concept authenticity	-0.03	[-0.07, -0.003]*
Pseudo self-forgiveness → self-concept authenticity	-0.01	[-0.03, 0.002]

Note. *b*s are unstandardized coefficients. *p < 05.

Discussion

The present study aimed to manipulate pseudo self-forgiveness via social acceptance threat (apology rejection vs. acceptance) to investigate its effect on self-concept authenticity. The manipulation was not found to function as predicted. Although the manipulation check showed participants reported a greater sense of rejection following having their apology rejected (compared to accepted), this only had a marginal effect on pseudo self-forgiveness, even when controlling for offenders' baseline level of acceptance. From this, it appeared that the manipulation was not strong enough to overpower interaction dynamics that may have already occurred between affected parties (for example, whether forgiveness had already been granted). It was therefore not possible to substantiate whether pseudo self-forgiveness causally increases self-concept authenticity. The correlational patterns were however consistent with hypotheses and replicated prior study findings.

Although manipulated acceptance threat was not found to produce between-group differences, the extent to which offenders felt accepted by the victim (as measured prior to the manipulation) showed the hypothesized effects. Victim acceptance was found to be positively associated with genuine self-forgiveness via defensiveness, as well as further (sequentially mediated) by self-concept authenticity. These results, while based on correlational post-hoc analyses, were consistent with the hypothesised relationships. The less accepted offenders felt by the victim (i.e., the greater the rejection threat), the more defensive they were, and this had a negative downstream effect on genuine self-forgiveness directly, as well as further mediated by self-concept authenticity. Though causality cannot be inferred from correlational findings, the results suggest that perceived rejection from the victim may increase the risk of failing to accept that one has done wrong; such defensiveness seems to protect a sense of self-concept authenticity, which may lessen engagement in moral repair. As defensiveness also mediated this process alone, the defensive aspects of this process may be key; self-concept authenticity (or a lack of self-concept inauthenticity) may function to signal that wrongdoing has not occurred.

Acceptance from third-party others was negatively associated with genuine self-forgiveness via self-concept authenticity. Given that there was no relationship between third-party acceptance and pseudo self-forgiveness, it did not appear that acceptance from others functioned to alter offenders' perceptions of the wrongdoing (for example, making them feel that their actions were justified). Rather, acceptance from others may have a protective effect on self-concept authenticity appraisals in representing non-contingent acceptance. People's self-regard is strongly affected by how they are perceived by others (Leary et al., 2003). The more one feels accepted by their community despite the wrongdoing, the less disruptive the event may seem to one's positive moral image and sense of self-concept authenticity. In further support of this idea, third-party acceptance was negatively correlated with moral and social threats. Acceptance from third parties, expressed despite wrongdoing, may therefore represent another way that a sense of self-concept authenticity may be protected in the context of moral transgressions. In preventing disruptions to self-concept authenticity that would ordinarily occur, acceptance from others may reduce motivation to work through one's failings through genuine self-forgiveness. Again, though, the correlational and post-hoc nature of the findings means that we cannot infer causality from these data.

Study 4.2

Study 2 aimed to experimentally manipulate offender perceptions of self-concept authenticity to consider the effect on engagement in genuine self-forgiveness. Self-concept authenticity is thought to arise to the extent that one experiences validation of important aspects of one's salient self-concept (e.g., Schmader & Sedikides, 2018). To the extent that one appraises one's behaviour as fitting the salient self-concept, one will experience self-concept authenticity, as contrasted with perceived discrepancy and feelings of alienation from one's self. In a reflection task, participants in the experimental conditions were asked to reflect upon how their behaviour was consistent (vs. inconsistent) with their concept of their true or core self; in the control condition, they were asked to reflect on recent unrelated events. Although the manipulation was developed for the purpose of the investigation, prior experimental research has found written reflection tasks to be effective in manipulating state authenticity (Gino et al., 2015; Gino & Kouchaki, 2020; Kifer et al., 2013). The methodology, hypotheses, and analysis plan for this study were pre-registered at: https://osf.io/wn4ye

Hypotheses

1. It is hypothesised that the manipulation will produce differences in perceptions of self-concept authenticity, that is, those who reflect upon their behaviour as true-self concept consistent will report greater self-concept authenticity regarding the transgression than those who reflect upon their behaviour as true-self concept inconsistent, or those at baseline (i.e., control).
2. Given H1, it is hypothesised that those who reflect on their behaviour as self-concept consistent will report less engagement with genuine self-forgiveness than those who reflect upon their behaviour as self-concept inconsistent, or those at baseline (i.e., control).

Method

Participants

A priori power analysis using G*power (Faul et al., 2007) determined that 246 participants were required for an 80% chance of detecting a medium-sized effect ($f = 0.20$) between three independent groups. To account for possible exclusions, a sample of 260 was planned. Participants were recruited from the online platform Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A total sample of $N = 265$ was collected. No responses were required to be removed based upon a priori exclusion criteria. The sample consisted of 149 women, 119 men, 2 non-binary people, and 1 trans man, aged between 19 and 73 ($M = 37.81$, $SD = 11.56$). Participants were White/Caucasian (74%), Black/African-American (10.5%), Hispanic/Latinx (6%), Asian (5.3%), Multiracial (3.4%), and Native American or Alaska Native (0.8%).

Design and Procedure

The study used a three-group between-subjects design with random allocation to groups. Prior to exposure to the manipulation, participants completed the same battery of transgression-related questions as in the previous study (i.e., open-ended event description, classifying the offence type, classifying the relationship shared with the victim, rating relationship importance and perceived transgression severity, and reporting when the event specifically occurred). Participants were then instructed that they would engage in a brief written reflection task regarding recent events. Depending upon randomized condition assignment, participants were asked to reflect upon how their behaviour during the reported incident was consistent vs. inconsistent with their true or core self, or on unrelated activities engaged in the day before. The instructions were as follows:

Consistency reflection: *Think about the incident you reported. In what ways were your actions* ***consistent*** *with who you really are or who you truly know yourself to be? For example, a participant in a prior study listed that they "stood up for themselves" which fit with their view of themselves as "assertive". Please spend a few moments reflecting and note down how your actions were* ***consistent*** *with who you really are.*

Inconsistency reflection: *Think about the incident you reported. In what ways were your actions* ***inconsistent*** *with who you really are or who you truly know yourself to be? For example, a participant in a prior study listed that they were "selfish" when they feel who they really are is "kind". Please spend a few moments reflecting and note down how your actions were* ***inconsistent*** *with who you really are.*

Unrelated events reflection (control task): *Think about what you did yesterday. What kinds of things did you do? These can be big or little things. For example, a participant in a prior study listed that they had brushed their teeth and fed their dog. Please spend a few moments reflecting and note down what you did yesterday.*

Participants were then asked to respond to a series of exploratory items as well as the main measures described below.

Measures

Self-concept authenticity (α = .95), pseudo self-forgiveness (α = .82), genuine self-forgiveness (α = .87), present-state authenticity (expression, α = .94; ownership, α =.85), self-punitiveness (α = .88), and transgression-related emotions were measured using the same scales as Study 4.1.

Results

Transgression Details

On average, participants rated the incident as moderately severe (*M* = 4.86, *SD* = 1.35). The wrongdoings were predominantly classified as acts of disrespect (20%), betrayals of trust (17.7%), insults or verbal abuse (15.8%), dishonesty or lying (10.2%) or selfishness (8.3%), committed against friends (23.8%), family members (22.6%), boyfriends/girlfriends (22.6%), spouses (20.4%) or work colleagues (7.5%). On average, these relationships were rated as very important (*M* = 6.21, *SD* = 1.20), with only 3.4% of participants rating the relationship importance below the midpoint (> 4).

Mean Difference Analyses

The effect of the self-concept consistency task on all dependent variables was analysed using one-way ANOVA. Cell means and *F*-test statistics are presented in Table 5.6. A significant difference emerged between conditions on self-concept authenticity. As predicted, following the self-concept consistency task, participants viewed themselves as more consistent than in the inconsistency task or control task. Those in the inconsistent condition rated themselves as the least self-concept consistent. Contrary to hypotheses, there was no difference between groups in genuine self-forgiveness. No difference between conditions emerged on any exploratory variable.

Table 5.6

Cell Means (Standard Deviations) as a Function of Self-Concept Consistency Manipulation, with Mean Difference Tests (Study 4.2)

Variable	Consistent (*n* = 86)	Control (*n* = 89)	Inconsistent (*n* = 90)	*F*	*p*	$\eta2$
SCA	4.49 (1.74)$_a$	3.83 (1.58)$_b$	2.59 (1.26)$_c$	34.86	<.001	.21
GSF	4.95 (1.16)$_a$	5.01 (1.07)$_a$	5.18 (1.14)$_a$	1.04	.36	.01
PSF	3.10 (1.33)$_a$	3.10 (1.29)$_a$	2.75 (1.15)$_a$	2.32	.10	.02
Express	4.72 (1.75)$_a$	4.61 (1.37)$_a$	4.50 (1.52)$_a$	0.44	.64	.003
Own	5.38 (1.17)$_a$	5.14 (1.17)$_a$	5.30 (1.13)$_a$	1.01	.37	.01
SP	3.45 (1.41)$_a$	3.46 (1.33)$_a$	3.70 (1.38)$_a$	1.00	.37	.01

Note. SCA = self-concept authenticity. GSF = genuine self-forgiveness. PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness. Express = expression. Own = ownership. SP = self-punitiveness. Means that do not share a subscript are significantly different at $p < .05$

Given that there was no effect of the manipulation on genuine self-forgiveness, correlational relationships were explored. Correlations between variables are shown in Table 5.7. The expected correlational patterns emerged. Self-concept authenticity was negatively correlated with genuine self-forgiveness, which was a moderate-sized effect. Pseudo self-forgiveness was positively correlated with self-concept authenticity, and negatively correlated with genuine self-forgiveness.

Table 5.7

Intercorrelations Between all Study Variables (Study 4.2)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. SCA	*				
2. GSF	-.40***	*			
3. PSF	.39***	-.32***	*		
4. Express	.41***	-.09	.37***	*	
5. Own	.21***	.006	.05	.58***	*
6. SP	-.39***	.54***	-.29***	-.18**	-.20**

Note. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$.

Discussion

The present study aimed to manipulate self-concept authenticity by prompting offenders to reflect upon the consistency (vs. inconsistency, vs. control) of their actions, to investigate the effect on genuine self-forgiveness. The manipulation was found to function as predicted. Reflecting upon the consistency of one's actions did appear to ameliorate the effect of committing a transgression on one's sense of being one's true or core self, whilst reflecting upon the inconsistencies exacerbated this. However, the manipulation had no statistically significant effect on genuine self-forgiveness, thus providing no support for the prediction.

Given the significant moderate correlation between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness (in the predicted direction), the lack of between-group differences is curious. As Study 3 (Chapter 5) suggested bidirectional relationships between these variables, the present correlational relationship may reflect reverse causality; that is, offenders' engagement in genuine self-forgiveness outside of the study context reduced self-concept authenticity. To the extent that offenders had engaged in genuine self-forgiveness, it highlighted the self-concept inauthenticity of their actions, independent of the effects of the experimental manipulation. Alternatively, it is possible that the effect of self-concept authenticity on genuine self-forgiveness did not materialise because it was suppressed by other mediating processes (experimental side effects), though it is unclear what these could have been. It is also possible that the effects on genuine self-forgiveness would only emerge over time (note that the evidence in Study 3 for such an effect was in the form of a cross-lagged relationship, thus involving a time lag). As it stands, the present study provided no support for the hypothesis that self-concept authenticity following wrongdoing would lessen engagement in genuine self-forgiveness.

General Discussion

Across two studies, I sought to experimentally investigate whether self-concept authenticity has a functional role in the context of wrongdoing, mediating a negative relationship between pseudo self-forgiveness and genuine self-forgiveness. In Study 4.1, the manipulation was not found to affect pseudo self-forgiveness as had been predicted, but correlational analysis supported the hypothesised relationships. Study 4.2 however raised doubts about the causal mechanism; whilst the consistency manipulation was found to affect self-concept authenticity as predicted, it was not found to affect engagement in genuine self-forgiveness. Correlational evidence for a link between self-concept inauthenticity and genuine self-forgiveness instead raises the possibility of reverse causality. Genuine self-forgiveness may predict lesser feelings of self-concept authenticity.

The results suggest that self-concept authenticity may more aptly be considered as an outcome of event processing. To the extent that an offender engages with having committed moral wrongdoing, it is likely that this will deplete their sense of being their true or core self. However, this appraisal may subsequently be affected differently depending upon whether an offender responds to this threat with pseudo or genuine self-forgiveness. Whilst pseudo self-forgiveness may defend against morality threats to up-regulate feelings of self-concept authenticity, the acceptance of responsibility and feelings of discrepancy associated with genuine self-forgiveness may down-regulate it, maintaining the view that what one has done was inconsistent with one's true self. In this way, feelings of self-concept inauthenticity may be a cognitive and emotional marker of self-discrepancies that, while threatening, are a reminder of needing to do better.

The finding that self-concept inauthenticity did not predict genuine self-forgiveness is inconsistent with prior research that suggests feelings of inauthenticity and awareness of self-discrepancy may motivate compensatory behaviours. Gino et al. (2015) found that experiencing inauthenticity, as manipulated by reflecting on *"a situation in which you felt inauthentic with your core self"*, led to helping behaviours (completing additional study tasks for no compensation; Study 3) and donating behaviour (Study 5). Further, information that challenges people's self-views has been found to prompt compensatory behaviours to affirm these self-conceptions (Swann & Brooks, 2012). As moral features are particularly constitutive of identity (e.g., Molouki & Bartels, 2017; Newman et al., 2014; Strohminger & Nichols, 2014), actions that threaten one's positive moral identity and the accompanying feelings of inauthenticity would be expected to motivate restorative actions, geared toward repairing one's image.

Given that prospective reciprocal relationships were found in Study 3, it may be that a reciprocal pattern with genuine self-forgiveness only emerges over time. Genuine self-forgiveness has been conceptually defined and operationalised as a process (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b; Woodyatt, Wenzel & de Vel-Palumbo, 2017; Woodyatt, Wenzel & Ferber, 2017), and captures the emotional labour required to work through an offence. It therefore implies reflection and personal growth in the period following the incident. Given that alterations in self-concept authenticity had only just occurred, there may have not been an opportunity for this to translate into changes in genuine self-forgiveness. Rather, this process may require time. Future studies should consider a period of delay following the manipulation to investigate whether this effect emerges.

In Study 4.1, acceptance from third parties affected self-concept authenticity appraisals, however victim acceptance did not, suggesting that the source of acceptance (or threat) may be important for self-concept authenticity perceptions. Third party acceptance may act as an alternate source of threat reduction, lessening the moral-social threats associated with one's actions and the impacts on one's positive self-image. Accordingly, acceptance from others may protect a sense of self-concept authenticity in the context of an otherwise self-threatening event. Whilst self-concept authenticity (manipulated via reflecting on a situation where one felt authentic to their core self) has previously been found to buffer social acceptance threats (Gino & Kouchaki, 2020), social acceptance may therefore also contribute to feelings of authenticity. Acceptance from the victim may however not alter the moral-social threats associated with the incident (as also supported by a lack of correlation between these variables), but may assist offenders to process these threats. As such, victim acceptance may allow offenders to accept the incident was not in line with their true self as an aspect of meaningfully processing the event. These results may therefore further speak to the role of self-concept inauthenticity in moral self-regulation.

The possibility that acceptance from others bolstered feelings of authenticity is notable in that it challenges assertions that authenticity involves the rejection of external influence (e.g., Wood et al., 2008), and joins the evidence that suggests this may not apply to authenticity at a state or momentary level. Lenton and colleagues (2016) found that the acceptance of external influence unexpectedly led to an increase, rather than a decrease, in authentic behaviours at a state level (Lenton et al., 2016). Further, the satisfaction of relatedness needs was found to be associated with authentic ("most-me") experiences (Lenton, Bruder, et al., 2013). In Chapter 1, this was accounted for in considerations of present-state authenticity, such that accepting external influence may not undermine authenticity as long as it is in accordance with the phenomenological self's values and interests. In this way, an individual may accept influence whilst still experiencing their own self as the active agent or originator of that experience. The present results however suggest that self-concept authenticity is also not at odds with external influence, as such influence may provide a social validation of self.

A clear limitation of the present study is that the experimental manipulation used in Study 4.1 was not found to affect the pseudo self-forgiveness as predicted, having only a marginal effect. The study trialled a methodology, using a real-life transgression in combination with an imagined aspect of the event, to maintain high ecological validity while using an experimental approach (e.g., Okimoto et al., 2013). However, this did not offer sufficient control, and extraneous factors appear to have diluted the effect. Even in controlling for victim and third-party acceptance, the manipulation remained marginal, and it cannot be ascertained what other factors may have been affecting this relationship. The results suggest that real-life transgressions are hard to manipulate. Mean defensiveness across the sample was also found to be low, which may have been a consequence of self-reporting a transgression that implies an acknowledgement of responsibility. Whilst the longitudinal Study 3 suggested a positive predictive relationship between pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity, this is yet to be established experimentally. A paradigm or vignette in which participants are presented with a hypothetical transgression would be advantageous for the greater experimental control, and would also allow for higher levels of defensiveness to be considered. This should be a consideration of future research.

Concluding Remarks

Across the literature, authenticity has been broadly understood as adaptive and socially desirable, whereas inauthenticity has been considered maladaptive. The current study challenges this narrative. Whilst it could not be established experimentally, the results suggest that feeling self-concept inauthentic, although uncomfortable, may be an appropriate and desirable response for offenders following wrongdoing, given its associations with moral repair. On the other hand, an offender's experience of self-concept authenticity may be symptomatic of a failure to engage with the wrongdoing or commit to positive change.

CHAPTER 6

General Discussion

In this thesis, I have developed a theoretical framework for personal authenticity, and applied it to the context of interpersonal wrongdoing to explore a complex relationship between authenticity, defensiveness and moral repair. Three questions guided this research. Firstly, what is personal authenticity? Secondly, how might personal authenticity relate to offenders' engagement in defensiveness and moral repair? Finally, if it were found to be of benefit, what strategies might support offenders' capacities to engage in authentic processes to facilitate personal and interpersonal restorative outcomes? In this final chapter, I will discuss the findings in relation to these initial research questions, consider the theoretical implications of this work, and the future directions that may continue from it.

What is Personal Authenticity?

In this thesis, I have argued that personal authenticity is a dual construct. Chapter 1 presented a rationale for this conceptualisation, arrived at via a deconstruction of the authenticity construct, adoption of classic theory of the self (James, 1890), and a synthesis of the personal authenticity literature. Authenticity may be broadly defined as a judgement or verification that a given entity is what it is claimed to be (Trilling, 1972) in a particular way. The relevant entity for personal authenticity is the self, which is comprised of two dimensions; the I-self, involving one's present-state phenomenological experiences, and the Me-self, pertaining to one's self-concept. Two analogous ways personal authenticity has been conceptualised can then be identified in the literature. Present-state authenticity regards feeling true to one's present-state self, and theoretically comprises subjective present-state awareness, consistent expression of present-state experience, and phenomenological ownership. Self-concept authenticity regards feeling true to one's conceptual understanding of who one is, and arises to the extent that valued, salient self-concept (or true-self concept) features are validated. This dual model provides an integrated framework for personal authenticity that unifies the literature.

A working scale was developed for the dual conceptualisation and evidence was found for its factorial structure across six data sets (Study 2; Study 3: T1, T2, T3; Studies 4.1 and 4.2). Regarding present-state authenticity, a clear factor structure was found for the ownership and expression subscales, however, awareness consistently failed to differentiate at a measurement level. Although Study 2 found support for the proposed four-factor conceptualisation, awareness was dropped from analysis in Study 3 given the difficulty in distinguishing it at a measurement level. The self-concept authenticity scale demonstrated high internal consistency and was found to have consistent predictive associations throughout[8]. Across all studies, the scales were found to be moderately correlated. Jointly, these results empirically support the differentiation of these two authenticity dimensions and the scale’s psychometric properties. Given that no existing scales differentiate these two authenticity dimensions, this presents promising initial information for a scale that may have wide utility within the broader literature.

Whilst investigating the relationships between the present-state authenticity sub-factors was not an aim of the present research, the studies provided some insights into how they may relate. As has been discussed, the finding that awareness did not differentiate from the other factors is consistent with the idea that it may be a logical precondition for ownership, and expression to a lesser extent. A positive lagged effect of ownership on expression was found in Study 3, which suggested a functional relationship between these factors over 24-hour periods following wrongdoing. Feeling one’s transgression-related experiences were agentic and self-authored therefore seemed to precede sharing these experiences with others, which may be motivational (e.g., offenders are more comfortable sharing experiences that feel owned) or practical (e.g., offenders have greater clarity regarding owned experiences, which facilitates sharing them). A possible sequence of present-state authenticity subfactors may therefore be that awareness of one's inner states and experiences precedes a sense of their ownership which in turn precedes their consistent expression. It should be noted however that 24-hour periods may have been too wide to capture dynamic relationships between these variables. Momentary sampling would be best suited to investigating these relationships.

---

[8] Unlike present-state authenticity, self-concept authenticity was investigated in a fixed way; each study considered the subjective self-concept authenticity of the reported offence.

Empirical support was found for the conditions under which self-concept authenticity is thought to arise. A functional relationship was found between offenders' awareness of the self-concept consistency of their actions and self-concept authenticity (Study 4.2). Those who reflected upon the transgression as self-concept consistent felt the incident was more self-concept authentic than those who reflected on it as inconsistent, or those at baseline. More severe, and assumedly more negatively valenced, transgressions were also reported to be more self-concept inauthentic. On average, offenders were ambivalent (i.e., the mean was not significantly different from the scale midpoint) regarding the self-concept authenticity of low-moderately severe transgressions (Studies 1 and 2), however, more severe incidents were rated as self-concept inauthentic (Study 3). Corroborating this, Study 3 also found that perceptions of moral-social threat predicted less self-concept authenticity over time (although in traditional cross-lagged panel models only). Jointly these findings suggest support for the conceptualisation of self-concept authenticity as experienced on the basis of appraised consistency (versus inconsistency) of experience with one's self-concept, as well as being impacted by morally valenced behaviour (due to features of true-self concepts).

How does Personal Authenticity Relate to Offender Defensiveness and Moral Repair?

Present-State Authenticity and Transgression Processing

It was initially hypothesised that offenders' present-state authenticity would be uniformly associated with reduced defensiveness and increased engagement in moral repair. Across the course of the thesis, this hypothesis was revised: present-state authenticity at the time of wrongdoing would reflect defensiveness, but present-state authenticity during its processing would be related to non-defensive constructive engagement with the wrongdoing. Support was found for neither hypothesis. Although Study 1 found partial support for the predicted associations (i.e., to the extent that offenders desired present-state awareness, leading to an increased sense of ownership, they reported less defensiveness and increased engagement in moral repair), this was not reflected in Studies 2 or 3. Further, no differences were found in how ownership and expression experienced at the time of the offence, compared to across the subsequent days, related to transgression processing (Study 3). Therefore, offenders' present-state authenticity did not clearly function to facilitate constructive processing as had initially been thought.

The differences found between present-state authenticity's function in Study 1 compared to Study 2 and 3 may be due to how it was measured. Study 1 captured offenders' *motives* to be present-state authentic, which may have also implied an engagement in a present-state authenticity process (e.g., actively reflecting upon their true feelings and their role in the incident). Studies 2 and 3 captured offenders' subjective *experience* of present-state authenticity, which appears to have different implications. Whilst no evidence was found that offenders' subjective experience of present-state authenticity is associated with constructive transgression processing, aspirations for present-state authenticity (and *engagement* in a present-state authenticity process) may serve a pro-relational and restorative function.

Offenders' *experience* of subjective awareness, expression and phenomenological ownership had opposing associations with defensiveness. Across Studies 2 and 3, expression was found to be positively associated with pseudo self-forgiveness in cross-sectional analysis, whilst ownership was negatively associated. No cross-lagged associations were found between these variables (Study 3). Accordingly, these relationships were interpreted in an associative rather than causal way. It appears that feeling that one has expressed one's self consistently and accurately in the context of wrongdoing may reflect the individuals' sense that they stand by what they have said and done, and defend it as such. Ownership had contradictory associations. Whilst feeling that one's experience was self-authored and agentic (i.e., ownership) implies less defensiveness (as it may oppose the motivated self-distancing that characterises defensiveness), it may also facilitate expression, and through this, it may have positive associations. Likewise, while directly negatively related to defensiveness, ownership was negatively correlated with moral-social threat and wrongfulness, and expression was also negatively correlated with responsibility (which would appear to be defensive responses; Study 3). Through defensiveness, offenders displace blame and responsibility, alter the perceptions of the severity of their actions, and ameliorate the impacts on their moral-social image (Wenzel et al., 2020; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). The same outcomes appear to be associated with both ownership and expression within this context.

The *experience* of present-state authenticity also had contradictory associations with genuine self-forgiveness. Contrary to hypotheses, no cross-sectional associations were found between ownership or expression and genuine self-forgiveness in Study 2, whilst ownership was positively associated at a cross-sectional level in Study 3. In Study 3, inconsistent prospective associations were found: expression was a positive predictor, and ownership a marginal negative predictor (but given that it also prospectively predicted expression, its effects may have been somewhat suppressed). Further, Study 3 found that present-state authenticity may better predict intra-individual changes in genuine self-forgiveness (increasing or decreasing over time) rather than at a relative, inter-individual level. These results suggest that the relationship between present-state authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness may best unfold within individuals over time. Ownership may imply an engagement with responsibility that is both an aspect of and a requirement for genuine self-forgiveness. Further research is needed to understand expression's role and its negative associations with genuine self-forgiveness. It could be that this is a positive process, such that offenders have already processed the incident through constructive engagement with others, obviating further working through. Alternatively, as previously discussed, this could represent defensive disengagement (i.e., the experience feels justified, so moral repair is not required). Considering who this experience is being expressed to may also be important in disentangling these effects.

The finding that present-state authenticity did not have a clear constructive function conflicts with literature that finds an orientation towards self-awareness and open communication with others is associated with conciliatory and pro-relational behaviours (Brunell et al., 2010; Tou et al, 2015). These prior investigations have considered trait authenticity using overall scores from the Authenticity Inventory (AI-3; Kernis & Goldman, 2006), which explicitly conceptualizes authenticity as non-defensiveness and pro-relational. For example, the unbiased processing scale emphasises awareness without self-serving distortion ("I'd rather feel good about myself than objectively assess my personal limitations and shortcomings", reverse-coded), and the relational orientation subscale emphasizes openness and closeness in interactions with others (e.g., "I express to close others how much I truly care for them"). These items may push the trait measure towards lower defensiveness and greater engagement in pro-relational behaviours. In contrast, the present measure does not qualify the content or nature of one's present-state experience. The inconsistency with prior research regarding present-state authenticity's constructive function therefore appears to reflect how it was measured. Unlike what was suggested by trait research, it does not seem that subjective experience of present-state authenticity inherently reflects a positive or pro-relational orientation in a transgression context.

In sum, aspirations for present-state authenticity may have positive implications for transgression processing, whereas the relationships are inconsistent for the experience of present-state authenticity. Although the subfactors are positively associated and aspects of a higher-order present-state authenticity factor (Study 2), the differing relationships with transgression processing demonstrate the importance of differentiating these facets. As subjective awareness (although considered only at a conceptual level following Study 3), expression, and ownership are conceptualised as subfactors of a broader present-state authenticity construct, one might wonder what their net or combined effect may be. Given the contradictory relationships between these variables, it may not make sense to consider an aggregate effect. A solution may rather lie in an advancement of a process model, in which the dynamics between the different present-state authenticity components are modelled. This represents a future direction in further understanding present-state authenticity processes and their outcomes.

Self-Concept Authenticity and Defensiveness

At the commencement of this thesis, it was hypothesised that self-concept authenticity would be negatively associated with defensiveness, as claims of having not been one's true self may be a self-excusing strategy following an offence. Across five studies the inverse was found to be true: self-concept authenticity was positively associated with a defensive response (*r*s for zero-order correlations between .39 and .53). Prospective associations in Study 3 suggested that self-concept authenticity is an outcome of defensiveness, rather than a predictor, as offenders' engagement in defensiveness was found to predict a stronger sense of self-concept authenticity at the subsequent measurement point (24-hours later). As the experimental manipulation in Study 4.1 (manipulating defensiveness via social acceptance threat) was not found to function as predicted, causal associations could not be ascertained. Therefore, whilst the prospective associations in Study 3 suggest a functional relationship, it must be noted that casual claims cannot be made from the present data, and future research will be required to substantiate these findings. Nonetheless, the results appear to paint a consistent picture. Offenders are likely to experience self-concept inauthenticity following a non-trivial transgression, however, self-exonerating processing of one's wrongdoing may enable self-concept authenticity to be preserved.

Theoretically, protecting feelings of self-concept authenticity may align with the central aims of defensiveness. The self-system is highly motivated to protect a sense of consistency and integrity, and a sense of being a good and moral person (Aronson, 2019; Festinger, 1957; Sherman & Cohen, 2006; Steele et al., 1993). In service of these aims, defensiveness functions as a psychological security system (Hart, 2014) or psychological immune system (Gilbert et al., 1998; Woodyatt, & Wenzel, 2013a) to protect the self from threats. As the experience of self-concept inauthenticity appears to be a psychological indicator of moral and self-related threats, it follows that engagement in defensiveness would disrupt this signal.

The mechanisms of this relationship however remain unclear. No evidence was found for the defensive distortion of incident severity or responsibility mediating this relationship, nor threats to one's moral social image (although as discussed in Chapter 4, this relationship may be complex, with moral-social threat being both a predictor of reduced defensiveness, as well as an outcome). As discussed in Chapter 4, a possible candidate may be the reduced experience of negative emotions, such as shame, particularly given that induced negative affect has been found to downregulate feelings of state authenticity (Lenton, Slabu et al., 2013). This presents an avenue for future exploration. Although the mechanism is yet to be established, the findings suggest that defensiveness functions to protect against disruptions that would ordinarily occur to self-concept authenticity in the context of morally threatening information.

Self-Concept Authenticity and Moral Repair

It was initially hypothesised that self-concept authenticity would be positively related to genuine self-forgiveness, predicated on the assumption that claiming one was not their true self would indicate disengagement from the offence. Across five studies, the opposite pattern of effects was consistently found: offenders' sense that their wrongdoing was not representational of their true or core self was related to greater engagement in genuine working through (*r*s between -.33 and -.48 in zero-order correlation). The direction of this relationship however requires further exploration. Study 3 (Chapter 4) found reciprocal negative associations between these variables in traditional cross-lagged panel models (CLPM) only. These findings were not mirrored in random-intercept cross-lagged panel models (RI-CLPM; although the strength of the effects was roughly equivalent). Study 4.2 (Chapter 5) then aimed to investigate this relationship experimentally via manipulating the salience of offenders' behaviour as self-concept consistent versus inconsistent (versus control). Although the manipulation produced significant between-group effects in the predicted directions for self-concept authenticity, this did not translate to differences in genuine self-forgiveness. The significant correlations between these variables suggested that genuine self-forgiveness may be predicting self-concept authenticity outside of the experimental paradigm (given that these were real-life wrongdoings). Whilst these relationships therefore still require experimental substantiation, more evidence was suggested for genuine self-forgiveness downregulating feelings of self-concept authenticity than the inverse.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the finding that self-concept authenticity did not clearly predict genuine self-forgiveness is inconsistent with what the literature suggests. Motives to self-verify arise when self-views are challenged (Swann & Brooks, 2012), and moral features are uniquely constitutive of identity (e.g., Molouki & Bartels, 2017; Newman et al., 2014; Strohminger & Nichols, 2014). Given the moral bias in true-self concepts, it would be expected that threats to self-concept authenticity may motivate actions to repair one's moral image. It remains possible that self-concept authenticity does predict genuine self-forgiveness, but only over time (as in Study 3). The cross-sectional design employed in Study 4.1 may have been a limitation, as there was no opportunity for genuine self-forgiveness (a growth-oriented process) to develop. As the manipulation in Study 4.1 was however found to function as predicted in affecting appraisals of self-concept authenticity, replication with a longitudinal design may enable this possibility to be investigated.

There may be both cognitive and affective mechanisms for the downregulation of self-concept authenticity via genuine self-forgiveness. Central to genuine self-forgiveness is an engagement with responsibility for wrongdoing (Wenzel et al., 2012; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b), which may increase self-threats and accompanying negative emotions in the short term. Negative emotion has previously been found to downregulate authenticity (Lenton, Slabu et al., 2013), as may moral self-threats, as suggested in the current research (see also Gino et al., 2015). Cognitive appraisals of self-discrepant behaviour (given the view of the true self as morally good) arrived at via genuine self-forgiveness may also function to reduce self-concept authenticity. An appraisal of the event as self-concept inauthentic may then act as a further resource for upholding that value in the future (i.e., that's not who I am; I am a person who adheres to the moral rules of my group). There may therefore be both an affective and cognitive component to genuine self-forgiveness' effects on self-concept inauthenticity.

Summary

The results jointly suggest that self-concept *inauthenticity* may be an appropriate response following wrongdoing. The experience of self-concept inauthenticity appears to function as a psychological signal of having transgressed self-relevant values. It further appears that self-concept (in)authenticity may be an outcome of how the event is processed (i.e., either openly, or defensively), more so than a predictor of processing, as was initially hypothesised. While some evidence points to self-concept inauthenticity mediating the engagement in genuine self-forgiveness, this is still in need of experimental corroboration. Nonetheless, it would appear that self-concept inauthenticity may have a role in moral self-regulation.

What Strategies Might Support Offenders' Capacities to Engage In Authentic Processes to Facilitate Personal and Interpersonal Restorative Outcomes?

Whilst the experience of present-state authenticity was not found to have a constructive function as initially hypothesized, engaging a present-state authenticity motive in offenders may be a viable tool for facilitating restorative outcomes. Determining an effective means of engaging a present-state authenticity motive however presents an avenue for future exploration. As discussed in Chapter 2, priming the positive aspects of authenticity does not appear to be an effective means. Although the authenticity prime increased valuing of authenticity (compared to gratitude), this was not found to affect present-state authenticity motives. An insight from Study 1 is however that any interventions should include the possibility of engagement with another person to investigate whether a desire to communicate one's experiences translates to alterations in processing in this context.

As self-concept *inauthenticity* may be involved in moral repair, another question may relate to how to support offenders to experience it appropriately. Low levels of authenticity have been found to be associated with maladaptive outcomes, such as poorer wellbeing and social functioning, and negative affect (English & John, 2013; Neff & Harter, 2002; Neff & Suizzo, 2006; Wickham et al., 2016). It may therefore be important to consider how self-concept authenticity may be experienced in a way that maximises benefits for moral self-regulation but minimises deleterious impacts on offenders' functioning and well-being. The way that an appraisal of self-concept inauthenticity is arrived at may also matter. Self-concept authenticity was also found to be negatively associated with self-punitiveness in Studies 1 and 2 (*r*s = -.21, -.38). As this work has suggested stronger evidence that self-concept inauthenticity is an outcome of processing, more so than a predictor, if self-concept inauthenticity is arrived at via self-punitiveness it may not have the same positive implications for restoration.

It remains an empirical question as to whether self-concept inauthenticity motivates engagement in moral repair, however, some comments will be offered on the implications if this were found to be the case. In Study 4.1 (Chapter 5), perceived acceptance from third parties was found to be associated with increased feelings of self-concept authenticity regarding the offence. If self-concept inauthenticity is functional, well-intentioned efforts to ameliorate threats to self-concept authenticity may ultimately be unhelpful. If offenders' sense of possessing a morally good true self is reinforced prior to taking reparative action, it may be at the expense of their engagement in moral learning and self-improvement (Stichter, 2022). This may have implications for mediation processes, where it may be wrongly assumed that reducing the threats associated with an offender's actions could encourage their engagement. Further, if the relationship between self-concept authenticity and genuine self-forgiveness is bidirectional, it also prompts questions as to whether this is resolved over time (i.e., the reciprocal loop is stopped) or whether the event is maintained as a self-concept inauthentic experience. It may be beneficial for offenders to maintain a sense of event-based self-discrepancy to grow from the event and commit to acting differently in the future. These considerations may therefore have implications for the counselling of offenders.

Implications and Other Future Directions

The current work suggests that differentiating present-state authenticity and self-concept authenticity is both practical and meaningful, and suggests promise in investing in full validation of the authenticity scale. The current work has provided evidence for the scale's factorial structure, but validation data is still required. Given that the scale was investigated within a transgression context, future studies may consider investigating whether the factorial distinctions hold irrespective of a discrete incident (e.g., on a given day). With further validation, the scale may satisfy the need for a differentiated measure.

Whilst awareness was dropped from the scale, it remains a theoretically relevant aspect of present-state authenticity. Given the logical connection between the present-state authenticity subfactors, a conventional factorisation approach may be inappropriate. However, awareness may be able to be captured in other approaches; for example, experimental studies may be able to tap awareness as an implicit cognitive process. Further, given that it is implied in the other factors, it remains a potentially important component for intervention. Evidence for its utility was suggested in Study 1, as a desire for present-state awareness was associated with increased ownership, which reflected prosocial changes. Future considerations of present-state authenticity should therefore continue to consider awareness as a conceptual element.

The current work suggests that authenticity is not reducible to simply being "good". Present-state authenticity may involve being true to genuine, but harmful or antisocial present-state experiences. Self-concept authenticity may be undeservedly arrived at, or protected, by defensiveness, and this may have negative implications for repair processes. These findings contrast a literature that has largely painted a uniformly positive image.

Jointly, these findings contribute to a more complex understanding of authenticity that satisfies the intuition that people possess both good and bad qualities, and so may be true to genuine aspects of self that are not positively valenced.

The findings illuminate an understanding of the function of true self claims in the context of wrongdoing. Christy et al. (2016) framed this as a question of whether feelings of self-alienation function as a rationalisation to psychologically distance from immoral acts, or as a "moral barometer" like shame and guilt (Tangney et al., 2007). No evidence was found that claims of having not been one's true self reflect a displacement of blame or responsibility (i.e., pseudo self-forgiveness). Rather, the latter hypothesis seems to be correct, in that self-concept authenticity may be involved in moral regulation. However, this finding may require contextualization. The transgressions investigated within the present work were all self-reported, which necessitates an acknowledgement of responsibility. As raised in Chapter 2, it remains an empirical question as to whether claims of having not been one's true self function as a moral rationalisation in different contexts (for example, in circumstances where blame is unequivocal, but defence motivation is high) which may better reflect the realms where these claims are made (e.g., public apologies; the media).

The current work focuses solely on offenders' experience of authenticity, so future work may seek to consider victims' experiences. Victims experience the psychological impacts of a transgression differently to offenders. Victimised individuals experience threats to their sense of status and power (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008, 2010), as well as threats to the value transgressed by the offender and the shared identity this value defines (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008). Victims may therefore experience self-threats and negative affect, but not of a moral nature, which raises questions about the impacts on their self-concept authenticity. As a sense of power has been found to be implicated in authenticity (Gan et al., 2018; Neff & Harter, 2002), it is possible that this may be uniquely associated with victims' authenticity experience. As feeling authentic may enhance a sense of power (Gan et al., 2018), it may be a strategy for meeting victim needs. In turn, this may impact forgiveness behaviours or power-seeking behaviour (e.g., revenge motivations; Aquino et al., 2001). Consideration of victims' experiences of authenticity may therefore further elucidate the factors involved in authenticity, and offers a new potential avenue for supporting victims' needs.

As authenticity has primarily been considered as an individual process (as in the current study), there is currently a gap in considering how it functions in interactions with others. Successful restoration processes involve both parties responding to the needs of the other (Shabel & Nadler, 2008). Accordingly, reconciliation and moral repair are now recognised as dyadic and reciprocal processes (Wenzel et al., 2021; Woodyatt et al., 2022). Authenticity processes may have similar dyadic effects. Suggesting dyadic associations, perceptions of authenticity in a relationship partner have been found to be associated with an orientation towards connectedness rather than self-protection goals, and increased trust (Wickham, 2013). One party's engagement with authentic processes may in turn also engender a more conciliatory response in the other, as well as create an authenticity-supportive environment (e.g., Ryan & Ryan, 2019; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018). Future research may therefore consider how authenticity is supported, shaped or undermined through interactions between conflict partners.

Limitations

As has been noted in prior chapters, a limitation of this research is that its main findings are correlational. Although three experimental designs were trialled, none were found to function in the hypothesised manner. This seemed to have partly owed to attempts to involve blended methodology, where manipulations were used within the context of real-life transgressions. In Study 1 (involving primed benefits of authenticity versus gratitude) and Study 4.1 (involving a hypothetical apology rejection versus acceptance), it was thought that the manipulation may not have been strong enough to overpower dynamics that had actually occurred between involved parties (which, however, is also informative about the strength of these manipulations). It should be separately noted that in Study 4.2, the consistency manipulation was found to affect self-concept authenticity appraisals, but there may not have been sufficient time for this to affect genuine self-forgiveness processing (given its conceptualisation as an effortful process that occurs over time; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b). Although the directionality of the effects is implied in longitudinal associations in Study 3, casual relationships cannot be claimed. As such, the causal order of effects remains to be established.

A further limitation is that mean defensiveness was low across each study. This likely owes to sampling offenders who were volunteering their transgressions. As such, they were cognizant of their responsibility for committing a wrongdoing that adversely impacted someone else. The data may have been subject to floor effects, such that there was not much variability in defensiveness to investigate its associations. A further implication of this sampling is that it does not provide an account of how self-concept authenticity may be experienced or reported when responsibility acknowledgement can be easily avoided or displaced. Although a strength of this research was the ecologically valid samples, it would be beneficial to supplement this with hypothetical transgression scenarios where individuals are induced into an offender role (e.g., Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a) or using an alternate defensiveness eliciting stimulus (e.g., Wenzel et al., 2020) to offer greater methodological control. Imagined methodologies have been found to produce appraisal-emotional responses that are consistent with more realistic methodologies (Robinson & Clore, 2001) and so this may provide further insight into scenarios where defensive motives may show greater variability.

A final limitation was that responses from the time of the transgression were retrospectively recalled. This may have particularly affected present-state authenticity, which required participants to think back to their experiences at the time of the event (as contrasted with self-concept authenticity, which involved current appraisals of the consistency of one's past action). Reconstructive memory processes for past emotional experiences may be unreliable, and memories for emotional responses are partially reconstructed or inferred on the basis of current appraisals (Levine, 1997). It is therefore possible that participants' reports of present-state authenticity during the transgression better reflected their appraisals at the time of the survey, more so that their feelings at the time of the offence. This was attempted to be limited by recruiting participants within a narrow window in Study 3 (i.e., 48 hours after an offence occurred); however, momentary sampling may provide a better insight into how these feelings arise.

Conclusion

The current research has presented a dual conceptualisation of personal authenticity that reflects two dimensions of a sense of self. Initial evidence for the viability of distinguishing these two dimensions has been presented. Whilst these two dimensions have been represented in the literature, a failure to meaningfully distinguish them has caused problems, and this conceptualisation may assist in providing a way forward. The current research has shown how authenticity may play out in real-life transgressions, which has challenged the positivity bias that is present within the literature. Specifically, the current research has suggested that self-concept inauthenticity may be desirable and is potentially involved in moral self-regulation, and present-state authenticity may reflect feelings of self-justification that share associations with defensiveness. Authenticity is generally thought to have positive functions, and so this may need to be critically reassessed. However, authenticity motives or goals may have positive implications for how one deals with the transgression and behaves in the future. To the extent that offenders desire present-state authenticity and the desire to self-affirm following a self-concept inauthenticity experience translate to genuine efforts for moral repair, this may represent a strategy for engaging offenders following committing harm.

References

Allen, M. P. (1997). The problem of multicollinearity. In M. P. Allen (Ed.), *Understanding regression analysis* (pp. 176–180). Plenum Press. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-585-25657-3_37

Alter, A. L., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2009). Suppressing secrecy through metacognitive ease: Cognitive fluency encourages self-disclosure. *Psychological Science*, *20*(11), 1414-1420. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02461.x

Andersen, S. M., & Chen, S. (2002). The relational self: An interpersonal social-cognitive theory. *Psychological Review, 109*(4), 619–645. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.4.619

Aquino, K., & Reed, A. II. (2002). The self-importance of moral identity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 83*(6), 1423–1440. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1423

Aquino, K., Tripp, T. M., & Bies, R. J. (2001). How employees respond to personal offense: The effects of blame attribution, victim status, and offender status on revenge and reconciliation in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(1), 52–59. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.1.52

Arndt, J., Schimel, J., Greenberg, J., & Pyszczynski, T. (2002). The intrinsic self and defensiveness: Evidence that activating the intrinsic self reduces self-handicapping and conformity. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*(5), 671-683. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167202288011

Aronson, E. (2019). Dissonance, hypocrisy, and the self-concept. In E. Harmon-Jones (Ed.), Cognitive dissonance: Reexamining a pivotal theory in psychology (pp. 141–157). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000135-007

Asher, M., & Aderka, I. M. (2021). How real do you feel? Self- and partner-authenticity in social anxiety disorder. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 130*(2), 166–176. https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000622

Austin, J. L. (1962). *Sense and sensibilia* (G. J. Warnock, Ed.). Oxford University Press.

Bailey, E. R., & Levy, A. (2022). Are You for Real? Perceptions of Authenticity Are Systematically Biased and Not Accurate. *Psychological Science*, 09567976211056623. https://doi.org/10.1177/09567976211056623

Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 3*(3), 193-209. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0303_3

Bargh, J. A., & Ferguson, M. J. (2000). Beyond behaviorism: on the automaticity of higher mental processes. *Psychological Bulletin, 126*(6), 925 –945. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.126.6.925

Bargh, J. A., McKenna, K. Y., & Fitzsimons, G. M. (2002). Can you see the real me? Activation and expression of the “true self” on the Internet. *Journal of Social Issues, 58*(1), 33-48. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4560.00247

Bargh, J. A., & Williams, E. L. (2006). The automaticity of social life. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 15*(1), 1-4. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0963-7214.2006.00395.x

Barrett-Lennard, G. T. (1998). *Carl Rogers’ helping system: Journey and substance*. SAGE Publications.

Baumeister, R. F. (1999). Self-concept, self-esteem, and identity. In V. J. Derlega, B. A. Winstead, & W. H. Jones (Eds.), *Personality: Contemporary theory and research* (pp. 339–375). Nelson-Hall Publishers.

Baumeister, R. F. (2019). Stalking the true self through the jungles of authenticity: Problems, contradictions, inconsistencies, disturbing findings—And a possible way forward. *Review of General Psychology*, *23*(1), 143-154. https://doi.org/10.1177/1089268019829472

Baumeister, R. F., Exline, J. J., & Sommer, K. L. (1998). The victim role, grudge theory, and two dimensions of forgiveness. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Dimensions of forgiveness* (pp. 79–104). Templeton Foundation Press.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin, 117*(3), 497–529. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497

Beer, J. S., & Brandler, S. (2021). Why don't we know more about the minds of authentic people?. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *15*(10), e12637. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12637

Begg, I. M., Anas, A., & Farinacci, S. (1992). Dissociation of processes in belief: Source recollection, statement familiarity, and the illusion of truth. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *121*(4), 446-458. https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.121.4.446

Beverland, M. B. (2005). Crafting brand authenticity: The case of luxury wines. *Journal of management studies*, *42*(5), 1003-1029. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2005.00530.x

Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. J. (2010). The quest for authenticity in consumption: Consumers' purposive choice of authentic cues to shape experienced outcomes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *36*(5), 838-856. https://doi.org/10.1086/615047

Bolger, N., DeLongis, A., Kessler, R. C., & Schilling, E. A. (1989). Effects of daily stress on negative mood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*(5), 808–818. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.5.808

Bornstein, R. F. (1989). Exposure and affect: overview and meta-analysis of research, 1968–1987. *Psychological Bulletin*, *106*(2), 265-289. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.2.265

Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *17*(5), 475-482. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167291175001

Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this" We"? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71*(1), 83-93. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.1.83

Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *84*(4), 822-848. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822

Brunell, A. B., Kernis, M. H., Goldman, B. M., Heppner, W., Davis, P., Cascio, E. V., & Webster, G. D. (2010). Dispositional authenticity and romantic relationship functioning. *Personality and Individual Differences, 48*(8), 900-905. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.02.018

Burnham, K. P., & Anderson, D. R. (2004). Multimodel inference: understanding AIC and BIC in model selection. *Sociological Methods and Research, 33*(2), 261-304. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124104268644

Cable, D. M., Gino, F., & Staats, B. R. (2013). Breaking them in or eliciting their best? Reframing socialization around newcomers' authentic self-expression. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 58*(1), 1-36. https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839213477098

Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons*, *63*(4), 469-479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003

Castéran, H., & Roederer, C. (2013). Does authenticity really affect behavior? The case of the Strasbourg Christmas Market. *Tourism Management*, *36*, 153-163. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.11.012

Chen, S. (2019). Authenticity in context: Being true to working selves. *Review of General Psychology, 23*(1), 60-72. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000160

Chen, S., Boucher, H. C., & Tapias, M. P. (2006). The relational self revealed: integrative conceptualization and implications for interpersonal life. *Psychological Bulletin*, *132*(2), 151-179. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.132.2.151

Christy, A. G., Kim, J., Vess, M., Schlegel, R. J., & Hicks, J. A. (2017). The reciprocal relationship between perceptions of moral goodness and knowledge of others' true selves. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *8*(8), 910-917. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617693061

Christy, A. G., Seto, E., Schlegel, R. J., Vess, M., & Hicks, J. A. (2016). Straying from the righteous path and from ourselves: The interplay between perceptions of morality and self-knowledge. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 42*(11), 1538-1550. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216665095

Clark, L. A., & Watson, D. (2016). Constructing validity: Basic issues in objective scale development. In A. E. Kazdin (Ed.), *Methodological issues and strategies in clinical research* (pp. 187–203). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/14805-012

Cooper, A. B., Sherman, R. A., Rauthmann, J. F., Serfass, D. G., & Brown, N. A. (2018). Feeling good and authentic: Experienced authenticity in daily life is predicted by positive feelings and situation characteristics, not trait-state consistency. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *77*, 57-69. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2018.09.005

Cornish, M. A., Woodyatt, L., Morris, G., Conroy, A., & Townsdin, J. (2018). Self-forgiveness, self-exoneration, and self-condemnation: Individual differences associated with three patterns of responding to interpersonal offenses. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *129*, 43-53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.03.003

Dammann, O., Friederichs, K. M., Lebedinski, S., & Liesenfeld, K. M. (2021). The Essence of Authenticity. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 629654. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.629654

De Freitas, J., & Cikara, M. (2018). Deep down my enemy is good: Thinking about the true self reduces intergroup bias. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *74*, 307-316. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2017.10.006

De Freitas, J., Cikara, M., Grossmann, I., Schlegel, R. (2017). Origins of the belief in good true selves. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 21*(9), 634–636. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2017.05.009

Davis, W. E., & Hicks, J. A. (2013). Maintaining hope at the 11th hour: Authenticity buffers the effect of limited time perspective on hope. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 39*(12), 1634-1646. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213500150

De Freitas, J., Sarkissian, H., Newman, G. E., Grossmann, I., De Brigard, F., Luco, A., & Knobe, J. (2018). Consistent belief in a good true self in misanthropes and three interdependent cultures. *Cognitive Science*, *42*(1), 134-160. https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.12505

de Vel-Palumbo, M., Woodyatt, L., & Wenzel, M. (2018). Why do we self-punish? Perceptions of the motives and impact of self-punishment outside the laboratory. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 48*(6), 756-768. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2368

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior.* Springer New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2271-7

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry, 11*(4), 227–268. https://doi.org.10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Deegan, J. (1978). On the occurrence of standardized regression coefficients greater than one. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *38*(4), 873-888. https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447803800404

DeWall, C. N., Twenge, J. M., Koole, S. L., Baumeister, R. F., Marquez, A., & Reid, M. W. (2011). Automatic emotion regulation after social exclusion: Tuning to positivity. *Emotion, 11*(3), 623-636. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023534

Dutton D. (2003). Authenticity in art. In J. Levinson (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of aesthetics* (pp. 258–274). Oxford University Press.

Enders, C. K., & Bandalos, D. L. (2001). The relative performance of full information maximum likelihood estimation for missing data in structural equation models. *Structural Equation Modeling, 8*(3), 430-457. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15328007SEM0803_5

English, T., & John, O. P. (2013). Understanding the social effects of emotion regulation: The mediating role of authenticity for individual differences in suppression. *Emotion*, *13*(2), 314–329. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029847

Farber, B. A. (2003). Patient self-disclosure: A review of the research. *Journal of clinical psychology, 59*(5), 589-600. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.10161

Faul, F., & Erdfelder, E. (1992). GPOWER: A priori, post-hoc, and compromise power analyses for MS-DOS [Computer program]. *Bonn, FRG: Bonn University, Department of Psychology*.

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A. G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G* Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods, 39*(2), 175-191. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03193146

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance* (Vol. 2). Stanford University Press.

Fiedler, K., Schott, M., & Meiser, T. (2011). What mediation analysis can (not) do. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *47*(6), 1231-1236. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.05.007

Field, A.P. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS*. SAGE Publications.

Fisher, M. L., & Exline, J. J. (2006). Self-forgiveness versus excusing: The roles of remorse, effort, and acceptance of responsibility. *Self and Identity*, *5*(2), 127-146. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298860600586123

Fleeson, W., & Wilt, J. (2010). The relevance of Big Five trait content in behavior to subjective authenticity: Do high levels of within-person behavioral variability undermine or enable authenticity achievement?. *Journal of Personality, 78*(4), 1353-1382. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2010.00653.x

Flückiger, C., Del Re, A. C., Wampold, B. E., & Horvath, A. O. (2018). The alliance in adult psychotherapy: A meta-analytic synthesis. *Psychotherapy*, 55(4), 316–340. https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000172

Frake, J. (2017). Selling out: The inauthenticity discount in the craft beer industry. *Management Science, 63*(11), 3930-3943 https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2016.2517

Furr, M. (2011). *Scale construction and psychometrics for social and personality psychology*. SAGE Publications.

Gan, M., & Chen, S. (2017). Being your actual or ideal self? What it means to feel authentic in a relationship. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 43*(4), 465-478. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216688211

Gan, M., Heller, D., & Chen, S. (2018). The power in being yourself: Feeling authentic enhances the sense of power. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *44*(10), 1460-1472. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167218771000

Garrison, K. E., Rivera, G. N., Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., & Schmeichel, B. J. (2022). Authentic for Thee But Not for Me: Perceived Authenticity in Self-Control Conflicts. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 01461672221118187. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167222111818

Gilbert, D. T., Pinel, E. C., Wilson, T. D., Blumberg, S. J., & Wheatley, T. P. (1998). Immune neglect: A source of durability bias in affective forecasting. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(3), 617– 639. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.75.3.617

Gillath, O., Sesko, A. K., Shaver, P. R., & Chun, D. S. (2010). Attachment, authenticity, and honesty: Dispositional and experimentally induced security can reduce self- and other-deception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98*(5), 841–855. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019206

Gino, F., & Kouchaki, M. (2020). Feeling authentic serves as a buffer against rejection. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 160*, 36-50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2020.03.006

Gino, F., Kouchaki, M., & Galinsky, A. D. (2015). The moral virtue of authenticity: How inauthenticity produces feelings of immorality and impurity. *Psychological Science*, *26*(7), 983-996. https://doi.org.10.1177/0956797615575277

Gino, F., Norton, M. I., & Ariely, D. (2010). The counterfeit self: The deceptive costs of faking it. *Psychological Science*, *21*(5), 712-720. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610366545

Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Babin, B. J., & Black, W. C. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis: A global perspective* (Vol. 7). Pearson.

Hall, J. H., & Fincham, F. D. (2005). Self–forgiveness: The stepchild of forgiveness research. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *24*(5), 621-637. https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2005.24.5.621

Hamaker, E. L., Kuiper, R. M., & Grasman, R. P. P. P. (2015). A critique of the cross-lagged panel model. *Psychological Methods, 20*(1), 102–116. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038889

Hart, J. (2014). Toward an integrative theory of psychological defense. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *9*(1), 19-39. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691613506018

Hart, W., Richardson, K., Breeden, C. J., & Kinrade, C. (2020). To be or to appear to be: Evidence that authentic people seek to appear authentic rather than be authentic. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *166*, 110165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110165

Harter, S. (2002). Authenticity. In C. R. Snyder & S. K. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 382-394). Oxford University Press.

Harter, S., Marold, D. B., Whitesell, N. R., & Cobbs, G. (1996). A model of the effects of perceived parent and peer support on adolescent false self behavior. *Child Development, 67*(2), 360-374. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.1996.tb01738.x

Hayes, A. F. (2018). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional Process analysis: A regression-based approach* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.

Heiphetz, L., Strohminger, N., Gelman, S. A., & Young, L. L. (2018). Who am I? The role of moral beliefs in children's and adults' understanding of identity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *78*, 210-219. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.03.007

Heppner, W. L., Kernis, M. H., Nezlek, J. B., Foster, J., Lakey, C. E., & Goldman, B. M. (2008). Within-person relationships among daily self-esteem, need satisfaction, and authenticity. *Psychological Science, 19*(11), 1140-1145. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02215.x

Hernandez-Fernandez, A., & Lewis, M. C. (2019). Brand authenticity leads to perceived value and brand trust. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics, 28*(3), 222-238. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJMBE-10-2017-0027

Hicks, J. A., Schlegel, R. J., & Newman, G. E. (2019). Introduction to the special issue: authenticity: novel insights into a valued, yet elusive, concept. *Review of General Psychology*, *23*(1), 3-7. https://doi.org/10.1177/1089268019829474

Hodgins, H. S., & Liebeskind, E. (2003). Apology versus defense: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 39*(4), 297-316. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-1031(03)00024-6

Hodgins, H. S., Liebeskind, E., & Schwartz, W. (1996). Getting out of hot water: Facework in social predicaments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71*(2), 300–314. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.2.300

Hopwood, C. J., Good, E. W., Levendosky, A. A., Zimmermann, J., Dumat, D., Finkel, E. J., Eastwood, P. E., & Bleidorn, W. (2021). Realness is a core feature of authenticity. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *92*, 104086. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2021.104086

Hosser, D., Windzio, M., & Greve, W. (2008). Guilt and shame as predictors of recidivism: A longitudinal study with young prisoners. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *35*(1), 138-152. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854807309224

Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural equation modeling: a multidisciplinary journal*, *6*(1), 1-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

Huang, M., Bridge, H., Kemp, M. J., & Parker, A. J. (2011). Human cortical activity evoked by the assignment of authenticity when viewing works of art. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 5,* 134. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2011.00134

James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology.* Henry Hold and Company.

Jongman-Sereno, K. P., & Leary, M. R. (2016). Self-perceived authenticity is contaminated by the valence of one's behavior. *Self and Identity, 15*(3), 283-301. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2015.1128964

Jongman-Sereno, K. P., & Leary, M. R. (2019). The Enigma of Being Yourself: A Critical Examination of the Concept of Authenticity. *Review of General Psychology*, *23*(1), 133–142. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000157

Jongman-Sereno, K. P., & Leary, M. R. (2020). Self-judgments of authenticity. *Self and Identity, 19*(1), 32-63. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2018.1526109

Kenny, D. A., Kaniskan, B., & McCoach, D. B. (2015). The performance of RMSEA in models with small degrees of freedom. *Sociological Methods and Research*, *44*(3), 486-507. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124114543236

Kenny, D. A., & McCoach, D. B. (2003). Effect of the number of variables on measures of fit in structural equation modeling. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 10*(3), 333-351. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15328007SEM1003_1

Kernis, M. H., & Goldman, B. M. (2005). From thought and experience to behavior and interpersonal relationships: A multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity. In A. Tesser, J. V. Wood, & D. A. Stapel (Eds.) *On building, defending and regulating the self: A psychological perspective* (pp. 31-52). Psychology Press.

Kernis, M. H., & Goldman, B. M. (2006). A multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity: Theory and research. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 283-357. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(06)38006-9

Kifer, Y., Heller, D., Perunovic, W. Q. E., & Galinsky, A. D. (2013). The good life of the powerful: The experience of power and authenticity enhances subjective well-being. *Psychological Science, 24*(3), 280-288. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612450891

Kim, J., Christy, A. G., Schlegel, R. J., Donnellan, M. B., & Hicks, J. A. (2018). Existential ennui: Examining the reciprocal relationship between self-alienation and academic amotivation. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 9*(7), 853-862. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617727587

Kim, U., Triandis, H. C., Kâğitçibaşi, Ç., Choi, S.-C., & Yoon, G. (Eds.). (1994). *Individualism and collectivism: Theory, method, and applications.* Sage Publications.

Knee, C. R., Lonsbary, C., Canevello, A., & Patrick, H. (2005). Self-determination and conflict in romantic relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*(6), 997-1009. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.997

Kovács, B. (2019). Authenticity is in the eye of the beholder: The exploration of audiences' lay associations to authenticity across five domains. *Review of General Psychology, 23*(1), 32-59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1089268019829469

Kovács, B., Carroll, G. R., & Lehman, D. W. (2014). Authenticity and consumer value ratings: Empirical tests from the restaurant domain. *Organization Science, 25*(2), 458-478. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2013.0843

Kraus, M. W., Chen, S., & Keltner, D. (2011). The power to be me: Power elevates self-concept consistency and authenticity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 47*(5), 974-980. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.03.017

Kyrios, M., Ali, K., Fassnacht, D. (2022). Clarifying Identity and the Self in a CBT Context. In R.G. Menzies, R.E. Menzies, G.A. Dingle (Eds.), *Existential Concerns and Cognitive-Behavioral Procedures* (pp. 185–203) Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-06932-1_11

Lakey, C. E., Kernis, M. H., Heppner, W. L., & Lance, C. E. (2008). Individual differences in authenticity and mindfulness as predictors of verbal defensiveness. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *42*(1), 230-238. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2007.05.002

Laurenceau, J.-P., Barrett, L. F., & Pietromonaco, P. R. (1998). Intimacy as an Interpersonal Process: The Importance of Self-Disclosure, Partner Disclosure, and Perceived Partner Responsiveness in Interpersonal Exchanges. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*(5), 1238–1251. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.5.1238

Leary, M. R., Gallagher, B., Fors, E., Buttermore, N., Baldwin, E., Kennedy, K., & Mills, A. (2003). The invalidity of disclaimers about the effects of social feedback on self-esteem. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*(5), 623-636. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167203029005007

Leary, M. R., & Tangney, J. P. (2012). The self as an organizing construct in the behavioral and social sciences. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (2nd ed., pp. 1-18). Guilford Press.

Lee, G. C., Platow, M. J., Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., Grace, D. M., & Cruwys, T. (2021). Facilitating goals, tasks, and bonds via identity leadership: Understanding the therapeutic working alliance as the outcome of social identity processes. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 25(4), 271–287. https://doi.org/10.1037/gdn0000170

Lefebvre, J. P., & Krettenauer, T. (2020). Is the true self truly moral? Identity intuitions across domains of sociomoral reasoning and age. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 192*, 104769. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2019.104769

Lehman, D. W., O'Connor, K., Kovács, B., & Newman, G. E. (2019). Authenticity. *Academy of Management Annals*, *13*(1), 1-42. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2017.004

Lenton, A. P., Bruder, M., Slabu, L., & Sedikides, C. (2013). How does "being real" feel? The experience of state authenticity. *Journal of Personality*, *81*(3), 276-289. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2012.00805.x

Lenton, A. P., Slabu, L., & Sedikides, C. (2016). State authenticity in everyday life. *European Journal of Personality, 30*(1), 64-82. https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2033

Lenton, A. P., Slabu, L., Sedikides, C., & Power, K. (2013). I feel good, therefore I am real: Testing the causal influence of mood on state authenticity. *Cognition and Emotion, 27*(7), 1202-1224. https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2013.778818

Lerner, M. J. (1980). The belief in a just world. In J. M. Lerner (Ed.) *The Belief in a just World: A fundamental delusion* (pp. 9-30). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-0448-5

Levine, L. J. (1997). Reconstructing memory for emotions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 126*(2), 165–177. https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.126.2.165

Lopez, F. G., & Rice, K. G. (2006). Preliminary development and validation of a measure of relationship authenticity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*(3), 362-371. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.53.3.362

Luthar, S. S., & Ciciolla, L. (2015). Who mothers mommy? Factors that contribute to mothers' well-being. *Developmental Psychology, 51*(12), 1812-1823. https://doi.org/10.1037/dev0000051

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346

McAdams, D. P. (1996). Personality, modernity, and the storied self: A contemporary framework for studying persons. *Psychological Inquiry, 7*(4), 295-321. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli0704_1

Meeks, B. S., Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (1998). Communication, love and relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15*(6), 755-773. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407598156003

Molouki, S., & Bartels, D. M. (2017). Personal change and the continuity of the self. *Cognitive Psychology*, *93*, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogpsych.2016.11.006

Neff, K. D., & Harter, S. (2002). The role of power and authenticity in relationship styles emphasizing autonomy, connectedness, or mutuality among adult couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*(6), 835-857. https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075021960

Neff, K. D., & Suizzo, M. A. (2006). Culture, power, authenticity and psychological well-being within romantic relationships: A comparison of European American and Mexican Americans. *Cognitive Development, 21*(4), 441-457. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2006.06.008

Newman, G. E. (2019). The psychology of authenticity. *Review of General Psychology, 23*(1), 8-18. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000158

Newman, G. E., & Bloom, P. (2012). Art and authenticity: The importance of originals in judgments of value. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 141*(3), 558–569. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026035

Newman, G. E., Bloom, P., & Knobe, J. (2014). Value judgments and the true self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *40*(2), 203-216. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213508791

Newman, G. E., De Freitas, J., & Knobe, J. (2015). Beliefs about the true self explain asymmetries based on moral judgment. *Cognitive science, 39*(1), 96-125. https://doi.org.10.1111/cogs.12134

Newman, G. E., & Smith, R. K. (2016). Kinds of authenticity. *Philosophy Compass*, *11*(10), 609-618. https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12343

Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). Telling more than we can know: Verbal reports on mental processes. *Psychological review*, *84*(3), 231-259. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.3.231

Noor, M., Shnabel, N., Halabi, S., & Nadler, A. (2012). When Suffering Begets Suffering: The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood Between Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflicts. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 16*(4), 351-374. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868312440048

O'Connor, K., Carroll, G. R., & Kovács, B. (2017). Disambiguating authenticity: Interpretations of value and appeal. *PloS one*, *12*(6), e0179187. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0179187

Okimoto, T.G., &Wenzel, M. (2008). The symbolic meaning of transgressions: Towards a unifying framework of justice restoration. In K. A. Hegtvedt, & J. Clay-Warner (Eds.). *Justice* (*Advances in Group Processes, Vol. 25*) (pp. 291-326). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0882-6145(08)25004-6

Okimoto, T. G., & Wenzel, M. (2009). Punishment as restoration of group and offender values following a transgression: Value consensus through symbolic labelling and offender reform. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 39*(3), 346-367. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.537

Okimoto, T. G., & Wenzel, M. (2014). Bridging diverging perspectives and repairing damaged relationships in the aftermath of workplace transgressions. *Business Ethics Quarterly, 24*(3), 443-473. https://doi.org/10.5840/beq201471515

Okimoto, T. G., Wenzel, M., & Hedrick, K. (2013). Refusing to apologize can have psychological benefits (and we issue no mea culpa for this research finding). *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *43*, 22-31. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1901

Oktar, K., & Lombrozo, T. (2022). Deciding to be authentic: Intuition is favored over deliberation when authenticity matters. *Cognition*, *223*, 105021. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2022.105021

Orth, U., Clark, D. A., Donnellan, M. B., & Robins, R. W. (2021). Testing prospective effects in longitudinal research: Comparing seven competing cross-lagged models. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 120*(4), 1013–1034. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000358

Oyserman, D. (2001). Self-concept and identity. In A. Tesser & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *The Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology* (pp. 499-517). Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Pillow, D. R., Crabtree, M. A., Galvan, M. J., & Hale, W. J. (2018). Not simply in the eye of the beholder: Authenticity as a product of candidate preference and unfettered speech. *Political Psychology*, *39*(4), 849-868. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12440

Plasencia, M. L., Taylor, C. T., & Alden, L. E. (2016). Unmasking one's true self facilitates positive relational outcomes: Authenticity promotes social approach processes in social anxiety disorder. *Clinical Psychological Science*, *4*(6), 1002-1014. https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702615622204

Prebble, S. C., Addis, D. R., & Tippett, L. J. (2013). Autobiographical memory and sense of self. *Psychological Bulletin, 139*(4), 815–840. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030146

Reber, R., Schwarz, N., & Winkielman, P. (2004). Processing fluency and aesthetic pleasure: Is beauty in the perceiver's processing experience?. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *8*(4), 364-382. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0804_3

Reis, H. T., Sheldon, K. M., Gable, S. L., Roscoe, J., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Daily Well-Being: The Role of Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin., 26(*4), 419–435. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167200266002

Riggle, E. D. B., Rostosky, S. S., Black, W. W., & Rosenkrantz, D. E. (2017). Outness, concealment, and authenticity: Associations with LGB individuals' psychological distress and well-being. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, 4*(1), 54–62. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000202

Rivera, G. N., Christy, A. G., Kim, J., Vess, M., Hicks, J. A., & Schlegel, R. J. (2019). Understanding the relationship between perceived authenticity and well-being. *Review of General Psychology, 23*(1), 113-126. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000161

Robinson, M. D., & Clore, G. L. (2001). Simulation, scenarios, and emotional appraisal: Testing the convergence of real and imagined reactions to emotional stimuli. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*(11), 1520–1532. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672012711012

Robinson, O. C., Lopez, F. G., Ramos, K., & Nartova-Bochaver, S. (2013). Authenticity, social context, and well-being in the United States, England, and Russia: A three country comparative analysis. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 44*(5), 719-737. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022112465672

Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychology*. Houghton Mifflin.

Rogers, C. R. (1980). *A way of being*. Houghton Mifflin.

Rose, R. L., & Wood, S. L. (2005). Paradox and the consumption of authenticity through reality television. *Journal of Consumer Research, 32*(2), 284-296. https://doi.org/10.1086/432238

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2004). Autonomy is no illusion: Self-determination theory and the empirical study of authenticity, awareness, and will. In J. Greenberg, S. L. Koole, & T. Pyszcynski (Eds.). *Handbook of experimental existential psychology* (pp. 449–479). Guilford Press.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2006). Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy: Does psychology need choice, self-determination, and will?. *Journal of Personality, 74*(6), 1557-1586. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00420.x

Ryan, W. S., & Ryan, R. M. (2019). Toward a social psychology of authenticity: Exploring within-person variation in autonomy, congruence, and genuineness using self-determination theory. *Review of General Psychology, 23*(1), 99-112. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000162

Schimel, J., Arndt, J., Banko, K. M., & Cook, A. (2004). Not all self-affirmations were created equal: The cognitive and social benefits of affirming the intrinsic (vs. extrinsic) self. *Social Cognition, 22*(1), 75-99. https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.22.1.75.30984

Schimel, J., Arndt, J., Pyszczynski, T., & Greenberg, J. (2001). Being accepted for who we are: evidence that social validation of the intrinsic self reduces general defensiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80*(1), 35-52. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.80.1.35

Schlegel, R. J., & Hicks, J. A. (2011). The true self and psychological health: Emerging evidence and future directions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *5*(12), 989-1003. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2011.00401.x

Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., Arndt, J., & King, L. A. (2009). Thine own self: True self-concept accessibility and meaning in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96*(2), 473–490. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014060

Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., Davis, W. E., Hirsch, K. A., & Smith, C. M. (2013). The dynamic interplay between perceived true self-knowledge and decision satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 104*(3), 542-558. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031183

Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., King, L. A., & Arndt, J. (2011). Feeling like you know who you are: Perceived true self-knowledge and meaning in life. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *37*(6), 745-756. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211400424

Schmader, T., & Sedikides, C. (2018). State authenticity as fit to environment: The implications of social identity for fit, authenticity, and self-segregation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *22*(3), 228-259. https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868317734080

Schmitt, N., & Stuits, D. M. (1985). Factors Defined by Negatively Keyed Items: The Result of Careless Respondents? *Applied Psychological Measurement*, *9*(4), 367–373. https://doi.org/10.1177/014662168500900405

Schumann, K., & Orehek, E. (2019). Avoidant and defensive: Adult attachment and quality of apologies. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *36*(3), 809-833. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517746517

Schwab, D. P. (1980). Construct validity in organizational behaviour. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behaviour* (Vol. 2, pp. 3-43). JAI Press.

Sedikides, C., Lenton, A. P., Slabu, L., & Thomaes, S. (2019). Sketching the contours of state authenticity. *Review of General Psychology, 23*(1), 73-88. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000156

Sedikides, C., Slabu, L., Lenton, A., & Thomaes, S. (2017). State authenticity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *26*(6), 521-525. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721417713296

Selig, J. P., & Little, T. D. (2012). Autoregressive and cross-lagged panel analysis for longitudinal data. In B. Laursen, T. D. Little, & N. A. Card (Eds.), *Handbook of developmental research methods* (pp. 265–278). The Guilford Press.

Selig, J. P., & Preacher, K. J. (2009). Mediation models for longitudinal data in developmental research. *Research in Human Development, 6*(2-3), 144-164. https://doi.org/10.1080/15427600902911247

Seto, E., & Hicks, J. A. (2016). Disassociating the agent from the self: Undermining belief in free will diminishes true self-knowledge. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *7*(7), 726-734. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550616653810

Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1998). Not all personal goals are personal: Comparing autonomous and controlled reasons for goals as predictors of effort and attainment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 24*(5), 546-557. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167298245010

Sheldon, K. M., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal well-being: the self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*(3), 482-497. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.76.3.482

Sheldon, K. M., Ryan, R. M., Rawsthorne, L. J., & Ilardi, B. (1997). Trait self and true self: Cross-role variation in the Big-Five personality traits and its relations with psychological authenticity and subjective well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(6), 1380–1393. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.73.6.1380

Sheldon, K. M., Ryan, R., & Reis, H. T. (1996). What makes for a good day? Competence and autonomy in the day and in the person. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 22*(12), 1270-1279. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672962212007

Sherman, D. K., & Cohen, G. L. (2006). The psychology of self-defense: Self-affirmation theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 38*, 183-242. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(06)38004-5

Shnabel, N., & Nadler, A. (2008). A needs-based model of reconciliation: Satisfying the differential emotional needs of victim and perpetrator as a key to promoting reconciliation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 94*(1), 116–132. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.94.1.116

Shnabel, N., & Nadler, A. (2015). The role of agency and morality in reconciliation processes: The perspective of the needs-based model. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 24*(6), 477-483. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721415601625

Shnabel, N., Nadler, A., Ullrich, J., Dovidio, J. F., & Carmi, D. (2009). Promoting reconciliation through the satisfaction of the emotional needs of victimized and perpetrating group members: The needs-based model of reconciliation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 35*(8), 1021-1030. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167209336610

Slepian, M. L., & Carr, E. W. (2019). Facial expressions of authenticity: Emotion variability increases judgments of trustworthiness and leadership. *Cognition, 183*, 82-98. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2018.10.009

Smallenbroek, O., Zelenski, J. M., & Whelan, D. C. (2017). Authenticity as a eudaimonic construct: The relationships among authenticity, values, and valence. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *12*(2), 197-209. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1187198

Spencer, S. J., Zanna, M. P., & Fong, G. T. (2005). Establishing a causal chain: Why experiments are often more effective than mediational analyses in examining psychological processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89*(6), 845–851. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.845

Steele, C. M., Spencer, S. J., & Lynch, M. (1993). Self-image resilience and dissonance: The role of affirmational resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64*(6), 885–896. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.64.6.885

Stevenson, L. (2020). Authenticity, Spontaneity, and Congruence. *The UBC Journal of Philosophical Enquiries, 1*(1), 50-61.

Stichter, M. (2022). The true self as essentially morally good: An obstacle to virtue development?. *Journal of Moral Education, 51*(2), 261-275. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2021.1887830

Stillman, T. F., Baumeister, R. F., Lambert, N. M., Crescioni, A. W., DeWall, C. N., & Fincham, F. D. (2009). Alone and without purpose: Life loses meaning following social exclusion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *45*(4), 686-694. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2009.03.007

Strohminger, N., Knobe, J., & Newman, G. (2017). The true self: A psychological concept distinct from the self. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *12*(4), 551-560. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691616689495

Strohminger, N., & Nichols, S. (2014). The essential moral self. *Cognition*, *131*(1), 159-171. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2013.12.005

Sutton, A. (2020). Living the good life: A meta-analysis of authenticity, well-being and engagement. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *153*, 109645. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.109645

Swann, W. B., & Brooks, M. (2012). Why threats trigger compensatory reactions: The need for coherence and quest for self-verification. *Social Cognition*, *30*(6), 758–777. https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2012.30.6.758

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2019). *Using multivariate statistics* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin, & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-47). Brooks/Cole.

Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., & Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral emotions and moral behavior. *Annual Review of Psychology, 58*, 345-372. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.070145

Theye, K., & Melling, S. (2018). Total losers and bad hombres: The political incorrectness and perceived authenticity of Donald J. Trump. *Southern Communication Journal, 83*(5), 322-337. https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2018.1511747

Thomaes, S., Sedikides, C., van den Bos, N., Hutteman, R., & Reijntjes, A. (2017). Happy to be “me?” authenticity, psychological need satisfaction, and subjective well-being in adolescence. *Child Development, 88*(4), 1045-1056.

Tice, D. M. (1992). Self-concept change and self-presentation: The looking glass self is also a magnifying glass. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63(3), 435–451. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.63.3.435

Tou, R. Y., Baker, Z. G., Hadden, B. W., & Lin, Y. C. (2015). The real me: Authenticity, interpersonal goals, and conflict tactics. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *86*, 189-194. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.05.033

Trilling, L. (1972). *Sincerity and authenticity.* Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12867

Umbach, M., & Humphrey, M. (2017). *Authenticity: The cultural history of a political concept*. Springer.

Van den Bosch, R., & Taris, T. W. (2014). Authenticity at work: Development and validation of an individual authenticity measure at work. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 15*(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-013-9413-3

Van den Bosch, R., & Taris, T. (2018). Authenticity at work: Its relations with worker motivation and well-being. *Frontiers in Communication*, *3*(21), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2018.00021

Vess, M. (2019). Varieties of conscious experience and the subjective awareness of one's "true" self. *Review of General Psychology*, *23*(1), 89-98. https://doi.org/10.1177/1089268019829471

Vess, M., Brooker, R. J., Schlegel, R. J., & Hicks, J. A. (2019). Daily mental lapses and the subjective experience of true self-alienation. *Journal of Research in Personality, 78*, 148-152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2018.11.009

Vess, M., Leal, S. A., Hoeldtke, R. T., Schlegel, R. J., & Hicks, J. A. (2016). True self-alienation positively predicts reports of mindwandering. *Consciousness and Cognition, 45*, 89-99. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2016.08.018

Vess, M., & Maffly-Kipp, J. (2022). Intentional mindwandering and unintentional mindwandering are differentially associated with the experience of self-alienation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *185*, 111289. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111289

Wenzel, M., Rossi, C., Thai, M., Woodyatt, L., Okimoto, T. G., & Worthington Jr, E. L. (2022). Let's talk about this: Co-rumination and dyadic dynamics of moral repair following wrongdoing. *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2927

Wenzel, M., Woodyatt, L., & Hedrick, K. (2012). No genuine self-forgiveness without accepting responsibility: Value reaffirmation as a key to maintaining positive self-regard. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *42*(5), 617-627. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.1873

Wenzel, M., Woodyatt, L., & McLean, B. (2020). The effects of moral/social identity threats and affirmations on psychological defensiveness following wrongdoing. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 59*(4), 1062-1081. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12378

Wenzel, M., Woodyatt, L., Okimoto, T. G., & Worthington Jr, E. L. (2021). Dynamics of moral repair: Forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and the restoration of value consensus as interdependent processes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 47*(4), 607-626. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167220937551

Wickham, R. E. (2013). Perceived authenticity in romantic partners. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *49*(5), 878-887. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2013.04.001

Wickham, R. E., Williamson, R. E., Beard, C. L., Kobayashi, C. L., & Hirst, T. W. (2016). Authenticity attenuates the negative effects of interpersonal conflict on daily well-being. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *60*, 56-62. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2015.11.006

Williams, H., & Vess, M. (2016). Daydreams and the true self: Daydreaming styles are related to authenticity. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, *36*(2), 128-149. https://doi/org/10.1177/0276236616646065

Wilson, T. D. (2004). *Strangers to ourselves: discovering the adaptive unconscious.* Harvard University Press.

Wilson, T. D., & Dunn, E. W. (2004). Self-knowledge: Its limits, value, and potential for improvement. *Annual Review of Psychology, 55,* 493-518. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.55.090902.141954

Wilt, J. A., Thomas, S., & McAdams, D. P. (2019). Authenticity and inauthenticity in narrative identity. *Heliyon, 5*(7), e02178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e02178

Wood, A. M., Linley, P. A., Maltby, J., Baliousis, M., & Joseph, S. (2008). The authentic personality: A theoretical and empirical conceptualization and the development of the Authenticity Scale. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 55*(3), 385-399. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.55.3.385

Woodyatt, L., & Wenzel, M. (2013a). The psychological immune response in the face of transgressions: Pseudo self-forgiveness and threat to belonging. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 49*(6), 951-958. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2013.05.016

Woodyatt, L., & Wenzel, M. (2013b). Self-forgiveness and restoration of an offender following an interpersonal transgression. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 32*(2), 225-259. https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2013.32.2.225

Woodyatt, L., & Wenzel, M. (2014). A needs-based perspective on self-forgiveness: Addressing threat to moral identity as a means of encouraging interpersonal and intrapersonal restoration. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 50*, 125-135. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2013.09.012

Woodyatt, L., Wenzel, M., & de Vel-Palumbo, M. D. (2017). Working through psychological needs following transgressions to arrive at self-forgiveness. In L. Woodyatt, E. L. Worthington, Jr., M. Wenzel, & B. J. Griffin (Eds.). *Handbook of the psychology of self-forgiveness* (pp. 43-58). Springer.

Woodyatt, L., Wenzel, M., & Ferber, M. (2017). Two pathways to self-forgiveness: A hedonic path via self-compassion and a eudaimonic path via the reaffirmation of violated values. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 56*(3), 515-536. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12194

Woodyatt, L., Wenzel, M., Okimoto, T. G., & Thai, M. (2022). Interpersonal transgressions and psychological loss: Understanding moral repair as dyadic, reciprocal, and interactionist. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 44*, 7-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.08.018

Zhang, R., & Noels, K. A. (2013). When ethnic identities vary: Cross-situation and within-situation variation, authenticity, and well-being. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 44*(4), 552-573. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022112463604

Appendix A

Blog Manipulations (Study 1)

Manipulation 1 of 4: Authenticity, Personal Benefit framing

In Praise of Authenticity!

4 Powerful Benefits of Authenticity – and how it can change your life.

June 26, 2019

In positive psychology research, authenticity is strongly and consistently associated with greater wellbeing. Authenticity helps people feel more positive emotion, relish good experiences, improve their health and deal with adversity.

“The benefits of Authenticity have been considered as far back as early philosophy”, says Karissa Thacker, a psychologist and author of *The Art of Authenticity*. “Positive psychology also tells us that the sense of being true to yourself creates meaning. Fundamentally, it’s part of living a meaningful life”.

This list was compiled by aggregating just a few of the incredible benefits found in research studies on authenticity.

Authenticity makes us happier. A 2014 study found that a five-minute daily exercise where participants were instructed to turn their focus inward and to connect with how they were feeling increased their reported happiness and wellbeing. Why? Because they found participants continued to use these skills throughout their day. By being more aware of their feelings, they were better able to respond to them and cultivate more positive experiences.

Authenticity helps us bounce back from stress. Studies have found that those who score more highly on measures of authenticity are more likely to engage in a healthier, more proactive coping style. Robert Emmons, a leading authenticity researcher, has conducted multiple studies on the link between authenticity and wellbeing. His research suggests that people who express authenticity are more likely to access support in times of need, are more likely to grow in times of difficulty and are less likely to develop stress disorders.

Authenticity reduces materialism. Materialism is strongly correlated with reduced well-being and increased rates of mental disorder. Excessive materialism has been found to generate negative emotions, make people feel less competent and reduce the ability to appreciate the good in life. A recent study, published in *Personality and Individual Differences* found that authenticity helps to reduce materialism by reducing our tendency to compare ourselves to those with a higher social status. As these comparisons lead to insecurity, authenticity is an effective strategy for helping people to feel more secure with what they’ve got.

Authenticity improves our physical health. A number of studies have suggested that people who rate more highly on authenticity are more likely to value themselves and take care of their physical health. A 2016 study found that authentic people are more likely to exercise and engage in health behaviours like regular check-ups with their doctors, which is likely to contribute to longevity.

Expressing yourself authentically may be one of the simplest ways to feel better.

Returning to Karissa Thacker, “People feel and express authenticity in multiple ways. Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's authenticity, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further.”

Maniplation 2 of 4: Gratitude, Personal Benefit framing

In Praise of Gratitude!

4 Powerful Benefits of Gratitude – and how it can change your life.

June 26, 2019

In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater wellbeing. Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotion, relish good experiences, improve their health and deal with adversity.

"The benefits of Gratitude have been considered as far back as early philosophy", says Karissa Thacker, a psychologist and author of *The Art of Gratitude*. "Positive psychology also tells us that the sense of being true to yourself creates meaning. Fundamentally, it's part of living a meaningful life".

This list was compiled by aggregating just a few of the incredible benefits found in research studies on gratitude.

Gratitude makes us happier. A 2014 study found that a five-minute daily exercise where participants were instructed to reflect on things they were grateful for feeling increased their reported happiness and wellbeing. Why? Because they found participants continued to use these skills throughout their day. By being more aware of what they had to be thankful for, participants were more able to appreciate these things and were able to cultivate more positive experiences.

Gratitude helps us bounce back from stress. Studies have found that those who score more highly on measures of gratitude are more likely to engage in a healthier, more proactive coping style. Robert Emmons, a leading gratitude researcher, has conducted multiple studies on the link between gratitude and wellbeing. His research suggests that people who express gratitude are more likely to access support in times of need, are more likely to grow in times of difficulty and are less likely to develop stress disorders.

Gratitude reduces materialism. Materialism is strongly correlated with reduced well-being and increased rates of mental disorder. Excessive materialism has been found to generate negative emotions, make people feel less competent and reduce the ability to appreciate the good in life. A recent study, published in *Personality and Individual Differences* found that gratitude helps to reduce materialism by reducing our tendency to compare ourselves to those with a higher social status. As these comparisons lead to insecurity, gratitude is an effective strategy for helping people to feel more secure with what they've got.

Gratitude improves our physical health. A number of studies have suggested that people who rate more highly on gratitude are more likely to value themselves and take care of their physical health. A 2016 study found that grateful people are more likely to exercise and engage in health behaviours like regular check-ups with their doctors, which is likely to contribute to longevity.

Expressing gratitude may be one of the simplest ways to feel better.

Returning to Karissa Thacker, "People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further."

Manipulation 3 of 4: Authenticity, Social Benefit framing

In Praise of Authenticity!

4 Powerful Benefits of Authenticity – and how it can change your life.

June 26, 2019

In positive psychology research, authenticity is strongly and consistently associated with better social outcomes. Authenticity helps people strengthen their relationships, improve their careers and build social resources.

"The drive to be around human beings who openly express authenticity has been documented as far back as early philosophy", says Karissa Thacker, a psychologist and author of *The Art of Authenticity*. "Positive psychology also tells us that people are drawn to those who express authenticity. In part, because it assists in creating conditions for them to do the same. Fundamentally, it's part of developing meaningful social bonds".

This list was compiled by aggregating just a few of the incredible benefits found in research studies on authenticity.

Authenticity strengthens our relationships. A 2014 study found that a five-minute daily exercise where participants were instructed to turn their focus inward and to connect with how they were feeling increased the number of meaningful social interactions they experienced. Why? Because they found participants continued to use these skills throughout their day. By being more aware of their experience, they were able to better communicate their feelings to others to facilitate more meaningful interactions.

Authenticity boosts your career. Studies have found that those who score more highly on measures of authenticity are more likely to engage in effective work behaviours. Robert Emmons, a leading authenticity researcher, has conducted multiple studies on the link between authenticity and leadership. His research suggests that people who express authenticity at work make more effective managers, develop stronger professional networks and have better decision-making capabilities. It may not always be easy to be authentic, but people will respect you for it.

Authenticity makes people like us. Having a social network is strongly correlated with better personal outcomes – it has been found to be related to career progression, life satisfaction and greater likelihood of having a romantic partner. A recent study, published in *Personality and Individual Differences* found that authenticity makes people appear more open and socially approachable. This means that authentic people are more likely to receive help from others for no reason other than that they are liked and appreciated.

Authenticity makes us look good. A number of studies have suggested that people who rate more highly on authenticity are consistently rated as more pleasant to be around. A 2016 study found that being authentic around a new acquaintance makes them more likely to seek an ongoing relationship.

Expressing yourself authentically may be one of the simplest ways to improve your relationships.

Returning to Karissa Thacker, "People feel and express authenticity in multiple ways. Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's authenticity, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further."

Manipulation 4 of 4: Gratitude, Social Benefit Framing

In Praise of Gratitude!

4 Powerful Benefits of Gratitude – and how it can change your life.

June 26, 2019

In positive psychology research, gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with better social outcomes. Gratitude helps people strengthen their relationships, improve their careers and build social resources.

“The drive to be around human beings who openly express gratitude has been documented as far back as early philosophy”, says Karissa Thacker, a psychologist and author of *The Art of Gratitude*. “Positive psychology also tells us that people are drawn to those who express gratitude. In part, because it assists in creating conditions for them to do the same. Fundamentally, it’s part of developing meaningful social bonds”.

This list was compiled by aggregating just a few of the incredible benefits found in research studies on gratitude.

Gratitude strengthens our relationships. A 2014 study found that a five-minute daily exercise where participants were instructed to reflect on things they were grateful for increased the number of meaningful social interactions they experienced. Why? Because they found participants continued to use these skills throughout their day. By being more aware of what they had to be thankful for, participants were able to better communicate their feelings to others to facilitate more meaningful interactions.

Gratitude boosts your career. Studies have found that those who score more highly on measures of gratitude are more likely to engage in effective work behaviours. Robert Emmons, a leading gratitude researcher, has conducted multiple studies on the link between gratitude and leadership. His research suggests that people who express gratitude at work make more effective managers, develop stronger professional networks and have better decision-making capabilities. It may not always be easy to be thankful, but people will respect you for it.

Gratitude makes people like us. Having a social network is strongly correlated with better personal outcomes – it has been found to be related to career progression, life satisfaction and greater likelihood of having a romantic partner. A recent study, published in *Personality and Individual Differences* found that gratitude makes people appear more open and socially approachable. This means that grateful people are more likely to receive help from others for no reason other than that they are liked and appreciated.

Gratitude makes us look good. A number of studies have suggested that people who rate more highly on gratitude are consistently rated as more pleasant to be around. A 2016 study found that thanking a new acquaintance makes them more likely to seek an ongoing relationship.

Expressing gratitude may be one of the simplest ways to improve your relationships.

Returning to Karissa Thacker, “People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. Regardless of the inherent or current level of someone's gratitude, it's a quality that individuals can successfully cultivate further.”

Appendix B

Additional Measures (Study 3)

The following additional measures were included in the Study 3 survey, but did not feature in the analyses.

Self-Punitiveness. Seven items assessed offenders' excessive self-blame and disproportionately punitive response to themselves (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) e.g., *What I have done is unforgiveable.* (Time 1, α = .87; Time 2, α = .90; Time 3, α = .91).

Desire to Reconcile. Four items assessed offenders' desire and willingness to reconcile with the other person (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014). Participants were prompted to respond to the items regarding the other person involved in the incident, and if multiple people were involved, to think about the person who may have been affected the most. Subsequent surveys prompted participants to respond regarding the same person (Time 1, α = .86; Time 2 α = .88; Time 3 α = .87).

Emotions. Participants were asked to what extent they were currently experiencing the following emotions regarding the incident: *guilty; resentful; regretful; sad; disappointed; ashamed; embarrassed; angry.*

Behavioural Outcomes. Participants were asked to indicate to whether they had engaged in any of the following actions: avoided the person; ended the relationship with the other person; discussed what happened with the other person involved; made amends with the other person; apologized to the other person; reconciled with the other person; repaired the relationship with the other person.

Appendix C

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) for the Authenticity Scale at Time 2 and 3 (Study 3)

An EFA using Principal Components Analysis with Oblique rotations was used to investigate the factor structure of the Authenticity Scale at Time 2, identifying factors for extraction based on the scree plot and correspondence to theory. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin's measure of sampling adequacy, KMO = .93, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, χ^2 (253) = 4158.30, p < .001, indicated that items were appropriate for factor analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). Three factors emerged from the initial extraction, corresponding to the proposed scales of self-concept authenticity, and the present-state authenticity subscales, expression and ownership. Awareness items did not differentiate to a separate factor. The items: *I was aware of my inner experiences; I was conscious of what I really thought; I can recount what my true feelings were"* loaded with the ownership items at 70, .81 and .60, respectively. The items: "*I was in touch with how I truly felt; I attended to any difficult feelings I had; I was open to the emotions I was experiencing"* cross-loaded with ownership/expression at .31/.56, .44/.49, .36/.56. The awareness items were dropped. A subsequent EFA on the remaining 17 items resulted in a three-factor solution explaining 78.4% of the variance. Standardized factor loadings for the final scale are shown in Table C.1. It was noted that for one expression item the standardized factor loading was 1, which may appear to be a problem for interpretation. However, with oblique rotations, the figures represent standardized factor loadings rather than correlation coefficients, and so may equal or exceed +/-1.

Table C.1

EFA Factor Loadings for the 17-item Authenticity Scale at Time 2 (Study 3)

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Expression			
I expressed what I really thought	-.03	**.98**	-.06
I expressed my true feelings	-.03	**.91**	.04
My behaviour reflected how I really felt	.17	**.71**	.09
I expressed my thoughts and feelings accurately	-.01	**.78**	.19
I openly shared my inner experiences	-.01	**.80**	.02
I genuinely conveyed my feelings to others	-.02	**1.00**	-.12
Ownership			
My thoughts were my own	-.02	.11	**.81**
I determined my emotional reactions	-.07	.06	**.81**
I had a sense of ownership over my thoughts and feelings	-.005	.05	**.86**
I had a sense of authorship over my actions	-.02	-.01	**.93**
I was in charge of how I responded to the situation	.07	-.15	**.95**
Self-concept Authenticity			
I was my true self	**.90**	.05	.04
I acted in line with my true self	**.89**	.05	.05
My actions were consistent with the core of who I am	**.88**	.01	-.06
I regarded myself as being true to who I really am	**.86**	.03	.08
I acted as someone else, rather than my true self (R)	**-.80**	.08	-.02
My actions were inconsistent with who I truly know myself to be (R)	**-.94**	.05	.12

Note. N = 178. Loadings above .30 in bold type.

An EFA using Principal Components Analysis with Oblique rotations was repeated for the Authenticity Scale at Time 3. As in previous analyses, the items were determined to be appropriate for factor analysis, KMO = .93, $\chi 2$ (253) = 3782.68, p < .001. Three factors emerged from the initial extraction. The awareness items: "*I was aware of my inner experiences, I was conscious of what I really thought; I can recount what my true thoughts were"* loaded with the ownership items at .76, .84, .72, respectively. The items: "*I was in touch with how I truly felt, I attended to any difficult feelings I had, I was open to the emotions I was experiencing",* loaded with ownership/expression at .43/.43, .56/.33, .31/.57. After dropping the awareness items, a three-factor solution explained 76.3% of the variance. Standardized factor loadings for the remaining 17 items are shown in Table C.2.

Table C.2

EFA Factor Loadings for the 17-item Authenticity Scale at Time 3 (Study 3)

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Expression			
I expressed what I really thought	-.03	**.92**	.01
I expressed my true feelings	.08	**.87**	.01
My behaviour reflected how I really felt	.20	**.63**	.13
I expressed my thoughts and feelings accurately	.03	**.85**	.09
I openly shared my inner experiences	-.14	**.84**	.001
I genuinely conveyed my feelings to others	-.10	**1.03**	-.10
Ownership			
My thoughts were my own	.007	.06	**.82**
I determined my emotional reactions	.05	.05	**.76**
I had a sense of ownership over my thoughts and feelings	-.03	.07	**.88**
I had a sense of authorship over my actions	-.04	.006	**.88**
I was in charge of how I responded to the situation	-.02	-.12	**.96**
Self-concept Authenticity			
I was my true self	**.93**	.04	.003
I acted in line with my true self	**.94**	.03	-.04
My actions were consistent with the core of who I am	**.86**	.07	.04
I regarded myself as being true to who I really am	**.88**	.10	-.07
I acted as someone else, rather than my true self (R)	**-.84**	.21	-.09
My actions were inconsistent with who I truly know myself to be (R)	**-.72**	.10	.07

Note. N = 166. Loadings above .30 in bold type.

Appendix D

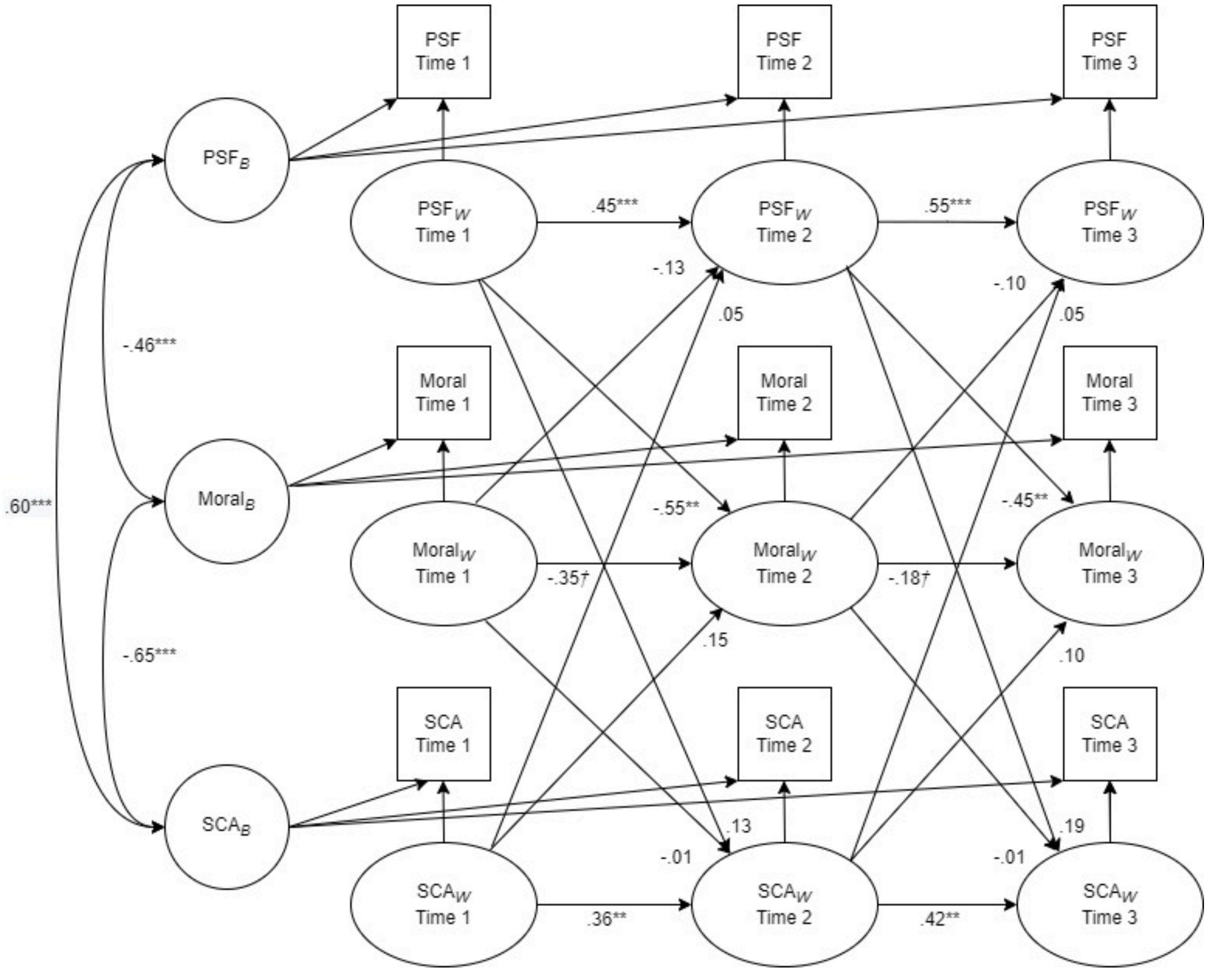
Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Models (RI-CLPM) for Proposed Mediators for Relationship between Pseudo Self-Forgiveness and Self-Concept Authenticity (Study 3)

Analyses were conducted to explore whether within-person change in moral image threat, perceived wrongfulness or responsibility acted as mediators for the relationship between pseudo self-forgiveness and self-concept authenticity. In each case, constrained models were compared with the default (i.e., unconstrained model). Models with autoregressive stabilities and cross-lags constrained to be equal were found to provide good fits to the data and did not deteriorate the model fit for moral threat: $\chi2$ (*df*) = 6.17 (12), p = .91; χ^2/df = 0.91, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = <.001, CI^{90} [<.001 .03]; $\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*) = 1.86 (9), p =.99; wrongfulness: $\chi2$ (*df*) = 11.31 (12), p = .50, χ^2/df = 0.94, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = <.001, CI^{90} [<.001, .07], $\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*) = 7.64 (9), p = .57; and responsibility: $\chi2$ (*df*) = 6.45 (12), p = .89, χ^2/df = 0.54, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = <.001, CI^{90} [<.001, .03], $\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*) = 6.01 (9), p = .74.

The cross-lagged relationships with moral threat as a mediator are shown in Figure D.1. There were no cross-lagged relationships between moral image threat and self-concept authenticity. There was a significant negative effect of pseudo self-forgiveness on moral image threat. That is, offender defensiveness was associated with decreased perceptions of threat to moral/social image over time.

Figure D.1

Standardised Coefficients for the Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM) for Pseudo Self-Forgiveness, Moral Image Threat and Self-Concept Authenticity

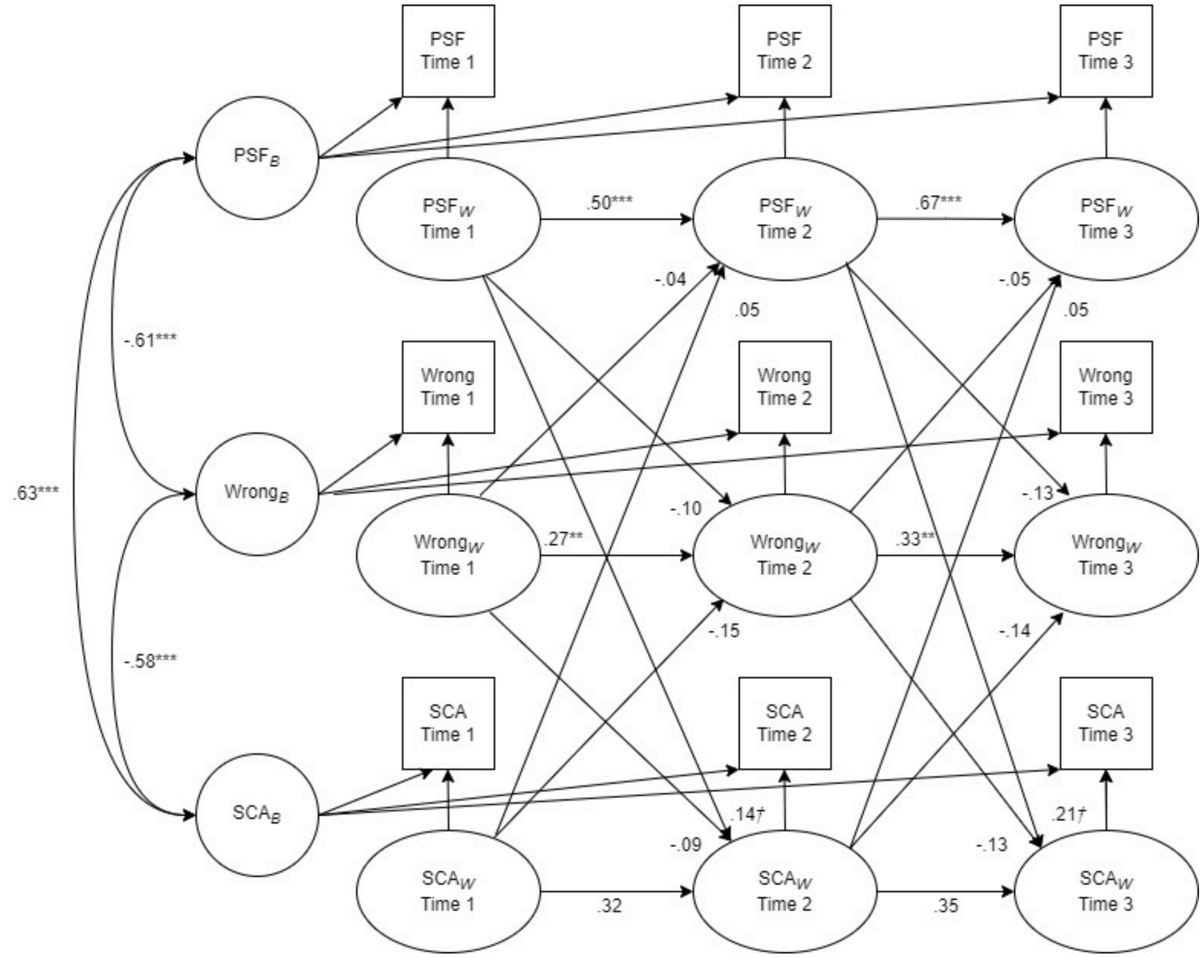

PSF Time 1
PSF Time 2
PSF Time 3
PSF$_B$
PSF$_W$ Time 1
.45***
PSF$_W$ Time 2
.55***
PSF$_W$ Time 3
-.13
.05
-.10
.05
-.46***
Moral Time 1
Moral Time 2
Moral Time 3
.60***
Moral$_B$
-.55**
-.45**
Moral$_W$ Time 1
-.35†
Moral$_W$ Time 2
-.18†
Moral$_W$ Time 3
.15
.10
-.65***
SCA Time 1
SCA Time 2
SCA Time 3
SCA$_B$
.13
.19
-.01
-.01
SCA$_W$ Time 1
.36**
SCA$_W$ Time 2
.42**
SCA$_W$ Time 3

Note. Squares represent observed variables, and circles/ellipses denote latent variables. The figure excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within wave correlations of residual variances. B = Between-components (intercept). W = within-components. PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness; Moral = moral image threat; SCA = self-concept authenticity. ***_p_ < .001, **_p_ < .01, †_p_ = .08.

Cross-lagged relationships with wrongfulness as a mediator are shown in Figure D.2. There were no cross-lagged relationships between wrongfulness and self-concept authenticity, nor wrongfulness and pseudo self-forgiveness.

Figure D.2

Standardised Coefficients for the Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM) for Pseudo Self-Forgiveness, Perceived Wrongfulness and Self-Concept Authenticity

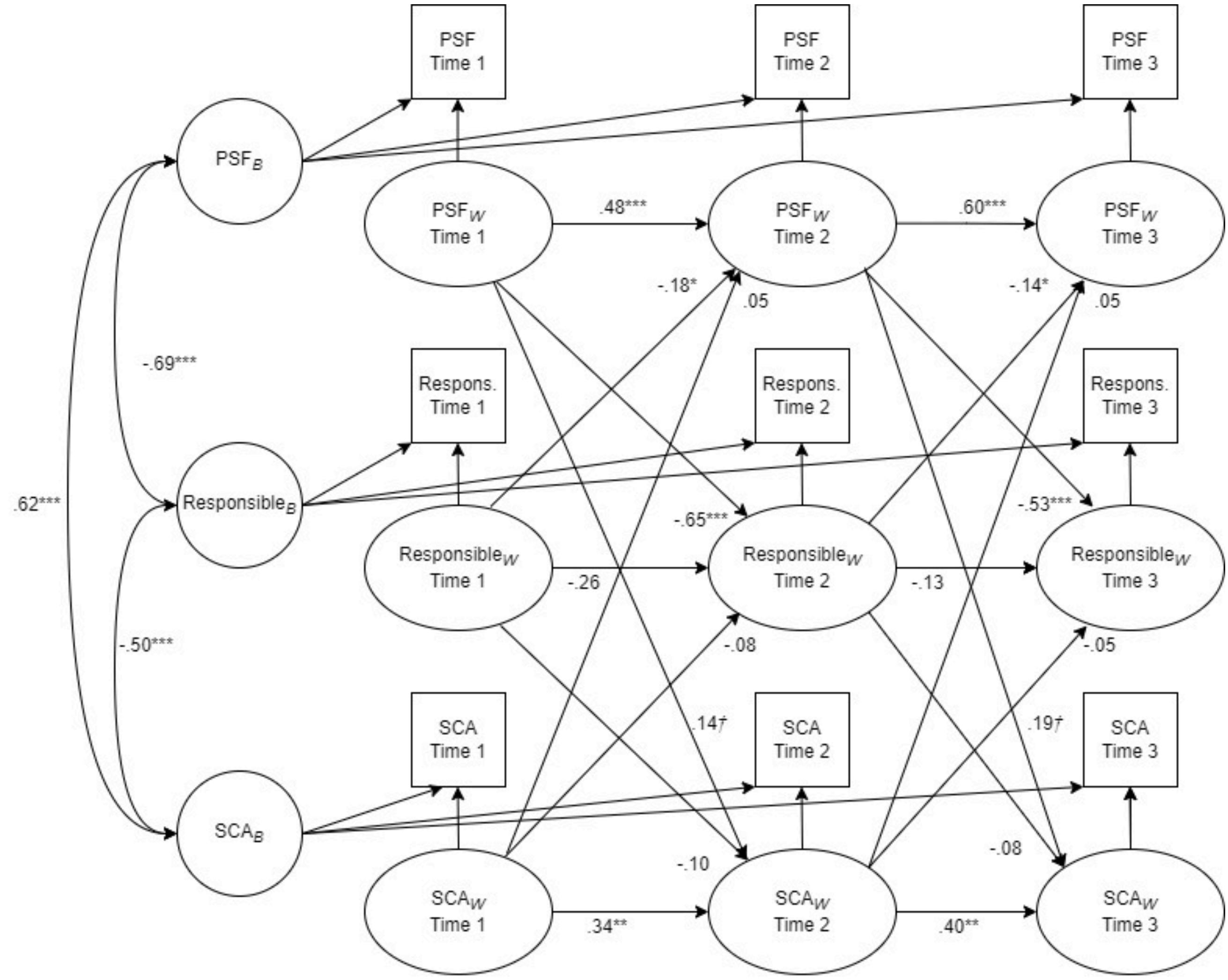

PSF Time 1
PSF Time 2
PSF Time 3
PSF_B
PSF_W Time 1
.50***
PSF_W Time 2
.67***
PSF_W Time 3
-.04
.05
-.05
.05
-.61***
Wrong Time 1
Wrong Time 2
Wrong Time 3
.63***
$Wrong_B$
-.10
-.13
$Wrong_W$ Time 1
.27**
$Wrong_W$ Time 2
.33**
$Wrong_W$ Time 3
-.15
-.14
-.58***
SCA Time 1
SCA Time 2
SCA Time 3
SCA_B
.14†
.21†
-.09
-.13
SCA_W Time 1
.32
SCA_W Time 2
.35
SCA_W Time 3

Note. Squares represent observed variables, and circles/ellipses denote latent variables. The figure excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within wave correlations of residual variances. B = Between-components (intercept). W = Within-components. PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness; Wrong = wrongfulness; SCA = self-concept authenticity. ***p < .001, **p < .01, †p = .06.

Cross-lagged relationships with perceived personal responsibility for the wrongdoing are shown in Figure D.3. There were no significant cross-lagged effects between responsibility and self-concept authenticity. Responsibility and pseudo self-forgiveness had significant negative reciprocal cross-lagged effects.

Figure D.3

Standardised Coefficients for the Random Intercept Cross-Lagged Panel Model (RI-CLPM) for Pseudo Self-Forgiveness, Responsibility, and Self-Concept Authenticity


PSF Time 1
PSF Time 2
PSF Time 3
PSF$_B$
PSF$_W$ Time 1
.48***
PSF$_W$ Time 2
.60***
PSF$_W$ Time 3
-.18*
.05
-.14*
.05
-.69***
Respons. Time 1
Respons. Time 2
Respons. Time 3
.62***
Responsible$_B$
-.65***
-.53***
Responsible$_W$ Time 1
-.26
Responsible$_W$ Time 2
-.13
Responsible$_W$ Time 3
-.50***
-.08
-.05
SCA Time 1
.14†
SCA Time 2
.19†
SCA Time 3
SCA$_B$
-.10
-.08
SCA$_W$ Time 1
.34**
SCA$_W$ Time 2
.40**
SCA$_W$ Time 3

Note. Squares represent observed variables, and circles/ellipses denote latent variables. The figure excludes the disturbances of exogenous variables and their within wave correlations of residual variances. B = between-components (intercept). W = within-components. PSF = pseudo self-forgiveness; Respons. = responsibility; SCA = self-concept authenticity. ***p < .001, **p <.01, *p < .05, †p <.10.

Appendix E

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) for Authenticity Scale (Studies 4.1 and 4.2)

Study 4.1

An EFA using Principal Components Analysis with Oblique rotations yielded three factors, explaining 73.68% of the variance. These corresponded to the proposed scales of self-concept authenticity (loadings >.79), the present-state authenticity subscales expression (loadings >.58) and ownership (loadings >.71).

Study 4.2

An EFA using Principal Components Analysis with Oblique rotations yielded three factors, explaining 74.03% of the variance. These corresponded to the proposed scales of self-concept authenticity (loadings >.68), the present-state authenticity subscales expression (loadings >.81) and ownership (loadings >.63).