Trying to reconcile when we don't see eye to eye: The impact of divergent narratives on reconciliation

by

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Summary

In reconciliation processes like restorative justice, mediation, and couples counselling, victims and offenders are often brought together to discuss the wrongdoing that has occurred. The goal of these interactions is to resolve each other's psychological needs resulting from the wrongdoing by finding some common ground around what happened. This process is important to move towards reconciliation, and as such, has been implemented across a range of contexts, to resolve the interpersonal implications of criminal offending, workplace disputes, schoolyard fights, and relationship conflict.

However, research suggests that the success of these interactions is contingent on the mutual, meaningful engagement of both victims and offenders – and this does not always occur. There's evidence that both victims and offenders have trouble attending conciliatory interaction (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005) or engaging in conciliatory interaction (Daly, 2003; Hayes, McGee, & Cerruto, 2011; Larsen, 2014), and after engagement, do not always experience restorative outcomes (Jones, 2009; Smith & Weatherburn, 2012). I suggest that this occurs because victims and offenders emerge from transgressions with different perspectives, reflected in what I term "divergent transgression narratives" of the wrongdoing. I propose that finding common ground is difficult to achieve when the two involved parties are starting from very different points of understanding.

Narrative divergence has been raised as an issue for reconciliation across a range of studies, suggesting that victims and offenders have different perceptions across domains such as guilt (Adams & Inesi, 2016), transgression severity (Adams, 2016), and approaches to achieving justice (Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). Further, these divergences are self-serving in nature (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997). I propose that these divergences may be psychologically threatening, particularly for offenders, and therefore result in their reduced attitudes towards reconciliation.

Across five studies utilising qualitative, experimental, and dyadic paradigms, I aim to, first, replicate and extend on previous research by exploring the nature of narrative divergence. Second, I aim to explore how narrative divergence impacts upon victim and offender attitudes towards reconciliation. Third, I aim to explore how divergent narratives impact upon the efficacy of engaging victims and offenders in a conciliatory interaction.

Overall, this thesis identifies that victims' and offenders' divergent transgression narratives may be problematic for future reconciliation. The findings of this thesis support the premise that victim and offender transgression narratives systematically diverge in self-serving ways, and that this negatively impacts upon both parties' attitudes towards reconciliation. Further, the findings suggest that these negative implications may not be addressed by "talking it out". This thesis presents important considerations for engaging victims and offenders, namely that we may first need to develop strategies that bring victims and offenders onto the same page of the offense, before bringing them face to face to discuss it.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis:

1. Does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and

2. To the best of my knowledge and belief it 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 (2016-2019).

Cara Rossi
October 2019

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Statement of Co-Authorship

This thesis builds upon research questions proposed in the following application to the Australian Research Council Discovery Project scheme:

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Chapter 1

Offender (Dis)engagement in Restorative Interactions

"Talking it out" is commonly viewed as a way of working through key issues stemming from the perceived transgression of laws, rules or values. Whether in interpersonal relationships, formal mediation, or collective intergroup reconciliations processes, the central idea is the same – justice and reconciliation is believed to be fostered by bringing together victims and offenders to discuss what has happened, the consequences, and how to move forward. Since the late 1980s, this approach to conflict resolution has been systematised in the form of restorative justice conferences, initially in the criminal justice domain but increasingly expanded to other contexts of interpersonal and intergroup relations (Braithwaite, 2002). Rather than typical Western punitive responses to wrongdoing, restorative justice proposes an alternative approach – promoting victim-offender collaboration as a means of repairing the harm caused by the offense. In restorative justice practice, the victim, offender, and their respective communities are given the opportunity to voice their perspective of the offense, achieve agreement about the values violated and the harm caused, and propose actions to make amends. These principles have been applied to a wide range of transgressions in order to address, for example, criminal offending, workplace disputes, schoolyard fights, and relationship conflict. Further, research suggests that this form of conflict resolution can lead to positive outcomes for both victims, offenders, and their communities.

However, successfully facilitating a restorative interaction can be problematic. Research suggests that the proposed positive outcomes of restorative justice practices are reliant on mutual engagement in the process – that is, both victims and offenders must *choose* to participate in the process in a *meaningful* way. But here a serious problem arises. Research shows that initiating and maintaining offender engagement in restorative processes can be a

major challenge (Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005; Sherman, Strang, Mayo-Wilson, Woods, & Ariel, 2015). While victims and offenders are ideally brought together to right the wrongdoing, this process is unlikely to be successful if one or both parties has difficulty engaging in the interaction. This thesis will explore one possible barrier to victims and offenders being ready to engage with each other meaningfully in restorative interactions, namely that they hold diverging narratives of the transgression event.

In restorative justice interactions, a victim and offender are brought together and generally the victim recounts what has occurred from their own perspective, to which the offender may respond. However, I propose that each party tends to remember the event differently, process the meaning of the event differently, and think of the consequences of the event differently. I propose these narrative divergences are likely to negatively impact on both parties' conciliatory attitudes and willingness to meaningfully engage with the other person, presenting a significant barrier to the possible effectiveness of restorative interaction. My thesis will explore the nature of divergent narratives between offenders and victims, the negative impact these divergent narratives have on an offender's readiness to reconcile with the victim, and consider whether or not simply "talking it out" can overcome these negative impacts of narrative divergence.

In this literature review I will firstly provide an overview of restorative justice theory and the current implementation of restorative justice practice in Australia. I will review the outcomes of these restorative justice practices and highlight the pivotal role that *mutual, meaningful* engagement plays in obtaining positive outcomes for both parties. I will discuss the implications of this research for addressing interpersonal transgressions, which will be the context of this thesis. Next, I will show how victim and offender transgression narratives diverge in systematic and self-serving ways, before outlining how narrative divergence may negatively affect offenders' readiness to reconcile with victims. Finally, I will discuss the

implications that this may have for engaging victims and offenders in a restorative interaction with one another, in light of evidence that suggests engagement may provide an avenue through which divergences can be addressed. It should be noted that the terminology of "victim" and "offender" will be used henceforth to respectively refer to those who were harmed by an interpersonal wrongdoing and the perpetrator of the interpersonal wrongdoing, whether in a relationship transgression, workplace transgression or criminal offending context.

Restorative justice theory and practice in Australia

Restorative justice is conceptualised as an alternative to punitive forms of justice. Restorative justice theory focusses on repairing the harm caused by the offender, *instead* of punishing the offender (Larsen, 2014). By repairing harm, restorative justice can theoretically provide benefits for the victim, community, and relationships, as well as provide opportunities to forgive and reintegrate the offender back into the community. As such, restorative justice theory is based upon principles of reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989), as it denounces offending behaviour, rather than the person. In contrast, punishment is said to be disintegrative – although it aims to deter transgressive behaviour, Braithwaite (1989) argues that punishment instead focusses on ostracising those who perform it.

However, it is notable that in practice, restorative justice *complements* the court-based legal system. For offenders who have confessed, a referral to restorative justice-based programs may be a sentencing outcome, or it could be used as a process through which to devise a sentence (Larsen, 2014) – in this way, victims may also have input in the offender's punishment, ensuring it is proportionate and relevant. Alternatively, restorative justice programs may be recommended following an offender's release from prison (Larsen, 2014), in order to repair the relational harm caused, after the offender has already been punished.

Evaluation of these programs have identified some positive outcomes. Restorative community corrections approaches may reduce or delay recidivism in offenders (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2013; Bonta, Wallace-Capretta, Rooney, & Mcanoy, 2002; Latimer et al., 2005; Luke & Lind, 2002). A series of experiments further demonstrated that restorative approaches may reduce offender recidivism, specifically when the program effectively employed the psychological process of reintegrative shaming (Tyler, Sherman, Strang, Barnes, & Woods, 2007). Engaging victims and offenders has also been shown to achieve additional restorative outcomes, such as increasing offender repentance (Kim & Gerber, 2012), improving offender actions of restitution (Bonta et al., 2002), reducing victim anxiety around re-victimisation and increasing the likelihood of the victim receiving an apology (Strang, 2000), and improving perceptions by both parties that a just outcome was achieved (Latimer et. al., 2005; Strang et al., 2006). Further, victims feel less driven to seek revenge after engaging with the offender (Strang, 2000), suggesting that this process may increase prosocial outcomes.

While the above discussion outlines restorative justice practice and outcomes within criminal justice settings, this research also has relevant implications for the resolution of interpersonal transgressions. Restorative justice theory is well-placed to resolve interpersonal conflict, as it fundamentally conceptualises conflict as a relational breakdown between two parties. Restorative justice theory also prioritises the repair of social relationships amongst its outcomes (Pranis, 2007). Restorative justice principles have been applied in various interpersonal settings. For example, these principles have been used in schools to enhance community relationships (Morrison, 2007). Restorative justice principles have also been suggested to resolve workplace disputes, with a view to improve relationships within the workplace and thereby benefit the organisation as a whole (Goodstein & Aquino, 2010; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). Where interpersonal relationships and community cohesion are prioritised goals, mutual engagement is therefore imperative – without both parties equally

committed to engaging with each other to work through what went wrong, it is unlikely that the relationship can be repaired.

However, there is a significant limitation to these approaches; they don't always work. Despite the positive outcomes outlined above, some research indicates that restorative justice programs do not always elicit reductions in reoffending (Jones, 2009; Smith & Weatherburn, 2012). Specifically, for both adults and juveniles, these studies found no differences in the risk of re-offending, the seriousness of reoffending, the time taken until the perpetrator reoffended, or the number of offences committed within one year of sentencing. These inconsistent findings suggest there are some limitations to the restorative justice process.

Theorists and practitioners have proposed that some programs may fail to meet restorative justice ideals, such as facilitating collaborative, productive engagement between victims and offenders. Achieving this "restorativeness" (Daly, 2003) has been highlighted as an issue facing current restorative justice programs. Further, the degree to which both offenders and victims engage with the process (or not) predicts the level of repair that can be achieved (Larsen, 2014). In fact, programs that better meet restorative standards (such as *both* victim and offender actively and appropriately participating in the process) have a clear relationship with reductions in reoffending (Daly, 2003). This suggests that the relative success of restorative justice processes, particularly with regards to recidivism, is linked to the quality of the engagement between the victim and offender.

What drives restoration? A reciprocal needs perspective

The needs-based model of reconciliation (Shnabel, Nadler, Canetti-Nisim & Ullrich, 2008) explains the importance of engaging victims and offenders to resolve transgressions in a way that enables them to reciprocally meet each other's psychological needs. Each party has a vastly different experience of wrongdoing. For example, victims may have experienced an aversive event which caused them hurt and loss, whereas offenders may have attained a

favourable outcome through violating social norms at someone else's expense. Each party subsequently develops different psychological needs – victims develop the need to regain their power and social standing, whereas offenders develop the need to reassure themselves and others that they are a good and moral person (Shnabel et al., 2008). The needs-based model then explains how victims and offenders may attempt to address their needs in ways that may further damage relationships. Shnabel and colleagues (2008) propose that victims' desire for revenge may be understood through their need to regain power, whereas offenders' avoidance of responsibility may be understood through their need to demonstrate their inherent morality.

While these respective approaches may address their own psychological needs, they do not lead to a resolution, nor do they restore the relationship between the pair (Shnabel et al., 2008). Victims and offenders may therefore achieve more positive interpersonal outcomes by addressing their psychological needs bilaterally – through engaging with one another. The offender taking responsibility and apologizing, perhaps also asking for the victim's forgiveness, satisfies the victim's need to restore their status (Shnabel et al., 2008). The empowered victim may consequently be more willing to forgive the offender, satisfying the offender's moral identity concerns (Shnabel et al., 2008). Thus, by engaging to address one another's psychological needs, the interpersonal relationship between the pair is better-placed for restoration.

However, there are challenges to engaging victims and offenders in a productive interaction. For example, language skills may impact on their capacity to effectively engage in complex, emotionally-sensitive conversations (Hayes & Snow, 2013). However, other research suggests that these barriers are also likely to be psychological. There is some suggestion that offenders may find restorative justice processes more demanding than court-based systems – their participation must be active, and their remorse must be genuine (Larsen,

2014). Offenders are also ideally expected to apologise and accept responsibility for their actions (Bonta et al., 2002). Further, offenders must maintain this collaborative and engaged attitude in front of victims, who may potentially be hostile towards them. It has been posited that some offenders find restorative interaction to be stigmatising (Smith & Weatherburn, 2012). In fact, Hayes, McGee, and Cerruto (2011) concluded that for offenders, negative and hostile interactions with victims during restorative processes may reduce any otherwise positive effects of the restorative interaction. Thus, the "restorativeness" of the victim-offender interaction may depend on whether victims and offenders are able to engage with one another in such a way as to meet their reciprocal needs.

Diverging narratives as possible barriers to victim-offender engagement

One possible barrier to achieving restorative interaction, is that victims and offenders may hold diverging narratives about the transgression. A large body of literature indicates that offenders and victims hold different perspectives of interpersonal transgressions and their implications (Adams, 2016; Adams & Inesi, 2016; Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Mikula, 1993; Mikula, 1994; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014; Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997). For example, victims and offenders tend to have divergent perceptions of the offender's feelings of guilt, and the intentionality of the offender's actions (Adams & Inesi, 2016). Victims are more likely to *overestimate* the offender's desire and intention to do the wrong thing by the victim; this is because victims are more likely to attribute the offending actions to dispositional factors (who the offender is as a person; Adams & Inesi, 2016). In addition, there is an inverse relationship between perceptions of intentionality and perceptions of guilt (where greater perceived intentionality is linked to lower perceived guilt). Consequently, victims are also more likely to *underestimate* the offender's feelings of guilt around their wrongdoing (Adams & Inesi, 2016).

Victims and offenders also have different perceptions of the severity of the offender's actions (Adams, 2016). Referred to as "magnitude gaps" (Baumeister et al., 1990), offenders are more likely to minimise the magnitude of the transgression compared with victims. Offenders may deny the negative consequences of their actions, deny their role in the wrongdoing, emphasize the mitigating circumstances under which they performed the transgression, or add details that justify their behaviour (Adams, 2016). Conversely, victims are more likely to magnify the negative outcomes of the offending behaviour (Baumeister et al., 1990).

Victims and offenders also tend to disagree on what needs to occur in order to achieve a just outcome (Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). Following transgressions, victims become preoccupied with regaining power and control, after having experienced the humiliation of a wrong committed against them (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Shnabel et al., 2008). Subsequently, restoration of power is often the most salient justice goal for victims (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). Conversely, offenders are driven to reassure themselves and their community of their inherent morality, after their behaviour violated social norms (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Shnabel et al., 2008). Subsequently, offenders view the restoration of their moral image as the most pressing justice goal (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). Thus, victims and offenders are driven to resolve the transgression in very different ways – where offenders may wish to vindicate themselves, victims may wish to assert their authority by holding the offender to account.

The self-serving nature of narrative divergence

The noted divergences in victim and offender perspectives appear to be self-serving and consistent with their respective justice goals. For example, offenders may reduce the magnitude of the offense in order to reduce perceptions that their behaviour was socially or morally "wrong", thereby achieving their salient justice goal. Reciprocally, victims may

magnify the offense in order to hold the offender to account and secure the offender's exclusion or punishment – these actions may consequently increase the victim's sense of power (Vidmar & Miller, 1980). As such, narrative divergence may occur in a self-serving manner.

In their 1997 study, Stillwell and Baumeister sought to elicit and measure self-serving narrative divergences in an experimental setting. Participants were asked to imagine themselves as the victim or offender in a provided scenario, before retelling the incident in their own words. The authors then counted which transgression-relevant details were reported, which were omitted, and which were altered. Upon analysis, systematic and self-serving biases were found in each party's transgression accounts. In general, victims reported details that tended to emphasise the offenders' role in producing a negative outcome, while ignoring details that might exonerate the offender (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997)**.** Further, the authors found that offenders tended to report details that emphasized exonerating information, while ignoring details that implicated themselves in the offense (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997). Although this study provides a useful paradigm to experimentally elicit narrative divergence, the effect has not been replicated. In this thesis, I will replicate and extend on the Stillwell and Baumeister (1997) study (Chapter 1).

Divergent victim narratives may reduce offenders' attitudes towards the victim and reconciliation

As stated earlier, "restorativeness" of victim-offender interactions is contingent on both the victim and offender genuinely and productively engaging in the process (Daly, 2003; Larsen, 2014). However, the attitudes each person holds toward the respective other party may impact (positively or negatively) on the likelihood of a positive interaction. I propose that when victims present a transgression narrative that diverges from the offender's

narrative, offenders will hold less favourable attitudes towards the victim and towards reconciliation, indicating poorer readiness to reconcile with victims.

During reconciliation processes, offenders are commonly exposed to the full extent of the hurt experienced by the victim during the transgression, potentially resulting in hostility towards the offender. These circumstances are clearly threatening for offenders, as exposure to victim hostility has been linked to poorer outcomes for offenders (Hayes et al., 2011). From a psychological needs-based perspective, this experience may be confronting for offenders because their primary need is to preserve their own sense of being a good and moral person (Shnabel et al., 2008).

Bandura (1999) suggests that under conditions of threat to their moral self-concept, offenders may psychologically distance themselves from the victim and the transgression via a process known as moral disengagement. Some of the strategies that offenders use to morally disengage from the transgression can be seen in the ways in which victim and offender narratives diverge. These include minimising their responsibility for, and agency over, their actions, and minimising the consequences of the transgression. However, offenders may also disengage from the victim as an individual, by denigrating and negatively characterising the victim (Bandura, 1999; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014). Psychological distancing from the victim and the offense has been linked to a lower willingness to engage in reparative or conciliatory behaviours (Fisher & Exline, 2010; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a) as the offender holds a reduced sense of accountability for the wrongdoing.

I propose that exposure to a divergent narrative will trigger a process of moral disengagement for offenders. When presented with a narrative that magnifies the intentionality and seriousness of the offending behaviour, as well as amplifies the consequences of the wrongdoing, I propose that offenders will be presented with a significant threat to their moral self-concept (Shnabel et al., 2008). Consequently, I propose that

following exposure to victim's divergent transgression narrative, offenders will hold less favourable attitudes towards reconciling with the victim. This will be characterised by a reduced willingness to make amends for their actions, reduced recognition that their actions violated social values, generation of more negative attributions to the victim's character, and a lower willingness to take the victim's perspective.

Reduced conciliatory attitudes may reduce the efficacy of restorative engagement

Conciliatory interaction is a dyadic process in which one party's response provokes a relevant response from the other party. The dynamic nature of interpersonal forgiveness has been highlighted amongst the literature (Friesen, Fletcher, & Overall, 2005; Hoyt, Fincham, McCullough, & Maio, 2005), reflecting how forgiveness is an interactional process of continuous exchange. Victims and offenders reciprocally appraise and reappraise one another and the transgression based upon their experiences of one another as they interact (Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Applied to the present context of narrative divergence and reduced offender conciliatory attitudes, it is proposed that victims will respond to offenders with similarly reduced conciliatory attitudes. For example, where victims perceive an offender's resistance to their perspective (perhaps triggered by the victim's divergent narrative), victims may, in turn, be less willing to consider the offender's point of view. Via this reciprocal process, victims' and offenders' reduced attitudes towards reconciliation may undermine the effectiveness of the engagement participated in by both parties.

However, the literature proposes that engaging victims and offenders with one another may provide an avenue through which both parties can *address* their diverging narratives. According to Cohen (2016, p.262), "restorative justice requires the construction of a shared memory of the past, in the present, in order to reconstruct spoiled identities and communities in the future". Engaging both victims and offenders in a structured and sequenced process,

where each party is bound by a common set of social rules, may therefore provide an opportunity for the pair to establish consensus. Rossano (2012) explains how a simple, reciprocal act such as turn-taking can foster shared experience in family-based contexts; it can also be seen in restorative interaction. Throughout engaging with one another, victims and offenders are allocated equal portions of time to discuss the offense, and desired outcomes. This turn-taking may facilitate positive interaction, as victim and offender input are each afforded equal consideration.

Individuals who perceive that they are being treated with fairness are more likely to comply with social rules (Tyler, 2006). This is known as procedural justice, and perceptions of procedural justice in restorative processes have been linked to prosocial outcomes (Tyler et al., 2007). The group engagement model (Tyler & Blader, 2003) suggests that this is because procedural justice influences judgments of shared identity between victim and offender, which in turn increases cooperative behaviour. Thus, reciprocal processes in restorative interactions may increase perceptions of procedural justice and in doing so, provide conditions in which a basic, mutual understanding between victim and offender can be reached.

While restorative justice theory proposes the benefits of engaging victims and offenders around the key issues resulting from transgressions, restorative justice practice has elicited mixed results. Narrative divergence and victim-offender engagement may therefore influence each other in a bidirectional manner: where narrative divergence reduces the effectiveness of engagement, engagement may help address divergences. However, given the inconsistent outcomes of restorative justice practices, it may be the case that engagement must adhere to principles of procedural justice in order to resolve divergences and thereby positively influence conciliatory attitudes. I therefore intend to engage victims and offenders in a structured, reciprocal interaction in order to determine whether engagement may overcome the negative psychological effects of their respective divergent narratives.

Summary and Overview

In the present thesis, I aim to explore a barrier to offender engagement in restorative interaction with victims – the phenomenon of divergent victim and offender narratives for transgressions. I suggest that victims and offenders emerge from transgressions with incompatible points of view regarding what happened, and what needs to occur to make amends (Chapter 2). As establishing consensus is more difficult to achieve in these circumstances, I suggest that offenders' conciliatory attitudes are negatively affected (Chapter 3). I therefore consider whether engaging victims and offenders is a sufficient strategy to overcome these diverging transgression narratives (Chapter 4).

In the second chapter of this PhD thesis, I experimentally test victim and offender reporting of an interpersonal transgression, in order to indicate points of divergence which may later become problematic during interaction. I will extend upon a qualitative paradigm used by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997) to elicit these divergences, additionally seeking to improve the statistical power and the specificity of the conclusions drawn from the original study. In this chapter, I will show that victims and offenders tend to report and withhold transgression-relevant details in a manner that reflects self-serving interests. However, as will also be discussed, narrative divergences were not found across quantitative items of agreement with statements regarding the transgression. This suggests the absence of a memory quality effect, and instead that divergences may emerge through a more deliberate reporting process.

In the third chapter, I explore the implications of these divergent narratives for offenders' attitudes towards reconciliation. Three experimental studies, utilising hypothetical scenarios, progressively showed offenders' increased negative attitudes towards victims and reconciliation. When presented with a victim's divergent narrative, offenders tended to make more negative attributions to the victim's character, were less willing to take the victim's

perspective, and held lower reparative intentions and more pessimistic expectations for a future conciliatory interaction. This chapter shows that narrative divergence reduces offender conciliatory attitudes towards reconciliation.

In the fourth chapter of this PhD thesis, I consider how narrative divergence impacts upon the efficacy of victim-offender engagement in a role play design. Despite the positive independent effects of engagement on both victims' and offenders' conciliatory attitudes, there was some evidence that engagement was insufficient to overcome the negative impact of narrative divergence. These findings provide an important basis for further exploration, as many conflict resolution processes aim to achieve positive outcomes for both victims and offenders through engaging them with one another.

Finally, in the fifth chapter I will integrate the findings of this PhD thesis, discussing how divergent victim and offender transgression narratives negatively impact upon engagement between the two parties, and considering the implications that this has for conflict resolution practice. I will explore potential avenues for intervention as a result of the findings obtained. I will also consider further research that would build upon the foundation contributed by this thesis.

Chapter 2

Divergence of Offender and Victim Narratives of Interpersonal Transgressions

One common approach to dealing with transgressions is a conversation between the two affected parties. This may be an informal chat between relationship partners, a mediated conversation at work or, in its most formalised form, a restorative justice conference in legal contexts. The aim is to arrive at a common understanding of the wrongdoing, responsibility, and degree of harm, and this common understanding should pave the way for repair. However, while this process sounds good in theory, in reality it is more complex due to the dyadic nature of these interactions. Research shows that an offender and victim can have vastly different recollections of the transgression event, which I term divergent narratives. I suggest this divergence can lead to a breakdown of the conciliatory process, and may even escalate the conflict or perpetuate harm to the victim, the offender, or both. This possibility presents a fundamental conundrum: while victim and offender dialogue about the transgression is used for reconciliation, the very nature of that interaction may in fact contain a significant risk of exacerbating the conflict. In this chapter I will examine the nature of these dissonant narratives, expanding on earlier research and identifying the key domains in which victim and offender transgression narratives may diverge.

Understanding narrative divergence

Offenders and victims tend to hold different narratives of a transgression event. This concept was illustrated during the “Me-Too” movement in response to numerous high-profile males exploiting positions of power at the expense of their female colleagues. Of particular interest, are the accounts of males who were horrified that their actions were perceived as unwanted and non-consensual. The involved males and females were present in the same physical circumstance and interaction, and yet the emerging stories of the affected women were at odds to the events that the males had experienced. Comedian Aziz Ansari released a

statement addressing the allegations made against him, in which he explained how his own perceptions of the interaction differed from his victim's: "it was true that everything did seem okay to me, so when I heard that it was not the case for her, I was surprised and concerned" (Stanton, 2018). He later described that in order to make amends, it was necessary that he reflected upon his own actions, and considered the reality of someone else's experiences (North, 2019). Overall, Aziz Ansari's situation demonstrated that interpersonal transgressions can be perceived very differently by victims and offenders, and resolving the transgression may require effortful consideration.

These divergences, if not recognised, can be highly problematic for engaging victims and offenders. How can we expect victims and offenders to reach consensus on how to repair the negative consequences of the wrongdoing, when they do not really agree on what occurred in the first place? In fact, further conflict should be anticipated, as each party attempts to bring the other to recognise their own point of view. It is therefore also likely that one of the two parties might simply disengage from the interaction as the disagreement perpetuates. Importantly, the necessary ingredients for reconciliation are unlikely to be present in these circumstances: it is unlikely that offenders would offer a genuine apology if they did not really recognise the issues for which they were apologising, and it is unlikely that a victim would forgive an offender who could not recognise the full extent of the hurt that they caused.

What we know about the development of narrative divergence

By transgressing, or violating a mutually accepted value (Durkheim, 1964), offenders convey that their perception of acceptable behaviour differs from their victims'. These perceived value differences are polarised by opposing experiences of the transgression event itself: victims may have experienced an aversive event for which they would like justice, whereas offenders may have benefitted from the situation and thus wish to avoid punishment

or owing compensation. These contrasting experiences, and subsequent development of contrasting motivations, may trigger incompatible psychological processes for victims and offenders and result in divergent views of the transgression.

As paraphrased by Bilali and Vollhardt (2019, p.88), "distortions and silences start with decisions about which facts are deemed important, and thereby collected, which ones are ignored, how they are assembled, and what interpretative framework is used to understand them". The subjectivity of transgression events has been indicated across a range of theoretical and empirical research (Adams, 2016; Adams & Inesi, 2016; Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Mikula, 1993, 1994; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014; Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997). Amongst the literature, it is commonly accepted that victims and offenders see transgressions differently. Some research has identified some broad domains in which victims and offenders disagree (Adams, 2016) – for example, highlighting the "mis-calibration" of victim and offender perceptions of guilt (Adams & Inesi, 2016) and intentionality (Adams & Inesi, 2016; Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019). Victims and offenders also tend to have different perceptions of transgression severity (Adams, 2016; Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019). Research has similarly considered divergent victim and offender notions of justice, and conversely, injustice (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). On an intergroup level, the literature has also identified how perpetrator groups and victim groups differentially attribute responsibility, disagree on which side has been truly victimised, and have different perceptions about how relevant the offending act is to the present day ("temporal distance"; Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019).

However, consistent with the analysis by Mikula (1993), much of the research regarding interpersonal transgressions relies on individuals recalling independent victim or perpetrator experiences (for example, autobiographical accounts of angering experiences explored by Baumeister and colleagues, 1990), rather than comparing victim and offender

divergences as relative to or occurring within the *same* transgression. Understanding whether and how divergences occur for both victims *and* offenders is imperative when considering the dynamic, reciprocal nature of transgressions and subsequent interaction.

One exception is a paper by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997). This paper presented three studies using a paradigm that explored how victims and offenders (within the same transgression) differentially included, omitted and distorted transgression-relevant information. Participants read a story about two people on either side of a wrongdoing, and then retold the story based on one of the two parties' perspectives (or that of a third party). Results found that the resulting victim and offender narratives systematically diverged with regards to the details they reported from the original story. In particular, victims and offenders tended to omit details that were counter to the interests of their own role. For example, where victims reported details that implicated the offender and omitted exonerating details, offenders conversely reported exonerating details and omitted implicating information. Details from the original story were categorised as being to either the victim's advantage (such as comparing the number of details around the severity of the consequences in the original story to the participant's recount), or to the offender's advantage (such as comparing the number of mitigating details in the original story to the participant's recount).

While this study provided a measure of the accuracy of the retold narratives, the authors entertained that a memory effect may have influenced the development of narrative divergence (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997). This meant that it was difficult for the authors to disentangle whether narrative divergence emerged in the *retelling* of the transgression, or whether divergent encoding processes may have led to some differences in the ways in which victims and offenders remember the transgression. The phenomenon of "motivated remembering" (Eitam, Miele, & Higgins, 2013) suggests that memories can be shaped by motivations at either the time of the event (encoding), or at the time of recall. The latter may

occur by biasing the search for motivation-consistent memories (Kunda, 1990), or by distorting existing memories to suit motivations (McDonald & Hirt, 1997). With regards to the former, via the self-reference effect (Symons & Johnson, 1997), victims and offenders may simply have superior encoding and memory processes for self-relevant information.

Applied to Stillwell and Baumeister's (1997) paper, the potential for motivated remembering presents numerous possibilities. For example, victims' and offenders' self-serving motivations following transgressions could prime divergent memory searches for transgression-relevant information (Kunda, 1990). Alternatively, motivations may reshape victims' and offenders' transgression-relevant memories in divergent ways (McDonald & Hirt, 1997). Further yet, self-relevant transgression details may be more easily encoded and therefore accessible to each party (Symons & John, 1997). In this way, it is difficult from Stillwell and Baumeister's study (1997) to disentangle whether narrative divergences reflect a self-serving "conscious editing process" (p.168), or a memory quality effect. By the latter, I suggest the possibility that each party may have more poorly encoded aspects of the event into their memory.

Stillwell and Baumeister (1997) utilised a paradigm that captured how victim and offender transgression narratives vary after experiencing the same series of events. However, I wish to extend upon their findings. Firstly, their paradigm is yet to be replicated. In light of this, it would also be useful to improve the statistical power of the findings, as their three studies contained samples of 50, 30, and 87 participants respectively. Secondly, it would be useful to further explore their inconclusive findings around memory quality. For example, it would be helpful to understand how divergences impact recall for selected details from the transgression. This would provide an indication of whether or not a memory effect may be implicated in narrative divergences, or whether divergences simply emerge during qualitative recall of the transgression. Further, it would be useful to not only identify reported details as

being to either party's advantage, but to more clearly specify the *types* of details that characterise these biased narratives. These potentially include victim-blaming details, moral justifications, and attributions of responsibility. This more specific information would allow researchers to progress this body of knowledge and develop targeted interventions that aim to bring victims and offenders to a common understanding of the transgression.

Study 2.1

The existing research in this area demonstrates the tendency for victims and offenders to hold different perspectives of transgressions. I firstly aimed to replicate the original findings obtained by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997), using a larger sample. I also aimed to include measures of recall for selected details from the transgression, in order to explore whether the quality of the transgression memory differs between victims and offenders.[1] Finally, I aimed to further specify the ways in which victim and offender narratives diverge.

In order to meet these aims, I designed the following experiment based upon the methods used by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997). I firstly asked participants to report demographic information, such as their age, gender, and nationality. I then presented participants with information regarding two people named Megan (the offender) and John (the victim).[2] Participants were then asked to read a scenario, randomly varying between groups whether they were asked to imagine that they were Megan in the scenario, that they were John, or were given instructions to simply read the scenario (control condition). All participants were then presented with the same scenario, written in the third person, in which Megan committed a wrongdoing against John (Appendix B). Following the scenario, participants

[1] Additional aims and hypotheses were tested in this study, relating to factors that may protect against the development of divergent victim and offender transgression narratives. In particular, shared identity was considered as a protective factor. The manipulations and hypotheses are footnoted. Materials used and results obtained are available in Appendix A.

[2] At this point, I randomly varied between groups whether participants were told that the victim and offender shared demographic characteristics, that they did not share demographic characteristics, or were not given any information regarding the victim and offender. See Appendix A.

were asked to recall the scenario in as much detail as possible, from their designated perspective. All participants were then presented with statements to quantitatively assess their recall of the scenario, and then were asked to rate their confidence in their memory of the scenario.

Hypotheses

1. Victims' and offenders' free recall of the transgression will show self-serving biases (narrative divergence).
2. Victims and offenders will show self-serving biases in their recognition of transgression details presented to them.[3]

Method

Participants

In total, 445 participants on MTurk accessed the study, which was developed using Qualtrics survey software. Participants were requested to have English as their first language. However, some entries were discounted due to not completing the study or not reporting from their allocated perspective (for example, reporting in 3rd person when asked to report in the 1st person). After I excluded these cases, 337 participants remained (197 female, 139 male, 1 genderqueer) aged 19-81. Participants primarily self-identified as American (89.1%).

Materials[4]

Recall perspective manipulation. Participants read about two people – the offender (Megan) and the victim (John). Participants then read a scenario involving both Megan and John. Participants were randomly allocated to conditions where they either imagined the

[3] It was also predicted that victims and offenders who shared an identity would report fewer self-serving biases in their recall for transgressions than victims and offenders who did not share an identity. Results from testing this hypothesis are available in Appendix A.

[4] Materials regarding manipulation of shared identity are available in Appendix A

scenario from Megan's perspective, John's perspective, or simply read the scenario as it was written:

A scenario involving Megan and John is described on the following page.

*While reading, please imagine that you are **Megan/John**. Think about what Megan/John would be thinking and feeling in this scenario.*[5]

Please read carefully.

Stimulus Delivery (Appendix B). The scenario was written in the third person, and informed participants that Megan and John were working hard to meet a project deadline. The day before the project was due, John was late to work without explanation. In his absence, Megan decided to complete some of John's work as well as her own. In the process, Megan made a significant mistake on one of John's forms. Their supervisor caught the mistake and Megan denied having made the mistake. Consequently, John was called to a performance review meeting where his job was at risk. Details were included within this scenario that could have been perceived to be to each character's advantage, in order to provide a more direct test of which details participants reported.

Recall instructions. Participants then recalled that scenario in as much detail as possible, from the perspective that was allocated to them prior to their exposure to the scenario. Participants were reminded of their designated perspectives in these instructions:

Please continue to imagine that you were Megan/John in that scenario.

*Please describe the events that occurred in that scenario in **as much detail as possible**, from Megan's/John's perspective.*

***Please write in the first-person**. For example, if the story mentioned that "Megan/John sang a song", you would write: "I sang a song".*

[5] These two sentences were not provided to the control condition

Participants in the control condition were simply asked "*Please describe the events that occurred in that scenario in **as much detail as possible***."

Coding of recall. Stillwell and Baumeister (1997) used a dichotomous scale to assess whether details from their original scenario were included or excluded, and if they were included, whether alterations had been made to the detail. Stillwell and Baumeister (1997) identified whether these details were to the victim's or the offender's advantage. In this study, I similarly wanted to monitor inclusions, omissions, and alterations, however I wanted to more closely monitor the types of distortions that were each made by victims and offenders. I therefore conducted the analysis in the following manner. I initially used inductive approaches to identify the range of details that were reported in the provided scenario[6]. From this, 12 variables were identified (see Table 1).

Two coders, including the writer, coded for the identified details amongst the qualitative data. The coders conducted their work separately. Consistent with protocol used by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997), the data was analysed based upon the results obtained from just one of the coders. The first author's coding was used to conduct reliability estimates, while the coding conducted by the second coder (a research assistant within the department) was used for data analysis. Nine variables were included in the final analysis of the data, after discounting three variables due to insufficient *N* (see Table 1).

[6] Data from this study is reported based on secondary coding and analysis of the results. The initial coding template was developed using inductive approaches (guided by principles outlined by Braun & Clark, 2006, and Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). This resulted in 29 details that were initially coded for by 3 individuals, using a frequency method (individuals coded for the number of times each detail was mentioned per entry) and their coding for each detail was averaged. 11 details were then either excluded due to insufficient power, or combined with other variables due to thematic overlap. The remaining details went through a secondary screening process for thematic overlap, and formed 12 variables. It was decided that due to the extensive thematic analysis process described above, secondary coding of these details was necessary to ensure the internal validity of each variable (Table 1). A second round of coding was therefore conducted for those variables. A discrete coding system (detail present or absent) was also used for this reason. Initial data is available upon request.

Table 1. *Dependent variables emergent from qualitative analysis.*

Transgression-relevant detail	**Coding**	**N**	**Qualitative example from data**	**Scale**	**Reliability**
It was a busy period at work	Mitigating detail	100	*John was late for work during a **busy time***	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .78
The victim was late	Neutral[7]	298	*One day, John informed me that he would be several hours late to work*	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .87
The victim was late and didn't explain why	Victim-blaming	58	*When he finally came in, he offered no **explanation or reason as to why he was so late***	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .94
The offender helped out by doing the victim's work	Moral justification	109	*I decided to **help him** complete some of his work so that we would not get behind*	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .68
There was a *serious* mistake	Offense seriousness	177	*We had made a **huge** mistake that would have cost the company **a lot of money***	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .96
The offender was responsible for the mistake	Correct attributions of responsibility	246	*… and **she who was at fault** for the mistake*	0 = not mentioned 1 = John is responsible 2 = Megan is partially responsible 3 = Megan is completely responsible	*a* = .88
The offender did not disclose that she had made the mistake	Moral violation	179	*Megan **did not say** that it was she who had actually completed the form*	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .85
The victim has a performance review and their job is at risk	Negative consequences	297	*… now John is subject to **a performance review*** *John is told by the supervisor that **his job is at risk***	0 = not present 1 = present (one or both details)	*a* = .43 (*r* = .28, *p* < .001)
Participant-generated details				**Scale**	**Reliability**
Excuses generated for the offender's lie	Excuse for transgression	66	*…I was over worked…*	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .79
Negative attributions made to the victim's character**[8]	n/a	4	*I'm not the one who didn't care about keeping my job*	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .34
Negative attributions made to the offender's character**	n/a	2	*…did she wanted me to get in trouble ? Back stabbed me like that ?*	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .23
Excuses generated for the victim's lateness**	n/a	16	*However, as I got ready for work one morning, my car had trouble starting*	0 = not present 1 = present	*a* = .83

[7] Following data analysis, the detail "Victim was late" was considered to reflect the context of the transgression and was therefore a neutral detail.
[8] Not included in further analysis due to insufficient *N*. These data are available upon request.

Quantitative dependent variables

Recognition of scenario details. Nine statements were used to measure recognition of selected aspects of the scenario on 4-point likert-type scales, ranging from Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree. These included five factual statements: *Megan and John have both been under pressure at work, recently*; *John lost his job as a result of what happened*; *Megan reasoned that the form was John's responsibility and so told that to her boss John was late to work at a busy time of the financial year; If it wasn't caught, Megan's mistake would have cost the business thousands of dollars.* There were also two statements biased in either character's favour: *Megan went above and beyond her job requirements to help John when he was late; John had a good reason for being late to work.* There were finally two statements biased against both characters: *Megan is dishonest; John doesn't pull his weight at work.*

Memory confidence. Participants also indicated their confidence in their memory of these details, on a sliding scale of 0-100%.

Results

Victims and offenders withhold more information compared to third parties, however do not differ in regards to memory accuracy or confidence

To replicate the findings of Stillwell and Baumeister (1997), I was firstly interested in whether victims and offenders selectively included and omitted transgression-relevant details compared with the control condition. Overall, participants in the control condition (N = 131) reported a total of 689 transgression-relevant details. Comparatively, those in the offender (N = 104) and victim (N = 102) conditions reported 490 and 351 details respectively, reflecting the tendency for those in these conditions to withhold information. Secondly, upon viewing the modal distribution of reporting (Figure 1), victims and offenders reported fewer transgression-relevant details per individual entry, compared with the control condition.

These two findings indicate that the two parties involved in the transgression were more inclined to withhold information compared to a third party, suggesting that biased reporting occurred in victim and offender transgression accounts.

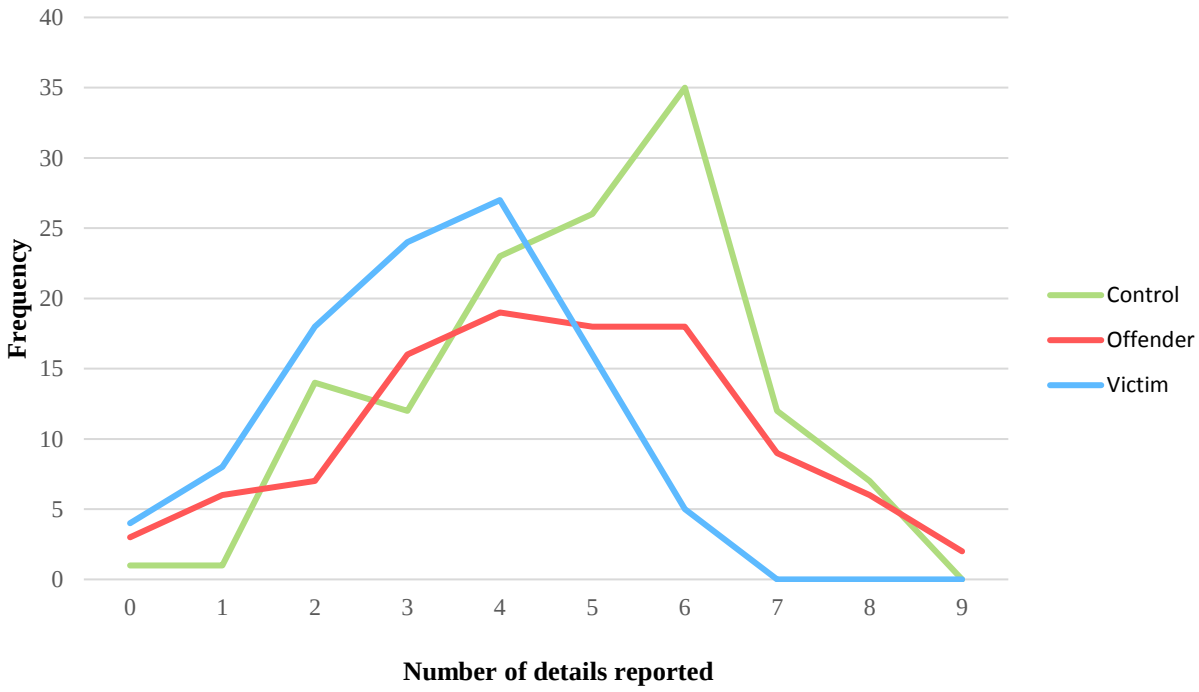

Figure 1. Modal distribution of reported transgression-relevant per narrative condition.

In light of these omissions made by victims and offenders compared to the control condition, participants' memory accuracy using the recognition task and their memory confidence were considered. For eight of the nine items, there was no difference between conditions in their agreement with statements regarding the original scenario (Table 2, *F*s < 2.83; a difference approached significance for the item *[the offender] is dishonest*, $F(2,328) = 1.33$, $p = .06$, $\eta p^2 = .02$). Overall, participants were largely in agreement regarding specific details contained within the original transgression scenario, and overall reported consistently high levels of confidence in their recall (Table 2) which also did not differ between conditions (*F*s < 1.83). These results do not suggest that there are differences in memory

quality between victims, offenders, and a third party group. Therefore, differences in memory quality may not be the best explanation for the occurrence of biased reporting. Instead, these results suggest that the differential omission of information may be a more deliberate process.

Table 2. *The effect of narrative condition on recognition of selected details*

Item	**M*(SD)***		
	Control (N = 131)	Offender (N = 104)	Victim (N = 102)
The [offender] and [victim] have both been under pressure at work, recently	3.28*(.71)*	3.33*(.57)*	3.37*(.63)*
[The victim] lost his job as a result of what happened	1.67*(.64)*	1.75*(.55)*	1.75*(.61)*
If it wasn't caught, [the offender]'s mistake would have cost the business thousands of dollars	3.66*(.58)*	3.72*(.45)*	3.63*(.63)*
[The victim] was late to work at a busy time of the financial year	3.38*(.75)*	3.53*(.59)*	3.45*(.61)*
[The victim] had a good reason for being late to work	3.22*(1.80)*	3.04*(1.27)*	3.41*(1.99)*
[The victim] doesn't pull his weight at work	3.11*(1.17)*	3.22*(1.25)*	3.14*(1.65)*
[The offender] is dishonest	3.25*(.66)*	3.04*(.72)*	3.16*(.69)*
[The offender] went above and beyond her job requirements to help [the victim] when he was late	3.22*(.53)*	3.22*(.61)*	3.21*(.59)*
[The offender] reasoned that the form was [the victim's] responsibility and so told that to her boss	3.38*(.69)*	3.47*(.59)*	3.34*(.64)*
How confident are you that your memory of the scenario is accurate?	86.21*(15.98)*	87.81*(11.41)*	84.21*(15.92)*
How confident are you that your memory of [the victim] is accurate?	83.38*(17.43)*	83.18*(12.58)*	81.54*(15.86)*
How confident are you that your memory of [the offender] is accurate?	88.34*(13.06)*	87.75*(10.32)*	85.52*(14.54)*

Differences in the *types* of details reported by victims, offenders, and third parties[9]

Next, logistic regressions were used to explore which specific details were being withheld across conditions. The control condition was firstly entered as the reference group, to which I could compare participants in the offender condition, and participants in the victim condition. In order to compare participants in the offender condition with the victim conditions, secondary analyses were run with the victim as the reference group. The results are visually depicted in Figure 2.

Results show that participants who reported the transgression as the victim were less likely to report mitigating details compared to those who imagined themselves as the offender (B = -1.14, *Wald*(1) = 11.53, $p = .001$), and compared to the control group (B = -.93, *Wald*(1) = 8.10, $p = .004$). While offenders included mitigating information on par with a third party (B = .21, *Wald*(1) = .58, $p = .45$), victims were less likely to include mitigating information compared to a third party, and thus appeared to withhold this information.

It was consistent with the hypothesis that victims were less likely to report details to their own detriment, and were thus less likely to report victim-blaming details compared to both the offender group (B = -2.38, *Wald* (1) = 18.53, $p < .001$) and the control group (B = -1.60, *Wald*(1) = 8.13, $p = .004$). Again, victims were less likely to report potentially blaming information compared to a third party and thus appeared to withhold this information. However, also consistently with the hypothesis, offenders appeared more likely to magnify victim-blaming information, as they were more likely to report such details compared to third parties (B = .78, *Wald*(1) = 6.06, $p = .01$).

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[9] Upon analysing the data, it was considered that the detail "Victim was late" reflected the context of the transgression and gave little insight to the motivations of victims and offenders. It is therefore not included in the discussion of the results. There were no differences between offenders and victims (B = .23, *Wald*(1) = .31, $p = .58$), offenders and the control condition (B = -.30, *Wald*(1) = .48, $p = .49$), or victims and the control condition (B = -.53, *Wald*(1) = 1.65, $p = .20$), in reporting this detail.

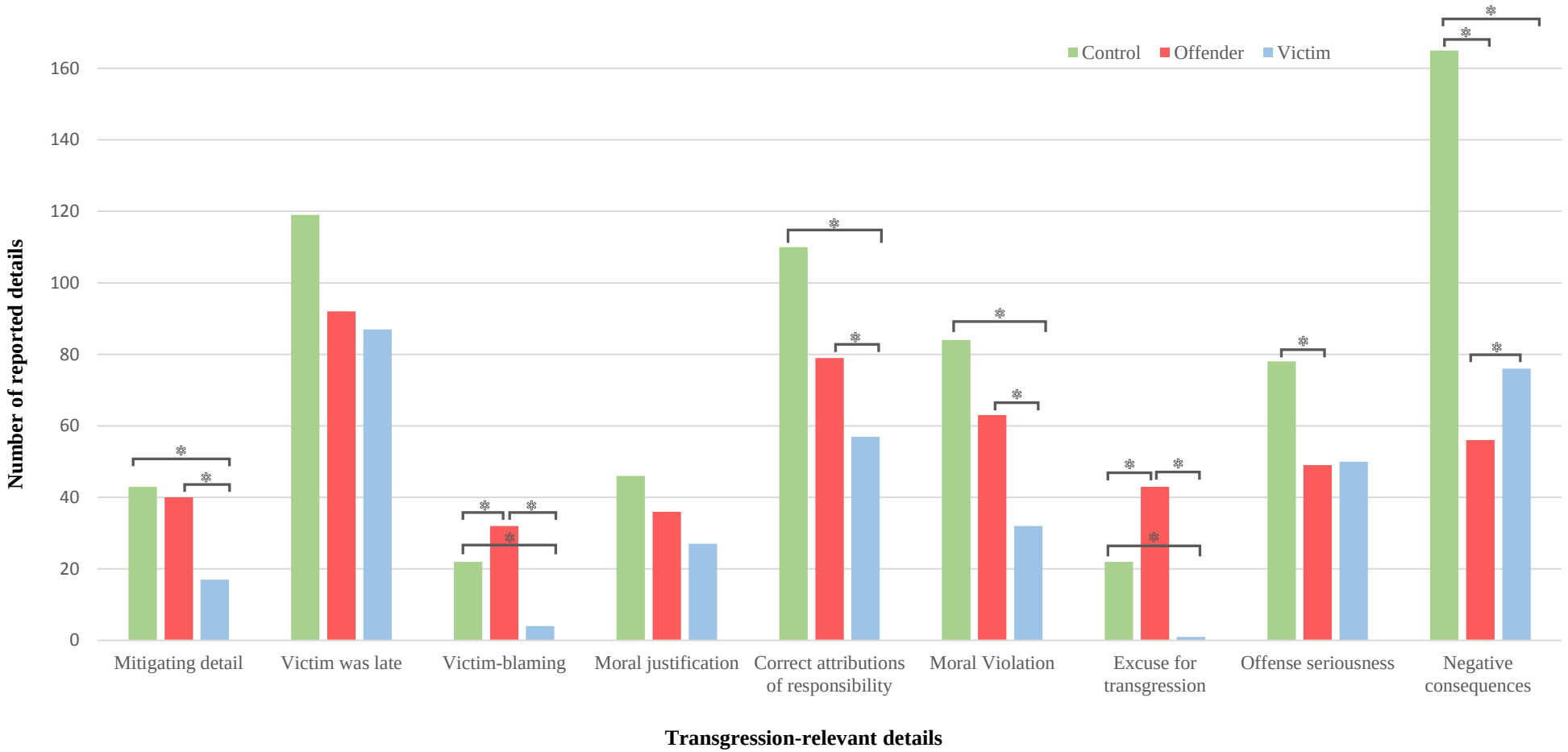


Figure 2. Differences between victim and offender reports of transgression-relevant details.
* = $p < .05$

Offenders were also less likely to report the negative consequences of their actions compared to the victim group (B = -.94, *Wald*(1) = 10.48, $p = .001$) and compared to third parties (B = -2.48, *Wald*(1) = 56.43, $p < .001$). This shows that offenders may also selectively withhold information, as well as victims. Rather than magnifying these details (as was predicted), as would be expected, victims were also less likely to report the negative consequences that they experienced, compared to third parties (B = -1.54, *Wald*(1) = 22.50, $p < .001$).

Some findings contradicted predictions. Firstly, there were no differences between victim and offender conditions with regards to moral justifications (B = .37, *Wald*(1) = 1.41, $p = .24$) nor offense seriousness (B = -.09, *Wald*(1) = .11, $p = .74$), although offenders were more likely to withhold information relating to the seriousness of the offense compared with third parties (B = -.55, *Wald*(1) = 4.14, $p = .04$). Secondly, offenders indicated unexpectedly higher responsibility-taking in this study. Multinomial regressions were unable to handle the variable assessing correct attribution of responsibility, due to two occurrences of zero cell-counts. Data was therefore collapsed to form a new variable with two conditions, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Collapsed "attribution of responsibility" variable.*

The offender is responsible/*correct attribution of responsibility*	0 = Not mentioned at all The victim is responsible 1 = The offender is responsible Partial offender responsibility

Logistic regressions were therefore used to consider the effect of narrative condition on this collapsed variable of correct attributions of responsibility. Contrary to expectations, offenders were *more* likely to correctly attribute responsibility compared with victims (B =

.90, *Wald*(1) = 8.74, *p* = 0.003) and were actually on par with third parties (B = -.52, *Wald*(1) = 2.47, *p* = .12). Further, victims were *less likely* to attribute responsibility to the offender compared to third parties (B = -1.42, *Wald*(1) = 20.85, *p* < .001). This suggests that victims were withholding information relating to correct responsibility for the offense. When exploring the distribution of responses across the four categories prior to collapsing the data (Table 4), it appears that, rather than victims incorrectly identifying where responsibility for the incident lay, victims were instead largely not mentioning the issue of responsibility at all (see "not mentioned" column).

Table 4. *Cellwise frequency of responses for "attribution of responsibility" variable prior to collapsing data.*

	The offender is responsible for the mistake			
Narrative condition	Not mentioned	Victim responsibility	Partial offender responsibility	The offender was responsible
Victim	41	4	28	29
Offender	9	16	36	43
Control	19	2	48	62

Additionally, previous research indicated that victims were more likely to dwell on the offender's wrongdoing, and that offenders would be more likely to avoid that information. However, contrary to expectations in the present study victims were *less* likely to report details around the offender's lie (moral violation), compared to both the offender (B = -1.21, *Wald*(1) = 16.99, *p* < .001) and the control group (B = -1.35., *Wald*(1) = 23.09, *p* < .001).

However, offenders' higher rates of excuses for the event may explain their higher reporting of both the moral transgression and attributions of responsibility, compared to

victims. Offenders were more likely than both third parties (B = 1.32, *Wald*(1) = 17.27, $p < .001$) and victims (B = 4.44, *Wald*(1) = 18.62, $p < .001$) to excuse their actions. Further, the control group were more willing to excuse the offender's actions compared with the victim group (B = 3.12, *Wald*(1) = 9.10, $p = .003$). Thus, while offenders are more likely to mention that they committed the wrongdoing in the first place, they are also more likely qualify their behaviour and thereby exonerate themselves.

Discussion

This study replicated a paradigm first developed by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997) in order to confirm and further explore victim and offender narrative divergences. In particular, I aimed to explore whether the quality of victim and offender memories for transgressions may be implicated in the development of divergences, and then to further specify the *ways* in which victim and offender transgression narratives diverge. These results firstly showed that victims and offenders tend to omit transgression-relevant information compared to third parties; secondly, that there were negligible differences between victim, offender, and third party responses to recognition measures; and third, that despite being exposed to the same imagined narrative, participants' reporting of the transgression somewhat varied depending upon their point of view. Together, these results suggested that despite the presence of divergences in their reporting of the transgression, all parties were in agreement with transgression-relevant statements.

Results regarding recognition of selected details from the transgression, indicate that divergent reporting of transgression-relevant details was motivated by factors other than memory quality. Across four details relating each to the offender and victim, and one detail relating to them both, all three conditions indicated equal agreement with the statements. If victims and offenders had not attended (or inadequately attended) to the details relating to the other party, we would expect more discrepancy among these items. This suggests that the

divergent reporting and omission of information was potentially motivated by more than just personal relevance and an encoding effect. It suggests that victims and offenders are somewhat selectively choosing what they do and do not report. This is evidence for the "conscious editing" process proposed by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997, p.168).

Consistent with the first hypothesis, offender and victim narratives carried some self-serving reporting biases. Offenders were more likely to report victim-blaming and mitigating details compared with the victim, and were more likely to generate excuses for their actions. Offenders were also more likely than victims to withhold information around the negative consequences of their actions, and to withhold information around the seriousness of the offense compared to a third party. Thus, even when presented with a hypothetical scenario, victims and offenders reported details that seemed to be in their favour to report, and withheld details that were not. Role-based differences were not found across all variables, however - there were no differences between conditions in reporting moral justification details or details around the seriousness of the offense. Future research may determine whether this occurred due to the specific hypothetical scenario utilised (i.e. the manipulation may have been too weak to elicit consistent divergences across all domains tested), or due to these particular details provided in the scenario being less vulnerable to selective reporting biases.

However, contrary to expectations, victims were also less likely than offenders and the control group to correctly attribute responsibility to the offender. Further analysis of the data suggested that this was because victims were largely not reporting the issue of responsibility *at all*. In fact, victims, as a group, collectively under-reported most transgression-relevant details. Some of these details may not have been personally relevant to the victim's perspective – their character did not perpetrate the wrongdoing, therefore reporting the offender's actions, responsibility, or exonerating details would be less relevant.

Consistent with this proposition, the control group showed a high reporting of transgression-relevant details, and in the absence of being primed to any particular perspective, they may have instead focussed on simply recalling as much information as possible.

Further, offenders were more likely to identify the value that they violated, and were more likely to correctly attribute responsibility to themselves, compared with victims. Research would suggest that offenders would be inclined to avoid such implicating information. In the context of these data (representing a hypothetical transgression), perhaps offenders were able to acknowledge responsibility, because they were otherwise focussed on magnifying victim-blaming details, excuses and mitigating details, and were minimising the consequences of their actions. They were thus potentially accepting responsibility for a milder set of circumstances than what actually occurred. This research therefore suggests that offender avoidance might not only be characterised as overt denials of responsibility, but may present in more subtle forms. For example, offenders may avoid their implication in the offense by framing their actions in a more positive light (and perhaps the victim in a more negative light). This obviously undermines the authenticity of the responsibility-taking that did occur and this has implications for conciliatory contexts – an apology may not be genuine or adequate when the offender is otherwise distorting peripheral details around what occurred.

This research showed that divergences were more pronounced in participants' qualitative reporting of transgressions, and were not identifiable across recognition for specific details relating to the transgression. This is important, as reconciliation processes are based upon qualitative, interactive dialogue around the transgression – if we can identify that this is where divergences and subsequent conflict are most likely to occur, it gives greater reason to explore the impact of narrative divergence on conciliatory outcomes. While victims and offenders seemed to have the capacity to agree upon key details relating to the

transgression across quantitative measures, their qualitative reporting indicated that the two parties do not necessarily consider these facts to be equally meaningful (or equally worth reporting/discussing).

This research supports previous literature suggesting that victim and offender transgression narratives diverge in self-serving ways. Further to this, these findings suggest that although offenders may be able to acknowledge their responsibility for perpetrating a transgression, they do so in a disengaged manner. In this study, offenders magnified victim-blaming details, excuses and mitigating details, and minimised the consequences of their actions. These strategies are symptomatic of offender disengagement from the victim and the consequences of their actions (Bandura, 1999). In an engagement context, offenders would next be exposed to their victim's point view – which this study suggests would contain less victim-blaming, excusing, and mitigating information, and more information about the negative consequences they caused. Given that offenders already seemed to be distancing themselves from the wrongdoing, exposure to conflicting information by the victim is unlikely to improve the situation. In order to eventually and successfully engage victims and offenders to achieve reconciliation, we need to understand how divergent victim transgression narratives impact upon offenders' attitudes towards reconciliation.

Chapter 3

When We Don't See Eye to Eye: The Effect of Divergent Transgression Narratives on Offenders' Conciliatory Attitudes

Decades of restorative justice research proposes that restoration following wrongdoing is best achieved when victim and offender genuinely and reciprocally acknowledge one another's experiences (Ahmed, Harris, Braithwaite, & Braithwaite, 2001; Braithwaite, 1989; Braithwaite, 2001; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Wenzel et al., 2008). For this to occur, victims and offenders must engage with each other about what has occurred. This engagement is foundational to many approaches to reconciliation, such as diversionary conferences in the criminal justice system, mediation between couples in counselling settings, and the resolution of workplace conflict or schoolyard disputes. In reality, however, this ideal of victims and offenders coming together and talking about what has happened can present a practical problem – as demonstrated in Chapter 2, victims and offenders often carry different versions of what occurred. These divergent transgression narratives may create a barrier to repair. Where victim and offender perceptions of the key issues differ, offenders may be less willing to reconcile and conflict may instead be perpetuated.

Previous research suggests that both victims and offenders recall transgressions in a manner consistent with self-serving motivations (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997). In Chapter 2, I similarly found that participants (as offenders and victims) reflected self-serving biases in their recall of a hypothetical transgression. Offenders were more likely to report victim-blaming details, mitigating details, excuses, and withheld details around the negative consequences of the offense for the victim. Victims tended towards the opposite pattern of reporting. Further, although offenders acknowledged their responsibility for the transgression, they appeared to have psychologically distanced themselves from the offense by reporting these exonerating details. This is likely to have implications for their attitudes

towards reconciliation, particularly when victims may have conflicting points of view in those particular domains.

Restorative justice approaches propose that in order to achieve meaningful resolution of conflict, victims and offenders must acknowledge one another's experience of the transgression, agree upon the harm caused, and negotiate appropriate ways to move forward (Wenzel et al., 2008). Divergent transgression accounts may form a barrier to victims and offenders participating in this process: if offender and victim cannot see eye to eye regarding the violation that occurred, they are likely to have different points of view regarding the harm caused by the violation and how it may best be mended, rendering reconciliation even more difficult to achieve. Through the present research, I explored how divergent transgression narratives may affect *offenders'* readiness to reconcile with the victim.

The importance of offenders' psychological readiness in achieving restorative outcomes

Engaging victims and offenders with one another has been linked to a range of positive, prosocial outcomes for both victims and offenders. Examples include reduced or delayed offender recidivism (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2013; Latimer et al., 2005; Tyler et al., 2007;), greater offender repentance and willingness to repay the victim (Kim & Gerber, 2012), and greater offender and victim satisfaction with the justice process (Latimer et. al., 2005; Strang et. al., 2006). Qualitatively, juvenile offenders identified that engaging with victims was a positive learning experience that provided them with insight to the negative impact of their offending behaviour (Hayes, McGee, & Cerruto, 2011).

However, the prosocial outcomes of these interactions may be contingent on the quality of the engagement between victims and offenders (Larsen, 2014) – in particular, whether or not the interaction upholds restorative ideals (Daly, 2003). This means that both victims and offenders must engage constructively and appropriately with one another (Daly, 2003). Yet, offenders may disengage from these interactions (Latimer et al., 2005; Miers et

al., 2001; Sherman et al., 2015) or disengage from their behaviour, minimising their actions and as such, achieving poorer rehabilitative outcomes (Hayes et al., 2011). While the mutual acknowledgment of one another's experiences has been identified as a desirable exercise for relationship repair, this can be an emotional and psychologically challenging experience for offenders.

During interaction, offenders must reconcile with the harm caused by their behaviour, and take some degree of responsibility to repair the damage caused. This can be a confronting experience. Exposure to victim hostility may be part of this process, which may undermine prosocial outcomes for offenders, including increasing the likelihood of reoffending (Hayes et al., 2011). Thus, in order for engagement to elicit positive outcomes, offenders must be psychologically ready for the challenges of interaction, holding favourable attitudes and intentions towards reconciliation. Where victims and offenders present with divergent transgression narratives, these challenges can only be exacerbated and thus negatively affect attitudes towards reconciliation.

Moral identity threat, offender disengagement, and implications for reconciliation

In the absence of prior research on this topic, the present research aims to understand how a victim's divergent account of a transgression may affect offenders' psychological readiness to engage with victims. We already know that transgressions are threatening to the offender's psychological need to be considered a good and moral person, as they suggest that the offender has acted in a manner that contradicts socially accepted values (Wenzel et al., 2008; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014). As a result of having their morality questioned and therefore their worthiness as a member of their community, offenders may perceive a threat to their moral self-concept after having perpetrated a wrongdoing (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Following a transgression, offenders are therefore already primed to employ defensive psychological strategies to protect their sense of being a good person. To this end, the

previous chapter provided supportive evidence of this occurring, given the exonerating details that were more likely to be reported by offenders compared to the victim or control groups. Where victims present with a divergent transgression narrative that perhaps ignores mitigating circumstances and emphasises the offender's guilt, offenders' use of these defensive strategies may be exacerbated.

Moral disengagement refers to defensive behaviours and cognitions that preserve one's moral identity when considering or executing morally reprehensible behaviour (Bandura, 1999). It manifests as justifications, minimizing the consequences of the transgression and denials of responsibility. The offender may also disengage by denigrating the victim, such as generating negative attributions to their character (Bandura, 1999; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014), or through disregarding the victim's experience of harm (Bandura, 1999). By disassociating themselves from the transgression and the victim, offenders may reduce their sense of responsibility (Bandura, 1999) and avoid the negative consequences of their actions (Mikula, 1994). These behaviours have been associated with a lower willingness to make amends (Fisher & Exline, 2006; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). Moral disengagement reflects offenders' psychological distancing from the transgression, and without the offender appropriately acknowledging their wrongdoing, achieving reconciliation becomes less likely.

Following transgressions, victims may present with narratives that do not recognise the offender's attempts to distance themselves from the transgression (as shown in Chapter 2). I argue that where victims present these divergent transgression narratives to the offender, offenders will be less prepared to reconcile. I suggest that this will be evidenced by offenders making increased negative attributions to the victim's character, engaging less with the victim's perspective, holding lower reparative intentions and having reduced awareness that their actions violated socially-acceptable values (Hypothesis 1).

In this chapter I present a series of three studies that explore the impact of a victim's divergent narrative on offenders' attitudes towards reconciliation using scenarios to experimentally manipulate divergence in a way that is consistent with the features of the narrative divergence reported in in Chapter 2.

Study 3.1[10]

Participants imagined themselves in a scenario where they were accused of plagiarising a fellow University student's work. Participants then completed measures of defensiveness and moral-emotional need following exposure to the transgression, in order to measure whether the transgression manipulation successfully placed participants in the shoes of an offender (Bandura, 1999; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Participants were then exposed to the victim's account of the incident, which either diverged from, or was similar to, the offender's perspective. All participants then completed measures of attention and conciliatory attitudes. Conciliatory attitudes will henceforth refer to the degree to which the offender considered the perspective of the victim, the types of attributions made to the victim's character, intended reparative behaviours, and awareness that their actions violated socially accepted values (value affirmation)**.**

It was hypothesized that offenders exposed to a divergent (compared to a similar) transgression narrative by the victim would show reduced psychological readiness to engage with victims. For the purposes of this experiment, reduced psychological readiness was marked by an offender's reduced conciliatory attitudes (Bandura, 1999).

[10] Study 3.1 refers to materials, data, and analyses that were submitted to the degree of Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) in 2015 (Rossi, Woodyatt, & Wenzel, 2015).

Method

Participants

In total, 149 first-year psychology students at Flinders University participated in the study, of whom 130 students completed the study (102 females, 27 males and 1 intersex, aged 17-57), whereas 19 students did not complete all requirements of the study and thus their data were excluded.

Materials

Stimulus Delivery. Participants attended a testing session at the School of Psychology within Flinders University. All materials were administered via computer, using Qualtrics survey software. Participants read about an offense that had hypothetically taken place and were instructed to imagine that they were the perpetrator. The scenario described a minor interpersonal transgression, in which a student (the participant; the offender) had borrowed an assignment from a friend (Sarah; the victim), and plagiarized some of the friend's work (see Appendix C). The purpose of using a minor transgression that occurred in a university setting was in order to make the scenario accessible and personally-relevant to the participant pool.[11]

Participants then completed measures of post-transgression defensiveness (Bandura, 1999) and need to demonstrate moral identity (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). As these measures were used to check the transgression manipulation, these measures were taken before participants listened to the victim's narrative so that results were not influenced by the

[11] Further measures were also taken during this study, in order to explore additional aims and hypotheses relating to using value recommitment as an intervention to reduce offender's defensiveness and increase moral-emotional need, in order to improve conciliatory outcomes. Prior to exposure to the transgression account, participants were randomly allocated to participate in a value recommitment exercise, or not. Value recommitment did not have a significant effect on defensiveness ($t(128) = .29$, $p = .78$) or moral emotional need ($t(128) = .54$, $p = .59$). 2x2 ANOVAs showed value recommitment did not have a significant main effect on conciliatory outcome variables ($Fs < 2.70$). Value recommitment did not have a main effect on attention measures or emotion measures, with the exception that participants who did not participate in value recommitment perceived the victim to feel more frustrated ($M = 6.29$, $SD = 1.07$) than participants who did participate ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 1.13$; $F(1,126) = 4.16$, $p = .04$). Value recommitment did not significantly interact with narrative condition across any outcome variables ($Fs < 3.24$). Data available on request.

narrative condition to which they were assigned. Following a transgression, we would expect offender's defensiveness to increase, and thus their need to demonstrate to the victim that they are a good person, should decrease.

Narrative Divergence Manipulation. Participants were then presented with an audio account from the victim, in order to mimic exposure to narrative divergence during an interaction between the offender and victim. Participants were randomly allocated to hear either a divergent account (N = 65) of the transgression, or a narrative that presented similar subjective details (N = 65) to the offender's account. These accounts featured some of the ways in which victim and offender transgression narratives were found to diverge in Study 2.1 – the divergent victim narrative was less likely to acknowledge the offender's excuses (that they really needed to improve their grade point average to be eligible for an exchange program), mitigating details (that their work was bound to have some similarities because it was based upon lecture content that everyone had access to), and victim-blaming details (the victim voluntarily sent the participant the assignment) that were featured in the offender's perspective, and placed some more emphasis on the negative consequences of the offense (through intonation). The hostility of the divergent victim account was also increased through intonation, and some additional details around transgression severity. These accounts were played only once. See Appendices E and F for full versions of both victim narratives.

All participants then completed measures of attention to the victim's account, attributions to the victim, offender perspective-taking, value affirmation and intended future reparative behaviours.

Dependent Variables

All items used to measure dependent variables were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Defensiveness. Six items were included to measure defensiveness, adapted from a scale of pseudo self-forgiveness (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b) that has previously been used as a measure of defensiveness (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). They include: *I feel angry about the way I have been treated; I feel [the victim] got what she deserved; I wasn't the only one to blame for what happened; I think [the victim] was really to blame for what happened; I'm not really sure whether what I did was wrong; I feel what happened was my fault* (reverse-coded). These items were averaged to create a total defensiveness scale variable (a = 0.73).

Moral Emotional Need. The measure of moral-emotional need was adapted from Shnabel and Nadler's (2008) scale of five items: *I would like to explain my view of the situation to [the victim]; I would like [the victim] to understand the reasons for my behaviour; I would like [the victim] to know that I tried to do the right thing; I would like [the victim] to know that I did not act out of thoughtlessness; I would like [the victim] to know that I am not a bad person.* These items were averaged to form a total scale variable (a = 0.83).

Attention to Perspective. I developed four pairs of statements in order to assess participants' attention to the provided victims' perspective. From each pair, one statement reflected an aspect of the incident mentioned in the offender's narrative (and thus also the similar victim narrative), and the other item presented the corresponding perspective from the victim's divergent account. The items were: *[the victim] and I have a give-and-take relationship when it comes to study* (similar) compared with *I rely on [the victim] for study assistance more than [the victim] relies on me* (divergent)*; [the victim] expected me to incorporate ideas from the work she sent me* (similar) compared with *[the victim] expected me to compare my writing standard to hers* (divergent); *[the victim] sent me her assignment because she wanted to help me* (similar) compared with *[the victim] sent me her assignment because she felt pressured to do so* (divergent); and *[the victim] thought I wouldn't copy her*

work because I'm a good friend (similar) compared with *[the victim] thought I wouldn't copy her work because it's too risky* (divergent).

Perceived victim emotions. Participants also considered the emotions that may have been experienced by the victim (*[the victim] feels angry; [the victim] feels betrayed; [the victim] feels embarrassed; [the victim] feels guilty*; *[the victim] feels disappointed*; *[the victim] feels frustrated).* The items were selected to reflect more aggressive emotions, such as anger, betrayal and frustration, and less aggressive emotions, such as disappointment, guilt and embarrassment. These items were used to measure participants' perceptions of the emotional qualities of the divergent and similar victim narratives. Items were considered independently of one another.

Attributions. Five items measured negative character attributions made to the victim, including blame, bad intentions and negative traits: *[the victim] is a selfish person; [the victim] is determined to see the worst in me; [the victim] is a forgiving person* (reverse-coded)*; [the victim] blames other people for her mistakes; [the victim] is prone to overreacting.* Responses were averaged to form a total attributions score (a = 0.80).

Perspective-Taking. Participants were given two items regarding how much effort they believe they invested in taking the perspective of the victim *(I tried to imagine how [the victim] would be thinking and feeling in this situation; I can empathize with how [the victim] would be thinking and feeling*). These items were modelled on items developed by Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson and Galinsky (2011) who also measured the extent to which participants adopted another perspective. Responses were averaged to form a total perspective-taking variable (a = 0.87).

Value Affirmation. Seven items measured participant's acknowledgment that their actions contravened values that were shared between victim, offender and society: *Others would say what I did was wrong; I feel I have violated common decency; I violated values*

that I hold to be true; I fully endorse the values I have violated with my behaviour; I feel others would think poorly of me if they knew what I did; Others would say that my behaviour crossed the line; Others would see my behaviour as violating values we should all share. These items were adapted from research which explored how the re-establishment of shared values affected conciliatory outcomes (Woodyatt, Wenzel, & Ferber, 2017). These items were averaged to form a total value affirmation variable (a = 0.90).

Intended Reparative Behaviours. Four items measured future intentions to make amends: *I am willing to apologize for the incident; I am willing to confess to the Topic Coordinator; I am willing to sit down with [the victim] to discuss the incident face-to-face; I am willing to repair my relationship with [the victim]*. All items were averaged to form a total intended reparative behaviours score (a = 0.79).

Results

Post-transgression defensiveness and moral-emotional need

Overall, results reflected that participants reported low defensiveness scores (M = 2.61, SD = 1.01) and a high need to re-establish their good moral character (M = 5.84, SD = .94). Low defensiveness scores indicated that participants had not defensively disengaged from the consequences of the transgression.

Narrative condition manipulation check

In order to test whether participants attended to their designated victim's perspective, two-way factorial ANOVAs were used. Table 1 shows a main effect of narrative condition across attention measures one, $F(1,126) = 34.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .2$; two, $F(1,126) = 41.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .25$; four, $F(1,126) = 34.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .22$; five, $F(1,126) = 28.62$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$; and eight, $F(1,126) = 9.10$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$.

However, there was no difference between participants' agreement with statements three, five and seven (Fs < .47). These three statements were all taken from the similar victim

narrative condition, which reflected the content to which all participants were initially exposed, prior to their exposure to the victim's perspective. Thus, participants in the divergent condition may have continued to somewhat endorse the statements aligned with the similar narrative, as this was information they had read previously. Conversely, there were significant differences across all four statements aligned with the divergent narrative, reflecting that those in the divergent victim narrative condition endorsed these statements more strongly than participants in the similar victim narrative condition.

Table 1 also shows a main effect of narrative condition on the emotions that were ascribed to the victim, calculated using two-way factorial ANOVAs. This reflects how the emotional qualities of the divergent and similar narratives were indeed different. Participants in the divergent condition more strongly agreed that the victim was feeling angry, $F(1,126) = 41.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .25$; betrayed, $F(1,126) = 21.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$; and frustrated, $F(1,126) = 15.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, compared to participants in the similar condition.

Conversely, participants in the similar condition more strongly agreed that the victim felt guilty, $F(1,126) = 6.74$, $p = .01$ $\eta_p^2 = .05$, and embarrassed, $F(1,126) = 7.51$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, than participants in the divergent condition. Both conditions reported that the victim was disappointed without a significant difference between groups, $F(1,126) = 0.11$, $p = .75$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$.

These results show how participants in the divergent condition believed the victim exhibited more aggressive emotions (anger, betrayal and frustration) than less aggressive emotions (guilt and embarrassment). Conversely, participants in the similar condition reported that the victim exhibited less aggressive emotions than aggressive emotions. Thus, the two conditions differed in emotional quality.

Table 1. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations for Study 3.1 post-victim narrative attention measures.*

M(SD)	Divergent (*N* = 65)	Similar (*N* = 65)
1. [the victim] and I have a give-and-take relationship when it comes to study (similar)***	3.31 (1.55)	4.77 (1.22)
2. I rely on [the victim] for study assistance more than [the victim] relies on me (divergent)***	5.65 (1.23)	4.23 (1.30)
3. [the victim] expected me to incorporate ideas from the work she sent to me (similar)	3.32 (1.89)	3.38 (1.67)
4. [the victim] expected me to compare my writing standard to hers (divergent)***	5.66 (1.31)	4.23 (1.46)
5. [the victim] sent me her assignment because she wanted to help me (similar)	4.69 (1.59)	4.91 (1.49)
6. [the victim] sent me her assignment because she felt pressured to do so (divergent) ***	5.43 (1.52)	4.07 (1.44)
7. [the victim] thought I wouldn't copy her work because I'm a good friend (similar)	5.88 (1.15)	5.98 (1.24)
8. [the victim] thought I wouldn't copy her work because it's too risky (divergent)**	4.95 (1.49)	4.08 (1.81)
Victim anger (divergent) ***	6.60 (.61)	5.29 (1.51)
Victim embarrassment (similar) **	4.63 (1.67)	5.37 (1.36)
Victim disappointment (similar)	6.32 (1.09)	6.38 (.82)
Victim guilt (similar) **	2.54 (1.71)	3.31 (1.57)
Victim betrayal (divergent) ***	6.58 (.75)	5.74 (1.28)
Victim frustration (divergent) ***	6.48 (.71)	5.77 (1.31)

***$p \leq .001$

**$p \leq .01$

The effect of narrative condition on negative attributions and conciliatory attitudes (H1)

Consistent with the first hypothesis, two-way ANOVAs showed a main effect of narrative condition on negative attributions to the victim. The means and standard deviations

in Table 2 show how participants who listened to the divergent narrative were more likely to attribute negative statements to the victim, compared with participants who listened to the similar narrative, $F(1,126) = 35.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .22$.

Table 2. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations for Study 3.1 post-victim narrative dependent variables.*

M(SD)	Divergent (N = 65)	Similar (N = 65)
Negative attributions***	3.57 (1.05)	2.57 (.84)
Offender perspective-taking	5.83 (1.18)	6.13 (.92)
Value affirmation	5.99 (.98)	5.76 (.98)
Reparative intentions	6.03 (1.09)	6.32 (.86)

***$p \leq .001$

However, contrary to the first hypothesis, two-way ANOVAs did not reflect a main effect of narrative type on conciliatory attitudes. Participants in the divergent condition did not indicate reduced agreement on scale items measuring offender perspective-taking ($F(1,126) = 2.20$, $p = .14$, $\eta p^2 = .02$), value affirmation (F (1,126) = 1.93, $p = .17$, $\eta p^2 = .02$), or reparative intentions ($F(1,126) = 2.50$, $p = .12$, $\eta p^2 = .02$).

Discussion

This study firstly aimed to investigate the effects of narrative divergence on an offender's ability to engage with a victim's point of view in a restorative manner following a transgression. The results partially supported the hypothesis, as participants who listened to the divergent narrative more strongly endorsed negative attributions to the victim's character, with a large effect size. However, the data did not reflect a main effect of narrative condition on other conciliatory attitudes. In fact, across both similar and divergent conditions, participants consistently reported strong intentions to engage with a victim's point of view in

a restorative manner. As the offender, participants strongly agreed that their actions would be objectively perceived to violate common values. Participants also reported that they had made effortful attempts to take the perspective of the victim and had a strong desire to make amends.

These results may have been obtained because the manipulation did not successfully place participants into the role of "offender". Participants' low defensiveness scores suggested that participants, as the offender, did not develop a defensive mind-set following the transgression, which we would typically expect of offenders (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Shnabel et al., 2008). Thus, the victim's divergent point of view was unlikely to be threatening to participants if they did not "psychologically experience" the offending role.

This shows that perhaps in the context of low psychological threat, offenders confronted with a divergent victim narrative may be able to acknowledge their wrongdoing and be willing to make amends, although they may think less favourably of the victim. Such results may indicate that negative attributions are a preliminary symptom of offender disengagement and are affected more easily by a divergent victim narrative than other defensive or disengaged reactions, such as not being willing to take the victim's perspective or to make amends. In Study 3.2, I further tested this hypothesis using a more psychologically-threatening scenario, in order to mimic the psychological characteristics of a real transgression.

Study 3.2

Given the low-threat transgression was suspected to have affected the results obtained in Study 3.1, in Study 3.2 I firstly aimed to investigate whether utilizing a higher-threat transgression may more successfully recreate the experience of the "offender" role for participants. Additionally, the second study aimed to further explore the ways in which offenders disengage following exposure to the victim's divergent narrative. In Study 3.1, I

obtained initial evidence that following a divergent victim narrative, offenders tend to be more inclined to disengage from victims themselves, by making negative attributions towards the victim. In the second study, I extended this to investigate how a divergent victim narrative might also lead an offender to identify less with the victim.

The violation of a societal value in the form of a transgression (Durkheim, 1964) may represent the severing of pre-existing social bonds between victims and offenders, thus reflecting differences in perceived acceptable attitudes, behaviours, and values. This may drive victims and offenders to subsequently identify themselves as different from one another (Tajfel, 1981). Presenting with divergent accounts regarding the offense may exacerbate these perceived differences. This is potentially problematic for engagement, as distinguishing themselves from the victim may result in offenders' having reduced inclination to engage in a restorative manner. This effect has been found in victims (Wenzel et al., 2010). Thus, I maintained similar predictions for the second study as the first study – that participants exposed to a divergent victim narrative will again show increased negative attributions to the victim's character, and decreased reparative intentions, perspective-taking, value affirmation, intentions to make amends, and – added in Study 3.2 – decreased sense of shared values and shared identity with the victim.

Participants imagined themselves in a scenario where they had "cheated" on their partner by kissing someone who was not their partner. The transgression was therefore made more vivid by increasing threat to the moral integrity of the participant, and by threatening potential loss of an important relationship. Participants then completed measures of defensiveness and moral-emotional need following exposure to the transgression, in order to measure whether the transgression was sufficiently threatening to the participant's self-concept (Bandura, 1999; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). I then presented participants with a divergent or similar account from the victim's perspective. All participants then completed

the dependent variables for this study. It was hypothesized that offenders exposed to a divergent (compared to a similar) transgression narrative by the victim would show reduced conciliatory attitudes (Bandura, 1999).

Method

Participants

In total, 185 first-year psychology students at Flinders University commenced the study, of whom 177 students completed the study (133 females, 43 males and 1 other, aged 17-56).

Materials

Stimulus Delivery. Participants attended a testing session at the School of Psychology within Flinders University. All materials were administered via computer, using Qualtrics survey software. Participants were asked to specify the gender of their romantic partner so that the presented scenario would be sufficiently realistic. They were then presented with a scenario where they attended their partner's work function. At this function, the participant was described to be ignored by their partner for the majority of the night, before they kiss someone who was not their partner (see Appendix D). Participants then completed measures of post-transgression defensiveness (Bandura, 1999) and need to demonstrate moral identity (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008).[12]

[12] Further measures were also taken during this study, in order to explore aims and hypotheses relating to using value recommitment as an intervention to improve conciliatory outcomes. Prior to exposure to the transgression account, participants were randomly allocated to participate in a value recommitment exercise, or not. Participating in a value recommitment exercise had a marginal effect on reducing defensiveness, $t(175) = 1.90$, $p = .06$, $d = .29$, and did not have an effect on moral-emotional need, $t(175) = .83$, $p = .41$, $d = .13$. 2x2 ANOVAs also demonstrated that value recommitment had a main effect on reducing negative attributions ($F(1,173) = 6.10$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$), and increasing value affirmation and reparative intentions, ($F(1,173) = 9.19$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$; $F(1,173) = 4.55$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$). Value recommitment did not have a main effect on offender perspective-taking, $F(1,173) = 1.89$, $p = .17$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. There was one interaction between value recommitment and narrative condition: for participants who read the divergent narrative, *not* participating in value recommitment led to reduced acknowledgement that their behaviour violated shared values (value affirmation; $M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.02$) compared with participants who did ($M = 6.37$, $SD = .63$), $F(1,173) = 5.44$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Data available on request.

Narrative Divergence Manipulation. Participants were then presented with a written account from the victim. A written account (rather than audio account) was used in this study in order to control for the nominated gender of the participant's romantic partner. Participants were randomly allocated to either read a divergent account (N = 83) of the transgression, or an account that was similar to the victim's (N = 94) to the offender's account. See Appendices G and H for full versions of both victim narratives. Again, the divergent narrative account minimised victim-blaming details (that the victim barely acknowledged the offender at the party), mitigating details (that the offender was intoxicated at the time of the wrongdoing), and excuses for the offending behaviour (that the offender did not initiate the situation).

All participants then completed measures of attributions to the victim's character, offender perspective-taking, shared identity, value affirmation, reparative intentions and attention to the victim's account.

Dependent Variables

Shared Identity. Three items measured participants' sense of identification with the victim. These included *My partner and I share a close relationship; My partner and I are not alike* (reverse-coded), and *identifying with my partner is very important to me.* These items together formed a total shared identity scale variable (a = .64).

Shared Values. Three items measured the participant's sense of having shared values with the victim. These included *My partner and I are connected by the values we share, My values are closely aligned with those of my partner; and My partner and I would agree on what is right and wrong* (a = .87).

Attention to Perspective. I developed three pairs of statements. From each pair, one statement reflected an aspect of the incident mentioned in the offender's narrative (and thus also the similar victim narrative), and the other item presented the corresponding perspective

from the victim's divergent account. The items were: *My partner abandoned me at a party where I didn't know anyone* (similar) compared with *I didn't make much of an effort to talk to other people at the party* (divergent)*; A lot of my actions can be explained by the fact that I was very drunk* (similar) compared with *I'd had a couple of drinks, but I was still in control of the choices that I made* (divergent); *Someone from my partner's office initiated the dance and kissed me* (similar) compared with *I initiated the dance and kissed someone else from my partner's office* (divergent).

Offender Perspective-Taking. Two additional items were added to this total perspective-taking variable, so that I could measure offender perspective-taking beyond items that specifically assessed behaviours that had already been performed *(I tried to imagine how my partner would be thinking and feeling in this situation; I can empathize with how my partner would be thinking and feeling*). Additional items included *I am willing to imagine how my partner would be thinking and feeling in this situation* and *I would like to understand how my partner experienced the situation*. All four items were averaged to form a total perspective-taking variable (a = .85).

Participants also considered the emotions that may have been experienced by the victim. These were consistent with those used in the previous study.

All measures were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Other measures, including negative attributions, reparative intentions (a = .68) and value affirmation (a = .89), remained consistent with those used in the previous study.

Results

Post-transgression defensiveness and moral-emotional need

After reading the transgression scenario, participants reported moderate levels of defensiveness (M = 3.79, SD = 1.01). Similar to Study 3.1. participants demonstrated a high

need to re-establish their good moral character (M = 5.95, SD = .91). This potentially indicates that the scenario used in Study 3.2 was more psychologically threatening compared to the first study.

Narrative condition manipulation check

Similarly to Study 3.1, two-way factorial ANOVAs tested the main effect of the victim's narrative across the three pairs of attention statements (divergent vs similar). Table 3 shows a significant main effect of narrative condition across attention measures two, $F(1,173) = 8.39$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$; and six, $F(1,173) = 9.97$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. However, there was no significant main effect of narrative condition on the remaining four attention measures (Fs < 2.00).

Table 3 also shows a main effect of narrative condition on the emotions that were ascribed to the victim. Similar to Study 3.1, participants in the divergent condition more strongly agreed that their partner was feeling angry, $F(1,173) = 62.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .27$; betrayed, $F(1,173) = 21.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$; and frustrated, $F(1,173) = 31.39$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$, compared to participants in the similar condition. On the other hand, participants in the similar condition more strongly agreed that their partner felt guilty, $F(1,173) = 33.28$, $p < .001$ $\eta_p^2 = .16$, disappointed, $F(1,173) = 18.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .16$, and embarrassed, $F(1,173) = 3.97$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Thus, results suggest that overall participants attended to the emotional quality of their allocated perspective.

Table 3. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations for Study 2 post-victim narrative attention measures.*

M(SD)	Divergent (*N* = 83)	Similar (*N* = 94)
1. *My partner abandoned me at a party where I didn't know anyone* (similar)	5.33 (1.47)	5.54 (1.27)
2. *I didn't make much of an effort to talk to other people at the party* (divergent)**	5.19 (1.19)	4.59 (1.53)
3. *A lot of my actions can be explained by the fact that I was very drunk* (similar)	4.43 (1.62)	4.41 (1.53)
4. *I'd had a couple of drinks, but I was still in control of the choices that I made* (divergent)	5.19 (1.62)	5.12 (1.60)
5. *I initiated the dance and kissed someone else from my partner's office* (divergent)	4.13 (1.70)	3.78 (1.64)
6. *Someone from my partner's office initiated the dance and kissed me* (similar) **	4.70 (1.36)	5.32 (1.26)
Victim anger	6.51 (.63)	5.27 (1.34)
Victim embarrassment	5.69 (1.49)	5.24 (1.49)
Victim disappointment	6.43 (.70)	5.76 (1.30)
Victim guilt	3.35 (1.60)	4.06 (1.67)
Victim betrayal	6.45 (.75)	5.67 (1.34)
Victim frustration	6.16 (.89)	5.13 (1.48)

**$p \leq .01$

The effect of narrative condition on negative attributions and conciliatory attitudes (H1)

Two-way ANOVAs showed a main effect of narrative condition on negative attributions to the victim, $F(1,173) = 39.27$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$; offender perspective-taking, $F(1,173) = 8.82$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$; and shared identity, $F(1,173) = 11.10$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. The means and standard deviations in Table 4 reflect how participants (as the offender) who read the divergent victim narrative were more likely to make negative attributions to the victim's character, were less willing to attend to the victim's perspective, and identified less

with the victim, compared with participants who heard the similar victim narrative. These results provided partial support for the hypothesis.

However, two-way ANOVAs did not show a main effect of narrative condition on measures of shared values, $F(1,173) = 2.17$, $p = .17$, $\eta p^2 = .01$; value affirmation, $F(1,173) = .82$, $p = .37$, $\eta p^2 = .005$; or reparative intentions, $F(1,173) = .09$, $p = .77$, $\eta p^2 = .001$. Participants (as the offender) in both divergent and similar conditions similarly acknowledged the values in the community towards their wrongdoing, similarly felt they shared values with their relationship partner, and similarly were committed to repairing their relationship with their partner.

Table 4. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations for Study 3.2 post-victim narrative dependent variables.*

M(SD)	Divergent (N = 83)	Similar (N = 94)
Negative attributions***	3.71 (1.01)	2.76 (1.01)
Offender perspective-taking**	5.85 (.85)	6.21 (.77)
Shared identity***	4.59 (1.07)	5.16 (1.19)
Shared values	4.59 (1.42)	4.90 (1.39)
Value affirmation	5.99 (.92)	5.88 (.97)
Reparative intentions	6.56 (.55)	6.53 (.61)

***$p \leq .001$

**$p \leq .01$

*$p \leq .05$

Discussion

The results from Study 3.2 extended on the findings from Study 3.1, in that upon hearing a divergent victim narrative, offenders tend to disengage from the victim. In study 3.2, participants who heard the divergent victim narrative identified less with the victim, were

less willing to take the victim's perspective, and were more inclined to make negative attributions to the victim's character. However, while offenders were more likely to distance themselves from the victim upon hearing the divergent victim narrative, they showed unchanging reparative intentions, value affirmation (which is a predictor of successful reconciliation (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010) or sense of having shared values with the victim.

Participants may have maintained these conciliatory attitudes due to the perceived closeness of their relationship with the victim in this study. Where offenders are highly invested in their relationship with the victim, evidence suggests that they possess greater motivation to restore that relationship (McCullough et al., 1998). Thus, the divergent narrative may have led participants to feel more distant from their partner, however may not have created sufficient psychological threat to justify not restoring the relationship after the wrongdoing, or to question the shared values within the relationship. Relationship closeness between victim and offender should therefore be reconsidered when developing manipulations for future research.

Study 3.2 also obtained inconsistent results across the six attention measures used, suggesting that participants' did not adequately attend to their provided victim narrative condition. Upon reflection, it is likely that the phrasing of these attention measures affected participants' responses. In Study 3.1, the attention measures were phrased such that participants were required to report their perception of the *victim's* experience of the transgression, which was either divergent or similar to their own. By using this phrasing, I could determine whether or not the participant was aware of how the victim's account differed from their own. However, in Study 3.2, I phrased attention measures such that participants were required to report their *own* experience of the transgression, which was competing with the victim's divergent or similar account. Thus, participants may have been confused about which version of events to report. Results may reflect that some participants

were reporting from the victim's perspective, however others were reporting their own motivations as presented in the initial offending narrative. My next study therefore reverted back to the original phrasing of attention measures to ensure the desired construct was captured.

Study 3.3

Given that relationship closeness is likely to have affected the results in Study 3.2, in Study 3.3 I aimed to explore whether the pattern of results observed would be upheld for a different transgression scenario in which the pre-existing relationship would be less influential. For this reason, the hypothetical transgression centred around co-workers. My prediction remained that participants (as offenders) exposed to a divergent victim narrative would again increase negative attributions to the victim's character, and decrease their reparative intentions, perspective-taking, value affirmation, intentions to make amends, and sense of shared identity and shared values with the victim. I also included participants' expectations of how successful any anticipated future interaction with the other person would be. I considered that this might provide further information around offenders' readiness to engage with victims – where offenders have poorer expectations of a future interaction, their commitment to engaging with the process is likely to be affected.

Participants imagined themselves in a scenario where they profited from a sale that a co-worker had arranged. As a result of the participant's hypothetical actions in the scenario, the co-worker failed to meet their sales target and were called to a performance review meeting. I reported this significant negative outcome of the transgression, in order to increase the perceived severity of the transgression (and hence the psychological threat) without utilising relationship closeness. Participants were then required to read the victim's perspective of the transgression (which was either similar to the offender's account, or divergent). Participants then completed the dependent variables for this study. It was

hypothesized that offenders exposed to a divergent (compared to a similar) transgression narrative by the victim would show less conciliatory attitudes (Bandura, 1999).

Method

Participants

In total, 253 participants on MTurk attempted the study. Participants were requested to have English as their first language. However, I discounted some of these entries due to participants not completing the study, or spending under 10 seconds reading the transgression outline (indicative of lack of attention). I therefore considered a sample of 195 participants (98 females and 97 males, aged 19-84). Participants primarily identified themselves as American or Canadian (93.6%).

Materials

Stimulus Delivery. Participants accessed the online survey via MTurk. All materials were administered using Qualtrics survey software. Participants imagined themselves in a scenario (Appendix J) where they were at work, and were expected to make a sales target. Their co-worker had been asked by a small-business owner to assist with their purchase. The participant then imagined that while their co-worker was searching for some final items for the customer, they chose to assist the customer by completing the first part of the transaction for them. As a result, the participant reached their sales target, however their co-worker did not. Qualtrics software was used to ensure that participants spent sufficient time on the stimulus page to have read the scenario.

Narrative Divergence Manipulation. Participants then read their hypothetical co-worker's point of view. This was either similar (N = 100) or divergent (N = 95) to the original transgression account, determined by random allocation (see appendices K and L). Again, the victim's divergent narrative was less likely to contain victim-blaming details (that the victim left the customer unattended for a long period of time), exonerating details (that the customer

seemed impatient), and was more likely to mention the negative consequences of what occurred (that they had a performance review meeting and their job was ultimately at risk).

All participants then completed measures of attention, attributions, offender perspective-taking, sense of shared identity with the victim, sense of shared values with the victim, value affirmation, reparative intentions, and expectations for a future restorative interaction.[13]

Dependent Variables

Attention to Perspective. Three items measured participants' attention to the victim's account (consistently with the first study). These included *Due to my actions, my co-worker's job is at risk; My co-worker believes that I processed the sale to help myself reach my sales target;* and *My co-worker believes that I processed the sale in order to provide good customer service.* Finally, I used a single statement to more directly measure perceptions of divergence: *My co-worker and I have a similar understanding of the incident that occurred.* Items were considered independently of one another.

Expectations. Three items measured the participants' expectations of a future reconciliation attempt. These included *I imagine that my co-worker would be willing to repair our relationship; If I were to discuss the incident with my co-worker, I anticipate there would be some conflict;* and *I expect that my co-worker and I would be able to repair our*

[13] All dependent variables were taken at two timepoints during this study, in order to explore additional aims and hypotheses relating to the effect of pre-existing shared identity (Appendix I) on offenders' conciliatory attitudes. The first set timepoint was following the initial transgression scenario, the second timepoint was following the presentation of the victim's account. These data are available on request. The data reported in this section is from the second timepoint – the point at which dependent variables were taken for the previous two studies. In relation to the hypotheses around pre-existing shared identity, results showed that participants who shared a pre-existing identity with the victim (compared with those who did not) made fewer negative attributions, $F(1,191) = 5.83$, $p = .02$, $\eta p^2 = .03$; had higher perceptions of shared identity ($F(1,191) = 55.07$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .22$) and values ($F(1,191) = 17.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta p^2 = .08$); held higher reparative intentions, $F(1,191) = 5.64$, $p = .02$, $\eta p^2 = .03$; and had more positive expectations for future reconciliation, $F(1,191) = 6.25$, $p = .01$, $\eta p^2 = .03$; $F(1,191) = 6.99$, $p = .01$, $\eta p^2 = .04$. There was no difference between identity conditions (shared/not shared) with regards to perspective-taking, value affirmation, or anticipated victim hostility (Fs < 2.80). Shared identity did not moderate the effect of narrative divergence for any of the outcome variables (Fs < 3.12).

relationship. All measures were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Additional measures included those used in the previous two studies and were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). These included: negative attributions (a = .90), perspective-taking (a = .94), reparative intentions (a = .92), value affirmation (a = .95), shared identity (a = .90), and shared values (a = .90).

Results

Narrative condition manipulation check

Two-way factorial ANOVAs were used to test the main effect of the victim's narrative upon the four attention measures used. Table 5 shows a significant main effect of narrative condition across three attention measures. Participants in the divergent condition were more likely to agree their co-worker believed that the participant processed the sale to help themselves reach their sales target, $F(1,191) = 29.67$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .13$; were less likely to agree that their co-worker believed that the participant processed the sale in order to provide good customer service, $F(1,191) = 24.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$; and were less likely to agree that they had a similar understanding to their co-worker of the incident, $F(1,191) = 65.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .25$. Both conditions agreed that their co-worker's job was at risk ($F(1,191) = .54$, $p = .47$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$), which was a consistent detail across both narratives. Thus, participants attended to the victim narrative across both conditions.

Table 5. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations for Study 3.3 post-victim narrative attention measures.*

M(SD)	Divergent (*N* = 95)	Similar (*N* = 100)
Due to my actions, my co-worker's job is at risk	5.20 (1.57)	5.05 (1.52)
My co-worker believes that I processed the sale to help myself reach my sales target***	6.46 (.76)	5.58 (1.37)
My co-worker believes that I processed the sale in order to provide good customer service ***	2.19 (1.53)	3.37 (1.72)
My co-worker and I have a similar understanding of the incident that occurred ***	2.57 (1.77)	4.65 (1.79)

***$p \leq .001$

The effect of narrative condition on negative attributions and conciliatory attitudes (H1)

Two-way ANOVAs also showed a main effect of narrative condition on negative attributions to the victim, $F(1,191) = 43.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .19$; shared identity, $F(1,191) = 7.36$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$; shared values, $F(1,191) = 26.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$; offender perspective-taking, $F(1,191) = 5.63$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$; and reparative intentions, $F(1,191) = 5.48$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$.

Table 6 demonstrates how participants in the divergent condition were more likely to make negative attributions to their co-worker's character, were less likely to perceive that they shared values and identified with their co-worker, were less willing to see the events from their co-worker's perspective, and held fewer reparative intentions. These results were consistent with the hypothesis. However, there was no difference between conditions with regards to value affirmation, $F(1,191) = .07$, $p = .80$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$.

Table 6. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations for Study 3.3 post-victim narrative dependent variables.*

M(SD)	Divergent (N = 95)	Similar (N = 100)
Negative attributions***	4.64 (1.25)	3.49 (1.20)
Offender perspective-taking*	5.30 (1.38)	5.76 (1.21)
Shared identity**	3.35 (1.49)	3.87 (1.51)
Shared values***	3.32 (1.31)	4.27 (1.36)
Value affirmation	4.12 (1.45)	4.05 (1.60)
Reparative intentions*	5.21 (1.47)	5.66 (1.34)
If I were to discuss the incident with my co-worker, I anticipate there would be some conflict.***	5.60 (1.38)	4.85 (1.51)
I expect that my co-worker and I would be able to repair our relationship ***	4.08 (1.40)	5.26 (1.35)
I imagine that my co-worker would be willing to repair our relationship.***	3.85 (1.47)	5.14 (1.34)

***$p \leq .001$

**$p \leq .01$

*$p \leq .05$

Participants in the divergent condition were also more likely to anticipate some conflict in a future restorative interaction with their co-worker, $F(1,191) = 12.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$; were less likely to believe that their relationship with their co-worker was reparable, $F(1,191) = 36.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .16$; and were less hopeful that their co-worker would be willing to repair the relationship, $F(1,191) = 41.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$. Overall, these results suggest that where the offender is presented with the divergent victim narrative, they tend to disengage from the victim and future reconciliation prospects.

Discussion

Results from Study 3.3 further extended on the findings from the previous two studies, suggesting that reading a victim's divergent narrative leads to reduced offender conciliatory

attitudes and increased negative attributions to the victim's character. Participants who read the victim's divergent view were more likely to make negative attributions to the victim's character and showed reduced conciliatory attitudes in domains such as perceiving themselves as like the victim, sharing values with the victim and being willing to consider the victim's perspective. Participants exposed to the divergent victim narrative also were less likely to want to make amends, perceived the relationship to be less reparable and anticipated greater future conflict with the victim. Thus, the divergent victim narrative had a negative effect on conciliatory attitudes in this study.

However, the divergent victim narrative did not lead to a significant difference between participants' (as offenders) acknowledgment that their actions contravened socially-accepted codes of behaviour (value affirmation). Both conditions, on average, indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with items that asserted that by perpetrating the transgression, the participants' actions violated social values. It is possible that participants perceived that their actions, as the offender, were somewhat unavoidable. The transgression scenario provided possible altruistic motives for the participants' actions in taking their colleagues' transaction, as well as outlined the workplace factors (strict profit targets) that may have pressured the offender into taking their colleague's transaction. In this way, participants may have viewed the series of events as somewhat acceptable within the context of a workplace. Study 3.3 again reinforces how the nuances of the specific transgression scenario may affect the conciliatory attitudes that are subsequently affected by narrative divergence.

Summary of Results

Table 7. *Summary of results from studies 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.*

Conciliatory attitudes	Study 3.1 (N = 130)		Study 3.2 (N = 172)		Study 3.3 (N = 195)	
	p	ηp^2	p	ηp^2	p	ηp^2
Negative attributions	**< .001***	**.22**	**<.001***	**.19**	**<.001***	**.19**
Perspective-taking	.14	.02	**<.01***	**.05**	**.02***	**.03**
Reparative intentions	.12	.02	.77	.001	**.02***	**.03**
Value affirmation	.17	.02	.37	.005	.80	<.001
Shared identity			**.001***	**.06**	**.007***	**.04**
Shared values			.17	.01	**<.001***	**.12**
Expectations of future conflict					**<.001***	**.06**
Expectations of relationship reparability					**<.001***	**.16**
Expectations of victim willingness to repair relationship					**<.001***	**.18**

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

General Discussion

This research highlights that victims' divergent transgression narratives may pose barriers to offenders' readiness to engage in reconciliation. After hearing a victim's divergent narrative, offenders are more likely to make negative attributions to their victims' characters. There was also some evidence to suggest that listening to a divergent victim narrative led to poorer expectations of future reconciliation attempts, reduced perspective-taking, reduced perceptions of shared identity and values, and reduced offender intentions to make amends for their wrongdoing. Thus, the victim's divergent transgression narrative may be a problematic factor for offenders' psychological readiness to reconcile with victims.

Some of the inconsistencies in the results between the studies may be explained by the different interpersonal transgression scenarios that were trialled. Having the victim see things differently may be more detrimental to an offender's conciliatory attitudes when the violated value is more integral (such as violating trust in a relationship) or when the consequences of the transgression are more serious for the victim (such as the loss of a relationship or job). Both of these transgression scenarios would be psychologically threatening to an offender's need to uphold their moral self-concept, and consistently with Bandura's (1999) concept of moral disengagement, the offender would likely distance themselves from their behaviour. Alternatively, sharing a close personal relationship with the victim may protect against the impact of the divergent narrative. As shown by Study 3.2, participants ultimately wanted to reconcile with their partner despite any divergences of perspective. So while three studies suggest that the negative effect of the divergent narrative on offender readiness to reconcile is reliably present, it is not uniform. The impact of narrative divergence may change depending on features of the transgression and the relationship.

Further, across all three studies, offenders' value affirmation seemed to remain unaffected by narrative divergence. This variable indicated offenders' recognition that their behaviour violated social values; in the first two studies of this chapter, participant responses overall reflected high acknowledgement, whereas in the third study participant responses indicated an overall "neither agree nor disagree" response. In the context of a workplace wrongdoing, participants may have viewed their hypothetical actions as acceptable for the professional situation, although it was damaging on an interpersonal level. This again indicates the sensitivity of participant responses to transgression-relevant factors, reinforcing the complexity of resolving wrongdoing.

However, the lack of difference between narrative conditions across all three studies suggests that value affirmation may not be vulnerable to divergences. This conciliatory attitude may be resistant to the victim's point of view, and offenders' determination that their behaviour was socially acceptable (or not) may be a more objective evaluation. This finding mirrors the results of Study 2.1, in which offenders were found to acknowledge their wrongdoing, yet ultimately downplayed the set of circumstances for which they took responsibility. In the case of Studies 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, divergences may not affect offenders' acknowledgment that their behaviour was *perceived* as a violation of social norms, although divergences did affect the extent to which they would be prepared to work with the victim to achieve a resolution.

Taken together, these three studies show a pattern toward reduced offender conciliatory attitudes when exposed to a victim's divergent narrative. Where offenders make more negative attributions towards the victim's character, are less willing to take the victim's perspective, hold lower willingness to make amends, identify less with the victim, and have poorer expectations for reconciliation, they are unlikely to be psychologically ready to

engage with victims in a challenging interaction. Further, restorative interaction is unlikely to elicit positive outcomes in these circumstances.

Chapter 4

Talking It Out: Engaging Victims and Offenders to Overcome Narrative Divergence

When people experience interpersonal disagreements, a common resolution strategy is to bring the parties together to talk about what happened and how to best move forward. Consider round-table discussions in workplace contexts, restorative justice conferences in Australian justice systems, and mediation in relationship counselling settings. To be successful, these strategies rely upon the parties to a conflict engaging productively with one another's perspectives and collaboratively paving a pathway to repair. However, productive engagement may be challenging when the victim presents with a conflicting side of the story to the offender.

Offenders and victims (the conflict dyad) come to restorative interaction with divergent narratives of what occurred during the transgression, and the implications of those events. When required to engage with one another around the key issues arising from the wrongdoing and what needs to happen to achieve reconciliation, victims and offenders often have different points of view. This raises questions as to how engagement can be expected to be successful and meaningful – eliciting responsibility-taking and perhaps apology on the part of the offender, and acceptance and perhaps forgiveness on the part of the victim – when both parties do not agree on the key issues before even entering into discussion.

In Chapter 3, I showed how the presence of divergent victim and offender transgression narratives may create a potential barrier to reconciliation through reducing offenders' conciliatory attitudes. Where offenders hold reduced conciliatory attitudes, engaging victims and offenders may be a less effective strategy. On the other hand, given sufficient scaffolding to ensure the interaction is reciprocal and fair, victims and offenders may be able to "talk it out" with respect to their divergences and thereby establish consensus.

Little is known about the impact of narrative divergence on victim-offender engagement, and conversely, the effectiveness of engagement in bringing victims and offenders to a common understanding (specifically in situations where there were divergent views). This chapter will therefore explore the impact of narrative divergence on conciliatory attitudes and consider how this may undermine victim-offender engagement. This chapter will also explore the effectiveness of engaging dyads in the presence of diverging transgression narratives.

Narrative divergence negatively impacts upon conciliatory attitudes, which may have implications for engagement

Victim and offender narratives fundamentally conflict on issues such as responsibility, intentionality, severity (these factors may be considered in terms of both the offense and its consequences), and justification for the transgressive behaviour. These characteristics of divergent narratives have been observed and commented upon in theoretical works (Mikula, 1994; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000), experimental paradigms (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997), workplace conflicts (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014), intergroup contexts (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019), and autobiographical accounts (Baumeister et al., 1990). Consistently, the second chapter of this thesis found that when participants were asked to recall a transgression from the perspective of a victim or offender, they similarly distorted their narratives. For example, offenders were more likely to report excuses, mitigating details and victim-blaming details compared with victims, and victims were more likely than offenders to report the negative consequences of the transgression.

The third chapter of this thesis then explored how diverging narratives may negatively impact upon offender engagement with the victim and reconciliation. The victim's divergent narrative led offenders to develop more negative perceptions of the victim, by consistently making more negative attributions to the victim's character and somewhat reducing

perceptions of shared identity. The victim's divergent narrative also somewhat reduced offenders' conciliatory attitudes, by reducing offender expectations for a future conciliatory interaction, lowering offender intentions to make amends, and reducing offender perspective-taking.

These reflected attitudes may lead to issues engaging offenders in restorative interaction. Restorative approaches to justice require victims and offenders to consider one another's perspectives in order to come to a shared understanding of the event and begin to repair the relationship between them (Johnstone, 2011). In order to achieve this repair, receiving a sincere apology from the offender is an important factor for victims (Sherman et al., 2005). Acknowledging the full extent of the harm caused is also important for offenders and communities, as those who minimise their own behaviour may be more likely to reoffend (Hayes et al., 2011). The likelihood of these processes occurring during engagement are less likely where the offender is not psychological ready for the process.

Can engagement overcome the negative impact of narrative divergence?

Restorative justice theory posits that engaging victims and offenders face-to-face may be a more effective conflict resolution strategy than punitive systems. This is because engagement is said to more adequately address the victim's needs for closure, healing and empowerment (Johnstone, 2011). Further, through its principles of reintegrating the offender, engagement may better develop offenders' understanding that their actions caused harm which they are responsible to resolve (Johnstone, 2011).

In cases of narrative divergence, theory suggests that engagement could actually facilitate consensus between victim and offender, as they are given a space in which to discuss their perspectives. Through a structured, fair, and reciprocal discussion, in which both parties' views are considered, victims and offenders may be more likely to cooperate (Tyler, 2006; Tyler et al., 2007), and therefore able to resolve their differences. This is because

perceptions of procedural justice (fair treatment in justice proceedings) may foster a sense of shared identity or "sameness" between the pair (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Bringing both parties to this equal footing may reduce their competing self-serving motivations, and hence result in improved attitudes towards reconciliation.

While theory suggests engagement is well-placed to bring victims and offenders to a consensus, the practice of engaging victims and offenders has elicited mixed results. Evaluation of Australian restorative justice interactions (Chapter 1) suggests that engaging victims and offenders does not always result in positive outcomes. Some offenders may experience these conferences as stigmatising (Smith & Weatherburn, 2012) or hostile (Hayes et al., 2011), suggesting that victim-offender engagement is not always a restorative experience (Daly, 2003; Larsen, 2014). I have proposed that this may be due to the presence of divergent victim and offender transgression narratives (Chapter 2), which may reduce offenders' attitudes towards reconciliation (Chapter 3). Alternatively, within a context that appropriately facilitates engagement according to principles of procedural justice, engagement may resolve narrative divergences. In light of these findings, it would therefore be useful to next test whether engagement is, in fact, an effective strategy when offenders and victims do not see eye-to-eye.

Study 4.1

Research into the efficacy of victim-offender engagement has elicited mixed results. Given the results of the previous studies presented in this thesis, divergent narratives may represent one factor that negatively impacts on meaningful engagement within dyads. Given exchange of narratives is often a key part of a restorative interaction I wanted to test whether the effects reported in Chapter 3 extended to a dyadic context. In the context of the dyad I also wanted to consider the impact on divergent narratives on the victim's experience. Furthermore, I tested whether victims and offenders 'talking it out' could overcome the

negative effects of narrative divergence on conciliatory attitudes. To explore these issues I used a dyadic role play study design.

Hypotheses

1. Participants exposed to a divergent (compared to a similar) transgression narrative will show reduced psychological readiness to reconcile. Reduced psychological readiness will be marked by reduced conciliatory attitudes (Bandura, 1999).
2. Engaging with the other party in a structured interaction will (a) increase conciliatory attitudes and (b) alleviate the negative effects of divergence.

I also considered additional hypotheses following data collection, in order to better understand dyadic psychological processes during engagement. In particular, I considered that improved shared identity may mediate the relationship between engagement and improved conciliatory attitudes. Findings by Tyler and Blader (2003) have previously suggested that perceptions of procedural justice may improve cooperation via shared identity.

Further, I predicted that perceptions of other-party perspective-taking would mediate the relationship between narrative divergence and participant's conciliatory attitudes. Narrative divergence may be foremost experienced as the other party not understanding, and not making an effort to understand, one's own perspective. Findings by Berndsen, Wenzel, Thomas, and Noske (2018) have previously suggested that offenders' perspective-taking improved victims' conciliatory attitudes, to the extent that the victim *perceived* that the offender had taken their point of view.

Lastly, I considered that the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model may provide a template to explain the dyadic relationships between offender perspective-taking, victim perspective-taking and the perceived perspective-taking of both parties. In particular, consistent with the previous mediation hypothesis, I suggest that reduced perceptions of

other-party perspective-taking may occur within the divergent narrative condition. I predicted that reduced *perceived* perspective-taking would lead to reduced perspective-taking on behalf of each party, and in turn, negatively affect reparative intentions. In cases where other-party perspective-taking is not perceived, an individual may themselves be less likely to consider the other's perspective. This may create a cyclic effect within the dyad: as the individual considers the partner's perspective less, the partner does not perceive the individual engaging in perspective-taking, and therefore reduces their own perspective-taking behaviour, etc. Both perceived perspective-taking (Berndsen et al., 2018) and perspective-taking have been shown in previous research to be related to conciliatory behaviour (Galinksy, Ku, & Wang, 2005). The proposed model is therefore depicted in Figure 1.

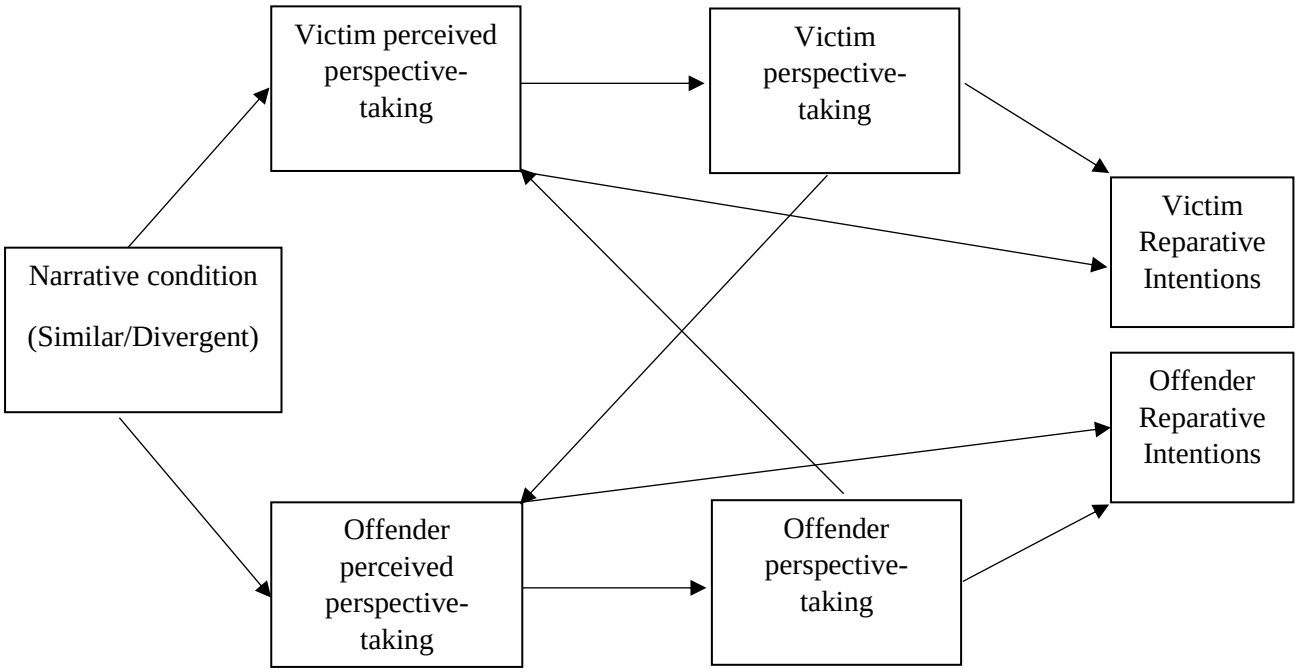


Figure 1. Proposed dyadic model based upon the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (Kenny, 1996)

Method

Participants

In total, 286 first-year psychology students at Flinders University participated in the study, of whom 277 students completed the study (198 females, 77 males, 1 intersex, aged 17-58). Nine students did not complete all requirements of the study and thus their data were excluded.

Preliminary Materials

Stimulus Delivery. Participants attended a testing session at the School of Psychology within Flinders University. All materials were administered via computer, using Qualtrics survey software. Participants read about an offense that had hypothetically taken place, varying whether they were given the perpetrator (N = 130) or the victim (N = 147) perspective. The scenario described a workplace transgression, in which one individual had received credit for making a sale at the expense of a co-worker.

Narrative Divergence Manipulation. I presented participants with their "own" perspective of a hypothetical wrongdoing – this was either the perspective of an employee who "stole" a co-worker's sale (Appendix M), or that of the co-worker whose sale was "stolen" (Appendix N if in the divergent condition, or Appendix O if in the similar condition). I then presented participants with the other party's point of view to read. Participants then completed measures of attention, and expectations of a future conciliatory encounter.

Preliminary Dependent Variables

Attention to Perspective. Four items measured participants' attention to the transgression. I varied the wording for three of the items according to victim/offender condition: *Due to my colleague's actions, my job is at risk/ Due to my actions, my colleague's job is at risk; I believe that my colleague processed the sale to help themselves*

reach their sales target/ My colleague believes that I processed the sale to help myself reach my sales target; I believe that my colleague processed the sale in order to provide good customer service/My colleague believes that I processed the sale in order to provide good customer service; My colleague and I have a similar understanding of the incident that occurred. Items were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), and were considered independently of one another.

Expectations. Three items measured participants' expectations of a future reconciliation attempt. These included *I imagine that my co-worker would be willing to repair our relationship; If I were to discuss the incident with my co-worker, I anticipate there would be some conflict*, and *I expect that my co-worker and I would be able to repair our relationship.* All measures were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Secondary Materials

Engagement Manipulation. Participants then considered six key discussion points regarding the transgression that occurred, varying whether this occurred while engaging with the other party, or during an independent self-reflection task. Participants in both engagement and non-engagement conditions considered: *What was the situation, what happened?; What do you think is the main issue here?; How did the incident make you feel?; How did the incident make your colleague feel?; What would you like to be the outcome of this incident?;* and *What can you learn from it?.* Participants in the engagement condition then completed a measure of *perceived* perspective-taking. All participants then completed measures of perspective-taking, strength of identification, negative attributions and reparative intentions.

Secondary Dependent Variables

Perceived perspective-taking (engagement condition). A single item was administered to participants in the engagement condition, in order to measure their perception

of how strongly they felt the other party took their perspective (based upon the measure used by Berndsen et al., 2018). Participants indicated their agreement with the statement: *How much do you feel that your colleague took your perspective during your face-to-face interaction?* Responses were scored on a 100-point sliding scale, ranging from 0 (*My colleague did not take my perspective at all*) to 100 (*My colleague completely took my perspective).*

Perspective-taking. Participants were given three items regarding how much effort they believe they invested in taking the perspective of the victim *(I am willing to consider how my colleague would be thinking and feeling after this situation; I can empathise with how my colleague would be thinking and feeling; I can sympathise with my colleague's situation; I feel like I understand how my colleague experienced the situation*). These items were modelled on items developed by Todd and colleagues (2011) who also measured the extent to which participants adopted another perspective. All responses were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Responses were averaged to form a total perspective-taking variable for both victims (a = .85) and offenders (a = .95).respectively.

Strength of identification. I administered a single item to participants in the engagement condition, in order to measure their perception of how strongly they identified with the other party. Participants indicated their agreement with the statement: *How strongly do you identify with your colleague?* Responses were scored on a 100-point sliding scale, ranging from 0 (*I do not at all identify with this person*) to 100 (*I strongly identify with this person).*

Negative attributions. Five items measured negative character attributions made to the other party, including blame, bad intentions and negative traits: *My colleague is a selfish person; My colleague is determined to see the worst in me; My colleague is a forgiving*

person (reverse-coded)*; My colleague blames other people for her mistakes; My colleague is prone to overreacting.* All responses were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Responses were averaged to form a total attributions score for both victims and offenders respectively (a= .84/a = .86).

Reparative intentions. Four items measured future intentions to make amends. I varied the wording for all items according to victim/offender condition: *I would like my colleague to apologise for the incident/I am willing to apologize for the incident; I would like to repair my relationship with my colleague/I am willing to repair my relationship with my colleague; I would like my colleague to admit responsibility for the incident to my boss and myself/I am willing to admit responsibility for the incident to my boss and colleague; I would like my colleague to accept any consequences of their actions/I am willing to accept any consequences of my actions*. All responses were scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). All items were averaged to form total intended reparative behaviours score for victims/offenders respectively (a = .62/.92).

However, following data collection, I considered that the internal validity of the victim reparative intentions scale was inadequate. Theoretically, three of the four items more accurately captured victim desire for the *offender* to make amends (a = .85). Only one item (*I am willing to repair my relationship with my colleague*) was considered to capture the victim's *own* reparative intentions. Therefore, henceforth, victim reparative intentions will refer to the single item variable.

Results

Narrative condition manipulation check

Offenders

Independent-samples *t*-tests were used to test the effect of the victim's narrative (divergent or similar) across four attention statements. Table 1 shows a significant effect of

narrative condition across statements 2, 3 and 4. Participants in the divergent condition were more likely to agree that their colleague believed the transgression was motivated by the participant's own self-interests, $t(109.70) = -3.20$, $p = .002$, $d = .38$.

Table 1. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations for post-victim narrative offender attention measures.*

M(SD)	Divergent (N = 66)	Similar (N = 64)
1. *Due to my actions, my colleague's job is at risk*	5.02(1.47)	4.63(1.70)
2. *My colleague believes that I processed the sale to help myself reach my sales target* **	6.39(.86)	5.78(1.28)
3. *My colleague believes that I processed the sale in order to provide good customer service* ***	1.94(1.29)	3.06 (1.47)
4. *My colleague and I have a similar understanding of the incident that occurred* ***	2.06(1.36)	3.48(1.62)

**$p \leq .01$
***$p \leq .001$

Participants in the divergent group were also less likely to agree that their colleague believed the transgression was motivated by altruistic motivations, or that their colleague shared a similar understanding of the transgression ($t(128) = 4.764$, $p < .001$, $d = .81$; $t(122.72) = 5.42$, $p = <.001$, $d = .95$). As appropriate, participants in both divergent and similar conditions agreed that their colleague's job was at risk (an objective detail), with no significant difference between groups ($t(128) = -1.40$, $p = .17$, $d = .25$). These findings suggest that the narrative divergence manipulation was successful for offenders.

Victims

Independent-samples *t*-tests were also used to test the effect of the offender's narrative (divergent or similar) across four attention statements. Table 2 shows a significant effect of narrative condition across statements 3 and 4. Participants in the divergent condition were less likely to agree that their colleague's actions were motivated by altruistic intentions,

$t(145) = 2.58$, $p = .01$, $d = .43$. Participants in the divergent group were also less likely to agree that they shared a similar understanding of the transgression with their colleague, $t(133.19) = 5.63$, $p < .001$, $d = .93$.

Table 2. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations for post-offender narrative victim attention measures.*

M(SD)	Divergent (*N* = 75)	Similar (*N* = 72)
1. *Due to my actions, my colleague's job is at risk*	4.17(1.52)	4.19(1.47)
2. *My colleague believes that I processed the sale to help myself reach my sales target*[†]	4.89(1.56)	4.42(1.72)
3. *My colleague believes that I processed the sale in order to provide good customer service* *	4.05(1.57)	4.71(1.51)
4. *My colleague and I have a similar understanding of the incident that occurred* ***	2.56(1.26)	3.92(1.63)

†$p = .08$
**$p \leq .01$
***$p \leq .001$

Further, participants in the divergent group were more likely to believe that their colleague's actions were motivated by their own self-interests, and this difference approached significance, $t(145) = -1.77$, $p = .08$, $d = .29$. Participants in both divergent and similar conditions agreed that their colleague's job was at risk (an objective detail), with no significant difference between groups ($t(145) = .09$, $p = .93$, $d = .01$). These findings suggest the divergence manipulation was successful for victims.

The effect of engagement on conciliatory attitudes (H1)

Offenders

Table 3 shows the robust main effect of engaging offenders with their hypothetical victims, across all measures of conciliatory attitudes. Compared to those who completed a self-reflection exercise, participants who engaged with their hypothetical victims made fewer

negative attributions to the victim's character ($F(1,126) = 60.03$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .32$), were more willing to take the victim's perspective ($F(1,126) = 6.82$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$), held higher reparative intentions ($F(1,126) = 10.68$, $p = .001$ $\eta_p^2 = .08$), and identified more strongly with the victim ($F(1,126) = 7.99$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$).

Table 3. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations showing the main effect of engagement on conciliatory attitudes*

	Offenders		Victims	
M(SD)	Engagement (N = 67)	No engagement (N = 63)	Engagement (N = 67)	No engagement (N = 80)
Negative attributions	2.02 (.97)***	3.35 (1.02)***	2.11 (.85)***	3.20 (1.07)***
Perspective-taking	6.68 (.47)**	6.31 (1.05)**	6.21 (.67)***	5.58 (.99)***
Reparative intentions	6.40 (.98)**	5.73 (1.33)**	6.27 (.90)**	5.76 (1.07)**
Shared identity	81.43 (15.65)**	72.73 (19.07)**	78.37 (18.94)***	56.14 (23.13)***
Victim desire for offender to make amends			5.09 (1.22)	5.17 (1.37)

**$p \leq .01$
***$p \leq .001$

Victims

One data point was missing within one negative attributions scale item; for that participant, their total negative attributions score was calculated by taking the mean of the participant's responses to the remaining three negative attributions scale items.

Table 3 shows the robust main effect of engagement across victim outcome measures. In parallel to findings regarding offenders, participants who had the opportunity to engage with their colleague made fewer negative attributions to the offender's character ($F(1,143) = 47.47$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .25$), were more likely to engage in perspective-taking ($F(1,143) = 19.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .12$), held higher reparative intentions ($F(1,143) = 9.52$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$), and identified more strongly with their colleague ($F(1,143) = 40.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .22$).

Engagement did not affect victims' desire for the offender to make amends, $F(1,143) = .12$, $p = .73$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$.

The effect of narrative condition on negative attributions and conciliatory attitudes (H2a)

Offenders

Participants exposed to the divergent victim narrative held poorer expectations of a future conciliatory interaction, holding lower expectations that the victim would be willing to repair the relationship, or that the relationship was reparable (Table 4; $t(127) = 4.74$, $p < .001$, $d = .84$, $t(128) = 4.18$, $p < .01$, $d = .73$). Participants exposed to the divergent narrative also had higher expectations of conflict within a future conciliatory interaction ($t(128) = -2.78$, $p < .001$, $d = .50$). Via 2x2 ANOVAs, Table 4 also shows that those exposed to the divergent narrative were more likely to make negative attributions to the victim's character ($F(1,126) = 5.27$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$).

The divergent narrative did not have a significant effect on offender perspective-taking, reparative intentions, or shared identity (Fs < 1.33). For those in the engagement condition, the victim's divergent narrative also did not affect the offender's perceptions of the victim's perspective-taking ($F(1,65) = .43$, $p = .51$, $\eta_p^2 = .007$).

Victims

Similar to offenders, victims exposed to the divergent narrative were less likely to anticipate that the offender would be willing to repair the relationship ($t(145) = 3.32$, $p < .001$, $d = .55$), held lower expectations for the reparability of their relationship ($t(144) = 2.85$, $p = .005$, $d = .48$), and tended to make more negative attributions to the offender's character ($F(1,143) = 9.68$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$).

Table 4. *Cell-wise means and standard deviations showing the main effect of narrative divergence on conciliatory attitudes.*

	Offenders		Victims	
M(SD)	Divergent (N = 66)	Similar (N = 64)	Divergent (N = 75)	Similar (N = 72)
Expectations: other party willingness to reconcile	3.38 (1.26)***	4.48 (1.37)***	4.71(1.27)***	5.38(1.17)***
Expectations: conflict	5.67 (1.13)**	5.11 (1.16)**	4.95 (1.14)	4.65 (1.38)
Expectations: relationship reparability	4.11 (1.24)***	5.02 (1.24)***	4.93 (1.02)**	5.44 (1.12)**
Negative attributions	2.85 (1.22)*	2.47 (1.14)*	2.94 (1.10)**	2.45 (1.07)**
Perspective-taking	6.54 (.71)	6.45 (.92)	5.73 (.88)*	6.00 (.93)*
Reparative intentions	6.19 (1.00)	5.95 (1.39)	5.89 (.91)	6.10 (1.13)
Shared identity	77.39 (18.17)	77.03 (17.69)	61.60 (24.74)**	71.14 (22.31)**
Desire for the offender to make amends			5.21 (1.20)	5.06 (1.40)
	(N = 34)	(N = 33)	(N = 34)	(N = 33)
Perceived perspective-taking	83.21 (18.89)	85.97 (15.35)	80.88 (17.81)**	90.63 (12.25)**

*$p \leq .05$
**$p \leq .01$
***$p \leq .001$

Additionally, victims exposed to the divergent narrative identified less strongly with the offender, and were less likely to take the offenders' perspective, compared with victims exposed to the similar narrative. These effects were not found within offenders ($F(1,143) = 7.42$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$; $F(1,143) = 3.85$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$; Table 4). Also in contrast to offenders, narrative divergence reduced victims' perceptions of the offender's perspective-taking ($F(1,65) = 6.68$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$). The divergent narrative did not impact victim reparative intentions ($F = 1.70$), desire for the offender to make amends ($F = .53$) or expectations of future conflict ($t = -1.41$).

The interaction between narrative condition and engagement (H2b)

Contradictory to predictions, engagement did not ameliorate the negative effect of the divergent narrative. Engagement did not interact with narrative divergence across any of the outcome measures for offenders, nor for victims. Results are summarised in Table 5, below.

Table 5. *Inferential statistics for the interaction between narrative condition and engagement condition.*

	Offenders (N = 130)			Victims (N = 147)		
M(SD)	$F(1,126)$	p	η_p^2	$F(1,143)$	p	η_p^2
Negative attributions	.95	.33	.01	.004	.95	<.001
Perspective-taking	.03	.87	<.001	.76	.38	.01
Reparative intentions	.70	.40	.01	.85	.36	.01
Shared identity	.02	.90	<.001	.004	.95	<.001

Shared identity mediates the relationship between engagement and conciliatory attitudes for both offenders and victims

Offenders

In addition to the main effects described above, exploratory analyses revealed that offenders in the engagement condition held more favourable conciliatory attitudes, partly as a result of identifying more strongly with the victim (Table 6). Bootstrapping analyses with 10000 samples (Using PROCESS statistical software; Hayes, 2012) showed that engagement improved perceptions of shared identity. Via this mechanism, engagement reduced negative attributions, and improved offender perspective-taking and reparative intentions

Accounting for these, there were direct effects of engagement on negative attributions and reparative intentions, but not offender perspective-taking. These findings suggested that

shared identity fully mediated the relationship between engagement and offender perspective-taking, and partially mediation the relationships between engagement and negative attributions, and between engagement and reparative intentions, respectively.

Table 6. *Direct and indirect (via shared identity) effects of engagement on conciliatory attitudes for offenders.*

Direct and indirect effects	*B*, *SE*, [95% CI]
Engagement → Shared identity	8.70, 3.05, [.007, .03]*
Engagement → Shared identity → Negative attributions	-.19, .08, [-.37, -.07]*
Engagement → Shared identity → Perspective-taking	.11, .07, [.008, .27]*
Engagement → Shared identity → Reparative intentions	.16, .08, [.04, .38]*
Engagement → Negative attributions	-1.14, .17, [-1.47, -.81]*
Engagement → Perspective-taking	.26, S.14, [-.01, .54]
Engagement → Reparative intentions	.51, .20, [.11, .91]*

*denotes statistical significance (confidence intervals do not include zero; Preacher & Hayes, 2004)

Victims

Victims in the engagement condition also held more favourable conciliatory attitudes somewhat due to identifying more strongly with the offender (Table 7). Bootstrapping analyses with 10000 samples (Using PROCESS statistical software; Hayes, 2012) showed that engagement improved perceptions of shared identity. Through shared identity, engagement reduced negative attributions and the victim's desire for the offender to make amends. Similarly, through shared identity, engagement improved victim perspective-taking and reparative intentions.

Table 7. *Direct and indirect (via shared identity) effects of engagement on conciliatory attitudes for victims.*

Direct and indirect effects	*B*, *SE*, [95% CI]
Engagement → Shared identity	22.24, 3.53, [15.26, 29.22]*
Engagement → Shared identity → Negative attributions	-.50, .11, [-.74, -.32]*
Engagement → Shared identity → Perspective-taking	.52, .10, [.35, .73]*
Engagement → Shared identity → Reparative intentions	.42, .12, [.22, .68]*
Engagement → Shared identity → Desire for offender to make amends	-.28, .11, [-.53, -.08]*
Engagement → Negative attributions	-.58, .16, [-.89, -.27]*
Engagement → Perspective-taking	.10, .13, [-.16, .36]
Engagement → Reparative intentions	.08, .17, [-.26, .42]
Engagement → Desire for offender to make amends	.20, .24, [-.27, .68]

*denotes statistical significance (confidence intervals do not include zero; Preacher & Hayes, 2004)

Accounting for these, there were direct effects of engagement on negative attributions, however not for perspective-taking, reparative intentions, or the victim's desire for the offender to make amends. These findings suggested that shared identity partially mediated the relationship between engagement and negative attributions, and fully mediated the relationship between engagement and the victim's perspective-taking, reparative intentions, and the victim's desire for the offender to make amends. Thus, for both offenders and victims, engagement appeared to facilitate a sense of shared identity between the pair, and partly through this mechanism, improved conciliatory attitudes.

Perceived perspective-taking mediates the relationship between divergence and conciliatory attitudes for victims who engage, but not offenders who engage

Offenders

Results showed that narrative divergence did not have an effect on perceived perspective-taking for offenders (Table 8). Exploratory mediation analyses (using PROCESS

statistical software and bootstrapping analyses with 10000 samples; Hayes, 2012) subsequently affirmed that for offenders, perceived perspective-taking did not mediate the relationship between narrative condition and negative attributions made to the victim's character. Perceived perspective-taking also did not mediate the relationship between narrative condition and offenders' own perspective-taking, reparative intentions, or shared identity.

Table 8. *Indirect (via perceived perspective-taking; [PPT]) effects of narrative divergence on conciliatory attitudes for offenders.*

Direct and indirect effects	*B*, *SE*, [95% CI]
Narrative condition → PPT	-2.76, 4.21, [-11.18, 5.65]
Narrative condition → PPT → Negative attributions	.07, .10, [-.14, .28]
Narrative condition → PPT → Perspective-taking	-.02, .03, [-.09, .03]
Narrative condition → PPT → Reparative intentions	-.04, .07, [-.24, .05]
Narrative condition → PPT → Shared identity	-.85, 1.33, [-3.65, 1.68]

*denotes statistical significance (confidence intervals do not include zero; Preacher & Hayes, 2004)

Victims

Results showed that, in contrast to offenders, perceived perspective-taking was negatively impacted by narrative divergence for victims (Table 9). Exploratory mediation analyses revealed that the relationship between narrative divergence and victim's conciliatory attitudes was mediated by the victim's perceptions of the offender's perspective-taking.

Bootstrapping analyses with 10000 samples (using PROCESS statistical software; Hayes, 2012) showed a significant indirect effect of narrative divergence on negative attributions, perspective-taking, and shared identity, via perceived perspective-taking.

Table 9. *Direct and indirect (via perceived perspective-taking; [PPT]) effects of narrative divergence on conciliatory attitudes for victims*

Direct and indirect effects	*B*, *SE*, [95% CI]
Narrative condition → PPT	-9.75, 3.55, [-17.23, -2.27]*
Narrative condition → PPT → Negative attributions	.25, .13, [.06, .60]*
Narrative condition → PPT → Perspective-taking	-.18,.10, [-.45, -.04]*
Narrative condition → PPT → Reparative intentions	-.30,.13, [-.61, -.09]*
Narrative condition → PPT → Shared identity	-6.86, 3.04, [-14.74, -2.29]*
Narrative condition → PPT → Desire for offender to make amends	.06, .12, [-.13, .34]
Narrative condition → Negative attributions	.25, .18, [-.12, .62]
Narrative condition → Perspective-taking	-.22, .15, [-.52, .08]
Narrative condition → Reparative intentions	-.07, .19, [-.46, .32]
Narrative condition → Shared identity	-2.79, 3.87, [-10.53, 4.95]
Narrative condition → Desire for offender to make amends	.10, .32, [-.53, .74]

*denotes statistical significance (confidence intervals do not include zero; Preacher & Hayes, 2004)

For victims, perceived perspective-taking also mediated the relationship between narrative divergence and reparative intentions. Perceived perspective-taking did not mediate the relationship between narrative divergence and the victim's desire for the offender to make amends. There were no direct effects of narrative divergence on any of these outcome variables, suggesting full mediation.

For victims to possess improved attitudes to reconciliation, it seemed to be important that they perceived the offender's attempts to consider their own point of view.

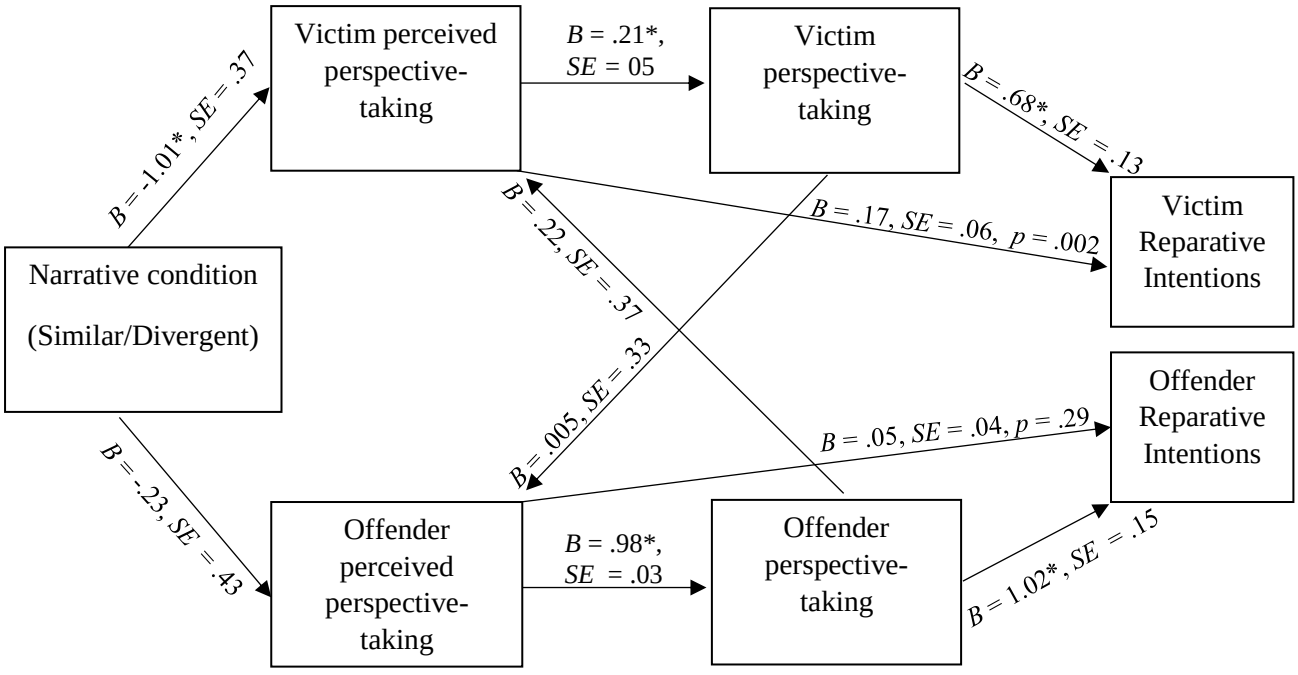
Dyadic effects of narrative divergence on victim-offender interaction

Given the dynamic process of reconciliation, the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny, 1996) was considered to explore the dyadic relationship between victim and offender perspective-taking in the presence of narrative divergence. The model

depicting the proposed relationships, as described in the hypothesis section, was previously shown in Figure 1.

Following the methods and syntax prescribed by Kenny, Kashy and Cook (2004), the data was organised according to a dyadic structure. In the first step, I examined the data for missing observations. After removing one dyad from the dataset (due to one of the participants not completing half of the survey), only two data points remained missing. These were replaced with the series mean. Consequently, the results from 67 dyads were analysed.

Structural equation modelling, based upon principles of the APIM, was conducted to consider the actor-partner effects between corresponding victim and offender perspective-taking and perceived perspective-taking variables of the dyads.



*denotes significance ($p < .05$)

Figure 2. Model based upon the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (Kenny, 1996), showing relationships between offender and victim, perceived perspective-taking, perspective-taking, and reparative intentions.

The subsequent model shown in Figure 2 had acceptable fit (χ^2 (11) = 10.76, p = .46, CFI = 1.00, GFI = .96, RMSEA = .00). The results do not show a dyadic relationship between victims and offenders, where victim perspective-taking influenced offenders' perceptions of the victim's perspective-taking (p = .99), and vice versa (p = .56).

However, results do reinforce the findings from the mediation analyses, in that an offender's divergent narrative reduces victims' perceptions that the offender has considered their perspective (p = .006). This effect does not occur for offenders (the victim's divergent narrative did not affect offender perceived perspective-taking; p = .60). Further, for both victims and offenders, perceived perspective-taking respectively predicted individual perspective-taking (p < .001; p = .007), and subsequent intentions to make amends (ps < .001).

Discussion

These results show that, despite the robust main effect of engaging victims and offenders to improve both parties' conciliatory attitudes, engagement did not reduce the negative effect of narrative divergence. Consistent with findings from previous chapters, exposure to a victim's divergent narrative led offenders to attribute more negative qualities to the victim's character. This chapter added that for victims, the negative impact of narrative divergence may be more robust. Exposure to an offender's divergent narrative led the victim to also attribute more negative qualities to the offender's character, identify less with the offender, be less willing to take the offender's perspective, and to hold reduced perceptions that the offender had tried to understand their own point of view. Despite the hypothetical nature of this study, the negative impact of narrative divergence was again apparent in this chapter.

Consistent with the previous chapter, exposure to the other party's divergent narrative reduced expectations of a future conciliatory interaction. These reduced expectations may

contribute to the established difficulties bringing both parties to real-world restorative justice conferences or mediation. Where the victim has a diverging account of the transgression, offenders may anticipate greater hostility, reduced victim desire to reconcile, and reduced reparability of their relationship. As explained earlier, hostility within restorative interactions is detrimental for offenders' commitment to making amends (Hayes et al., 2011). Following exposure to a divergent narrative, victims may also anticipate offenders' reduced desire to reconcile, and reduced reparability of their relationship. In these circumstances, engaging with one another may be considered to be challenging, and perhaps futile.

For victims who engage with offenders, narrative divergence may reduce conciliatory attitudes by reducing victims' perceptions that the offender has attempted to take their perspective. As evidenced by main effects, mediation analyses, and modelling, perceptions of the other party's perspective-taking was negatively impacted by divergence for victims, and not for offenders. These results suggest that when engaged with offenders with a divergent transgression narrative, victims may ultimately perceive that the offender is not interested in understanding their experience of the transgression, thereby reducing victims' readiness to reconcile.

This finding may be explained by victims' salient justice goal during engagement – victims primarily wish to reinstate their sense of power within the relationship (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). Therefore for victims, perceiving that the offender has considered their point of view may represent an important step in re-establishing the power balance as an equal *to* the offender, rather than a victim *of* the offender. Where their justice goal has not been perceived as met in this manner, victims may subsequently hold less favourable attitudes towards reconciling with the offender. This process may not be as important for offenders, who are primarily concerned with ensuring that the victim understands that they are a good and moral person. Perceiving that their perspective has been understood may therefore be less

important than perhaps perceiving that the victim thinks well of them. This nuance should be explored in future research, by measuring offender perceptions of the victim's attributions towards themselves.

The staged engagement between the parties did not attenuate the negative impact of the narrative divergence. However, engagement, did have main effects for victims and offenders across all measures of conciliatory attitudes, hence, it may be a productive strategy to improve conciliatory attitudes in its own right. Within the hypothetical setting provided by this study, bringing both parties together to discuss the transgression improved both parties' attributions to the partner, perspective-taking, reparative intention and shared identity, compared with participants who did not meet with the opposing party.

The data further suggest that the conciliatory effects of engagement may partially operate through improved perceptions of shared identity. Engagement increased the extent to which victims and offenders identified with one another, which subsequently reduced negative attributions, and increased perspective-taking and willingness to reconcile. While a single-item measure was used to measure strength of identification and therefore the conclusions that can be drawn are limited, it appeared that engagement led participants to feel they were more alike, which had a positive impact on conciliatory attitudes. Participants who engaged with one another may have perceived a sense of "sameness" with one another, therefore potentially making salient a shared identity and increasing both parties' readiness to successfully mend the relationship. Future research should explore this effect, in order to further understand how shared identity mechanisms may contribute to the successful effects of engaging offenders and victims.

The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny, 1996) was used in this study to consider the cross-partner effects of perspective-taking and perceived perspective-taking. Results did not show dyadic effects in this study, as each party's perceptions of the

others' perspective-taking was not influenced by the other's perspective-taking behaviour. This may have occurred due the hypothetical transgression utilised in this research paradigm; participants did not necessarily have a prior relationship with their conflict partner and were induced into victim and offender roles. They may have been less receptive to one another's behaviours as a result. Improving the ecological validity of the sample may allow further testing of the dyadic model proposed in the present thesis – particularly, as perceived perspective-taking predicted an individual's own perspective-taking behaviour, and subsequent reparative intentions. Here, the influence of perceived perspective-taking suggests the possible presence of a dynamic, interactive relationship, which should be further explored.

Modelling also showed the importance of an individual's own perspective-taking behaviour in improving their own reparative intentions. Facilitating perspective-taking may therefore be a useful strategy to implement during victim-offender engagement. Although restorative justice interactions allow each party to relay their own point of view of the transgression (which is heard by the other party), these interactions may require more active, effortful perspective-taking on behalf of each party. Future research may consider using perspective-taking exercises as an intervention that occurs during victim-offender interaction, requiring parties to more actively engage with the opposing point of view, and thereby improving conciliatory attitudes.

In sum, in this chapter, I highlighted that there is a need to better understand the impact of narrative divergence on victim-offender engagement. Current conflict resolution strategies rely upon the positive effect of bringing victims and offenders together to discuss the offense – however, this research suggested that engagement may not be sufficient to counter the negative impact of narrative divergence. Results from Study 4.1 reinforced the findings of previous chapters, suggesting that narrative divergence may be problematic for

victims' and offenders' readiness to reconcile. Further, the results suggested that victims and offenders may be affected by narrative divergence differently. These dynamics may have important implications for the individual outcomes of engaging victims and offenders. There is room to replicate and extend upon this research and as such, inform more effective processes for conducting restorative justice.

Chapter 5

General Discussion: Bringing Victims and Offenders to the Same Page

In this thesis, I investigated the occurrence and impact of divergent transgression narratives, thereby contributing to knowledge of factors that might create barriers to resolving conflict following interpersonal transgressions. Specifically, I demonstrated that victims and offenders emerge from transgressions with divergent narratives, which may subsequently reduce both parties' psychological readiness to engage with one another to resolve the conflict. Engaging victims and offenders with one another had benefits for both parties' conciliatory attitudes, however engagement alone did not attenuate the negative effects of narrative divergence. The present research has implications for restorative justice theory and practice, suggesting that narrative divergence adds complexity to facilitating conciliatory interactions that are contingent upon reciprocity (as proposed by the needs-based model of reconciliation; Shnabel et al., 2008). Divergent transgression narratives may interfere with victims' and offenders' readiness to work towards reconciliation, and therefore reduce both parties' ability to mutually and collaboratively resolve one another's psychological needs.

In this final chapter I will discuss the present findings in the context of my initial research aims; that is, to firstly show how these findings contribute to knowledge around how victim and offender transgression narratives diverge, and secondly, how narrative divergence may impact upon victims' and offenders' readiness to reconcile. I will discuss the implications of these findings for our understanding of restorative justice theory and practice. Next, I will consider possible interventions that may address the negative impacts of narrative divergence, as found in this thesis. Last, I will consider the limitations of this thesis, and suggest some future directions for dyadic research methodologies examining narrative divergence.

Victims and offenders present divergent, self-serving narratives of transgressions

This research elicited and measured the phenomenon of narrative divergence, replicating research conducted by Stillwell and Baumeister (1997), and demonstrating a fundamental conundrum facing restorative reconciliation processes: victims and offenders are expected to discuss and resolve a conflict that they may see quite differently. In Chapter 2, participants demonstrated differences in their reporting of transgression-relevant details (for the same transgression scenario) depending on the role they were asked to adopt. These findings show that victims and offenders tend to report systematically diverging narratives for transgressions.

Specifically, this research identifies a range of domains in which victim and offender transgression narratives typically diverge, such as acknowledgment of transgression consequences, exonerating details, and victim-blaming. This thesis provides more detailed, experimental evidence for the characteristics of narrative divergence compared with previous literature, which has historically taken a range of approaches to considering the ways in which victims and offenders might disagree, and has often focussed upon specific domains (Adams, 2016; Adams & Inesi, 2016; Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019; Mikula, 1993; Mikula, 1994; Mikula & Wenzel, 2000; Okimoto & Wenzel, 2014). A key contribution of this research was utilising qualitative methodology (Study 2.1) to elicit and measure narrative divergence from both offender and victim perspectives (as suggested by Mikula, 1993), and considering a broad range of transgression-relevant details across which divergences might present.

In addition to replicating past research on the occurrence of narrative divergence, Study 2.1 showed that narrative divergences were not an artefact of overall memory quality. Participant responses across recognition measures did not significantly differ between conditions. Participants appeared to have the same general understanding of the event that

hypothetically occurred, however they were differentially reporting specific aspects of the event. These findings suggested that a "conscious editing" process (Stillwell & Baumeister, 1997, p.168) was implemented by both parties when recalling the event, based upon transgression-relevant motivations. However, future research could further explore the nature of these divergences and the conditions that shape them. It would be useful to replicate my findings around whether divergences represent a memory encoding effect or a recall phenomenon, to explore how divergences might change with time or instances of memory retrieval, and whether people are actually conscious of this "conscious editing" process that seems to be occurring.

It may be that memory processes adapt unilaterally, in response to an *individual's* transgression-relevant psychological needs (Shnabel et al., 2008), rather than anticipating reciprocity and collaboration. As proposed by Bandura (1999), offenders may absolve themselves of moral wrongdoing – thereby meeting their moral-emotional needs (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008) – by downplaying the consequences of the transgression, and emphasizing exonerating circumstances. By demonstrating the opposite pattern of reporting (Study 2.1), victims may try to reassert their power in the relationship (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008) by clearly holding the offender to account. Moving towards a reciprocal approach to resolving these psychological needs (Shnabel et al., 2008), through the offering of apology and forgiveness, may therefore be a complex undertaking when both parties seem to be initially driven to take intrapersonal approaches. Future research could examine contextual or relationship factors that may moderate individuals' anticipation for a unilateral versus reciprocal meeting of needs, and if this, in turn, shapes memory for the transgression.

Victims and offenders are both less "psychologically ready" to reconcile following narrative divergence

The second key contribution of this thesis was showing that divergences indeed create a barrier to reconciliation. Exposure to divergent transgression narratives was shown to negatively impact upon both offenders' readiness to reconcile with victims (Chapter 3), and victims' readiness to reconcile with offenders (Chapter 4). For offenders, exposure to a victim's divergent narrative consistently increased the negative attributions offenders made to the victim's character, and reduced offenders' expectations around the success of engaging with the victim. Narrative divergence also somewhat reduced offenders' perspective-taking, reparative intentions, and perceptions of shared identity and values with the victim. For victims, narrative divergence reduced their perspective-taking, expectations of future conciliatory interaction, and perceptions of shared identity with the offender. Narrative divergence also increased the negative qualities that victims attributed to the offender's character. The findings of this research tended to show that narrative divergence negatively impacts upon conciliatory attitudes for both offenders and victims.

Narrative divergence may have different implications for offenders' readiness to reconcile, depending upon the type of transgression perpetrated. For example, it seemed that relationship closeness with the imagined victim (e.g. a romantic partner) affected the impact of a divergent narrative. Offenders imagining a close personal relationship (i.e. between relationship partners; Study 3.2) indicated equally high intentions to repair their relationship, regardless of their partner's divergent perspective. Transgression severity, or seriousness of consequences, also seemed to affect the negative impact of narrative divergence for offenders. This may be intuitive – for a relatively "minor" social infringement (such as plagiarism against another student; Study 3.1), offenders may feel less threatened by a victim's divergent view and therefore continue to hold relatively favourable conciliatory

attitudes. Whereas, where serious consequences were inflicted by the offender (such as potential job loss; Study 3.3), a victim's divergent narrative may pose a more serious threat to the offender's moral self-concept, thereby reducing offenders' readiness to reconcile.

After showing that divergent narratives may present a barrier to facilitating meaningful conciliatory interaction between victims and offenders, I next aimed to engage victims and offenders with one another (Chapter 4). The findings of this thesis showed that engaging victims and offenders in an interaction had some positive effects, but seemed to be insufficient to overcome the negative effect of narrative divergence. While engagement increased conciliatory attitudes by fostering a sense of shared identity between victims and offenders, engagement did not attenuate the negative effects of narrative divergence. Victims' and offenders' different perspectives of transgression negatively affect each others' readiness to reconcile, which, at least in my role play scenario, did not seem to be addressed by engaging the parties with one another. Formal conflict resolution practices operate according to the proposed benefits of engaging victims and offenders with one another; it is therefore important that future research establishes if these benefits are contingent upon the victim and offender already seeing eye to eye, or alternatively, whether engaging victims and offenders can provide an avenue through which they may resolve their divergences.

Offenders do accept responsibility, but in a way that is still defensive

The present research indicates that offenders' avoidance of responsibility may be more nuanced than is suggested by the literature. Despite research indicating that offenders tend to avoid being implicated in the wrongdoing (Adams, 2016; Bandura, 1999), Study 2.1 showed that offenders were actually *more* likely than victims to mention the offense that they committed, and to assign responsibility to themselves. However, by also emphasising exonerating details and minimising negative consequences (Study 2.1), the present findings suggest that offenders may nevertheless avoid responsibility for the *full reality* of the

transgression experienced by victims. This naturally questions the authenticity of that responsibility-taking.

Offender narratives that acknowledge responsibility, yet contain diverging perceptions of exonerating details and transgression consequences, may reflect processes of defensiveness, similar to pseudo self-forgiveness. Pseudo self-forgiveness refers to the psychological process whereby offenders claim to have atoned for their wrongdoing, however do so by excusing themselves from the wrongdoing (Fisher & Exline, 2006; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a). This response allows the offender to resolve the negative emotions associated with having acted in an immoral manner ("shame displacement"; Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006), however it does not resolve the *interpersonal* implications of the wrongdoing. In the context of the present thesis, offenders may accept responsibility to assure victims (and themselves) that they are a good and moral person who recognises the values of their community, however do so in a way that essentially lets themselves "off the hook" (for example, by over-reporting exonerating details). In this way, pseudo self-forgiveness could be considered as a defensive, unilateral strategy employed by offenders to resolve their transgression-relevant psychological needs. Pseudo self-forgiveness has been negatively associated with interpersonal restoration (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013a), and findings from Chapter 3 of this thesis support the notion that narrative divergence may similarly be a poor predictor of conciliatory attitudes for offenders.

Further evidencing offenders' problematic defensiveness, was the finding that offenders did not seem to be receptive to the victims' consideration of their own perspective; perceptions of the victims' perspective-taking did not affect offenders' conciliatory attitudes. By contrast, in Chapter 4 I showed that for victims who engaged with offenders, a divergent transgression narrative led to victims' reduced perceptions that the offender had considered their point of view. It was through this mechanism that victims were less willing to reconcile

with offenders. As such, perceptions of the offenders' perspective-taking seemed to matter to victims, whereas victims' perspective-taking did not seem to matter to offenders. A lack of receptiveness to the victim may psychologically protect offenders from allegations of their immoral and anti-social behaviour (Bandura, 1999), however it is suggestive of disingenuous engagement and, perhaps, pseudo self-forgiveness.

Victims' receptiveness to offenders' perspective-taking may indicate that victims are more inclined to consider bilateral avenues of resolving their transgression-relevant psychological needs, compared with offenders. This may be reflective of victims' salient justice goal to regain their status within their relationship with the offender; perceiving that the offender understands their perspective may validate the victim's experience, and thereby re-empower the victim. Comparatively, offenders may be driven by their own goal of moral redemption. Offenders may therefore adopt a more self-focussed approach, of communicating their own exonerating narrative, as well as avoiding negative feelings about themselves by disregarding the victims' experience. This thesis importantly suggests that offenders may have a greater tendency to consider unilateral approaches to conflict resolution, compared with victims. Therefore, this research indicates the need for more extensive exploration around the negative impact of offenders' defensiveness following transgressions, and how this may hinder relationship repair.

Moving towards a shared transgression narrative

Ultimately, the goal of engaging victims and offenders with one another is to bring both parties to a shared understanding of the values that were violated by the transgression, the harm caused by the transgression, and what both sides need to do to move forward from the transgression. As such, by showing that divergent transgression narratives are potentially damaging for reconciliation, this thesis has highlighted the need to bring victims and offenders to a *shared* narrative of the transgression. According to previous analysis by Cohen

(2016, p.262): "conflict is more likely to be resolved to the extent to which [victim and offender] narratives overlap".

Maruna and Ramsden (2004) have suggested that offenders may be able to unilaterally address some of the shame they feel for their behaviour, by developing their own redemption narrative. Redemption narratives acknowledge the harm of offending behaviour, however provide a pathway forward by focussing upon the good that the offender can achieve following the wrongdoing. This encourages offenders to manage their moral-emotional needs in a prosocial manner (by reinforcing that the offender *can* make amends for their wrong), rather than via avoidance strategies (in which offenders exonerate themselves and withdraw from the victim's perspective). Again, this strategy draws upon principles of reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989), by offering offenders the opportunity to redeem themselves.

However, Cohen (2016) suggests that the development of a redemption narrative can be a collaborative process between victims and offenders. Rather than their respective transgression narratives being a product of their own self-serving motivations and memory biases, victims and offenders may instead construct a shared memory for what occurred. The *intergroup* conflict literature already recognises the maladaptive role of each group's collective narrative in maintaining political conflict (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012), particularly as these collective narratives also tend to diverge (Bilali & Vollhardt, 2019). In intergroup contexts, shared narratives have been identified to play an important role in moving towards reconciliation (Adwan & Bar-On, 2004; Bilali & Mahmoud, 2017). Subsequent to the findings of this thesis, I propose that the development of shared narratives is equally important to resolving conflict within interpersonal contexts.

Bilali and Mahmoud (2017) analysed the ways in which social groups on either side of a political conflict may transform their conflict-maintaining collective narratives. Shared

narratives were proposed to highlight the similar experiences shared by conflict partners, such as hardship during the conflict period, or prosperity during periods of peace. Specifically, by constructing a shared narrative, it was proposed that groups could reduce their negative attitudes towards one another, and may even develop a superordinate, shared identity.

Collaborative engagement may therefore not only bring victim and offender groups to a more mutual understanding of the transgression, but also to a shared understanding of one another as people. The findings of this thesis (Study 4.1) not only show this link between collaborative engagement and improved shared identity in an interpersonal context, but go further to indicate that by improving shared identity between victims and offenders, we may subsequently improve their intentions to make amends. For both victims and offenders, results showed that collaborative engagement improved their own conciliatory attitudes through fostering a sense of shared identity between them. Facilitating a sense of "sameness" between conflict partners may therefore play a fundamental role in resolving conflict; the creation of a shared narrative, requiring the collaborative engagement of both parties, may be a useful strategy to achieve this.

As highlighted by this thesis, however, the very presence of narrative divergence may dissuade victims and offenders from engaging to develop a shared transgression narrative in the first instance. In their research around the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Adwan and Bar-On (2004) similarly identified that both groups recruited for the study were not yet prepared to engage with one another to create a shared narrative, due to the severity of each groups' collective narrative for the conflict. The authors therefore approached the process in a gradual manner, by developing a tool that placed each group's narrative alongside each other, in other to firstly increase both groups' awareness of the existence of an alternative narrative for the conflict. Over a period of months, teachers were encouraged to discuss the two narratives

with their students. Teachers reported that the tool elicited students' curiosity for the other party's version of history. While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a highly complex and unique political issue, this piece of research nevertheless highlights that with time and gradual exposure, it is possible to bring two parties with very different points of view, to a place where they might be more open to receiving another view point of that conflict.

Therefore, the intergroup conflict literature suggests that it may be useful to provide victims and offenders with the other party's point of view, well before bringing them to discuss the conflict face to face. Specifically, it may be useful to encourage both parties to independently identify how the divergent narrative differs from their own, and to actively contemplate why the other party may remember the transgression in a certain light. In light of the findings of this thesis, which suggest that victims and offenders are less ready to reconcile when they hold diverging perspectives, it may be necessary to first *prepare* both parties for future engagement with one another. By approaching narrative divergence from a place of curiosity, education, and gradual exposure, both parties may feel less threatened, and therefore be better prepared to engage to develop a shared transgression narrative.

Reducing offender defensiveness in order to improve their readiness to reconcile

In light of offenders' problematic defensiveness following transgressions, it may be useful to initially focus intervention upon preparing offenders for exposure to a victim's divergent narrative. Offenders who are defensive and therefore unable to recognise the full extent of their responsibility for a wrongdoing, are unlikely to offer a meaningful apology for their actions. In turn, victims' are unlikely to forgive an offender who they perceive has not fully acknowledged their own transgressive behaviour; to this end, forgiveness is unlikely to be meaningful to offenders who have already partially absolved themselves for their wrongs. As such, offenders' defensiveness seems to undermine the psychological processes that make engaging victims and offenders a beneficial process.

Preliminary, basic intervention with offenders might involve providing a tool (prior to interaction) that can educate offenders around the phenomenon of narrative divergence. Content would potentially include explanations as to the ways in which narrative divergences affect their own narratives, and the narratives of their victims. Education should also relate to offenders' transgression-relevant psychological needs; by understanding and recognising the significant impact of their moral-emotional needs, offenders' drive to be seen as an inherently good person may be validated and normalised. Offenders would be made aware of their tendency to be defensive, to focus upon exonerating details and to avoid implicating details, and the potential problems this raises for interpersonal restoration. Awareness of their own needs and biases, and what they may be able to anticipate from the other party's perspective, may better prepare offenders to interact with victims.

Offender transgression narratives indicated moral disengagement from their behaviour (Bandura, 1999) and therefore preliminary pseudo self-forgiveness; it may therefore be useful to reduce offender defensiveness prior to this education around narrative divergence, and prior to offenders' exposure to a victim's divergent narrative. Recommitting to violated values has been shown to improve *genuine* self-forgiveness for offenders. By reasserting that they do, in fact, endorse the values that they transgressed, offenders may address their moral identity concerns without excusing themselves from the transgression (as occurs in pseudo self-forgiveness; Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2013b). In keeping with principles of reintegrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989), genuine self-forgiveness, denounces offenders' *behaviour*, rather than who they are as a *person.* Through genuine self-forgiveness, value recommitment subsequently increased offenders' willingness to reconcile (Woodyatt & Wenzel, 2014). Using value recommitment as an intervention to reduce defensiveness has elicited mixed results, ranging from negligible effects (see footnote 10, p.44), to promising

findings (see footnote 11, p.55). Further exploration of value recommitment as an intervention to reduce offenders' defensiveness is therefore warranted.

Offender intervention may also include exercises to develop their own perspective-taking. Perspective-taking predicted reparative intentions within this thesis, for both victims and offenders (Chapter 4). Further, *perceptions* of the offenders' perspective-taking mediated the effect of narrative divergence upon victims' conciliatory attitudes. Therefore, the extent to which offenders' consider the victim's perspective seems to be an important predictor of both parties' readiness to reconcile. Interventions have targeted perspective-taking in order to improve pro-social outcomes across a range of contexts. For example, increasing individual's perspective-taking has been linked to reduced stereotyping (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), improved intergroup relations (Finlay & Stephan, 2000), and improved social bonds (Galinsky et al., 2005). Further, perspective-taking has also been linked to reduced negative personal attributions during workplace conflict (Sessa, 1996). The present thesis consistently reflected that offenders' negative attributions towards victims were increased by narrative divergence; perspective-taking may therefore be an appropriate strategy to attenuate this effect. Thus, by completing an exercise in which offenders are encouraged to imagine the victim's experience, offenders may be better prepared to approach conciliatory interaction with more openness to engage with the victim, and to receive the victim's divergent transgression narrative.

Limitations to the present research program and future directions for dyadic research

This thesis aimed to explore how interactional dynamics (specifically, narrative divergence) negatively affect conciliatory interaction between victims and offenders. In meeting these aims, this thesis has also reinforced that narrative divergence, and interpersonal conflict resolution more broadly, are dynamic and complex phenomena. As was highlighted in Chapter 3, divergences may elicit different effects across different transgression types.

Further, narrative divergence may negatively affect conciliatory attitudes in different ways for victims and offenders (such as the perceived perspective-taking pathway for victims). In order to continue exploring how we can bring victims and offenders to the same page, it is therefore also important to continue developing dyadic research methodologies to better capture the phenomena we are interested in.

As has been referenced earlier, Mikula (1993) emphasized that in order to better understand the nature and resolution of narrative divergence, it is necessary to consider both victims and offenders together. Chapters 1 and 4 achieved this goal, however within the scope of this PhD thesis, it was necessary to utilise experimental paradigms in which participants were induced into victim and offender roles. While these methods elicited observable effects of narrative divergence across outcome measures, it should be noted that participants nevertheless reflected generally favourable attitudes towards reconciliation (e.g. means above the Likert scale mid-points). It is hypothesised that this occurred as participants were not *personally* invested in the imagined transgression scenario, and did not necessarily hold a real prior relationship with their imagined "conflict partner". In order to more accurately explore narrative divergences in interpersonal conflict, a logical next step would be to recruit real-world conflict dyads.

Conflict dyads (couples, friends, or colleagues) have previously been successfully recruited to better understand interpersonal relationship phenomena (such as dyadic coping; Donato et al., 2014). This future research pathway would therefore use more ecologically-valid samples to test the replicability of the obtained findings, such as conducting confirmatory analyses for the pathways considered in the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (Chapter 4). In order to control for relationship closeness and transgression type, recruitment could perhaps target specific conflict dyads. For example, couples undergoing counselling might present a useful and relevant sample. Couples' counselling settings may

benefit from the findings of this proposed program of research, as therapists aim to resolve relationship conflict between partners. Focussing divergence research within a targeted group would not only clarify the broad findings of this thesis (which considered numerous types of interpersonal transgressions), but would also benefit that targeted group through the findings obtained.

Last, dyadic research methodologies should explore the generalisability of narrative transformation work that has been conducted at the intergroup level. As discussed earlier, within the intergroup conflict literature it is well-understood that both sides of a conflict hold their own, complex, collective narratives for transgression. Further, the intergroup conflict literature acknowledges that these self-serving narratives perpetuate conflict, and that conflict may be resolved through the construction of shared narratives. Interpersonal conflict literature within social psychology lacks this narrative perspective, evidenced by the wide range of studies focussing upon different aspects of victim and offender perspectives of transgressions (summarised in Chapter 2). This literature is somewhat fragmented. By conceptualising victim and offender perspectives as *narratives*, which are dynamically constructed according to the motivations of each party, future dyadic research may strive to holistically capture features that maintain conflict and present barriers to reconciliation.

Conclusion

The present thesis sought to identify the way in which victim and offender transgression narratives diverge, and how that might affect victims' and offenders' psychological readiness to engage in reconciliation. Within this thesis, I have replicated previous research, showing that victim and offender transgression narratives diverge in self-serving ways, and in a manner that is more consistent with an editing process than a memory effect. I also extended on previous findings by showing specific domains in which narrative divergence may occur. Further, I showed that divergences negatively impact upon both

victims' and offenders' readiness to engage in reconciliation, by reducing their expectations of future conciliatory engagement, increasing negative attributions to the other party, and in some instances reducing perspective-taking, reparative intentions, and perceptions of shared identity. Finally, and importantly, my results indicated that engagement – a strategy commonly implemented to resolve conflict – may not be sufficient to overcome the negative effects of narrative divergence. This research has pertinent implications for conflict resolution settings that rely upon engaging victims and offenders with one another, to reciprocally and collaboratively address their own transgression-relevant psychological needs.

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Appendix A

Materials and results relating to shared identity as a protective factor in the development of narrative divergence

Manipulation materials.

Shared identity condition

Please ensure you are in an environment free from distraction, where you are able to read and type easily.

You are about to read a scenario about two people named Megan and John. Megan and John are coworkers in the Accounts/Finance department of a local automotive business. Megan and John both grew up in large, working class families and graduated high school. Neither went to University, however both have business certificates from local community colleges. They are both married with young families.

How strongly do you think Megan and John identify with one another?

(0-100 sliding scale presented – 0 = Megan and John do not identify with one another, 100 = Megan and John identify very strongly with one another)

Non-shared identity condition

Please ensure you are in an environment free from distraction, where you are able to read and type easily.

You are about to read a scenario about two people named Megan and John. Megan and John are coworkers in the Accounts/Finance department of a local automotive business. Megan grew up in a large, working class family. She did not attend University, however holds a business certificate from her local community college. Megan has a young family for whom she and her husband work to support.

John grew up without siblings. His parents were both lawyers, and following high school he was able to move interstate to attend college, where he obtained a Masters in Business Administration. John lives with his partner and does not have children.

How strongly do you think Megan and John identify with one another?

(0-100 sliding scale presented – 0 = Megan and John do not identify with one another, 100 = Megan and John identify very strongly with one another)

Control

Please ensure you are in an environment free from distraction, where you are able to read and type easily. You are about to read a scenario about two people named Megan and John.

Results

The main effect of shared identity on reported transgression details

Logistic regressions were used to explore whether shared identity affected the types of details that were reported or withheld. Overall, shared identity did not have an effect on the types of details reported compared to non-shared identity, eliciting non-significant effects across outcome variables.

Participants who did not share an identity with the other party were more likely to withhold some details compared to the control condition. Where identity is not shared, participants tend to perceive the offense as less serious than third parties (B = -.63, *Wald*(1) = 5.14, *p* = .02). It is therefore logical that they are less invested in reporting mitigating details (B = -.71, *Wald*(1) = 5.31, *p* = .02) or moral justifications (B = -1.00, *Wald*(1) = 10.91, *p* = .001). Participants who *did* share an identity with the other party also appeared to be marginally less likely to report the negative consequences of the offense (B = -.56, *Wald*(1) =3.25, *p* = .07).

The interaction between shared identity and narrative condition on transgression recall

Logistic regressions were used to explore whether the interaction between identity condition and narrative condition affected the types of details that were reported or withheld. Overall, the interaction between these variables did not have a robust effect on the types of details reported, largely eliciting non-significant effects across the majority of outcome variables.

The non-shared identity condition (vs. control) significantly interacted with being in the victim role (versus observer role) on the reporting of moral justifications (B = 1.64, *Wald*(1) =4.71 *p* = .03). While in the identity control condition, victims reported marginally less moral justifications than observers (B = -0.91, p = .076), in the non-shared identity condition victims tended to provide more moral justifications than observers, albeit not significantly so (B = 0.72, p = .190).

Further, the shared identity condition (vs. control) significantly interacted with being in the offender role (vs. observer role) on the reporting of moral justifications (B = -1.38, *Wald*(1) =4.17, *p* = .04). In the identity control condition, there was no difference between offenders and observers in reporting moral justifications (B = .47, *Wald* = .52, *p* = .47). However, in the shared identity condition, offenders were less likely to report the moral justification compared with observers (B = -1.03, *Wald* = 4.72, *p* = .03).

With regards to reporting the moral violation, both the non-shared identity condition (vs. control), and shared identity condition (vs control), significantly interacted with being in the offender role (vs. observer role), (B = -1.61, *Wald*(1) =5.26, *p* = .02; B = -1.74, *Wald*(1) =6.52, *p* = .01 respectively). In the identity control condition, offenders reported more frequently that their character had lied, compared to observers (B = 1.02, *Wald*(1) = 3.98, *p* = .05). For the non-shared identity and shared identity conditions, there was no significant difference between

offenders and observers in reporting the moral violation (B = -.59, *Wald*(1) = 1.51, *p* = .22, and B = -.72, *Wald*(1) = 2.55, *p* = .11 respectively).

Lastly, the shared identity condition (vs. control) significantly interacted with being in the offender role (vs. control) for participant reports of responsibility for the transgression, B = -2.14, *Wald*(1) =5.76, *p* = .02. In the identity control condition, there was no significant difference between offenders and observers in correctly attributing responsibility for the transgression, B = .34, *Wald*(1) = .28, *p* = .60. However in the shared identity condition, offenders were significantly less likely to correctly attribute responsibility compared to observers (*B* = -1.80, *Wald*(1) = 8.49, *p* = .004).

Appendix B

Study 2.1 Transgression Narrative

[Note: You will not be able to proceed from the following page until 30 seconds has lapsed, to ensure you have sufficient time to read the scenario.]

John and Megan are coworkers in the Accounts/Finance department of a local automotive business.

Together, they were working to reconcile the accounts for the end of the 2015-2016 financial year. Both Megan and John had worked overtime on numerous occasions, in order to ensure the job was completed on time. There was a lot of work to do, and they were cutting it fine.

The morning before the final figures were due to their supervisor, John called in and advised that he would be a few hours late to work due to unforeseen circumstances. Megan decided to help out and completed some of John's tasks as well as her own.

John arrived at work around lunchtime and did not explain why he was late. Together they worked quickly to finalize the accounts, and handed in their final numbers to their supervisor by the deadline.

A few days later, Megan was called to her supervisor's office. She was informed that there was an error on one of the forms, and if her supervisor hadn't caught it, it would have cost the company thousands of dollars. Megan looked at the form, and recognised it as being one of John's tasks that she had completed instead, on the day that he was late.

The supervisor asked who was responsible for the form. Megan reasoned that the form in question was technically John's responsibility - they should review all their paperwork before handing it in to their supervisor. So, Megan stated that it was John's form. Megan did not disclose that it was she who had actually completed the form, and she who was at fault for the mistake.

The supervisor thanked Megan, excused her, and then called John into the office. The supervisor informed John that he had made a significant mistake on one of his forms. John was shown the form, and recognised it as one that would usually be assigned to him. But, John had no memory of completing it. He told his supervisor that he didn't complete the form in question.

The supervisor stated that as a result of the seriousness of the mistake, he had no choice but to schedule a performance review meeting. John understood that his job was at risk.

Appendix C

Study 3.1 Transgression narrative

My friend Sarah and I are planning to go on exchange next year, and need a GPA equivalent of Distinctions to get into our desired universities in Europe. We're both currently sitting on low Distinctions, with one assignment left. If we manage to do well in this assignment, we will be guaranteed a place next year.

I organize to meet with Sarah for a study session two days before the assignment is due, to compare our papers. We always bounce ideas off each other to prepare. I wait at the library for an hour, before it's apparent that she is not going to come. I go home and send Sarah an email, asking where she was and did she want to reschedule. Sarah replied that something had come up, so she attached her assignment for me to read. She knows I'm a good friend, and would never copy her work.

I read through Sarah's copy of the assignment – ours are nothing alike. Sarah has raised some fantastic points, mentioned in previous lectures, that I completely forgot about. I really need to get a good grade for this assignment, so I alter my paper slightly, including a couple of Sarah's points but rephrasing them so that it is still my own work. The points I include were mentioned in lectures, so it's only fair that I include them too. Besides, there's not much room for interpretation in this topic so I'm sure they're points that everyone mentioned. I submit the assignment.

Weeks later, I receive an email asking me to report to the Topic Coordinator's Office the following day.

I arrive the next day, to the door swinging open and Sarah walking out, in tears, refusing to make eye contact with me. The Topic Coordinator informed me that our assignments were too similar, and we both failed due to plagiarism. We would have an opportunity to resubmit if the person who copied owned up to the offense, however the incident would go on that person's permanent record. I tell the Topic Coordinator that I wasn't the person who copied, because I didn't. Sarah's assignment simply reminded me of points raised in lectures that I attended. Besides, she willingly sent me her work. The Topic Coordinator informs me that because no one would own up to plagiarizing, we have both failed the assignment. Neither of us would be going on exchange.

Appendix D

Study 3.1 Divergent victim narrative audio script

I was planning to go on exchange next year - if I managed to do well in my final assignment, I would have been guaranteed a place. I was so excited.

You organized to meet with me for a study session two days before the last assignment is due. This assignment was important to you too, you had the same exchange plans as me; we were classmates. But it was ***so*** predictable. ***You*** struggle with a paper, and I have to take time out of my own schedule to basically tutor you. Well, this time I had a lot of work due, and I didn't go! You then basically emailed me a guilt-trip, telling me how I've let you down and that I need to make it up to you. So, I sent you an email, attaching a copy of my work. I figured you would read through it just to get an idea of the writing standard. I thought that you couldn't possibly copy, you're my classmate.

Then a few weeks later, I received an email asking me to report to the Topic Coordinator's Office the next day.

So I arrived, and she informs me that that ***apparently*** our assignments were too similar, and we both ***FAILED*** due to plagiarism! We could've had an opportunity to resubmit if the person who copied owned up to the offense, however the incident would go on that person's permanent record.

So I asked to see the two papers, to see how they compared. ***THEY WERE ALMOST IDENTICAL!*** The reference list was the same! You even used ***the same opening quote*** in the introduction! I burst into tears. I told the Topic Coordinator everything that happened, how I felt pressured to send my assignment to you, how you ***always*** depends on me to achieve your grades. I told the Topic Coordinator that ***you*** copied ***me***, how you're ***incapable*** of producing your own work. The Topic Coordinator said there was nothing she could do until she spoke to you. I left the office and there you were. You didn't even have the courage

to look at me.

The next day, the Topic Coordinator informed me that because no one would own up to plagiarizing, we ***both*** failed the assignment. You couldn't even own up to what you did. My exchange dreams are ruined.

Appendix E

Study 3.1 Similar victim narrative audio script

You and I were planning to go on exchange next year, and if we managed to do well in our last assignment, we would've been guaranteed a place.

You organized to meet with me for a study session two days before the assignment was due, to compare our papers. I had a lot of work due and wasn't able to make it. I forget to let you know, and then I received an email from you asking where I was and did I want to reschedule. I wanted to make it up to you, so I replied, attaching a copy of my work. I thought our assignments would be fairly similar anyway – there's not much room for interpretation in this topic. We're classmates, you wouldn't copy.

A few weeks later, I received an email asking me to report to the Topic Coordinator's Office. I arrived, and she informed me that that apparently our assignments were too similar, and we both failed due to plagiarism! We would have an opportunity to resubmit if the person who copied owned up to the offense, however the incident would go on that person's permanent record. So I asked to see the two papers, to see how they compared

I saw that a few quotes and references are similar, things that were referred to in lectures. I burst into tears, upset that I became involved in this situation. I tell the Topic Coordinator everything that happened, how I was the one who sent my assignment to you, that I hadn't seen it as an issue because the assignment was based on lecture topics that everyone had access to. The Topic Coordinator said unfortunately there was nothing she could do until she spoke to you. I left the office and you were there, but I couldn't bring myself to stop and chat.

The next day, the Topic Coordinator informed me that because no one would own up to plagiarizing, we both failed the assignment. My exchange dreams are ruined.

Appendix F

Study 3.2 Transgression narrative

My partner is taking me to a function for one of their work colleagues this evening. I don't know many people at this party, and so when we get there, I'm eager to have a few drinks to calm my nerves. My partner is also drinking.

My partner introduces me to a couple of people, before they are caught up in conversation with a different group. I notice that my partner doesn't introduce me to these people, and moves away to join them. I'm left making small talk with this group of people I've just met. I keep drinking, glancing over at my partner regularly. It's like they've forgotten I exist.

Throughout the night, I watch as my partner and another person leave the larger group, to sit separately. They are sitting close together, laughing and talking at length. I continue drinking, feeling myself starting to get drunk. I approach the pair, pulling over a chair to join in the conversation. Just as I sit down, my partner states that they were actually just about to get up to get drinks. They do not ask if I would like another drink. They quickly get up and leave.

As they walk off, someone extremely attractive approaches me. They introduce themselves to me and give me a drink. They are paying attention to me, complimenting me on my appearance. They sit down, and we laugh together. Feeling the alcohol in my system, we get up to dance and at some point, they kiss me. I leave the dance floor to go find my partner so we can go home.

Appendix G

Study 3.2 Divergent victim narrative

I had a staff show on, so I decided to bring you along. I introduced you to some of my closest workmates, people with whom I thought you'd have a lot in common.

I was then approached by some of the management staff. They start joking with me, drawing me in to conversation. I've been working really hard to try to get promoted, so I thought I'd try and bond with them. You didn't come over to introduce yourself to them. I felt a bit annoyed – I was hoping you'd make a bit more of an effort. I always try to be friendly to your mates.

Eventually, I started talking one-on-one with one of them. There was a really good business opportunity. I looked over at you a couple of times to come over, but you still seemed to be rudely ignoring us. As the night went on, you eventually decided to come over. By that point I'd given up the thought of introducing you – we'd finished our conversation and were ready to get another drink.

When I came back, I noticed you approach someone else from my office, grabbing their hands and pulling them on to the dance-floor. You were all over them! I saw you start to kiss them. They pushed you away and you chased them half way off the dance-floor before you even noticed me.

Appendix H

Study 3.2 Similar victim narrative

I had a staff show on, so I decided to bring you along. I thought it would be a good opportunity for you all to meet and have a few casual drinks together. I introduced you to some of my closest workmates, people with whom I thought you'd have a lot in common.

I was then approached by some of the management staff. They start joking with me, drawing me in to conversation. I've been working really hard to try to get promoted, so I thought it wouldn't hurt to try and bond with them. Eventually, I started talking one-on-one with one of them.

I felt a bit bad for leaving you on your own with some strangers, but there was a business opportunity that I really felt I needed to take advantage of. I noticed you come over at one point, but just at that moment, the manager wanted a drink. I wanted to stay in their good books, so we left you sitting there on your own. I felt awful.

When I came back, I noticed you laughing with someone else from my office. You seemed like you were drunk. I felt bad for leaving you alone in that state. You both went onto the dance floor, and then you kissed. When you stopped, I noticed you walking towards me, putting on your coat as if you wanted to go home.

Appendix I

Study 3.3 Shared identity manipulation

Please select the person that you feel is ***most/least*** like you

1. Mary, University student. Works weekends. Lives at home. Has ambitions to be a lawyer and works hard towards this goal.

2. Sarah, works full-time. Committed to her faith, member of local youth group that organises charity events.

3. Anne, works part-time. Married, parent to 3 children.

4. Max, employed full-time. Lives with girlfriend. Enjoys video gaming in his spare time. Member of various online communities.

5. Tom, works part-time. Rents with friends. Member of a band that plays at local bars in his spare time.

6. John, frequently works overtime. Dedicated to personal fitness, including morning runs before work.

Explain why you can/cannot relate to this person. [free text]

Please imagine:
- What things might you have/not have in common with this person?
- What experiences would you have had that might be similar/different to the experiences of this person?

Appendix J

Study 3.3 Transgression scenario

At the last staff meeting, our manager informed us that we were going to be given daily sales targets. This means that each staff member has to sell a minimum of $300 worth of goods each shift. If we do not meet these sales targets each shift, we face a performance review meeting with our manager at the end of the month, and may lose our job.

Yesterday, I was working in the stationery department with John. It had been a slow sales day. I had almost finished my shift, and I had barely sold anything. John had only started an hour ago, and had already sold $280 worth of goods. What luck – a couple of big sales in a row, and he was almost at the $300 sales target. I was still so far off, and couldn't see how I could make the extra money by the end of my shift.

I went to get some stock from the stockroom, and in the time I was gone, a customer had strolled in and approached John for customer service. This customer was a small-business owner, and was purchasing stationary for her administration staff – she basically wanted several of everything! The total would easily come to a few hundred dollars! The customer needed a few extra things that weren't stocked in our department. So, John left to go source the items from other departments.

15 minutes later, and John had still not returned. The customer was looking impatient. She kept checking her watch. So, I offered to put through the sale for her while she waited for John. The customer seemed happy with this suggestion. I put through the items, and happened to make my $300 sales target. After the sale, my shift had ended, so I left work for the night.

On my next shift, I was working with John again. He barely acknowledged me when I arrived. I asked another staff member what was wrong – apparently, on our last shift together, John was unable to find the remaining items that the customer needed. He didn't sell the

customer any more goods. There were no customers for the remainder of the shift, and John didn’t meet the $300 sales target. He now has a performance review meeting with the manager scheduled at the end of the month. I'm sure he can simply explain what happened.

Appendix K

Study 3.3 Divergent victim narrative

Yesterday I was working with you in the stationery department. I came on shift towards the end of yours, and it seemed like not much had been done. You weren't anywhere near your sales target, yet you weren't particularly trying to engage customers as they walked past.

So, I tried really hard to engage customers as they walked past. I made conversation with browsing customers, gave suggestions, and as a result, I made a couple of big sales. I was making some good progress towards my sales target.

While you went off somewhere, probably checking your phone again, a local small-business owner walked in and I offered her some help. She needed a lot of assistance - she was buying new stationary for her entire administration desk. I helped her find items, while you continued wandering about, fiddling with stock.

Our department didn't stock all the items the customer needed. I ducked away for like 5 minutes, just to the department next to us, to see if I could source the items she wanted. And in that short time I was gone, you swooped in and processed my sale so that it would come under your sales record! And then disappeared!

The rest of the afternoon was completely quiet. I barely sold anything else. As a result of you processing that sale, I didn't make the sales target. Now I have to meet with the manager and my job is at risk, all because you took credit for my hard work.

Appendix L

Study 3.3 Similar victim narrative

Yesterday I was working with you in the stationery department. I came on shift towards the end of yours, and it seemed pretty quiet. There weren't many customers about, and you were having difficulty reaching your sales target.

I somehow managed to make a couple of reasonable sales - customers seemed to be particularly chatty with me. Before I knew it, I was edging closer to my sales target.

You disappeared for a moment - I think to the stock room - when a local small-business owner walked in and I offered them some help. She needed a lot of assistance, as she was buying new stationary for her entire administration desk. She asked me for a lot of advice, so I helped her to find items.

Our department didn't stock all the items the customer needed, so I went to see if the department next to us had them. It took some time for them to check their stock. By the time I came back, you had gone. The customer explained that you processed her sale for her, before you left. I informed the customer that I couldn't find the rest of the items that she wanted, and she left.

The rest of the afternoon was really quiet, I didn't sell much more. As a result of losing that sale, I didn't end up meeting my sales target. I now need to meet with the manager at the end of the month.

Appendix M

Study 4.1 Offender narrative

At the last staff meeting, our manager informed you and your colleague that you were going to be given daily sales targets. This means that each staff member has to sell a minimum of $300 worth of goods each shift. If you do not meet these sales targets each shift, you face a performance review meeting with the manager at the end of the month, and may lose your job.

Last week, you were working in the stationery department with your colleague. It had been a slow sales day. You had almost finished your shift, and had barely sold anything. Your colleague had only started an hour ago, and had already sold $280 worth of goods. What luck – a couple of big sales in a row, and they were almost at the $300 sales target. You were still so far off, and couldn't see how you could make the extra money by the end of your shift.

You went to get some stock from the stockroom, and in the time you were gone, a customer had strolled in and approached your colleague for customer service. This customer was a small-business owner, and was purchasing stationary for her administration staff – she basically wanted several of everything! The total would easily come to a few hundred dollars! The customer needed a few extra things that weren't stocked in our department. So, your colleague left to go source the items from other departments.

15 minutes later, and your colleague had still not returned. The customer was looking impatient. She kept checking her watch. So, you offered to put through the sale for her while she waited for your colleague. The customer seemed happy with this suggestion. You put through the items, and happened to make the $300 sales target. After the sale, your shift had ended, so you left work for the night.

On your next shift, you were working with the same colleague. Your colleague barely acknowledged you when you arrived. You asked another staff member what was wrong – apparently, on your last shift together, your colleague was unable to find the remaining items that the customer needed. They didn't sell the customer any more goods. There were no customers for the remainder of the shift, and your colleague didn't meet the $300 sales target. Your colleague now has a performance review meeting with the manager scheduled at the end of the month. You're sure your colleague can simply explain what happened.

[END OF SCENARIO]

[Page break]

As a result of this scenario, your colleague has requested to engage in a workplace mediation meeting.

You each provided your account of the scenario to your boss, who has released your statements to each of you prior to the meeting.

On the following page is the statement that your colleague provided.

[Appendix N or C shown]

Appendix N

Study 4.1 Divergent victim narrative

Imagine that you work in the stationery department of a large department store.

Last week, there was an incident between you and your colleague. You have requested a workplace mediation meeting as a result.

On the following page is the statement you provided.

[Page break]

Last week I was working with you in the stationery department. I came on shift towards the end of yours, and it seemed like not much had been done. You weren't anywhere near your sales target, yet you weren't particularly trying to engage customers as they walked past.

So, I tried really hard to engage customers as they walked past. I made conversation with browsing customers, gave suggestions, and as a result, I made a couple of big sales. I was making some good progress towards my sales target.

While you went off somewhere, probably checking your phone again, a local small-business owner walked in and I offered her some help. She needed a lot of assistance - she was buying new stationary for her entire administration desk. I helped her find items, while you continued wandering about, fiddling with stock.

Our department didn't stock all the items the customer needed. I ducked away for like 5 minutes, just to the department next to us, to see if I could source the items she wanted. And in that short time I was gone, you swooped in and processed my sale so that it would come under your sales record! And then disappeared!

The rest of the afternoon was completely quiet. I barely sold anything else. As a result of you processing that sale, I didn't make the sales target. Now I have to meet with the manager and my job is at risk, all because you took credit for my hard work.

[END OF STATEMENT}

[Page break]

The following statement was provided by your colleague:

[Appendix M shown]

Appendix O

Study 4.1 Similar victim narrative

Imagine that you work in the stationery department of a large department store.

Last week, there was an incident between you and your colleague. You have requested a workplace mediation meeting as a result.

On the following page is the statement that you provided.

[Page break]

Last week, I was working with you in the stationery department. I came on shift towards the end of yours, and it seemed pretty quiet. There weren't many customers about, and you were having difficulty reaching your sales target.

I somehow managed to make a couple of reasonable sales - customers seemed to be particularly chatty with me. Before I knew it, I was edging closer to my sales target.

You disappeared for a moment - I think to the stock room - when a local small-business owner walked in and I offered them some help. She needed a lot of assistance, as she was buying new stationary for her entire administration desk. She asked me for a lot of advice, so I helped her to find items.

Our department didn't stock all the items the customer needed, so I went to see if the department next to us had them. It took some time for them to check their stock. By the time I came back, you had gone. The customer explained that you processed her sale for her, before you left. I informed the customer that I couldn't find the rest of the items that she wanted, and she left.

The rest of the afternoon was really quiet, I didn't sell much more. As a result of losing that sale, I didn't end up meeting my sales target. I now need to meet with the manager at the end of the month.

[END OF STATEMENT]

[Page break]

The following statement was provided by your colleague:

[Appendix M shown]