Too Proud to Let Go: Narcissistic Entitlement as a Barrier to Forgiveness

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Narcissistic entitlement impedes forgiveness in ways not captured by other robust predictors (e.g., offense severity, apology, relationship closeness, religiosity, Big Five personality factors), as demonstrated in 6 studies. Narcissistic entitlement involves expectations of special treatment and preoccupation with defending one's rights. In Study 1, entitlement predicted less forgiveness and greater insistence on repayment for a past offense. Complementary results emerged from Study 2, which used hypothetical transgressions, and Study 3, which assessed broad forgiveness dispositions. Study 4 examined associations with the Big Five, and Study 5 extended the findings to a laboratory context. Study 6 demonstrated that entitlement predicted diminished increases in forgiveness over time. Taken together, these results suggest that narcissistic entitlement is a robust, distinct predictor of unforgiveness.

Conflicts, disputes, and transgressions seem to be unavoidable aspects of human social life. Hundreds of utopian experimental societies from the past 2 centuries repeatedly failed to eliminate such interpersonal clashes. These attempts failed even when organizers tried such radical methods as abolishing private property, on the basis of a Marxist assumption that greed and envy would become obsolete within such a system. Given the admittedly low odds that people will find a way to perfect human nature or social organization, it seems safe to predict that interpersonal conflicts will continue. Social harmony will therefore depend largely on people's ability and willingness to repair the interpersonal damage these conflicts cause.

Forgiveness is one response that can help restore interpersonal harmony after transgression (for reviews, see Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Enright & North, 1998; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000; Schimmel, 2002; Shults & Sandage, 2003; Worthington, 1998, 2003). Although forgiveness is generally understood as letting go of bitter or vengeful feelings toward a transgressor (e.g., Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998), it sometimes involves downplaying or relinquishing claims on restitution, apology, or punishment (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003).

Forgiveness can benefit relationships, insofar as it enables them to survive after a damaging conflict or misdeed. Recent studies also suggest that forgiveness may benefit the forgiver, both in terms of mental health (e.g., Coyle & Enright, 1997; Freedman & Enright, 1996) and physical health (e.g., Witvliet, Ludwig, & van der Laan, 2001). Yet, despite these potential benefits, people do not always forgive. Because forgiveness involves letting go of justifiable feelings of resentment (and, in some cases, demands for repayment), people may regard forgiving as costly (e.g., Exline, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001; Williamson, 2003) or morally inappropriate (see Lamb & Murphy, 2002).

Given these pros and cons of forgiving, offended parties are likely to face competing pressures when deciding whether to forgive. Desires for relationship restoration and emotional relief should press toward forgiveness, whereas desires for repayment should encourage grudges.

Past research has identified some robust predictors of forgiveness, including apologies and concessions (e.g., Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Girard, Mullet, & Calahan, 2002; Gold & Weiner, 2000; Gonzales, Haugen, & Manning, 1994; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough et al., 1998; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; Witvliet, Worthington, & Wade, 2002), low offense severity (e.g., Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002), relationship commitment (e.g., Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, 2003; McCullough et al., 1998), and religiosity (e.g., Tsang, McCullough, & Hoyt, in press). Researchers have also examined forgiveness in light of the Big Five factors of personality, revealing positive links with Agreeableness (Brown, 2003; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; Symington, Walker, & Gorsuch, 2002) and negative links with Neuroticism (e.g., Brown, 2003; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough, Emmons, & Kilpatrick, 2001; Symington et al., 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002).

Our goal was to examine another potential predictor of unforgiveness: an inflated, narcissistic sense of personal entitlement. Entitled narcissists believe that their superiority entitles them to special treatment, and they are highly invested in asserting their rights and collecting on debts owed to them (e.g., Bishop & Lane, 2002; Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004). Because narcissistic entitlement centers directly on demands for preferential treatment and repayment, the construct seems highly relevant to the study of forgiveness. We predicted that narcissistic entitlement would show clear, consistent associations with unforgiveness. Furthermore, we proposed that narcissistic entitlement would emerge as a distinct predictor, one that would remain even when we controlled for other robust predictors of forgiveness.

Entitlement, Narcissism, and the Social Exchange Context of Forgiveness

From a social exchange perspective (e.g., Blau, 1964; Homans, 1950, 1961; Sprecher, 1998), transgressions are like debts. The larger the transgression, the larger the debt—and, therefore, the more costly it would be for the offended party to cancel that debt through forgiveness. Forgiveness researchers have argued that repayment facilitates forgiveness by reducing the size of the debt or "injustice gap" (e.g., Witvliet et al., 2002; Worthington, 2003). Repayment might take the form of an apology or concessions (to meet demands for restorative justice), or it might consist of vengeful or punishing actions toward the offender (to meet demands for retributive justice).

The debt metaphor suggests several features that should characterize an unforgiving person. First, an unforgiving person should readily perceive debts owed to the self and see these debts as disproportionately large. Second, such a person should also be highly motivated to collect on interpersonal debts, being unwilling to cancel them without full repayment. Third, this person should place high value on self-respect, self-assertion, and "face saving." Such values might lead a person to view cancellation of debts as both weak and morally remiss, and he or she might therefore refrain from forgiving for principled reasons. In considering these criteria, we found that a certain group of individuals came into

focus as potential prototypes of an unforgiving stance: persons high in narcissistic entitlement.

At a fundamental level, ideas about entitlement involve judgments about fairness. People may be legally or morally entitled to certain outcomes based on who they are or what they have done, as described in writings on the social psychology of justice (e.g., Crosby, 1976; Feather, 1999a, 1999b; Lerner, 1987; Lerner & Mikula, 1994; Major, 1994). One might also view entitlement through a dispositional lens. Within personality psychology, the entitled disposition has often been studied in connection with narcissism. Narcissism is an individual-differences construct with the primary characteristic of a grandiose and inflated sense of self (see, e.g., Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Emmons, 1987; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Raskin & Terry, 1988). The narcissistic self also entails a sense of specialness, uniqueness, and entitlement (Emmons, 1984; Raskin & Terry, 1988). The main hypothesis of this investigation was that this entitled dimension of narcissism would be linked to a broad reluctance or inability to forgive.

The Greek myth and original concept of narcissism emphasized the self's admiration for itself. Entitlement is more explicitly interpersonal, emphasizing one's assumptions about how others should treat the self. The entitled component of narcissism implies that a person expects special, preferential treatment from others. Because such special treatment is not always forthcoming, entitled narcissists should be easy to offend. Prior research supports this reasoning, suggesting that entitled narcissists are quick to take offense (McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Mooney, 2003; Witte, Callahan, & Perez-Lopez, 2002; see also Kuppens, van Mechelen, Smits, & de Boeck, 2003) and to externalize blame (Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000). Those high in entitlement should also insist on being given the repayment that they see as deserved—whether through seeking amends or through revenge (see Bishop & Lane, 2002). Prior research also supports the face-saving, defensive aspects of narcissistic entitlement. Studies have demonstrated that narcissists are prone to derogate or attack those who provide ego-threatening feedback in the form of failure or social rejection (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman, Bonacci, van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Twenge & Campbell, 2003), and parallel findings have emerged from recent studies on entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004).

Although we are not aware of prior research that systematically examined the entitlement–unforgiveness association, some studies have suggested links between narcissism and unforgiveness (e.g., Brown, in press; Davidson, 1993). Also, isolated findings from earlier studies offer preliminary support for a link between narcissistic entitlement and unforgiveness. For example, one study revealed that narcissistic entitlement was associated with greater regret about forgiving in cases where forgiveness was difficult (Exline et al., 2001). A second study suggested that the entitled, exploiting dimension of narcissism was associated with less trait propensity to forgive on a scenario-based, self-report measure (Tangney, Boone, Dearing, & Reinsmith, 2002). The present research was designed to build on these suggestive findings by focusing systematically on the role of entitlement in decisions about forgiveness.

Overview of the Present Investigation

The core hypothesis of the present investigation was that a high trait sense of narcissistic entitlement would be consistently associated with an unforgiving stance. More specifically, individuals high in entitlement should be less willing to forgive specific offenses. They should also be more skeptical of forgiving in general, because they are broadly oriented toward maximizing others' obligations to them. They should be more sensitive than other people to the personal costs of forgiving, insofar as their emphasis is on face saving and on what other people owe them (rather than, say, on relationship harmony). Their forgiveness should be more tentative and conditional, and they may be more insistent on receiving an apology or other restitution before they forgive, as compared with other people. Their behavior in a laboratory-based transgression context should also suggest unforgiveness. Furthermore, all of these associations should remain significant when controlling for other robust predictors of forgiveness (e.g., apology, offense severity, relationship commitment, religiosity, and Big Five factors of personality).

We investigated the hypothesized link between entitlement and forgiveness in six studies. Specifically, we used multiple approaches, circumstances, relationship partners, and measures, in order to provide converging evidence and reduce the danger of method-based artifacts. Study 1 asked people to report on actual transgressions that they had experienced in their lives (outside the laboratory). An autobiographical narrative and questionnaire method was used to examine whether narcissistic entitlement was associated with less forgiving attitudes. Study 2 confronted participants with hypothetical transgressions and asked how they should respond and would actually respond. Study 3 investigated broad, dispositional tendencies to forgive. Study 4 examined the association between entitlement and the Big Five factors of personality in predicting both dispositional and situational forgiveness. Study 5 moved beyond the self-report paradigm to evaluate behavioral responses to an offender in a laboratory context. Study 6 used a longitudinal design, examining changes in forgiveness toward a dating partner over time.

Study 1: Forgiving and Unforgiving Responses to a Naturalistic Transgression

Study 1 focused on forgiveness of naturalistic, self-reported transgressions. We predicted that narcissistic entitlement would be associated with less forgiving motivations and with lower levels of self-reported private and communicated forgiveness. We also predicted that entitlement would be associated with seeing forgiveness as more costly, less beneficial to the self, and less morally appropriate.

A major aim of Study 1 was to determine whether entitlement would still be associated with unforgiveness even after controlling for other major predictors of forgiveness (apology, relationship closeness, offense severity, and religiosity). We included gender for exploratory purposes, as gender has shown mixed associations with responses to transgression in past studies (e.g., Gonzales et al., 1994; Mongeau, Hale, & Alles, 1994; O'Malley & Greenberg, 1983).

Last, we wanted to see whether entitlement would be associated with heightened sensitivity to issues surrounding repayment. We predicted that entitlement would correlate positively with insisting that forgiveness needed to be earned by offenders, either by suffering retribution or by offering concessions.

Method

Participants

Participants (136 men, 134 women, 6 not indicating gender) were undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a large, public research university in the Midwestern United States. Ethnicities were as follows: European American or Caucasian (81%), Asian/Pacific Islander (9%), African American or Black (5%), Latino or Hispanic (3%), and other or mixed race (2%). Religious affiliations were as follows: Protestant (41%), Catholic (35%), atheist/agnostic (5%), spiritual but not religious (3%), Hindu (2%), Muslim (2%), Jewish (1%), Buddhist (1%), and other (10%). For religiosity, percentages exceed 100% because participants were allowed to select multiple options where appropriate.

Procedure

Participants completed a questionnaire for extra course credit. After completing a short set of individual-difference measures, participants were asked to recall a specific event in which (a) another person did something that deeply offended, harmed, or hurt them and (b) they still had some negative feelings about the experience. Common transgressions included betrayals of trust (37%), ridicule (14%), infidelity (14%), insults and signs of disrespect (10%), relationship breakups (8%), and emotional or physical abuse (7%). After providing a brief description of the incident, participants completed a series of measures related to the offense.

Measures

Unforgiving and benevolent motivations. The 18-item revised Transgression Relevant Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM–18–R; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002) was used to assess current motivations toward the offender. Participants responded to 18 items on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale has three subscales: Benevolence (sample items include "I have good will toward him/her" and "I want to put the hurts aside so we can resume our relationship"), Vengefulness (sample items include "I want to make him/her pay" and "I want him/her to get what he/she deserves"), and Avoidance (sample items include "I want to avoid him/her" and "I want to live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around"). The three subscales were highly intercorrelated, with magnitudes of correlations ranging from .61 to .83. We computed a total score by reverse scoring the Benevolence scale and averaging the three scales together. Because the subscales were highly intercorrelated, we used only total TRIM scores in our analyses ($M = 2.7$, $SD = 1.0$, $\alpha = .87$).

Private forgiveness. Participants read the following definition for private forgiveness:

> This process takes place inside the person who was hurt. It involves letting go of angry feelings and desires for revenge, and it may involve increased positive feelings toward the other person as well. Private forgiveness does not imply forgetting or excusing the incident or denying that harm was done. It also does not imply that you communicate forgiveness to the other person or that you attempt to restore the relationship.

Participants rated the extent to which they had privately forgiven the other person on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*totally*). The mean was 5.9 ($SD = 2.8$).

Communicated forgiveness. Participants read the following definition for communicated forgiveness:

This process takes place between the people involved. It involves letting the other person know, either directly or through behavior, that he or she is forgiven. It also implies not behaving in an angry or vengeful way toward the other person. Communicating forgiveness does not imply pretending that the offense never occurred.

Participants then rated the extent to which they had communicated forgiveness to the other person on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*totally*). The mean was 4.6 ($SD = 3.2$).

Forgiveness as morally right or deserved. Participants were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*totally*):

1. "Do you think the other person deserves forgiveness from you?"

2. "To what extent do you think that privately forgiving the other person would be the morally right thing to do?" and

3. "Do you think that privately forgiving the other person would be the morally wrong thing to do?" (reverse scored).

The three items had intercorrelations ranging from .20 to .47 and were averaged to form an index of the moral rightness of forgiving ($M = 6.2$, $SD = 2.1$, $\alpha = .68$).

Personal costs and benefits of forgiveness. Participants responded to 14 items about the (actual or hypothesized) consequences of privately forgiving the other person on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*). Maximum-likelihood factor analysis with promax rotation suggested creation of two factors relevant to the current study. The first factor, Personal Costs of Forgiving ($M = 3.9$, $SD = 2.0$, $\alpha = .83$, eigenvalue $= 4.4$; 33.5% of variance), contained the following five items: "I felt (or would feel like) I was getting less than I deserved," "I felt (or would feel) weak," "I had (or would have) less respect for myself afterwards," "I lost (or would lose) power within the relationship," and "I cheated (or could be cheating) myself." The second factor, Personal Benefits of Forgiving ($M = 5.7$, $SD = 2.4$, $\alpha = .92$, eigenvalue $= 2.7$; 20.5% of variance), contained these four items: "I felt (or would feel) better about myself," "I felt (or would feel) happy," "I felt (or would feel) peace," and "I felt (or would feel) a sense of relief." The correlation between the two factors was $r(274) = -.43$, $p < .001$.

Forgiveness index. Because each of the above measures was designed to capture a different facet of forgiveness, we wanted to retain them for separate analysis. However, because we were using multiple measures that correlated highly with one another (rs ranged from .17 to .83, all ps $< .01$), we reasoned that it would also be prudent to create an aggregate index of forgiveness to reduce the risk of Type I errors in our major analyses. To create the index, we first standardized all forgiveness-related measures: the TRIM (i.e., unforgiveness), private and communicated forgiveness, personal costs and benefits of forgiveness, and forgiveness as right or deserved. We then reverse scored the measures that assessed an unforgiving stance (TRIM, costs of forgiveness) and averaged all scales together ($\alpha = .86$). Higher scores on the index indicate more forgiving attitudes.

Required conditions for forgiveness. Participants were asked to complete these items only if they had not completely forgiven the offender (212 of the 276 participants met these criteria). After reading the prompt, "In order for me to completely forgive the other person . . .", they rated responses on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 (*strongly agree*) for the following items: "s/he would have to accept responsibility for the offense," "s/he would have to offer a sincere apology," "s/he would have to undo the damage done to me," and "s/he would have to suffer some negative consequence for the offense." The first 3 items were intercorrelated (rs ranging from .38 to .91) and were combined into a single scale labeled Concessions ($M = 6.2$, $SD = 2.8$, $\alpha = .82$). Because the item on suffering negative consequences did not correlate highly with the items on acceptance of responsibility, $r(209) = .01$, or apology, $r(209) = .07$, we retained this item for separate analysis and labeled it Retribution ($M = 5.7$,

$SD = 3.2$). These measures were not included in the forgiveness index because they were relevant for only a subset of participants (those who had not completely forgiven).

Narcissistic entitlement. We included the widely used 40-item version of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) as a measure of narcissism (Raskin & Terry, 1988).[1] The NPI uses a forced-choice format with a narcissistic and a nonnarcissistic response for each item. We scored the 6-item entitlement scale proposed by Raskin and Terry (1988).[2] A sample entitlement item is, "I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve" (entitled response) versus "I take my satisfactions as they come" (nonentitled response). Descriptive statistics were as follows: full NPI, $M = 17.2$, $SD = 6.6$, $\alpha = .82$, and narcissistic entitlement, $M = 1.9$, $SD = 1.4$, $\alpha = .44$.[3]

Relationship closeness. Participants read, "How close was your relationship with the other person before the offense occurred?" and "Prior to the offense, to what extent were you committed to having a positive relationship with the other person?" Responses were rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*). The two items were highly correlated, $r(254) = .79$, $p < .001$, and were averaged to assess preoffense closeness ($M = 6.9$, $SD = 2.8$).

Apology and amends. Participants indicated the extent to which the offender had apologized or made amends to them from 1 (*no, not at all*) to 10 (*yes, totally*; $M = 4.2$, $SD = 3.5$).

Offense severity. Participants rated the extent to which the offense was morally wrong and intentional on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*). Because the two items were only moderately correlated, $r(269) = .35$, $p < .001$, we analyzed each item separately rather than combining them into a single severity index. For the morally wrong item, $M = 7.5$ ($SD = 2.6$). For the intentional item, $M = 7.2$ ($SD = 2.8$).

Religiosity. Following a procedure from Exline, Yali, and Sanderson (2000), we created a religiosity index by combining measures of religious-belief salience and religious participation. Religious-belief salience refers to the degree to which religious or spiritual beliefs influence a person's everyday life. We assessed religious-belief salience using Blaine and Crocker's (1995) measure adapted for a 10-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 10 = *strongly agree*). The religious participation measure designed by Exline et al. (2000) was abbreviated for use in this study. Participants were asked to rate how frequently they had participated in each of the following activities in the past month: praying or meditating; use of religious/spiritual books or media; attending religious/spiritual meetings; thinking about religious/spiritual issues; and talking to others about religious/spiritual issues. Items were rated from 0 (*not at all*) to 5 (*more than once a day*). Scales were scored by averaging across items. Descriptive

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[1] Although our primary interest was in narcissistic entitlement, we also wanted to see whether the residual narcissism score (with entitlement removed) would systematically predict additional variance in forgiveness. For all six studies, we reran all correlations between entitlement and forgiveness-related responses with the residual narcissism score added as a second predictor. Narcissism explained additional variance in only 2 of the 21 analyses. Therefore, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, we opted to focus only on narcissistic entitlement in the remainder of this report.

[2] We also scored all available items from the Entitled/Exploitive scale suggested by Emmons (1987) on the basis of his factor analysis of the original 54-item NPI (Raskin & Hall, 1979). Findings using the Emmons (1987) scale paralleled those using the Raskin and Terry (1988) measure, both in Study 1 and throughout the remaining studies. Because of space constraints, we report only the results using the Raskin and Terry scoring.

[3] The internal consistency figures for the Raskin and Terry (1988) entitlement measure, though clearly low, are generally consistent with prior research (Raskin & Terry, 1988). For example, Raskin and Terry reported a Guttman lambda 3 statistic of .50 for entitlement, which was low compared with the .83 reported for the NPI.

statistics were as follows: religious-belief salience, $M = 6.2$, $SD = 2.6$, $\alpha = .95$, and religious participation, $M = 2.6$, $SD = 1.0$, $\alpha = .84$. The scales were highly correlated, $r(275) = .74$, $p < .001$. Following prior research (Exline et al., 2000), the two scales were standardized and averaged to form a religiosity index.

Results and Discussion

Does Entitlement Predict Unforgiveness?

Table 1 reports correlations between narcissistic entitlement and all forgiveness-related variables. Consistent with predictions, entitlement correlated negatively with the forgiveness index. When we examined correlations with the individual forgiveness measures (see bottom section of Table 1), we found that entitlement was associated with greater unforgiveness (higher TRIM scores), less private forgiveness, less communicated forgiveness, less belief that forgiveness was morally right or deserved, more concern about the personal costs of forgiveness, and less belief that forgiveness would yield personal benefits. These results strongly support our prediction that entitlement would be associated with an unforgiving stance.

Even when we controlled for current levels of unforgiveness (TRIM scores), entitlement was still associated with seeing forgiveness as more costly, $pr(270) = .22$, $p < .001$, and as less morally right or deserved, $pr(271) = -.17$, $p < .01$. In other words, regardless of how forgiving participants actually felt, entitlement predicted less favorable attitudes about forgiveness.

Other Predictors of Forgiveness

The other hypothesized predictors of forgiveness showed the expected associations, replicating prior research.[4] Consistent with prior literature, forgiveness was positively associated with the presence of apology, $r(268) = .42$, $p < .001$; preoffense closeness, $r(268) = .38$, $p < .001$; and religiosity, $r(275) = .28$, $p < .001$.

Table 1

Study 1: Simple and Partial Correlations Between Narcissistic Entitlement and Forgiveness Measures

Measure	Narcissistic entitlement	
	r	pr^a
Forgiveness index[b]	−.35***	−.29***
Individual forgiveness measures		
Unforgiveness (TRIM)	.26***	.20**
Private forgiveness	−.32***	−.26***
Communicated forgiveness	−.19**	−.10†
Forgiveness right or deserved	−.29***	−.20**
Personal costs of forgiving	.28***	.25***
Personal benefits of forgiving	−.24***	−.16*

Note. TRIM = Transgression Relevant Interpersonal Motivations Inventory.
[a] The following variables were held constant to obtain partial correlations: wrongness, intentionality, apology, pre-offense closeness, religiosity, and gender.   [b] The following variables were standardized and combined to form the forgiveness index: the TRIM (reverse scored), private forgiveness, communicated forgiveness, forgiveness right or deserved, personal costs of forgiving (reverse scored), and personal benefits of forgiving ($\alpha = .86$).
† $p < .10$.   * $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$.

Forgiveness was negatively associated with offense severity—that is, perceptions that offenses were intentional, $r(269) = -.31$, $p < .001$, and morally wrong, $r(269) = -.26$, $p < .001$. Reports of forgiveness were slightly higher among women ($M = 0.1$, $SD = 0.8$) than among men ($M = -0.1$, $SD = 0.7$), $t(267) = 2.59$, $p = .01$.

Entitlement was associated with lower levels of religiosity, $r(275) = -.17$, $p < .01$; marginally lower relationship closeness, $r(268) = -.10$, $p < .10$; and marginally lower reports of apologies received, $r(268) = -.12$, $p < .10$. It was not associated with offense wrongness, $r(269) = .08$, *ns,* or intentionality, $r(269) = .06$, *ns.*

Does the Entitlement–Unforgiveness Link Remain When Other Robust Predictors Are Controlled?

Our main reason for including the other forgiveness predictors was to address a specific question: Would entitlement continue to predict unforgiving attitudes even when all of these robust predictors were held constant? This speaks to the broader theoretical question of whether entitlement is a separate factor contributing to unforgiveness, as opposed to being mediated by these other, better established predictors. As shown in the partial correlations reported in Table 1, the general pattern linking entitlement with unforgiveness remained significant when we controlled for offense severity (wrongness and intentionality), apology, relationship closeness, religiosity, and gender. Entitlement showed a highly significant partial correlation with the forgiveness index (see top of Table 1). More specifically, entitlement continued to predict more unforgiveness, less private forgiveness, less perception of forgiveness as right or deserved, more perceived costs of forgiving, and fewer perceived benefits of forgiving. The only exception to the pattern was the association with communicated forgiveness, which dropped to marginal significance. Taken together, the results of these conservative tests suggest strong support for our hypothesis: Entitlement appears to be a substantial, independent predictor of unforgiveness in cases involving a specific past offense.[5]

Do Entitled People Require Repayment in Order to Forgive?

By definition, individuals with a high sense of entitlement should be preoccupied with collecting on debts owed to them. In situations involving transgression, this debt-collecting focus should translate into an insistence on repayment before forgiving. We therefore predicted that higher entitlement would be associated with a decision to make forgiveness contingent on repayment—either through punishments for the offender or concessions for the self. We assessed these contingencies for forgiveness among the

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[4] We do not report every correlation involving these variables because doing so would require including a large, cumbersome correlation matrix with only peripheral relevance to our hypotheses. In the interest of space constraints, we simply report the correlations of each of these variables with the forgiveness index. We use a similar reporting pattern throughout the article.

[5] We also used hierarchical regression to test for interactions between entitlement and each of the other predictors. None of the interactions were significant.

participants who had not completely forgiven their offenders ($n =$ 212 out of 276). Generally speaking, these participants were more likely to insist on concessions as a prerequisite for forgiveness ($M = 6.2$, $SD = 2.8$) than to insist that their offenders suffer punishment ($M = 5.7$, $SD = 3.2$), $F(1, 210) = 4.34$ (Wilks's $\lambda =$ .98, $p < .05$). Entitlement showed a small but significant correlation with insistence on punishment for offenders, $r(210) = .16$, $p < .05$. Also, in cases in which participants had not received any concessions (i.e., apology or amends), insistence on concessions before forgiving correlated positively with entitlement, $r(109) =$ .30, $p < .01$. These findings offered preliminary support for the idea that entitled persons tend to make forgiveness contingent on repayment, an idea that we explored further in Studies 2 and 3.

Summary

Study 1 revealed that narcissistic entitlement is a substantial predictor of unforgiving responses to real-life transgressions. The entitlement–unforgiveness association held even when we controlled for other robust predictors of forgiveness: offense severity, apology, relationship closeness and commitment prior to the offense, and religiosity. Study 1 also suggested that entitled narcissists may have principled objections to forgiveness: Even when we controlled for the extent of actual forgiveness, entitlement predicted less belief that forgiveness was morally right and greater insistence on repayment before being willing to forgive. We examined both of these issues more closely in Study 2.

Study 2: Responses to Five Standardized Transgression Incidents

Study 2 was designed to focus on judgments about the appropriateness and likelihood of forgiveness across five different transgression situations. By using standardized transgression incidents, we were able to directly control contextual factors that were allowed to vary in Study 1 (e.g., offense type and severity, relationship closeness, and apology). Another advantage of using hypothetical situations to study forgiveness-related judgments is that scenarios are unlikely to provide the same level of emotional involvement as real-life transgressions. By removing the emotional noise of naturalistic transgression situations, scenarios provide a good context in which to examine "cold" cognitive judgments about when forgiveness is appropriate. By looking at participant responses across five different situations, we sought to obtain a reasonably stable, trait-like assessment of people's opinions about the appropriateness of forgiveness.

We also designed Study 2 to complement and extend Study 1 in three other ways. First, Study 1 was based on retrospective recall of naturalistic transgressions. This approach provided good external validity, but it also had the tradeoff of not allowing us to see how different participants would react when faced with standardized situations. Granted, it is noteworthy that entitlement showed clear associations with unforgiveness when we only sampled a single incident. Nonetheless (and second), we wanted to see whether the entitlement–unforgiveness link would remain when we used multiple transgressions. Third, we wanted to control for self-esteem, both because of its likely overlap with narcissism (e.g., Campbell et al., 2002) and because research has revealed

positive associations between self-esteem and forgiveness (e.g., Miller, 2003).

On the basis of the results of Study 1, we predicted that entitlement would be associated with (a) fewer beliefs that one should or would forgive across the five situations and (b) greater insistence on repayment (concessions and retribution) before being willing to grant forgiveness. A secondary set of hypotheses stemmed from recent research suggesting that narcissists—particularly those scoring high on the entitled/exploiting dimension—are more frequently offended than other people (McCullough, Emmons, et al., 2003). We predicted that when faced with identical situations, highly entitled people would perceive the situations as more offensive than other people.

Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduates (91 men, 72 women) enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a private, urban research university in Ohio. All received partial course credit for participation. The average age was 18.8 years ($SD = 2.4$), and virtually all (99%) were single. Ethnicities were as follows: European American or Caucasian (72%), Asian (21%), African American (5%), Hispanic (2%), Middle Eastern (2%), and Native American (1%), as well as 4% of participants who identified their ethnicity as "other or mixed." Religious affiliations were as follows: Protestant (30%), Catholic (23%), Hindu (7%), Jewish (3%), Buddhist (3%), Muslim (2%), Eastern Orthodox (2%), Taoist (1%), atheist/agnostic (12%), no religion (12%), unsure (4%), and other (4%). (For both ethnicity and religiosity, percentages exceed 100% because participants selected multiple options as appropriate.)

Procedure

Participants completed a questionnaire for partial course credit. Participants first read a definition of forgiveness, which paralleled the definition of private forgiveness from Study 1. They then read five counterbalanced transgression scenarios and answered questions about their opinions and probable responses for each situation. After completing the scenarios, participants completed demographic and dispositional measures.

Measures

Transgression scenarios. All scenarios were adapted from the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness (TNTF; Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Connor, & Wade, 2001), a well-validated instrument assessing the likelihood that participants would forgive five hypothetical transgressions. Sample transgressions involved plagiarism of a class paper and revealing a personal secret to peers in a gossip situation. Participants were asked to read each scenario and to imagine themselves as the offended party in each situation. The five scenarios were stapled in random order to prevent any bias due to order effects. Because our interest was in a person's overall response across the five situations, we collapsed results across the five scenarios rather than analyzing each one separately. This collapsing across scenarios is consistent with the original use of the measure (Berry et al., 2001). Because we were interested in whether people would require amends in order to forgive, we systematically deleted all information about the presence or absence of apology from each scenario. Also, the original TNTF asked participants only about the extent to which they would forgive, whereas we were interested in the perceived offensiveness of the actions and beliefs about whether forgiveness should be granted under various conditions. We thus tailored the TNTF by adding a series of response items for each scenario. We describe these items below.

Perceived offensiveness. Participants were asked, "If this were to happen to you, to what extent do you think you would feel . . . ." They then rated from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*) the extent to which they would feel insulted, offended, disrespected, angry, hurt, wounded, upset, and vengeful. Cronbach's alphas within each scenario ranged from .84 to .91. A total negative emotion score was computed by averaging across the five scenarios ($M = 6.4$, $SD = 1.6$, $\alpha = .83$). Participants used the same 0–10 scale to rate offense severity (across the five scenarios, $M = 6.7$, $SD = 1.7$, $\alpha = .69$) and the level of perceived injustice associated with each offense (across the five scenarios, $M = 6.7$, $SD = 1.6$, $\alpha = .66$). Because the three scales were highly intercorrelated (correlations ranging from .72 to .80 across the four scenarios) and to reduce the risk of Type I error, we averaged them to form an index of the degree to which participants saw the acts as offensive ($M = 6.6$, $SD = 1.5$, $\alpha = .90$).

Forgiveness-related motives. Using a 10-point scale (0 = *no, definitely not* to 10 = *yes, definitely*), participants rated the extent to which they should forgive and the extent to which they would actually forgive. They answered these questions under two counterbalanced conditions: if they received an apology and if they did not. The four items showed high internal consistency within scenarios, with alphas ranging from .88 to .91. We therefore combined the four items (across the five scenarios) into a single index of proforgiveness motives ($M = 5.3$, $SD = 2.2$, $\alpha = .88$).

Required conditions for forgiveness. After being reminded of the definition of forgiveness, participants read the following prompt: "Before trying to forgive in this type of situation, do you think that you would insist on . . . ." They then responded to a series of 12 items on a scale from 0 (*no, definitely not*) to 10 (*yes, definitely*). After computing the mean for each of the 12 items across the five situations, we ran a maximum-likelihood factor analysis using promax rotation to allow for intercorrelation between the factors. Results suggested creation of two factors. The first, which we labeled Insistence on Concessions ($M = 6.8$, $SD = 1.9$, $\alpha = .92$, eigenvalue = 6.8; 56.5% of variance), contained these seven items: an explanation for why the offense occurred, acknowledgement of fault or responsibility by the other person, a sincere apology, request for forgiveness by the other person, assurance that your dignity would be restored, assurance that your reputation would be restored, and assurance that the other person respected you. Within each scenario, alphas ranged from .82 to .88 for these concession-related items. Across scenarios, alpha for the Concessions subscale was .90. The second subscale, which we labeled Insistence on Retribution ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 2.0$, $\alpha = .83$, eigenvalue = 1.5; 12.6% of variance), contained two items: some sort of punishment for the other person and getting revenge. Within each scenario, alphas for Retribution ranged from .57 to .83. Across scenarios, the alpha for Retribution was .84. The correlation between the Concessions and Retribution subscales was high, $r(165) = .54$, $p < .001$. We thus averaged the Concessions and Retribution scores to form an index of the degree to which a person would insist on repayment before forgiving ($M = 5.1$, $SD = 1.7$, $\alpha = .70$).

Individual differences: Religiosity, entitlement, and self-esteem. Participants completed the same religiosity and entitlement measures used in Study 1. We also added a measure of self-esteem: the widely used inventory by Rosenberg (1965, 1979). The version used in this study contained 10 items rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). A sample item is "I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others." The scale is scored by summing across items. Descriptive statistics were as follows: self-esteem, $M = 38.9$, $SD = 8.6$, $\alpha = .92$; narcissistic entitlement, $M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.5$, $\alpha = .60$; religious-belief salience: $M = 5.7$, $SD = 3.3$, $\alpha = .96$; and religious participation: $M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.2$, $\alpha = .87$. As in Study 1, religious-belief salience and religious participation were standardized and averaged to form a religiosity index, $\alpha = .84$.

Results and Discussion

Is Entitlement Associated With Less Forgiving Attitudes?

As shown in Table 2, entitlement was associated with an offended and unforgiving stance. Entitlement was linked with greater perceptions of offense, lower levels of proforgiveness motivations, and greater insistence on repayment.

Will Entitlement Predict Less Forgiving Attitudes When Other Predictors Are Controlled?

Consistent with predictions, religiosity predicted greater proforgiveness motivations, $r(163) = .26$, $p < .01$. Self-esteem predicted marginally less insistence on repayment, $r(163) = -.15$, $p < .10$. When compared with men, women rated the incidents more offensive (for men, $M = 6.2$, $SD = 1.5$; for women, $M = 7.1$, $SD = 1.35$), $t(161) = 3.86$, $p < .001$, and were more likely to say that they would insist on repayment before forgiving (for men, $M = 4.8$, $SD = 1.8$; for women, $M = 5.4$, $SD = 1.6$), $t(161) = 2.30$, $p < .05$. Women also reported marginally lower proforgiveness motives ($M = 5.0$, $SD = 2.2$) than men ($M = 5.6$, $SD = 2.1$), $t(161) = 1.93$, $p < .10$. Entitlement did not correlate significantly with gender, self-esteem, or religiosity, all $rs < .12$, ns.

As in Study 1, our primary purpose in including these other predictors of forgiveness was to use them as covariates. We again wanted to run a conservative test to determine whether entitlement would continue to predict offended, unforgiving responses when these other major predictors were taken into account. As shown in the partial correlation (*pr*) column in Table 2, all significant associations between entitlement and unforgiving responses remained significant when religiosity, self-esteem, and gender were held constant. These findings extend those obtained in Study 1: Entitlement is associated not only with less forgiving attitudes about real-life offenses; it is also associated with less forgiving attitudes about hypothetical, standardized offenses. Specifically, entitlement predicts greater readiness to take offense, less belief that forgiveness is appropriate, and greater insistence on repayment before being willing to forgive.

As described above, narcissistic entitlement was associated with greater perception that the acts described in the scenarios were offensive. This finding complements results of other recent research suggesting that entitled narcissists are more frequently offended than other people (McCullough, Emmons, et al., 2003). Yet, even when we controlled for perceived offen-

Table 2

Study 2: Simple and Partial Correlations Between Narcissistic Entitlement and Forgiveness Measures

Measure	Narcissistic entitlement	
	r	*pr*[a]
Perceived offensiveness	.19*	.18*
Proforgiveness motives	−.19*	−.17*
Insistence on repayment	.25**	.25**

[a] Religiosity, self-esteem, and gender were held constant in all partial correlations.
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.

siveness (using the combined index), we still found significant associations between entitlement and insistence on repayment before forgiving, $pr(160) = .17$, $p < .05$. In other words, an entitled attitude was associated with more desire for repayment even when we accounted for the greater tendency of entitled persons to find the acts offensive.

Summary

Study 2 revealed that entitlement was associated with an unforgiving stance across five hypothetical situations. Not only are entitled people less forgiving of offenses against themselves (Study 1), but they also appear less inclined to believe that forgiveness is appropriate in general. Entitlement was associated with greater readiness to take offense and less belief that forgiveness was appropriate, even when we controlled for other predictors such as self-esteem, gender, and religiosity. The link between entitlement and demands for repayment remained significant even when we controlled for entitled persons' readiness to take offense.

Study 3: Propensities to Forgive and Opinions About Unconditional Forgiveness

Even though Studies 1 and 2 assessed responses to many different types of transgressions, it remained possible that there was something distinctive about those situations that caused entitled people to appear especially unforgiving. Study 3 was designed to examine whether the entitlement–unforgiveness link would extend to general opinions and dispositions regarding forgiveness, ones not specific to a particular transgression context. Study 3 also addressed two other issues. First, religions vary in the degree of emphasis they place on forgiveness (see, e.g., Cohen, 2003; Rye et al., 2000; Schimmel, 2002). We therefore reasoned that regardless of a person's religiosity level, opinions and propensities regarding forgiveness might be influenced by the degree of emphasis placed on forgiveness within one's religion. We also wanted to account for social desirability concerns because it seemed likely that social desirability would be associated with lower entitlement scores and higher scores on self-report measures of dispositional forgiveness.

Our basic analysis framework paralleled those of Studies 1 and 2: We predicted that entitlement would correlate negatively with forgiving dispositions and personal favoring of unconditional forgiveness. Furthermore, we predicted that these associations would remain even when we controlled for the influence of religiosity, religious teachings, and social desirability. We also controlled for gender, as in Studies 1 and 2.

Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduates (83 men, 72 women) in an introductory psychology course at a private, urban research university in Ohio. All received partial course credit for participation. The average age was 18.9 years ($SD = 1.3$). All were single. Ethnicities were as follows: European American (79%), Asian (16%), African American (3%), Middle Eastern (3%), and Native American (1%), as well as 1% who identified ethnicity as "other or mixed." Religious affiliations were as follows: Protestant (32%),

Catholic (30%), Hindu (3%), Jewish (6%), Buddhist (2%), Muslim (2%), Eastern Orthodox (1%), New Age (1%), Taoist (1%), atheist/agnostic (12%), no religion (7%), unsure (5%), and other (4%). (For ethnicity and religiosity, percentages exceed 100% because participants selected multiple options as appropriate.)

Procedure

As part of a larger study on transgression in relationships, participants completed measures of dispositional forgiveness, religiosity, religious emphasis on forgiveness, and personal beliefs about when forgiveness should be granted.

Measures

Dispositional tendency to forgive. Dispositional tendencies to forgive were assessed using a 10-item inventory by Berry et al. (in press). A sample item is, "I can forgive a friend for almost anything." We scored the scale by averaging across items ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.6$, $\alpha = .78$).

Favoring of unconditional versus conditional forgiveness. Participants responded to nine items, each of which was rated on a scale from 0 to 10. Participants were asked to focus on their personal opinions, regardless of what their religious or spiritual tradition (if any) might teach. Participants read the prompt, "In my personal opinion, people should forgive others . . ." followed by nine items with the following anchors: "for only certain types of offenses" versus "for all types of offenses," "only if the offender apologizes" versus "even if the offender does not apologize," "only if there's no chance of being harmed again" versus "even if there's a chance of being harmed again," "only if the offender accepts responsibility" versus "even if the offender does not accept responsibility," "only if the offender asks for forgiveness" versus "even if the offender does not ask for forgiveness," "a limited number of times" versus "an unlimited number of times," "only if they trust the offender" versus "even if they do not trust the offender," "only in certain types of relationships" versus "in all types of relationships," and "only under certain conditions" versus "under any and all conditions." Maximum-likelihood factor analysis with promax rotation suggested that all items loaded on a single factor, which we labeled Favoring of Unconditional Forgiveness ($M = 5.9$, $SD = 2.4$, $\alpha = .96$, eigenvalue = 6.3; 70% of variance explained).

Narcissistic entitlement and religiosity. We assessed entitlement and religiosity using the same measures from Studies 1 and 2. For entitlement, $M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.5$, and $\alpha = .57$. Religious-belief salience scores ($M = 6.0$, $SD = 3.4$, $\alpha = .96$) were standardized, as were religious participation scores ($M = 2.6$, $SD = 1.2$, $\alpha = .88$). The two religion variables correlated highly, $r(152) = .75$, $p < .001$. We made a religiosity index by averaging the standardized variables.

Religious emphasis on forgiveness. Participants were asked to respond to four items only if they had some religious or spiritual belief or affiliation. They rated from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*), (a) "Is forgiveness emphasized by your religious/spiritual tradition?" (b) "Does your religious/ spiritual tradition teach you to value forgiveness?"(c) "Are people in your religious/spiritual tradition encouraged to forgive?" and (d) "Does your religious/spiritual tradition view forgiveness as a virtue?" The scale was scored by averaging across items ($M = 9.0$, $SD = 1.6$, $\alpha = .96$).

Social desirability. We assessed social desirability using the 13-item version of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Reynolds, 1982). A sample item is, "I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings." Participants responded to items in a true–false format. Reliability estimates and validation data appear in Reynolds (1982), where the version used in this study is listed as Form C. The scale is scored by summing across items ($M = 4.5$, $SD = 2.4$, $\alpha = .64$).

Results and Discussion

Is Entitlement Associated With Lower Propensity to Forgive and Less Favoring of Unconditional Forgiveness?

Results conformed to predictions: Narcissistic entitlement was linked with a lower propensity to forgive, $r(132) = -.33$, $p < .001$, and with less personal belief that unconditional forgiveness was appropriate, $r(132) = -.32$, $p < .001$.

Does the Entitlement–Unforgiving Attitude Link Remain When Other Predictors Are Controlled?

Correlations with the hypothesized predictors of forgiveness generally conformed to predictions. Religiosity showed strong associations with both trait propensity to forgive, $r(152) = .28$, $p < .01$, and favoring of unconditional forgiveness, $r(152) = .54$, $p < .001$. Religious emphasis on forgiveness showed a marginal positive association with trait propensity to forgive, $r(123) = .16$, $p < .10$, and a significant positive association with favoring of unconditional forgiveness, $r(123) = .22$, $p < .05$. Social desirability correlated positively with both trait propensity to forgive, $r(154) = .39$, $p < .001$, and favoring of unconditional forgiveness, $r(154) = .18$, $p < .05$. Women were also more likely than men to favor unconditional forgiveness (for men, $M = 5.3$, $SD = 2.2$; for women, $M = 6.5$, $SD = 2.5$), $t(152) = 3.20$, $p < .01$.

Entitlement scores were marginally higher in men ($M = 1.9$, $SD = 1.5$) than in women ($M = 1.5$, $SD = 1.4$), $t(151) = 1.78$, $p < .10$. Entitlement was associated with lower social desirability, $r(152) = -.17$, $p < .05$, and marginally lower religiosity, $r(150) = -.14$, $p < .10$. The association between entitlement and religious emphasis on forgiveness was not significant, $r(126) = -.14$, ns.

As in Studies 1 and 2, we wanted to conduct a conservative test: Would entitlement continue to predict less forgiving dispositions when religiosity, religious emphasis on forgiveness, social desirability, and gender were taken into account? This hypothesis was strongly supported: Entitlement continued to predict a lower propensity to forgive, $pr(114) = -.24$, $p < .01$, and less favoring of unconditional forgiveness, $pr(114) = -.21$, $p < .05$.

Summary

Study 3 extended the entitlement–unforgiveness findings from Studies 1 and 2 to the level of broad dispositions and abstract principles regarding forgiveness. Entitlement was associated with less propensity to forgive and with a less favorable view of unconditional forgiveness. Results from Study 3 ensure that the entitlement–unforgiveness links in Studies 1 and 2 were not specific to the types of transgression situations sampled in those studies. We were also able to ensure that the entitlement–unforgiveness associations were not simply a reflection of social desirability or of the degree to which forgiveness was emphasized within one's religion.

Study 4: Associations With the Big Five Factors of Personality

Prior research has demonstrated links between forgiveness and the Big Five factors of personality (e.g., Brown, 2003; McCul-lough, Bellah, et al., 2001; McCullough & Hoyt, 2003; Symington et al., 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). Furthermore, studies have suggested that narcissistic entitlement has links with the Big Five as well. For example, research suggests that narcissistic entitlement is associated with low Agreeableness and high Extraversion (e.g., Bradlee & Emmons, 1992; Campbell et al., 2004). Given that both entitlement and forgiveness are associated with the Big Five (particularly Agreeableness), it is important to see whether the association between entitlement and unforgiveness is mediated by Agreeableness or other Big Five constructs.

Method

Overview

Study 4 made use of two overlapping samples of Introductory Psychology students. We assessed the Big Five factors, narcissism, and dispositional forgiveness in an Internet-based screening study containing a series of individual-difference measures. One major purpose of this screening study was to allow matching with other studies being run during the semester. If students granted permission, we were able to link their individual-difference measures from the screening study to their measures in other studies from that semester. This prevented redundancy in the administration of measures that would otherwise be repeated in many studies. We assessed situational forgiveness in a separate, laboratory-based study. The situational forgiveness analyses included a smaller group of students ($n = 53$) who participated in both studies and granted us their permission to combine their data across studies.

Participants

Participants were undergraduates in an Introductory Psychology course at a private research university in Ohio. All received partial course credit for participation. The larger screening sample consisted of 241 undergraduates (118 men; 123 women) with a mean age of 19.0 years ($SD = 2.5$). Ethnicities were as follows: European American (66%), Asian American (20%), African American (4%), Latin American (1%), and other (9%). The subsample who participated in the forgiveness study included 53 undergraduates (19 men; 34 women) with a mean age of 18.8 years ($SD = 2.1$).

Procedure

Participants in the screening sample picked up a consent form to take home. The form provided the address of the study Web site and a unique code for each participant to use to access the survey. The survey, which contained a series of individual-difference measures, included measures of narcissism, dispositional forgiveness, and the Big Five factors of personality.

Participants in the forgiveness study reported to the laboratory and were seated in private rooms. After completing a brief background questionnaire, they were given another questionnaire asking them to recall a time in which someone had seriously hurt or offended them. They were asked to describe the experience in writing and to answer questions about the offense. The measure of forgiveness-related motivations was included in the questionnaire.

Measures

Dispositional forgiveness. The screening questionnaire used the same 10-item measure from Study 3 (Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, in press) to assess dispositional forgiveness ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 0.7$, $\alpha = .81$).

Unforgiving and benevolent motivations. As part of the smaller forgiveness study, participants completed the TRIM–18–R (McCullough &

Hoyt, 2002). This was the same measure that was used in Study 1. Participants completed the measure with respect to a specific interpersonal offense that they focused on throughout the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were as follows: $M = 2.5$, $SD = 0.9$, and $\alpha = .80$.

Big Five. The screening questionnaire included the BFI-54 (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) to assess the Big Five factors. Participants are asked to indicate how well each of the 54 statements described them, using a scale from 1 (*rarely or never*) to 5 (*very often*). We scored the scale by averaging across items. Descriptive statistics were as follows: Extraversion, $M = 3.1$, $SD = 0.6$, $\alpha = .85$; Agreeableness, $M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.5$, $\alpha = .78$; Openness, $M = 3.4$, $SD = 0.5$, $\alpha = .84$; Neuroticism, $M = 2.9$, $SD = 0.7$, $\alpha = .86$; and Conscientiousness, $M = 3.4$, $SD = 0.5$, $\alpha = .79$.

Entitlement. Entitlement was assessed using the same NPI subscale used in Studies 1–3, $M = 1.8$, $SD = 1.4$, $\alpha = .56$.

Results and Discussion

Is Entitlement Associated With the Big Five?

Entitlement correlated negatively with Agreeableness, $r(241) = -.33$, $p < .001$, and Neuroticism, $r(241) = -.13$, $p < .05$. Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Openness to Experience were not associated with entitlement, rs ranging from .02 to .10 in magnitude, *ns*.

Predicting Dispositional Forgiveness

Entitlement predicted lower dispositional forgiveness in the screening study, $r(241) = -.33$, $p < .001$. We examined the Big Five factors next. Dispositional forgiveness showed a positive association with Agreeableness, $r(241) = .65$, $p < .001$. Dispositional forgiveness was also linked with low Neuroticism, $r(241) = -.44$, $p < .001$; greater Openness to Experience, $r(241) = .27$, $p < .001$; and greater Conscientiousness, $r(241) = .13$, $p < .05$. When considered together, the Big Five factors accounted for 48% of the variance in dispositional forgiveness.

When we controlled for the Big Five factors, the association between entitlement and dispositional forgiveness remained statistically significant but small in magnitude, $pr(234) = -.16$, $p < .05$. Supplemental analyses clarified that the association between entitlement and dispositional forgiveness was largely, albeit partially, explained through its association with Agreeableness. We ran a hierarchical regression predicting dispositional forgiveness with entitlement entered on the first step ($R^2_{model} = .11$, $p < .001$; $\beta = -.33$, $p < .001$). When we included Agreeableness on the second step, the contribution of Agreeableness was highly significant, $\beta = .61$, $p < .001$. The contribution of entitlement, though still significant, was small, $\beta = -.13$, $p < .05$.

Predicting Situational Forgiveness

A different picture emerged when we looked at forgiveness for a specific offense, as assessed in the smaller forgiveness study. Entitlement predicted less forgiving motivations as measured by higher TRIM scores, $r(53) = .28$, $p < .05$. When the Big Five factors were entered into a simultaneous multiple regression predicting TRIM scores, they accounted for 17% of the variance in TRIM scores. TRIM scores were associated with lower Openness to Experience ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .05$) and marginally higher Extraversion ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$). TRIM scores were not associated with Agreeableness, $\beta = .02$, *ns*. Consistent with predictions, entitle-

ment continued to predict higher TRIM scores (i.e., unforgiving motivations) when the Big Five factors were taken into account, $pr(46) = .34$, $p < .05$.

Summary

Taken together, the results of Study 4 suggest that the associations between the Big Five, entitlement, and forgiveness depend in part on which facet of forgiveness is being tapped. When we simply asked people to report how forgiving they were at a dispositional level, entitlement did predict lower ratings (as in Studies 2 and 3). Agreeableness was a particularly strong predictor of dispositional forgiveness, partly subsuming the role of entitlement. Nonetheless, entitlement still predicted a significant (albeit small) amount of variance when Agreeableness and the other Big Five factors were controlled. When we looked at forgiveness-related motivations in a specific situation, the predictive power of entitlement emerged more sharply. In this case, entitlement remained a clear predictor of unforgiveness (i.e., TRIM scores), even when Agreeableness and the other Big Five factors were taken into account.

Study 5: Forgiveness in a Laboratory Context

Studies 1–4 suggested a clear, consistent link between entitlement and self-reported unforgiving attitudes. Our aim in Study 5 was to see whether entitlement would predict unforgiving attitudes and behaviors in a real-time, controlled laboratory context. As in the prior studies, we also wanted to see whether these associations would hold when we controlled for factors such as gender, self-esteem, and religiosity.

To create an offense context in the laboratory, we used a variation of the Prisoner's Dilemma, a game often used in research on conflict resolution (e.g., Axelrod, 1980; Komorita, Hilty, & Parks, 1991). The game consists of a series of turns in which two players must decide whether to cooperate with one another or to defect (i.e., to not cooperate). Choices are made simultaneously so that neither player knows in advance what the other player will choose. The object is to win as many points as possible. Our dyadic, 10-turn version of the game used the following point distribution: On any given turn, if both partners cooperate, they win a moderate amount of points (4). If both defect, they both lose a small amount of points (2). However, if one cooperates while the other defects, the defector wins a large amount of points (8), whereas the cooperator loses a moderate amount of points (5). In the long run, the optimal strategy is for both participants to cooperate. However, participants can obtain the largest immediate gains for themselves by defecting against a cooperative partner. By observing behavior in the Prisoner's Dilemma, researchers can gain knowledge about forgiveness as well as trust, greed, competitiveness, and altruism.

In a pilot study using a computerized "partner" that participants believed was another actual player (Exline & Baumeister, 1998), we confirmed that having the partner defect on the first turn led participants to defect more on the remaining nine turns, and they ultimately earned fewer points in the game. In other words, we confirmed that starting with an initial defection by the partner set the stage for a relatively antagonistic encounter. Yet, although participants did defect more against partners who initially defected

against them, their self-reports indicated that they did not feel particularly offended by these defecting partners. In the current study, we wanted to use the same Prisoner's Dilemma paradigm while increasing the odds that participants would feel offended. To accomplish this, we added a message component so that participants would receive an antagonistic message halfway through the game. Our reasoning was as follows. First, a negative message should increase the odds that participants would feel offended. Second, by coding the affective tone of replies to this negative message, we could obtain an additional, real-time measure of forgiveness-related responses.

Our pilot study (Exline & Baumeister, 1998) also revealed some potential problems with using defection in the Prisoner's Dilemma as the sole measure of forgiveness. Defection might indeed stem from hostility, but not necessarily. Individuals might also defect because they do not trust the other party or simply because they have a competitive desire to win the game. Consistent with this reasoning, when participants were asked to rate a list of adjectives to describe their current attitudes and their behavior in the game, those who defected frequently indicated greater mistrust of the partner. They also rated their behavior in the game as competitive and strong but not necessarily as hostile.

As we learned about these multiple meanings of defection in the Prisoner's Dilemma, we saw the importance of including additional variables that would tap forgiveness more directly. As described above, we coded the level of hostility in the response sent to the partner. We also asked participants about their positive and negative feelings toward the other player after the game. Finally, we added a money allocation measure. Prior research suggests that resource allocation procedures can be a useful way to assess retributive motives after offenses have been committed (e.g., Gallucci & Perugini, 2000; Turillo, Folger, Lavelle, Umphress, & Gee, 2002). We therefore added a money allocation procedure as a behavioral indicator of forgiveness.

Method

Participants

Participants were 120 undergraduates (61 men, 59 women) enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a large state university in the Midwestern United States. All received partial course credit for participation. The average age was 19.6 years ($SD = 1.9$). Ethnicities were as follows: European American or Caucasian (85%), Asian (5%), African American (3%), Latino or Hispanic (2%), and other (4%). Eight participants showed suspicion of study hypotheses or procedures and were deleted from the sample.

Procedure

Prisoner's Dilemma game. After arriving at the laboratory in same-gender groups of 2 or 4 persons, participants were directed to separate rooms. Once in their rooms, participants completed a background questionnaire containing individual-difference measures (including narcissism). They were then led to believe that they would play a computerized, 10-trial version of the Prisoner's Dilemma game with one of the other participants. On any given turn, players had the option of cooperating with the partner or defecting (i.e., not cooperating). The point distributions on each turn were as follows. If both players cooperated, both would receive 4 points. If both defected, both would lose 2 points. If one player cooperated while the other defected, the one who cooperated would lose 5 points while the

defector would win 8 points. Participants were told that they would be paid $0.20 for each point earned in the game. After hearing the instructions, participants started the game when signaled by the experimenter.

Although participants were led to believe that they were playing 10 trials against another same-gender participant, they were actually playing against the computer. In designing the programmed strategy, we had three main goals. First, we wanted to ensure that the programmed strategy was moderately antagonistic but not so antagonistic as to create a ceiling effect, pressing all participants into a continuous string of defections. We set the program to defect on Turns 1 and 10 to ensure that the game started and ended on an antagonistic note, and we also added one additional defection late in the game (Turn 7) to keep the tone at least moderately antagonistic. This strategy worked well in the pilot study (Exline & Baumeister, 1998). Second, we wanted to avoid having the participants win the game. Our goal was to have participants feel offended and frustrated so that we could assess forgiveness-related responses, and we reasoned that a competitive success would change the affective tone of the situation. We therefore needed to design the program so that participants who defected frequently would not win the game. Because some participants might defect on every turn, we needed to design the program so that such participants would not win. Third, we wanted the strategy to be as realistic as possible, one that seemed appropriately responsive to the strategies used by each participant.

To promote realism and to protect against having high-frequency defectors win the game, we set the program to follow a "tit-for-tat" strategy on the remaining 7 turns (all except 1, 7, and 10). In a tit-for-tat strategy (see Axelrod, 1980), the program simply echoes the response (cooperate or defect) that the participant selected on the prior turn. One tradeoff of this responsive design is that some participants are exposed to more defections by the program than others. Those who frequently cooperate get more cooperation from their computerized partner, and those who frequently defect get more defection in response. To address this issue statistically, we controlled for the number of defections by the (computerized) partner in our partial correlations (see Table 3).

Electronic message. Prior to the game, participants were told that they would exchange an electronic message with the other player in the middle of the game. Immediately after the fifth turn, participants received a negative message from the other player. We wanted this message to be somewhat antagonistic but not so antagonistic that it would raise suspicion if the game had been proceeding in a relatively friendly manner up to that

Table 3

Study 5: Simple and Partial Correlations Between Narcissistic Entitlement and Forgiveness Measures

Measure	Narcissistic entitlement	
	r	pr[a]
Affective tone of reply to partner[b]	−.20*	−.22*
Money allocated to partner	−.21*	−.20*
Negative attitudes toward partner	.15	.22*
Positive attitudes toward partner	−.07	−.05
Defections after message (Turns 6–10)	.02	—

[a] Religiosity, gender, self-esteem, and ratings of affective tone of other's message were held constant. For the variable assessing the affective tone of the reply to partner, the quantity of defections by self and other in the first five turns (prior to message) were also held constant. For the postgame measures (attitudes toward partner and money allocated to partner), total defections by self and other during the game were held constant.   [b] Higher numbers indicate more positive affective tone.
* $p < .05$.

point. The message read, "Is that the best you've got?"[6] The message appeared on the screen letter by letter, as though it were being typed in real time by the other player. Participants were required to type a response to the other player before the game would continue.

Postgame questionnaire and money allocation. After the game, participants received a questionnaire asking about their behavior during the game and their current feelings toward the partner. They were then asked to allocate money to the partner (see details in the *Measures* section).

Measures

Written response to other player's message. After receiving the negative message after Turn 5, participants sent a reply. Two trained coders rated the affective tone of these replies on a scale from 1 (*very negative*) to 10 (*very positive*). After ensuring that interrater reliability was adequate by using an intraclass correlation (see Shrout & Fleiss, 1979) of $r(111) = .82$, $p < .001$, we averaged the two ratings together to form a single index of affective tone, $M = 4.1$ ($SD = 1.6$).

Defections in Prisoner's Dilemma. We assessed the number of defections over the 10 trials of the Prisoner's Dilemma game, $M = 6.1$ ($SD = 2.1$). We were particularly interested in the number of defections in the last 5 turns (those following the negative message), $M = 3.5$ ($SD = 1.2$). On average, the preprogrammed strategy defected 7.0 times ($SD = 1.6$) and defected 4.0 times ($SD = 0.9$) out of the last 5 turns.

Self-reported attitudes after game. After the game, participants read 22 words and rated from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*) the extent to which each word described their current feelings toward the other player. Maximum-likelihood factor analysis with varimax rotation suggested creation of two forgiveness-related scales. The first scale, which assessed positive attitudes toward the other player, contained the following seven items: friendly, kind, forgiving, trusting, warm, supportive, and caring. Descriptive statistics were as follows: $M = 4.6$, $SD = 1.6$, and $\alpha = .87$. The second scale, which assessed negative attitudes toward the other player, contained the following nine items: distant, mistrustful, betrayed, resentful, annoyed, angry, cold, disappointed, and offended. Descriptive statistics were as follows: $M = 3.9$, $SD = 1.6$, and $\alpha = .89$. (The other six items on the list were not relevant to forgiveness and are thus not discussed further.)

Participants also gave ratings to enable comparisons of how they perceived their own behavior versus the other player's behavior. They rated the emotional tone of their own message and the other player's message on a scale from 1 (*extremely negative*) to 10 (*extremely positive*). They also rated their own behavior and the other player's behavior during the game on dimensions such as competitiveness and hostility, using a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*). We report descriptive statistics for these variables in the *Results and Discussion* section.

Money allocation. Participants were told,

> In this experiment we have a certain amount of money set aside for each pair of participants. It varies depending on the study we're doing. When we don't use all of the money, we follow a standard procedure: We take a portion of the remaining money (in this case, 4 dollars), divide it in half and let each participant decide how much the other participant will get. So that means that you can decide to give the other person any amount between 0 dollars and 2 dollars, and they'll do the same for you. You aren't sacrificing any of your own money. You're just determining how much money the other person will get. And they will decide how much you get.

Participants received a sheet listing monetary figures in ascending $0.05 increments, from $0 to $2.50. All numbers after the $2.50 mark were crossed off, and participants were reminded that the most they could allocate was $2. They were asked to circle the amount that the other participant should get. The mean was $1.53 ($SD = $0.58).

Individual differences. We assessed entitlement, religious-belief salience, and self-esteem using the same measures used in the prior studies, with the exception that self-esteem and religious-belief salience were assessed using 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Descriptive statistics were as follows: narcissistic entitlement, $M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.5$; religious-belief salience, $M = 4.7$, $SD = 1.6$, $\alpha = .95$; and self-esteem, $M = 48.0$, $SD = 4.8$, $\alpha = .87$.[7]

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

In keeping with our goals and the design of our Prisoner's Dilemma program, none of the participants outscored the (computerized) partner. The average participant score was -3.0 ($SD = 9.5$), whereas the average score for the partner was 9.2 ($SD = 15.40$).

Participants generally viewed the partner's behavior during the game as being more aggressive than their own. They rated their own messages as more positive ($M = 5.8$, $SD = 2.1$) than those of their partners ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 1.8$; Wilks's $\lambda = .67$), $F(1, 110) = 54.20$, $p < .001$. Compared with the behavior of their partners, participants rated their own behavior as less competitive (self: $M = 6.9$, $SD = 2.4$; partner: $M = 8.0$, $SD = 1.8$; Wilks's $\lambda = .82$), $F(1, 110) = 25.01$, $p < .001$, and less hostile (self: $M = 3.3$, $SD = 2.3$; partner: $M = 4.6$, $SD = 2.7$; Wilks's $\lambda = .80$), $F(1, 110) = 27.58$, $p < .001$. These data are consistent with a picture of perceived injustice and offense: Participants saw themselves as showing friendlier behavior than their partners did.

The five forgiveness-related measures (affective tone of message, defections in last five turns, self-reported positive and negative attitudes, and money allocated to partner) showed only modest intercorrelations. Participants allocated less money to the partner to the extent that they reported negative attitudes toward him or her after the game, $r(111) = -.20$, $p < .05$. Negative

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[6] Although we focus on the negative message condition in this report, the design also included a control condition ($n = 113$) containing a neutral message ("Interesting game so far"). By making comparisons against this control condition, we ensured that the negative message (a) was seen as comparatively negative and (b) increased the odds of aggressive responses by participants. Results supported these hypotheses. Participants exposed to the negative message saw it as having a less positive affective tone ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 1.8$) than the neutral message ($M = 6.5$, $SD = 2.1$), $F(1, 222) = 87.35$, $p < .001$. Coded ratings revealed that responses to the negative message were less positive ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 1.6$) than responses to the neutral message ($M = 5.5$, $SD = 1.2$), $F(1, 222) = 51.38$, $p < .001$. Participants in the negative-message condition also defected more in the last five turns ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.2$) than those in the neutral condition ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.5$), $F(1, 222) = 8.47$, $p < .01$. There were no significant interactions with entitlement in any of these analyses, all $ps > .10$, *ns*. Bivariate correlations revealed that entitlement did not predict any of the forgiveness-related responses in the control condition, rs ranging from .00 to .12, all *ns*. These analyses suggest that the negative message was serving its purpose: It made the other player's behavior during the game seem more aggressive. Because this article focuses on how people respond to negative interpersonal behaviors (as opposed to relatively neutral ones), we focus only on the negative-message condition in the remainder of this report.

[7] Because of a clerical error, we recorded only the total score for narcissistic entitlement; therefore, we could not compute Cronbach's alpha for narcissistic entitlement in Study 5.

attitudes toward the other player showed a moderate negative association with positive attitudes, $r(111) = -.26$, $p < .01$. More defections in the last five turns (i.e., after the message) were associated with more negative attitudes, $r(111) = .20$, $p < .05$, and marginally less positive replies to the partner, $r(111) = -.17$, $p < .10$. No other correlations were significant (magnitudes ranged from .02 to .14, ns). Because each measure seemed to be tapping a distinct facet of response to transgression, we retained all of them for analysis rather than creating an unforgiveness index.

Is Entitlement Associated With Less Forgiving Responses?

As shown in Table 3, greater entitlement predicted more unforgiving responses on the two primary behavioral measures: a less positive reply to the partner's insulting message and less money allocated to the partner. Entitlement's association with negative attitudes, though in the expected direction, was not significant ($p = .11$). Entitlement did not predict defections in the last five turns, nor did it predict positive attitudes toward the partner.

Does the Entitlement–Unforgiving Attitude Link Remain When Other Predictors Are Controlled?

As in Studies 1–4, we also examined other predictors of forgiveness in addition to entitlement. To the extent that participants viewed the partner's message as negative in tone, they allocated less money to the partner, $r(111) = -.22$, $p < .05$; reported more negative attitudes toward him or her, $r(111) = .29$, $p < .01$; and reported less positive attitudes toward him or her, $r(111) = -.21$, $p < .01$. When compared with men, women allocated more money to their partners (for women, $M = \$1.66$, $SD = \$.52$; for men, $M = \$1.40$, $SD = \$.61$), $t(118) = 2.48$, $p < .05$, and reported more positive attitudes toward them (for women, $M = 5.0$, $SD = 1.6$; for men, $M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.4$), $t(118) = 2.78$, $p < .01$. There were no other gender differences. Although self-esteem overlapped with entitlement, $r(111) = .28$, $p < .01$, it did not predict any of the dependent variables. Religiosity predicted more positive attitudes toward the partner, $r(111) = .25$, $p = .01$, but it was not associated with behavioral responses or negative attitudes.

Entitlement scores were higher in men ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.6$) than in women ($M = 2.7$, $SD = 1.4$), $t(118) = 2.52$, $p < .05$. Entitlement correlated positively with self-esteem, $r(120) = .21$, $p < .05$, but it was not associated with religious-belief salience, $r(120) = .00$, ns, or with ratings of the other player's message, $r(120) = .00$, ns.

As in Studies 1–4, we included the other predictors of forgiveness with the primary aim of using them as covariates. Also, because participants were likely to have different perceptions of the game on the basis of their own behavior and the partner's behavior, we thought it prudent to control for the number of defections by both self and partner. As shown in the partial correlation (pr) column in Table 3, all associations between entitlement and unforgiving responses remained significant when we controlled for religiosity, self-esteem, gender, ratings of the affective tone of the partner's message, and the number of defections by self and other. In addition, the association between entitlement and negative attitudes became significant when these variables were held constant.

Supplemental Analyses: Predicting Defections in the Prisoner's Dilemma Game

Although the pattern of results in Study 5 supported our predictions across three forgiveness measures, we wanted a better understanding of why entitlement did not predict defections in the game. Supplemental analyses revealed two variables that showed positive correlations with defections in the last five turns: a sense of mistrust toward one's partner, $r(120) = .28$, $p < .01$, and a perception that one's own behavior in the game had been competitive, $r(120) = .26$, $p < .01$. A simultaneous multiple regression revealed that both variables predicted unique portions of variance in the defection variable ($R^2 = .12$, $p = .001$; for competitive striving, $\beta = .24$, $p < .01$; for mistrust toward other player, $\beta = .26$, $p < .01$). It is important to note that seeing one's behavior in the game as hostile did not predict defections in the last five turns, $r(120) = .08$, ns. Instead, self-reports of hostility during the game were linked with entitlement, $r(120) = .21$, $p < .05$, as well as our other two behavioral measures of forgiveness: more hostile messages in reply to the partner, $r(120) = -.29$, $p = .001$, and a tendency to allocate less money to the partner, $r(120) = -.17$, $p < .10$. These findings complement those of our pilot study (Exline & Baumeister, 1998): It seems that mistrust and competitive striving, not hostility per se, predicted defections in the Prisoner's Dilemma game. Although entitlement did not predict defections, it did predict other behavioral responses that more directly implied a sense of hostility and unforgiveness.

Summary

Study 5 moved beyond self-report measures to demonstrate that entitlement predicted unforgiving behaviors in a laboratory-based forgiveness situation. Entitlement predicted less forgiving responses on two behavioral measures: more hostile responses to a negative message and less money allocated to the other player. As in the prior studies, these associations remained significant when we controlled for a host of other predictors: religiosity, gender, self-esteem, perceived hostility of the partner's message, and the number of defections by self and partner during the game. In addition, entitlement predicted more negative attitudes toward the partner when we controlled for these other predictors. This study demonstrates that the link between entitlement and unforgiveness applies not only to self-reported attitudes but that it also extends to actual behavior in the laboratory.

Study 6: Forgiveness Across Time in Dating Relationships

Our goal in Study 6 was to see whether entitlement would predict changes in forgiveness over time. To examine this issue, we used a naturalistic study of dating relationships. The longitudinal design of Study 6 offered several methodological advantages. First, it allowed us to monitor relational offenses as they naturally occurred over a 4-month period. Second, we could assess forgiveness both when participants reported the transgression and again 2 weeks later. This feature allowed us to track changes in forgiveness over time. Third, the design allowed us to administer an entitlement measure that predated participant reports of offenses and forgiveness.

Method

Participants and Recruitment

Sixty-nine Northwestern University freshmen (35 women, 34 men) were recruited through flyers posted around campus to participate in a 6-month

longitudinal study of dating processes. Eligibility criteria required that each participant must be (a) a 1st-year undergraduate at Northwestern University, (b) involved in a dating relationship of at least 2 months in duration, (c) between 17 and 19 years old, (d) a native English speaker, and (e) the only member of a given couple to participate in the study (i.e., both members of a given couple were not allowed to participate). Participants who completed all components of the study were paid $100; those who missed some parts of the study were paid a prorated percentage of the full payment amount.

At the beginning of the study, participants were 18.0 years old on average ($SD = 0.4$ years), and they had been involved with their dating partners for an average of 13.0 months ($SD = 9.8$). Ethnicities were as follows: Caucasian (74%), Asian American (12%), Hispanic (3%), African American (1%), and other (10%). Most indicated that their relationship status was best described as "dating steadily" (90%); a few indicated it was "dating casually" (6%), "friendship" (3%), or "engaged" (1%). Through the first 4 months of the study, 30% of participants had experienced a breakup with the romantic partner; 48% of this subset had already started dating somebody new. Given that this study explored forgiveness processes in romantic relationships, participants only answered forgiveness-relevant questions if they reported that they were currently involved in a romantic relationship.

Procedure

Study 6 was part of a larger investigation of dating processes. The study consisted of four parts: (a) completing an hour-long questionnaire sent via campus mail, (b) participating in a 90-min in-lab session involving additional questionnaires and training for the online sessions, (c) completing a 10–15-min online questionnaire every other week for 6 months, and (d) returning to the lab for a final, hour-long session at the end of the 6-month period. This study is still ongoing; the results reported herein incorporate data from its first 4 months. The entitlement measure (as well as several control variables described below) was assessed with the mailed questionnaire at the beginning of the study. Then, as part of the biweekly online questionnaires, participants were asked to report whether or not the partner had upset them during the previous 2-week period. If so, they were asked to indicate the degree to which they had forgiven the partner for this behavior. In any given session, if participants did indicate that their partner had upset them, their next online questionnaire (2 weeks later) again asked them to rate the degree to which they had forgiven the partner for the behavior. All scale items were assessed from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 (*agree strongly*).

Measures

Forgiveness. Given that participants were slated to respond to the identical online questionnaire 14 times (the first 9 of which are included in the present analyses) over a 6-month period, we streamlined the questionnaire as much as possible. Toward this goal, forgiveness was assessed with a one-item measure. At each session, participants who were involved in such a relationship were asked, "Has your partner done anything over the past 2 weeks that was upsetting to you?" If the answer was "yes," participants provided a brief description of the behavior and indicated the degree to which they agreed with the following item: "I have forgiven my partner for this behavior." The response to this item served as our measure of concurrent forgiveness. If the answer was "no," participants did not answer any forgiveness-related questions regarding that 2-week period (as such questions were not relevant). Descriptive statistics for this one-item concurrent-forgiveness measure were $M = 5.6$ and $SD = 1.7$.

When participants completed each subsequent online session, they were also asked about the upsetting partner behavior that they had reported on the previous session 2 weeks earlier—if such a behavior had taken place. At this 2-week follow-up session, participants were provided (by means of

the computer program) with their own verbatim description of what their partner had done that had upset them. They again indicated the degree to which they agreed with the item, "I have forgiven my partner for this behavior." Assessing forgiveness with the identical instrument 2 weeks later allowed us to explore not only whether entitlement is associated with forgiveness but also whether entitlement predicts change over time in forgiveness (see McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003, for an analysis of why forgiveness is fruitfully studied with longitudinal data). Descriptive statistics for this one-item "later-forgiveness" measure were $M = 6.1$ and $SD = 1.2$.

Entitlement. As in prior studies, entitlement was assessed using the Raskin and Terry (1988) subscale of the NPI ($M = 1.4$, $SD = 1.2$, $\alpha = .41$).

Relationship commitment. On each online questionnaire, participants indicated the degree to which they agreed with the following item regarding their current romantic relationship: "I am committed to maintaining this relationship in the long run." Descriptive statistics for this one-item commitment measure were $M = 6.1$ and $SD = 1.4$.

Time since the incident. On each online questionnaire, participants indicated how many days ago the upsetting partner behavior took place. Descriptive statistics revealed that the events took place an average of 5.5 ($SD = 3.9$) days before the online session.

Offense severity. On each online questionnaire, participants indicated the degree to which they agreed with the following item: "I experienced my partner's behavior as a betrayal." Descriptive statistics for this one-item degree-of-betrayal measure were $M = 2.9$ and $SD = 2.0$.

Amends. On each online questionnaire, participants indicated the degree to which they agreed with the following item: "My partner tried to make amends to me for this upsetting behavior." Descriptive statistics for this one-item amends measure were $M = 4.7$ and $SD = 2.0$.

Social desirability and impression management. On the mailed questionnaires that participants completed before they attended the initial lab-based session, they completed an abbreviated version of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1984). The full-length version of this scale includes a 20-item Self-Deception subscale (e.g., "I never regret my decisions") and a 20-item Impression Management subscale (e.g., "I am a completely rational person"). For time efficiency, we shortened each of these scales by excluding the 10 items with the lowest item-total correlations, leaving two 10-item subscales. Building on the original scoring protocol suggested for these scales (Paulhus, 1984), we scored items on which a given participant answered toward the extreme end of the scale (6 or 7 for the regularly scored items; 1 or 2 for the reverse-scored items) as a 1; otherwise, these items were scored as a zero. The items for each subscale were then summed to provide a measure that could hypothetically range from 0 to 10. Descriptive statistics were as follows: self-deception, $M = 2.9$, $SD = 2.3$, $\alpha = .70$, and impression management, $M = 3.7$, $SD = 2.0$, $\alpha = .56$.

Self-esteem. On the mailed questionnaires that participants completed before they attended the initial lab-based session, they completed the Rosenberg (1965, 1979) self-esteem scale described previously (assessed with the 1–7 scale). Descriptive statistics for this 10-item self-esteem measure were $M = 59.5$, $SD = 8.2$, and $\alpha = .86$.

Results and Discussion

Analysis Strategy

For Study 6, we used multilevel data analytic strategies (cf. Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) that researchers have adapted for analyzing diary data (e.g., Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Nezlek, 2001). The two-level data structure includes measures assessed on each of the online questionnaires (Level 1) nested within each participant (Level 2). For example, a given participant may report on three separate incidents in which the partner engaged in an upsetting behavior. Given that these three incidents are "nested"

within the individual, we cannot assume that they adhere to the ordinary least squares assumption of independence. Multilevel modeling approaches simultaneously examine variance associated with each level of nesting and provide unbiased hypothesis tests. In the multilevel regression analyses reported below, we z-transformed all predictor and outcome variables in order to obtain standardized regression coefficients.[8]

Is Entitlement Associated With Lower Propensity to Forgive? Cross-Sectional Analyses

Results conformed to predictions: Replicating prior studies, multilevel modeling analyses revealed that entitlement was linked with a reduced propensity to forgive, $\beta = -.28$, $t(99) = -2.08$, $p < .05$.

Does the Entitlement–Unforgiveness Link Remain When Other Predictors Are Controlled?

To provide a particularly rigorous test of the associations of entitlement with concurrent forgiveness, we performed two multilevel multiple regression analyses examining the associations of the entitlement measures with forgiveness after controlling for the effects of eight variables that could potentially eliminate these associations. Four of these were Level 1 variables (online session level), and four were Level 2 variables (person level). The Level 1 variables were commitment, time since the incident, offense severity, and amends; the Level 2 variables were self-deception, impression management, self-esteem, and gender.

All four Level 1 variables accounted for unique variance beyond the other variables in the model, $\beta s > |.06|$, $ts(93) > |2.47|$, $ps < .05$. The Level 2 variable of self-deception accounted for marginal unique variance, $\beta = .11$, $ts(93) = 1.89$, $p < .06$. The other three Level 2 variables (impression management, self-esteem, and gender) failed to account for unique variance. Consistent with Study 2 and prior research (McCullough, Emmons, et al., 2003), entitlement was associated with greater perceived offense severity, $\beta = .41$, $t(99) = 2.29$, $p < .05$. None of the other Level 1 or Level 2 variables was associated with entitlement (for Level 1 variables, rs ranged from .02 to .16, ns; for Level 2 variables, ts ranged from 0.49 to 1.43, ns).

The first analysis predicted concurrent forgiveness from the entitlement measure and the eight potential confounds. Despite the associations of the control variables with both entitlement and forgiveness, entitlement accounted for unique variance in concurrent forgiveness when all eight factors were controlled, partial $\beta = -.19$, $t(93) = -2.13$, $p < .05$.

Does Entitlement Account for Change Over Time in Forgiveness?

The multiple regression analyses reported in the previous paragraphs indicate that individuals with a high sense of entitlement are less forgiving of their partner's upsetting behavior than those with a lower sense of entitlement—even when the study controlled for many possible confounds. The longitudinal design we used in Study 6 allows us to ask an important follow-up question: Is entitlement associated with unforgiveness that persists over time? To test this idea, we first performed a single-predictor multilevel

regression analysis examining whether entitlement showed simple associations with the later forgiveness measure. Entitlement did predict later forgiveness, $\beta = -.30$, $t(79) = -2.60$, $p < .05$. Although these findings demonstrate that entitlement is associated with forgiveness 2 weeks after the initial forgiveness measures, they do not provide evidence that entitlement accounts for change over time in forgiveness.

To test whether entitlement is indeed associated with change in forgiveness, we next performed a multilevel multiple regression analysis predicting participants' later forgiveness from entitlement—while controlling for their forgiving responses at the earlier time period. These analyses painted a clear picture. It is not surprising that results revealed a highly significant effect of the earlier forgiveness measure, indicating that individuals who reported greater levels of forgiveness when they first reported their partner's upsetting behavior also reported greater forgiveness 2 weeks later, $\beta = .33$, $ts(73) = 5.73$, $ps < .0001$. Even though the study controlled for this robust stability coefficient, however, entitlement accounted for significant variance in predicting later forgiveness, $\beta = -.23$, $t(73) = -2.34$, $p < .05$. These data reveal that individuals with a high sense of entitlement not only start off less forgiving than those with a lower sense of entitlement but that they also exhibit smaller increases in forgiveness over time.

General Discussion

The results of these six studies point to narcissistic entitlement as a consistent, conceptually meaningful, and distinct predictor of unforgiveness. Entitled narcissists are readily offended, and they are eager to save face and to defend their rights. As such, they tend to see forgiveness as a costly and morally unappealing option. The link between entitlement and unforgiveness emerged consistently across different methods, circumstances, and venues. We found it in reports of personal experiences (Studies 1, 4, and 6), in responses to experimentally controlled vignettes (Study 2), and in actual behavior in the laboratory (Study 5). We found the entitlement–unforgiveness pattern in response to single incidents (Studies 1, 4, 5, and 6) and also on more broad-based, dispositional measures (Studies 2 and 3). Entitlement predicted not only less concurrent forgiveness but also smaller increases in forgiveness over a 2-week period (Study 6).

Our analyses also demonstrate that the association between entitlement and unforgiveness is independent of several other theoretically important factors. First, although our measures of entitlement were taken from a narcissism measure (NPI), the effects do not appear to be a simple artifact of a broader link between narcissism and unforgiveness (see Footnote 1). More important, we found that the effect of entitlement was independent of many other variables that have been established as predictors of forgiveness. When we controlled for variables such as relationship closeness, offense severity, apology, and religiosity, entitlement still significantly predicted less willingness to forgive. The asso-

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[8] After examining whether there was significant variability in the intercept and slope terms, we decided to treat the intercept terms as random effects and the slope terms as fixed effects in all analyses. We made these decisions after noting that analyses treating the slopes as random effects either failed to exhibit significant variability for the slope terms or failed to converge.

ciation between narcissism and unforgiveness also remained when we controlled for variables such as social desirability, dispositional forgiveness, and gender. Study 4 demonstrated that the association between entitlement and a self-report, trait-based measure of forgiveness was partly (though not entirely) mediated by the Big Five personality factor of Agreeableness. However, when we turned to forgiveness-related motivations in response to a specific situation from real life, the entitlement–unforgiveness association remained strong even when we controlled for all of the Big Five factors (Agreeableness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience). On the basis of the consistent findings across our six studies, it seems fair to conclude that narcissistic entitlement is a robust, distinctive predictor of unforgiveness.

Explaining the Entitlement–Unforgiveness Link

Why does a high sense of personal entitlement accompany a reluctance to forgive? The current research offers several answers to this question. Not only were highly entitled people less willing to forgive specific offenses (Studies 1, 4, 5, and 6), but they also expressed more skepticism and reservations about the wisdom and appropriateness of forgiveness in general (Studies 2 and 3). Entitled individuals appear to be more easily offended than other people, as shown in Studies 2 and 6 and in prior research (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2003). Their greater perception of injustice is likely to make forgiveness seem like a more dangerous or unfair option. Highly entitled persons also appear to be particularly sensitive to the personal and pride-related costs of forgiveness, as shown in Study 1. To the extent that pride is viewed as a locus of strength, the fact that forgiveness can entail costs to pride could also make it seem like an unappealing choice.

Furthermore, and consistent with the social exchange framework, people with a high sense of entitlement seemed well attuned to the interpersonal debt aspect of a transgression, and they were reluctant to write off such debts. Entitlement was associated with insistence on receiving some form of repayment (i.e., concessions, retribution) before forgiving (Studies 1, 2, and 3). In other words, they often demanded the restoration of justice before granting forgiveness. More generally, entitled narcissists tended to favor conditional forgiveness and were wary of unconditional forgiveness. Entitlement was also linked with a heightened awareness of the potential costs of forgiving and more skepticism about its potential benefits.

Theoretical Implications

The current research clearly demonstrates that narcissistic entitlement is a distinctive predictor of unforgiveness. The entitlement–unforgiveness link remains even when studies control for other robust predictors such as apology, commitment, offense severity, religiosity, and the Big Five factors. These findings suggest that there is some facet of forgiveness that the entitlement construct captures particularly well. On the basis of the studies presented here, we propose that the common ground between entitlement and forgiveness centers largely on the notion of interpersonal debts. Because both entitlement and forgiveness focus on debts and issues of repayment, the entitlement construct can pinpoint core features of forgiveness in a way not captured by other

situational or individual-difference constructs. Entitled persons, by definition, are preoccupied with defending their rights and collecting debts owed to them. As shown here, these self-protective, calculating tendencies tend to push entitled persons in the direction of unforgiveness.

Even when we look beyond the role of entitlement, the current research draws attention to the metaphor of transgressions as debts. We propose that greater use of the debt metaphor will help to illuminate core processes behind forgiveness and unforgiveness (see also, Worthington's, 2003, closely related metaphor of the injustice gap). More broadly, use of social exchange concepts could provide conceptual bridges with other social psychological work on virtue and vice. As researchers consider people's perceptions of what they owe and are owed by others, theorizing should naturally begin to extend beyond the relatively small fields of forgiveness research and narcissism research. For example, recent research on the topic of gratitude makes use of debt metaphors and concepts from social exchange theory (McCullough, Emmons, & Kilpatrick, 2001). A social exchange lens could also reveal unifying themes in the study of virtues that show regard for others, such as self-sacrificial love, forbearance, mercy, and repentance.

By highlighting the distinctive role of narcissistic entitlement in unforgiveness, these data also suggest implications for the study of narcissism more generally. Prior research suggests that narcissists often experience patterns of instability in their interpersonal relationships (e.g., Campbell, Foster, & Finkel, 2002). Even if people initially find narcissists (and other self-enhancers) charming or impressive, greater familiarity often breeds dislike (Paulhus, 1998). Past studies suggest some reasons for these relational struggles among narcissists, including their low levels of empathic caring and commitment (Campbell, 1999) and a tendency to take more credit for themselves than is due (Campbell et al., 2000). The current data suggest another potential problem in the relational lives of narcissists: Because of their inflated sense of entitlement, narcissists will be easily offended by others and will not readily forgive. They will insist that others repay them and will be reluctant to "lose face" by forgiving—particularly if justice has not been restored. Granted, these grudge-holding tendencies may protect the individual rights of the entitled narcissist—but at the same time, unforgiveness may block the healing of relational wounds, ultimately leading to further social alienation.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of the present investigation must be noted. First, the participants were all American college students. Although most social and personality psychologists are reasonably comfortable generalizing from such samples to other modern Western citizens, it is hazardous to generalize across cultural boundaries, especially insofar as other cultures may have different norms regarding entitlement, social exchange, and forgiveness.

Our primary aim in this set of studies was to examine entitlement as a trait rather than as a state. Although not reported here, we have tried to use directed priming techniques in an attempt to elicit states of mind that were more versus less entitled. However, we found that these brief manipulations were not sufficiently powerful to alter a person's sense of entitlement, even at the state level. More specifically, the problem was that we were not able to influence high-entitlement persons to take a low-entitlement

stance. Reducing a sense of entitlement at a trait level is likely to be even more difficult, particularly to the extent that entitlement is part of a broader pattern of narcissism. Yet, for both theoretical and practical reasons, it would be useful to continue work on this front, seeing whether it is possible to reduce feelings of entitlement and, if so, whether reduced entitlement would increase the propensity to forgive.

Our goal was to examine narcissistic entitlement as a predictor of unforgiveness. In future research, it would also be useful to examine entitlement and forgiveness from a perpetrator perspective. Recent studies suggest that narcissists are reluctant to seek forgiveness (Sandage, Worthington, Hight, & Berry, 2000) while readily dismissing their own offenses (e.g., Fisher & Exline, 2004; Tangney et al., 2002), but the dynamics underlying these decisions are not yet well understood. Another useful step, one in keeping with the current emphasis on virtues and positive psychology, would be to examine factors that would seem to directly oppose narcissistic entitlement, such as humility (e.g., Emmons, 1999, 2000; Exline et al., 2004; Sandage, 1999; Tangney, 2000; Worthington, 2003) or a grateful disposition (e.g., McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2003).

Conclusion

Forgiveness, though widely admired as a virtue, sometimes brings costs for self-interest. In the wake of deep hurt, those who forgive must humbly set aside hateful thoughts and vengeful fantasies that seem perfectly justified. To forgive means to cancel a debt, a debt for which one may fully deserve repayment. This debt metaphor suggests a profile of a person who should be especially prone to unforgiveness. An unforgiving person should be someone who is easily offended, highly invested in collecting on debts owed to the self, and determined to assert his or her rights in a principled effort to maintain self-respect. As suggested in the six studies presented here, individuals high in narcissistic entitlement fit this unforgiving profile in ways not fully captured by situational factors (e.g., offense severity, apology, and relationship closeness) or broad-based individual-difference constructs (e.g., agreeableness, neuroticism, religiosity, social desirability). These findings suggest that narcissistic entitlement is a robust, conceptually meaningful predictor of unforgiveness.

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