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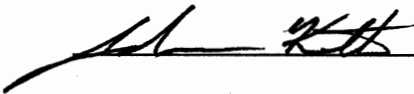
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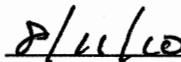
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The Role of Remedial Work: A Look at Re-Offending

BY

John M. Koth

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2010
YEAR

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my parents, family, and closest friends who continue to love and support me throughout my years of education.

Abstract

Many studies have evaluated the usefulness of remedial work (apologies, excuses, and justifications) after a transgression or injustice has been committed. The present study tested the effectiveness of remedial work after a first, and then a second transgression. One hundred and sixty undergraduates read a vignette describing a social transgression. This was followed by either an apology, an excuse, a justification or no remedial work. After completing variables rating their reactions to the vignette, participants were asked to read a second vignette and to answer the same questions. During the analyses, two justifications used in the study were found to be non-equivalent and were excluded from further analysis. The study's primary dependent variable (perceived wrongness of the transgressor's actions) supported the prediction that excuses are the most effective form of remedial work after a first transgression. Results also supported the prediction that the second transgression for all variables was perceived to be worse. Predictions that were not supported, however, were that the remedial work showed to be no different from each other after a second transgression and that apologies were not significantly different from no remedial work given on the perceived wrongness variable. The study's limitations and ideas for future research are discussed.

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The Role of Remedial Work: A Look at Re-offending

At points in our lives, most if not all of us find that we have offended, hurt, or angered someone we have interacted with. When we have offended someone it is often appropriate to seek forgiveness. This can be especially important when that someone is a friend or loved one.

One common way to achieve forgiveness is through remedial work. Remedial work that is performed on the part of the transgressor after an offense has occurred usually consists of accounts or apologies (Goffman, 1971). Accounts consist of both excuses and justifications. As Gonzales, Manning, and Haugen (1992) put it, “accounts are designed to mitigate others’ tendency to reach undesirable conclusions about the character of the offending actor” (p. 960). Therefore, the primary role of accounting for one’s actions is to alleviate any ill feelings that the offended person has against the transgressor. As Scher & Darley (1998) describe, if the offended person agrees that the transgressor either wasn’t at fault (excuse) or that the offense either wasn’t bad or harmful to the offended person (justification), the right to hold feelings of anger, ill thoughts, or displeasure towards the transgressor diminishes.

The function of an apology, according to Scher & Darley (1998), is also to decrease the offended person’s negative views of the transgressor and to put the relationship closer to where it was prior to the offense. An apology is a communication from the offender to the offended that indicates that the offender admits to doing something wrong, acknowledges that what he/she did was bad, and conveys remorse about the event or thing that happened to the offended person. These messages seek to

communicate that the offense should not be incorporated into the victim's perception of the transgressor's identity.

The effects of remedial work have been looked at extensively in various studies (Gollan & Witte, 2008; Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Scher & Darley, 1997, 1998; Goffman, 1971; Gonzales, Manning, & Haugen, 1992; Gonzales, Pederson, Manning, & Wetter, 1990; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; Snyder & Higgins, 1988); however, no studies to date look at the concept of re-offense. The importance of researching re-offense is to discover whether a second transgression is affected by the various types of remedial work differently. For example, if an apology is proffered after a first offense, and we can measure how effective that first apology was on different variables related to the offense, then a pertinent research question is to see if, after some time has passed and a second transgression occurs, and the same form of remedial work is given a second time, how this second form of remedial work affects these same variables. What is under investigation in the present study, then, is whether or not the type of remedial work presented after a first offense, has a corresponding effect after a second offense.

Successful apologies decrease the likelihood that the offended person will retaliate or act aggressively towards the transgressor (Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989); however, the severity of the offense and the intent of harm also highly influence forgiveness and the acceptance of remedial work (Gonzales, Manning, & Haugen, 1992). A second transgression may be interpreted by the participants as more severe and more intentional, simply because it is a re-offense or second transgression. Therefore, the first offense and its corresponding remedial work will likely work better or be more effective than the second transgression and its corresponding remedial work. Hence, the friendship

level is predicted to deteriorate more after the second offense than the first. Likewise, the second remedial work administered by the transgressor is predicted to not be as effective as the first remedial work proffered.

We can imagine friendship level to be like a reservoir that carries water that continually raises and lowers over time. Just as water can be raised and lowered in a reservoir, so too do interactions with friends often cause rising and lowering in the friendship level. Often times, this is a subtle rise and fall in the perception of each individual in the relationship as good and bad things happen to, and in, their relationship.

When either party contravenes the friendship by transgressing against their friend, it is natural to predict that there is likely a decline, to some degree, in the friendship. How far of a decline, is determined by many factors such as the perceived severity of the offense. Wherever this fall in the relationship ends, a new line on the friendship continuum proceeds horizontally with a new lower level in the “friendship reservoir.” Remedial work is an attempt to bring the line back up to its initial level; however, even with remedial work, the original line may not completely return to its initial point (at least immediately). Due to unease, ill thoughts, or mistrust at any level, the new line on the friendship continuum may be slightly lower than the original friendship line, at least for a period of time (See Figure 1).

Transgressions and Remediation Work

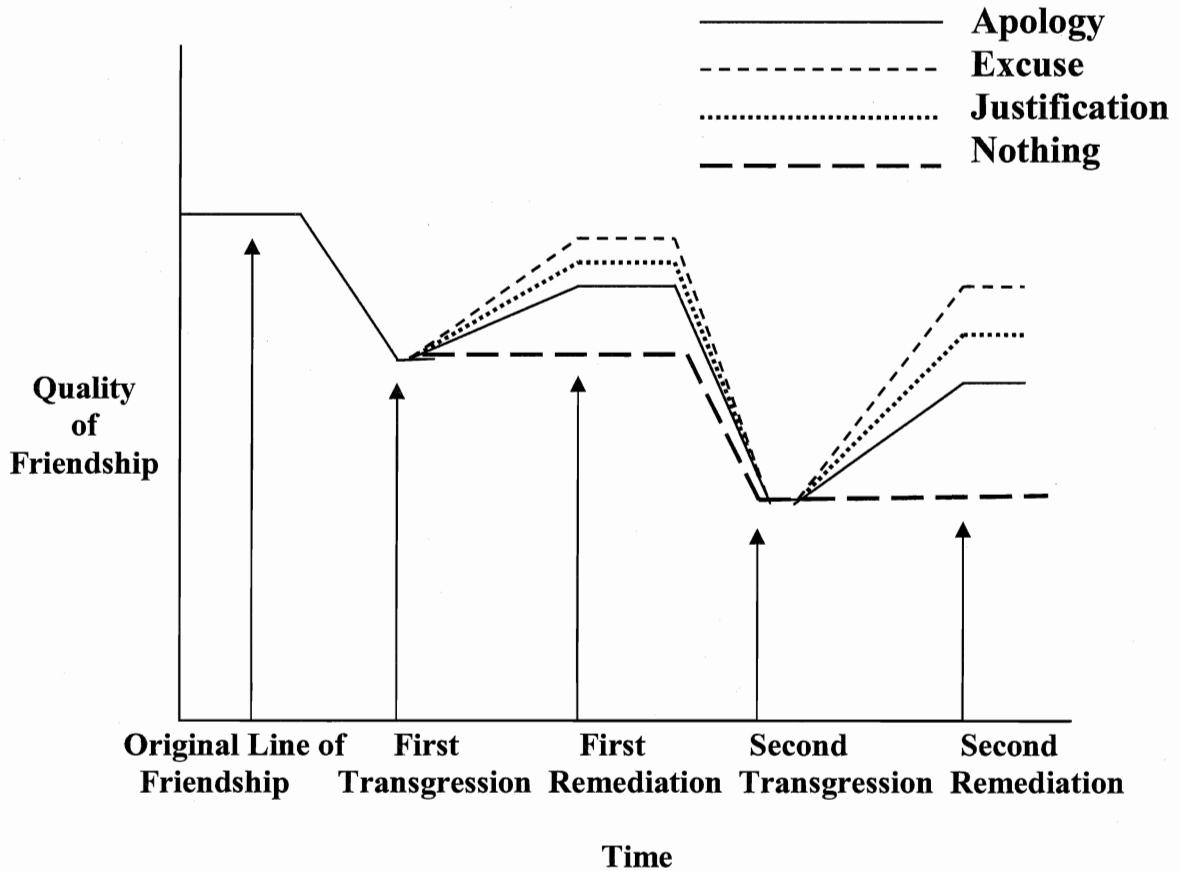


Figure 1. Remedial Work: Apology, Excuse, Justification and Nothing Prediction at Two Transgressions.

The unease or doubt at any level caused by a re-offense, relates to the old adage: “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.” If the transgressor has a sincere apology the second time, or even if they have something more concrete such as an excuse or justification the second time, the friend-victim will likely find less favor or forgiveness for the transgressor upon the second offense than they did upon the first due to either an unease or a doubt about the genuineness of the combined first and second offenses.

The period of time for a friendship to return to its original state after an offense has occurred has been researched by McCullough, Fincham, and Tsang (2003). These authors report that with time, participants seemed to demonstrate a decrease in their avoidance and revenge motivations, but did not show an increase in their benevolence motivations. McCullough, Fincham, and Tsang (2003) also reported that participants who found the transgressor to be more guilty or responsible for the transgression, showed higher signs of benevolence and forgiveness than when the transgressor was not seen as very responsible for the event. Some thought patterns behind this idea are that as a victim places more blame on the transgressor, they are more likely to confront them about it, which will likely lead to a quicker friendship recovery. Another idea is that the more the transgressor realizes he or she is responsible or is to blame, the more they are likely to use remedial work to decrease the victim's negative thoughts, feelings, or behaviors towards them.

The idea of re-offending would follow a similar pattern as described above. Upon re-offending, the perpetrator will fall from the line returned to from the first offense in a downward manner. Once remedial work has been completed, the new line of friendship will once again travel upwards towards the original line, but the hypothesis is that because of the re-offense, the second transgression would be dealt with more harshly and the remedial work would not be as meaningful as it was the first time. Hence, the risen line (after remedial work had been offered) would be predicted to be lower than the friendship line from which it had fallen (See Figure 1).

The use of sincere and elaborate apologies has been shown to decrease the negative consequences for the transgressor and to help the friendship restore or get close

to the pre-transgression level of friendship (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Scher & Darley, 1997, 1998; Gonzales, Manning, & Haugen, 1992; Gonzales, Pederson, Manning, & Wetter, 1990; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989). We hypothesize, however, that upon re-offending, and again offering an apology as a form of remedial work, the relationship between the transgressor and the offended will be hindered a second time, and that this time the lowering friendship level will go below that of the first offense, and the second apology will not bring the friendship back up as high as the first apology. Of all of the remedial work in this study (apologies, excuses, and justifications), the second apology is predicted to be the least effective remedial work on forgiveness and the other variables measured. The rationale for this prediction is based on the concreteness of this form of remedial work as compared to the other forms of remedial work. An apology is largely based on trust and on communicating emotions, whereas excuses and justifications can often times be proven or disproved and hence tend to rest on something more concrete.

Excuses focus on externalizing blame; blame is shifted to something that is beyond the control of the offender (Schlenker & Weigold 1992). When excuse makers believe their excuse to be true and valid, they generally experience a sense of improved health, performance, esteem, and emotion and are hence likely to offer an excuse again in the future (Snyder & Higgins, 1988).

The offended friend will likely accept the excuse from the first transgression in trying to give the offender the “benefit of the doubt.” However, in the second excuse, it may seem as if the transgressor is merely trying to continually push blame away from himself/herself. Over-using excuses can lead to negative views from the offended and other negative consequences (Snyder & Higgins, 1988). Hence, the level of blame that

the offender actually holds may be called into question and the validity of the excuse may be questioned and scrutinized more severely leading to less immediate forgiveness.

So, in the current study looking at re-offense and excuses, after the first offense, it is predicted that the line of friendship will drop as it did with the apology section noted above. The first excuse would be expected to raise the friendship line near to the original point of friendship much like the effect of the first apology, but perhaps slightly more. The second excuse would be predicted to have more of a noticeable effect on raising the line of friendship than a second apology however.

The distinction between the second excuse's impact on forgiveness as compared to the predicted forgiveness level of the second apology is rationalized by the idea that while the offended person may see the transgressor as merely pushing blame away from himself/herself, when in fact they may have blame in what happened (this is called into question upon the second offense / second excuse), the excuse giver still has something concrete that they can point to in order to show that they are not at fault. In contrast, a second apology still relies primarily on trust and communication/ability to convince with a trust that has already teetered once. So, remedial work of a second excuse would be predicted to have a less negative affect on forgiveness than the second apology that again merely accepts blame for what happened and shows remorse for the offense (See Figure 1).

Justifications have the effect of decreasing the ramifications of a transgression between an offender and the offended by illustrating the idea that the offended really is not hindered and that contrary to the offended's view, the offended was either not harmed

by what happened, or that they gained something positive from the perceived transgression's occurrence.

True justifications can be predicted to have an effect on the victim in two primarily different ways. Logically, if the transgression is successfully justified by the offender to either not have a bad consequence, or to have a good outcome for the "victim," it would stand to follow that a justification would prove more restorative in a relationship than possibly any other form of remedial work. The rationale would follow that unlike an apology that is more based on emotions and communication style (crying, tone of voice, length and frequency of an apology, promising to never do it again, offering some form of compensatory punishment for their actions), justifications are more concrete in that they can refer to a more solid thing or event as to why they should be forgiven. For example, if offender X missed meeting his/her spouse for lunch because he/she was buying a lottery ticket that ended up winning \$50,000, he/she might justify their absence by saying, yes I'm responsible for being late, but if I had not been there to buy that next ticket, we would not have won the lottery. In this case, there is something tangible (the winning ticket) that the offending spouse can use to justify his/her nonattendance and is not based on a mere emotional and communicative apology, "I'm so sorry I'm late; I take full responsibility for my actions; if there's anything I can do to make it up to you, please let me know. I promise this will never happen again."

Likewise, when compared to an excuse, successful justifications might be expected to lead to a higher likelihood of forgiveness. Like justifications, excuses are also based more on tangible facts than apologies are. In an example of an excuse, person X is late to a team meeting but due to something out of his control, for example, person X's

car breaking down, person X excuses himself/herself from blame of being late by placing external blame on the malfunction of the car. Again, the tangible explanation/excuse (car breaking down) can be verified by a mechanic that can report, “Yes indeed, the car did break down due to no fault of person X, and the car is currently not in working condition.” However, something bad happened in this example of an excuse (person X missed the team meeting), with no good coming out of it for the team. Therefore, in this prediction and way of rationalizing justifications and comparing justifications with excuses, a repeated excuse (something bad happening again) would be conceived as more damaging in a relationship, even with successful excuses, than repeated successful justifications in which there is some form of benevolent outcome for the “victim.”

On the other hand, much of the available literature seems to describe justifications as more aggressive ways of performing remedial work. An active justification is described by Gollan and Witte (2008) as being more proactive and argumentative than other forms of remedial work. Gollan and Witte (2008, p. 190) state that in an active justification, “...the person acknowledges the intentionality of her actions, accepts responsibility for it, and defends it as good and right.” Justifications also stand out in literature in terms of face work. Gonzales, Manning and Haugen (1992) report that when faced with the choice to save their own face value or restore that of the offended, especially when the transgression is more severe, the transgressor is more likely to use justifications to save face, but in doing so risks thwarting the face needs of the offended by challenging their interpretation of what happened.

Transgressors who use justifications are therefore seen as more confrontational in the aspect of defending themselves. This can put the offended person on guard or on the

defensive in their perceived right towards wanting justice or in having ill thoughts towards the transgressor. If a transgressor successfully justifies his/her actions, the offended person can quickly go from the victim to the aggressor in the relationship if they do not accept the justification and do not change any ill feelings they have towards the transgressor. Regardless of whether the transgressor's action is justified to the satisfaction of the offended person, it can be predicted to lower the line of friendship even farther than excuses, as both the transgressor, perceiving himself or herself as in the right, and the offended person, being challenged in their interpretation of the situation, are brought to a possible standstill until someone gives in or further remedial work is accomplished.

In terms of the prediction of the graph from a transgression, followed by a justification, with a short period of time between a new transgression followed by a second justification, it is predicted to look similar to that of an apology (Figure 1). Hence, for the purpose of this study, the latter hypothesis about the outcome of justifications mentioned above is predicted to occur. The reason the friendship line would not be predicted to rise completely back up to the line of original friendship is because the offended person's face value is challenged, and complete forgiveness would not be expected to occur while this challenge is present in the relationship. Hence, the original line of friendship would drop on the friendship graph and would level out. Once the justification is proffered (and assuming the justification is legitimate and believed by the offended) the relationship would return close to the original line of friendship much like the first excuse, but since the offended person's face value is challenged, it would not be predicted to rise as far as an excuse, but would rise higher than an apology. Upon the second transgression, the friendship line on the continuum from the first offense that is

now already lower than the original line of friendship, would be expected to lower again, but this time farther than the first drop. Again, this drop of the friendship line would level out and would stay close to this new line until the second justification was given. This second justification would be predicted to be different than the apology's second rising line in that it would rise up further (and according to other literature would not rise up as far as a second excuse). See Figure 1.

When no remedial work is performed (the control condition in the present study), it is reasonable to expect that the lowering friendship line, due to the transgression, would both level off eventually, and that the new level or line of friendship on the continuum would not rise back up, at least not noticeably. The same is predicted to happen if a second transgression were to occur and no response was given to the second transgression in any form of remedial work so that the graph would look something like a staircase where each step would go both downward on the friendship level with each new transgression, and however briefly horizontal with time before dropping again in an ever diagonal fashion with a new transgression, until the friendship is terminated (See Figure 1).

In order to study these hypotheses, we will have participants read vignettes in which a transgression occurs between close friends. Once a participant has completed reading the vignette and its accompanying form of remedial work, he or she will be asked a series of questions measuring responses to the transgression. The participant will then go on to read a second vignette with the same characters/friends. In this second vignette, the same transgressor commits a similar offense against the same victim. Again, the transgressor will offer some form of remedial work (the same form of remedial work as

offered after the first offense) and the participant will then be asked the same series of questions measuring the dependent variables, as pertaining to the second offense and remedial work, while keeping in mind the first transgression and its corresponding remedial work.

Method

Participants

160 Eastern Illinois University students participated, either as part of the requirements for a psychology course they were currently enrolled in or for extra credit. The participants had an age range of 18 to 57 years of age ($M = 21.03$). The gender of the participants was largely more female 82.5% ($N = 132$) than male 17.5% ($N = 28$). The races of the participants consisted of 86.2% Caucasian ($N = 138$), 13.12% Black or African American ($N = 21$) and less than 1% Latino ($N = 1$).

Vignettes

Participants read vignettes containing two transgressions. In both transgressions, Jim (the victim) and Lisa (the transgressor) are reported to be close friends. Jim is a hard-working, dedicated, and responsible college student, while Lisa is more of a party-girl who enjoys procrastinating on homework and sometimes not even turning it in.

The two transgressions were designed to involve similar misbehaviors, and to be approximately equal in severity. In Transgression 1, Jim and Lisa are assigned to work on a class project together, but because Jim is so busy with his other school work and responsibilities he suggests that they postpone working on the project until the night before it is due. Lisa, being a procrastinator and more of a party-girl happily agrees to hold off on working on the project. The day comes for them to work on the project

together, but Lisa is nowhere to be found and Jim cannot contact her through her phone. Jim ends up working on the project all night by himself and makes one last attempt at contacting her at the early hours of the morning (3:15 AM). Lisa sleepily picks up the phone and offers one of the three forms of remedial work (apology, excuse, or justification) or the no remedial work category where Lisa says nothing.

In Transgression 2, Jim is being awarded an honor at an honor's award ceremony. Jim asks Lisa if she would be able to drive him to the ceremony and she agrees. The day of the ceremony arrives and again Lisa is nowhere to be found and cannot be reached through her cell or home phones. Jim arrives at the ceremony thanks to the last minute favor of a friend, but misses his speech and award – acknowledgement. Jim decides to release his stresses by going out with some friends and then, still upset, calls Lisa at 3:00 AM and she finally picks up her phone and offers the same form of remedial work (or no remedial work) a second time (See Appendix A).

The order in which the transgressions were presented was counter-balanced. Either Transgression 1 or Transgression 2 was presented first, and then followed by the sentence “A couple of months go by and it's a new, but still snowy semester.” Two versions of each form of remedial work were created (See Table 1). The order in which each version of remedial work was used was also counterbalanced.

Table 1

All Versions of Remedial Work: Apologies, Excuses, and No Remedial Work.

	Remedial Work 1	Remedial Work 2
Apology	“Jim, I’m really sorry I didn’t show up. What I did was really bad, and I know I messed up. I know it may not mean much, but I am truly sorry.”	“Jim I’m so sorry! I feel horrible for not showing up. I’ve really screwed up and I was wrong; I should have at least called. I’m so so sorry.”
Excuse	“Oh Jim, I got snowed in and I couldn’t get out. I tried, but I couldn’t do it by myself! I tried calling but my phone line was down and my sister had borrowed the cell phone for the day and she doesn’t pick up calls she doesn’t recognize; so I had no way of contacting you. I guess they must have just gotten the lines working again because I tried calling you right before I went to bed around midnight.”	“I wanted to come, but my car stalled in Champaign. By the time a friend came and jump started the car for me and by the time I went home I was absolutely exhausted. I meant to call you but when I laid down for just a minute to relax for a second I passed out! I just woke up now to your call.”
No Remedial Work	nothing.	nothing at all.

NOTE: The text of the Justifications are not included in this table. It was much more difficult to arrive at suitable justifications that could apply to both transgressions. As a result, the justifications used were considerably longer than either the apologies or excuses (see Appendix A). As a matter of fact, the two justifications used did not turn out to be equal in effectiveness. They were, therefore, deleted from the analysis of the data (see below).

Dependent Variables

Participants answered nineteen Likert scale questions after each transgression and its affiliated remedial work. The participants were asked to respond from the perspective

of Jim (the victim). Responses were given on 7-point scales with 1 being the least severe response and 7 being the most severe response.

These Likert scales were used to measure how bad Lisa's actions were as well as other relevant information: how much Lisa is to blame for the bad things that happened to Jim, how much responsibility Lisa has for what happened, how much Lisa should be forgiven, how much Lisa should be punished for what she did, how much Jim wants to get back at Lisa, how angry Jim is, how hurt Jim is, how much Jim feels betrayed, how likely it is that Lisa and Jim will stay friends after this, how sincere Jim thinks Lisa is, how much Jim thinks Lisa is simply trying to avoid negative evaluations/thoughts from him, how intentional Lisa's actions were, the level of severity of the consequences of Lisa's actions, how much Jim's trust in Lisa will go down, how likely Jim is to perceive Lisa's actions as careless, how much the participant thinks Lisa is being purposefully mean, how much the participant was able to step into Jim's shoes and how much Lisa and Jim were friends before this offense (see Appendix A).

Procedure

Participants were given an informed consent sheet upon entering the testing area. The informed consent was read to the participants as they followed along and was finalized by an oral summary for clarification and any questions from the participants were answered by the researcher. Participants were then handed one of the variations of the experiment and started out by reading the directions at the top of the page before continuing to the first vignette. The directions read:

“You will now be asked to read the stories below very carefully. Please put yourself into the role of Jim, as if you were Jim, as intensely as you can. Try the best you can to think and feel how he would think and feel.

Following each story is a series of questions. Please answer them as honestly as you can.

As the examiner will not leave until all materials are in, please take your time and do the best job you can. Thank you again for your participation in this important study.”

The participants then read the first vignette/transgression and form of remedial work given, and then rated the nineteen dependent variables on the 1-7 Likert scales. The participants then, without any further directions, continued with the experiment and read the second transgression and remedial work given. Finally, the participant answered the nineteen dependent variables a second time (corresponding to the second transgression and remedial work they had just read).

Results

Data Reduction

We conducted two separate maximum likelihood factor analyses on the dependent variables completed after the first transgression and after the second transgression. Based on scree plots, two factors were submitted to an oblique rotation. Two sets of items loaded greater than .500 on the same factors in both the first and second analysis. These items were therefore combined, based on their means, into measures of the perceived wrongness of the transgressor's actions (items: how *bad* the transgressor's actions were, how much to *blame* the transgressor is, how much *responsibility* the transgressor has for what happened, how much the transgressor should be *forgiven*, how much the

transgressor should be *punished*, how much the transgressor is trying to *avoid negative evaluations/thoughts*, how *intentional* the transgressor's actions were, and how *mean* the transgressor is purposefully being, α for first transgression = .85; for second transgression = .90) and perceived negative emotions of the offended party (items: how *hurt* the victim is, how *betrayed* the victim is, and how *angry* the victim is, α for first transgression = .87; for second transgression = .93). All other items were analyzed as individual variables.

Comparing the Effectiveness of Comparable Remedial Work

T-tests were conducted separately for each of the awards and project scenarios comparing apology A and apology B on the perceived wrongness variable and the perceived negative emotions variable. Similar analyses were conducted for justifications and excuses. None of these findings were significant for the apologies. Similarly, none of the analyses or t-tests for the perceived wrongness variable were significant with the excuses. The negative emotion variable when the class project scenario was given was also not significant. However, the negative emotions variable at the awards ceremony scenario was significant with the traditional t-test $t(18) = 2.12, p < .05$. However, Levine's test for equality of variances was significant at $F(1, 18) = 11.09, p < .01$; a modified t-test which does not assume homogeneity of variance was not significant at $t(9.58) = 2.12, p > .05$. Based on these analyses we will treat the two apologies as equivalent and the two excuses as equivalent.

The t-tests for both the project and awards scenario were significant when the justifications were given. For the project scenario, the perceived wrongness of actions variable was significant at $t(18) = 5.58, p < .01$, and the negative emotions variable was significant at $t(18) = 2.44, p < .05$. For the awards ceremony scenario, the perceived

wrongness of actions variable was significant at $t(18) = 3.72, p < .01$, and the negative emotions variable was significant at $t(18) = 2.94, p < .01$. Because we cannot assume the equivalency of the justification remedial work, justifications will not be considered further in the analyses. It is important to note that the t-test analyses are only performed on the first set of dependent variables because we do not know how the first set of scenarios affects the second. The first time the participants received a scenario expresses solely the effects of the remedial work.

Comparing Transgressions

In order to determine whether the two transgressions can be considered equal in severity, two independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the Perceived Wrongness of the Transgressor's Actions and Perceived Negative Emotions of the Offended Party in the class project and awards ceremony scenarios when they occurred first, and when no remedial work was given. For the first t-test measuring the Perceived Wrongness of the Transgressor's Actions, there was a significant difference between the class project scenario ($M = 5.08, S.D. = .49$) and the awards ceremony scenario ($M = 4.58, S.D. = .76$) conditions; $t(38) = 2.47, p < .05$. However, for the second t-test measuring the Perceived Negative Emotions of the Offended Party, there was not a significant difference between the two transgressions (Project: $M = 6.45, S.D. = .64$; Awards: $M = 6.65, S.D. = .50$) conditions; $t(38) = 1.10, p > .10$.

Thus, the equality of the transgressions is questionable. However, given the mixed results, and the centrality of the equivalency of the transgressions for our study, we will proceed to analyze the results as if they were equivalent.

Plan of Analysis

A 2 (Transgression Timing: first or second transgression) x 3 (Remedial Work: apologies, excuses, or no remedial work) mixed analysis of variance was conducted on all variables. Timing was a within subjects variable, and remedial work was a between subjects variable.

Perceived Wrongness of the Transgressor's Actions

There was a main effect of Timing which was statistically significant ($F(1, 117) = 124.70, p < .001$). The transgressor was perceived to be more wrong after the second transgression ($M = 5.64, S.D. = .97$) than after the first transgression ($M = 4.70, S.D. = .88$).

There was a significant two-way interaction between Remedial Work and Timing ($F(2, 117) = 3.16, p < .05$). An analysis of the simple effect of Remedial Work in the second transgression shows that there were no significant differences across Remedial Work ($F(2, 117) = .05, p > .10$). However, the analysis of the simple effect of Remedial Work in the first transgression was significant ($F(2, 117) = 3.01, p < .05$). Specifically, the transgressor's actions were perceived to be more wrong when an apology ($M = 4.83, S.D. = .87$) versus an excuse ($M = 4.43, S.D. = 1.02$) was given ($F(1, 117) = 4.52, p < .05$). Similarly, the actions were perceived to be more wrong when no remediation ($M = 4.83, S.D. = .68$) versus an excuse was offered ($F(1, 117) = 4.52, p < .05$). However, no difference was found in the wrongness of the actions in an apology versus no remediation ($F(1, 117) < .01, p > .10$; See Figure 2).

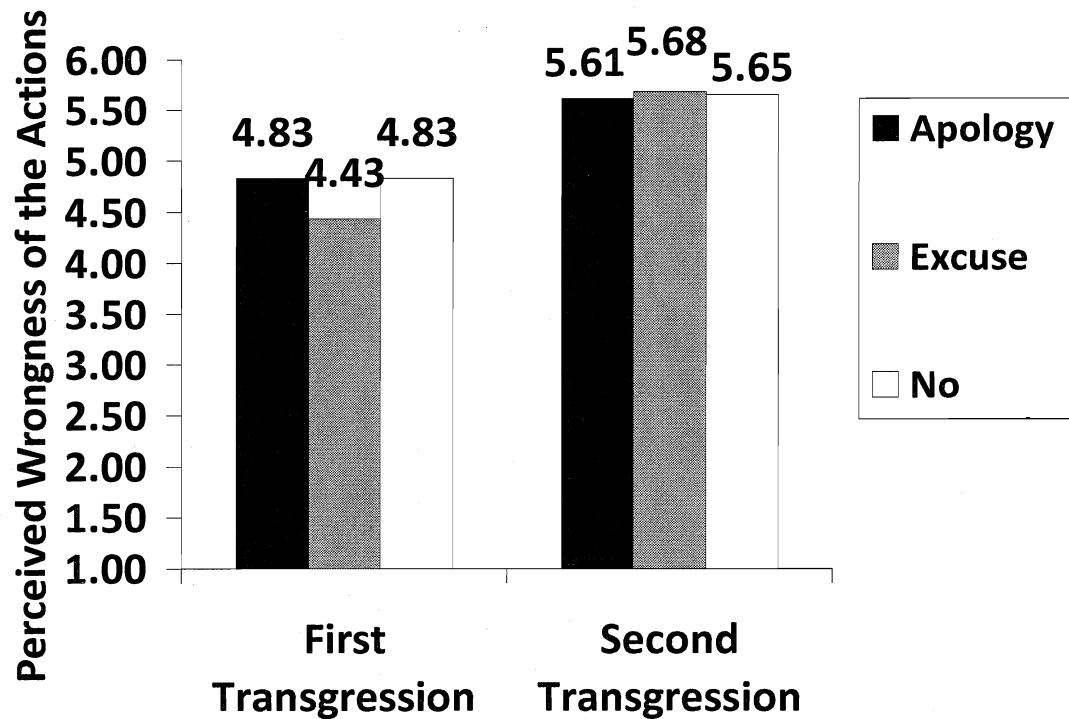


Figure 2. Two-Way Interaction between Timing and Remedial Work on Perceived Wrongness of the Transgressor's Actions.

Perceived Negative Emotions of the Offended Party

There was only a main effect of Timing which was statistically significant ($F(1, 117) = 26.50, p < .001$). The transgressor was perceived to have more negative emotions in the second transgression ($M = 6.74, S.D. = .45$) than in the first transgression ($M = 6.43, S.D. = .75$).

Perceived Carelessness of the Transgressor

Only the main effect of Timing was statistically significant ($F(1, 117) = 22.06, p < .001$). The transgressor was perceived to be more careless in the second transgression ($M = 6.70, S.D. = .66$) than in the first transgression ($M = 6.23, S.D. = 1.03$).

Perceived Insincerity in Remedial Work Given

There was a significant main effect of Remedial Work ($F(2, 117) = 3.74, p < .05$). Analyses of main effects further indicate that the transgressor was perceived to be more insincere when no remediation was given ($M = 6.06$) than when an apology was offered ($M = 5.48; F(1, 117) = 6.34, p < .05$), as well as when an excuse was given ($M = 5.55$); $F(1, 117) = 4.83, p < .05$). No significant difference was found between apology and excuse ($F(1, 117) = .10, p > .10$). There was also a main effect of Timing which was statistically significant ($F(1, 117) = 55.30, p < .001$). The transgressor was perceived to be more insincere in the second transgression ($M = 6.19, S.D. = 1.25$) than in the first transgression ($M = 5.20, S.D. = 1.35$).

Likelihood of Not Staying Friends

The main effect of Timing was statistically significant ($F(1, 117) = 148.21, p < .001$). The parties were perceived as more likely not to remain friends in the second transgression ($M = 5.64, S.D. = 1.42$) than in the first transgression ($M = 3.92, S.D. = 1.46$).

Likelihood that the Trust for the Transgressor Will Diminish

There is a significant main effect of Timing ($F(1, 117) = 16.59, p < .001$). Trust is more likely to be diminished in the second transgression ($M = 6.07, S.D. = 1.66$) than in the first transgression ($M = 5.51, S.D. = 1.43$).

How Much the Victim Wants to Get Back at the Transgressor

There was a main effect of Timing which was statistically significant ($F(1, 114) = 25.84, p < .001$). The transgressor was perceived to want to get back at the transgressor

more in the second transgression ($M = 5.55, S.D. = 1.61$) than in the first transgression ($M = 4.72, S.D. = 1.70$).

Perceived Severity of the Consequences of the Transgressor's Actions

There was a main effect of Timing which was statistically significant ($F(1, 117) = 10.75, p = .001$). Analyses indicate that the consequences of transgressor's actions were perceived to be more severe in the second transgression ($M = 5.98, S.D. = 1.53$) than in the first transgression ($M = 5.57, S.D. = 1.49$).

Discussion

The primary purpose of remedial work is to get forgiveness, reduce responsibility and receive less or no punishment, and in that regard, the main findings in this study suggest that excuses may be a highly effective form of remedial work after a first transgression; however, excuses were shown to be no better than other forms of remedial work after a second transgression. This was true at least for the main set of variables (Perceived Wrongness of the Transgressor's Actions), which includes the forgiveness variable.

For all variables, the second transgression was seen as more severe. This means that the participants rated the offended to view the transgressor in the second transgression as more wrong in their actions, to hold more negative emotions towards the transgressor, be more careless, be less sincere, be less likely to remain friends, be more likely to lose trust in the relationship, be more likely to want to get back at the transgressor, and be more likely to interpret the actions of the transgressor as being more severe than in the first transgression.

While many participants believed the excuse given after a first transgression, they did not believe the excuse given almost at all after a second transgression. This may be because many people are taught to take ownership for their actions. An excuse pushes blame off of themselves and onto something or someone else. While participants accepted this passing of blame after a first offense, they did not tolerate it after a second offense. Another thought along these lines is that we give people the benefit of the doubt after a first offense when an excuse is given, but after a second offense and another excuse is given, we become suspicious and doubtful of their honesty and sincerity. Snyder and Higgins (1988) support this interpretation. They report that if the transgressor over uses excuses, or if the excuse is not believed, it can lead to negative consequences and perceptions from the offended. This is what may have happened after the second excuse was given.

Past studies have repeatedly shown results that indicate that when remedial work is given, the transgressor is more likely to be forgiven. However, no study to date has investigated the effects of a second transgression and corresponding second form of remedial work on forgiveness. For the purposes of this study, then, it was predicted that the first form of remedial work given would be more effective on forgiveness and other related variables than the second form of remedial work given. We also predicted that excuses would be more effective than apologies, because apologies are largely based on emotions and trust, instead of evidence and something more concrete, compared to excuses or justifications.

Limitations

A major limitation to this study was not being able to fully examine the form of remedial work “justifications.” After running analyses on the remedial work, the justifications were not perceived by participants as equivalent. Creating justification variables that fit both vignettes interchangeably was a very difficult task. The end result was that while the justifications did fit both vignettes, they were several times the size and length of the other forms of remedial work given.

Another possible limitation for this study is that in both vignettes the transgressor was female (Lisa) and the victim was male (Jim). Gender biases and stigmatizations for gender roles may have inhibited the results of this study. For example, males are often seen as the transgressor, and the females the victim, not the other way around. Also, men are often seen as more tough than women and are therefore supposed to be unaffected by negative life circumstances more than women are.

Another possible drawback is with the participants. All participants were college students and the vignettes were geared towards the students (an academic awards ceremony and a classroom project as a major part of the characters’ grade). However, because only students took the study, it is unclear whether the finding will generalize to other populations.

A possible drawback to this study was that the two transgressions may not have been of equal severity; if they had been shown to be of equal severity without mixed results for the equality analysis ran, the overall results might have been more in line with past research and the current hypotheses. A way to find a more balanced set of vignettes would be to pre-test participants to see if the vignettes are of equal severity, make

corrections if needed, test again, and continue until it is determined that the vignettes are of equal severity before testing on a large population. This study did not pre-test due to time constraints and lack of participant availability.

It is important to note again that the participants only imagined being the offended person (Jim) and were not actually subjected to the situations described in the vignettes. While this type of study is most common in research investigating remedial work due to its low cost, it does not represent participant's reactions to real events where they are the victim being transgressed against and then offered a form of remedial work. Making this study or similar studies into real-world experiments would be exceptionally difficult, especially for this study, as there is not only one transgression and a set of remedial work offered, but after some time has passed from the occurrence of the first transgression and first form of remedial work, a second transgression and second form of remedial work is given. Such a study would be nearly impossible to conduct for multiple reasons.

First, it is hard enough for a confederate in a study to appear convincing in both role of transgressor and remedial work giver during the first transgression. Having the same confederate give a similar (in severity) second offense would likely not work because the victim/participant would likely recognize them from the first study and would be alert to the study being conducted and would likely react differently during the second transgression and to the remedial work given. If a different confederate were to give the second transgression and form of remedial work, a major limitation to the study would be confounding variables such as the acting of a more convincing or less convincing confederate.

Further complications to the study could be the time involved to complete such a study as this study reported a complete time frame that lasted months from the time of the first transgression and remedial work, a break, and then a new semester and the completion of the second transgression and remedial work. Also, such a hands-on study would be limited in the number of participants that it could capture data from. This study was able to initially assess 160 participants through the use of vignettes.

Finally, financial costs of a study involving confederate(s) and participants that would be willing to be involved in a study for months at a time would likely be costly with little foreseeable added benefits in data collection from the investigator. In fact, as Scher and Darley (1998) point out, the rare experiments that have attempted confederate usage in their studies have only been able to measure a small number of dependent variables, and therefore have limited conclusions that can be reached.

Future Research

The justification form of remedial work might have been more interpretable and easier to develop under different vignettes. Also, the less complicated and intricate the justifications are, the more likely it will be easier for future researchers to create suitable justifications for their studies.

The results might have also been different if the transgressor and victim were also counter-balanced in the vignettes so that half of the participants would have received a female transgressor and half would have a male transgressor. For participants in the study, future research may consider diversifying its participants by not only using university students and in doing so, encompassing a broader spectrum of the general population.

Finally, future research undergoing a similar format in their study should seriously consider pre-testing the perceived severity of the transgressions and make appropriate changes to better balance the perceived severity of their vignettes.

Conclusions

Remedial work plays an important role in the level of relationships, health, legal outcomes, and in many other realms of the lives of everyday people. Many of us daily use remedial work in our everyday interactions.

Our relationships and mental and physical healths can be affected by how we believe we are perceived by others. Goffman would call this our face-value. When we believe we have a high face-value with others, we tend to be happier. Moods such as happiness have been shown to have an effect on our health including healing faster from illnesses and living longer and more fulfilling lives. When someone is a transgressor, and it is their first transgression against someone else, our results indicate that an excuse, versus other forms of remedial work, may best allow the transgressor to keep their perceived face value, and hence happiness and overall health higher due to the offended being more likely to offer forgiveness. This forgiveness can lead to less anxiety, less anger and less depressive symptoms for the transgressor.

The legal system may benefit from such research in order to better help interrogators and prosecutors understand the influences and weight a defendant's or plaintiff's remedial work can carry. For example, with future supporting research, defense attorneys and prosecutors may be able to predict an initial excuse to be more persuasive than an apology to a jury, and this knowledge may have an effect on how they plan their cases.

It is a rarity indeed for those who only minimally need to utilize remedial work, and most of us use a form of remedial in day to day proceedings more often than we would care to admit. Gaining a better understanding of such everyday techniques of being able to successfully make it through our social world throughout our lifetime, such as by the use of remedial work and our interactions of playing the changing role of victim and transgressor, helps us to better understand the complexity of our social interactions, social survival and its role on our physical and mental health.

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Appendix A

Introduction, Transgression Scenarios, Transition, All Remedial Work and Dependent Variables/Questionnaire

Introduction:

Jim is a hard working student who always delegates his time so that homework is finished before any other event can take place. Lisa is a student who often procrastinates on her homework and sometimes does not turn it in. Jim and Lisa are close friends.

Transgression 1:

Jim and Lisa are in the same class and the professor assigned them to work with each other on a project. They were only given a week to do the assignment and because Jim was so concerned about all of his other homework that also needed to get done, he suggested that they postpone the project until the weekend. Lisa, wanting to put off doing the project anyway, happily agreed to meet on Sunday early in the morning and to work on the project all day (or as long as it took) in order to turn it in on time on Monday.

This week had been particularly snow ridden and cold, and Jim was miserable from the bad weather as well as being hard-pressed to get all of his homework, studying for tests, and other projects done. He worked hard and managed to get everything finished by Friday. Saturday he spent a lot of time thinking over what he could suggest that they do for the project on Sunday and went to bed before midnight so he could get a good night's rest. On Sunday, Jim was up by 10:00 AM to start working on the project, but since he didn't know which of his ideas, or Lisa's ideas, if she had any, that they would work on, he decided it was best to just wait for Lisa to call. He worked-out, called his parents and talked to them for a while and then went to buy groceries for the week.

By the time he was finished shopping and had put everything away, it was 3:00 PM and he was really getting worried. He tried to call Lisa, but she did not pick up. He left her a message, and went to get some laundry done. By 6:00 PM he was back home and having a lot of anxiety about how the project was going to get done. He called a second time only to again reach her voice-mail and getting ever more agitated decided to try her home phone which only gave him a disconnected beeping signal. Jim waited a short-time longer, and then decided to work on the project by himself.

Jim worked most of the night on the project alone. Out of frustration of not knowing what had happened that she hadn't come over and anger over the possibilities of why she had ditched him, Jim called one last time, but this time on her home phone at 3:15 AM. On the other end of the line he heard a tired, groggy Lisa pick up the phone. In hearing the anger in his voice, Lisa said,

Transition:

A couple of months go by and it's a new, but still snowy semester.

Transgression 2:

Jim tells Lisa that in two days, that Friday at 8:00 PM, he will be honored at an academic honors ceremony that will be held off-campus at a fancy conference hotel, for the "school's academic elite," and that in addition, he will have to give a speech to everyone present. Lisa is really happy for Jim and admires his "braininess" since she doesn't usually get very good grades.

Jim doesn't have a car at school and asks if Lisa wouldn't mind taking him to the ceremony. Lisa promises to pick him up at 7:00 PM to make sure they have more than

enough time to get there and for him to get debriefed by the officials hosting the honor's ceremony on where to stand and what to do, etc...

Friday comes and Jim is really nervous about giving the speech he has composed and has been practicing as often as he could for the past two days. Jim got home early from going out to dinner in hopes of finding Lisa there so that they could go ahead and head over to the honor's ceremony, but Lisa was nowhere to be found. While waiting, Jim took his gloves, boots, coat and hat off, that were cold and wet and from the heavy snowfall that day and set up his lap top and got all of his speech materials organized and ready to go, but he just kept waiting. Finally, after waiting long after he would have liked, he called Lisa at 7:10 PM only to get her voicemail. He left an anxious message, and kept waiting for her to call back. By 7:45 PM, and 8 voice-mails later, Jim called one of his other friends, Chris, to come pick him up and take him to the ceremony. Chris was at work and couldn't leave, but promised to pick him up by 8:30 PM if he could wait that long. Incredibly worried, but not thinking of any other option because all of his other friends were out of town partying or had gone home for the weekend and had already left, Jim agreed to wait and thanked Chris for doing this for him last minute.

By the time Jim got to the ceremony, it was 9:00 PM and he was told by a staff member, who was stationed at the greeting table just outside of the auditorium, that he had missed his part in the ceremony and that the University officials that were there were very upset.

After the ceremony, and still incredibly upset, Jim decided to go out drinking/partying with his friend to release some of his stress and to get his mind off of things for a while. When he finally got home at 2:30 AM, Jim was not sober, but was still

worked up about the evening's events. He was tired and was about ready to pass out at 3:00 AM when he called Lisa one last time, still expecting to get her voicemail, to tell her how upset, angry, and hurt he was. Surprisingly, she picked up.

After hearing how angry he was, Lisa said,

Remedial Work:

Apology 1

"Jim, I'm really sorry I didn't show up. What I did was really bad, and I know I messed up. I know it may not mean much, but I am truly sorry."

Apology 2

"Jim I'm so sorry! I feel horrible for not showing up. I've really screwed up and I was wrong; I should have at least called. I'm so so sorry."

Excuse 1

"Oh Jim, I got snowed in and I couldn't get out. I tried, but I couldn't do it by myself! I tried calling but my phone line was down and my sister had borrowed the cell phone for the day and she doesn't pick up calls she doesn't recognize; so I had no way of contacting you. I guess they must have just gotten the lines working again because I tried calling you right before I went to bed around midnight."

Excuse 2

"I wanted to come, but my car stalled in Champaign. By the time a friend came and jump started the car for me and by the time I went home I was absolutely exhausted. I meant to call you but when I laid down for just a minute to relax for a second I passed out! I just woke up now to your call."

Justification 1

“You’re never going to believe what happened! I was at Marty’s Bar tonight and was hanging out with some friends at a table. Across from us at a different table was Jason; you know, that big ape of a guy who always works out and doesn’t have much for brains? The same guy you refused to let cheat off of your homework assignments last week; yeah, same guy. He was getting drunk and was telling his buddies how he was going to go to your place with a mask on and beat the shit out of you till you couldn’t see anymore.”

“I was really worried for you, and I know he’s always had a crush on me, so I went over to talk and kind of flirt with him. I stayed there at the bar with him all night Jim. I couldn’t get away to answer your phone calls. Anyway, by the time the bars closed at 1:00, he was sloshed and wanted me to go back with him to his place to “keep partying,” only the party was just the two of us. I walked back with him to his place and he started trying to make out with me as soon as we were in the door. He kept leading me back to his room and I was getting scared. Thank God you called again. What time was it? Around 2:15 by that time? I pretended to answer the phone and faked a crisis that one of my friends was in. Jason looked so dazed and confused as all of this was happening. I told him I had to go help a friend who was plastered from drinking all night and needed my help and for him to go ahead and lay down and that I’d be right back. He looked a little angry so I kissed him, and then that asshole grabbed my ass; before I could react he just turned around and flopped on his bed. Right before I left I heard him snoring. I was just going to call you tomorrow or come over to meet you and explain everything. I know you’re really disappointed and probably angry, but at least you don’t need medical

attention because some masked drunken asshole tried to use your head as a punching bag for a while.”

Justification 2

“I am completely responsible for not showing up, but let me explain. I went out to an early dinner with some friends which included your sister. I know she’s a year younger than us and you think it’s weird I’m friends with you and her, but she called me earlier today and was bored so I invited her along. We drove out to Don Sol Mexican Restaurant in Mattoon and the roads were getting bad on Lincoln Highway 16 when we left; by the time we were heading back to Charleston, the roads were really bad and our car spun out and into a ditch where we slid into a sign by Sarah Bush Hospital. Your sister’s leg was bleeding badly and I remembered what you taught me about putting pressure on a wound, wrapping it a certain way, and elevating it. An ambulance came out within minutes and took your sister to the Emergency Room. The doctor told us if I hadn’t put pressure on the wound and done the other things you had taught me, that her leg may have needed to have been amputated.”

“I’ve been with her all night and my phone didn’t receive any service in the ER. With all of the crazy events of the night and worrying about your sister, I completely forgot about driving to your place and going from there with what we had planned. I got home at 1:00 in the morning and had a rush of the realization that I completely forgot about meeting you tonight. I felt so horrible, and I got all of your missed calls. I was going to call you back but thought you’d already be asleep. I was going to tell you everything tomorrow. Before I left, your sister said you and I were her heroes tonight and that she can’t wait to give you a big hug when you go out to see her tomorrow at the hospital.”

No Remedial Work 1

nothing.

No Remedial Work 2

nothing at all.

Dependent Variables (Likert Questions):

1) How bad were Lisa's actions?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Very

2) How much is Lisa to blame for the negative things that happened to Jim?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Completely

3) How much responsibility does Lisa have for what happened?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			All

4) How much should Lisa be forgiven?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely			Somewhat			Not at all

5) How much should Lisa be punished for what she did?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Completely

6) How much does Jim want to get back at Lisa?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Completely

7) How angry is Jim?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Very

8) How hurt is Jim?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Very

9) How much does Jim feel betrayed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Very

10) How likely is it that Lisa and Jim will stay friends after this?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very			Somewhat			Not at all

11) How sincere does Jim think Lisa is?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very			Somewhat			Not at all

12) How much does Jim think Lisa is simply trying to avoid negative evaluations/thoughts from him?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Completely

13) How intentional were Lisa's actions?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Completely

14) How severe were the consequences of Lisa's actions?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Very

15) How much will Jim's trust in Lisa go down?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Completely

16) How likely would Jim be to perceive Lisa's actions as careless?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Very

17) How much do you think Lisa is being purposefully mean?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Completely

18) How much were you able to step into Jim's shoes and answer questions as you think he is thinking and feeling?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely			Somewhat			Not at all

19) How much were Lisa and Jim friends before this offense?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Best			Somewhat			Not at all

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Reactions to Student Behavior

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by *John M. Koth (and faculty sponsor Dr. Steven J. Scher)*, from the *Psychology Department* at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study is designed for research purposes. This study investigates how well remedial work, works on offending and then re-offending.

- **PROCEDURES**

After understanding this form, meeting the minimal requirements (EIU undergraduate student, 18 years of age or older), and signing this form if you agree to participate, you will be asked to read a vignette or story and then answer a series of questions. You will then continue on, without a break or further instruction, to a second vignette or story followed by a second series of questions.

The task is expected to last no more than one hour.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

No foreseeable risks or discomforts are anticipated.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

You will gain an understanding through the experience of participating on how University level research is conducted. Benefits to society may be that researchers and professionals are better able to describe and understand human interactions; this study may also help to promote and further scientific research.

- **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION (*Optional*)**

Participation in the study will be counted towards the credit hour requirement for your Introductory to Psychology course at Eastern Illinois University.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All information that you provide will remain confidential and anonymous. No identifying information will be indicated in any reports of this research.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this

study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

Hence, you can terminate your participation at any time without penalty and without losing credit towards your course (you will still receive credit towards your course if you leave the study).

• **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Steven J. Scher
3143 Physical Science Building
Eastern Illinois University
Telephone: (217) 581-7269
Email: sjcher@eiu.edu

• **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I am at least 18 years old, and I am an undergraduate student at Eastern Illinois University. I have been offered a copy of this form.

Printed Name of the Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

Signature of Investigator

Date