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"We forgive": A group's act of forgiveness and its restorative effects on members'

feelings of justice and sentiments towards the offender group

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Abstract

Although typically conceptualized as a reconciliation outcome, we propose that intergroup forgiveness can also be construed as a decision or course of action that advances justice and positive intergroup sentiments among members of the victimized group. However, the process through which this occurs depends on the perceived differentiation between the groups. Following intergroup transgressions staged in the laboratory (Study 1) or reported in news article scenarios (Study 2), participants whose victimized ingroup expressed forgiveness perceived less injustice than those whose group did not forgive, which indirectly improved intergroup sentiments. Among high ingroup identifiers and in victim groups with low relative status (i.e., more salient intergroup boundaries), forgiveness diminished feelings of injustice by reducing the perceived threat to the ingroup's status/power. In contrast, among low ingroup identifiers and in groups with high relative status, forgiveness diminished feelings of injustice by reducing the perceived threat to collectively shared values.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999), chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, declared there would be "no future without forgiveness" for a diverse and inclusive, post-apartheid South Africa. Forgiveness may indeed be a key to the resolution of intergroup conflict and lasting peace. It may help to prevent an escalation of violence due to retribution and counter-retribution, heal relationships within a divided people and mend divisions between groups. Vested with such optimism and hope, researchers have begun to study forgiveness as part of reconciliation processes not only in South Africa, but also in Northern Ireland, Chile, Rwanda, and elsewhere (e.g., Cairns, Tam, Hewstone, & Niens, 2005; Gobodo-Madikizela, 2002; Gonzales, Manzi, & Noor, 2011; Noor, Brown, Gonzales, Manzin, & Lewis, 2008; Staub, Pearlman, Gubin, & Hagengimana, 2005). Intergroup forgiveness may not only be key to the resolution of large-scale conflicts, but also to the curbing of fallout from more circumscribed issues such as diplomatic rows, corporate wrongdoing, or mundane scandals and insults (e.g., Leonard, Mackie, & Smith, 2011; Philpot & Hornsey, 2011).

Similar to research in interpersonal forgiveness (e.g., Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1991; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997), intergroup forgiveness implies that groups who feel victimized (hurt, violated or terrorized) by another group overcome their hatred, overcome their desires for revenge or punishment, and are open to re-engage with the other group constructively towards a peaceful future (McLernon, Cairns, Hewstone, & Smith, 2004). Based on this understanding of forgiveness and its beneficial role in intergroup conflict resolution, most research addresses the questions of how forgiveness is possible, what determines forgiveness, and how it can be promoted. And, as in interpersonal contexts, often research measures intergroup forgiveness as an outcome or intervening variables, as a sentiment in individual group members that reflects their preparedness to

forgive, or their lack of hatred or vengeful motives towards the other group (e.g., Cehajic, Brown, & Castano, 2008; Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger, & Niens, 2006; Noor et al., 2008; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008; Swart, Turner, Hewstone, & Voci, 2011; Tam et al., 2007, 2008; Wohl & Branscombe, 2005).

What is widely lacking in this research is the consideration of forgiveness as a decision or act, and how this act may play a role in the formation of more positive, conciliatory intergroup attitudes. Thus, rather than seeing (or measuring) forgiveness as individual-level sentiments and mere outcome of social-cognitive and emotional processes, we can conceptualize intergroup forgiveness as a course of action that a group decides to take (Digeser, 2001). What impact does this course of action have for the reconciliation process? Obviously, we might expect forgiveness to have beneficial effects on the offender group's attitudes and motivation to engage in reconciliation (see Nadler & Shnabel, 2008). But what are the consequences for the forgiving group? If a group collectively decides they want to forgive the outgroup for acts that harmed the ingroup, how does this affect members of the forgiving group psychologically? How does the collective decision to forgive (as we can imagine it to occur in a post-conflict reconciliation process) affect members' perceptions, emotions and sentiments towards the outgroup?

Towards Forgiveness as an Act

Most, if not all, empirical research on intergroup forgiveness has treated it as conciliatory sentiment towards an offender group, measured as positive (or non-hostile) feelings, favourable views about the offender group's morality and trustworthiness, and favourable behavioural tendencies towards the outgroup (McLernon et al., 2004; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). Researchers have commonly measured it as an outcome or intervening variable and tried to understand what predicts such forgiving sentiment. For example, it has been found that intergroup contact is a positive predictor of forgiving sentiments, mediated

by empathy and trust (Cehajic et al., 2008) or by anger emotions and infrahumanization (Tam et al., 2008). Likewise, an offender group apology has been shown to promote forgiveness, again mediated by favourable intergroup emotions (Leonard et al., 2011), although apologies generally have been found to be surprisingly ineffective in intergroup contexts (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). For example, victim group members may not grant offender groups the ability to feel the emotions expressed in an apology (infrahumanization), which impedes its effect on forgiveness (Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012).

Further, a common or superordinate identity can facilitate forgiveness, for example by portraying the transgression as intra-human rather than intergroup (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005); or, in a protracted conflict, by invoking a common identity as victims (or perpetrators) that is shared by both groups (Shnabel, Halabi, & Noor, 2013). Again, however, there are limits to a common identity's ability to promote forgiveness, namely if a subgroup claims to represent the superordinate group more than the outgroup does (Noor, Brown, Taggart, Fernandez, & Cohen, 2010; see Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007). Similarly, identification with one's victimized ingroup is negatively related to forgiving sentiments (Noor et al., 2008) and can qualify the effects of intergroup apologies, with apologies eliciting forgiving responses only when members do not identify strongly with their victim group (Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008).

However, research on forgiveness in interpersonal contexts suggests that we can understand forgiveness not only as a sentiment, as intrapersonal conciliatory feelings and attitudes, but also as an interpersonal act of behaving with conciliation towards the offender (Exline & Baumeister, 2000). We can think of it not only as affective forgiveness, that is an intrapsychic change within the victim of which the offender need not even be aware of; but also as decisional forgiveness, which is a deliberate choice of forgiving the offender (Enright and the Human Development Study Group, 1992; Worthington, 2006). This distinction

assumes particular relevance in intergroup contexts, where the intrapsychic change occurs in the minds of individual members, while the decision to forgive may be one taken as a group, through a legitimate authority or a legitimated process of decision-making (e.g., a referendum). While in interpersonal contexts the intrapsychic changes might commonly (although not necessarily) precede and inform the decision to forgive, in intergroup contexts the group may decide to forgive *irrespective* of the sentiments of individual members. Thus, the group's decision to forgive may inform or affect the sentiments of individual members.

Forgiveness, Symbolic Concerns and Justice

We argue that the act of forgiveness by the victimized ingroup can help to ameliorate certain psychological threats that victims of a wrongdoing experience and, thereby, diminish perceptions of injustice, which *in turn* promotes more conciliatory sentiments towards the offender outgroup. Specifically, justice restoration theory (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008; Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Platow, 2008) argues that transgressions have two major symbolic implications for victims. First, transgressions communicate that the offenders put themselves above the rules and the victims, illegitimately assuming superior status and power, and diminishing the status and power of the victims; victims feel threatened in their social standing, reputation, status and power (Nadler & Shnabel, 2008). Second, transgressions communicate that offenders do not share in a consensus about the values they violated, thus questioning the accepted consensus and the validity of the values (Durkheim, 1964; Vidmar, 2000). It is primarily these two symbolic violations or threats that underpin victim experiences of injustice, and thus need to be addressed in order to restore a sense of justice. Revenge, retribution, compensation, apologies, and so on, can help ameliorate either or both those threats – however, so can forgiveness (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008).

First, forgiveness, rather than betraying weakness, can be a status-restoring act through which victims express their refusal to be drawn to the low moral level of the

offenders, thus assuming a standing of moral superiority; hence, forgiveness can be empowering as victims dictate the course of action and demonstrate to self and others their willpower and control in managing baser instincts (Heider, 1958). Second, forgiveness can restore (akin to a process of self-persuasion) the belief that the offenders, irrespective of their transgression, do accept the values violated by their offense; through their forgiveness act victims demonstrate their expectation, trust or hope that the offenders share in the value consensus (Walker, 2006). Through both these processes, forgiveness can reduce feelings of injustice (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008); and, in turn, with their sense of justice at least partially repaired, victims should be more inclined towards conciliation and forgiving sentiments (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003; Wenzel & Okimoto, 2014). In interpersonal contexts, Wenzel and Okimoto (2010) found evidence for these processes in a study where participants were instructed (or not) to write a message of forgiveness to the perpetrator of an imagined wrongdoing against them. The act of interpersonal forgiveness increased perceptions of status/power and value consensus, which increased perceptions of justice and conciliatory sentiments towards the offender. The present research investigates whether the equivalent would be true for a *group's* acts of forgiveness. We argue that intergroup forgiveness can alleviate individual members' concerns about status/power and a value consensus shared with the offending outgroup, regardless of the individuals' own initial (un)forgiving sentiments or level of support for the forgiveness act.

However, justice restoration theory (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008) further argues that the two symbolic threats emanating from transgressions (i.e., threats to status/power and value consensus), are not always equally relevant to feelings of justice (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2012). Specifically, status/power should be of particular concern when the relationship between victims and offender is of a more competitive or antagonistic nature (Wenzel et al., 2010). Status and power are inherently relative, as higher status and power derive from comparisons

with others who have lower status and power (and vice versa); they therefore imply a differentiation between self and other, or ingroup and outgroup, and a competitive orientation.

A competitive and antagonistic relationship between groups is more likely when the intergroup relation is salient to members (e.g., Wit & Kerr, 2002), when members identify with their group and are motivated to arrive at a more positive intergroup differentiation for their group (see Turner, 1975). For example, a group's low status or minority role is an "aggravating condition" under which its members show enhanced intergroup differentiation behaviour through even blatantly aversive means (Blanz, Mummendey, & Otten, 1995; Mummendey et al., 1992; Otten, Mummendey, & Blanz, 1996). Low-status group members also tend to be sensitive to discriminatory treatment that could be construed as a rejection based on their status (Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002). In contrast, majority or high status groups, as long as they feel their status is relatively secure, can afford to be magnanimous in their behaviour towards the outgroup (see Haslam, 2004). Indeed, in situations of intergroup contact, Saguy, Dovidio and Pratto (2008) found that low-status group members were more motivated to talk about issues of power than high-status group members, particularly when they identified strongly with their group. Status and power are generally issues of particular concern to groups who feel their deprivation, and for strongly identified group members. Status/power threats implied in intergroup transgressions are therefore more likely to affect feelings of injustice when the ingroup has a lower status, or when members identify strongly with their victim ingroup.

Conversely, value consensus threats presuppose that there is an assumption of value consensus to start with (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2012; Wenzel et al., 2010). When self and other, or ingroup and outgroup, are seen to be fundamentally different, they would not be expected to agree on the same positions or share the same values; hence the appraisal of the transgression as a value violation would be less relevant. Only when the groups share a

common superordinate identity, or at some level are categorized as the same or interchangeable, would members expect to hold the same views and values, and be motivated to restore agreement when there are differences (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Reynolds, 1998; Turner, 1987).

Value consensus threats are therefore more likely to determine members' injustice feelings when they identify less strongly with their ingroup, and/or their status position is secure. Under these conditions, ingroup-outgroup differentiation and intergroup competition are less identity-relevant to members; they may be more cooperatively oriented and therefore define their identity at a more inclusive level through the values they share. For example, majority groups tend to prefer assimilation as a strategy of acculturation (Verkuyten, 2006), and to represent the superordinate identity shared with the minority as "one group" that supersedes intergroup differentiation, whereas minorities prefer a "dual identity" (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007). In other words, majority groups expect minorities to share the same values and fit into a superordinate group as defined by the majority (see Wenzel et al., 2007). In contact situations, Saguy et al. (2008) found that majority members were more motivated to talk about commonalities with the minority outgroup. Generally, value consensus is more of concern for majority or high-status groups, and for members who are less identified with their group and do not see or seek further intergroup differentiation.

In sum, we argue that intergroup forgiveness can improve feelings of justice (and subsequent intergroup sentiments) because it positively affects perceptions of ingroup status/power and intergroup value consensus. However the relative importance of these two processes is determined by the salience of intergroup differentiation, as a function of either relative status or group identification (i.e., moderated mediation):

H1. A victim group's act of forgiveness will reduce feelings of injustice among its members and, mediated by this, lead to less hostile and more positive sentiments towards the offender group.

H2. A victim group's act of forgiveness will reduce feelings of injustice among its members due to (i.e., mediated by) reduced feelings of threat to status/power and to a value consensus with the outgroup.

H3. The salience of the intergroup differentiation (i.e., low ingroup status, or group identification) will moderate the relationships between symbolic threats (i.e., to status/power and value consensus) and feelings of injustice: perceived status/power threat will be more strongly related to injustice when the ingroup's status is low or the member's group identification is high, whereas perceived value consensus threat will be more strongly related to injustice when the ingroup's status is high or the member's group identification is low.

Study 1

Study 1 utilized a laboratory paradigm where novel groups were created in the lab, a transgression by the outgroup was staged, and the participants' ingroup either expressed forgiveness to the outgroup or not. Information about the ingroup's relative status was also manipulated in order to examine its moderating effects.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 155 students at an Australian university (62% female; M_{age}=26). Participants volunteered to participate in response to advertisements placed across the university campus, and received payment of AUS$15. They were randomly assigned to a 3 (ingroup status: low, unspecified, high) by 2 (forgiveness: no, yes) between-subjects design.

Procedure. The study involved an intergroup transgression staged in a laboratory environment, and was allegedly about "performance and interactions of groups with different

cognitive styles". There were six participants in each experimental session (or, participants believed there were), working in separate cubicles and interacting via computers. Participants received all instructions and completed all tasks on individual computers. Participants first completed a "cognitive style test": they were shown ten complex pictures of overlapping geometrical shapes (circles, squares, or ellipses) and were to identify as quickly as possible how many shapes each picture entailed. They then received false feedback that graphed all six participants (identified by letters) in a diagram, with three falling in an area shown to reflect an analytic cognitive style and the other three as having a synthetic cognitive style. All participants were asked to identify their own cognitive style (analytic or synthetic, counterbalanced across conditions) to acknowledge their recognition of the ingroup.

Next, participants were told that for the remainder of the study they would form a group with the other participants who had the same cognitive style as them, and that they would play a competitive anagram game against the other group. In reality, there were no groups and the competition was staged (see Eaton, Struthers, & Santelli, 2006, for a similar procedure). There were ten rounds. In each round all participants were given a string of letters and were asked to identify the word that could be formed out of those letters as quickly as possible. The group that gave the correct response first would win the round. To provide an incentive to work hard they were told they could win extra money by doing well in the game, beyond the AUS$15 they were offered for participating in the study; however, they could lose some money too. Participants were told:

> "Each player's starting balance is $15. After each round each player of the winning team will earn $1. Collectively the winning team will decide (by vote) whether they want to take that money from the 'bank' or from the other team."

There was one practice round (which the ingroup won). The game was programmed so that the outgroup won most of the rounds (8 out of 10), and in most of those cases (6 out of 8)

they voted to take their winnings from the ingroup's funds (i.e., their participation payments, rather than the bank). As there was no good reason for this, ingroup members should feel that this was an unjustified harm to them.

After the game the two teams were asked to exchange messages with each other. Each member of a group would draft a short message to the other team; the three drafts would be shown to fellow members and they would vote on which message to send. Forgiveness was manipulated by the messages that the other two team members apparently drafted, both of which were either forgiving or non-forgiving (depending on forgiveness condition), and by the group allegedly voting to send one of those two messages (counterbalanced). This was followed by the dependent variables (see below): "To conclude, we are interested in how Synthetics and Analytics respond to these types of competitive tasks. Please answer a few questions about your thoughts regarding this study session." Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Independent variables.

Ingroup status. Ingroup status was manipulated by varying the information provided about analytic styles, prior to the intergroup competition. In the *unspecified status* condition, no further information about the two cognitive styles was provided. However, in the low and high status conditions, participants received additional information about the inferiority or superiority, respectively, of their own cognitive style compared to the alternative style. In the *low status* condition, participants were told research had shown that the outgroup's cognitive style was superior to their own in the processing of complex information, whereas in the *high status* condition participants were told their own cognitive style had been shown to be superior to the other:

"Note that past research has shown that the two styles not only differ in how people identify and process complex information, but performance differences have also been

found: Relative to the speed of processing complex stimulus arrays, people with a synthetic [analytic] style make significantly fewer errors than people with an analytic [synthetic] style.

So, people with a synthetic [analytic] style perform better in processing complex information. Interestingly, this has been shown to be linked also to the superiority of a synthetic [analytic] style in complex problem-solving, multi-tasking and leadership skills. Research is currently busy investigating implications for other performance areas."

Forgiveness. Following the intergroup competition (and transgression), participants were instructed that their team could send the other team a message. The participant drafted a message, and allegedly so did the two other group members. All three message drafts were then displayed, including the participant's actual draft and the two pre-programmed messages. Participants voted on the message they wanted to send; but irrespective of their choice, one of the pre-programmed messages was always "chosen" by the majority vote. In the *unforgiveness* condition, the chosen message expressed outrage and lack of forgiveness (e.g., "well played guys, but why the hell did you tak e your winnings form our group. That's friggin rude"), while in the *forgiveness* condition, without ignoring the issue, it expressed conciliation and forgiveness (e.g., "well played guys, but why did you have to tak e your winnings form our group. Ah well… we re not the resentful type, no hard feelings"); typographical errors in the messages were deliberate. After they had already made their choice, participants received the message allegedly sent by the outgroup, which was rather bland and held constant between conditions ("Thanks for the game guys. Better luck next time"). Then the message the participants' group had allegedly decided on was shown and allegedly sent.

Dependent variables. All dependent variables were measured on 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), unless otherwise specified. Scale scores were computed by averaging across items.

Threat to status/power. The outgroup's threat to the ingroup's status and power was measured by six items (based on Wenzel et al., 2010): "I feel the other group looks down on our group"; "I feel the other group thinks they are better than us"; "I feel the other group feels powerful and in control"; "I feel the other group is superior to us"; "I feel the other group respects our group" (reverse-coded), "I feel like the other group is more powerful than we are" ($\alpha = .79$).[1]

Threat to value consensus. The outgroup's threat to value consensus with the ingroup was measured by four items (based on Wenzel et al., 2010): "I feel the other group agrees with us on principles of decent conduct" (reverse-coded); "I feel we share the same values with the other group" (reverse-coded); "I feel the other group ignores a broadly accepted understanding of what is right and wrong"; "I feel like the other group disregards commonly shared beliefs and values" ($\alpha = .66$)

Injustice. The participants' feelings of injustice were measured with four items: "The events have left my sense of justice at a low point"; "The situation, as it unfolded, is very unjust"; "Overall, this situation has been very unfair"; "Considering the events, I feel a strong sense of injustice" ($\alpha = .91$).

Intergroup sentiments. The participants' feelings of *anger* and resentment were measured with three items: "How do you currently feel? ...Angry"; "…Furious"; and "…Resentful" ($\alpha = .87$). Their *sympathy* and liking towards the outgroup were measured by four items: "I like the other group of synthetics [analytics]"; "I am sure the other group are likeable people"; "I have no desire to meet the members of the other team" (reverse-coded);

"What are your feelings towards the other group? (1 = *extremely cold*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *extremely warm*)" (α = .62).

   Manipulation checks. As a check for the manipulation of status, participants rated the following question towards the end of the study, after all dependent variables had been completed: "Would you say that the information provided to you about your group's cognitive style made you feel lower or higher in status compared to the other group?" (1 = *much lower in status*, 7 = *much higher in status*).[2] Likewise, as a check for the forgiveness manipulation, participants were again presented with the message they had sent to the other group and asked to rate it on the following four attributes: angry, resentful (both reverse-coded), conciliatory, and forgiving (α = .79).

Results

   A 3 x 2 ANOVA on the status check yielded a significant effect of status, $F(2,85) = 13.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .246$; neither the main effect of forgiveness nor the interaction were significant, Fs < 0.1. Pairwise comparisons showed that, as intended, participants in the low status condition perceived their group as having lower status ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.30$) than in the unspecified status condition ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.04$), $t(57) = 2.03$, $p = .047$, while those in the high status condition perceived having higher status ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.92$) than in the unspecified condition, $t(57) = 3.29$, $p = .002$. A similar analysis for the forgiveness manipulation check yielded a main effect of forgiveness, $F(1,149) = 102.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .408$, while the main effect of status and the interaction were not significant, Fs < 1.7. As intended, the ingroup message was considered significantly more forgiving or conciliatory in the forgiveness condition ($M = 4.96$, $SD = 1.16$) than in the no forgiveness condition ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.23$), $t(153) = 10.16$, $p < .001$.

   We then investigated individuals' own choices when it came to sending the offending outgroup team a message, to assure these would not confound the results. Two independent

coders rated the messages drafted by the participants on a scale from 0 = *not resentful* to 2 = *resentful*. The coders' ratings were highly correlated ($r = .84$) and were thus averaged. A 3x2 ANOVA with status and forgiveness as factors revealed no significant main or interaction effects, Fs < 1.67. Hence, individuals' own sentiments as expressed in their message could not account for any experimental effects and were not considered further. Likewise, we dummy-coded participants' vote as being in favour of one of the pre-programmed forgiving or unforgiving messages versus not (i.e., they voted for their own message). A binary logistic regression with effect-coded experimental factors as predictor variables showed a main effect of forgiveness, $B = .89$, $p = .008$; no other main or interaction effects were significant. Participants were more likely to vote for forgiving than unforgiving messages. However, when exploring participant's vote as a predictor variable for the main dependent variables, it did not significantly qualify any of the following effects. In particular, all effects of the ingroup's act of forgiveness reported below were independent of the individual's vote. We therefore omitted this variable from the main analyses reported here.

The cell means for our main dependent variables are displayed in Table 1. We used regression techniques to test our predictions, with bootstrapping methods to test for indirect effects (Hayes, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). For this, the experimental factors were effect coded: forgiveness was represented by one variable (-1, +1), and status by two, namely low status (1, -.5, -.5) and high status (-.5, -.5 , 1), with the unspecified status condition serving as reference category. The interaction terms between the forgiveness variable and each status variable were also included. First, we tested the effects of forgiveness on feelings of injustice (top part of Table 2): as predicted, the act of forgiveness significantly reduced feelings of injustice, and none of the other main or interaction effects were significant. Next, we subjected anger as outcome variable to this model and, in a second step, added injustice as the predicted mediator (see middle panel of Table 2). In the first step, only forgiveness was a

significant predictor: the act of forgiveness reduced anger. In the second step, injustice was significantly related to anger, while the effect of forgiveness was reduced but still significant. Using bootstrapping methods with Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 4), results confirmed that the indirect effect of forgiveness on anger via feelings of injustice was significant ($B = -.16$, CI95% = [-.35; -.04]): through reducing feelings of injustice, the act of forgiveness reduced anger. Similarly, we investigated sympathy towards the outgroup as outcome variable (see the bottom panel of Table 2). In the first step, only forgiveness was a significant predictor: the act of forgiveness increased sympathy. In the second step, injustice was significantly related to sympathy, while the effect of forgiveness was reduced but still marginally significant. Using bootstrapping again, we found that the indirect effect of forgiveness on sympathy via feelings of injustice was significant ($B = .10$, CI95% = [.02; .19]): through reducing feelings of injustice, the act of forgiveness increased sympathy. Altogether, in line with predictions, the ingroup's act of forgiveness led members to feel less anger and more sympathy towards the offender outgroup, at least partially mediated by lowered feelings of injustice.[3]

We next tested whether the effect of forgiveness on injustice was mediated by reductions in status/power threat and value consensus threat (Hypothesis 2), and whether their respective roles were moderated by ingroup status (Hypothesis 3). We began by establishing the critical mediating relationships between the variables. First, we regressed the two presumed mediators on forgiveness, the two status dummy variables, and their interactions. Only forgiveness had significant effects: the act of forgiveness reduced the perceived threat to the ingroup's status/power ($B = -.28$, $p = .007$) and, marginally, the perceived threat to value consensus ($B = -.19$, $p = .065$). Second, as we have already reported, forgiveness had a main effect on perceived injustice, but with no effect of the two status dummy variables or their interactions (see Table 2, top panel). Third, we added the two

presumed mediators into the regression: both status/power threat and value consensus threat were positively related to feelings of injustice (see Table 3, Step 1).

Next, to test the proposed mediated moderation effects on perceived justice, we added the interaction terms between both presumed mediators and the low and high status dummy variables, respectively (see Table 3, Step 2). The two interactions involving high status did not show any significant effects. However, low status significantly moderated the relationships of status/power threat and, marginally, value consensus threat with feelings of injustice. Analyses of simple effects (Aiken & West, 1991) showed that in the low status condition status/power threat was significantly related to injustice ($B = .71$, $p = .010$) but value consensus threat was not ($B = .27$, $p = .313$), whereas in the control condition (and, by implication, similarly in the high status condition) value consensus threat was significantly related to injustice ($B = .75$, $p < .001$) but status/power was not, or only marginally ($B = .28$, $p = .064$; see Figure 1, which shows the standardized regression coefficients).

Finally, we used bootstrapping methods to test the significance levels of the conditional indirect effects. Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 76) showed that the conditional indirect effect of forgiveness on injustice via status/power threat was significant in the low status condition ($B = -.29$, CI95% = [-.64; -.01]) but not in the control condition ($B = -.08$, CI95% = [-.32; .01]). Conversely, the conditional indirect effect of forgiveness on injustice via value consensus threat was significant in the control condition ($B = -.26$, CI95% = [-.57; -.06]) but not in the low status condition ($B = -.06$, CI95% = [-.30; .06]).

Discussion

The findings from Study 1 were in line with our predictions. An act of forgiveness by the victim ingroup (endorsed by its majority) led individual members, irrespective of what their initial reaction might have been, to show more conciliatory sentiments towards the outgroup: they felt less anger and more sympathy towards them. These positive effects of the

forgiveness act were at least partially mediated by the reduction of individuals' feelings of injustice. This reduction of injustice feelings was due to the act of forgiveness mitigating threats to both status/power and value consensus, but their relevance was dependent on manipulated ingroup status. When the ingroup's status was generally inferior (i.e., members felt more insecure in their status position and were more sensitive to status threats), the alleviation of a status/power threat reduced feelings of injustice. Conversely, when the ingroup's status was not said to be inferior (or even explicitly superior), the alleviation of a threat to value consensus reduced feelings of injustice. However, it should be emphasized that under some conditions high-status groups members' feelings of justice could reflect heightened concern for status/power, specifically when their status dominance is insecure or under threat from looming social change (e.g., Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). The present paradigm did not suggest such a spectre of change, rather it presented status differences as an established scientific fact.

Notably, this study required an exchange of messages between the groups. Although the outgroup's message was neutral, it could have been perceived as friendly (i.e., "better luck next time"), thus signalling conciliation and leading to more forgiving sentiments. In Study 2 we addressed this issue by investigating a one-sided expression of forgiveness. Further, while the laboratory paradigm of this study had the benefit of experimental realism, involving participants as first-hand victims and directly exposing them to the process of (non)forgiveness, it was limited by use of a necessarily minor transgression and artificiality of the situation. In the second study, we therefore turned to a real-life situation in an attempt to replicate the findings.

Study 2

In Study 2 we referred to an ostensibly "real event" by presenting information in form of an online news story where the leader of an outgroup insulted the participants' own group:

students. A representative body of students then responded either with conciliation or with outrage and hostility. The dependent variables were equivalent to those in Study 1. However, in this study we investigated levels of ingroup identification (see Wenzel et al., 2010) as a moderator variable for the effects of status/power and value consensus threat. With greater levels of identification, participants would be more concerned with the ingroup's goals, its status and power, and more competitively oriented to defend it from a challenger outgroup. With lower levels of identification the ingroup-outgroup distinction becomes less relevant and/or participants would be less partisan and more cooperatively oriented towards shared interests, including the validation of common values (see Turner, 1981).

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 156 university students at a South Australian university (68% female; $M_{age}=25$). Participants volunteered to participate in a set of studies in a research lab and received a payment of AUS$20. They were randomly assigned to a 2-cell between-subjects design with the experimental factor forgiveness (no, yes) and the measured level of identification as a continuous moderator.

Procedure. In the first part of the study session, participants completed a range of individual difference variables (not relevant for this paper) as well as a scale measuring identification with students (see below). In the second part of the session, participants were told "we are interested in your reactions to a recent event covered in the local news. Perhaps you have read about it. We will present you here with some articles from the internet that covered the issue." The first article was entitled "Business Council Chief Slams Uni Students as Lazy", and reported how a Mr McLean, the CEO of the (fictitious) Business Council of South Australia, had publicly made disparaging comments about university students in South Australia, branding its university graduates as lazy, lacking initiative and solid knowledge, missing significant work skills and work ethic, and so on. These disparaging remarks

constitute the transgression event, and university students were its victims. Participants subsequently answered a number of questions about how the incident made them feel and what they thought about it, including how "unfair" ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.60$) and "wrongful" ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.51$) the Business Council's statements were. Both means were clearly greater than 4, the midpoint of the 7-point scale, $t(155) = 7.42$ and 6.05, ps $< .001$, indicating that participants felt indeed victimized.

Next, participants were presented with another local online news article that was apparently published two days later and reported about student reactions to the Business Council's statements. Specifically, the article reported the response by Tim Bowman, the (fictional) president of the National Union of Students. Two versions of the article were randomly presented to students, manipulating the ingroup's act of forgiveness vs. no forgiveness. The dependent variables followed, and finally participants were thanked and debriefed, including of course that all the articles and information presented had been fake.

Forgiveness manipulation. Forgiveness was manipulated through the presentation of one of two articles that reported the response of the representative student body, the National Union of Students. In the no forgiveness condition, the article was entitled "Students Hit Back at Business Council" and reported that the president of the student union was infuriated, refuted the Business Council's claims, demanded a public apology, berated Mr McLean as a "loudmouth", called for him to be sacked, and called off any "intention to engage again in any way with the Business Council". In the forgiveness condition, the article was entitled "Students Reach Out to Business Council" and reported that students responded with measure to the remarks by the Business Council, with the president of the student union being unruffled by the Business Council's statements, inviting the Business Council to a dialogue, trusting that they agree with students about the value of university study, and declaring the willingness to discuss the issue with the Business Council.

Dependent variables. All dependent variables were measured on 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), unless otherwise specified. Scale scores were computed by averaging across items.

Identification. Level of ingroup identification was measured with four items: "I identify with other university students"; "Being a university student is important to me"; "When I talk about university students, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they'"; "I am a typical university student" (α = .72).

Threat to status/power. The outgroup's threat to the ingroup's status and power was measured by four items adapted from Study 1: "I feel the Business Council looks down on students"; "I feel the Business Council thinks they are better than us students"; "I feel the Business Council feels powerful and in control"; "I feel the Business Council respects us students" (reverse-coded; α = .65).

Threat to value consensus. The outgroup's threat to value consensus with the ingroup was measured by the four items adapted from Study 1; e.g. "I feel the Business Council agrees with us students on principles of decent conduct" (reverse-coded; α = .47). The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was low, however the item-total correlations were very homogenous (from .23 to .34), and the exclusion of any item would have only lowered the alpha further.

Injustice. The participants' feelings of injustice were measured with the same four items as in Study 1 (α = .86).

Intergroup sentiments. The participants' *unforgiving sentiments*, including anger and resentment, were measured with four items: "I feel angry towards Mr McLean and the Business Council"; "I think Mr McLean should be penalized for his comments"; "I don't trust Mr McLean and the Business Council"; "I don't want to have anything to do with the Business Council or its CEO" (α = .75). The participants' *sympathy* and liking towards the

outgroup were measured by three items: "I have sympathy for the Business Council"; "I am sure the Business Council are likeable people"; "What are your feelings towards the Business Council?" (1 = *extremely cold*, 4 = *neutral*, 7 = *extremely warm*; α = .52).

      Manipulation checks. As a check for the forgiveness manipulation, participants were again (after all dependent variables had been completed) presented with the second article about the students' response to the incident and rated the statement by the president of the National Union of Students on four attributes: angry, resentful (both reverse-coded), conciliatory, and forgiving (α = .81).

Results

      A one-way ANOVA with the factor forgiveness found a significant effect on the forgiveness manipulation check, $F(1,154) = 144.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .485$. As intended, the ingroup's response was perceived to be more forgiving and conciliatory in the forgiveness ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.03$) than the no forgiveness condition ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.09$). Including level of identification as a covariate had no significant effect on the check measure, and the interaction between identification and forgiveness was also not significant, Fs < 0.7.

      We again used regression techniques to test our predictions, with bootstrapping methods to test for indirect effects (Hayes, 2013; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The experimental factor of forgiveness was effect coded (-1, +1) and the continuous variable group identification was centred; the interaction term between forgiveness and identification was also included. First, we tested the effects of forgiveness on feelings of injustice (top part of Table 4). Unexpectedly, the main effect of forgiveness was not significant; rather, there was a marginally significant main effect of group identification and a significant interaction effect. Probing the interaction (Aiken & West, 1991), simple slope analyses showed that the act of forgiveness did not reduce individuals' feelings of injustice when their level of identification

was high (+1*SD*; $B = .23$, $p = .118$), but it did when levels of identification were low (-1*SD*; $B = -.31$, $p = .038$).

Next, we subjected unforgiving sentiments as outcome variable to this model and, in a second step, added injustice as the predicted mediator (see middle panel of Table 4). In the first step, neither forgiveness, nor identification, nor their interaction term had a significant effect. In the second step, feelings of injustice were significantly positively related to unforgiving sentiments. Given that the preceding analysis showed that the effect of the forgiveness act on feelings of injustice was moderated by levels of group identification, we used Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 7) to investigate the conditional indirect effects. The results showed that the indirect effect of the act of forgiveness on unforgiving sentiments via feelings of injustice was significant when levels of group identification were relatively low (-1*SD*; $B = -.15$, CI95% = [-.35; -.01]): through reducing feelings of injustice, the act of forgiveness reduced the individuals' unforgiving sentiments. However, this was not the case when group identification was relatively high (+1*SD*; $B = .11$, CI95% = [-.03; .28]).

Similarly, we investigated sympathy towards the outgroup as outcome variable (see the bottom panel of Table 4). In the first step, the only significant effect was an unexpected main effect of identification, indicating – curiously – that the more participants identified with their ingroup, the greater sympathy they had for the outgroup. In the second step, injustice was significantly negatively related to sympathy. Using bootstrapping again, we found that the conditional indirect effect of forgiveness on sympathy via feelings of injustice was significant when group identification was low (-1*SD*; $B = .06$, CI95% = [.01; .17]): through reducing feelings of injustice, the act of forgiveness increased sympathy. However, this was not the case when participants identified more strongly with their ingroup (+1*SD*; $B = -.05$, CI95% = [-.15; .004]). Altogether, these findings replicated those of Study 1, but with an important qualification: the ingroup's act of forgiveness led members to feel less injustice

and, mediated through this, less unforgiving sentiments and more sympathy towards the outgroup, *only* when participants' ingroup identification was rather low. [4]

We next tested Hypotheses 2 and 3, again using regression techniques with bootstrapping methods (Hayes, 2013). To establish the critical mediating relationships between the variables, we first regressed the two presumed mediators on the forgiveness factor and the continuous measure of group identification, as well as their interaction. Only forgiveness had significant effects: the act of forgiveness reduced the perceived threat to the ingroup's status/power ($B = -.20$, $p = .019$) and the perceived threat to value consensus ($B = -.15$, $p = .043$). Second, we have already reported the regression of perceived injustice on forgiveness, group identification and their interaction, which showed an interaction effect where the act of forgiveness reduced feelings of injustice when group identification was low rather than high (see Table 4, top panel). Third, we added the two hypothesized mediators: both status/power threat and value consensus threat were positively related to feeling of injustice (see Table 5, Step 1).

Next, to test the mediated moderation, we added the interaction terms between both presumed mediators and ingroup identification (see Table 5, Step 2). Ingroup identification significantly moderated the relationships of value consensus threat and, marginally, status/power threat with feelings of injustice. Analyses of simple effects (see Aiken & West, 1991) showed that when participants identified weakly with their ingroup (-1*SD*) value consensus threat was significantly related to injustice ($B = .88$, $p < .001$) but status/power threat was not ($B = .18$, $p = .130$); conversely, when participants identified strongly with their ingroup status/power threat was significantly related to injustice ($B = .44$, $p < .001$) but value consensus threat was not ($B = .02$, $p = .872$; see Figure 2, which shows the standardized regression coefficients).

Finally, bootstrapping methods with Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 15) showed that the conditional indirect effect of forgiveness on injustice via status/power threat was significant when ingroup identification was high ($B = -.09$, CI95% = [-.21; -.01]) but not when identification was low ($B = -.04$, CI95% = [-.12; .01]). Conversely, the conditional indirect effect of forgiveness on injustice via value consensus threat was significant when identification was low ($B = -.13$, CI95% = [-.29; -.01]) but not when it was high ($B = -.003$, CI95% = [-.07; .07]).

Discussion

The second study largely replicated the findings from Study 1. Specifically, the victim ingroup's act of forgiveness alleviated threats to ingroup status/power and value consensus. When participants identified strongly with their group (implying a more competitive intergroup orientation, as with the low status condition in Study 1), the reduction in *status/power* threat translated to lessened feelings of injustice. In contrast, when they did not strongly identify (implying a more cooperative orientation, as with the 'secure' status conditions in Study 1), the reduction in *value consensus* threat appeared to lessen feelings of injustice. Note that levels of group identification and relative status are obviously two distinct constructs, and we do not wish to naïvely equate them. However, they can have similar implications, in terms of making competitive or cooperative orientations between groups more or less salient, which affect, according to our theory, the relative relevance of status/power or value consensus concerns for justice perceptions. In turn, the reduction in injustice feelings (through addressing these concerns) was associated with more conciliatory sentiments towards the offender outgroup. Thus, the indirect effect of the group's act of forgiveness to individual members' forgiving sentiments was equivalent between both studies.

Different from Study 1, the forgiveness act failed to show a significant total effect on conciliatory sentiments in Study 2. It increased conciliatory sentiments only indirectly via the

reduction of injustice feelings, and only when participants did not strongly identify with their ingroup; in contrast, participants highly identified with the victim group only showed a (non-significant) tendency towards greater feelings of injustice after forgiveness. The two studies differed in one key aspect that may account for these results: whereas in Study 1 the forgiveness act was a group decision endorsed by the majority, in Study 2 participants learnt only that a group representative made the forgiving (versus unforgiving) statement, without being clear whether this represented a consensus or majority view within the victim ingroup. It is possible that group members strongly committed to their group felt that the representative's statement did not reflect the group's views or interests; perhaps even that the representative had let their group down, adding insult to injury and amplifying feelings of injustice. In contrast, in Study 1 the voting process implied that it was the group's collective decision to forgive; participants might have adopted or conformed with this group position, if anything, *because* they identified with their group (through a process of social influence; Turner, 1991; although it is also possible for highly identified group members to question a group's norm if it is seen to go against group interests; e.g., Packer & Chasteen, 2010).

Alternatively, the moderation effect of group identification in Study 2 also mirrors the findings by Brown et al. (2008) where group identification qualified the effects of an offender apology on forgiveness by the victim group: for strongly identified victim group members, an offender apology was significantly less potent in eliciting conciliatory sentiments (less avoidance, less revenge) than it was for less strongly identified members. Thus, highly identified and committed group members may more strongly resist conciliatory overtures, whether they are initiated by offenders or victims. Thus, perhaps the key difference between the two studies was generally lower levels of identification and commitment to the artificial groups in Study 1 than the real-life group in Study 2. Only in Study 2 might levels of identification have been sufficiently strong to elicit an unwillingness to show conciliation

towards the outgroup that offended them. But irrespective of the absence of a total effect in Study 2, the indirect effects evidence the proposed theoretical processes, albeit while recognizing the effect of other influences on conciliatory sentiments towards the outgroup.

General Discussion

Overall, the findings of the two studies offer a remarkably consistent pattern of results, despite the methodological differences between them. The main insight they offer is that a group's act of forgiveness can have important psychological effects on its members that may help to promote reconciliation between the groups. Forgiveness is not merely a sentiment that derives from contact, emotions, trust, empathy and favourable stereotypes, as discussed in the introduction, but is also a pro-active decision that victims can make deliberately (Digeser, 2001; Worthington, 2006). While the decision to forgive may at times grow out of changes in appraisals, emotions, attitudes and resultant conciliatory sentiments, the decision to forgive can conversely also induce such conciliatory sentiments by addressing the symbolic threats of transgressions and reducing feelings of injustice (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010, 2012; Wenzel, Turner, & Okimoto, 2010).

A group's decision to forgive and its act of forgiveness can help restore its members' beliefs in the status and power of their group as well as in the consensus about, and hence social validity of, the values the transgressor group violated. Both beliefs can help restore their sense of justice and thus facilitate more conciliatory sentiments towards the offender group. Importantly, the forgiveness act would have these beneficial effects independent of the individuals' original sentiments and level of endorsement of the forgiveness decision (which of course varied non-systematically across our experimental condition). Rather, it is the group's decision, the group's voice and the group's act that matter. This is a critical point given that negotiations and reconciliation efforts often do not directly involve the whole membership of the groups affected; particularly for large-scale groups, for diplomacy

between two nations for example, this would be quite impossible. Yet, reconciliation between groups is often incomplete and fragile if the wider group membership is not ready for reconciliation, still harbours grudges, and still resents the injustice. It is here then that a group's decision to forgive, at a diplomatic level through legitimate representatives or with other forms of legitimation (e.g., elections where such an act is a party's policy platform, or direct referenda for or against such an act), may help spread conciliatory sentiments among the wider population.

However, what exactly constitutes an appropriate legitimation of an act of forgiveness has not been answered here, and is a critical issue for future research. In Study 2 it appears that the mere holding of a representative role may not be sufficient for an individual to be seen as offering forgiveness in the name of the group; in particular members highly committed to their group may resent such a move and question its appropriateness. In Study 1, the decision to forgive was based on a vote in which all participants had a say, and the resultant forgiveness act may have therefore had less qualified benefits for the conciliatory sentiments of victim group members. However, the methods of decision-making were rather incidental methodological choices in the present studies, and more tailored investigations are necessary in order to systematically test the question of what offers effective legitimation of a forgiveness act, and whether indeed the degree of attributed legitimacy moderates the effects of the forgiveness act on conciliation.

Of course, caution is warranted when we translate the present insights to the level of international conflicts and political diplomacy. Much more serious transgressions are usually at stake in such contexts, compared to which the ones utilized in the present studies are relatively benign. Further research is necessary that tests the proposed processes in more serious real-life conflicts. However, empiricist generalizations are a fallacy in any case. What the present research offers is support for a *theory* and the proposition we can derive from it:

Forgiveness is not only an indicator of reconciliation but also an instigator; it can be a choice that helps to restore justice perceptions by allaying the symbolic threats inherent in transgressions. Thus, let us not assume in any context that forgiveness is the end of the dialogue between victimized and transgressor groups, but rather is part of the process of justice repair that can serve as a foundation for a collective enterprise towards reconciliation and goodwill.

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Table 1

Cell Means (and Standard Deviations) in Study 1

	Forgiveness					
	no			yes		
	Status			Status		
	low	unspecified	high	low	unspecified	high
Anger	3.15	3.32	2.69	2.71	2.09	1.78
	(2.07)	(1.90)	(1.41)	(1.53)	(1.16)	(1.10)
Sympathy	4.14	3.96	4.45	4.60	4.76	4.70
	(1.06)	(1.46)	(0.86)	(1.21)	(0.91)	(0.85)
Injustice	3.39	3.29	3.10	2.92	2.46	2.33
	(2.00)	(1.68)	(1.46)	(1.65)	(1.63)	(1.18)
Threat to status/power	4.03	4.02	3.61	3.27	3.43	3.29
	(1.45)	(1.30)	(1.11)	(1.42)	(1.16)	(1.02)
Threat to value consensus	3.93	4.27	3.81	3.61	3.56	3.70
	(1.29)	(1.24)	(1.18)	(1.40)	(1.18)	(1.24)

Table 2.

Hierarchical Regression Results for Feelings of Injustice and Conciliatory Sentiments

(Study 1).

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2		
	B	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
Outcome: Injustice						
Forgiveness	-.34**	.13	-2.65			
Low status	.19	.21	0.87			
High status	-.11	.21	-0.51			
Forgiveness x Low status	.12	.21	0.56			
Forgiveness x High status	.02	.21	0.08			
Outcome: Anger						
Forgiveness	-.43***	.13	-3.41	-.27*	.11	-2.37
Low status	.15	.21	0.73	.06	.18	0.34
High status	-.31	.21	-1.50	-.26	.18	-1.43
Forgiveness x Low status	.26	.21	1.28	.21	.18	1.15
Forgiveness x High status	.11	.21	0.52	.10	.18	0.55
Injustice	--	--	--	.47***	.07	6.82
Outcome: Sympathy						
Forgiveness	.25**	.09	2.92	.15†	.08	1.90
Low status	.01	.14	0.05	.06	.13	0.48
High status	.14	.14	1.02	.11	.13	0.88
Forgiveness x Low status	-.11	.14	-0.80	-.08	.13	-0.61
Forgiveness x High status	-.18	.14	-1.29	-.18	.13	-1.39
Injustice	--	--	--	-.29***	.05	-5.97

†$p < .10$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Table 3.

Hierarchical Regression to Test the Moderated Mediation on Injustice (Study 1).

Predictors	STEP 1			STEP 2		
	B	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
Forgiveness	-.11	.09	-1.12	-.09	.09	-0.95
Low status	.26[†]	.15	1.76	.25[†]	.15	1.68
High status	.04	.15	0.26	.01	.15	0.08
Forgiveness x Low status	.07	.15	0.47	.12	.15	0.80
Forgiveness x High status	-.14	.15	-0.92	-.17	.15	-1.09
Status/power threat	.47[***]	.09	5.33	.42[***]	.09	4.63
Value consensus threat	.57[***]	.09	6.42	.59[***]	.09	6.67
Status/power threat x Low status	--	--	--	.32[*]	.13	2.42
Status/power threat x High status	--	--	--	-.04	.16	-0.23
Value consensus threat x Low status	--	--	--	-.23[†]	.14	-1.67
Value consensus threat x High status	--	--	--	-.09	.15	-0.60

[†]$p < .10$, [*]$p < .05$, [**]$p < .01$, [***]$p < .001$.

Table 4.

Hierarchical Regression Results for Feelings of Injustice and Conciliatory Sentiments (Study 2).

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2		
	B	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
Outcome: Injustice						
Forgiveness	-.04	.10	-0.41			
Identification	.17†	.09	1.95			
Forgiveness x Identification	.23*	.09	2.53			
Outcome: Unforgiving sentiments						
Forgiveness	-.11	.10	-1.03	-.08	.09	-0.96
Identification	.03	.09	0.35	-.06	.08	-0.81
Forgiveness x Identification	-.05	.09	-0.55	-.17*	.08	-2.21
Injustice	--	--	--	.55***	.07	7.83
Outcome: Sympathy						
Forgiveness	-.09	.08	-1.19	-.11	.08	-1.40
Identification	.12†	.07	1.78	.17*	.07	2.52
Forgiveness x Identification	.04	.07	0.64	.10	.07	1.52
Injustice	--	--	--	-.26***	.06	-4.30

$^\dagger p < .10,$ $^* p < .05,$ $^{**} p < .01,$ $^{***} p < .001.$

Table 5.

Hierarchical Regression to Test the Moderated Mediation on Injustice (Study 2).

Predictors	STEP 1			STEP 2		
	B	*SE*	*t*	*B*	*SE*	*t*
Forgiveness	.08	.09	0.87	.13	.09	1.47
Identification	.18*	.08	2.24	.24*	.08	3.06
Forgiveness x Identification	.16*	.08	1.98	.09	.08	1.12
Status/power threat	.28**	.09	2.95	.31***	.09	3.44
Value consensus threat	.42***	.11	3.89	.45***	.10	4.37
Status/power threat x Identification	--	--	--	.11†	.07	1.66
Value consensus threat x Identification	--	--	--	-.36***	.08	-4.25

†*p* < .10, *p* < .05, **p* < .01, ***p* < .001.
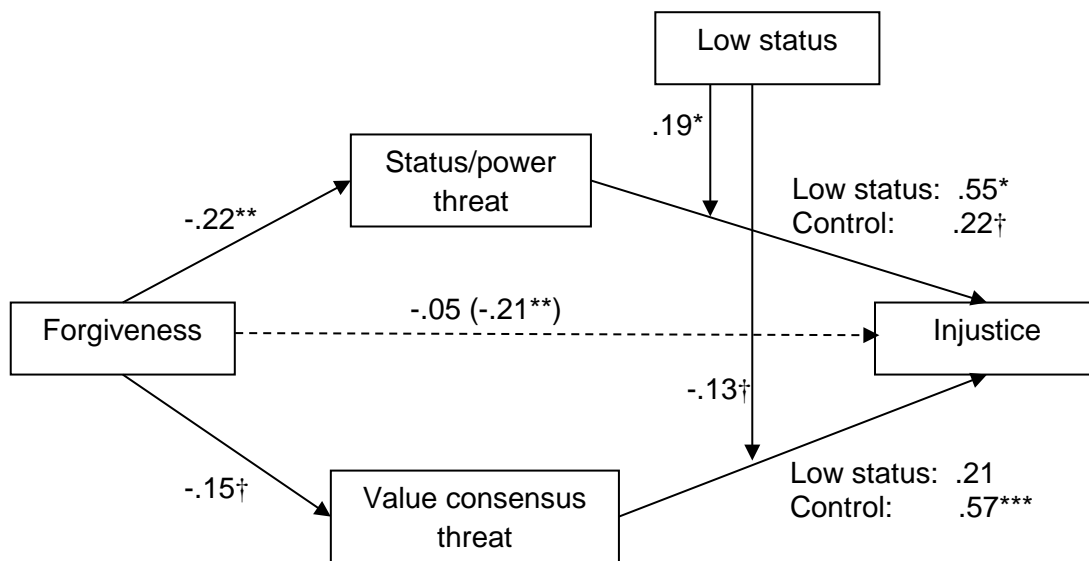
Figure 1. Moderated mediation in Study 1 (standardized coefficients)
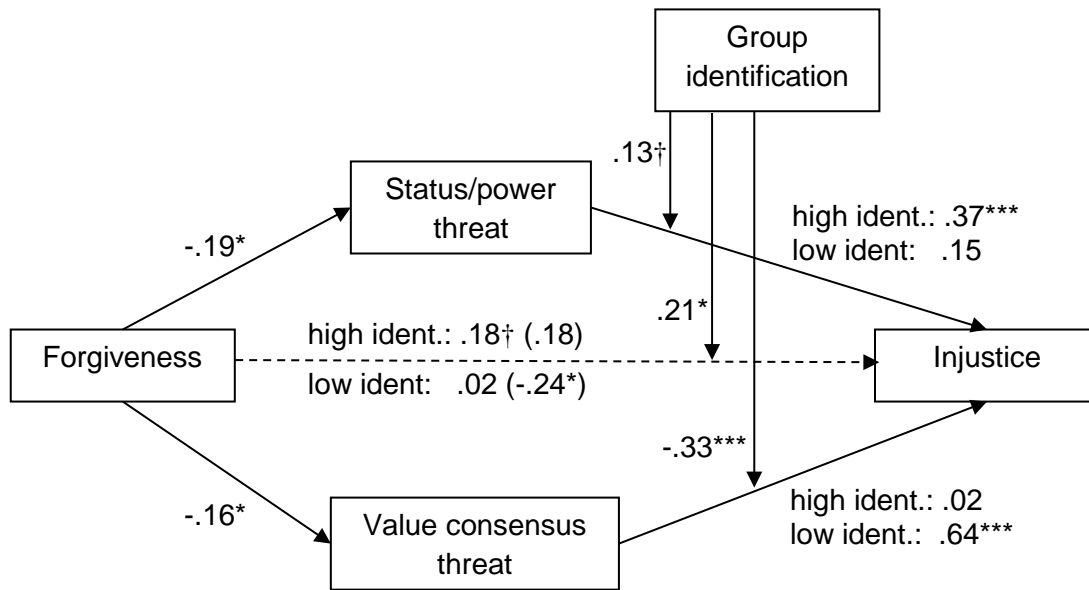
Note: † *p* < .10; * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .01.

Figure 2. Moderated mediation in Study 2 (standardized coefficients)

Note: † *p* < .10; * *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .01.

Footnotes

[1] This scale includes two types of items: two tapping into participants' own perceptions of status/power and the other four into meta-perceptions as to how the outgroup perceives or acts out its status/power. In other words, the items reflect the extent to which the outgroup's actions (1) have subjectively undermined one's ingroup's status/power, and (2) were intended to undermine one's ingroup's status/power. The pattern of results for status/power was the same for both types of items.

[2] Due to a programming error, the status check question was only presented to 91 participants.

[3] The evidence for the link between justice and intergroup sentiments is only correlational, from which we cannot infer causal directionality. Indeed, alternative models in which justice and intergroup sentiments switched their roles produced equivalent results. Bootstrapping tests indicated that, conversely, reduced anger and sympathy could alternatively mediate the effects of the group's act of forgiveness on diminished feelings of injustice, $B = -.16$, CI95% = [-.32; -.06] and $B = -.11$, CI95% = [-.23; -.04], respectively. Hence, the data are ambiguous about causality at this "downstream" leg of mediation.

[4] As in Study 1, we tested the alternative model with intergroup sentiments as mediators and feelings of injustice as outcome. However, as there were no significant effects of the group's forgiveness on unforgiving sentiments or sympathy towards the outgroup, these could not mediate any effects on feelings of injustice. Indeed, bootstrapping effects confirmed that none of the indirect effects were significant. While this gives some support to the causal directionality we argued for, we still caution that the correlational data do not permit any inferences about causality. Our interpretation rests on our theoretical arguments.