

Moving Beyond Betrayal: How Meaning-Making and Power Promote Forgiveness
Following Infidelity

by

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A dissertation submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Psychology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

The current research sought to better understand how forgiveness may be fostered following infidelity. To do so, participants completed questionnaires assessing meaning-making and forgiveness. In Study 1 ($N = 330$), results revealed that people who found meaning in their experience of infidelity were more willing to forgive their romantic partner than people who were not able to find meaning. This effect was moderated by relationship status. Meaning only predicted forgiveness for those who remained in the relationship post-infidelity. Study 2 ($N = 67$) was a conceptual replication of Study 1, however, participants' perceived power in their relationship and attributions for the unfaithful behaviour were also assessed as possible mediating mechanisms. Once again, people who remained in the relationship were more forgiving of the infidelity when they found meaning. Attributions for the unfaithful behaviour did not mediate this effect, but as predicted, perceived relationship power did – meaning increased perceived power, which increased forgiveness. To assess the causal direction of the observed effects, I attempted to manipulate meaning (Study 3; $N = 104$) and relationship power (Study 4; $N = 113$). The extent to which participants reported finding meaning and having power within their relationship was positively associated with forgiveness. However, neither of the manipulations was effective. It was determined that meaning and power might not be easily manipulated after someone has experienced infidelity. As such, in Study 5 ($N = 225$) a hypothetical scenario was used to manipulate meaning and power (i.e., participants who were in a relationship were asked to imagine that their partner committed infidelity). Both manipulations were successful. People in the meaning found condition reported greater forgiveness than people in the no meaning condition. People in

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the high power condition expressed greater forgiveness forgive than people in the low power condition. However, meaning and power did not interact to predict forgiveness. Results of the current research suggest that meaning and power are each unique predictors of forgiveness in the aftermath of infidelity. The implications for individual recovery and relationship repair following infidelity, as well as future directions for research are discussed.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. Michael Wohl. As both my MA and PhD advisor, your guidance and support over the past seven years has been invaluable. You have encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone in order to accomplish things I did not think were possible and you continue to provide advice and direction when I need it most – for this I am truly grateful.

To my committee members, Dr. Chris Davis, Dr. Johanna Peetz, Dr. Susan Boon, and Professor Neil Sargent, thank you for your insightful questions and feedback during this process.

I would also like to thank everyone in, and gone from, the Wellness Labs. Having the support of others who are dealing with similar challenges and accomplishments is vital, and I value the times when no one was actually working the most! Jess and Melissa, you have both given me tremendous support throughout every aspect of this process and I am lucky to have found amazing friends like you!

To my parents, it has been a long road and I cannot possibly express how appreciative I am of your support, encouragement, and patience. You've been cheering me on my whole life and for that, thank you.

Lastly, to Andrew, we met at the start of this journey and you have been here for me through all the ups and downs. You can tell exactly when I need a boost, and exactly when I need your patience and easygoing outlook – thank you for always knowing.

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Moving Beyond Betrayal: How Meaning-Making and Power Promote Forgiveness
Following Infidelity

In committed romantic relationships, people hold assumptions about how their partner will behave in that relationship. Specifically, people expect their romantic partner to be trustworthy, honest, and take their feelings into consideration when engaging in behaviours that impact them and their relationship, i.e., they won't inflict suffering (Metts, 1994). Romantic partners, however, often violate these expectations, which might disrupt or terminate the romantic relationship. Indeed, these expectation violations can yield a great deal of hurt, which can lead the victim to seek revenge and avoid their partner (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; Witlvet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001) – reactions that can cause further damage to the relationship (Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004; 2007).

One type of transgression that is particularly difficult for a person to overcome in a romantic relationship is when their partner commits infidelity. This is because the assumptions regarding the fundamental values of the relationship (maintaining the sanctity of exclusive intimacy) are torn apart. Indeed, because infidelity represents a violation of the expectations implied in monogamous relationships, the discovery that a romantic partner has been unfaithful can be traumatic (Glass & Wright, 1997; Gordon & Baucom, 1998). This trauma can lead people to experience overwhelming negative emotions and distress similar to the post-traumatic stress symptoms reported by victims of other traumatic events (e.g., loss of loved one; Glass, 2002; Glass & Wright, 1997; Gordon & Baucom, 1998; Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004; 2005). Akin to other traumas, the harmed party has the choice to hold on to those negative emotions or start

the path to recovery. In this light, the jilted romantic partner has two options: withdraw from the relationship or choose to forgive. If the intention is to maintain and mend the relationship, forgiveness is generally the best route (Karremans & Van Lange, 2004; Wohl, Kuiken, & Noels, 2006). The forgiveness process, however, is not an easy route, especially as the perceived severity of the harm increases (Boon & Sulsky, 1997). Moreover, how people move forward on this difficult, pro-relationship road is not well understood.

Clues for how people are able to move forward in a pro-relationship manner following infidelity (e.g., forgive) might be gleaned from the broader trauma literature. For instance, following traumatic events such as illness or bereavement, many people will search for some meaning in their experience (Janoff-Bulman, 1985, 1992; Janoff-Bulman & Frantz, 1997). That is, traumatic events often result in the harmed person wanting to know why the traumatic event occurred, what could have been done to prevent it, and what role they might have played (e.g., “Why did this happen to me?”; Frankl, 1963; Janoff-Bulman, 1992). The ability to find meaning in a particular experience is often associated with a host of positive consequences for the self, one of which being a sense of personal growth (Park & Helgeson, 2006).

Similar to the processes that follow illness and loss, the discovery of infidelity within a romantic relationship may instigate a search for meaning. It is well known that in the context of traumatic life events like loss, the ability to come to some understanding of why the event occurred can have positive effects for the injured person (Davis, Wohl, & Verberg, 2007; Davis, Wortman, Lehman, & Silver, 2000). Likewise, when trauma occurs in the relationship, finding meaning may have positive benefits for the

relationship. Specifically, meaning-making may facilitate pro-relationship motivations and behaviours. One such motivation may be the forgiveness process – a known route to relational repair (Rusbult, Hannon, Stocker, & Finkel, 2005). To date, however, the relationship between meaning-making and forgiveness has yet to be explored. In this dissertation, meaning-making as a possible facilitator of the forgiveness process in the aftermath of infidelity is examined.

Transgressions in Relationships: The Harmful Consequences

An unfortunate truth is that people are bound to be hurt by close others. For example, a person may discover that a friend shared information that was told in confidence, a close colleague was spreading lies about their behaviour, or a sibling stole from them. It goes without saying that these hurtful words and behaviours can have a negative impact on a relationship.

Not all transgressions, however, have a similar negative impact. That is, not all hurts are created equal – the extent of the harm caused to the relationship can vary, in part, depending on the perceived antecedents of the hurtful event. Specifically, judgments of the transgressor's intentions are central to the victim's reaction to the hurtful situation and thus are also central to the impact it may have on the relationship (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Malle & Knobe, 1997; Vangelisti & Young, 2001; Wohl & Reeder, 2004). Whereas some hurts occur accidentally, others are committed with intention. For example, John might miss a dinner date with Mary because his car broke down on his way (without intent) or because he decided to hang out with his friends instead (with intent). It is likely that Mary would be more understanding (i.e., less hurt) when she discovers that John missed the dinner date due to car troubles than to hang out with

friends. This variation in response to accidental harms compared to intentional harms tends to remain constant regardless of relationship type.

Indeed, Vangelisti and Young (2001) found that when people are asked to recall a time in which they had been hurt by another person, they felt less close to the perpetrator when the hurtful statement was deemed to be intentional (see also Wohl & Reeder, 2004). Importantly, the negative reaction to intentional hurts was the same regardless of whether the participant was asked to recall a time in which the perpetrator of the hurt was a friend or a romantic partner. Such a discrepancy in responses between accidental and intentional harms is even seen in young children. Darby and Schlenker (1989), for example, found that when a hypothetical transgression situation presented an intentional act of harm, children – ranging from kindergarteners to seventh-graders – indicated that the transgressor should receive more punishment and judged them more harshly than when the act was unintentional. Findings such as these reveal that although accidental transgressions can still cause harm, the most injurious for relationships seem to be those transgressions in which the person causing the harm has done so knowingly.

A cornerstone of why people experience a greater amount of hurt as a result of intentional harm is the degree of responsibility attributed to the transgressor. Indeed, people often look to attribute responsibility and blame for the hurt they experience, i.e., why the transgressor might have committed the harm (Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; McCullough, Bellah, Kirkpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; Wohl & Pritchard, 2008). If responsibility and blame are placed on the situation, judgments of the transgressor's intentions will likely be low. That is, the transgression will tend to be judged as accidental. However, if responsibility and blame are placed on the transgressor,

the victim will tend to judge the harm as intentional. To assess this possibly, Bradfield and Aquino (1999) asked employees of a government agency to provide descriptions of an offense they had experienced at work in the six months prior. Participants then responded to a series of questions regarding their reactions to the incident. To the extent that the transgressor was believed to be responsible, the desire to seek revenge against the harmdoer increased. Further, Bradbury and Fincham (1990) argued that when victims make attributions that the person who caused the hurt intended to do so, the victim tends to react in a more negative manner than when the hurt was unintentional. To the point, people tend to respond negatively when the harm is deemed intentional because they blame the transgressor for the harm that was inflicted - the consequence is a damaged relationship.

Part of the reason purposeful transgressions are particularly damaging to relationships is because close relationships involve expectations of loyalty, honesty, and respect (Jones, Moore, Schratte, & Negel, 2001). Transgressions occur when there is a violation of these rules and expectations (Metts, 1994). When these relational expectations are not met, it can leave the injured party feeling that the relationship has been disrespected, devalued, and betrayed (Jones et al., 2001; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). In romantic relationships, deliberate acts of betrayal represent not only a violation of the loyalty and trust found in other relationships, but also a violation of the intimacy shared between partners which may be particularly damaging to the relationship.

Romantic Relationship Transgressions: The Case of Infidelity

Betrayals within a romantic relationship come in all shapes and sizes. For example, saying something rude, keeping secrets, or deceiving one's partner are all commonly cited causes of hurt in romantic relationships (Jones et al., 2001; Metts, 1994). One type of betrayal that can have a particularly harmful consequence for a romantic relationship is the discovery that one's partner has been unfaithful (Whisman, Dixon, & Johnson, 1997).

Broadly, infidelity, or the act of being unfaithful, occurs when one person in a committed, monogamous relationship engages in emotional and/or sexual behaviour with someone other than their partner (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). Importantly, infidelity represents a violation of one of the basic expectations people have about romantic relationships – intimate exclusivity. In romantic relationships, as in other types of close relationships, there are fundamental assumptions and expectations for behaviour that exist and on which the relationship functions (Gordon & Baucom, 1998; Jones et al., 2001). For example, it is expected that one can trust their partner and that their partner is committed to the relationship. Moreover, in monogamous relationships there is an expectation that one's partner will remain faithful. That is, they will uphold the intimate exclusivity, both sexual and emotional, of the relationship (Glass & Wright, 1997).

Unfortunately, infidelity is not an infrequent occurrence in romantic relationships – a surprisingly large proportion of people have been the victim of infidelity in either a dating (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999) or marital relationship (Lauman, Gagnon, Michaels, & Michaels, 1994) despite the potential negative consequences. Discrepancies exist in reported prevalence rates of infidelity due to differences in the sample of interest or the

definitions used in each survey, however, large scale studies estimate that between 10 to 15% of women and 20 to 25% of men *admit* that they have cheated on their marital partner (Atkins, Baucom & Jacobson, 2001; Lauman et al., 1994; Wiederman, 1997). Given people's reluctance to admit they have committed this behaviour and not all victims are aware that infidelity has occurred, actual rates of infidelity are likely much higher. Circumstantial evidence for this contention is provided in finding that nearly 80% of university students in committed dating relationships report having suspicions that their partner had been unfaithful (Shackelford, Leblanc, & Drass, 2000). Moreover, in my own research, over the past several years I have consistently found that approximately 30% of first year undergraduate students who participate in mass testing report being the victim of infidelity (Squires & Wohl, 2012). To put a line under this situation, infidelity within a committed romantic relationship appears to be a rather common phenomenon.

The Impact of Infidelity on the Victim and their Romantic Relationship

Discovering that one's partner has been unfaithful can result in feelings of anger and disappointment (Charny & Parnass, 1995), self-doubt (Buunk, 1995), as well as anxiety and depression (Cano & O'Leary, 2000). For instance, Cano and O'Leary (2000) found that women who reported experiencing a humiliating event within their marriage (of which infidelity was frequently mentioned) were more likely to report major depressive episodes than those who did not have such an experience. So impactful is the experience of infidelity that victims experience symptoms similar to those observed among people who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Allen & Atkins, 2005; Glass & Wright, 1997; Gordon & Baucom, 1998; 1999; Lusterman, 2005). For example, victims of infidelity often report having recurring

thoughts and emotions (e.g., anger, defenselessness) related to the infidelity akin to the flashbacks experienced by those with PTSD (Gordon & Baucom, 1998). Similarly, Lusterman (2005) reported that victims of infidelity often experience a state of “hyperalertness” in which they cannot stop thinking about the infidelity. Particularly damaging is that such ruminative states lead to a desire to gather as much information as possible about their partner’s indiscretion, which can lead to further psychological distress (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Lusterman, 2005). Without a doubt infidelity can be harmful for the injured party.

Importantly for the current research, infidelity can shake the very foundation of the romantic relationship. This is because infidelity can undermine a person’s trust in their philandering romantic partner. Charny and Parnass (1997), for instance, found that 21% of their respondents reported loss of trust in their partner upon learning of their infidelity. Without trust, a romantic relationship is difficult to maintain. Perhaps for this reason, clinicians report infidelity to be one of the most problematic issues for a relationship to overcome in couples therapy (Whisman et al., 1997). Substantiating this claim, in a 17-year longitudinal study of married couples, Amato and Previti (2003) found that the most frequently reported reason for divorce was infidelity. In fact, the frequency with which infidelity was reported as the cause of divorce was more than double the second most reported cause (i.e., incompatibility). Furthermore, among those who reported infidelity as the cause of divorce, poor adjustment afterwards was also reported, whereas no other causes of divorce were associated with poor post-divorce adjustment (Amato & Previti, 2003). Despite the negative consequences for relationships that result from infidelity, not all instances necessarily result in relationship dissolution.

Understanding how people overcome the harm inflicted by infidelity can help determine ways to mitigate the damage caused and aid in mending the relationship (if so desired).

The extant literature exploring the recovery from infidelity stems largely from treatment outcome studies of couples therapy (e.g., Atkins, Eldridge, Baucom, & Christiansen, 2005; Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004). Perhaps of most importance, this research suggests that in order to help couples recover from the experience of infidelity, it is beneficial to consider this unfaithful behaviour as an interpersonal trauma, particularly because (as previously mentioned) victims of betrayal often report psychological distress similar to victims of other traumatic experiences (Allen & Atkins, 2005; Glass & Wright, 1997; Gordon & Baucom, 1998; 1999; Lusterman, 2005). Moreover, akin to the death of a loved one, the experience of infidelity can be accompanied by feelings of loss and grief (see Barbara & Dion, 2000). As such, it is important to examine relationships in the aftermath of infidelity from a trauma perspective (Boekhout, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1999; Gordon et al., 2004; Hall & Fincham, 2006).

The literature on post-traumatic growth posits that positive outcomes are more likely to manifest when the traumatized person is able to come to some understanding of why the traumatic event occurred. Because infidelity can be a traumatic event, similar psychological processes could be involved in the course of recovery afterwards. Research on meaning-making has been helpful in understanding why some people are able to overcome traumatic life events while others are not. However, meaning research has focused largely on traumas such as loss (e.g., Davis & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; Davis et al., 2007), illness (e.g., Pakenham, 2005; 2007; Park, Edmondson, Fenster, & Blank, 2008), and sexual assault (e.g., Orbuch, Harvey, Davis, & Merbach, 1994). There is a

paucity of research that has examined meaning-making within the context of interpersonal transgressions in general and infidelity within romantic relationships specifically. It is argued that the process of meaning-making may play a pivotal role in relationship maintenance following infidelity. Because it is often difficult to understand why a romantic partner would commit such an indiscretion, akin to other traumas, a search for meaning should be instigated among some victims.

Recovering from Trauma: Finding Meaning

Following a traumatic life event (e.g., the unexpected death of a loved one), people may try to come to an understanding of why this negative event has befallen them. Specifically, often people will search for some meaning or understanding in order to have a logical and acceptable explanation of the traumatic event. Writing about his experience in a concentration camp during the Holocaust, Frankl (1963) suggested that the search for value or understanding (i.e., meaning) in even the most difficult situations stems from the psychological need to believe that life has purpose and events do not occur arbitrarily. Importantly, finding meaning in pain, suffering, and loss helps with the coping process. Finding meaning however, is not always easy. Experiencing a traumatic event can undermine pre-existing understandings that people have of their lives, causing their world to shatter.

According to Janoff-Bulman (1992), most people hold a basic set of assumptions that the world is good, meaningful, and that they are decent, worthy people. More specifically, people tend to assume that events happen for a reason, event outcomes can be predicted, and bad things tend not to happen to good people. Loss and trauma are postulated to shatter a person's worldview. Specifically, experiencing a traumatic event

can lead to a collapse of positive impressions people have about the world, i.e., a *loss of illusions*. As a consequence, people often feel a lack of control because the future is no longer as predictable as it had been when these illusions were intact (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Janoff-Bulman & Frantz, 1997). This loss of control also makes people feel vulnerable and can yield a greater sense of mortality among victims (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). As a result, those who experience trauma tend to take steps to rebuild their shattered worldview with the aim of returning to a sense that events (particularly negative events) happen for a reason (Frankl, 1963; Janoff-Bulman & Frantz, 1997; Taylor, 1983). More specifically, some people seek to restore their sense of meaning in the world.

The Search for Meaning

An array of traumatic events can instigate a search for meaning including, among other things, the diagnosis of a terminal illness (Park et al., 2008) or the loss of a loved one (Davis & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; Davis et al., 2007). Regardless of the event that initiated the search, this process typically begins with an attempt to answer questions about the significance of the event, what caused the event to occur, and what it means for the person's life overall (Taylor, 1983). For example, people who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness may wonder what they could have done differently. Such people may think if they had only exercised more or taken better care of their body perhaps the illness could have been prevented. They may also attempt to evaluate the situation in an effort to understand what impact the illness will have on their life moving forward (Fife, 1994; Taylor, 1983). Put differently, the process of meaning-making is an attempt to cope with the inconsistencies between their previously held belief that bad

things only happen to bad people and awareness that they have been the victim of a traumatic event (Janoff-Bulman, 1992).

In an attempt to deal with this inconsistency, the search for meaning involves trying to make sense of the situation (Janoff-Bulman & Frantz, 1997; Park & Folkman, 1997). Importantly, there are a variety of ways in which the search for meaning can occur (for a review see Park, 2010). Some people will attempt to view the trauma in a way that coincides with their pre-existing beliefs (Janoff-Bulman, 1985). For example, a victim might assign self-blame in an effort to hold on to the belief that the world is predictable and controllable (i.e., “I caused the event to occur, so if I just don’t act in a similar manner a similar negative event will not happen to me”; Joseph & Linley, 2005). Alternatively, victims may reform their beliefs in order for them to be more consistent with the occurrence of the trauma (e.g., adopting a new worldview that the world is unsafe). For others, the search for meaning involves finding some value or benefit in the traumatic event. For instance, people who have suffered loss may reappraise the situation and view it in a more positive light (i.e., “It helped me discover what is most important in life”; Folkman, 1997; Park & Folkman, 1997). Yet another avenue people use to contend with the inconsistency created by the traumatic event is to compare their trauma experience with those who experienced a similar trauma, but whose consequences were worse – to feel better about their own trauma (Kray et al., 2010; Park, 2010; Taylor, Wood, & Lichtman, 1983). Regardless of how people come to terms with their trauma, the process helps restore consistency, order, and control in the victim’s life (Park, 2010; Park & Folkman, 1997).

The search for meaning, however, is not ubiquitous nor is the ability to find meaning once the search process is initiated (Davis et al., 2000). For example, Davis and colleagues (2007) showed that following the unexpected loss of a loved one in a mine explosion, 42% of people searched for and found meaning, whereas 27% did not search for meaning at all, and 31% searched but could not find meaning. Importantly, after the unexpected loss of a loved one those who searched for, but were unable to find meaning had heightened levels of distress and reduced psychological adjustment following the trauma (Davis et al., 2000). Moreover, continually searching for meaning has been found to be related to negative affect in women undergoing treatment for breast cancer (Kernan & Lepore, 2009). The distress that arises from not finding meaning over time may reflect ineffective coping and increased rumination regarding the event (Michael & Snyder, 2005). Thus, searching for and being unable to find meaning can inhibit the recovery process following traumatic life events.

On the other hand, those who are able to find meaning often report better adjustment after trauma (for a review, see Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Park, 2010). According to Hayes and colleagues (2005), making deliberate attempts to process distressing thoughts and feelings and find meaning in what is happening is an important aspect in therapy for people suffering from depression. Moreover, finding meaning after a traumatic event can facilitate positive outcomes, such as a reduction in post-traumatic stress symptoms (Updegraff, Silver, & Holman, 2008), a strengthening of personal relationships (Davis & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001), and personal growth after trauma (Park & Helgeson, 2006). For example, Updegraff and colleagues (2008) explored the relationship between meaning-making and post-traumatic stress symptoms in Americans

after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The results revealed that attempts to make sense of the attack two months afterwards was related to decreased symptomatology two years later. Importantly, this association was mediated by reductions in fear of another attack. Thus, meaning-making helped restore order after the chaos created by the 9/11 trauma.

Meaning-making has also been shown to yield post-traumatic personal growth (relative to those who do not search for meaning; Park 2010). In the aftermath of the Westray mine explosion, Davis and colleagues (2007) found positive psychological effects among those people who reported searching for and finding meaning after the loss of their family member. Specifically, they reported experiencing personal growth (e.g., they felt emotionally stronger and better able to deal with everyday situations) and believed that their loss had resulted in something positive (e.g., changes to important policies for the mining industry). The positive benefits of finding meaning after trauma reveal that being able to make sense of or find benefits in what has happened can help regain a sense of control over one's life and also aid in the recovery process.

Searching to construct meaningful accounts of traumatic events can not only help people make sense of what happened, but is also associated with decreases in distress and depression following traumatic events for those who are able to find meaning (Davis et al., 2000). For example, Davis and colleagues (2000) examined the search for meaning among parents who had suffered the loss of a child due to sudden infant death syndrome and among people who had either lost a spouse or child in a motor vehicle accident. Importantly, making sense of the loss was associated with improved psychological adjustment. One caveat to this research is that while finding meaning was beneficial, it is

important that it is done so early on as people who lingered in their search for meaning reported greater psychological distress.

Physiological benefits have also been reported as a result of finding meaning (Affleck, Tennen, Croog, & Levine, 1987; Bower, Kemeny, Taylor, & Fahey, 1998). Bower and colleagues (1998) explored the physical consequences of finding meaning after the loss of a friend or partner in HIV positive men. When the bereaved partner reported having discovered meaning in the loss, immune system functioning showed less decline and there was also a decrease in mortality rates. Thus, finding meaning following trauma such as loss or illness can have both psychological and physiological benefits for the victim.

While much is known about the impact of searching for and finding meaning following many different types of trauma, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the relevance that meaning could have in the aftermath of relational trauma, or more specifically, infidelity. Akin to the literature on trauma demonstrating the personal benefits that can arise as a result of finding meaning, trauma within interpersonal relationships (e.g., infidelity) might yield pro-relational outcomes. As such, forgiveness was examined as a key pro-relational outcome that might stem from the meaning-making process. Specifically, the idea that people who have experienced infidelity in their romantic relationship should be more likely to forgive if they are able to find meaning in that traumatic event was tested. In the next section, the literature on forgiveness is reviewed and why meaning-making might be an important antecedent of the forgiveness process following infidelity is discussed.

Forgiveness

People are often under the illusion that their romantic partner can do no wrong (Murray & Holmes, 1993; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Perhaps this is why intense hurt can occur in close relationships when that illusion is shattered by infidelity. Indeed, the very foundations of a romantic relationship – trust, respect, and loyalty – are called into question when infidelity is discovered. This hurt often leads to anger and resentment directed toward the perpetrator. Additionally, following an interpersonal transgression, people experience a heightened motivation to both avoid and seek revenge against the transgressor (McCullough et al., 1998). When the transgression takes the form of infidelity the future vitality of the romantic relationship can be deeply hurt (Gunderson & Ferrari, 2008). The romantic relationship, however, need not dissolve following infidelity. Victims might exonerate their offenders. To the point, the act of infidelity can be forgiven, which can allow the relationship to either return to the pre-transgression state or improve the relationship (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Karremans & Van Lange, 2004; McCullough et al, 1997; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Wohl et al., 2006).

Defining Forgiveness

Forgiveness is often defined as a process of changing destructive thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviours directed at the person who has caused the hurt into more pro-social and constructive ones (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; McCullough, Pargament & Thoresen, 2000; Worthington, 1998). Forgiveness is not the same as pardoning, condoning, forgetting, excusing, or reconciliation (Enright et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 2000; North, 1998). A pardon is most commonly used as a legal term

referring to an offender being released from the legal consequences of the act (McCullough et al., 2000). When a person condones a harmful behaviour there is an implication that there was no harm done, that the act was acceptable and as such, forgiving would be unnecessary (Enright & Coyle, 1998). Forgetting involves the event no longer being held in a person's memory, whereas when a person forgives they may not necessarily forget that the harm occurred. Excusing differs from forgiving an offense in that excusing implies there was a justifiable reason that it occurred and removes blame from the offender, whereas this is not the case for forgiving (McCullough et al., 2000). Moreover, it is quite possible for a person to forgive, while at the same time not reconcile with the harmdoer. That is, victims can let go of the negative motivations that result from being harmed while at the same time make a choice not to maintain the relationship (Enright et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 2000; Worthington, 1998).

The point is that forgiveness involves a pro-social change in feelings toward the transgressor, while maintaining the belief that the transgressor is responsible for committing illegitimate harm (Enright et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 2000; Worthington, 1998). This process involves motivational shifts on the part of the victim that typically occur over time (as opposed to occurring in a single moment in time). Specifically, forgiveness encompasses reductions in the motivation to seek revenge against the transgressor as well as the motivation to avoid the transgressor (McCullough et al., 1997). More recently, McCullough, Root, and Cohen (2006) have suggested that forgiveness also motivates an increase in benevolence toward the transgressor. That is, forgiveness also involves the motivation to act kindly and with warmth towards the person who has committed the harm.

The consequences of these motivational shifts are changes in the victim's cognitions, affect, and behaviour toward the transgressor as well as their relationship with the transgressor (Enright et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 2000; Worthington, 1998). Put another way, forgiveness is a process in which the victim lets go of negative thoughts and feelings towards the transgressor over time and replaces them with more positive ones (Enright et al., 1998). In this way, forgiveness is a tool that can promote more harmonious relations by allowing the hurt person to move beyond the negativity created by the transgression and instead focus on more positive thoughts and feelings (McCullough et al., 2000; North, 1998).

The Positive Effects of Forgiving for the Victim and the Relationship

Following hurt, forgiving has been shown to promote, among other things, life satisfaction (Brown & Phillips, 2005), greater self-esteem and lower negative affect (Karremans, Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Kluwer, 2003), as well as lower levels of physiological stress responses and depressive emotions (Brown, 2003; Witvliet et al., 2001; Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2007). For example, Witvliet and colleagues (2001) found that people who reported experiencing more forgiving thoughts after an offense showed significantly less change in heart rate and blood pressure, whereas unforgiving thoughts increased these physiological responses. Moreover, Brown (2003) measured people's tendency to forgive (TTF) along with the occurrence of depressive symptoms and found that those reporting greater TTF also reported fewer depressive symptoms. Thus, forgiving an interpersonal transgression appears to yield both physiological and psychological benefits for people who are able to grant it.

Likewise, forgiveness can have positive effects on the relationship. The positive relational benefits have been demonstrated in a wide variety of relational contexts including bullying and victimization in adolescent relationships (Flanagan, Vanden Hoek, Ranter, Reich, 2012; Wernli, 2006), offenses in the workplace (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999), and conflict resolution in marriage (Fincham et al., 2004, 2007). Specifically, forgiveness can help restore and improve these interpersonal relations via its positive influence on constructive communication in the relationship (Fincham & Beach, 2002), by encouraging liking (Darby & Schlenker, 1982), and increasing willingness to sacrifice and accommodate the person who caused the harm (Karremans & Van Lange, 2004). Additionally, forgiveness increases closeness to the relationship partner as well as overall relationship satisfaction (McCullough et al., 1998; Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2005; Ysseldyk & Wohl, 2011).

Forgiveness has these positive effects on the relationship because it impacts affective processes relevant to the relationship. For example, McCullough and colleagues (1998) asked participants to recall a recent hurtful offense by someone close to them and then they were asked to indicate their pre- and post-feelings of closeness with the offender. The analysis revealed that not only is forgiveness more likely in close relationships, but it can also promote post-transgression closeness. Further, research has shown that people who are more forgiving are typically more committed to their relationship (Ysseldyk & Wohl, 2011). As illustrated by Ysseldyk and Wohl (2011) forgiveness for an earlier transgression encouraged commitment to one's relationship following a serious transgression and continued to do so as the time since the transgression increased.

Perhaps as a result of these heightened pro-relationship orientations, people who are forgiving are also more likely to engage in reparative action. For example, forgiveness has been associated with better conflict resolution in married couples following hurtful transgressions (Fincham et al., 2004, 2007). Moreover, forgiveness for a past offense is positively related to pro-relationship behaviours. For instance, Karremans and Van Lange (2004) found that people were more willing to sacrifice, accommodate, and cooperate with the person who had harmed them when forgiveness was reported for a previous transgression. As well, in a longitudinal study of married couples, Fincham and colleagues (2007) reported that a lack of forgiveness, in the form of heightened revenge and avoidance motivations and low benevolence motivations, was related to poor conflict resolution at a later date. These researchers suggest that if previous transgressions are left unforgiven and unresolved, a vicious cycle may perpetuate where future transgressions are also poorly resolved and this, in turn, may lead to more significant marital issues. Thus, forgiving one's partner after they have transgressed can help maintain the relationship's integrity (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Exline & Baumeister, 2000; Karremans & Van Lange, 2004; McCullough et al, 1997, 1998; Schlenker & Darby, 1981). Because of the pro-relational consequences of forgiveness it is important to understand the processes by which forgiveness may be facilitated.

Meaning-Making as a Possible Antecedent of Forgiveness

Much is now known about factors that influence the forgiveness process. These antecedents include, among other things, the victim's personality (e.g., agreeableness and neuroticism; Brown, 2003; Maltby et al., 2008), the situation that might have elicited the

transgression (e.g., attributions such as whether the event was accidental; Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Wohl & Pritchard, 2008), as well as characteristics of the relationship in which the transgression was committed (e.g., closeness and commitment; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hanon, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). Forgiveness is also associated with cognitive and affective processes within the injured partner (e.g., empathy, attributions of responsibility; Takaku, 2001; Wohl & Pritchard, 2008). In the current research, it is argued that meaning-making is an unexplored antecedent of the forgiveness process. Specifically, that finding meaning following infidelity heightens people's forgiveness of their philandering romantic partner.

Suggestive evidence for a link between meaning-making and forgiveness stems from Enright and Coyle (1998) who found an association between finding benefit or value (previously discussed as one way in which victims of trauma can find meaning in the event) in an interpersonal transgression and forgiveness. They suggested that understanding the meaning of a transgression is an important aspect of the forgiveness process. Moreover, McCullough and colleagues (2006) examined whether perceived benefits garnered from a transgression were associated with forgiveness. Specifically, they asked their participants to recall a time in which they were hurt or offended by a close other and then had them write about either: the trauma experience, the positive benefits experienced as a result of the trauma, or a neutral topic. Results indicated that people who wrote about the benefits of what had transpired reported greater forgiveness motivations than people in the other two conditions. Thus, identifying positive outcomes of the transgression experience appears to help people let go of the negative feelings they hold toward the transgressor.

Although finding benefits is suggestive of meaning-making, people can find meaning without perceiving that benefits have been drawn from a transgression or trauma. Indeed, finding meaning entails the generation of an account of the event and that account need not be positive (Park, 2010). For example, Davis, Nolen-Hoeksema, and Larson (1998) showed that finding meaning and finding benefit are distinct processes. In their research with bereaved family members, interview results revealed distinct explanations for having found meaning compared to having found benefit after the loss. At both 6 and 13 months after losing their loved one, the two processes were statistically unrelated to one another. As such, finding benefit in a transgression is not synonymous with meaning-making, but does hint at the possibility that formulating an account of the transgression might facilitate forgiveness.

Even more suggestive of a link between meaning-making and forgiveness is clinical theory from the couples therapy literature. Specifically, Gordon and colleagues (2004) developed a treatment model for couples in response to infidelity that is based on the consideration of infidelity as an interpersonal trauma. This model involves trying to find meaning in the infidelity in order to move into the next stage of recovery. Specifically, they suggest couples explore the causes of the infidelity, the effects that it has had on the relationship, and what it means for the relationship. They also propose that couples need to consider the significance and implications of the infidelity and why the betrayal occurred in order to begin to rebuild the relationship. According to this model, coming to some understanding of what happened is considered to be an essential step in the forgiveness process following infidelity.

Using this model as a framework, Hall and Fincham (2006) explored the relationship between attributions and relationship dissolution following infidelity. Among people who had been the victim of infidelity, those who made more benign attributions for the cause of the event (i.e., they blamed their partner less) were less likely to end the relationship to the extent that they were more forgiving. While this research provides preliminary support for Gordon and colleagues (2004) model, this research did not directly assess finding meaning, but rather focused on attributions of responsibility for the infidelity.

According to Park (2010), reappraising the event is necessary for meaning to be garnered (and not merely attributions of responsibility). In this way, the forgiveness process following infidelity would necessarily begin when the victim starts seeing the transgression and the transgressor by extension, in a different light. Interestingly, the idea that reappraisals of an event is of importance to the forgiveness process is echoed by Rusbult and colleagues (2005) who suggested that, "...forgiveness rests on a psychological transformation of the transgression situation" (p. 187). That is, much like the recovery process after trauma, the forgiveness process after transgressions should involve people reappraising the event in such a way that why it occurred is understood. When the victim comes to an understanding, forgiveness can follow. In sum, meaning-making may lead to forgiveness. Specifically, after experiencing infidelity, changes in the victim's perspective regarding the betrayal (i.e., finding meaning) may move people down the road toward forgiveness. However, just how this might happen is not known. In the current research, how people contend with the knowledge that they have incurred

harm was explored. Specifically, how people come to an account of the infidelity they have experienced and how this account, or meaning-making, might influence the forgiveness process was assessed.

Overview of the Current Research

The primary aim of the current research was to investigate the impact of meaning-making on forgiveness following infidelity. Whether and how finding meaning might influence the extent to which a person forgives their partner in the aftermath of infidelity is examined in this dissertation. It was hypothesized that finding meaning following infidelity would heighten forgiveness, but only for those people who remain in the relationship. For people who have left the relationship, finding meaning should have little to no effect on forgiveness motivations. This is because those who are no longer in the relationship have already decided to act on a motivation associated with a lack of forgiveness: avoidance of the transgressor. To assess this supposition directly, in Study 1 meaning-making and forgiveness were assessed in the context of infidelity among people who were as well as were not still in the romantic relationship in which the infidelity occurred. All participants completed a series of online questionnaires that assessed the extent to which they found meaning in the incident and their forgiveness of their partner for the relationship betrayal. Study 2 investigated possible mechanisms by which meaning-making might facilitate the forgiveness process. Specifically, whether meaning-making makes people feel more powerful in their romantic relationship, and thus leads to heightened forgiveness was examined. The attributions a victim makes for their partner's unfaithful behaviour were also assessed as a possible mediator of the meaning-making link with forgiveness. Based on the results of Study 2, the goal of Studies 3 and 4 was to

experimentally manipulate meaning-making and relationship power respectively, in order to provide further support for the preliminary findings of the previous two studies.

Finally, in Study 5 both finding meaning and power were manipulated using a hypothetical, infidelity-based scenario.

STUDY 1

Despite a prevalence of research on meaning-making, the literature has focused mainly on whether people find meaning following illness or loss, and little is known about meaning-making in relation to infidelity. Study 1 sought to investigate the effect of meaning-making on forgiveness of one's romantic partner after infidelity had been discovered.

In addition, the current research explored possible differences in the relations between meaning-making and forgiveness among those victims who left the relationship and those who stayed following discovery of their partner's infidelity. Specifically, it was predicted that the ability to find meaning after infidelity is discovered would have a positive effect on forgiveness among those who stay in the relationship, but not for those who leave.

Method

Participants

Participants in Study 1 were 330 undergraduates (271 female, 59 male) enrolled in introductory psychology classes at a large Canadian university, all of whom reported being the victim of infidelity in either a past or current relationship (average relationship duration 16 months). Participants ranged in age from 17 to 50 years ($M = 21.74$, $SD = 5.48$). All participants received 0.25% in grade-raising credit towards their introductory

psychology course for participating. The average elapsed time since the infidelity was 2.83 years ($SD = 3.21$; range: .25-312 months) in the past relationship group and 1.09 years ($SD = 1.47$; range: .25-120 months) in the current relationship group.

Table 1.

Type of Infidelity Experienced and Current Relationship Status by Condition

Variable	Not in Relationship ($N = 217$)	Still in Relationship ($N = 113$)
Type of Infidelity		
Sexual	25.8%	40.7%
Emotional	14.7%	24.8%
Both	59.4%	34.5%
Current Relationship Status		
In a relationship	37.8%	77.9%
Living with partner	12.4%	15.9%
Married	6.0%	4.4%
Recently broke up	42.4%	-
Missing	1.4%	1.8%

Procedure

To investigate the link between forgiveness and meaning-making, participants completed a series of online questionnaire that assessed the extent to which they found meaning in the incident, the extent to which they forgave, and attributions for the act of infidelity. First year psychology students ($N = 330$) students who responded in mass testing that they had experienced infidelity while in a committed monogamous romantic

relationship were approached to participate (via email; Appendix A) in an online study described as assessing “romantic relationships and transgressions”, for 0.25% course credit or a \$10 gift card. Specifically, they were told that we were interested in how individuals respond to infidelity in romantic relationships. Upon agreeing to participate, participants were sent a link to the appropriate survey (either for people who are still currently in the relationship or for people who were no longer with their partner). After providing online informed consent (see Appendix B), participants began a series of questionnaires (see Appendix C) assessing meaning-making and forgiveness. In addition, participants were asked standard demographic questions (age, sex, ethnicity, relationship status, etc.). After completing the final questionnaire, participants were fully debriefed.

Measured Variables

Forgiveness. The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIM-18) Inventory assesses three components of forgiveness: benevolence, avoidance, and revenge motivations (e.g., “Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her”, “I am living as if he/she doesn’t exist, isn’t around”, “I want to see him/her hurt and miserable”; McCullough et al., 2006; $\alpha = .88, .93, \text{ and } .86$).

Meaning. An adapted version of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006) was used to assess meaning in the transgression. The 3-item Presence of Meaning subscale includes the following items: “I understand why this happened”, “I have discovered a satisfying explanation for why this has happened to me”, and “I have found meaning/purpose in my experience with infidelity” ($\alpha = .83$). Participants also completed the 3-item Searching for Meaning subscale in order

to present the scale in its entire form (e.g., “I am looking for something that makes this event feel meaningful”; $\alpha = .88$).

Description of Meaning-Made. An open-ended question was also included to assess what meaning (if any) participants had been able to make following the infidelity. This item was: “How have you done so (made sense of or found purpose in the event)? Please describe in detail”.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to the main analyses, the data were screened for the presence of missing data, outliers, and to ensure the appropriate statistical assumptions for the planned analyses were met. Frequency distributions were run on all variables of interest. These indicated that all the variable total scores fell within the proper range of minimum and maximum values for each scale. All of the subsequent preliminary analyses were conducted for each relationship groups.

Missing data. Missing values analyses (MVA) were conducted to assess missing data. Little’s MCAR test revealed non-significance for the previous relationship group, $\chi^2(218) = 233.43, p = .23$, suggesting that the missing data is missing completely at random (MCAR). However, for the current relationship group Little’s MCAR test revealed significance, $\chi^2(159) = 218.92, p = .001$, suggesting that the missing data may not be missing completely at random. Further MVA were conducted as a secondary test. Separate variance t-test could not be calculated because no cases were missing more than 5% of the data. It was decided that the cases with missing data on items should remain in

the dataset as it was less than 5% of the data. Furthermore, correlations were compared with and without these cases and there was little to no change in the results.

After examining scatterplots of the variables the relationships between variables appear to be linear. It does not appear that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated. The cases all appeared to be evenly scattered with no particular patterns that would suggest a violation. Furthermore, linearity also does not appear to have been violated.

Normality, univariate and multivariate outliers. Visual analysis of the variables conducted by examining histograms indicates that there may be a departure from normality for some of the variables. Skewness and kurtosis for these variables also indicate that a violation of normality may be of concern. For the current relationship group, all three subscales of the TRIM-18 were examined further with a statistical test of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov). Results revealed that normality was not met for benevolence, $D(113) = .13, p < .001$, avoidance, $D(113) = .14, p < .001$, and revenge, $D(113) = .20, p < .001$. As well, revenge and finding meaning were examined further in the group no longer in the relationship and normality assumptions were not met, revenge, $D(217) = .13, p < .001$, found meaning, $D(217) = .10, p < .001$. The assumption of normality appears to be violated for each of these variables after triangulation of several analyses.

Several transformations, including square root and logarithm (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), were attempted with each of the variables in order to reduce their negative skew. It was found that these transformations were unsuccessful at reducing overall

skewness. As such, the original scores for each measure were retained. Correlations before and after the transformations were compared and there were no differences.

Initial examination of boxplots did reveal that some cases were potentially influential, however only one was identified with a z score greater than + or - 3.29 for revenge motivations. This outlier was then assessed using Cook's distance. This case¹ (and all others) did not have values greater than one, suggesting no cases were overly influencing the results.

Mahalanobis' distance was used to determine whether multivariate outliers were present for each of the moderation analyses. According to the Chi Square distribution, for a level of $p = .001$ with $df = 2$ the critical value of Chi Square is 13.82 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Only one case falls above this range (on the revenge subscale; the same identified univariate outlier), and as mentioned previously, when analyses were compared pre- and post-deletion there were no significant differences. Therefore, the original data was retained.

Multicollinearity. Bivariate correlations typically should not be high (e.g., .80-.90) and therefore the correlations found are acceptable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Furthermore, higher tolerance values close to 1 are recommended (Pedhazur, 1997), and the tolerance values found in the coefficients table were sufficient indicating that multicollinearity is not an issue.

In order to test for sex differences on the variables of interest, a series of independent samples t-tests were conducted for each of the groups. The results revealed no significant effect of sex for those still in the relationship or for those who are no

¹ The outlying case was retained in order to maintain the original data. The analyses were conducted with and without this case and comparable results were obtained.

longer in the relationship, on any of the variables. For those still in the relationship, males ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 1.80$) and females ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.67$) did not significantly differ in levels of reported meaning found, $t(111) = -.75$, $p = .46$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$. Nor were there differences for those who had left, $t(215) = -.32$, $p = .75$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$ (males: $M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.27$; females: $M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.52$).

There were also no significant differences on any of the TRIM subscales. For the current relationship condition benevolence motivations, $t(111) = 1.45$, $p = .15$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ (males: $M = 3.53$, $SD = .87$; females: $M = 3.85$, $SD = .89$), avoidance motivations, $t(111) = -1.60$, $p = .11$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ (males: $M = 2.34$, $SD = 1.04$; females: $M = 1.97$, $SD = .93$), and revenge motivations, $t(111) = -1.67$, $p = .10$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ (males: $M = 1.89$, $SD = .87$; females: $M = 1.58$, $SD = .73$) did not significantly differ by sex. This was the same for the previous relationship condition. There were no differences by sex in benevolence, $t(215) = .79$, $p = .76$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$ (males: $M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.07$; females: $M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.01$), avoidance, $t(215) = -.31$, $p = .43$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$ (males: $M = 2.72$, $SD = .87$; females: $M = 2.67$, $SD = .88$), nor revenge motivations, $t(215) = -.05$, $p = .95$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$ (males: $M = 1.94$, $SD = .89$; females: $M = 1.93$, $SD = .83$). As such, all analyses were conducted by collapsing across sex.

Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were conducted among the variables of interest. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2. Correlations among the variables of interest are presented in Table 3 and are in the hypothesized directions.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics for Finding Meaning, Benevolence, Avoidance, and Revenge Motivations by Relationship Group

	Still in Relationship		Not in Relationship	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Found Meaning	4.23 _a	1.69	4.74 _b	1.47
Benevolence	3.79 _a	.89	2.68 _b	.87
Avoidance	2.04 _a	.96	3.41 _b	1.02
Revenge	1.64 _a	.76	1.93 _b	.84

Note: Means with differing subscripts within rows are significantly different at the $p < .01$.

Table 3.

Bivariate Correlations for Finding Meaning, Benevolence, Avoidance, and Revenge Motivations by Relationship Group

Relationship Group		Found Meaning	Benevolence	Avoidance	Revenge
Still in Relationship	Found				
	Meaning	-			
	Benevolence	.33**	-		
	Avoidance	-.25**	-.84**	-	
Not in Relationship	Found				
	Meaning	-			
	Benevolence	-.06	-		
	Avoidance	.14**	-.77**	-	
Still in Relationship	Found				
	Meaning	-			
	Benevolence	-.22**	-.73**	.78**	-
	Revenge	-.22**	-.38**	.37**	-

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

Moderation Analyses

To test our hypotheses, each subscale for forgiveness² was subjected to a moderated multiple regression (MMR). Benevolence, avoidance, and revenge were each regressed onto finding meaning³ (centered), relationship status, and their interaction.

Benevolence. The benevolence motivation subscale of the TRIM-18 was subjected to a moderated multiple regression (MMR). Finding meaning was centered and a relationship status by meaning interaction variable was created (for this and each of the following subscales of the TRIM-18). Benevolence scores were regressed on the centered found meaning variable, relationship status (no longer in the relationship = 0, still in the relationship = 1), and the interaction, adjusted $R^2 = .29$, $F(3, 326) = 46.10$, $p < .001$. Relationship status significantly predicted extent of benevolence for the transgressor, $\beta = .54$, $t(326) = 11.49$, $p < .001$, however meaning was not a significant predictor of benevolence ($\beta = -.06$, $t(326) = -.94$, $p = .35$). As predicted, a significant interaction between finding meaning and relationship status qualified these results, $\beta = .21$, $t(326) = 3.41$, $p = .001$. A simple slopes analysis demonstrated that finding meaning was associated with greater benevolence motivations for those who had remained with their partner following the infidelity, $\beta = .33$, $t(110) = 3.65$, $p < .001$ (95% CI: .08 to .27), but not for those no longer in the relationship, $\beta = -.06$, $t(214) = -.94$, $p = .35$ (95% CI: -.12 to .04).

² While the TRIM subscales are most commonly analyzed separately, analysis of a TRIM total score was also conducted for exploratory purposes. The results reveal a similar significant interaction between finding meaning and relationship status on overall forgiveness motivations using a TRIM total score.

³ Exploratory analyses were also conducted assessing possible interactions between forgiveness motivations and searching for meaning, however no significant effects emerged. As a result, the remainder of the studies continued to focus on exploring the association between finding meaning and forgiveness.

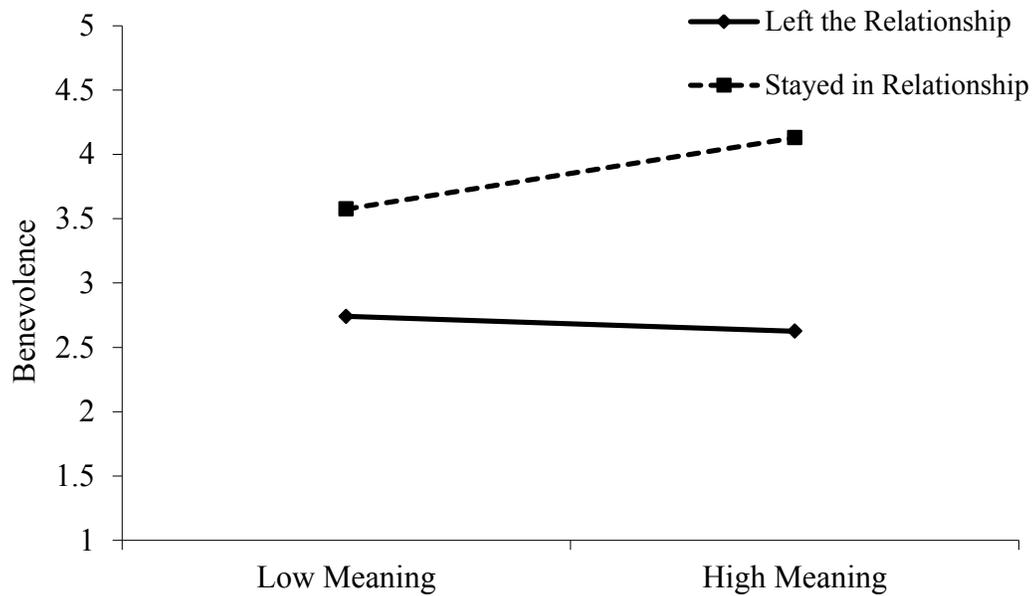


Figure 1. Simple slopes for finding meaning and benevolence motivations in Study 1.

Avoidance. The avoidance motivation subscale of the TRIM-18 was also subjected to an MMR with scores regressed on the centered found meaning variable, relationship status (no longer in the relationship = 0, still in the relationship = 1), and the interaction term, adjusted $R^2 = .32$, $F(3, 326) = 51.73$, $p < .001$. Finding meaning significantly predicted avoidance motivations, $\beta = .13$, $t(326) = 2.13$, $p = .03$ and relationship status was a significant predictor of avoidance, $\beta = -.56$, $t(326) = -12.08$, $p < .001$. A significant meaning by relationship status interaction qualified these results, $\beta = -.20$, $t(326) = -3.35$, $p = .001$. Simple slopes analysis revealed that for those remaining in the relationship, finding meaning was associated with lower avoidance motivations, $\beta = -.25$, $t(110) = -2.59$, $p = .01$ (95% CI: $-.25$ to $-.03$), whereas for those no longer in the relationship meaning found was associated with increased avoidance, $\beta = .14$, $t(214) = 2.13$, $p = .03$ (95% CI: $.01$ to $.19$).

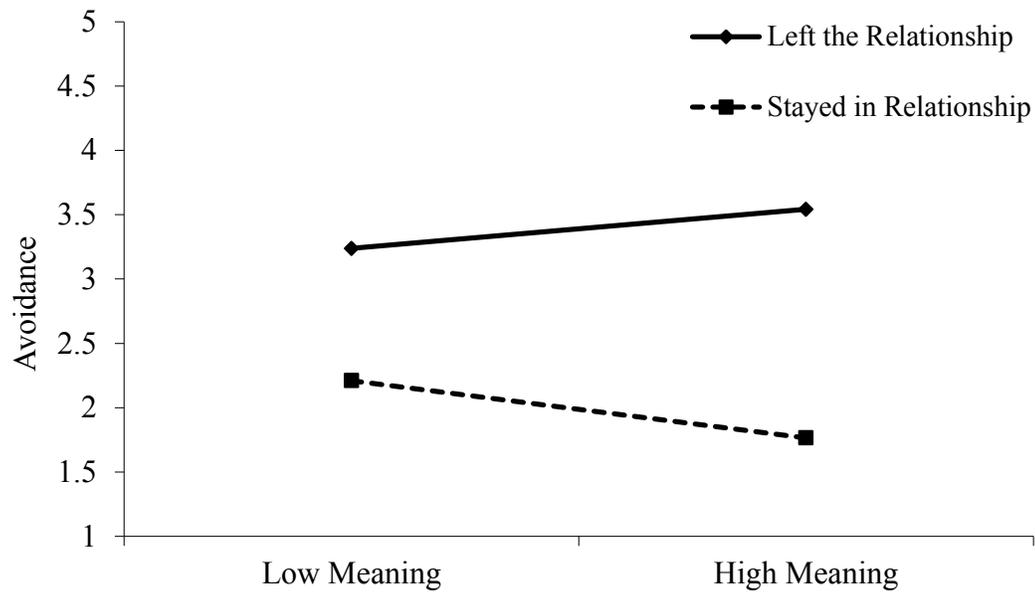


Figure 2. Simple slopes for finding meaning and avoidance motivations in Study 1.

Revenge. Lastly, the revenge subscale of the TRIM-18 was subjected to an MMR. Again, revenge scores were regressed on the centered finding meaning variable, relationship status, and the status by meaning interaction, $R^2 = .07$, $F(3, 326) = 8.74$, $p < .001$. A main effect of meaning was found on revenge motivations, $\beta = -.23$, $t(326) = -3.33$, $p = .001$, and relationship status also significantly predicted revenge motivations, $\beta = -.20$, $t(326) = -3.73$, $p < .001$. However, the interaction was not significant for revenge motivations, $\beta = .03$, $t(326) = .42$, $p = .68$.

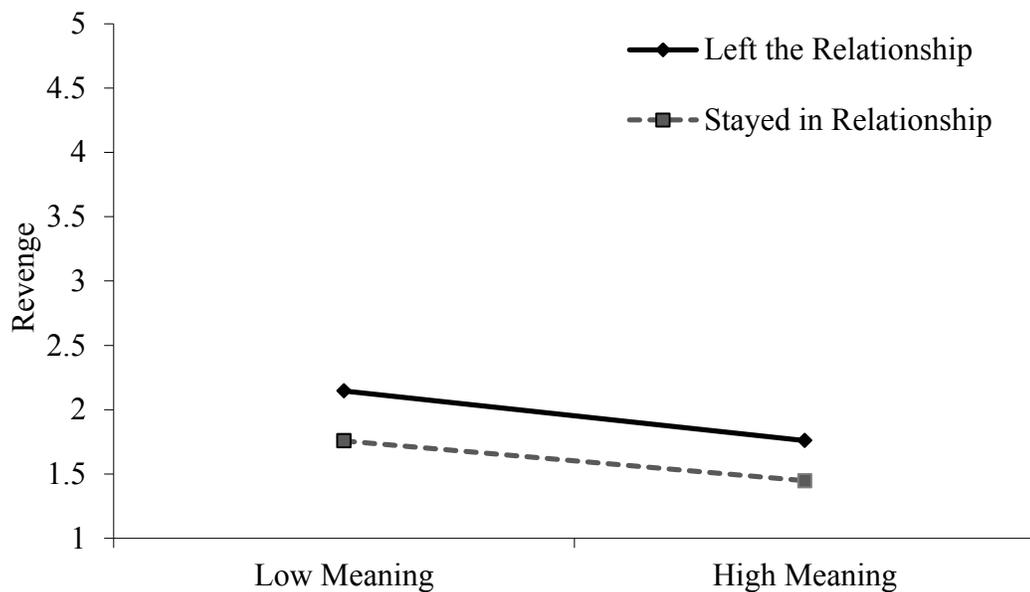


Figure 3. Simple slopes for finding meaning and revenge motivations in Study 1.

Qualitative Examination of Meaning-Making

For exploratory purposes, a research assistant blind to the study hypotheses examined the qualitative item that asked participants what meaning or purpose (if any) they had found after the infidelity. The responses were examined for common themes and these themes were used to create categories for analysis. For the participants who were no longer in the relationship, the most common response was related to them not being meant to be together (13.4%), followed by it being their ex's problem (7.4%). Of the participants who remained in the relationship, the two most common responses to this question were that they had discussed the infidelity and as a result understood it more (10.6%), and that it had made the relationship better (9.7%).

Discussion

The results of the present study provide support for the prediction that there is a positive association between meaning-making and the motivational components of

forgiveness (i.e., benevolence and avoidance motivations) in the context of infidelity.

Specifically, the data indicate that the philandering partner was forgiven to the extent that meaning was found. However, this effect was moderated by relationship status such that finding meaning in the transgression only facilitated a change in forgiveness motivations (i.e., benevolence and avoidance) among those who remained in the relationship.

Specifically, for those who were still in the relationship in which their partner had been unfaithful, finding meaning was associated with increased benevolence motivations and decreased avoidance motivations. There was a main effect of meaning such that those who reported finding meaning also reported being less vengeful compared to those reporting low meaning. Notably, people generally seem to not be interested in revenge and so the distribution of scores on this subscale was skewed, with most scores at or very near the floor. Similar results of low distribution of scores have been found for the revenge subscale of the TRIM-18 (see Karremans & Smith, 2010).

Not surprisingly, people who were no longer in the relationship and reported having found meaning not only did not experience a decrease in avoidance motivations, but rather reported an increase in such motivations. This suggests that part of the meaning found by people who have already left the relationship is related to an increased desire to avoid the other person. Perhaps as people who left the relationship reappraised the event they made increasingly stable and causal attributions for their partner's behaviour. This negatively oriented reappraisal may have then motivated them to dissolve their romantic relationship.

Such an understanding of Study 1's results would be in line with Hall and Fincham's (2006) findings regarding relationship dissolution after infidelity. Specifically,

they found that negative attributions predicted relationship breakup to the extent that the victim was less forgiving. However, the reason people have ended the relationship cannot be determined in this study and there may have been other factors involved in this decision that are beyond the scope of the current investigation. Interestingly, participants were asked to discuss what meaning (if any) they had found in their experience with infidelity in an open-ended question. Examination of these responses revealed that people did differ in their descriptions of the meaning they found. For people who had stayed with their partner, meaning was commonly associated with improvement in the relationship, whereas for those who had terminated the relationship meaning was related to the couple not being meant for each other.

In sum, Study 1 revealed a relationship between finding meaning and forgiveness among people who are still with their unfaithful partner. What stands out is that when it comes to finding meaning, a positive response is observed among people who remain with their partner. Moreover, the meaning-making process appears to promote forgiveness motivations in the aftermath of infidelity. Unexamined in Study 1, however, is the reason meaning-making is associated with forgiveness following infidelity. Thus, the aim of Study 2 was to assess possible mechanisms by which meaning-making leads to forgiveness. Specifically, Study 2 examined whether meaning-making facilitates forgiveness to the extent that people feel empowered by finding meaning and whether finding meaning alters the causal attributions (i.e., stability and responsibility judgements) the victim makes for their partners unfaithful behaviour.

STUDY 2

Finding meaning in a traumatic event occurs through a process of re-evaluating the trauma and what value it has for the victim and their life (Folkman, 1997; Park, 2010; Park & Folkman, 1997). As mentioned previously, this process can involve restoring a sense of control over one's life after it has been shattered by the traumatic event (Janoff-Bulman & Frantz, 1997). In the context of recovery from the trauma of infidelity, it is possible that victims of infidelity may re-evaluate their own personal value within the relationship. Through the re-evaluation process, meaning may lead to an increase in power because meaning restores a sense of control, which is an important aspect of interpersonal power. As such, finding meaning could result in heightened perceptions of the victim's control and power in their relationship after infidelity. Further, it is possible that the extent to which a person is able to find meaning following the transgression impacts perceptions of their own power within the relationship, and in turn increases forgiveness.

Power dynamics exist in every romantic relationship. Either partners share equal power or one partner wields more power than the other (i.e., one person tends to "wear the pants"). Power—one's perceived ability to control outcomes and resources in the relationship—has previously been shown to promote forgiveness (Karremans & Smith, 2010). If powerful people are more forgiving and meaning-making restores a sense of control (or power) to victims of trauma, it is possible that power is a mechanism by which meaning-making advances the forgiveness process.

Another possible mechanism by which meaning-making might facilitate forgiveness is by altering attributions for the infidelity. Hall and Fincham (2006), for

example, found that negative attributions predicted relationship breakup to the extent that the victim was less forgiving. Importantly, making attributions about what caused the traumatic event to occur is an important aspect of the meaning-making process (Janoff-Bulman & Frantz, 1997). As such, it is possible that in the context of a relationship trauma (i.e., infidelity) attributions about what caused the person to be unfaithful may be part of the victim finding meaning. Specifically, finding meaning may involve the victim making more benign attributions for the infidelity as they reappraise the event and what caused the unfaithful behaviour, thus leading to increased forgiveness. Indeed, there is a well-established link between attributions for transgressions and forgiveness (see Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Wohl & Pritchard, 2008). For example, the more the offender is attributed responsibility, the less likely the victim will grant forgiveness (Wohl & Pritchard, 2008). Taking the above findings into consideration, it is possible that attributions may also be involved in the relationship between meaning-making and forgiveness.

In the following sections, both the power literature and research on attributions made following transgressions are reviewed. In doing so, links to both meaning-making and forgiveness are made. Specifically, it is hypothesized that power and attributions about the cause of the infidelity are possible mechanisms that can explain the positive association between meaning-making and forgiveness.

Power

Interpersonal power – the ability to influence or control the other person, as well as their affect, behaviour, and cognitions (Fiske, 1993; Guinote & Vescio, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003) – is an important facet of all social interaction. Be it a

person's interaction with their parents, children, or romantic partner, there is a certain power dynamic that exists in relationships (Falbo & Peplau, 1980). Power is an important aspect of everyday life and nearly all social interactions and as a result, researchers have been exploring the nature of power and its consequences on interpersonal relations (for example Bargh & Raymond, 1995; Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; Fiske 1993; Keltner et al., 2003, Kipnis, 1972; 1976).

Power tends to be regarded as a negative, corrupting force in relationships in that it is used by the powerful to take advantage of the less powerful (Kipnis, 1972; 1976). For example, heightened power in men has been linked to an increased likelihood of sexually harassing women (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995). As well, power increases the likelihood that a person will be unfaithful in their romantic relationship (Lammers, Stoker, Jordan, Pollmann, & Stapel, 2011). In addition, high power status is associated with a tendency to have trouble seeing other people's points of view (see Galinsky, Magee, Inesi, & Gruenfeld, 2006; Keltner et al., 2003). For example, after undertaking a writing task intended to prime high power (compared to a control condition), people were asked to judge emotional expressions on target faces. Those people in the high power prime condition made significantly more errors, as compared to the low-power condition, when judging emotional expressions (Galinsky et al., 2006). Furthermore, powerful people, as compared to those with less power, tend to rely on stereotypical information about a person when making judgements rather than focus on a person's individual characteristics (Fiske, 1993; Goodwin, Operario, & Fiske, 1998). In light of these findings, it would seem reasonable to assume that powerful people are abusive to those with less power and may take advantage of their higher power status.

That said, although heightened power has been linked to a variety of negative outcomes, it is also possible that power may not always result in adverse consequences.

Indeed, Overbeck and Park (2001) showed that when people were assigned to a high power position and asked to recall information provided about people they had been interacting with during the study, they were more likely to remember key information presented about the person than were people in the low power position. Moreover, while low power participants tended to view high power participants as homogeneous, high power participants were less likely to view those with low power in such a manner. This is contrary to research suggesting that people with power tend to stereotype others (see Fiske, 1993; Goodwin et al., 1998). Such contradictions have resulted in an expansion of the extant literature on power with a focus on understanding the contexts in which power has either negative or positive results (see Keltner et al., 2003).

Keltner and colleagues (2003) recently theorized that high power should heighten approach behaviour and lessen avoidance behaviour. As well, they suggest that approach behaviours are associated with goals and the tendency to take action. Research by Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee (2003) empirically substantiated this supposition. Specifically, they found that participants assigned to a leader position (compared to the subordinate position) were more likely to “hit” (i.e., take an additional card) than “stand” (i.e., not taking an additional card) whilst playing blackjack after their initial two cards have been dealt. Within the context of transgressions, taking action might manifest in the ‘act’ of forgiveness. However, the impact of power is not limited to increased action toward a particular goal. People with elevated power often report experiencing more positive affect (Berdahl & Martorana, 2006) as well as more creativity and less

conformity to their peers (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, Liljenquist, 2008).

While the extant literature has examined the influence of power on a variety of factors, relatively little is known about the impact of power on forgiveness.

Suggestive of a relationship between power and forgiveness is work by Aquino, Tripp, and Bies (2006) that showed power was positively correlated with forgiveness for an offense among co-workers, especially when the victims perceived that the procedural justice climate was high. Recently, Karremans and Smith (2010) tested for a possible link between power and forgiveness in close relationships. They demonstrated that elevated perceptions of power facilitate forgiveness motivations in highly committed partners, but only if people are highly committed to the relationship. Specifically, they asked people to recall a time they had been hurt by someone and found that power was associated with heightened forgiveness for those people who also reported being highly committed to the relationship in which the transgression occurred. Further support for this effect was revealed with experimental manipulation of both power and commitment. Participants were first primed with either low or high power. They were then presented with scenarios in which the harmdoer was either a weak- or a strong-commitment other and asked to rate how likely they would be to forgive this person. An interaction was found such that high power people were more forgiving of strong-commitment others in comparison to low power people. Of import for the current research, Karremans and Smith suggested that people with power focus on the long-term goal of relationship maintenance and are thus more likely to forgive. However, this possibility was not directly tested. As such, the antecedents of increased perceptions of power in a romantic relationship have yet to be empirically assessed.

Finding meaning after a transgression could be the process by which power is heightened – people may feel they have a better understanding about the dynamics of the relationship via meaning and this heightened power elicits forgiveness. Moreover, relationship betrayal can result in feelings of powerlessness (Gordon et al., 2004). Thus, the meaning-making link with forgiveness might be due to the heightened sense of control and power within the victim. Specifically, in the process of finding meaning following a relationship trauma people will re-assess their value in the relationship, which in turn may lead to heightened perceptions of their own power and control. Put differently, a person who is able to scrutinize the transgression and come to some understanding of why it occurred and what it means for themselves and their relationship may find that this facilitates forgiveness by restoring, or possibly enhancing, their perceived power in the relationship. Furthermore, power has been shown to aid in carrying out goal-directed behaviour (Galinsky et al., 2003). As such, if maintenance of the relationship is important (i.e., is a goal) to the injured partner, a heightened sense of power brought about through reappraisals of oneself, the relationship, and the affair, could promote forgiveness.

In the aftermath of a betrayal in one's relationship, as with other traumatic events, people may experience a loss of predictability about future events and the controllability of their relationship (Gordon & Baucom, 1998, 1999; Janoff-Bulman, 1992). In their model of the recovery process following infidelity, Gordon and colleagues (2004) suggest that through attempts to comprehend the reasons the betrayal occurred (i.e., find meaning in the affair), the injured partner can begin to work towards mending their sense of control in the relationship. As such, being able to find meaning after the trauma of

infidelity may lead to a re-appraisal of one's control in the relationship, perhaps resulting in an increase in perceptions of power. In this dissertation, the potential mediating role of interpersonal power in the relationship between meaning and forgiveness is examined. In particular, can heightened perceptions of power be a mechanism through which finding meaning leads to increased forgiveness?

Attributions for Partner Behaviour

Another potential mechanism through which finding meaning might heighten forgiveness is the attributions that are made for the unfaithful behaviour. In the aftermath of an event (or behaviour), explanations for what occurred that involve inferring the cause of the event (or behaviour) are commonly known as attributions. According to theories of attributions (e.g., Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1985), people respond to the behaviour of others by understanding the causal explanations for the behaviour. That is, behaviour is understood along three dimensions: causality (internal-the person or external-the environment), stability (stable or unstable), and controllability (controllable or uncontrollable). For example, if a friend borrows your car and then crashes it, their behaviour can be attributed to their carelessness (an internal explanation) or to bad weather conditions (an external explanation).

Attribution theories have been used to explain how people in relationships understand each other's behaviour and events that occur within the relationship (see Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Fincham, 2001). For example, Bradbury and Fincham (1990) argued that the nature of the attributions made for the harmdoer's behaviour will impact how the victim responds to said behaviour. That is, when a victim attributes the harmdoer's behaviour as internal, controllable, and stable (i.e., this is something specific

and controllable about their partner that is not going to change) they tend to react more negatively. Moreover, the more that these types of attributions are made about a spouse's behaviour, the more likely a person will behave negatively themselves during problem-solving attempts (Bradbury, Beach, Fincham & Nelson, 1996). As mentioned previously with regards to interpersonal transgressions, when these types of attributions are made for a transgressors' behaviour people do not respond positively and this can hinder pro-relationship behaviour.

Finding meaning may be a way in which victims can reframe the attributions that they have made for their partners infidelity. Importantly, the process of reappraisals and re-evaluation allow victims of traumatic events an opportunity to view the event in a different light. As a person recovers from the trauma of infidelity and is able to find meaning in the event, he or she may become able to reduce the negative attributions imposed on their partner through these reappraisals and is then able to move towards forgiving their partner. Furthermore, there is a well-established link between attributions and forgiveness. As mentioned previously, attributions of responsibility for transgressions have been shown to decrease willingness to forgive (e.g., Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Boon & Sulsky, 1997; Bradfield & Aquinos, 1999; Wohl & Pritchard, 2008). As such, through the process of finding meaning attributions for the infidelity may be viewed in a more positive light (i.e., as less of an enduring flaw in the persons character and more as a temporary lapse in judgement) and this, in turn, may promote pro-relational behaviours, like forgiveness.

Therefore, the purpose of Study 2 was to explore the connection between finding meaning and forgiveness in romantic relationships following a particularly traumatic

relationship event: infidelity. Specifically, Study 2 aimed to examine the potential mediating roles of interpersonal power and attributions in the relationship between finding meaning and forgiveness. It was predicted that higher levels of self-reported meaning following infidelity would lead to an increase in self-perceptions of power within the relationship and more benign attributions, and in turn, these would lead to a greater forgiveness.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

In exchange for course credit, first year psychology students who responded in mass testing that they had experienced infidelity while in a committed monogamous romantic relationship were approached to participate (via email; see Appendix A) in an online study described as assessing “romantic relationships and transgressions.”

Participants were only recruited if they were still in the relationship with their unfaithful partner. Sixty-seven undergraduates—52 female and 15 male—enrolled in introductory psychology classes at a large Canadian university participated. Students ranged in age from 18 to 45 years of age ($M = 22.01$, $SD = 4.92$). The average time that had elapsed since the infidelity occurred was 1.57 years ($SD = 1.90$; range: .50-120 months). The study involved completing a series of online questionnaires (see Appendix C) that assessed their perceptions of power in their relationship, attributions for the infidelity, the extent to which they found meaning in the infidelity, and their forgiveness of their partner.

Table 4.

Type of Infidelity Experienced and Current Relationship Status

Variable	Percentage
Type of Infidelity	
Sexual	31.3%
Emotional	32.8%
Both	35.8%
Current Relationship Status	
Dating Casually	13.4%
Dating Regularly	3.0%
Dating Exclusively	46.3%
Living Together	26.9%
Engaged	4.5%
Married	6.0%

Measures

After providing online informed consent, participants began a series of questionnaires that assessed power and dominance (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), their experience with infidelity, meaning-making (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006), attributions for the event (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992), and forgiveness (Brown & Philips, 2005). In addition, participants were asked standard demographic questions (age, sex, ethnicity, relationship status, etc.).

Forgiveness. The State Forgiveness measure (Brown & Phillips, 2005) was used to assess forgiveness of their partner for the infidelity (e.g., “Even though his/her actions hurt me, I do not feel ill-will toward him/her”, “I have forgiven this person”; $\alpha = .88$).

Perceived power. To assess beliefs about the power participants have in their relationship the Generalized Sense of Power Scale (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006) was used. Sample items from this 8-item scale include, “If I want to, I get to make the decisions” and “I can get him/her to do what I want” ($\alpha = .91$).

Attributions. The Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992) was used to assess attributions for the infidelity. Although the 6-items are usually used as responses to hypothetical events, studies have also used these items in response to real-life scenarios (see Hall & Fincham, 2006). The items consisted of attribution statements assessing responsibility and causality for the infidelity (e.g., “My partner’s infidelity was due to something about him/her—the type of person he/she is, his/her mood” and “My partner was unfaithful on purpose rather than unintentionally”; $\alpha = .80$).

Presence of meaning. An adapted version of the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006) was again used to assess meaning in the transgression. The 3-item Presence of Meaning subscale included the items, “I have discovered a satisfying explanation for why this has happened to me”, “I have discovered a satisfying explanation for why this has happened to me”, and “I have found meaning/purpose in my experience with infidelity” ($\alpha = .88$).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The dataset was examined for missing data and for potential outliers. In addition, data were examined to ensure that statistical assumptions for the planned analyses were met. Frequency distributions were also run on all measured variables. These revealed that all the variable total scores were within the proper range of values. MVA was conducted to check for missing data. Little's MCAR test was not significant, $\chi^2(72) = 56.24, p = .91$, thus the data are MCAR. As in Study 1, cases with missing data were kept in the dataset. Furthermore, scatterplots indicate that heterogeneity of variance and linearity are not an issue.

An examination of skewness and kurtosis values of forgiveness and finding meaning indicate slight deviations from normality. A check of the statistical test of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) provided similar results: forgiveness $D(67) = .12, p < .02$ and found meaning $D(67) = .13, p = .005$. Transformations were attempted with each variable and were unsuccessful at attaining normality and as such, the original scores were retained. The results and correlation were comparable with and without the transformations.

The presence of outliers on the measured variables was not revealed after inspection of the data. Boxplots reveal one case that appears to possibly be influential, however the computed z-scores revealed no cases greater than three standard deviations above the mean. In addition, no cases appear to be influential according to cook's distance. Mahalanobis' distance was used to look for multivariate outlier. There were no cases falling above the critical value, according to the Chi Square distribution, $\chi^2(4) =$

18.47, $p = .001$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Multicollinearity was also not an issue based on collinearity statistics.

Independent sample t-tests were conducted for participants' scores on finding meaning, perceived power, attributions, and forgiveness to determine whether any sex effects were present. The results revealed no significant effects of sex in any variables. Males ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.51$) and females ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.73$) did not significantly differ in levels of reported meaning found, $t(65) = .23$, $p = .82$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, or perceived power, $t(65) = -1.10$, $p = .28$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ (males: $M = 5.10$, $SD = .94$; females: $M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.22$). There were also no significant differences in attributions, $t(65) = .30$, $p = .76$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$ for males ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.29$) and females ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.08$). Finally, males ($M = 4.76$, $SD = .87$) and females ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.12$) did not differ significantly on the forgiveness measure, $t(65) = -1.12$, $p = .27$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. As such, analyses were conducted by collapsing across sex. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were conducted. Means, standard deviations, as well as bivariate correlations are presented in Table 5. Correlations among the variables of interest were in the hypothesized directions.

Table 5.

Descriptive Statistics for Finding Meaning, Perceived Power, Attributions, and Forgiveness

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1 Meaning Found	4.15	1.67	-	-	-	-
2 Perceived Power	4.81	1.17	.29*	-	-	-
3 Attributions	3.69	1.12	-.16	-.35**	-	-
4 Forgiveness	4.49	1.07	.26*	.49**	-.30*	-

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

Mediation Analysis

As predicted finding meaning was a significant predictor of forgiveness, $\beta = .26$, $t(65) = 2.13$, $p = .04$. Having found meaning following the infidelity was associated with increased forgiveness of their partner. Finding meaning also significantly predicted perceived power, $\beta = .29$, $t(65) = 2.44$, $p = .02$, but did not predict attributions, $\beta = -.16$, $t(65) = -1.30$, $p = .20$. As such, power, but not attributions, will be included in the mediation analyses. To determine whether the effect of finding meaning on forgiveness could be explained by perceptions of one's power in the relationship, Baron and Kenny's (1986) method for testing mediation was used. As noted above, there was a significant effect of finding meaning on both perceived power and forgiveness. As such, the first two requirements of mediation were satisfied. Additionally, it is important to note that perceived power also predicted forgiveness, $\beta = .45$, $t(65) = 4.52$, $p < .001$, in that the more power participants felt they had in their relationship, the more likely they were to forgive their partner. As such, the full mediation model was then tested (see Figure 4). Finding meaning was simultaneously regressed on the outcome, forgiveness, and on the putative mediator, perceived power. This equation was significant, $R^2 = .25$, $F(2, 64) = 10.87$, $p < .001$. Importantly, the coefficient associated with power was a unique predictor of forgiveness, $\beta = .45$, $t(64) = 4.02$, $p < .001$ and finding meaning no longer predicted forgiveness, $\beta = .12$, $t(64) = 1.10$, $p = .25$.

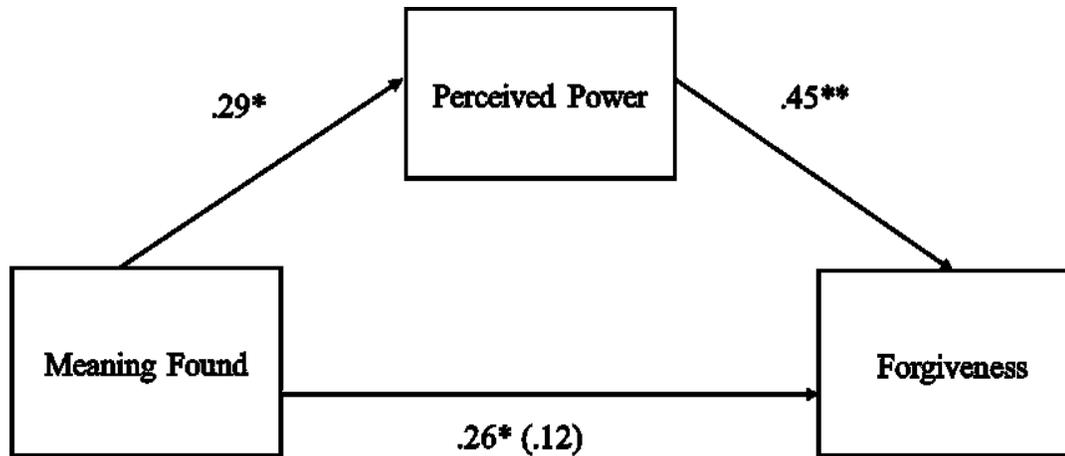


Figure 4. Mediation model for meaning found and forgiveness in Study 2. Coefficients with an asterisk indicate significant beta weights, $p < .05$. Coefficients with a double asterisk indicate significant beta weights, $p < .001$.

The bootstrapping technique (with 5000 replications; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was then used to determine whether the indirect effect of finding meaning on forgiveness, through perceived power, was significantly different from zero. The indirect effect was estimated to lie between .004 and .12 with 95% confidence. As zero is not included in the 95% confidence interval, the indirect effect is significantly different from zero at $p < .05$ (two tailed) – indicating that perceived power was a significant mediator of the relationship between finding meaning in the infidelity and forgiveness.

Alternative Model

An alternate mediation model assessing reversed directional paths between the mediator and the dependent variable was also evaluated. There was a possibility that an increase in forgiveness due to finding meaning made people feel more powerful after the infidelity. In fact, when this alternate path through forgiveness to power was tested, meaning found was no longer a significant predictor of relationship power, $B = .12$, $SE = .08$, $t(64) = 1.59$, $p = .12$, and the indirect effect was estimated to lie between .005 and

.20 with 95% confidence. As such, it is possible that forgiveness preceded perceived relationship power. However, past theory has indicated a relationship between power and forgiveness in the proposed directions (Karremans & Smith, 2010). The subsequent studies will further examine the direction of this relationship via manipulation of relationship power.

Discussion

Inevitably, transgressions will occur within romantic relationships. How people respond to those transgressions will determine the relationship's fate. The present research provides additional support for the main hypothesis that finding meaning is associated with forgiveness of infidelity. This study extends previous findings by showing that the relationship may be accounted for by perceptions of power. Specifically, finding meaning was associated with high perceptions of power. In turn, heightened levels of power, as shown by Karremans and Smith (2010), predicted forgiveness.

Additionally, a second possible mediator of the relationship between finding meaning and forgiveness was assessed. Hall and Fincham (2006) have suggested that the process of making attributions after infidelity is parallel to the process of understanding and finding meaning proposed in Gordon and colleagues (2004) infidelity recovery model. Therefore, it was anticipated that finding meaning could help victims focus less on attributions that were negative in nature (i.e., something that is inherently wrong with their partner and they will never be able to change) and perhaps on more benign attributions for the infidelity (i.e., that the infidelity was a one-time fling that does not reflect on their true character). Moreover, Hall and Fincham (2006) have shown that making more benign attributions for a transgression can heighten willingness to forgive.

As such, attributions were included in the current investigation as a possible mechanism through which finding meaning may lead to forgiveness. However, the results did not provide support for this association. As such, further analyses of how finding meaning facilitates the forgiveness process will no longer include attributions and will instead focus only on power.

While Study 1 and 2 provide strong support for the general hypothesis that meaning-making can promote forgiveness, both studies were correlational in nature. Spencer, Zanna, and Fong (2005) have argued that psychological research has begun to rely too heavily on mediational analyses of correlation designs. Specifically, Spencer et al. (2005) suggest that randomized experiments are still the best source for making causal inferences. In their recommendations, they propose that several experimental studies should be conducted in order to examine psychological processes in a causal chain, especially if the process is easy to manipulate and measure. As such in the subsequent two studies (Study 3 and 4) the goal is to experimentally manipulate meaning-making and relationship power, respectively, in order to begin to provide further support for the preliminary findings of the previous two studies.

STUDY 3

As in Study 2, the goals of Study 3 were to examine a possible mechanism through which finding meaning leads people to be more willing to forgive their partner for infidelity. Because the previous study revealed that attributions were not a significant mediator in the model, the remaining research focused solely on power. Study 3 sought to extend these findings by experimentally manipulating the presence of meaning. As mentioned previously, Spencer and colleagues (2005) suggest that the strongest argument

for a process model is obtained via several studies that experimentally examine the relationship between variables. Exploring the effect of the independent variable on the proposed mediator is one step in this process. As such, the goal of this study was to manipulate the presence of meaning and explore the effects this has on power. It was expected that people in the meaning found condition would report heightened perceptions of power in their relationship.

Method

Participants

A community sample of individuals from the United States ($N = 104$, 73 female, 30 male, 1 unidentified) were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online tool that allows "workers" to complete small tasks for monetary rewards. Participants were compensated with US \$0.50 for their participation and ranged in age from 19 to 64 years of age ($M = 33.71$, $SD = 10.53$). The average time elapsed since the infidelity was 2.36 years ($SD = 3.32$; range: .25-216 months).

Table 6.

Percentages of Type of Infidelity Experienced and Current Relationship Status

Variable	Percentage
Type of Infidelity	
Sexual	19.2%
Emotional	26.0%
Both	54.8%
Current Relationship Status	
Dating Casually	2.9%
Dating Regularly	5.8%
Dating Exclusively	13.5%
Living Together	34.6%
Engaged	6.7%
Married	35.6%
Missing	1.0%

Procedure and Measures

Participants who wished to participate in the experiment signed up through MTurk and were provided a link that took them to the first page of the study hosted on Qualtrics. The first page in Qualtrics was an informed consent (see Appendix B). After providing informed consent participants were then asked to complete a 3-item eligibility assessment (Appendix C). In order to be eligible participants had to indicate that they had been the victim of infidelity in their current romantic relationship and were still in this relationship, had found themselves “...searching to make sense of or find some

understanding in the event” and had not yet “...been able to make sense of or find some understanding in the infidelity.” The final two eligibility items were included because it would not have been ethical to instigate a search for meaning among people who have already found meaning or have never sought meaning in the first place. Upon meeting the eligibility criteria, participants then completed several items assessing their experience with infidelity. Following these items, they were then randomly assigned to either the experimental or control conditions.

The conditions varied in terms of the intended manipulation of finding meaning. Two-thirds of the participants were asked to “...write your deepest thoughts and feelings regarding the experience”, and half of these people were further instructed to “...write down the most significant way in which you think you have benefited from the experience or some positive things that you have learned from the experience.” The remaining participants were asked to “Describe in detail what you do on a typical Monday”⁴ (see Appendix D).

Thereafter, participants completed a similar battery of questionnaires as in Study 2 (Appendix C) including: the Generalized Sense of Power Scale ($\alpha = .91$; Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), the State Forgiveness measure ($\alpha = .73$; Brown & Phillips, 2005), and the adapted version of the MLQ assessing meaning (Steger et al., 2006) served as a manipulation check (found; $\alpha = .81$; searching: $\alpha = .87$).

⁴ Due to the negative consequences that can result from searching for and not finding meaning (see Davis et al., 2007; 2010) we did not include a condition that would have participants think about and discuss being unable to find meaning.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Frequency distributions were examined for all items of interest. These indicated that all item scores were within the proper range of minimum and maximum values. The data were then screened for out-of-range and missing values and the data analysis assumptions were assessed (following Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The missing values analyses (MVA) revealed that Little's MCAR test was not significant, $\chi^2(70) = 82.54, p = .15$, thus the data are MCAR. As in both Study 1 and 2, cases with missing data were kept in the dataset. Furthermore, scatterplots indicated that heterogeneity of variance and linearity were not issues.

Normality was assessed using a triangulation of methods. First, visual analysis of the data was conducted by examining histograms and stem and leaf plots to assess whether there may be departures from normality. These visual analyses suggested that there were no serious deviations from normality. The items were further examined using statistical tests of normality (Shapiro-Wilks) and skewness and kurtosis values were also obtained. The statistical test of normality (Shapiro-Wilks) suggested some deviations from normality (forgiveness, $D(103) = .97, p = .009$; presence of meaning, $D(103) = .91, p < .001$; searching for meaning, $D(103) = .96, p = .003$; power, $D(103) = .98, p = .07$). However, all skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable range and as such, the data remained untransformed.

Boxplots, standardized scores, and Cook's Distance were used in order to screen for univariate outliers. In the event that a case was visually detached from the distribution

and identified as an extreme score (i.e., having a standardized value $\geq \pm 3.29$) it was then assessed using Cook's distance. There were no cases identified as univariate outliers.

A multiple linear regression was run with respondent's ID as the criterion and all 4 variables as predictors in order to calculate Mahalanobis' distance. There were no cases falling above the critical value, according to the Chi Square distribution, $\chi^2(4) = 18.47, p = .001$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Multicollinearity was also not an issue based on collinearity statistics.

Independent sample t-tests did not reveal any significant effect of sex on the variables of interest. Males ($M = 2.59, SD = 1.56$) and females ($M = 2.71, SD = 1.44$) did not differ significantly in levels of reported presence of meaning, $t(101) = -.37, p = .71, \eta_p^2 = .001$ or the search for meaning, $t(101) = -.37, p = .71, \eta_p^2 < .001$ (males: $M = 4.00, SD = 1.57$; females: $M = 4.13, SD = 1.67$). There were also no significant differences in perceived power, $t(101) = -.54, p = .59, \eta_p^2 = .003$ for males ($M = 4.58, SD = 1.36$) and females ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.23$) or forgiveness, $t(100) = -.26, p = .80, \eta_p^2 = .001$ (males: $M = 4.56, SD = 1.64$; females: $M = 4.65, SD = 1.54$). As such, analyses were conducted by collapsing across sex.

Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses of the variables of interest were conducted. Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations by condition are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Descriptive Statistics for Presence of and Search for Meaning, Perceived Power, and Forgiveness by Condition

	Control (<i>n</i> = 36)	Experimental 1 (<i>n</i> = 34)	Experimental 2 (<i>n</i> = 34)
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Presence of Meaning	2.72 (1.51) _a	2.86 (1.51) _a	2.52 (1.46) _a
Searching for Meaning	4.77 (1.50) _a	3.84 (1.79) _b	3.67 (1.40) _b
Perceived Power	4.82 (1.15) _a	4.57 (1.32) _a	4.61 (1.34) _a
Forgiveness	4.69 (1.68) _a	4.73 (1.44) _a	4.72 (1.44) _a

Note: Means with differing subscripts within rows are significantly different at the $p < .05$.

Meaning Manipulation – Analysis of Variance

The second phase of analyses tested our main hypotheses. First, using univariate between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA), a meaning manipulation check was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the meaning manipulation. Further, ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of the manipulation on both power (the mediator), and forgiveness (the dependent variable).

Manipulation check. To assess the extent to which the manipulation effectively influenced the presence of meaning, a univariate between-groups ANOVA was performed. There were no significant differences in participant's reports of presence of meaning among any of the conditions, $F(2,101) = .45, p = .64, \eta_p^2 = .009$ (see Table 7 for means). Thus, the manipulation did not successfully aid participants in finding meaning following infidelity.

Power. The main goal of Study 3 was to extend the findings of Study 1 and 2 by experimentally manipulating the presence of meaning and assessing the effects of this manipulation on the mediator, perceived power. The analysis did not reveal a significant difference in perceived power between either of the experimental conditions (see Table 7) and the control condition, $F(2,101) = .39, p = .68, \eta_p^2 = .008$.

Forgiveness. A univariate between-groups ANOVA also assessed the extent to which the manipulation impacted forgiveness. Again, the manipulation did not have a significant effect on forgiveness for the unfaithful partner, $F(2,101) = .32, p = .73, \eta_p^2 = .006$ (see Table 7).

Exploratory analysis of manipulation: Searching for meaning. Because the manipulation was unsuccessful in increasing the presence of meaning as hypothesized, an exploratory analysis of the manipulations effects was conducted using the searching for meaning subscale of the MLQ (Steger et al., 2006). A univariate between-groups ANOVA revealed that participants in both experimental conditions reported lower amounts of searching for meaning compared to those in the control condition (see Table 7), $F(2,101) = 5.02, p = .008, \eta_p^2 = .09$.

Mediation Analyses

Presence of Meaning and Forgiveness. As predicted, finding meaning was a significant predictor of forgiveness, $\beta = .26, t(100) = 2.56, p = .01$. Presence of meaning explained a significant proportion of variance in forgiveness scores, $R^2 = .06, F(1, 101) = 6.53, p = .01$. That is, the more presence of meaning participants reported, the more likely they were to forgive.

Power and Forgiveness. Perceived power once again predicted willingness to forgive, $\beta = .29$, $t(100) = 2.43$, $p = .02$. Specifically, the more power participants felt they had in their relationship the more likely they were to forgive their partner for the infidelity, $R^2 = .06$, $F(1, 101) = 5.89$, $p = .02$.

Presence of Meaning and Power. As mentioned previously, the manipulation did not significantly impact the presence of meaning as expected, and further examination of the correlations revealed relationships not similar to those found in Study 2. Specifically, the relationship between presence of meaning and perceived power was not significant ($p = .41$); thus the mediation model from Study 2 was not assessed.

Discussion

In the aftermath of infidelity, pro-relationship behaviours such as forgiveness are needed in order to aid in repairing the damage that has been done. The present study aimed to manipulate the meaning-making process, to facilitate finding meaning or understanding of the infidelity experienced, in order to assess the impact of finding meaning on perceived power in the relationship. Unfortunately, the manipulation was not successful at increasing the presence of meaning following infidelity. Further, this study was unable to replicate the main finding from Study 2. Specifically, the previous study revealed that finding meaning facilitated forgiveness via greater perceived power in the relationship. In Study 3, both presence of meaning and perceived power were associated with heightened forgiveness of one's partner for their unfaithful behaviour, however there was no relationship between presence of meaning and perceived power and as a result the mediation process could not be replicated.

The results of the current study suggest that it might prove difficult to manipulate the meaning-making process in a single session experiment. Discovering purpose, value, or some understanding of why a stressful life event has occurred is not typically something that happens overnight. Recovery from a traumatic is often a lengthy process that involves considerable time and effort, and more often than not, therapy (Foa, Keane, & Friedman, 2000). For example, Gordon and Baucom's (1998; 1999) intervention model for couples dealing with infidelity focuses on a process that occurs in several stages (including a meaning-making stage) that ultimately does not occur overnight. More specifically, successful implementation of this intervention occurred over at least 24 sessions (Gordon et al., 2004), revealing that coming to some understanding of the event can be a lengthy process. That said, the goal of manipulating meaning in this study might be too much to expect from of a single session manipulation. Given that participants were asked to engage in narrative writing about the infidelity on only one occasion, this was likely an insufficient amount of time to result in meaning being found.

In line with the idea that a single session may not provide sufficient time to fully find meaning, the manipulation did have some influence on participant's reports of searching for meaning. Compared to the control condition, in both experimental conditions people reported lower levels of searching for meaning. This finding suggests that writing about the infidelity and purpose or benefits found initiated the meaning-making process. Because narrative writing seems to have reduced searching for meaning, it is possible that repetition of this manipulation over time may be needed in order for people to resolve their shattered relationship views and come to an understanding of what this event means in their lives going forward.

Although the method used to test the proposed model might not be sufficiently powerful enough to manipulate the variables in accordance with Spencer and colleagues (2005) suggested tests of causality, this does not necessarily mean that this model does not exist. Importantly, while Spencer and colleagues (2005) have suggested several experiments investigating causal relationships between variables are needed to make the strongest argument for a process model, they also acknowledge that it is sometimes not possible to manipulate a given variable. As a result, rather than conducting what is referred to as an experimental-causal-chain design it may be more practical to use a moderation-of-process design, manipulating the mediator, in order to further explore the proposed mediation model (Spencer et al., 2005).

STUDY 4

Study 4 was designed to further assess the causal chain among the variables of interest. As mentioned, given the difficulty of manipulating meaning-making it is possible that a more practical method to examine these relationships is to manipulate the mediator instead. Moreover, numerous studies have successfully manipulated perceived power in interpersonal relationships (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2003; Karremans & Smith, 2010), including romantic relationships (Gordon & Chen, 2013). Consequently, the decision was made to switch strategies and explore the effects of power on forgiveness via manipulation of perceived relationship power.

Thus, the main purpose was to manipulate the mechanism through which finding meaning heightened forgiveness, perceived power, and assess the effects on forgiveness. While assessing perceived power using a scale was revealing (Study 2), the current research manipulated perceived power in people's romantic relationships to further

understand the influence it has on pro-relational behaviours (i.e., forgiveness) and examine the previous findings. Given that Study 3 was unable to effectively manipulate the independent variable and show a causal link between presence of meaning and power, a moderation-of-process design (Spencer et al., 2005) was also assessed. The purpose of this design was to manipulate the proposed mediator and examine the interaction effect on the dependent variable to provide further evidence for the model found in Study 2.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) was again used to recruit a community sample of individuals from the United States ($N = 113$, 84 female, 27 male, 2 unidentified). Participants were compensated with US \$0.50 for their participation and ranged in age from 19 to 59 years of age ($M = 31.94$, $SD = 10.17$). The average time elapsed since the infidelity was 2.84 years ($SD = 3.70$; range: .25-192 months).

Table 8.

Percentages of Type of Infidelity Experienced and Current Relationship Status

Variable	Percentage
Type of Infidelity	
Sexual	26.5%
Emotional	16.8%
Both	56.6%
Current Relationship Status	
Dating Casually	0.9%
Dating Regularly	2.7%
Dating Exclusively	12.4%
Living Together	22.1%
Engaged	7.1%
Married	30.8%
Missing	24.8%

Similar to Study 3, participants signed up through MTurk and were provided a link that took them to the study hosted on Qualtrics. After providing informed consent (see Appendix B) participants were then asked to complete an eligibility item to ensure they were still in a relationship with their unfaithful partner and several items assessing the experience of infidelity. They were then randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions or the control condition.

The conditions varied in terms of the intended manipulation of relationship power. In the high power condition the participants were asked to "...recall a particular

incident in which you felt empowered in your relationship. By empowered, we mean a situation in which you had control or the authority in the relationship, thus enabling you to get what you wanted.” Alternatively, in the low power condition participants were asked to “...recall a particular incident in which you felt you were not empowered in your relationship. By not being empowered, we mean a situation in which you did not have control or the authority in the relationship, thus you were not able to get what you wanted.” In both experimental conditions they were asked to describe the situation—what happened, how they felt, and so on. The remaining participants were asked to recall their day yesterday and describe their experiences (see Appendix D).

Thereafter, participants completed a similar battery of questionnaires (Appendix C) as in Study 3 including: the adapted MLQ subscale assessing meaning after infidelity ($\alpha = .80$; Steger et al., 2006), the State Forgiveness measure ($\alpha = .93$; Brown & Phillips, 2005), and the Generalized Sense of Power Scale (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006) served as a manipulation check ($\alpha = .93$). As well, participants were asked to complete several items of their subjective ratings of their power in their relationship (e.g., “I feel influential in my romantic relationship”, “I feel powerful in my romantic relationship”, and “I don't feel like I have very much control in my relationship”).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Frequency tests indicated that all item scores were within the proper range. Missing values analyses (MVA) revealed that Little's MCAR test was significant, $\chi^2(99) = 126.81, p = .03$, thus the data are not MCAR. Further MVA was conducted as a secondary test and indicated that no cases were missing more than 5% of the data

resulting in separate variance t-tests not being calculated. As a result, it was decided that the cases with missing data should remain unchanged. Furthermore, scatterplots indicated that heterogeneity of variance and linearity were not issues. Visual analyses suggested that there were no serious deviations from normality, with the exception of found meaning, which appeared slightly negatively skewed. The statistical test of normality (Shapiro-Wilks) suggested deviations from normality (forgiveness, $D(112) = .96, p = .001$; presence of meaning, $D(112) = .91, p < .001$; searching for meaning, $D(112) = .95, p < .001$; power, $D(112) = .97, p = .005$), however all skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable range and as such, the data remained untransformed. Finally, no cases were identified as univariate or multivariate outliers ($\chi^2(4) = 18.47, p = .001$). Multicollinearity was also not an issue.

An independent samples t-test revealed a significant effect of sex on presence of meaning, $t(109) = 3.13, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .08$ (males: $M = 3.44, SD = 1.75$; females: $M = 2.48, SD = 1.27$), however no other significant differences were found. As such, the remaining analyses will control for sex when they include the presence of meaning.

Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were conducted. Means and standard deviations by condition are presented in Table 9.

Table 9.

Descriptive Statistics for Presence of Meaning, Perceived Power, and Forgiveness by Condition

	Control (<i>n</i> = 38)	High Power (<i>n</i> = 34)	Low Power (<i>n</i> = 39)
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Presence of Meaning	2.75 (1.36) _a	2.73 (1.62) _a	2.62 (1.44) _a
Perceived Power	4.02 (1.30) _a	4.51 (1.54) _a	4.15 (1.57) _a
Forgiveness	3.87 (1.79) _a	4.12 (1.91) _a	4.12 (1.60) _a

Note: Means with differing subscripts within rows are significantly different at the $p < .05$.

Power Manipulation – Analysis of Variance

Following the preliminary analyses the main hypotheses were examined. A manipulation check was first conducted to examine the effectiveness of the power manipulation. Following this, the effect of the manipulation on forgiveness, the dependent variable, was explored.

Manipulation check. The extent to which the manipulation effectively influenced perceived power was assessed using a between-groups ANOVA. There were no significant differences in participants self-reported power between the high power condition ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.54$), the low power condition ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.57$), and the control condition ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.30$), $F(1,108) = 1.03$, $p = .34$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Thus, the manipulation did not successfully impact participant's perceived power in their relationship and as a result, a moderation-of-process design could not be assessed.

Forgiveness. Extending the findings of Study 2 by experimentally manipulating perceived power and assessing the effects of this manipulation on the dependent variable,

forgiveness, was the main goal of Study 4. The analysis did not reveal a significant difference in forgiveness of the unfaithful partner, $F(2,108) = .26, p = .77, \eta_p^2 = .005$ (high power: $M = 4.12, SD = 1.91$; low power: $M = 4.12, SD = 1.60$; control: $M = 3.89, SD = 1.79$).

Mediation Analyses

Presence of Meaning and Forgiveness. Similar to the previous studies, having found meaning was a significant predictor of forgiveness, $\beta = .33, t(109) = 2.30, p = .004$. Participants who reported having found meaning in the aftermath of the infidelity were significantly more forgiving of their partner, $R^2 = .08, F(1, 110) = 8.86, p = .004$.⁵

Power and Forgiveness. Perceived power once again predicted forgiveness, $\beta = .55, t(109) = 5.46, p < .001$. That is, participants who reported greater perceived power in their relationship were also significantly more forgiving of the infidelity, $R^2 = .21, F(1, 110) = 29.86, p < .001$.

Presence of Meaning and Power. Examination of the correlations revealed relationships similar to those found in Study 3. Specifically, the relationship between finding meaning and perceived power was not significant⁶, $r(110) = .10, p = .29$; thus the mediation model from Study 2 was not assessed.

Discussion

Past research has shown that heightened power is associated with negative behavioural outcomes like being unable to see other people's points of view (Keltner et al., 2003), sexual harassment (Bargh et al., 1995), and committing infidelity (Lammers et

⁵ Further analyses revealed a significant ($p = .05$) meaning by sex interaction on forgiveness such that among males finding meaning was associated with heightened forgiveness but this was not the case for females. Such a sex effect has not been found in any of the previous studies but it was noted here and will be furthered examined in the subsequent study if another sex difference is found on the meaning variable.

⁶ There was no interaction between gender and presence of meaning on relationship power.

al., 2011). While power has long been conceptualized as a corrupting force (Kipnis, 1972; 1976), research has begun to demonstrate that this need not always be the case. For example, powerful people tend to be more forgiving (Karremans & Smith, 2010) and power aids in perspective taking when people are highly self-focused (Gordon & Chen, 2013). The aim of Study 4 was to manipulate relationship power in order to examine its impact on forgiveness following infidelity and to assess whether the mediation observed in Study 2 could be replicated. The manipulation, unfortunately, was unsuccessful and no differences were observed in relationship power between the conditions. Once again, the results from Study 2 were not replicated. Whereas Study 2 revealed that finding meaning promoted forgiveness via greater perceived power in the relationship, in Study 4 there was again no relationship between presence of meaning and perceived power and as a result the mediation process could not be replicated. Importantly, the present study did replicate several key findings from the first three studies. Specifically, all four studies have revealed a significant, positive association between the presence of meaning and forgiving one's partner for infidelity when the relationship remains intact. Furthermore, in Study 4 a relationship between perceived power and forgiveness similar to that found in Study 2 and 3 was shown for people who stay in the relationship. In line with previous research by Karremans and Smith (2010), these studies indicate that elevated perceptions of power promote the forgiveness process.

The experiential power priming task that was used in Study 4 has previously demonstrated its effectiveness in terms of manipulating perceived power in interpersonal relationships (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Galinsky et al., 2006), including romantic relationships (Gordon & Chen, 2013; Karremans & Smith, 2010). To my knowledge,

however, no study has attempted to manipulate power within the context of a relationship post-infidelity. It is possible that following infidelity the power structure in the relationship becomes solidified due to the significant trauma that befell the romantic relationship. If this is the case, attempts at manipulating power within a romantic relationships post infidelity will prove ineffective⁷.

The overall goal of Studies 3 and 4 was to assess the causal associations among meaning, relationship power, and forgiveness within the context of infidelity in a romantic relationship. Neither of the manipulation tasks successfully influenced their target variable. It is possible that both meaning-making and changes in relationship power may occur soon after the transgression, well before participants have been recruited. That is, prior to being recruited, participants may have already successfully found meaning or experienced some shift in the power dynamic of their relationship. In fact, Davis and colleagues (1998; 2000) suggested that in the event that a person is going to find meaning after a traumatic experience, it tends to occur not long after.

If this is the case, attempts to manipulate these processes after some time has passed are bound to be unsuccessful. However, people may be able to imagine coming to some understanding of infidelity or experiencing shifts in the power dynamic of their relationship when the event has not actually happened to them and subsequently is not as personally relevant. If this is in fact the case, a hypothetical vignette manipulation could yield the previously hypothesized effects on forgiveness. Given this possibility, a fifth

⁷ It should be noted that Study 4 was replicated with a student sample. Again, the manipulation of power was unsuccessful. I then re-ran Study 4 with a different power manipulation (participants completed a power-based sentence completion task or a control sentence completion task). Once again, there was no effect of the manipulation on power.

study was designed using a hypothetical scenario in order to assess these associations in a sample of people who had not explicitly experienced infidelity.

STUDY 5

In this final study, the goal was to manipulate both meaning and relationship power using a hypothetical vignette with participants who may not necessarily have experienced infidelity in their current relationship. It was hypothesized that there would be a main effect of meaning and power. Moreover, it was anticipated that these two variables would interact such that the greatest amount of forgiveness should be among participants in the meaning-found and high-power condition. Specifically, forgiveness would be greatest for people who have been able to find some understanding of the infidelity and feel powerful in their relationship. Conversely, those people who are unable to find purpose in the experience and feel less powerful in their relationship would be the least willing to forgive their partner following infidelity.

Method

Participants and Procedures

A community sample of individuals from the United States ($N = 225$, 142 female, 83 male, 2 unidentified) was recruited again using MTurk. Participants were compensated with US \$0.75 for their participation and ranged in age from 18 to 70 years of age ($M = 36.36$, $SD = 11.82$). Relationship status varied among the participants: 40.1% of the sample reported they were currently married, 26% were dating exclusively, 20.3% were living with their partner, 5.3% were engaged, 4.8% were dating regularly, and 1.3% were dating casually (missing = 2.2%).

Participants signed up through MTurk and were provided with a link to the study hosted on Qualtrics. After providing informed consent (see Appendix A) they were then asked to complete an eligibility item to ensure they were in a romantic relationship. Participants were only allowed to participate if they were in a relationship in order to increase the ecological validity of the scenario. They were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions that varied in terms of the manipulation of both presence of meaning and relationship power (see Appendix D). All participants were asked to imagine that they had discovered their romantic partner was unfaithful and they were told that “The infidelity shattered your beliefs about the nature of this romantic relationship.” Following this, participants read a short paragraph describing that they had found meaning (or not) in the aftermath of the infidelity and were now more powerful (or not) in their relationship. For example, in the presence of meaning and high power condition participants read the following:

“After time and reflection, you have now come to understand how and why the infidelity occurred – you have been able to put your shattered beliefs about the relationship back together again. Moreover, you are now in control of your relationship. You are able to get your partner to be attentive to your needs and listen to your wants and desires.”

Following the manipulation participants were asked to complete questionnaires assessing forgiveness (State Forgiveness scale, $\alpha = .87$; Brown & Phillips, 2005), the manipulations (MLQ Presence: $\alpha = .88$, Steger et al., 2006; Generalized Sense of Power Scale, $\alpha = .91$; Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), as well as various aspects of the hypothetical scenario and how they would feel if this had actually happened in their

relationship (see Appendix C). Embedded among these questionnaires were also two additional single item manipulation checks for presence of meaning (“I have discovered a satisfying understanding/explanation for why the infidelity has happened”) and power (“Please click on the bar below to indicate your power position in your relationship where 1 = Low Power and 7 = High Power”).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Frequency tests indicated that all item scores were within the proper range. Missing values analyses (MVA) revealed that Little’s MCAR test was not significant, $\chi^2(133) = 111.30, p = .92$, thus the data are MCAR. As a result, it was decided that the cases with missing data should remain unchanged. Furthermore, scatterplots indicated that heterogeneity of variance and linearity were not issues. Visual analyses suggested that there were no serious deviations from normality, with the exception of presence of meaning, which appeared slightly negatively skewed. The statistical test of normality (Shapiro-Wilks) suggested deviations from normality (forgiveness, $D(227) = .98, p = .009$; presence of meaning, $D(227) = .95, p < .001$; power, $D(227) = .98, p < .001$), however all skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable range and as such, the data remained untransformed. Finally, no cases were identified as univariate or multivariate outliers ($\chi^2(3) = 16.27, p = .001$). Multicollinearity was also not an issue.

A between-groups ANOVA did not reveal a significant effect of sex on any of the variables of interest (see Table 10). As such, analyses were conducted by collapsing across sex. Means and standard deviations by condition are presented in Table 11.

Table 10.

Means and Standard Deviations of Variables of Interest by Sex

	Males (<i>n</i> = 83)		Females (<i>n</i> = 142)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1 Presence of Meaning	3.28	1.41	2.92	1.61
3 Perceived Power	4.21	1.23	4.16	1.40
4 Forgiveness	3.54	1.32	3.21	1.20

Note: Presence $\eta_p^2 = .01$; Power $\eta_p^2 < .001$, Forgiveness $\eta_p^2 = .02$.

Table 11.

Descriptive Statistics for Presence of Meaning, Perceived Power, and Forgiveness by Condition

	Meaning/ High Power (<i>n</i> = 59)	Meaning/ Low Power (<i>n</i> = 56)	No Meaning/ High Power (<i>n</i> = 55)	No Meaning/ Low Power (<i>n</i> = 57)
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
	Presence of Meaning	3.59 (1.61)	3.43 (1.54)	2.73 (1.37)
Perceived Power	4.70 (1.05)	3.61 (1.38)	4.87 (0.96)	3.58 (1.44)
Forgiveness	3.92 (1.28)	3.34 (1.28)	3.39 (1.15)	2.72 (1.03)

Meaning and Power – Analysis of Variance

Manipulation checks were conducted after the preliminary analyses to examine the effectiveness of the manipulations. Following these manipulation checks, their effect on forgiveness, the dependent variable, was explored.

Meaning manipulation check. A univariate between-groups ANOVA assessed the extent to which the manipulation effectively influenced presence of meaning. The

analysis revealed a significant effect of meaning, $F(1,225) = 22.13, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$. Specifically, participants reported higher presence of meaning ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.57$) when they had read that they were able to come to some understanding of the infidelity compared to those who read that they were unable to ($M = 2.59, SD = 1.37$).

Power manipulation check. The extent to which the manipulation effectively influenced perceived power was assessed using a between-groups ANOVA. The manipulation successfully impacted participant's perceived power in the relationship, $F(1,225) = 52.85, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .19$. That is, participants who read that they had more power in the hypothetical scenario reported higher perceived relationship power ($M = 4.77, SD = 1.01$) compared to those who read that a scenario in which they had low power ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.40$).

Forgiveness. A 2 (meaning: presence versus searching) x 2 (power: high versus low) between-groups ANOVA was conducted on forgiveness. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of meaning, $F(1,223) = 13.25, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$. Specifically, participants reported greater forgiveness when they had read that they were able to come to some understanding of the infidelity ($M = 3.64, SD = 1.31$) compared to those who read they were not able to ($M = 3.05, SD = 1.14$). A significant main effect of power on forgiveness was also found, $F(1,223) = 15.34, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$. When participants read that they held more power in the relationship they also reported greater forgiveness ($M = 3.66, SD = 1.25$) compared to those who were told they had less power ($M = 3.03, SD = 1.20$). However, there was no significant interaction between presence of meaning and power, $F(1, 223) = .08, p = .78$.

Discussion

The purpose of Study 5 was to manipulate both presence of meaning and power in order to assess forgiveness for a hypothetical experience of infidelity. In line with expectations, people were able to imagine changes in meaning and power when the event was not personally relevant. Specifically, manipulation of both meaning and power was successful in the current study. When participants were asked to imagine a scenario in which they experienced a shattering event, infidelity, and had been able to find some purpose in this incident, they reported heightened presence of meaning. Additionally, when participants were told that following the infidelity they were more powerful in their relationship they reported greater perceived power.

The results of this experiment provide further support for the links between presence of meaning and forgiveness, as well as between relationship power and forgiveness following infidelity. Consistent with Study 1-4, when people have been able to find some purpose or understanding in an experience with infidelity, higher levels of forgiveness were reported. In addition, the current study replicates the results from Study 2-4. When people were made to feel powerful in their relationship, they were more willing to forgive infidelity. Interestingly, rather than what was originally proposed no interaction between presence of meaning and power emerged, suggesting these variables operate in a parallel manner.

General Discussion

The experience of infidelity in a committed romantic relationship can be a traumatizing experience similar to other traumas such as illness or loss of a loved one (Glass & Wright, 1997; Gordon & Baucom, 1998; Gordon et al., 2005). Learning that

one's partner has been unfaithful shatters relationship expectations like honesty, trust, and intimate exclusivity, and may leave the victim wondering, "Why me?" Importantly, discovering an answer to this question can have positive benefits for the sufferer (Davis & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001; Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006; Park & Helgeson, 2006; Updegraff et al., 2008). In the context of romantic relationships and the trauma of infidelity, coming to understand or see some purpose in the experience is an important part of successfully rebuilding the shattered relationship and moving towards forgiveness (Gordon & Baucom, 1998; 1999; Gordon et al., 2004). While couples therapy outcomes (Gordon et al., 2004; 2005) suggest that finding meaning after infidelity is an important component of the forgiveness process, there is a lack of research that experimentally examines this relationship. As a result, the primary goal of this research was to assess the impact of being able to find meaning on forgiveness following infidelity.

In Study 1, participants completed a series of online questionnaires that assessed the extent to which they had been able to find meaning after experiencing infidelity and their forgiveness of their partner. Participants were more forgiving of their partner's infidelity when they reported having found some meaning in the event, but this only occurred for those people who were still in the relationship in which the infidelity had occurred. This initial study suggested that there may be a positive effect of finding meaning after infidelity, specifically heightened forgiveness. Because the link between meaning and forgiveness was only found among those who remained in the relationship, it is possible that something about the meaning found among those who have stayed differs from the meaning found by those who end the relationship. For instance, responses to the question, "How have you done so (made sense of or found purpose in the

event)” among people who were no longer with their partner were commonly related to not being meant to be together. In contrast, the most common responses from people who remained with their partner were that they had discussed the infidelity and that it had made their relationship better.

To further examine why being able to find meaning in the infidelity promoted forgiving one’s partner, in Study 2 only people who had previously reported experiencing infidelity and remained in the relationship in which the infidelity occurred were recruited. Previous research (Karremans & Smith, 2010) has shown that when people feel more powerful, they also tend to be more forgiving. As such, it was hypothesized that some aspect of the meaning that a victim finds may be related to a heightened sense of power and control in their relationship going forward and this is what heightens forgiveness. Akin to Study 1, those who found meaning in the experience of infidelity reported heightened forgiveness of their romantic partner. Moreover, the effect of finding meaning on forgiveness was mediated by the extent to which participants perceived that they had power in the relationship. These results suggested that there was some aspect of the meaning being made by victims of infidelity that was impacting a person’s perceptions of their own power in the relationship and as a result, the victim became more willing to forgive their partner, however exactly what is beyond the scope of this research.

The subsequent studies were conducted to experimentally examine the associations among meaning, power, and forgiveness found in the previous study. The goal of Study 3 was to assess whether meaning could be experimentally induced and as a result impact perceived power in the relationship. It was hypothesized that if participants were manipulated to find meaning there would be a heightened feeling of power. As in

Study 2, it was reasoned that the meaning being found by the victim after experiencing infidelity may be that they are not powerless and as a result this restores their sense of control and order in their relationship and allows them to move towards forgiveness.

Participants were recruited if they had experienced infidelity and remained in the relationship with their unfaithful partner. Additionally, people were only eligible to participate if they indicated that they had not yet been able to find meaning.

Unfortunately, the meaning manipulation was not successful. That is, there was no difference between conditions on the extent to which participants reported finding meaning in the infidelity they experienced.

One possible explanation for the ineffective manipulation of meaning is that this process may have already occurred (i.e., many participants may have already found meaning, thus undermining the meaning-making manipulation). In Study 3, on average approximately two years had elapsed since the infidelity had occurred, ranging from a minimum of a few weeks to a maximum of 18 years. As a result, one might expect that during this time many participants may have already found some understanding or purpose from their experience with infidelity. In line with this idea, Davis and colleagues (1998, 2000) have found that if people are going to find meaning it likely occurs shortly after the trauma's occurrence. For instance, Davis and colleagues (2008) found that parents who had experienced the loss of a child from sudden infant death syndrome and reported finding meaning did so within the first few weeks. As well, people who had lost a loved one to a terminal illness and found meaning did so within the first few months (Davis et al., 1998).

Another possible explanation is that recovery from trauma is not a simple process and treatment often occurs over many sessions (Foa et al., 2000). Among the participants who are actually still searching for meaning, a one-time narrative writing manipulation is likely not going to be sufficient in order to help them completely achieve some sense of meaning. Interestingly, the meaning manipulation used did show signs of lessening the search for meaning. That is, people who engaged in the narrative writing process reported lower rates of searching than those in the control condition. Thus, it is possible that the manipulation was able to initiate the meaning-making process for participants who were still searching for meaning and perhaps with more writing sessions meaning may have been found.

Because I was unable to manipulate the independent variable (i.e., meaning) in Study 3, in line with Spencer and colleagues (2005), I decided to pursue a moderation-of-process design for Study 4. Specifically, I moved to manipulating the proposed mediator (i.e., power). The decision to do so was also based on the fact that power has been successfully manipulated in a number of different contexts and with a number of different methods (for example, Galinsky et al., 2003, 2006; Gordon & Chen, 2013; Karremans & Smith, 2010). Like Study 2 and 3, participants in Study 4 were recruited if they had experienced infidelity in their current romantic relationship. It was hypothesized that people in the high power condition would be more willing to forgive their partner than people in the low power and control conditions. Unfortunately, the experiential priming manipulation used to manipulate perceived power within romantic relationships was not effective.

Similar to Study 3, a possible explanation for the failure of the power manipulation in Study 4 might be that, post-infidelity, the power dynamic of people's relationship has solidified either through shifts in power as a consequence of the infidelity or the infidelity caused a solidification of pre-existing power dynamics. If solidification did occur it would be difficult to manipulate people's sense of power in their romantic relationship following infidelity. In line with this suggestion, unpublished research (Squires & Wohl, 2014) has been unsuccessful at manipulating power in people who have remained with their partner after infidelity using different tasks (i.e., a sentence completion task) and populations (i.e., university students⁸).

While the manipulations in Study 3 and 4 were unsuccessful, it is argued that perhaps it is not the case that meaning and power cannot be manipulated, but rather that people may find it easier to imagine shifts in finding meaning and relationship power than to actually achieve these changes in one's own romantic relationship following infidelity. As a result, in Study 5, a different strategy was used in order to explore the possible associations among meaning, power, and forgiveness. Participants were recruited if they were currently in a romantic relationship however they were no longer required to have experienced infidelity in this relationship. Using a hypothetical vignette, both presence of meaning and power were successfully manipulated. This lends support to the notion that the earlier attempts at manipulating these variables failed due to the context in which they were being conducted. In the case of real-life experiences of infidelity, finding meaning appears to be difficult to alter in a single session experiment

⁸ Workers on MTURK seem to be knowledgeable about the use of experiential priming tasks in psychology research (Mueller, Chandler, & Paolacci, 2012) and as a result this manipulation was also assessed with a student population. Similar to Study 4, the experiential priming task was once again ineffective at manipulating relationship power.

and power dynamics have probably already been set in place. However, the manipulation effectively altered both meaning and perceived power and in turn, impacted forgiveness of one's partner for a hypothetical case of infidelity. In the meaning condition people reported greater forgiveness compared to those who read that they were still searching for meaning. Similarly, forgiveness was facilitated for participants in the high power condition compared to the low power condition.

Notably, the final three studies were unable to provide support for the mediation model proposed in Study 2. While both presence of meaning and perceived power were once again associated with heightened forgiveness in all three studies, there was no association between presence of meaning and relationship power. Specifically, in Study 3 and 4 presence of meaning and perceived relationship power were not related and in Study 5 there was no interaction between these two variables on forgiveness. Thus, although meaning and power might influence the forgiveness process, they likely do so independently.

Implications

Taken together, the results of the current studies have a number of important theoretical as well as practical implications. Beginning with theoretical implications, although the proposed mediation of finding meaning on forgiveness via relationship power was not supported in the final three studies, finding meaning and feeling powerful were positively related to forgiveness throughout all five studies. Thus, this research extends the existing literature by providing both correlational and experimental support for the important role of meaning-making and power in the forgiveness process.

While previous research (e.g., Gordon et al., 2004) has suggested that finding meaning is a crucial step in the recovery process for couples therapy following infidelity, the current research experimentally demonstrated that coming to find some purpose in infidelity can lead to increased forgiveness, which is known to aid in relationship repair (Rusbult et al., 2005). Because forgiveness is associated with a multitude of positive outcomes for both the individual (e.g., life satisfaction, Brown & Phillips, 2005; greater self-esteem, Karremans, 2003; reduced physiological stress responses, Witvliet et al., 2001; depressive symptoms, Brown, 2003) and the relationship (e.g., improved constructive communication, Fincham & Beach, 2002; encouraging liking, Darby & Schlenker, 1982; increased closeness and relationship satisfaction, McCullough et al., 1998; Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2005; Ysseldyk & Wohl, 2011) understanding its antecedents adds to the literature by showing a new way (via meaning-making) to effectively promote the forgiveness process after experiencing an interpersonal transgression and thus achieve these positive benefits.

These findings also shed more light on the positive consequences of feeling powerful in one's romantic relationship. Interestingly, power has long been considered as a force that can corrupt people (Kipnis, 1972; 1976). For example, heightened power is associated with increased sexual harassment (Bargh et al., 1995) and commitment of infidelity (Lammers et al., 2011). Recent research, however, has found that power can be a constructive force (e.g., Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Galinsky et al., 2008; Gordon & Chen, 2013; Karremans & Smith, 2010). Specifically, power is related to increased creativity and less conformity (Galinsky et al., 2008), positive affect (Berdahl & Martorana, 2006), and better perspective taking in relationships (Gordon & Chen, 2013).

The current research revealed that in the context of infidelity in romantic relationships feeling powerful can be a constructive force, promoting forgiveness.

Given that power can have both constructive and destructive effects, future research might examine whether there is a limit to the benefit that feeling powerful yields following infidelity. To the point, it is possible that too much perceived power might result in negative relationship behaviours such as using this power to manipulate the unfaithful partner in the future. Interestingly, Strelan, Weick and Vasiljevic (2013) have recently shown that people who are normally powerless, compared to those who are normally powerful, tend to seek more vengeance when they are exposed to incidental experiences of power. In the case of infidelity then, if the victim felt powerless prior to the infidelity and suddenly feels more powerful post-infidelity, this could actually have a detrimental impact on the relationship. For example, this heightened sense of power may lead victims of infidelity to seek revenge and perhaps commit infidelity themselves. Additionally, feeling too powerful may lead the victimized partner to manipulate the perpetrating partner to get his or her way – a process that could ultimately end the relationship due to the power imbalance.

In terms of practical implications for the observed findings, the research reported herein highlights the importance of focusing on meaning in couples therapy. That is, further support is provided for the notion that it is helpful to target meaning-making when working with individuals and/or couples who have experienced infidelity (e.g., Gordon et al., 2005). Indeed, because finding meaning was found to be associated with increased forgiveness throughout all five studies, exploring the meaning-making process during treatment of those who have experienced infidelity may facilitate forgiveness and in turn,

lead to increased positive treatment outcomes. For example, exploring attributions of meaning regarding the infidelity via cognitive therapeutic techniques (see Beck, 2011) may prove useful in helping individuals come to terms with the infidelity by identifying and modifying core beliefs regarding their relationship, and consequently, aid in the forgiveness process. In terms of perceived power, therapists may find it useful to explore partners' perceived level of power in the relationship and the role that this plays in the forgiveness process for people recovering from the experience of infidelity. Given that with power it seems to become easier to forgive, couples therapy may benefit from specifically targeting victims who are feeling powerless in order to help them regain some sense of control in their relationship. While it is well understood that promoting forgiveness is an important component in couples therapy (e.g., Diblasio & Benda, 2008; Gordon et al., 2004), uncovering these factors that influence forgiveness and aid the recovery process can be informative for future therapy techniques.

Importantly, infidelity can be detrimental to the well-being of the victim (Allen & Atkins, 2005; Buunk, 1995; Cano & O'Leary, 2000; Glass & Wright, 1997; Gordon & Baucom, 1998; 1999; Lusteran, 2005) as well as the romantic relationship in which the infidelity took place (Amato & Previti, 2003, Charny & Parnass, 1995; Whisman et al., 1997). As such, the current research helps inform people who have experienced infidelity on factors that may facilitate the forgiveness process if, of course, they have a desire to maintain the relationship. Indeed, results suggest that finding some reason for why the infidelity occurred (i.e., meaning-making) can help move the relationship forward post-infidelity. Moreover, the results of the current research help inform the philandering partner of a possible course of action to making it easier for their partner to forgive.

Specifically, the philanderer should help their partner feel more empowered within the context of the relationship. Doing so should encourage the forgiveness process, particularly among people who stay in the romantic relationship following the act of infidelity.

Limitations

Some limitations of the current research should be noted. First, the studies were all conducted online. Research has indicated that MTurk workers tend to pay less attention to experimental manipulations than people participating in a laboratory environment (Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2012). It is also possible that participants might not be naïve to the manipulation (Mueller, Chandler, & Paolacci, 2012). Consequently, MTurk participant's inattention or pre-existing knowledge of the experiential priming task might have impacted the effectiveness of the manipulation. As a result, the same manipulation was implemented with an online student sample. Once again this methodology was not effective at manipulating relationship power, suggesting that MTurk participant inattention to, or knowledge of the task was not the reason for the unsuccessful manipulation. Moreover, research has shown that the majority of data obtained via MTurk is of high quality (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), and that as long as researchers include questions that gauge participant attention (Goodman et al., 2012) reliable results can be obtained from online samples such as MTurk. Alternatively, the ineffective manipulation could be a result of conducting the research online rather than in the laboratory. The narratives that participants provided were typically short in length, on average only a couple of sentences long, suggesting that participants were not deeply reflecting on that which they were asked to consider and write about.

Accordingly, future research should target an offline sample of participants to assess this further.

It is also important to note that both the meaning and power manipulations may have been ineffective for unforeseen methodological reasons. First and foremost, the necessary instructions might not have provided sufficient information to engage participants in spending a substantial amount of time writing during the power manipulation. While participants were encouraged to "...describe what happened, how you felt...", the instructions did not include any guidelines about how much time to spend doing so. Research by Gordon and Chen (2013) has successfully manipulated relationship power in an online sample; however, their study required a minimum of 3 minutes be spent on the task. Thus, in the case of power, obliging participants to spend more time on the task may result in an effective manipulation. However, it is also possible that it is simply not possible to shift power in relationships where infidelity has occurred as the current results suggest.

Another limitation of the current research is the cross-sectional nature of the design. An hour-long session may not be sufficient for participants to find meaning in such a traumatic life event. The recovery process from traumatic events often requires a great deal of time and therapy can involve deep contemplation of the traumatic event (Foa et al., 2000). In this light, future research might use a longitudinal design to better assess the effect of variance in meaning on forgiveness following infidelity. For example, participants could be asked to engage in several meaning-making oriented writing sessions over the course of weeks or months. Doing so may help move the meaning-making process forward.

It should also be noted that people who seek out therapy tend to be motivated and ready to engage in the process for recovery (Bradford, 2012; Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986). The participants recruited for these studies were not told about the narrative writing task until they read the informed consent, thus they may not have been motivated to engage in the task and deal with their thoughts and feelings. People who are not motivated to move beyond their experience may put less energy and depth of thought in to the writing task and this could have impacted the effectiveness of the meaning manipulation. Future studies could benefit by seeking out participants who are interested in working through their experience with infidelity to further assess the association among meaning and forgiveness.

Importantly, forgiveness is most often regarded as a process that can promote both psychological and physical well-being in the aftermath of interpersonal transgressions (e.g., Brown, 2003; Brown & Phillips, 2005; Karremans et al., 2003; Witvliet et al., 2001; Ysseldyk et al., 2007) and this has been my conceptualization of forgiveness throughout this research. While this is often the case, there are also instances in which forgiveness may not be the best option (e.g., McNulty, 2008; 2011; Squires, Sztainert, Gillen, Caouette, & Wohl, 2012). For instance, spouses that do not express forgiveness for their partner's abusive behaviour tend to see a reduction in both physical and psychological aggression over time, whereas spouses that forgive their partner tend to report no change in the abusive behaviour experienced (McNulty, 2011). As a result, facilitating forgiveness in the aftermath of infidelity may not always be the best option. For example, in the context of the current research, if the victim continually forgives their partner's infidelity, this may signal to them that they can continue to be unfaithful with

no ramifications. Another potential negative outcome is that if the victim comes to some understanding (i.e., finds meaning) by accepting some blame for the infidelity, and as a result forgives, the unfaithful partners may be less motivated to change, given that they are not to blame. Thus, there are instances in which facilitating forgiveness following infidelity is not the ideal route, and future research should take in to account the potential dark side of forgiving.

Lastly, the current research focused only on the victims of infidelity and their own personal path to recovery, but romantic relationships involve more than one person. As such, the recovery process following infidelity also involves both partners and research should aim to include the unfaithful partner in order to assess the perpetrators role and any reparative steps they may have taken.

Conclusion

In monogamous relationships, people have the expectation that their partner is trustworthy, honest, and will remain faithful. Often though, these expectations are violated when one partner commits infidelity. The discovery of a romantic partner's infidelity can be particularly traumatizing for the victim and can severely damage the future vitality of the romantic relationship. As a result, if one's intention is to mend and maintain the relationship it is crucial to know what factors can aid in the recovery process in the aftermath of infidelity. Importantly, forgiveness following transgressions can aid in relationship repair and there are a plethora of valuable individual outcomes that can result from forgiving someone who has done us harm. Because of this, the current research sought to better understand how forgiveness may be encouraged following a relationship betrayal. Across five studies, finding meaning after experiencing infidelity and perceived

relationship power were related to heightened forgiveness. As one recovers from the trauma of infidelity and works to find meaning in the event, he or she becomes better able to forgive their partner and as a result maintain the relationship. Moreover, this research provides additional insight into the relationship between power and forgiveness, and findings point to the need for future research to continue to examine the complexities involved in interpersonal power. Although no interaction was found between meaning and power, these studies have consistently demonstrated that they are both unique paths toward forgiveness following infidelity. While the literature has shown the importance of forgiveness in pro-social behaviours and positive treatment outcomes, the current research builds upon this by highlighting two key factors that aid in the forgiveness process: meaning-making and power. These findings have the potential to inform both couples and therapists regarding the types of interventions that may be valuable when helping individuals process a traumatic event and encouraging forgiveness following infidelity. Given these potential implications, it is important that future research continue to examine meaning and relationship power in order to increase our understanding of their role in forgiveness.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Recruitment Notices

Study 1 & 2**First Email:**

Dear Student,

You recently agreed to be contacted to participate in psychology studies through mass testing. You are eligible to participate in the following study:

Study Name: Romantic Relationships and Transgressions

Abstract: Responding to transgressions in romantic relationships.

Description: This study is completed online. The aim of this study is to assess how individuals respond to infidelity in romantic relationships. You will be asked to complete some standard demographic question and to complete several brief questionnaires concerning the infidelity you experienced. **This study has been approved by the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research (09-002/11-067).**

Duration: 30 minutes

Percentage: 0.25 Percentage (0.5% for Study 2)

Researchers:

Michael Wohl, Email: michael_wohl@carleton.ca

Chris Davis, Email: chris_davis@carleton.ca

Erinn Squires, Email: esquires@connect.carleton.ca

If you are still interested in participating, please contact me and I will forward you the link to the online study.

Thank you!

Erinn Squires

Second Email:

Dear Student,

You recently agreed to participate in the following study: Romantic Relationships and Transgressions. You have now been manually added to participate through the SONA system. Please follow the link provided in SONA to complete this study. If you cannot complete the study by the deadline of the timeslot, please notify me and I will extend the deadline.

Thank you in advance for participating!

Erinn Squires

Study 3 & 4**MTurk Recruitment Announcement:****Romantic Relationship Infidelity (45mins/\$0.50)**

The study involves describing a period of time in your relationship and filling out questionnaires about your current romantic relationship. Specifically, we will be asking you to report on your thoughts and feelings about your experience as the victim of infidelity. You will also be asked to report on the current state of your romantic relationship. The survey will be conducted on-line.

Your participation as well as your responses will be strictly confidential. Only researchers associated with the research project will know you participated in the study and no one will know how you responded to the questions asked.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Resident of the United States of America.
2. Must have been the victim of infidelity in your current romantic relationship. Infidelity is defined as “a romantic, sexual, or emotional relationship with someone other than the primary partner that was kept secret from that partner and that would have been unacceptable to the partner if s/he had known”.
3. Must currently be trying to come to an understanding of why the infidelity occurred.

This study takes about 45 minutes, and upon completion you will receive US\$0.50 for your participation.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board (Reference #12-183).

Study 5

MTurk Recruitment Announcement:

Romantic Relationships and Transgressions (45mins/\$0.75)

The study involves reading a scenario about experiencing infidelity and filling out questionnaires about this scenario. Specifically, we will be asking you to report on your thoughts and feelings about being the victim of infidelity. The survey will be conducted on-line.

Your participation as well as your responses will be strictly confidential. Only researchers associated with the research project will know you participated in the study and no one will know how you responded to the questions asked.

Eligibility Requirements:

1. Resident of the United States of America.
2. Must currently be in a romantic relationship.

This study takes about 45 minutes, and upon completion you will receive US\$0.75 for your participation.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board (Reference #14-049).

Appendix B. Informed Consents

Study 1

The purpose of an informed consent is to ensure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent must provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study.

Study Title: Romantic Relationships and Transgressions

Research Personnel:

Erinn Squires (Principal Investigator, esquires@connect.carleton.ca)

Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl (Faculty Investigator, 520-2600, ext. 2908)

Dr. Chris G. Davis (Faculty Investigator, 520-2600, ext. 2251)

If you have any ethical concerns about how this study was conducted please contact Dr. M. Sénéchal (Chair of the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research, 520-2600, ext. 1155) or Dr. J. Mantler (Chair of the Department of Psychology at Carleton University, 520-2600, ext. 4173). This study has been approved by the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research.

Purpose and Task Requirements: The aim of this study is to assess how individuals respond to infidelity in romantic relationships. This study is completed online. You will be asked to complete some standard demographic questions and to complete several brief questionnaires concerning the infidelity you experienced. By participating in this study you are greatly assisting us to obtain basic knowledge about interpersonal issues. Be assured that your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Completion of this study should not take more than 30 minutes of your time and you will be given .25% toward your final grade in Introductory Psychology.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: We can anticipate no physical discomfort to you as a result of your participation in this study. You may, however, experience some stress when thinking about the infidelity you experienced. Your participation is solicited but is completely voluntary.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not complete certain questions or to withdraw with no penalty whatsoever.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this experiment are confidential. All data are coded such that your name and student number are used only for the purpose of awarding you course credit, but will not be associated with the data thereafter. The coded data are made available only to the researchers associated with this project.

Validity: Please complete all questionnaires truthfully. In order to guarantee the validity of the data, we will be performing validity checks. If your responses are not deemed valid, your credit/gift card will not be issued. Thank you.

I have read the above description of the study. The data collected will be used in research publications and/or for teaching purposes. By selecting "I CONSENT", this indicates that I agree to participate in the study, and this in no way constitutes a waiver of my rights.

By selecting "I CONSENT" we are assuming that you have read the above information and have granted consent to participate in this study.

Please indicate your response:

- I consent
- I do not consent

Study 2

The purpose of an informed consent is to ensure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. An informed consent must provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study.

Study Title: Infidelity in Romantic Relationships

Research Personnel:

Erinn Squires (Principal Investigator, esquires@connect.carleton.ca)

Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl (Faculty Investigator, 520-2600, ext. 2908)

Dr. Chris G. Davis (Faculty Investigator, 520-2600, ext. 2251)

If you have any ethical concerns about how this study was conducted please contact Dr. M. Sénéchal (Chair of the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research, 520-2600, ext. 1155) or Dr. J. Mantler (Chair of the Department of Psychology at Carleton University, 520-2600, ext. 4173).

This study has been approved by the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research (#11-067).

Purpose and Task Requirements: The aim of this study is to assess how individuals respond to infidelity in romantic relationships. This study is completed online. You will be asked to complete some standard demographic questions and several brief questionnaires concerning the infidelity you experienced. By participating in this study you are greatly assisting us in obtaining basic knowledge about interpersonal issues. Be assured that your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Completion of this study should not take more than 45 minutes of your time and you will be given .5% toward your final grade in Introductory Psychology or your name will be entered into a draw for 1 of 3 \$50.00 gift cards, depending on which you choose.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: We anticipate no physical discomfort to you as a result of your participation in this study. You may, however, experience some stress when thinking about the infidelity you experienced. Your participation is solicited but is completely voluntary.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not complete certain questions or to withdraw with no penalty whatsoever.

Confidentiality: The data collected in this experiment are confidential. All data are coded such that your name and student number are used only for the purpose of awarding you course credit, but will not be associated with the data thereafter. The coded data are made available only to the researchers associated with this project. Your personal information will be destroyed once credit is granted or when the draws are complete unless you give us permission, at the end of the study, to recontact you. If you give us

permission to contact you again, then your personal information will be kept for two years.

Validity: Please complete all questionnaires truthfully. In order to guarantee the validity of the data, we will be performing validity checks. Thank you.

I have read the above description of the study. The data collected will be used in research publications and/or for teaching purposes. By selecting "I CONSENT", this indicates that I agree to participate in the study, and this in no way constitutes a waiver of my rights.

By selecting "I CONSENT" we are assuming that you have read the above information and have granted consent to participate in this study.

Please indicate your response:

- I consent
- I do not consent

Study 3 & 4

The purpose of an informed consent is to insure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent must provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board (Reference #12-183).

Present study: Romantic Relationships and Transgressions

Research Personnel:

Erinn Squires (Principal Investigator, erinnsquires@cmail.carleton.ca)

Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl (Faculty Investigator, 520-2600, ext. 2908)

Dr. Chris G. Davis (Faculty Investigator, 520-2600, ext. 2251)

Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact Dr. Avi Parush, Chair, Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board (avi_parush@carleton.ca; (613) 520-2600 ext. 6026). For any other concerns, please contact, Dr. Anne Bowker (Chair, Department of Psychology, 1 (613) 520-2600, ext. 8218, psychchair@carleton.ca).

Purpose and Task Requirements: The aim of this study is to assess how individuals respond to infidelity in romantic relationships. This study is completed online. You will be asked to complete some standard demographic questions and to complete several brief questionnaires concerning the infidelity you experienced. By participating in this study you are greatly assisting us to obtain basic knowledge about interpersonal issues. Be assured that your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Completion of this study should not take more than 20 minutes of your time. We are offering eligible participants who complete the study US \$0.50 for participating. You will be given a completion code at the end of the survey.

Duration and Locale: The survey will be administered on-line and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: We can anticipate no physical discomfort to you as a result of your participation in this study. You may, however, experience some stress when thinking about the infidelity you experienced. These emotions are sometimes necessary in order to research or study relationships between somewhat sensitive variables. If you do experience any distress or discomfort, you may wish to contact one of the helplines nearest to your location. A list of helplines by town and state can be found at <http://www.befrienders.org/helplines/helplines.asp?c2=USA>. A copy of this information will be provided to you in the debriefing sheet following the questionnaires.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not complete certain questions or to withdraw with

no penalty whatsoever. To withdraw at any point, simply click the “withdraw” option at the bottom of each page.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this experiment are confidential. All data will be coded such that your name is not connected with the survey response. The coded data are made available only to the researchers associated with this project. Your personal information will be destroyed once credit is granted unless you give us permission, at the end of the study, to re-contact you. If you give us permission to contact you again, then your personal information will be kept for two years.

We collect data through the software Qualtrics, which uses servers with multiple layers of security to protect the privacy of the data (e.g., encrypted websites and pass-word protected storage). Please note that Qualtrics is hosted by a server located in the USA. The United States Patriot Act permits U.S. law enforcement officials, for the purpose of an anti-terrorism investigation, to seek a court order that allows access to the personal records of any person without that person's knowledge. In view of this we cannot absolutely guarantee the full confidentiality and anonymity of your data. With your consent to participate in this study you acknowledge this.

By selecting "I consent" you agree to the following terms:

I have read the above form and understand the conditions of my participation. My participation in this study is voluntary, and if for any reason, at any time, I wish to leave the experiment I may do so without having to give an explanation and with no penalty whatsoever. Furthermore, I am also aware that my participation as well as the data gathered in this study is confidential. Selecting "I consent" below and clicking ‘Next’ indicates that I agree to participate in the study.

- I consent
- I do not consent

Study 5

The purpose of an informed consent is to ensure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent must provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study.

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board (Reference #14-049).

Present Study: Romantic Relationships and Transgressions

Research Personnel:

Erinn Squires (Principal Investigator, erinnsquires@cmail.carleton.ca)

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Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact Dr. Shelley Brown, Chair, Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board (shelley.brown@carleton.ca; (613) 520-2600 ext. 1505). For any other concerns, please contact, Dr. Anne Bowker (Chair, Department of Psychology, 1 (613) 520-2600, ext. 8218, psychchair@carleton.ca).

Purpose and Task Requirements: The aim of this study is to assess how individuals respond to being the victim of infidelity in romantic relationships. This study is completed online. You will be asked to complete some standard demographic questions and to complete several questionnaires concerning a scenario about being the victim of infidelity that you will read. You will also be asked to report your thoughts and feelings about this scenario. This study has been approved by the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research (#14-049). By participating in this study you are greatly assisting us to obtain basic knowledge about interpersonal issues. Be assured that your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Completion of this study should not take more than 45 minutes of your time. We are offering eligible participants who complete the study US \$0.75 for participating.

Duration and Locale: The survey will be administered on-line and should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Potential Risk/Discomfort: We can anticipate no physical discomfort to you as a result of your participation in this study. You may, however, experience some stress when thinking about experiencing infidelity. These emotions are sometimes necessary in order

to research or study relationships between somewhat sensitive variables. If you do experience any distress or discomfort, you may wish to contact one of the helplines nearest to your location. A list of helplines by town and state can be found at <http://www.befrienders.org/helplines/helplines.asp?c2=USA>. A copy of this information will be provided to you in the debriefing sheet following the questionnaires.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not complete certain questions or to withdraw with no penalty whatsoever. To withdraw at any point, simply click the “proceed” button at the bottom of each page until you reach the debriefing.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this experiment are confidential. MTurk worker IDs will only be collected for the purposes of distributing compensation and will not be associated with survey responses. Further, worker IDs will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team and will be removed from the data set. We collect data through the software Qualtrics, which uses servers with multiple layers of security to protect the privacy of the data (e.g., encrypted websites and password protected storage). Please note that Qualtrics is hosted by a server located in the USA. The United States Patriot Act permits U.S. law enforcement officials, for the purpose of an anti-terrorism investigation, to seek a court order that allows access to the personal records of any person without that person's knowledge. In view of this we cannot absolutely guarantee the full confidentiality and anonymity of your data. With your consent to participate in this study you acknowledge this.

I have read the above form and understand the conditions of my participation. My participation in this study is voluntary, and if for any reason, at any time, I wish to leave the experiment I may do so without having to give an explanation and with no penalty whatsoever. Furthermore, I am also aware that my participation as well as the data gathered in this study is confidential.

Checking I consent below and clicking ‘Next’ indicates that I consent to participate in the study.

- I consent
- I do not consent

Appendix C. Measures

Eligibility Assessment

1. Some people who have experienced infidelity find themselves searching to make sense of or find some understanding in the event. Have you ever done this since learning of the infidelity?
Yes (they will be sent to the next question)
No (they are not eligible and will be sent to the appropriate page)
2. Have you been able to make sense of or find some understanding in the infidelity?
Yes (they are not eligible and will be sent to the appropriate page)
No (they will be sent to the next question)
3. You previously identified yourself as having experienced infidelity in your current romantic relationship, are you still in this relationship?
Yes (they will be sent to the questionnaire)
No (they are not eligible and will be sent to the appropriate page)

Infidelity Assessment Items

***included in Studies 1-4 (two different versions with wording changed for current or previous relationship in Study 1)**

1. You previously identified yourself as having experienced infidelity in your current romantic relationship, is this correct?

Yes No

If yes, please continue on with the following study.

If no, please contact the researcher.

2. Is your relationship with someone of the opposite sex / same sex?

Now could you answer a few questions about this event?

3. How long ago did the infidelity happen? _____ (weeks/ months / years)
 - a. How long had you been dating when this happened? _____ (weeks/ months / years)

4. Would you consider the unfaithful behaviour to be a(n) (please choose one):
 - a. sexual betrayal
 - b. emotional betrayal
 - c. sexual & emotional betrayal

5. Please describe what happened? Please be as detailed as possible what happened (i.e., how you found out, the events that followed, how you felt after learning about the infidelity etc.)

6. How long have you been in this relationship? _____ (weeks/ months / years)

7. After infidelity, people often feel that there was someone or something that caused it. What/who do you think was the cause of this event?

8. Here is a list of common questions people have about the causes of the infidelity. Using the following scale, please describe the extent to which you agree or disagree with these factors in your case.

1. NOT AT ALL	2. A LITTLE	3. SOMEWH AT	4. QUITE A BIT	5. A GREAT DEAL
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8a ___ "The infidelity was due to something about me"

8b ___ "The infidelity was due to something about my partner"

8c ___ "The infidelity was due to chance"

8d ___ "The infidelity was due to external factors (e.g., the *other* person, intoxication)"

9. With respect to the infidelity, have you ever asked yourself, "Why me?"

1. YES



0. NO

→ GO TO 12

9a. What, if any, answer did you come up with? If you haven't come up with an answer, please say so explicitly. If you have come up with an answer, please describe that answer in as much detail as possible.

- 10 Have you had these kinds of thoughts during the past two weeks?

1. NO, NEVER	2. YES, BUT RAREL	3. YES, SOMETIME S	4. YES, OFTEN	5. YES, ALL THE TIME
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Y

11 Are these thoughts upsetting to you?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOMEWH AT	QUITE A BIT	A GREAT DEAL

12. Some people who have experienced infidelity find themselves **searching to make sense of or find some purpose** in the event. Have you ever done this **since learning of the infidelity**?

1. NO, NEVE R	2. YES, BUT RARELY	3. YES, SOMETIME S	4. YES, OFTEN	5. YES, ALL THE TIME
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GO TO
14



12a. Have you done this during the past two weeks?

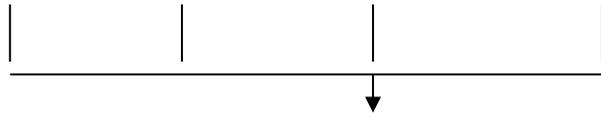
1. NO, NEVE R	2. YES, BUT RARELY	3. YES, SOMETIME S	4. YES, OFTEN	5. YES, ALL THE TIME
------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------	----------------------------

13. How **important** is it to you to make some sense of or find some purpose in this event?

1. NOT AT ALL	2. A LITTLE	3. SOME- WHAT	4. QUITE IMPORTAN T	5. VERY IMPORTANT
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14. Have you been able to **make any sense** or find any purpose in this event?

1. NO, NOT AT ALL	2. YES, A LITTLE	3. YES, SOME	4. YES, QUITE A BIT	5. YES, A GREAT DEAL
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14a Can you tell me more about why you feel that way? Please be detailed.

14b How painful has it been for you not to have made sense of or found any purpose in this infidelity?

1. NOT AT ALL

2. JUST A LITTLE

3. SOME

4. QUITE A BIT

5. A GREAT DEAL

GO TO 15

14c How have you done so? Please describe in detail.

14d How comforted are you by this explanation?

1. NOT AT ALL

2. JUST A LITTLE

3. SOME

4. QUITE A BIT

5. A GREAT DEAL

GO TO 15

15. Sometimes people who have experienced infidelity find some positive aspect in the experience. For example, some people feel they learned something about themselves or others. Have you found anything positive in this experience?

N : Yes : Explain:

o : 1 : _____

16. How did you find out about the infidelity? (please check one)
- a. Your partner told you _____
 - b. You heard from someone else _____
 - c. You found out on your own (e.g., found incriminating emails) _____

Please briefly describe how you learned about your partner’s infidelity:

17. Have you committed infidelity within your current romantic relationship? YES/ NO

18. Did you commit infidelity as retribution (i.e., to get back at your partner for committing infidelity)? YES / NO

19. Please indicate your willingness to commit infidelity:

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

20. I feel betrayed by my partner?
strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

21. I feel victimized by my partner?
strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

22. My partner’s act of infidelity created a serious conflict in our relationship.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

23. My partner was wrong for committing infidelity.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

24. I was hurt by my partner’s act of infidelity.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 strongly agree

25. Please rate how severe you think your partner’s act of infidelity was:

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

***additional assessment items added to Studies 3 and 4**

1. Was an apology received for the infidelity? YES/NO
If No Is Selected, Then skip to question 3

2. How sincere was this apology?

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

3. Please indicate how sorry you believe your partner was:

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

4. How serious of a transgression would you say this was? (i.e., how badly has this affected your relationship)?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not serious at all			Somewhat serious			Extremely serious

5. How hurt were you by this situation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not hurt at all			Somewhat hurt			Extremely hurt

6. My impression of my partner has changed (in a negative direction) since I found out about his/her infidelity.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Completely	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Completely

7. I thought my partner might have been cheating even before I found out the truth.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Completely	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Completely

			Disagree			
--	--	--	----------	--	--	--

8. How surprised were you by your partner's infidelity?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all surprised			Somewhat surprised			Extremely surprised

9. Since learning of my partner's infidelity, I see his/her character in a more negative light.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Completely	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Completely

10. I felt angry when I learned about my partner's infidelity.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Completely	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Completely

11. Please rate how severe you think your partner's act of infidelity was:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all Severe			Somewhat Severe			Extremely Severe

12. I think less of my partner now that I know that he/she has cheated on me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

13. Before I discovered my partner's infidelity, I had suspicions he/she was cheating.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Completely	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Completely

14. Please indicate how remorseful you believe your partner was:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not remorseful			Somewhat remorseful			Extremely remorseful

15. Since learning of the infidelity, I no longer see my partner as a good person overall.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Completely	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Completely

Meaning-Making

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006)
(adapted to fit infidelity)

***measured in Studies 1, 2, and 4**

***manipulation check in Studies 3 and 5**

Please think back upon the infidelity you experienced. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Absolutely Untrue	Mostly Untrue	Somewhat Untrue	Can't Say True or False	Somewhat True	Mostly True	Absolutely True

1. I am looking for something that makes this event feel meaningful.
2. I am searching for meaning in the event.
3. I am seeking a purpose for what occurred.
4. I understand why this happened.
5. I have discovered a satisfying explanation for why this has happened to me.
6. I have found meaning/purpose in my experience with infidelity.

Relationship Power

Generalized Sense of Power Scale (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006)

***measured in Studies 2 and 3**

***manipulation check in Studies 4 and 5**

In rating each of the items below, please use the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree a Little	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree a Little	Agree	Agree Strongly

In my relationship with my partner . . .

1. I can get him/her to listen to what I say.
2. My wishes do not carry much weight.
3. I can get him/her to do what I want.
4. Even if I voice them, my views have little sway.
5. I think I have a great deal of power.
6. My ideas and opinions are often ignored.
7. Even when I try, I am not able to get my way.
8. If I want to, I get to make the decisions.

Attributions for Partner’s Infidelity

Relationship Attribution Measure (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992)

***measured in Study 2**

With your partners infidelity in mind, read the statements that follow. Please circle the number that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement, using the rating scale below:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Strongly

YOUR PARTNER WAS UNFAITHFUL:

My partner’s infidelity was due to something about him/her (e.g., the type of person he/she is, his/her mood)..... 1 2 3 4 5 6

My partner’s infidelity was due to something about me (e.g., the type of person I am, the mood I was in)..... 1 2 3 4 5 6

The reason my partner was unfaithful is not likely to change 1 2 3 4 5 6

The reason my partner was unfaithful is something that affects other areas of our relationship..... 1 2 3 4 5 6

My partner was unfaithful on purpose rather than unintentionally..... 1 2 3 4 5 6

My partner’s unfaithful behavior was motivated by selfish rather than unselfish concerns.....1 2 3 4 5 6

My partner deserves to be blamed for his/her unfaithful behaviour 1 2 3 4 5 6

Forgiveness

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale (TRIM-18; McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006).

***measured in Study 1**

For the following questions, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person who hurt you; that is, we want to know how you feel about that person right now. Next to each item, circle the number that best describes your current thoughts and feelings.

1	2	3	4	6
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

1. I'll make him/her pay.
2. I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible.
3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her.
4. I wish that something bad would happen to him/her.
5. I am living as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around.
6. I want us to bury the hatchet and move forward with our relationship.
7. I don't trust him/her.
8. Despite what he/she did, I want us to have a positive relationship again.
9. I want him/her to get what he/she deserves.
10. I am finding it difficult to act warmly toward him/her.
11. I am avoiding him/her.
12. Although he/she hurt me, I am putting the hurts aside so we can resume our relationship.
13. I'm going to get even.
14. I have given up my hurt and resentment.
15. I cut off the relationship with him/her.
16. I have released my anger so I can work on restoring our relationship to health.
17. I want to see him/her hurt and miserable.
18. I withdraw from him/her.

State Forgiveness Scale (Brown & Philips, 2005)

***measured in Study 2, 3, 4 and 5**

Directions: Please read each statement carefully and consider how well it applies to you. On the seven point scale below each item, indicate your reaction, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

1. I have forgiven this person.
2. I feel angry toward this person.
3. Even though his/her actions hurt me, I do not feel ill-will toward him/her.
4. I dislike this person.
5. I feel warmly toward this person.
6. I hope this person gets what's coming to them for what they did to me.
7. If I saw this person again, I would try to avoid interacting with him/her.

Demographics***included in all studies**

Age _____

Sex _____

Relationship status:

What is your current dating status? (please place a check beside the one that currently applies to you)

- am in a relationship
 dating casually
 dating fairly regularly
 dating exclusively
 living together
 engaged
 married

 have recently broken up from a relationship

- I broke it off
 My partner broke it off
 It was mutual

If you are **currently** in a relationship, how long have you been with that person?
 weeks OR months OR years
What is your ethnic/racial background? (Please check one)

- Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
 South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan)
 South East Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian)
 Arab/West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan)
 Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali)
 Latin American/Hispanic
 Aboriginal
 White/Euro-Caucasian
 Other (Please specify): _____

What is your religious affiliation? (Please check one)

- None—Atheist (e.g., belief that there is NO God)
 None—Agnostic (e.g., belief that the existence of God cannot be known)

Protestant (e.g., United, Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Mennonite, “Christian”)

Catholic (e.g., Roman Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic)

Jewish

Muslim

Buddhist

Hindu

Sikh

Bahá’í

Other (Please specify): _____

What is your first language? (Please check one)

English

French

Other (Please indicate): _____

*If English is your **second** language, at what level is your use of the English language?* (please check one)

Basic (e.g., I can understand someone when they say hello or say thank you, and I am able to say hello and say thank you)

Minimum social skills (e.g., I can understand and ask simple questions)

Basic social skills (e.g., I can understand and respond if someone speaks slowly to me)

Moderate social skills (e.g., I can understand and respond when people talk at a normal speed to each other)

Native social skills (e.g., I can understand everything and talk about anything)

Positive Relationships

This is included in each study in order to eliminate the possible perseverence effects of thinking about negative instances within a romantic relationship. Participants write brief paragraphs about positive relationships they have within their life at end of the questionnaire battery. This is intended to promote thinking about positive aspects of relationships, as well as other positive influences on one's life before finishing the study, instead of continuing to ruminate on transgressions within romantic relationships

Although we have asked you to reflect on the negative aspects of one of your relationships, there are often many positive experiences shared within this relationship or within others personal relationships. Please take a few moments to think about the most positive experience you have had in your current romantic relationship or in a prior romantic relationship if you are not currently in one.

Extra Power Manipulation Checks (Lammers, Stoker, & Stapel, 2010; Lammers et al., 2011)

***included in Study 4 and 5**

Please indicate on this line your power position in your relationship (by placing a tick on the line with your mouse).

High Power



Low Power

Directions: Please read each statement carefully and consider how well it applies to you. On the seven point scale below each item, indicate your reaction, from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree:

1. I feel influential in my romantic relationship
2. I feel powerful in my romantic relationship
3. I don't feel like I have very much control in my relationship

Appendix D. Manipulations

Study 3 – Meaning Manipulation

Narrative Writing Task

Now we would like you to write about your experience with infidelity. We know that you have already described what happened, but now we want you to go in to depth and write about your deepest thoughts and feelings regarding the experience. Ideally, whatever you write should deal with things that you have not talked about with others in detail. Your name will not be connected, in any way, with what you write, and your writing will be regarded with strict confidentiality.

Narrative Writing Task with Positive Aspect

Now we would like you to write about your experience with infidelity. We know that you have already described what happened, but now we want you to go in to depth and write about your deepest thoughts and feelings regarding the experience. Ideally, whatever you write should deal with things that you have not talked about with others in detail. Your name will not be connected, in any way, with what you write, and your writing will be regarded with strict confidentiality.

People who have experienced infidelity often report that they have found some understanding or purpose or learned something about themselves as a result. For example, they report finding some positive aspect in the experience. Consider the events that followed your experience with infidelity. Now we would like you to write down the most significant way in which you think you have benefited from the experience or some positive things that you have learned from the experience.

Control

Now we would like you to write about a specific topic. It is important for you to know that your name will not be connected, in any way, with what you write, and your writing will be regarded with strict confidentiality. The topic for you to write about is: Describe in detail what you do on a typical Monday.

Study 4 – Power Manipulation**High Power Condition**

Please recall a particular incident in which you felt empowered in your relationship. By empowered, we mean a situation in which you had control or the authority in the relationship, thus enabling you to get what you wanted.

Please describe this situation in which you had power and control—what happened, how you felt, etc.

Low Power Condition

Please recall a particular incident in which you felt you were NOT empowered in your relationship. By NOT being empowered, we mean a situation in which you did not have control or the authority in the relationship, thus you were not able to get what you wanted.

Please describe this situation in which you did not have power and control—what happened, how you felt, etc.

Control Condition

Please recall your day yesterday.

Please describe your experiences yesterday—what happened, how you felt, etc.

Study 4a (2nd power manipulation)

The following questions are a cognitive test aimed to measure linguistic cognitive abilities. We will measure the time it takes you to complete this task. Unscramble the groups of words to make a FOUR word phrase or sentence, dropping one irrelevant word.

Please write the sentence in the space provided.

For example: high/ winds/ the/ flies/ plane ---> the plane flies high

High Power Condition

1. retrace good have holiday a
2. wielding I over power them
3. shoes give replace old the
4. always dominant as feeling I
5. send I over it mailed
6. boss am it I the
7. more paper once do it
8. unquestioned for is authority my
9. saw hammer he the train
10. influenced send all them I

Low Power Condition

1. retrace good have holiday a
2. was they over powerless them
3. shoes give replace old the
4. always submissive as feeling I
5. send I over it mailed
6. subordinate am it I the
7. more paper once do it
8. others dependent on fully my
9. saw hammer he the train
10. compliant all them to it

Control Condition

1. retrace good have holiday a
2. fall was worried she always
3. shoes give replace old the
4. yesterday it finished track he
5. send I over it mailed
6. predictable he shoes his tied
7. more paper it once do
8. you held pencil building the
9. saw hammer he the train
10. on printer grass she walked

Study 5 – Hypothetical Scenario

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY AND TRY TO PLACE YOURSELF IN THE SITUATION

In the following paragraph, we will describe a situation and ask you to imagine that it happened to you in your current romantic relationship. Thereafter, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that assesses how you would feel if this had happened to you in your current romantic relationship.

Found Meaning/High Power Condition

Imagine you discovered that your romantic partner was unfaithful. The infidelity shattered your beliefs about the nature of this romantic relationship. After time and reflection, you have now come to understand how and why the infidelity occurred – you have been able to put your shattered beliefs about the relationship back together again. Moreover, you are now in control of your relationship. You are able to get your partner to be attentive to your needs and listen to your wants and desires.

Did not Find Meaning/High Power Condition

Imagine you discovered that your romantic partner was unfaithful. The infidelity shattered your beliefs about the nature of this romantic relationship. After time and reflection, you still do not understand how and why the infidelity occurred – you have been unable to put your shattered beliefs about the relationship back together again. However, you are now in control of your relationship. You are able to get your partner to be attentive to your needs and listen to your wants and desires.

Found Meaning/Low Power Condition

Imagine you discovered that your romantic partner was unfaithful. The infidelity shattered your beliefs about the nature of this romantic relationship. After time and reflection, you have now come to understand how and why the infidelity occurred – you have been able to put your shattered beliefs about the relationship back together again. However, you are not in control of your relationship. You are unable to get your partner to be attentive to your needs and listen to your wants and desires.

Did not Find Meaning/Low Power Condition

Imagine you discovered that your romantic partner was unfaithful. The infidelity shattered your beliefs about the nature of this romantic relationship. After time and reflection, you still do not understand how and why the infidelity occurred – you have been unable to put your shattered beliefs about the relationship back together again. Moreover, you are not in control of your relationship. You are unable to get your partner to be attentive to your needs and listen to your wants and desires.

Appendix E. Debriefings

Study 1 & 2

Thank you for participating in this study! This post-survey information is provided to inform you of the exact nature of the research you just participated in.

What are we trying to learn in this research?

Past research has shown that after a traumatic event most people search for an explanation or understanding of the event. Specifically, individuals seek answers to self-generated questions about why the event occurred, what could have been done to prevent it, and what role they played. This process of searching and finding meaning is associated with decreases in distress and depression following traumatic events.

Research has yet to assess whether the process of meaning-making affects willingness to forgive. It is expected that forgiveness is likely to arise when meaning has been found following trauma within a romantic relationship (i.e., infidelity). The purpose of this research is to determine if people who search and find meaning in the infidelity experienced will be more likely to express forgiveness. We are also interested in determining if there are other factors involved that may influence this relationship.

In our study, all participants were asked to describe in detail, the infidelity they experienced in a past or current relationship and answer questions related to this experience. This is in order for us to examine the differences in meaning-making on the forgiveness process. We wanted to see if forgiveness would vary based on whether or not people sought meaning and found it, sought meaning and did not find it, or did not search for meaning at all. We were also interested in how other factors, such as relationship satisfaction, perceived alternative partner choices, and personal coping strategies may impact this relationship.

Describing personal experiences.

If you are feeling distressed from discussing this personal experience and would like to talk to someone about the situation you have experienced, there are a number of highly qualified people at Health Services who can help and you might wish to contact the Carleton University Health and Counseling Services (613-520-6674; www.carleton.ca/health/). Furthermore, revenge motivations are often experienced following infidelity but letting go of these is important for the forgiveness process. If recalling these thoughts of revenge are causing you additional distress, we again recommend that you contact Carleton University Health and Counseling Services.

What are our hypotheses and predictions?

It is expected that people who search and find meaning in the infidelity experienced will be especially likely to express forgiveness. Those who report never searching for meaning will be relatively less forgiving, but still report greater levels of forgiveness than those who have searched for meaning and not found it.

Why is this important to scientists or the general public?

This research will contribute to psychologists' knowledge and understanding of intimate relationships and infidelity. Specifically, findings from this study will shed light on how people react to transgressions committed against them by a romantic partner, and what factors affect their willingness to forgive in these situations.

What if I have questions later?

If you have any other questions or comments about this research, please feel free to contact Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl (michael_wohl@carleton.ca), Dr. Chris G. Davis (chris_davis@carleton.ca), or Erinn Squires (esquires@connect.carleton.ca).

If you have any ethical concerns about how this study was conducted please contact Dr. M. Sénéchal (Chair of the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research, 520-2600, ext. 1155) or Dr. J. Mantler (Chair of the Department of Psychology at Carleton University, 520-2600, ext. 4173).

Is there anything that I can do if I found this experiment to be emotionally draining?

We realize that describing your personal experience or some of the questions about this may have produced feelings of anxiety. If, as a result of participating in this study, you are currently feeling any anxiety or distress, or if you experience any such feelings in the future, we suggest that you make an appointment with the Carleton University Health and Counseling Services, 613-520-6674, www.carleton.ca/health.

Thank you for participating in this study! We greatly appreciate your participation, but we ask that you refrain from discussing this study with potential participants (i.e., other PSYC 1001/1002 students) because their responses may be influenced.

Study 3 & 4

Thank you for participating in this study! This post-survey information is provided to inform you of the exact nature of the research you just participated in.

What are we trying to learn in this research?

Past research has shown that after a traumatic event most people search for an explanation or understanding of the event. Specifically, individuals seek answers to self-generated questions about why the event occurred, what could have been done to prevent it, and what role they played. This process of searching and finding meaning is associated with decreases in distress and depression following traumatic events.

In a previous study, we found that the philandering partner was forgiven to the extent that meaning had been found. However, this effect was moderated by relationship status. Finding meaning in the transgression only facilitated forgiveness among those who remained in the relationship. Recent research has also revealed that power—one's perceived ability to control outcomes and resources within the relationship—plays an important role in interpersonal forgiveness. The purpose of this research is to further explore these associations.

In this research, we are trying to learn about the relation between finding meaning and forgiveness. We would like to find out about the role that perceived power plays in the relationship between finding meaning and willingness to forgive a partner for infidelity.

Why is this important to scientists or the general public?

This research will contribute to psychologists' knowledge and understanding of intimate relationships and infidelity. Specifically, findings from this study will shed light on how people react to transgressions committed against them by a romantic partner, and what factors affect their willingness to forgive in these situations. Ways of maintaining a healthy relationship may be aided by the outcomes of this study.

What are our hypotheses and predictions?

We predict that finding meaning will be associated with increased willingness to forgive one's partner for infidelity and that this will be because finding meaning leads to heightened perceptions of power and control in the relationship.

Why did I have to write about a positive experience (or powerful experience)?

In this study, we wanted to help our participants find meaning (or come to an understanding) of their experience with infidelity in order to test our hypothesis that finding meaning promotes willingness to forgive.

We would like you to know that sometimes people who take part in psychology studies continue to experience emotions that were manipulated in the study, even though they

have been told that we made them feel a certain way (e.g., more or less power in your relationship). Psychologists have found that making participants aware that this can occur helps to eliminate perseverance of the manipulated emotions. In this study, some participants might continue to experience feelings of low/high power, when they were not experiencing this before the study. We want to remind you again that the researchers made you feel this way and that we hope these feelings do not persist.

Is there anything I can do if I found this experiment to be emotionally upsetting?

Yes. It is normal to feel some distress when reflecting on past infidelity that you have personally experienced. These emotions are sometimes necessary in order to research or study relationships between somewhat sensitive variables. If you are feeling distressed from discussing this personal experience and would like to talk to someone about the situation you have experienced, please feel free to contact one of the helplines nearest to your location. A list of helplines by town and state can be found at <http://www.befrienders.org/helplines/helplines.asp?c2=USA>.

What if I have questions later?

If you have any other questions or comments about this research, please feel free to contact Erinn Squires (erinnsquires@cmail.carleton.ca) or Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl (michael_wohl@carleton.ca), or Dr. Chris G. Davis (chris_davis@carleton.ca). Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact Dr. Avi Parush (Chair, Psychology Ethics Board, 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 6026, avi_parush@carleton.ca). For any other concerns, please contact, Dr. Anne Bowker (Chair, Department of Psychology, 1 (613) 520-2600, ext. 8218, psychchair@carleton.ca).

Thank you for participating in this study!

We greatly appreciate your participation, but we ask that you refrain from discussing this study with potential participants.

Study 5

Thank you for participating in this study! This post-survey information is provided to inform you of the exact nature of the research you just participated in.

What are we trying to learn in this research?

Past research has shown that after a traumatic event most people search for an explanation or understanding of the event. Specifically, individuals seek answers to self-generated questions about why the event occurred, what could have been done to prevent it, and what role they played. This process of searching and finding meaning is associated with decreases in distress and depression following traumatic events.

In a previous study, we found that the philandering partner was forgiven to the extent that meaning had been found. However, this effect was moderated by relationship status. Finding meaning in the transgression only facilitated forgiveness among those who remained in the relationship. Recent research has also revealed that power—one's perceived ability to control outcomes and resources within the relationship—plays an important role in interpersonal forgiveness. The purpose of this research is to further explore these associations.

In this research, we are trying to learn about the relation between finding meaning and forgiveness. We would like to find out about the role that perceived power plays in the relationship between finding meaning and willingness to forgive a partner for infidelity.

Why is this important to scientists or the general public?

This research will contribute to psychologists' knowledge and understanding of intimate relationships and infidelity. Specifically, findings from this study will shed light on how people react to transgressions committed against them by a romantic partner, and what factors affect their willingness to forgive in these situations. Ways of maintaining a healthy relationship may be aided by the outcomes of this study.

What are our hypotheses and predictions?

We predict that finding meaning will be associated with increased willingness to forgive one's partner for infidelity and that this will be because finding meaning leads to heightened perceptions of power and control in the relationship.

Why did I have to read a hypothetical scenario about infidelity?

In this study, we wanted to assess whether finding meaning (or coming to an understanding) of an experience with infidelity and also perceived relationship power would impact willingness to forgive. As such, you read 1 of 4 possible scenarios that we created. You were randomly assigned to one of these scenarios, where you were asked to imagine feeling powerful (or not) and having come to some understanding (or not) after experiencing hypothetical infidelity. We are interested in how people feel towards their "transgressor" depending on the different scenarios.

We would like you to know that sometimes people who take part in psychology studies continue to experience emotions that were manipulated in the study, even though they

have been told that we made them feel a certain way (e.g., more or less power in your relationship). “Psychologists have found that making participants aware that this can occur helps to eliminate perseverance of the manipulated emotions.” In this study, some participants might continue to experience feelings of low/high power, when they were not experiencing this before the study. We want to remind you again that the researchers made you feel this way and that we hope these feelings do not persist.

Is there anything I can do if I found this experiment to be emotionally upsetting?

Yes. It is normal to feel some distress when imagining infidelity. These emotions are sometimes necessary in order to research or study relationships between somewhat sensitive variables. If you are feeling distressed from imagining this type of experience and would like to talk to someone about it, please feel free to contact one of the helplines nearest to your location. A list of helplines by town and state can be found at <http://www.befrienders.org/helplines/helplines.asp?c2=USA>.

What if I have questions later?

If you have any other questions or comments about this research, please feel free to contact Erinn Squires (erinnsquires@cmail.carleton.ca) or Dr. Michael J. A. Wohl (michael_wohl@carleton.ca), or Dr. Chris G. Davis (chris_davis@carleton.ca). Should you have any ethical concerns about this research, please contact Dr. Shelley Brown (Chair, Psychology Ethics Board, 1 (613) 520-2600 ext. 1505, shelley.brown@carleton.ca). For any other concerns, please contact, Dr. Anne Bowker (Chair, Department of Psychology, 1 (613) 520-2600, ext. 8218, psychchair@carleton.ca).

Thank you for participating in this study!

We greatly appreciate your participation, but we ask that you refrain from discussing this study with potential participants (e.g., other MTurk workers) because their responses may be influenced.