

Getting Out of Hot Water: Facework in Social Predicaments

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Participants wrote accounts to victims of social predicaments. Results showed that autonomous perpetrators offered more mitigation, used more complexity in accounts, and used fewer lies, especially to acquaintances. High blame was associated with less mitigating and complex accounts and greater deception; this occurred despite perpetrators' understanding of probable relationship harm. Women were more concerned with repairing others' face damage, at least in part to preserve relationships; their self-esteem also was more harmed by lack of forgiveness, especially from friends. Perpetrators gave longer, more mitigating and complex accounts to friends and more mitigating accounts to high-status victims. Participants who used aggravating elements expected more positive relationships. Results are discussed in terms of competing demands for facework.

Human social interaction has been characterized as an elaborate ritual governed by a shared system of politeness that implicitly recognizes the social identities or "faces" of participants (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1955, 1959; Scott & Lyman, 1968). When one party fails to observe conventions, the faces of all participants are threatened, interaction is disrupted, tension ensues, and participants feel lowered esteem (Goffman, 1955, 1959; Schonbach, 1990). For equilibrium to be restored, face damage must be repaired through corrective facework (see Cupach & Metts, 1994). If facework is not performed adequately, relationships are damaged or may terminate.

Perpetrators play a crucial role in the restoration of equilibrium after face-threatening events through the provision of accounts that repair the victim's face damage. However, predicaments also threaten perpetrators' own faces; hence, accounts simultaneously must address damage to one's own and the victim's faces. Of course, needs for own and other facework often compete; if equilibrium is to be restored, accounts must achieve a delicate balance that satisfies both face needs.

The Mitigation–Aggravation Continuum

The dialectical tension between addressing one's own and others' face needs was identified by McLaughlin, Cody, and O'Hair (1983) in their conceptualization of accounts along a mitigation–aggravation continuum (see also Clark & Schunk, 1980; Hamilton & Hagiwara, 1992; Holtgraves, 1989; McLaughlin, Cody, & Rosenstein, 1983). An account is mitigating to

the extent that it ameliorates the hearer's face concerns; an account is aggravating to the extent that it threatens the hearer's face. Of course, accounts that mitigate the hearer's face often threaten the speaker's own face. For example, *concessions*, which take full responsibility without offering extenuating circumstances (e.g., "I was wrong"), are most helpful to victims but incur threat to speakers. *Excuses* similarly mitigate the hearer's face threat by acknowledging harm but are less threatening to the speaker's own face than concessions because they offer qualifying factors that reduce responsibility (e.g., "I was preoccupied"). Although concessions and excuses mitigate the hearer's face damage, they both necessarily contain some threat to the speaker's face by acknowledging culpability for an untoward act.

In contrast, *justifications* accept full responsibility but seek to redefine the behavior as legitimate (e.g., "I was doing what any normal person would do"). Justifications thus protect the speaker's face but are aggravating to the hearer's in their failure to acknowledge the negative nature of the event. Finally, *refusals* deny all responsibility; they may include statements (e.g., "It is not my fault") or lack of willingness to give an account (i.e., silence). Refusals are the most aggravating responses for the hearer's face.

In summary, concessions, excuses, justifications, and refusals represent varying levels of perpetrator attention to face damage suffered by the self versus the other. In actual use, people are creative: Wrongdoers readily combine seemingly contradictory account elements in explanations for single events (Gonzales, Manning, & Haugen, 1992; Metts & Cupach, 1989).

Variables That Influence Account Strategies

The purpose of the current study was to examine factors that influence perpetrator use of mitigating and aggravating account strategies following predicaments. Account strategies are viewed as reflecting the relative strengths of the preferences to repair one's own versus the other's face (cf. Cupach & Metts, 1994; Gonzales et al., 1992). We suggest that the extent to which accounts address one's own versus others' face concerns

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is influenced by the balance between two pivotal factors: the degree of threat to one's own face and motivation to maintain the relationship. From the perpetrator's perspective, predicaments produce the quandary of having to balance the cost of own face damage with that of relationship damage. An account that provides redress for the victim's face (thereby maintaining the relationship) entails further threat to the perpetrator's own face. To the extent that relationships are valued, perpetrators should be willing to endure more threat to their own faces in order to repair the victim's. However, when damage to perpetrators' own faces becomes severe, repair may become a priority, despite the relational cost.

Variables That Influence Face Threat

General Causality Motivation Orientation

The degree of face threat experienced is probably influenced by situational and individual factors; however, little past attention has focused on individual differences. One purpose of the present study was to examine the effect of individual differences in general causality motivational orientation on accounts for social predicaments. General causality motivational orientation is described in terms of autonomy, control, and impersonal orientations (Deci & Ryan, 1985a, 1985b, 1990). *Autonomy orientation* refers to the tendency to initiate behavior out of choices based on an awareness of one's needs, feelings, and integrated goals. In contrast, *control orientation* describes the tendency to seek out external controls and experience events as pressures that determine behavior and feelings. *Impersonal orientation* describes the general tendency to experience desired outcomes as unattainable and to display little sense of intentionality. Humans possess all three tendencies but for investigative purposes may be categorized according to their predominant motivational orientation.

We expected that motivational orientation would be an important predictor of degree of face threat experienced during predicaments because motivational orientation relates to individual differences in interpersonal defensiveness versus openness. In general, autonomy orientation is associated with openness and honesty, whereas control orientation is associated with defensiveness. For example, high-control participants feel lower esteem and find it unpleasant when naturally occurring interaction is open and honest; in contrast, high-autonomy participants report greater openness, honesty, and enjoyment of interaction (Hodgins, Koestner, & Duncan, 1996). Similar defensiveness is seen in social perception; when making attributions for others' actions, highly control-oriented participants give less credit for positive actions and more blame for negative actions compared with autonomy-oriented participants, who show greater positivity bias toward others (Hodgins & Deci, 1995). Consistent with this, participants who are high on autonomy but low on control orientation show an absence of self-serving bias in success and failure attributions (Knee & Zuckerman, 1996).

Because past studies suggest that a defensive interpersonal stance is characteristic of a high-control orientation, we expected that control-oriented participants would be particularly

sensitive to their own face threat and would attend to their own faces by using proportionately more aggravating statements. Consistent with their interpersonal honesty and openness and with the choiceful behavior that defines autonomy, we expected that autonomous participants would take responsibility for their behavior and offer accounts mitigating the victim's face threat. Social behavior associated with the impersonal orientation has been examined less; it has been suggested, however, that people who feel helpless often respond defensively (Assor, 1987). Hence, we expected that impersonal perpetrators would respond defensively, using more aggravating statements relative to autonomous participants.

Sex Differences

An individual difference that has been examined is sex of the perpetrator; results have consistently shown that men repair their own faces more and attend to others' less than women do. For example, women use more positive face-redressive tactics to gain compliance, whereas men are more tolerant of using aggravating justifications (Baxter, 1984). Similarly, when coping with embarrassment, men judge avoidance and justification to be more effective than women do (Cupach, Metts, & Hazleton, 1986; Petronio, 1984). The greater tolerance of aggravating strategies among men also is reflected in accounts for untoward behavior; for example, men are more aggressive toward the offended party (Hamilton & Hagiwara, 1992), use fewer concessions (Gonzales, Pedersen, Manning, & Wetter, 1990; Schonbach, 1990), offer less complex concessions, and use more lies (Gonzales et al., 1992).

We expected to replicate robust past sex differences; however, a unique contribution of the present study was the examination of two previously offered theoretical explanations (Gonzales et al., 1990, 1992; Schonbach, 1990); we refer to them as the *social power hypothesis* and the *relationship maintenance hypothesis*. The former suggests that women concede more because of their low social power (Snodgrass, 1985). People in less dominant roles depend on the favor of powerful others and apologize readily to appease them. In contrast, the relationship maintenance hypothesis postulates that the expressive female sex role includes valuing interpersonal concerns (Bem, 1974; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975). Because women presumably are concerned with relatedness, they make concessions to preserve relationships. We examined these explanations empirically.

Blameworthiness

Beyond individual differences, we were interested in situational factors; one widely investigated factor that increases perpetrator face threat is blameworthiness. Viewed from a social interactionist framework, undeniably guilty perpetrators cannot claim positive social identity (Goffman, 1955); thus, highly blameworthy perpetrators may feel especially threatened and provide defensive, self-protective accounts to salvage their own damaged faces. Consistent with this, Schlenker (1980) predicted that under severe circumstances offenders use "extreme" accounting strategies; he specified that failure events could be severe in consequence or blameworthiness. Schonbach (1990)

also expected blameworthiness to be associated with defensiveness, although he specified a different mechanism: He predicted that a severe offense would elicit a severe victim reproach that would invoke defensive perpetrator accounting. Both perspectives concur that blameworthiness increases perpetrator attention to his or her own face; we refer to this as the *defensiveness prediction*.

Alternatively, other researchers have predicted the opposite relation: The greater face threat inherent in severe failure episodes should result in greater perpetrator attention to the victim's face concerns. We refer to this as the *politeness prediction*; it assumes that perpetrators behave in an accountable manner rather than out of defensive concerns. For example, in a theory of politeness in language, Brown and Levinson (1987) posited that requests containing greater face threat are accompanied by increased politeness to mitigate other face threat.

Experimental evidence regarding the effect of blameworthiness exists for both the politeness and defensiveness predictions. For example, in support of the former, McLaughlin, Cody, and O'Hair (1983) found that severe offenses received more concessions in recalled episodes. Similarly, Schlenker and Darby (1981) demonstrated that severe consequences produced the most apologies, and this was especially pronounced when the actor was highly responsible. Furthermore, the politeness prediction has support in numerous studies that have shown that perpetrators give mitigating accounts for shortcomings (Cupach et al., 1986; Hamilton & Hagiwara, 1992; Gonzales et al., 1990, 1992; Holtgraves, 1989; Schlenker & Darby, 1981).

Nonetheless, it is possible that perpetrators, when sufficiently threatened, adopt a defensive strategy, protecting their own faces by using aggravating accounts. Consistent with this, Gonzales et al. (1992, Study 2) reported a curvilinear relation of blameworthiness, with negligent perpetrators (i.e., moderate blame) giving longer, more complex accounts than either accidental offenders (i.e., low blame) or intentional offenders (i.e., high blame). The authors suggested that moderately blameworthy offenses resulted in more mitigation than low-blameworthy offenses because of offenders' greater need to apologize; however, high-blame offenses resulted in less mitigation because of offenders' increased need to address their own face threat and decreased effectiveness of accounts (see also Schonbach, 1990).

The curvilinear relation of blameworthiness demonstrated by Gonzales et al. (1992) is not inconsistent with the more frequently documented linear relation; the difference could be a result of experimental parameters. In other words, perhaps the curvilinear effect appears when blame is quite high, as in Gonzales et al. (1992). However, the curvilinear effect has not been replicated; hence, another purpose of the present study was to include a severe level of blame to test for a curvilinear effect. We expected to replicate the curvilinear effect by demonstrating that when perpetrators are highly blameworthy of nefarious action, they increase defensive repair of their own faces.

In summary, we expected that being control or impersonally oriented, male, and highly blameworthy would be associated with lower threshold for one's own face threat; this should result in greater attention to one's own face needs and less to others'. We expected the increased priority of one's own face to

be checked, however, by high desirability of relationship maintenance.

Variables That Influence Motivation to Maintain the Relationship

Closeness

The most obvious factor that might motivate relationship maintenance is closeness. There is evidence that people implicitly understand that severe predicaments have an impact on future relationships (Gonzales et al., 1990) and that aggravating accounts will terminate a relationship (Hupka, Jung, & Silverthorn, 1987). We expected that people would make more effort to repair close than distant relationships out of a desire to keep the relationship. This should be reflected in the use of more mitigating and fewer aggravating statements. One of the few studies to include relationship intimacy found consistent results: Participants used more polite tactics in close relationships when making face-threatening statements (Baxter, 1984). In contrast, however, McLaughlin, Cody, and O'Hair (1983) found no support for the same hypothesis.

It is interesting to note that the opposite prediction is made by Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness in language, which predicts that less facework is required in closer relationships. There also is evidence supporting this relation; specifically, Hamilton and Hagiwara (1992) found that although participants were more likely to offer accounts in close relationships, accounts to close others were more aggressive, whereas accounts to distant victims were more assuaging.

Past results regarding the effect of closeness on facework may be mixed in part because of different methodologies. McLaughlin, Cody, and O'Hair (1983) did not manipulate closeness but used retrospective accounts. In contrast, Baxter (1984) and Hamilton and Hagiwara (1992) both manipulated closeness and asked participants to predict their responses. These two studies showed relations in directions opposite to each other, but Hamilton and Hagiwara's (1992) study shows a methodological flaw. Although no manipulation check is provided, the eight scenarios appear to differ in severity. This is problematic, because scenario was confounded with closeness, and severity is known to influence accounting. Consequently, the greater aggravation in close relationships may have been due to greater severity.

In the current study, we examined the effect of relationship closeness on accounts by manipulating closeness and having participants generate their own responses. This method provides greater control than retrospective accounts and greater realism than likelihood ratings of predetermined responses. In addition, closeness was manipulated within scenario to avoid the above-mentioned confound. We expected that people would do more corrective facework for the other's face after predicaments with friends compared to acquaintances because of motivation to preserve the relationship.

Status

A second factor that could increase motivation to preserve relationships is high-victim status. High-status others have so-

cial power and control potentially important outcomes; thus perpetrators should expend more effort to preserve relationships with high-status victims. A few past findings are consistent with this prediction. For example, high-power individuals use less polite compliance-gaining tactics (Baxter, 1984), low-status offenders receive more derogation (Ungar, 1981), and high-status perpetrators give shorter accounts for mild gaffes (Gonzales et al., 1990).

In contrast, a few studies do not support the prediction. For example, McLaughlin, Cody, and O'Hair (1983) found no evidence for the expected positive relation of victim status and mitigation, possibly because of the use of retrospective accounts. Furthermore, Hamilton and Hagiwara (1992) reported the opposite relation: Accounting strategies toward superiors were more aggressive than those toward equals. However, as we noted above regarding closeness, Hamilton and Hagiwara confounded status with scenario, and the scenarios varied in severity. Hence, these two studies may have failed to support our status prediction because of methodological considerations.

A more puzzling contradiction occurs in Gonzales et al.'s (1990) study, which examined the effect of status on verbal accounts and behavioral helping. Consistent with our prediction, low-status perpetrators gave longer accounts and more responsibility-taking statements. However, in the same study high-status perpetrators gave higher quality verbal offers of help. The authors suggest that high-status perpetrators may have felt greater responsibility for the interview because of the role assigned; however, all three dependent variables seem to reflect accounting motivation. Hence it is difficult to understand why the variables did not show a consistent pattern within the study.

In summary, although past evidence contains some contradictions, it generally supports that high-victim status leads to greater effort in accounting. We thus conceptualized victim status as a variable that would motivate relationship maintenance and expected that perpetrators would attend more to face concerns of high- than of low-status victims.

The Present Study and Hypotheses

In the present study we examined perpetrator accounts for face-threatening predicaments. Following work by Goffman (1955, 1959), Schonbach (1990), and others, we assumed that perpetrators would provide explanatory accounts and asked them to do this for hypothetical predicaments. However, the conflicting demands of own-face concerns and victim-face concerns present a dilemma; accounts that mitigate the victim's-face damage tend to threaten one's own face; accounts that aggravate the victim's face (but save one's own face) may not restore equilibrium and hence risk relationship loss. The amount of facework directed toward own-face versus the victim's-face concerns was expected to depend on (a) degree of threat to own face and (b) desirability of maintaining the relationship with the victim.

Factors expected to decrease the perpetrator's threshold for experiencing face threat were (a) having a control or impersonal causality orientation rather than an autonomous one, (b) being male, and (c) the situational factor of high blameworthiness. We predicted that as threat to perpetrators' faces increased, a

defensive need to address one's own-face damage would compete with attention to the victim's. Facework for one's own face would be reflected in shorter accounts, less mitigating accounts, less complex accounts, and greater deception.

We expected defensive accounting to be tempered by perpetrator motivation to maintain the relationship, however. The factors we expected to increase desire to maintain the relationship were (a) a close relationship and (b) high-victim status.

We examined these predictions in an experiment with four hypothetical scenarios in which participants imagined themselves as perpetrators and wrote explanatory accounts as if they were speaking to the victim. We coded the accounts using Schonbach's (1990) taxonomy for the account phase of conflict.

Method

Participants

Ninety-six students (48 men, 48 women) at Skidmore College participated in partial fulfillment of a research requirement.

Materials

Predicament questionnaire. The predicament questionnaire contained four pages, each of which described a scenario in which the participant caused a negative consequence. Victim status and closeness were systematically varied so that each participant responded to one scenario with the following combinations of closeness and status: friend-low, friend-high, acquaintance-low, acquaintance-high. Each description ended with the question "What do you say to [the other person] in this situation?"

The scenarios contained Schonbach's (1990) predicaments (used by Gonzales et al., 1992) chosen on the basis of two pilot studies.¹ The four scenarios included situations in which the participant turned in another person's term paper late, damaged a computer disk belonging to someone else, was overheard gossiping (for descriptions see Gonzales et al., 1992, Study 2, Appendix C), and had an accident in a borrowed car (Gonzales et al., 1992, Study 1, Appendix A). We created 12 versions of each scenario by crossing the variables of blameworthiness (low, moderate, high), closeness (friend, acquaintance), and victim status (low, high). We manipulated blameworthiness for three scenarios by varying perpetrator responsibility as in Gonzales et al. (1992, Appendix C). For the accident scenario we manipulated blameworthiness by asking participants to imagine that an accident occurred because (a) a driver ran a stop sign while the participant was distracted (low blameworthiness), (b) the participant ran a stop sign while distracted (moderate blameworthiness), or (c) the participant lost control of the automobile while speeding (high blameworthiness).

In all scenarios we manipulated closeness by describing the victim as a close friend or as an acquaintance. We manipulated victim status by varying the description with different manipulations used to increase realism. Specifically, the car was described as belonging to a professor (high-victim status) or cafeteria worker (low-victim status). The late

¹ One scenario was eliminated on the basis of pilot testing. The predicament involved babysitting, and the results showed pronounced sex differences. Otherwise, pilot testing primarily was used to ensure adequate manipulation of independent variables. Pilot results showed the predicted effects of the independent variables (all F s > 16, all p s < .002, all r s > .74).

term paper belonged to a head resident (high) or high school student taking a course (low). The computer disk was borrowed from either a sorority or fraternity president (high) or an unpopular sorority sister or fraternity brother (low). Finally, the target of the gossip was either a company vice president (high) or an employee under the participant's supervision (low). The order of the closeness-status combinations was counterbalanced within scenario and blame conditions. Scenarios were given in a constant order and were seen by an equal number of each sex.

Future outcome questionnaire. After providing accounts, participants answered questions about their future relationship with the victim on 9-point scales. There were five questions (from Gonzales et al., 1992) including (1) how much the relationship would suffer, (2) how much the perpetrator's image would suffer, (3) how responsible the victim would hold the perpetrator, (4) how angry the victim would be, and (5) how likely the victim would forgive. We summed these five questions to create an expected-future-relationship variable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$).

In addition there were two situational-self-esteem questions about how the perpetrator would feel about him- or herself if the victim did and did not forgive (mean $r = .24$, $p < .05$).

General Causality Orientations Scale. The General Causality Orientations Scale (GCOS; Deci & Ryan, 1985a) consists of three subscales that measure motivational orientation: autonomy, control, and impersonal. Empirically, autonomy is associated positively with self-evaluation, self-awareness, self-actualization, and ego development (Deci & Ryan, 1985b); consistency among attitudes, traits, and behaviors (Koestner, Bernieri, & Zuckerman, 1992); interaction that is open, honest, and positive (Hodgins et al., 1996); and the absence of self-serving biases (Knee & Zuckerman, 1996). In contrast, control relates to lack of self-awareness (Deci & Ryan, 1985b); regulation of social behavior by external cues (Zuckerman, Gioioso, & Tellini, 1988); inconsistency among attitudes, traits, and behaviors (Koestner et al., 1992); and defensiveness in naturally occurring social interaction (Hodgins et al., 1996). Finally, impersonal scores relate to self-derogation, social anxiety, external locus of control (Deci & Ryan, 1985b), and restrictive anorexia (Strauss & Ryan, 1987).

The original GCOS contains 12 vignettes, each describing a situation; we used an expanded 17-vignette version (51 items; Ryan, 1989) in this study. Each vignette has three items, one representing each motivational orientation. Respondents rate on 7-point scales the likelihood of responding in each way. Responses are summed, resulting in three scores representing the strength of the motivational orientations in the respondent.

An example of a vignette and its three items is as follows:

Your friend's younger sister is a freshman in college. Your friend tells you that she has been doing badly and asks you what he (she) should do about it. You advise him (her) to: (a) Talk it over with her and try to see what is going on for her (the autonomous response); (b) Not mention it; there is not much he (she) could do about it anyway (the impersonal response); (c) Tell her it's important for her to do well, so she should be working harder (the control determined response).

In the past, autonomy and impersonal subscales related negatively ($r = -.25$), control and impersonal subscales related positively ($r = .27$), and autonomy and control subscales were unrelated ($r = .03$; Deci & Ryan, 1985b). In the current sample the subscales were uncorrelated (all r s $< .11$). Gender relates modestly to autonomy and control orientations, with women higher on autonomy and men higher on control; all subscales show internal reliability ($\alpha = .75$ to $.90$) and test-retest reliability (r s = $.75$ to $.85$; Blustein, 1988; Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Vallerand, Blais, LaCouture, & Deci, 1987). Internal consistencies in this study were .79, .72, and .68 for autonomy, control, and impersonal, respectively.

Participants were categorized into one of three orientations according to the highest standardized GCOS subscale. This resulted in similar N s; however, there was a sex difference in distribution: Proportionately more women were categorized as autonomous and impersonal, whereas more men were control oriented. Cell n s for autonomous, control, and impersonal were, respectively, 10, 24, and 14 for men and 19, 10, and 19 for women.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to conditions and completed questionnaires in groups. They completed the GCOS and were given instructions for the predicament questionnaire. It was explained that we were interested in how people act when in predicaments with others. Participants were asked to imagine themselves in each situation and to "write down what you would say to the other person . . . as though you were explaining it directly to the other person." After providing accounts, participants answered future-outcome and situational-self-esteem questions, completed a manipulation check, and were debriefed.

Coding Procedure

We used an account taxonomy created by Schonbach (1980, 1990) and modified by Gonzales et al. (1992) to code all explanations. The taxonomy includes four general categories: concessions, excuses, justifications, and refusals. Each of these categories subsumes a number of superordinate categories that are further divided into subordinate categories.²

Coding consisted of dividing each account into elements and assigning a category to each element. Verbal phrases were designated as elements if they contained discrete meaning without regard for grammar. For example, an account would be divided into elements and coded as follows: "I'm sorry" (expression of regret concerning failure event, a C3 concession); "The accident was my fault" (explicit acknowledgement of own responsibility or guilt, a C1 concession), "but I just never saw the other car" (appeal to insufficient knowledge or skill, an E1.1 excuse); or "I will pay for the damages" (offer of restitution or compensation, a C4 concession).

The number of elements in accounts ranged from 1 to 10 ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.55$). Two judges, trained through practice with more than 150 pilot study explanations, independently coded each account from verbatim typed transcripts. Interjudge reliability was estimated by calculating the concordance for each explanation following Gonzales et al.'s (1992) formula:

$$C = \frac{2 \times \text{number identical categories assigned}}{(\text{number categories J1} + \text{number categories J2})}$$

Categories were considered identical if judges used the same category or if one used a superordinate and the other a related subordinate category (e.g., C1 and C1.1). The use of different superordinate categories (e.g., C1 and C3) was considered nonidentical. Concordance ranged from 0 to 1.00 (i.e., perfect agreement); mean concordance was .85. Fifty-three percent of accounts showed concordance of 1.00, and less than 0.1%

² We added two subordinate categories to the account taxonomy of Schonbach (1990; published in Gonzales et al., 1992, Appendix B) to accommodate responses the taxonomy did not include. Specifically, one concession subordinate code was added to reflect acknowledgment of the victim's right to reproach (e.g., "You have every right to be angry"); one refusal subordinate code was added to reflect a denial of negative feeling regarding the failure event (e.g., "I would not feel bad, I would not care, I would not be bothered").

showed 0.00 concordance. Differences were resolved through discussion.³

Following the theoretical model of McLaughlin and her colleagues (McLaughlin, Cody, & O'Hair, 1983; McLaughlin, Cody, & Rosenstein, 1983), we combined the four categories to form mitigating (concessions and excuses) and aggravating (justifications and refusals) elements. This was considered appropriate despite the likelihood that (a) various elements may provide different degrees of mitigation and aggravation and (b) elements may not combine in a linear and additive manner. The data reduction procedure does not require either of these conditions, because the dependent measure is not proposed to reflect absolute level of mitigation, rather, it captures relative differences. In other words, although an excuse and a concession may not be twice as mitigating as one alone, it is safe to assume that two are more mitigating than one. If anything, this measure may be insensitive to differences given the lack of basis for assigning weights to elements before combining. Hence, the number of mitigating and aggravating elements provides a valid, albeit conservative, index for examining effects of variables.

Results and Discussion

Manipulation Checks

Participants responded on 9-point scales to questions about responsibility, relationship closeness, and victim status. Ratings were analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the manipulated variables.⁴ Taken together, the results suggest that variables were manipulated adequately and independently.

Blameworthiness. Low-blame participants rated themselves less responsible ($M = 6.1$) than moderate-blame participants ($M = 7.7$), who were lower than high-blame participants ($M = 8.4$), across-scenario linear contrast $F(1, 85) = 78.55, p < .001, r = .69$.⁵ There was an effect of sex on blameworthiness, with women rating themselves higher than men ($M_s = 7.6$ and 7.2), $F(1, 85) = 4.47, p < .05, r = .22$; however, blame and sex did not interact. There were no effects of closeness or status on responsibility ratings.

Closeness. The predicted effect of relationship on closeness emerged ($M_s = 5.0$ and 6.6 for acquaintance and friend), $F(1, 85) = 80.75, p < .001, r = .70$. There was no effect of either blame or status.

Status. There was an effect of status on ratings, ($M_s = 4.8$ and 6.9 for low and high status), $F(1, 84) = 135.56, p < .001, r = .62$. There was no effect of either blame or closeness on status.

Data Analytic Strategy

Preliminary analyses showed no effects of scenario on the number or type of account elements offered (all $F_s < 1.3$), hence all dependent variables were collapsed across scenario.

We performed an analysis of variance (ANOVA) with between-subjects variables of sex, blameworthiness (low, moderate, or high), and motivational orientation (autonomous, control, or impersonal). Within-subjects variables included status (low or high), closeness (friend or acquaintance), and element type (mitigating or aggravating). Dependent variables included (a) number of elements used, (b) account complexity scores, (c) number of lies used, (d) expected future relationship, and (e) situational self-esteem.

We used contrast analysis to provide focused significance

Table 1

Mean Numbers and Standard Deviations of Elements Used by Level of Blame, Sex, and Account Type

Sex and account type	Blame			<i>M</i>
	Low	Moderate	High	
Female				
Mitigating				
<i>M</i>	3.68	4.33	2.59	3.53
<i>SD</i>	1.35	1.59	1.60	1.51
Aggravating				
<i>M</i>	0.29	0.22	0.77	0.43
<i>SD</i>	0.59	0.39	0.92	0.63
Total	3.97	4.55	3.35	3.96
<i>SD</i>	0.97	0.99	1.26	1.07
Male				
Mitigating				
<i>M</i>	3.56	2.79	1.94	2.76
<i>SD</i>	1.34	1.31	1.41	1.35
Aggravating				
<i>M</i>	0.14	0.35	0.82	0.44
<i>SD</i>	0.31	0.50	0.87	0.56
Total	3.70	3.14	2.76	3.20
<i>SD</i>	0.83	0.91	1.14	0.96
Overall mean for blame	3.83	3.84	3.06	
Overall <i>SD</i>	0.90	0.95	1.20	

tests of effects that had more than 1 degree of freedom in the numerator (i.e., effects including blame or motivational orientation, both of which had three levels). Specifically, we calculated contrast significance tests by assigning weights of 1, 1, and -2 to test whether two levels were higher than the third level of the variable, or 1, 0, and -1 to test linear effects.

Length of Accounts

We reasoned that account length reflects effort to restore equilibrium for the simple reason that it requires more time and energy to use more elements. There was an effect of sex on length, with women giving longer accounts (see Table 1), $F(1, 78) = 9.17, p < .01, r = .32$. There also was a main effect of

³ Gonzales et al.'s (1992) concordance formula requires determining whether an identical code was used by the two judges for a specific phrase; this makes it a conservative estimate of intercoder reliability. Use of a more common method of assessing reliability, although it has the advantage of controlling for chance error, produces higher reliability estimates. Effective interrater reliabilities calculated according to Rosenthal and Rosnow's (1984) method were .97, .91, .85, and .81 for concessions, excuses, justifications, and refusals, respectively.

⁴ Degrees of freedom vary for the manipulation check because 5 participants did not complete the blame and closeness ratings, and 6 participants did not complete the status rating.

⁵ An estimate of effect size, the Pearson r , was computed as: $r = \sqrt{F(1, \text{---}) / F(1, \text{---}) + df_{\text{error}}}$ (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1984). The magnitude of the effect is indicated by r^2 , which is an estimate of the variance accounted for. According to Cohen and Cohen (1983, p. 61), r s of .10, .30, and .50 correspond to small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

Table 2
Mean Numbers and Standard Deviations of Elements Used by Level of Blame, Closeness, and Account Type

Closeness and account type	Blame			<i>M</i>
	Low	Moderate	High	
Friend				
Mitigating				
<i>M</i>	3.88	3.77	2.33	3.33
<i>SD</i>	1.21	1.44	1.60	1.42
Aggravating				
<i>M</i>	0.16	0.32	0.69	0.39
<i>SD</i>	0.53	0.40	1.09	0.67
Total	4.04	4.09	3.02	3.72
<i>SD</i>	0.87	0.92	1.35	1.05
Acquaintance				
Mitigating				
<i>M</i>	3.35	3.34	2.19	2.96
<i>SD</i>	1.49	1.46	1.41	1.45
Aggravating				
<i>M</i>	0.27	0.25	0.89	0.47
<i>SD</i>	0.37	0.49	0.70	0.52
Total	3.62	3.59	3.08	3.43
<i>SD</i>	0.93	0.98	1.06	0.99

blameworthiness; a performed contrast (weights of 1, 1, and -2 for low, moderate, and high blame, respectively) resulted in $F(1, 78) = 8.39, p < .005, r = .31$. Thus, low- and moderate-blame participants gave longer accounts than high-blame participants did. This result suggests that less effort is put into salvaging awkward situations when perpetrators are highly liable compared to when they are only slightly or moderately liable. Because high blame is a severe threat to face, highly blameworthy perpetrators may choose to "cut their losses" rather than admit the extent of their perfidy and suffer further loss of face.

There also was a main effect of closeness on length, indicating that participants gave longer explanations to friends than to acquaintances, $F(1, 78) = 6.13, p < .02, r = .27$ (see Table 2). It is interesting, however, that greater motivation to preserve friendships dissipates when the perpetrator's own face is threatened by high blame: The effect of closeness was moderated by an interaction with blame. Specifically, friends received longer accounts from low- and moderate-blame perpetrators, but not from high-blame ones, contrast $F(1, 78) = 4.15, p < .05, r = .22$.

Type of Account Element Used

Of course, a primary interest of the study was the relative use of mitigating versus aggravating elements. Consistent with past research, there was a large effect of element type; overall, participants used far more mitigating than aggravating elements, $F(1, 78) = 319.8, p < .001, r = .90$ (see Table 1). In fact, a frequency of proportions indicates that 40% of participants used no aggravating elements at all. Hence, perpetrators overwhelmingly accepted responsibility, thereby addressing the victim's face concerns much more than their own. Of greater interest, however, is the fact that the preference for mitigation was moderated by several factors.

Motivational orientation. Highly autonomous people are honest and self-aware; thus we expected that they would take responsibility for their behavior and provide accounts to mitigate the other's face loss. In contrast, because control orientation is associated with interpersonal defensiveness, we expected these participants to be self-protective and to use more aggravation. Impersonally oriented people tend to feel general helplessness, hence we expected that they too would respond defensively relative to autonomous participants.

As predicted, the preference for mitigation was stronger among autonomous participants than among control or impersonal participants (see Table 3). A contrast performed on the Motivation \times Element Type interaction (weights 2, -1, and -1 for autonomous, control, and impersonal orientation, respectively) resulted in interaction contrast $F(1, 78) = 4.58, p < .05, r = .24$. This was not moderated by other variables.

Sex differences. Second, although men and women used similar numbers of aggravating elements, because of men's shorter accounts they used proportionately more aggravation relative to women, Element Type \times Sex interaction $F(1, 78) = 6.53, p < .01, r = .28$ (see Table 1). It is important to note that although sex and motivational orientation both were associated with element type, and men and women were not equally distributed by motivational orientation, sex differences in motivational orientation do not account for women's greater use of mitigating elements. The motivation orientation variable was included in the analysis, thus its effect was controlled for. Therefore, the effects showing that women and autonomous participants use more mitigation are orthogonal to each other.

Blameworthiness. Third, although high-blame participants used fewer elements overall, they used proportionately more aggravation relative to low- and moderate-blame participants. A contrast performed on the Element Type \times Blame effect (weights of 1, 1, and -2 for low, moderate, and high blame, respectively) resulted in contrast $F(1, 78) = 33.47, p < .001, r = .55$. The pattern shows that although highly liable perpetrators continue to offer accounts that are primarily mitigating, they show an increased willingness to use aggravating tactics. It may seem contradictory to placate and counterattack simultaneously; however, this is the pattern seen under high blame, born of competing demands for self and other facework.

Closeness and status. Fourth, the preference for using miti-

Table 3
Mean Numbers and Standard Deviations of Elements Used as a Function of Motivation Orientation and Account Type

Account type	Motivation orientation			<i>M</i>
	Autonomy	Control	Impersonal	
Mitigating				
<i>M</i>	3.31	3.15	3.08	3.18
<i>SD</i>	1.17	1.62	1.52	1.44
Aggravating				
<i>M</i>	0.21	0.54	0.50	0.42
<i>SD</i>	0.33	0.65	0.82	0.60
Total	3.52	3.69	3.58	
<i>SD</i>	0.75	1.14	1.17	

gating elements was especially pronounced when the victim was a friend rather than an acquaintance (see Table 2), Element Type \times Closeness $F(1, 78) = 5.58, p < .02, r = .26$. A similar pattern occurred for status; participants used proportionately more mitigating elements with high-status victims compared to low-status victims, Element Type \times Status interaction $F(1, 78) = 3.82, p < .05, r = .22$. Mean numbers of mitigating and aggravating elements were 3.00 and .50 for low-status victims and 3.29 and .36 for high-status victims.

Complexity of Accounts

A third index of effort in facework is the degree of complexity used in accounting. It takes more initiative and ingenuity to give three distinct mitigating responses (e.g. "I'm sorry; I was totally distracted and forgot what I was doing. Please tell me how I can help you now.") rather than merely repeat one mitigating element three times (e.g. "I'm sorry. So very sorry. I'm really sorry!"). Beyond requiring greater effort, complex accounts probably are more effective in appeasing victims compared to less complex ones.

We calculated a complexity score separately for mitigating and aggravating elements and defined it as the percentage of available subordinate categories used. For example, if a participant used 4 of 16 mitigating categories and 1 of 17 aggravating categories, he or she received complexity scores of 25.0 and 5.8 for mitigating and aggravating elements, respectively. Mean complexity scores were 16.39 (range: 0–43.75) for mitigating elements and 2.11 (range: 0–17.65) for aggravating elements. We submitted the complexity scores to an ANOVA.⁶

There was a main effect of blame, with high-blame perpetrators using less complexity than low- and moderate-blame perpetrators (see Table 4), contrast $F(1, 78) = 8.83, p < .005, r = .32$. It is interesting, however, that this was moderated by element type: High-blame perpetrators used less complexity in mitigation but more in aggravation. A contrast (weights 1, 1, and -2 for low, moderate, and high blame, respectively) resulted in $F(1, 78) = 35.36, p < .001, r = .56$. This supports the interpretation of complexity as a measure of facework effort; there is no obvious reason that blame would increase the com-

Table 4
Means and Standard Deviations of Complexity Scores by Level of Blame and Account Type

Account type	Blame			<i>M</i>
	Low	Moderate	High	
Mitigating				
<i>M</i>	18.30	18.09	12.65	16.35
<i>SD</i>	5.73	5.99	7.79	6.50
Aggravating				
<i>M</i>	1.02	1.53	3.81	2.12
<i>SD</i>	2.11	2.36	3.88	2.78
Mean across account type	9.66	9.81	8.23	
<i>SD</i>	3.92	4.18	5.84	

Note. Higher scores indicate more complex use of account elements.

Table 5
Means and Standard Deviations of Complexity Scores by Closeness, Sex, and Account Type

Sex and account type	Closeness		<i>M</i>
	Friend	Acquaintance	
Women			
Mitigating			
<i>M</i>	19.35	16.22	17.79
<i>SD</i>	6.25	6.79	6.52
Aggravating			
<i>M</i>	1.91	2.03	1.97
<i>SD</i>	2.42	3.00	2.71
Total			
<i>M</i>	10.63	9.13	9.88
<i>SD</i>	4.34	4.90	4.62
Men			
Mitigating			
<i>M</i>	14.90	14.91	14.91
<i>SD</i>	6.38	6.62	6.50
Aggravating			
<i>M</i>	2.16	2.37	2.27
<i>SD</i>	2.77	2.95	2.86
Mean across account type	8.53	8.64	8.59
<i>SD</i>	4.58	4.79	4.69

Note. Higher scores indicate more complex use of account elements.

plexity of aggravation and simultaneously decrease the complexity of mitigation if complexity did not reflect effort. The finding also gives further evidence that highly blameworthy perpetrators do facework in a defensive manner; they are more resourceful than low- and moderate-blame participants in generating phrases that address damage to one's own face, but they show less ingenuity in repairing the hearer's face damage.

There also was a main effect of sex on complexity, $F(1, 78) = 7.50, p < .01, r = .30$, that was moderated by a Sex \times Account Type interaction, $F(1, 78) = 6.30, p < .01, r = .27$ (see Table 5). Overall, women gave more complex accounts, and this was a result of greater complexity in mitigation. Simple effects tests showed greater female complexity for mitigating elements, $F(1, 78) = 8.06, p < .01, r = .31$; complexity of aggravating elements actually showed the reverse, but was not significant ($F < 1$).

In addition, there were effects of closeness on complexity. Perpetrators gave more complex accounts to friends than to acquaintances, $F(1, 78) = 6.46, p < .01, r = .28$, but this was moderated by sex: Closeness \times Sex interaction $F(1, 78) = 8.55, p < .01, r = .31$ (Table 5). Simple effects tests showed that women gave more complex accounts to friends than to acquaintances, $F(1, 39) = 12.71, p < .001, r = .50$, and women gave more complex accounts to friends than men did, $F(1, 78) = 15.07, p < .001, r = .40$.

Furthermore, the closeness effect was moderated by a mar-

⁶ A second, less sensitive index of complexity calculated by Gonzales et al. (1992) is the number of different superordinate categories used. In Gonzales et al.'s article this variable showed effects in one of the two studies reported. The index was calculated in the current study and showed no effects.

Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations of Complexity Scores by
Motivation Orientation and Account Type

Account type	Motivation orientation			<i>M</i>
	Autonomy	Control	Impersonal	
Mitigating				
<i>M</i>	16.84 (.73)	17.04 (.25)	15.16 (–.99)	16.35
<i>SD</i>	5.45	6.79	7.29	6.51
Aggravating				
<i>M</i>	1.15 (–.73)	2.31 (–.25)	2.90 (.99)	2.12
<i>SD</i>	1.79	2.77	3.80	2.79

Note. Higher complexity scores indicate more complex use of account elements. Interaction residuals (which represent the interaction effect with both main effects removed) appear in parentheses and are used to interpret the two-way interaction.

ginally significant interaction with element type, $F(1, 78) = 3.52, p < .06, r = .21$. Simple effects indicate greater complexity to friends than to acquaintances for mitigation, $F(1, 78) = 5.82, p < .02, r = .26$, but not aggravation ($F < 1$).

It is not surprising that the main effect of element type on complexity was significant, $F(1, 78) = 504.47, p < .001, r = .93$. This indicates that perpetrators used more complexity in mitigation than aggravation and probably is a function of the greater number of mitigating elements. More important, this was moderated by a linear interaction with motivation orientation (see Table 6). A performed contrast (weights 1, 0, and –1 for autonomy, control, and impersonal orientation, respectively) resulted in interaction contrast $F(1, 78) = 5.15, p < .05, r = .25$. Hence, the greater complexity of mitigating elements was most pronounced for autonomous participants, was moderate for control-oriented participants, and was least pronounced for participants with an impersonal orientation. It should be noted that this differs somewhat from the effect of motivational orientation on type of element reported earlier in that it is linear. Although the direction is the same, with autonomous participants showing the least defensive accounting, control and impersonal participants did not differ from each other earlier in the number of mitigating versus aggravating elements. In contrast, control and impersonal participants differed in complexity, with impersonal participants being even more defensive than control-oriented ones (i.e., they decreased the complexity of mitigating elements and increased the complexity of aggravating elements).

In addition, there was a tendency that approached significance for the greater complexity of mitigating elements to be moderated by status, $F(1, 78) = 3.14, p < .08, r = .20$. An examination of the means suggests that the difference between the complexity of mitigating and aggravating elements was greater in accounts to high-status victims ($M_s = 17.16$ and 1.84 , respectively) than to low-status victims ($M_s = 15.63$ and 2.39 , respectively).

Account length, greater use of mitigation, and complexity all reflect perpetrator effort to restore equilibrium. It is important to note that the three indexes show quite consistent patterns of perpetrator exertion following face-threatening incidents.

Number of Lies

Lying is a particularly hazardous tactic for refusing responsibility because in the event of exposure it is extremely difficult for liars to restore face. Notwithstanding, approximately one third of participants ($n = 31$) told at least one outright fabrication; the number of lies was counted and analyzed. Elements were considered lies if they showed blatant contradiction of scenario facts. For example, a participant was asked to imagine that she had crashed a car while speeding. When she wrote that the accident was caused by another driver crossing the line, it was coded a lie. Mean judge concordance for the number of lies was .74. This is lower than the overall concordance; perhaps participants' inventiveness in exaggeration made lies more difficult to judge than other elements. Lower concordance does not introduce systematic error, however; therefore, it would increase the possibility of making a Type II rather than a Type I error.

There was a main effect of motivational orientation on the number of lies told. Autonomous perpetrators told fewer lies than control and impersonal perpetrators (see Table 7), contrast $F(1, 78) = 4.56, p < .05, r = .24$. This was qualified by a Closeness \times Orientation (weights: 2, –1, –1) interaction, contrast $F(1, 78) = 4.83, p < .05, r = .24$. Simple effects tests revealed no effect of motivation orientation on the number of lies told to friends ($F < 1$) but did reveal a significant effect on the number of lies told to acquaintances, contrast $F(1, 78) = 6.03, p < .03, r = .27$. Hence, autonomous participants differed from others in that they were more honest with acquaintances.

There also was a main effect of blame on the number of lies, with high-blame participants telling more lies than low- and moderate-blame participants ($M_s = .048, .078$, and $.340$ for low-, moderate-, and high-blame participants, respectively), contrast $F(1, 78) = 24.51, p < .001, r = .49$. When perpetrators' own faces are threatened, they apparently become reckless and use the drastic refusal strategy of lying.

Expected Future Relationship

In conjunction with accounts, we examined perpetrators' expectations about the effect of predicaments on future relationships. There was a main effect of blame ($M_s = 5.38, 4.69$, and 4.18 for low-, moderate-, and high-blame participants, weights of 1, 1, and –2), contrast $F(1, 78) = 10.86, p < .005, r = .35$. Hence, highly blameworthy perpetrators recognized that their culpability would harm the relationship; this is interesting in light of the lesser mitigation and complexity they used. Although highly blameworthy perpetrators recognized the relationship peril, they nonetheless increased attention to their own faces, tolerating further injury to the relationship. Taken together, the results attest to the crucial need to maintain one's face in social exchange.

There also was a main effect of sex, with women expecting a more negative future than men ($M_s = 4.47$ and 5.02), $F(1, 78) = 4.80, p < .03, r = .24$. This may underlie women's greater facework effort; it is not clear from the current study which of several mechanisms explains the finding, however. It is possible that one sex is more "correct" (i.e., more realistic) in predicting

Table 7
Mean Numbers and Standard Deviations of Lies as a Function of
Motivation Orientation and Closeness

Closeness	Motivation orientation			<i>M</i>
	Autonomy	Control	Impersonal	
Friend				
<i>M</i>	0.12 (.08)	0.09 (–.05)	0.15 (–.03)	0.12
<i>SD</i>	0.14	0.15	0.25	
Acquaintance				
<i>M</i>	0.04 (–.08)	0.25 (.05)	0.29 (.03)	0.19
<i>SD</i>	0.08	0.22	0.45	0.25
Mean across closeness	0.08	0.17	0.22	
<i>SD</i>	0.11	0.19	0.35	

Note. Interaction residuals (which represent the interaction effect with both main effects removed) appear in parentheses and are used to interpret the two-way interaction.

future relationships than the other. It is alternatively possible that outcome depends on the sex of the perpetrator, with women receiving worse consequences for the same accounting behavior.

Using Aggravation and Expectations for Future Relationship

In addition to the above analysis, we calculated a categorical variable that designated whether participants used aggravating elements; this was possible because only 60% used any aggravation. We examined the aggravation-used variable expecting that perpetrators who used aggravating statements might fail to recognize the potential future impact of predicaments.

There was a main effect of the aggravation-used variable, with participants who used aggravating elements expecting more positive future relationships than participants who did not use them (see Table 8), $F(1, 84) = 7.48, p < .01, r = .29$. It is interesting to note that perpetrators who use justifications and refusals of their harmful behavior expect rosier futures than perpetrators who offer only mitigation. This suggests that individuals who respond defensively after wrongdoing are oblivious not only to the outcomes of predicaments but also to the insult

their aggravation adds to the original injury. Perhaps a basic egocentrism is associated with the tendency to use aggravating accounts.

This main effect was qualified by an interaction with sex that approached significance, Aggravation Used \times Sex $F(1, 84) = 3.04, p < .09, r = .19$. As seen in Table 8, the tendency for users of aggravating elements to expect better relationships was somewhat more pronounced among men.

Taken together, the results suggest that the tendency to protect one's face and fail to repair another's involves a lack of sensitivity to interpersonal consequences, perhaps especially among men. Perpetrators who used aggravation anticipated neither the repercussions of predicaments nor the affront inherent in their own responses. We speculate that those using justification and refusal may be puzzled and frustrated by relationship deterioration because they fail to appreciate the underlying processes.

Perpetrator's Situational Self-Esteem

We also were interested in how perpetrators would feel about themselves if the victim did and did not forgive them. The two self-esteem questions were analyzed as a repeated measure for this purpose ("How will you feel about yourself if the person forgives/does NOT forgive you?").

It is not surprising that forgiven perpetrators feel better (see Table 9), $F(1, 77)^7 = 198.47, p < .001, r = .85$, than unforgiven perpetrators. There also was a main effect of blame on self-esteem, contrast $F(1, 77) = 7.18, p < .01, r = .29$ ($M_s = 4.70, 4.49$, and 3.87 , weights: 1, 1, and -2 for low-, moderate-, and high-blame participants, respectively). This indicates that high-blame participants anticipate feeling worse about themselves relative to low- and moderate-blame ones, independent of forgiveness. Apparently perpetrators judge their own behavior.

There also was evidence for sex differences in situational self-esteem; a Forgiveness \times Sex interaction indicated that being un-

Table 8
Means and Standard Deviations of Expected Future
Relationship by Sex and Aggravation-Used Variable

Aggravation used	Sex of participant		<i>M</i>
	Female	Male	
None			
<i>M</i>	4.11 ^a	3.97 ^b	4.04
<i>SD</i>	1.69	1.18	
Some			
<i>M</i>	4.40 ^c	5.28 ^d	4.84
<i>SD</i>	1.70	1.80	

Note. Higher numbers indicate a more positive expected future relationship.

^a $n = 21$. ^b $n = 17$. ^c $n = 27$. ^d $n = 31$.

⁷ Degrees of freedom are 77 because 1 participant did not complete both situational self-esteem ratings.

Table 9
Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem
by Forgiveness, Sex, and Closeness

Closeness	If forgiven		If not forgiven	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Friend				
<i>M</i>	6.03	5.42	2.37	3.19
<i>SD</i>	1.82	2.06	1.47	1.18
Acquaintance				
<i>M</i>	5.69	5.93	2.95	3.25
<i>SD</i>	2.18	1.83	1.79	1.39
Mean across closeness	5.86	5.68	2.66	3.22
<i>SD</i>	2.00	1.95	1.63	1.60

Note. Higher numbers indicate higher self-esteem.

forgiven tended to deflate women's self-esteem more than men's, $F(1, 77) = 3.44, p < .07, r = .21$ (see Table 9). Although the two-way interaction was only marginally significant, it was moderated by a Forgiveness \times Sex \times Close interaction $F(1, 77) = 12.30, p < .001, r = .37$. Simple effects tests of the three-way interaction showed a main effect of sex on being unforgiven by friends, $F(1, 78) = 5.51, p < .02, r = .26$, and a main effect of closeness for women when unforgiven, $F(1, 39) = 8.20, p < .01, r = .42$. Hence, being unforgiven by friends harmed women's self-esteem more than men's.

Possible Explanations for Sex Differences

Consistent with past studies, women attended more to others' face concerns: Women gave longer accounts, used more mitigation, and used more complexity, especially in mitigation. We were able to examine whether the relationship maintenance hypothesis, the social power hypothesis, or both, underlie sex differences. Specifically, we examined the effects that included closeness and status for interactions with sex. If women make more effort in giving an account out of concern for relatedness, then closeness effects should be moderated by sex. Conversely, if women are motivated to restore equilibrium because they are low in social power, then status effects should be qualified by sex.

We examined all closeness and status effects for the three dependent variables reflecting accounting effort (length, element type, and complexity) for moderating effects of sex. It must be noted, however, that there were more effects in these data for closeness than for status, offering more opportunity to evaluate the relationship maintenance than the social power hypothesis.

In an examination of the social power hypothesis, no variable showed supporting evidence: The tendencies of perpetrators to use more mitigation for high-status victims and greater complexity of mitigation to high-status acquaintances were not further qualified by sex (both F s < 1).

Regarding the relationship maintenance hypothesis, the dependent variables of length and element type showed no evidence; the tendencies to give longer and more mitigating accounts to friends than acquaintances were not moderated by

sex (both F s < 1). There was some evidence for greater female motivation to preserve relationships, however, in effects on complexity, as reported in Table 5. Specifically, women gave more complex accounts to friends than to acquaintances and gave more complex accounts to friends than men did. Furthermore, there was a nonsignificant trend consistent with the relationship maintenance prediction for the greater complexity of mitigation to friends to be more pronounced for women, $F(1, 78) = 2.75, p < .10, r = .18$.

Hence, in these data there is no evidence that women's greater effort to restore equilibrium after predicaments results from greater sensitivity to status, but there is some support for the relationship maintenance hypothesis. The greater facework performed by women therefore is motivated at least in part by the desire to preserve relationships. Because of the difference in effects of the closeness and status variables, we can claim support for the relationship maintenance hypothesis but cannot eliminate the possibility that social power also contributes to sex differences in accounting.

General Discussion

The present study offers some unique insight into perpetrator responses to predicaments. First, it gives evidence that accounting shows similarities to other interpersonal behaviors associated with motivational orientation: Autonomy predicts openness and honesty, whereas control is associated with defensiveness (Hodgins et al., 1996). Impersonally oriented participants were as self-protective as control-oriented and in some ways even more so. In contrast to others, autonomous participants concentrated on repairing damage inflicted on another's face, with less defense of their own faces. We suggest that autonomous people have a higher threshold for experiencing face threat and consequently are less likely to respond egocentrically from a defensive interpersonal stance.

Further support for the face-threat threshold hypothesis of motivational differences appears in the use of deception: Impersonally oriented participants told more lies than control-oriented participants, who deceived others more than autonomous participants did. Other results reported here (i.e., for blameworthiness) imply that deception is a rash strategy that increases with own-face threat. The relative increase in lying among control and impersonal participants relative to autonomous participants mirrors the increased lying in high-blame participants relative to low- and moderate-blame ones. The most parsimonious interpretation of both lying patterns is that own-face threat results in defensive, self-protective maneuvers, including distortion. The degree of face threat experienced is increased by the situational factor of high blameworthiness and by having a control or impersonal motivational orientation, both of which lead to greater deception in accounting.

According to self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 1990), autonomous behavior arises from internal motivation. The present study extends empirical support for this into the interpersonal domain of conflict management with the results on deception and relationship closeness. Autonomous participants were honest across relationships (friends and acquaintances). In contrast, control and impersonal partici-

pants were honest selectively; their behavior was determined by the external situational factor of type of relationship with the target person. Presumably, the greater motivation for maintaining friendships constrained dishonesty by control and impersonal participants; with acquaintances there was less at stake, so they were more willing to lie. Autonomous participants were honest consistently, even with acquaintances; their behavior was guided by internal choice rather than an external situational factor.

Beyond the use of deception, the primary distinction in accounting was between the autonomy orientation and the other two: Autonomous participants offered more repair than control and impersonal participants for face damage of people they wronged. In lying, impersonal participants were more defensive than control participants; however, when distributing care to victims' and their own faces, both impersonal and control participants showed a pattern of vigilant self-protection. Perhaps interpersonal wariness becomes especially necessary when one's locus of causality is perceived to be other than intrinsic; a lack of basic trust in one's own regulation may circumscribe openness toward others. Although paradoxical for some conceptualizations of autonomy (for a discussion, see Koestner & Losier, *in press*), these data are consistent with past research showing that the interpersonal behavior of autonomous individuals is characterized by openness and positivity, whereas control and impersonal orientations predict defensiveness (Hodgins et al., 1996; Hodgins & Deci, 1995).

In addition to motivational differences, the present study provides further evidence for a curvilinear relation between blameworthiness and attention to victims' face damage (cf. Gonzales et al., 1992). Although perpetrators overall showed a pronounced tendency to use mitigation to repair others' faces, this preference was weaker among highly blameworthy perpetrators, who increased defense of their own faces. The pattern is quite robust across dependent variables; relative to low and moderate blame, high blame resulted in shorter accounts, greater use of self-protective aggravating elements, less complex use of mitigation but more complex use of aggravation, and use of more outright lies. The defensive pattern occurred despite the fact that high-blame participants were not ignorant of the consequences of predicaments: They envisioned negative repercussions of predicaments for future relationships with victims. Nonetheless, offenders increased attention to their own faces and decreased care of victims' faces when offenders were most deserving of censure. Apologies are especially critical for relationship repair when wrongdoers are highly responsible; ironically, however, it is precisely under high culpability that offenders express the least candid contrition, instead incorporating greater defense into accounts. The defensive response is consistent with Schonbach's (1990) belief that accounts are made egocentrically without consideration of others' face needs; apparently the face threat concomitant with high blameworthiness increases egocentricity.

Some theorists have posited that people use accounts for impression management (Schlenker, 1980), strategically offering excuses to mitigate others' anger (Weiner, Amirkhan, Folkes, & Verette, 1987) or from concern for others' feelings (Folkes, 1982). Our results are inconsistent with these "cold" motives

in that under high blame, participants instead increased aggravation, which could be expected only to exacerbate tension and lead to negative victim evaluation. Hence, it is difficult to understand increased self-defense as adaptive, effective management of others' impressions; defensive responses would have to be considered failures of impression management.

Defensiveness is explained more adequately by Goffman's (1955) symbolic interactionist perspective. In this view the moral worth and social identity of participants are supported by shared interaction rituals that proceed smoothly when people cooperate in a mutual way. When face-threatening predicaments occur, the symbolic implications for participants' identities lead to disequilibrium that requires re-establishment of each party's worthiness of respect. In particular, when one person is highly responsible for an infraction, a grave challenge arises regarding her or his face. Furthermore, perpetrator face threat arises not solely from the victim's evaluation but also from the perpetrator's own self-view, as evidenced by the effect of blame on self-esteem even when forgiveness was controlled.

Thus, when a severe threat to the offender's face occurs, renegotiating his or her own identity increases in priority, even at the expense of undermining his or her affiliation with others. We view defensive strategies as own-face restorative tactics used when one's face is in jeopardy and as tactics that compete with and necessarily decrease the relationship nurturing that occurs through facework. Defensive accounting thus is motivated by a need to restore one's identity at least partly in one's own eyes rather than simply to manage another's impression.

Although we interpret an increase in the use of refusals as defensive, it is possible to take an entirely different perspective. One might argue that believable refusals are expected and even necessary in severe predicaments because they establish the perpetrator as morally worthy and lessen the relational consequences of the predicament.⁸ After all, justifications and refusals are aggravating only if the victim experiences them that way; if the victim accepts refusals as legitimate the predicament is resolved and equilibrium is restored.

A fascinating issue underlying this interpretation is whether to view accounts as the negotiation of "reality" that consists of whatever one convinces the other to accept, or, alternatively, according to the actual facts of the predicament (as we have done). An important assumption of our interpretation is that if the objective facts of the predicament were known by both participants, accounts could be classified along a mitigation-aggravation continuum. The continuum would include an endpoint of other-face mitigation with honest acknowledgement, apology, and restitution, and another endpoint of other-face aggravation with justifications, refusals, and deception. Of course, in real life, both participants may not have access to all information; indeed, predicaments may be ambiguous, subject to different valid interpretations, and without objective "facts." In that case, reality negotiated between participants is the only reality. In other failure events, however (e.g., the hypothetical ones in this study and many actual events), there are objective facts that perpetrators may acknowledge or deny, in effect perform-

⁸ We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this possibility.

ing varying degrees of their own and others' facework. Although factual clarity sometimes is missing, its presence here allows the categorization of accounts along a mitigation-aggravation continuum. Hence, there is good internal validity in viewing justifications and refusals as defensive. Furthermore, because defensiveness occurred in response to a manipulated variable that has a real-life analog (i.e., blame), we posit that the results reflect a causal direction in actual facework processes.

It is important to note that although aggravating accounts probably impede relationships, there are excellent reasons to use aggravation. Most obviously, when a reproach is unjust, self-respecting recipients often respond with indignation and emphatic refusals. Thus, what we term aggravation may be most adaptive sometimes; indeed, failure to use it might be problematic.

Regarding sex differences, the accounting pattern of male perpetrators closely mirrors the increased defensiveness of non-autonomous and high-blame participants: Relative to women, men provided shorter accounts, more aggravation, and less complex mitigating but more complex aggravating elements. Hence, maleness may be viewed as another determinant of threshold for face threat and, consequently, of defensiveness. In contrast to high-blame participants, however, men who used aggravation were somewhat less cognizant of the implications for future relationships. Men who used aggravating strategies tended to expect brighter futures relative to other participants. This result implies that men who use defensive accounting may lack a realistic understanding of relationship processes.

Of course, the sex differences replicate reliable past findings showing that female offenders attend more to victims' face concerns. A unique contribution of the current data, however, was the test of two hypotheses about women's greater attention to others' faces. Although the test is not definitive, because only two status effects were obtained, neither provided evidence for the social power hypothesis. Hence we found no support that women's greater use of mitigation is motivated by sensitivity to status, presumably resulting from low power.

In contrast, there was evidence for the relationship maintenance hypothesis, that women address others' face threat in order to preserve relationships. Specifically, women's preference for mitigating strategies and their use of greater complexity was especially pronounced for victims who were friends, indicating that women increase effort more than men do when friendship is at stake. Hence, women's solicitousness toward others' faces at least partly reflects greater concern for preserving relationships.

Women's relationship concern may be in part esteem-related; women predicted that their self-esteem would be harmed to a greater extent than men's by a lack of forgiveness, especially when victims were friends. This supports a suggestion made elsewhere (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991), that women's identities may be based in connections with others to a greater extent than men's.

Given accounting sex differences, if men's and women's explanations have the same effect, then women may defuse predicaments more effectively. It is plausible, however, that accounts offered by men and women have differential effectiveness. If men are allowed by social convention to use more refusals, re-

fusals from men may be received differently than those from women. Results of accounting sex differences on victim evaluations remain to be tested.

Two past theoretical statements offer possible mechanisms underlying sex differences in accounting. The escalation theory of conflict (Schonbach, 1990) assumes that humans desire control over the social environment and that this has a reciprocal relation with self-esteem. When something goes awry, the senses of control and self-esteem both become vulnerable, leading to short-sighted, egocentric accounting. Schonbach proposed that men have a greater desire for control and therefore give more defensive accounts. Hence, sex differences in desire for control is a potential explanation for accounting differences.

From a different perspective, a theory of defensive perception suggests that emotional arousal accompanying threat is a necessary condition for defensiveness (Assor, 1987). Although not discussed by Assor, there is unrelated evidence that men experience greater autonomic arousal (Buck, 1984; Pennebaker & Roberts, 1992). To the extent that men are more autonomically reactive, they may be physiologically predisposed to psychological defensiveness. It is feasible that men's greater defense in accounting is partly a function of a lower threshold for arousal and greater vulnerability to experiencing threat.

Although several factors increased defensiveness, it is important to note that these were relative increases. Overall, the current study replicates the previously well-demonstrated and vigorous human preference to apologize by offering mitigating accounts. The majority of accounts endorsed a shared norm of apologetic discourse as the appropriate response when another is harmed. Greater attention to victims' faces than to one's own face still was evident when defensiveness increased, albeit to a smaller degree.

A further contribution of the present study was the investigation of relationship closeness and accounting, for which some theorists have advanced hypotheses that seem contradictory to our results. For example, Scott and Lyman (1968) suggested that the intimate linguistic style used in close relationships may require less thorough accounting because of numerous shared understandings. Similarly, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed that requests are legitimate in close relationships and thus involve less face threat and politeness. However, the current study shows the opposite relation: When victims were friends (rather than acquaintances), perpetrators paid more attention to others' face damage and tolerated more threat to their own faces.

Perhaps the seeming contradiction can be reconciled as follows: People may be less polite with close others when making legitimate requests or in minor failure events. However, perhaps serious predicaments introduce uncertainty in relationships that requires circumspect facework. After all, the consequences of the scenarios were neither legitimate nor minor. Delineating situational determinants of facework and politeness in close relationships remains an intriguing question for research.

In the current study, victim status motivated predicament resolution in a manner analogous to relationship closeness: Perpetrators worked harder accounting to high-status victims. Presumably, perpetrators have more to lose when the victim is a friend or of high status. However, the results for closeness were

stronger than those for status (nine effects of closeness, two of status). Manipulation checks reported earlier show large effect sizes both for closeness ($r = .70$) and status ($r = .62$); thus, closeness may be a more important influence than status within the parameters of this study. There may be situations untested here (e.g., formal relationships or high stakes) in which status is a decisive factor, however.

We have suggested that perpetrators risk relinquishing relationships only when their own face costs become so high that the need for own-face repair competes with the priority of relationship maintenance. This assumes a basic desire among perpetrators to maintain relationships. Another causal path for the relation between threat and accounts is possible: Face threat may be so aversive that it directly decreases motivation for the relationship. Stated differently, perpetrators may relinquish relationships in which they experience predicaments—not because saving face is a priority but simply because they do not want to keep relationships in which face threat occurs. Consistent with this, past work has shown that justifications are more acceptable to actors whose goal is to terminate a relationship compared to those who wish to maintain it (Hupka et al., 1987). The relevance of this to the current data is that control and impersonal participants, men, and high-blameworthy perpetrators may provide more aggravating accounts in part because their interest in the relationship is diminished by face threat. Underlying systematic use of this approach, of course, would be an unrealistic expectation for conflict-free relations. Given the ubiquity of conflict between humans, the eventual outcome of terminating relationships in which predicaments occur would be alienation! The present study cannot distinguish between the own-face-priority and the decreased-relationship-motivation explanation.

In accord with Schonbach's (1990) taxonomy, we categorized lies as refusals, the most face-threatening account element. Alternatively, it might be argued that when lies are successful they represent face *management* rather than threat (cf. Saarni, 1993). It is true that perpetrator deception may manage face threat "successfully" when undetected, in the sense that unaware victims do not experience face threat. However, we think it appropriate to categorize lies as face threatening for two reasons. First, the enormous potential for exacerbating face damage in the conceivable event of exposure makes lying risky. Second, it is possible that the mere act of introducing deception as face management affects the liar even if undetected. That is, except for the most sociopathic people among us, perhaps the presence of undetected deception changes behavior and relationship processes, hindering possibilities for openness and intimacy.

We have interpreted account length and complexity as reflecting effort to restore the other person's face. Alternatively, it is possible to argue that length does not necessarily represent effort to restore the other's face; longer accounts could be directed at damaging rather than repairing face. However, our results and the results of others (Gonzales et al., 1990, 1992) do not support this. Specifically, the length and complexity dependent variables show patterns of effects for independent variables similar to the account type dependent variable. In light of their good face validity, we argue that the most parsimonious way to

interpret length and complexity is as indexes of perpetrator effort that are nonredundant with account type.

There undoubtedly are complexities in real-life conflicts that were not captured in our experimental manipulations. For example, the scenarios clearly designated participants as perpetrators; in actual conflicts perpetrator and victim roles may be ambiguous or at least construed that way. Consequently, there may be a process of negotiating roles that is fascinating in its own right but not addressed here.

It is the central hypothesis of one theorist that, because of structural constraints of account episodes and humans' egocentric dispositions, there is a high likelihood that conflict episodes will escalate and founder, disrupting relationships (Schonbach, 1990). While acknowledging the myriad ways the restorative process can go awry, Tavuchis (1991) asserted hopefully that apologies nonetheless emerge as "a remarkable response to the obstinate facts of moral trespass and malice in human affairs" (p. 46). Many questions remain about factors determining whether episodes lead to alienation or reconciliation. This study provides insight into a few mechanisms that influence one phase of conflict negotiation, that of perpetrator accounting.

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