

THE FORGIVING ORGANIZATION: A MULTILEVEL MODEL OF FORGIVENESS AT WORK

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We introduce a multilevel model of workplace forgiveness and present forgiveness climate as an organizational-level phenomenon that explains when and why employees respond to conflict prosocially. We begin with an examination of the core cultural values that allow forgiveness climates to emerge, including restorative justice, compassion, and temperance. We then explore how the organizational environment, organizational practices, and leader attributes produce these core cultural values and facilitate forgiveness climate emergence. Drawing from a sensemaking perspective, we subsequently examine the cross-level impact of forgiveness climate on individual employees, as well as the boundary conditions of these effects. We conclude with a discussion of our model's contributions and implications for future theory building and empirical research.

Conflict is a ubiquitous part of everyday life in organizations. As noted by Katz and Kahn, "Every aspect of organizational life that creates order and coordination of effort must overcome other tendencies to action, and in that fact lies the potentiality for conflict" (1978: 617). Twenty-first-century trends toward globalization and increasingly team-based organizing furthermore suggest that the frequency and intensity of interpersonal conflict at work will only continue to increase (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). Given the ubiquity of conflict in organizations, an important question for scholars and practitioners alike is how employees respond to conflict after it occurs. Do offenders respond antisocially through repeated aggression and derogation,

or prosocially through apology and compensation? Do victims likewise respond antisocially through revenge and avoidance, or prosocially through benevolence and understanding?

Our purpose in this article is to explore these questions through the lens of forgiveness, with a particular focus on how forgiveness emerges at the organizational level and influences employee behavior. In recent years scholars have displayed a growing interest in the causes and consequences of forgiveness (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010; Karremans & Van Lange, 2008). Nonetheless, there is a notable lack of forgiveness scholarship in the organizational sciences (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003; Bright & Exline, 2011; Cox, 2011). Instead, organizational scholars have overwhelmingly emphasized the "dark side" of workplace conflict, including revenge, avoidance, and aggression (Barling, Dupré, & Kelloway, 2009; Tripp & Bies, 2009). Research that does examine forgiveness in the workplace almost exclusively focuses on individual, microlevel processes (Aquino, Tripp, & Bies, 2001, 2006) and generally ignores the role of the organizational context. A myopic focus on forgiveness at the individual level risks an oversimplification of the processes through which forgiveness and other prosocial offense responses emerge, particularly in organizational

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settings where the fundamentally multilevel nature of employee behavior is a central concern.

In this article we move beyond the individual level and argue that forgiveness can exist at higher levels of analysis. We start with the assumption that organizational contexts can provide strong situations (Johns, 2006) that serve to define socially shared and normative ways of responding to situations that induce harm. Drawing and expanding on research on forgiveness in organizations at the individual level, we specifically introduce the new construct of *forgiveness climate*—the shared perception that empathic, benevolent responses to conflict from victims and offenders are rewarded, supported, and expected in the organization—and present a multilevel model of its antecedents and consequences. After differentiating forgiveness climate from related constructs, we draw on a number of real-world examples that illustrate how forgiveness has emerged as a collective phenomenon in a diverse set of organizations and groups. We then advance propositions that delineate precisely how forgiveness climates emerge in organizations. We begin with an examination of the core cultural values that allow forgiveness climates to arise, including restorative justice, compassion, and temperance. We explore how the organizational environment, organizational practices, and leader attributes produce these core cultural values and drive their effect on forgiveness climate. Drawing from a sensemaking perspective, we then examine the cross-level emotional, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral consequences of forgiveness climate on individual employees, as well as the boundary conditions of these effects. In the final sections of the article, we examine the lasting consequences of forgiveness climate for individual employees and conclude with a discussion of our model's contributions and implications for future theory building and empirical research.

FORGIVENESS IN ORGANIZATIONS: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Social scientists have adopted many conceptualizations of forgiveness, alternatively characterizing the construct as an emotion, a decision, a behavior, and a motivational change (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). In recent years scholars have begun to coalesce

around the conceptualization of forgiveness as a motivational phenomenon with affective, cognitive, and behavioral antecedents and consequences (Fehr et al., 2010; Karremans & Van Lange, 2008). Forgiveness can therefore be most centrally characterized as an "intraindividual, prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor that is situated within a specific interpersonal context" (McCullough et al., 2000: 9). As victims of transgressions come to forgive, motivations for revenge and avoidance give way to motivations that are benevolent and prosocial. A range of corresponding emotional and cognitive changes are associated with these shifts, including a release from anger and a reduced tendency to ruminate over the offense. Importantly, forgiveness does not imply condoning, excusing, forgetting, or denying the harmful actions of an offender (Coyle & Enright, 1997). Rather, forgiveness is an effortful, transformative process that occurs despite the recognition that an offense occurred and was wrong.¹

Several studies have demonstrated the existence of individual-level forgiveness in organizational contexts (e.g., Aquino et al., 2001, 2006). Much less evident, however, are examples of forgiving organizations, where forgiveness is not simply a sporadic response to everyday conflict but a fundamental, emergent characteristic of the organization itself. At first blush the concept of a forgiving organization might seem antithetical to the dominant business ethos, especially in the United States and other Western countries (Stone, 2002). Nonetheless, there is growing evidence to suggest that forgiveness can emerge at the organizational level.

The health care sector stands out as a compelling example of the potential for organizational-level forgiveness and associated values to emerge. As described by Stanton (2011), in one Arizona medical system, employees developed a forgiveness counseling program to facilitate a restorative approach to conflict and to encourage benevolent conflict responses. Coworkers

¹ Beyond the social sciences, much of the debate surrounding forgiveness focuses on its morality. Whereas most philosophers and religious scholars paint a positive picture of forgiveness (Griswold, 2007), some have argued that forgiveness undermines victims' dignity and encourages further conflict (Murphy, 2005). We proceed with the perspective that forgiveness is generally positive but acknowledge that worthy philosophical debates persist.

were invited to spend an hour talking through their conflict episodes with the offender and a third party in order to promote forgiveness (see also Berlinger, 2003). The initiative was an immense success, with over 100 employees signing up for the program upon its initiation.

In his writings on organizational virtuousness, Cameron (2003, 2005) details the story of Griffin Hospital and the emergence of a forgiveness climate during a difficult downsizing. Whereas downsizing almost universally leads to animosity and anger, Griffin's CEO employed a model of employee-focused leadership, with a persistent focus on employees' needs and concerns. He specifically focused on building high-quality relationships with his employees and emphasized the meaningfulness of their work. According to Cameron, "The organization institutionalized forgiveness, optimism, trust, and integrity as expected behaviors" (2005: 11), often through prosocial organizational practices. When a nurse was diagnosed with terminal cancer, the company allowed his coworkers to donate vacation time so he could continue to receive a paycheck until he passed away. Through Griffin's culture of compassion, forgiveness emerged as a normative response to conflict. Employees' daily discourse "commonly included words such as love, hope, compassion, forgiveness, and humility" (Cameron, 2005: 12). As one employee succinctly noted, "We are in a very competitive health care market, so we have differentiated ourselves through our compassionate and caring culture. He [the CEO] got the support of everyone by his genuineness and personal concern. . . . It wasn't hard to forgive" (Cameron, 2005: 12).

Wooten and Crane provide a similar example of organizational-level forgiveness from a nurse in one Midwestern hospital's midwifery unit, where prosocial responses to conflict are the norm:

We place a value on getting along. We have a need for harmonious relationships and are willing to work on this. This does not mean we always agree and that we don't get angry with each other. Our group is able to feel anger, talk about it, forgive and hug after. We are all human and in need of understanding. How well we treat each other transcends how well we treat our patients (2004: 859).

These examples highlight the fact that forgiveness can become part and parcel of daily

life in organizations, and they hint at potential factors that might enable forgiveness climates to emerge. Compared to organizations in other sectors, hospitals are highly interdependent entities, where employees must work together to achieve their goals (Klein, Ziegert, Knight, & Yan, 2006). Often arranged as nonprofits with altruistic goals (Jones, Felps, & Bigley, 2007), hospitals furthermore need to respond to a wide range of stakeholders and are deeply integrated into their communities (Proenca, Rosko, & Zinn, 2000). Compassion is frequently discussed as a core organizational value, and failures in compassion are harshly criticized (Renzenbrink, 2011). At Griffin a servant leader enabled forgiveness to emerge by putting his employees first (Cameron, 2003). In the Arizona medical system discussed by Stanton (2011), forgiveness was maintained through an organizational system that allowed for a restorative approach to conflict.

In further keeping with the notion of forgiveness as a phenomenon that can emerge as a norm within large-scale groups, evidence abounds that cultural communities vary dramatically in how much they expect and value forgiveness. Examples of communities renowned for forgiveness norms include the Amish (Kraybill, Nolt, & Weaver-Zercher, 2007), the indigenous population of Hawaii (Shook, 1986), and the Māori (Spiller, Erakovic, Henare, & Pio, 2010).

FORGIVENESS CLIMATE: DEFINITION AND DISTINCTIONS

To delineate the concept of organizational-level forgiveness, we begin with a definition of forgiveness climate as the shared perception that empathic, benevolent responses to conflict from victims and offenders are rewarded, supported, and expected in the organization. Like other climate constructs, forgiveness climate focuses on employee perceptions of the behaviors that occur on a daily basis and are supported by the organization (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2011). It is an "abstraction of the environment" built on employees' everyday experiences (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003: 572). Unlike generic climate models that focus on the organizational context in its entirety, forgiveness climate draws from the strategic approach to climate research, which focuses on specific constructs

that reflect an organization's goals and can be directly linked to closely aligned outcomes (Schneider, 1975). Examples from the existing strategic climate literature include service climate, which is primarily aligned with customer service outcomes, and safety climate, which is primarily aligned with employee and customer safety outcomes (Schneider, Salvaggio, & Subirats, 2002; Zohar & Luria, 2004). Forgiveness climate thus focuses on the organization's dedication to a prosocial approach to conflict management and its aligned individual-level behaviors.²

Forgiveness climate bears similarities to other strategic climates, notably climate for justice and psychological safety climate. Nonetheless, forgiveness climate possesses a number of key characteristics that distinguish it from these related constructs. Climate for justice has been hypothesized by Ambrose and Schminke as a construct that "guides fair behavior in organizations" (2007: 408). As we later discuss in our section on core values, justice and forgiveness are closely related phenomena that both concern how individuals respond to conflict. Nonetheless, they are distinct. At the individual level, justice is neither a necessary condition for forgiveness nor sufficient. On the one hand, justice does not always lead victims to view their offenders in a more benevolent light. When focused on retribution, justice can, in fact, make victims feel angrier and cause them to ruminate over the catalyzing event even more (Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2009). On the other hand, it is not uncommon for individuals to offer forgiveness in the complete absence of justice. Examples include the metaphor of forgiveness as a "gift" and the notion of "unconditional forgiveness" (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). At the organizational level, forgiveness climate and climate for justice imply an additional key distinction. Whereas climate for justice is primarily victim focused, forgiveness cli-

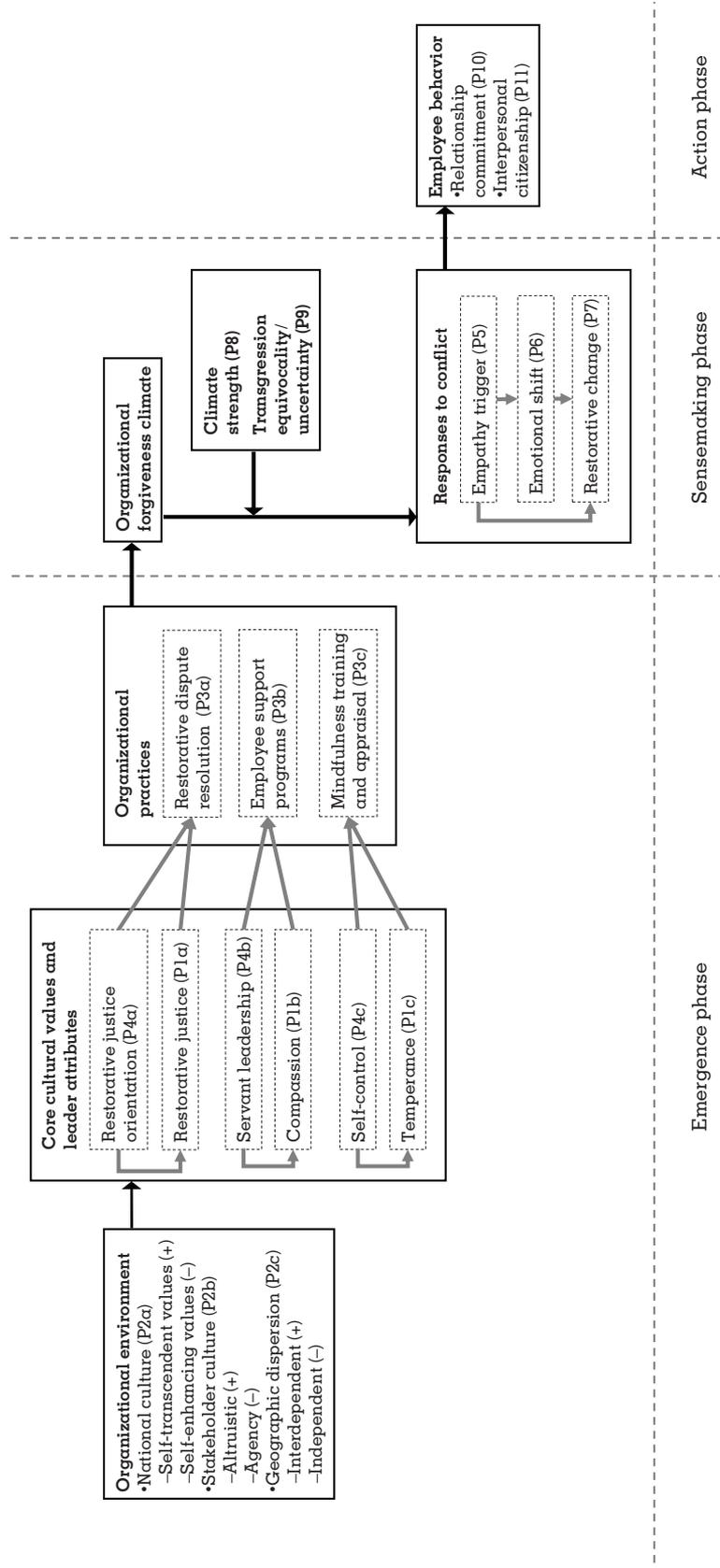
mate entails strong expectations for offender behavior as well, such as apology.

Forgiveness climate is also distinct from psychological safety climate, which refers to "a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up" (Edmondson, 1999: 354). Forgiveness climate and psychological safety climate are similar in their focus on how employees react to potentially conflict-inducing behavior. Nonetheless, two key differences should be noted. First, forgiveness climate and psychological safety climate differ in the types of catalyzing behaviors involved. Psychological safety climate typically promotes an environment where employees "feel a sense of openness and avoid taking task disagreements personally" (Bradley, Postlethwaite, Klotz, Hamdani, & Brown, 2012: 152). Forgiveness climate conversely focuses on conflict where disagreements become personal and a victim-offender dynamic emerges. Second and most critically, psychological safety climate and forgiveness climate differ in the motives underlying a constructive response to the potentially harmful event. With psychological safety climate, the motive is to withhold judgment so that employees can feel free to express a broad range of ideas. With forgiveness climate, the motive is to respond to offenses with benevolence, despite the fact that the catalyzing event was inherently disreputable.

Figure 1 presents our multilevel model of forgiveness at work, which identifies three distinct phases through which forgiveness climate emerges and influences employee outcomes. First is the *emergence* phase, which identifies how forgiveness climate initially develops within organizations and is sustained over time. Here we argue that organizations' core cultural values provide the bedrock of forgiveness climate emergence. Among these values are restorative justice, compassion, and temperance. Drawing from the "open systems" model of organizations as responsive to their external environments (Katz & Kahn, 1978), we furthermore examine multiple pathways to the emergence of organizations' cultural values and forgiveness climates. First, we examine variables associated with the environments in which our three focal cultural values emerge. These include national culture, stakeholder culture, and geographic dispersion. Second, we examine the more proximal role of factors central to employees' day-to-day

² It is important to note that although we refer to forgiveness climate as an "organizational-level" phenomenon, it can be expected to emerge at more localized levels (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). For example, although a forgiveness climate emerged in the midwifery subunit described in Wooten and Crane (2004), a parallel climate was not observed in the hospital as a whole. In the discussion we elaborate on this point and its implications for climate measurement.

FIGURE 1
A Multilevel Model of Workplace Forgiveness



experiences, including organizational practices (restorative dispute resolution systems, employee support programs, and mindfulness training and appraisal) and leader attributes (restorative justice orientation, servant leadership, and self-control).

The second phase in our forgiveness climate model is the *sensemaking* phase. Here we examine how forgiveness climates enhance the chronic accessibility of prosocial responses to discrete conflict episodes. Consistent with previous sensemaking research, we specifically argue that victims and offenders will utilize their forgiveness climate perceptions to interpret discrete conflict events and construct an appropriate response (Weick, 1995). For example, we argue that forgiveness climates can lead offenders to interpret conflict episodes as events that necessitate reconciliation and, thus, motivate them to apologize to their victims.

We identify three components of the sensemaking process. First, forgiveness climates act as empathy triggers, facilitating perspective taking and empathic concern. Second, forgiveness climates produce an emotional shift, reducing victims' feelings of anger and enhancing offenders' feelings of guilt. Third, forgiveness climates facilitate restorative changes that include offers of apology and forgiveness. In this phase of our model, we also consider two key moderators of forgiveness climate's effects on employee behavior: climate strength and issue equivocality/uncertainty.

Third, following displays of apology and forgiveness, we model the downstream behavioral effects of forgiveness climates through the *action* phase. Here we focus on the relational consequences of forgiveness climates, including relationship commitment and interpersonal citizenship. For expository purposes we do not explicitly model or discuss recursive loops across the phases of our forgiveness climate model. Nonetheless, we recognize that such recursion is likely to exist, and we encourage future research to consider these possibilities in depth.

PHASE 1: CLIMATE EMERGENCE

Core Cultural Values

Whereas climate references the "what" of daily life in organizations, culture references the

"why." Compared to organizational climate, culture is more lasting and more resistant to change³ (Alvesson, 2011). Consistent with current theorizing, we argue that culture precedes climate in the life course of the organization (Ostroff et al., 2003). To understand how an organization might develop a forgiveness climate, it is therefore necessary to understand the qualities of an organizational culture that are likely to provide the basis for forgiveness climate. We propose that forgiveness climates are most likely to emerge from three key cultural values: restorative justice, compassion, and temperance.

Restorative justice. First among the values that facilitate a forgiving organizational climate is restorative justice. We define restorative justice values as a *shared belief in the importance of resolving conflict multilaterally through the inclusion of victims, offenders, and all other relevant stakeholders* (Goodstein & Butterfield, 2010; Okimoto et al., 2009). To understand the core of restorative justice, it is necessary to understand retributive justice—the more common model of justice in Western societies (Braithwaite, 1989). In the retributive model emphasis is placed on punishment, which restores balance "by degrading the offender's status or power" (Strelan, Feather, & McKee, 2008: 1538). Victims are generally kept outside the process of determining these punishments, and little attention is paid to offenders following the administration of punitive action (Braithwaite, 1989). Whereas retributive justice focuses on keeping victims and offenders apart while meting out punishment via a third party, restorative justice focuses on bringing victims, offenders, and communities together for the ultimate goal of healing (Goodstein & Aquino, 2010; Okimoto et al., 2009). All sides are asked to voice their thoughts and feelings. Victims are provided the opportunity to express their hurt and influence the conflict resolution process, and offenders, in turn, benefit from the opportunity to play an active role in their reintegration into the community, avoiding the stigmatization often associated with criminal charges (Okimoto et al., 2009). Restorative justice values thus emphasize the importance of transforming conflict through a collective focus on all relevant stakeholders.

³ For reviews of the distinctions between climate and culture, see Ostroff et al. (2003) and Schneider et al. (2011).

Existing theory and data support the notion of a positive link between restorative justice values and forgiveness climate emergence. Individual-level theorizing suggests that restorative justice serves as a conduit for reconciliation and leaves both victim and offender satisfied with the process (Wenzel, Okimoto, Feather, & Plautow, 2008). In a set of empirical studies, Karremans and Van Lange (2005) found that subtle justice primes predict increased forgiveness. Strelan et al. (2008) found that the justice-forgiveness link is more specifically confined to restorative justice notions. Although group-level data on the justice-forgiveness link are limited, research by Schwartz (1992) demonstrated a positive correlation between justice as one component of universalism and forgiveness as one component of benevolence. Case studies in U.S. hospitals similarly suggest that when organizations institute restorative justice practices, forgiveness becomes increasingly common and valued (Stanton, 2011). All in all, existing theory and research suggest that restorative justice values produce an expectation for prosocial conflict management, implying the concomitant evolution of forgiveness climate.

Proposition 1a: Restorative justice is a core value that facilitates forgiveness climate emergence.

Compassion. Restorative justice values can provide a strong foundation for forgiveness climate by emphasizing the importance of bringing all parties into the conflict resolution process. To facilitate forgiveness, victims and offenders can also look beyond justice and toward the general easing of suffering. For this organizations must emphasize the cultural value of compassion. In previous research scholars have conceptualized compassion in various ways. Whereas psychological scientists have placed an emphasis on compassion as an emotional display (e.g., Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010), organizational scholars have emphasized the additional importance of initially noticing others' suffering and ultimately taking action to alleviate it (Lilius et al., 2008). As a cultural value, we focus on the perceived importance of compassionate action and define compassion values as *a shared belief in the importance of easing others' pain* (Rothschild, Abdollahi, & Pyszczynski, 2009).

Existing individual-level research suggests a positive link between compassion and prosocial conflict responses such as forgiveness. When induced to experience compassion, individuals are less likely to punish both the target of compassion and other, unrelated individuals (Condon & DeSteno, 2011). Forgiveness and compassion likewise stem from a parallel set of predictors, including empathy, closeness, and agreeableness (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Fehr et al., 2010; Goetz et al., 2010). Although there has been little research on compassion at higher levels of analysis, Dutton, Worline, Frost, and Lilius (2006) argue that compassion exists as organizational-level action and is enabled by a shared belief in the importance of (1) holistic personhood, which entails the recognition that people are composed of more than just their professional identities; (2) a sense of family, which entails feelings of shared experience and commonality among employees; and (3) expressed humanity, which entails an acceptance of suffering as a part of the human experience. By examining these more specific group values, it is possible to better understand how a compassionate culture might enable forgiveness climates to emerge. For example, holistic personhood and a sense of family each focus on the quality of workplace relationships. Employees become closer to each other, are better able to see each other as more than just their work identities, and, in turn, are better able to empathize with each other (Dutton et al., 2006). Employee values for expressed humanity, in turn, enhance employees' awareness of others' suffering, another central correlate of forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010). By placing the focus on easing others' pain, compassion values produce a shared belief in the importance of helping others for helping's sake. Forgiveness climates thus emerge not only because of a prosocial model for closing the "justice gap" (Worthington, 2006) but also because compassion values produce a perception of forgiving behavior as supported throughout the organization.

Proposition 1b: Compassion is a core value that facilitates forgiveness climate emergence.

Temperance. Conflict dynamics are unique in their capacity to produce egocentric biases, negative emotions, and the automatic impulse to retaliate and "get even" (McCullough et al.,

2000). Accordingly, self-control and thoughtful information processing in the face of conflict are critical to ensure that an offense does not escalate into a conflict spiral (Vallacher, Coleman, Nowak, & Bui-Wrzosinska, 2010). Thus, we argue that organizations are more likely to produce forgiveness climates when they emphasize temperance as a core cultural value. Here we define temperance values as *a shared belief in the importance of practicing restraint in the face of temptation and provocation* (Aristotle, 2000; Lao Tzu, 1963; Peterson & Seligman, 2003). According to Dahlsgaard, Peterson, and Seligman (2005), temperance is a virtue that protects against excess, exemplified by characteristics including humility and prudence. Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and the works of Confucius and Aristotle provide just a few examples of the philosophical and religious contexts in which temperance is historically rooted (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). Plato lists temperance alongside courage, justice, and prudence as the four cardinal virtues, later adopted by Christianity and integrated into contemporary models of virtue-based leadership (Plato, 1968; Riggio, Zhu, Reina, & Maroosis, 2010).

Temperance encourages individuals to exhibit self-control and humility in the face of provocation. The cultural value of temperance thus implies the emergence of a climate where egocentric biases and heated emotional reactions to conflict give way to expectations of patience and restraint. Consistent with the idea of forgiveness as predicated on temperance and self-control, anecdotal descriptions of the forgiveness process speak of "finding the strength to forgive" and of forgiveness being an "attribute of the strong" (e.g., Gandhi, 1993). This is in keeping with Arendt's conceptualization of forgiveness as breaking a conflict cycle, wherein the forgiver "acts anew" and is "unconditioned" by the catalyzing offense (1958: 241; see also Bright & Exline, 2011). Individual-level empirical research confirms that forgiveness is associated with executive control—an ability to suppress dominant response patterns and behavioral inclinations (Pronk, Karremans, Overbeek, Vermulst, & Wigboldus, 2010). Similarly, research has shown that self-control attenuates the effects of vengeful motivations on actual revenge behavior (Bordia, Restubog, & Tang, 2008). Accordingly, we propose that temperance values facilitate a shared emphasis on patience, self-

control, and humility in the wake of conflict, ultimately leading to forgiveness climate emergence.

Proposition 1c: Temperance is a core value that facilitates forgiveness climate emergence.

In sum, we theorize that forgiveness climates are most likely to emerge in organizations that possess values for restorative justice, compassion, and temperance.⁴ Through restorative justice values, organizations build a foundation of prosocial responses to conflict. Through compassion values, organizations build a foundation of care and concern for others' suffering. Through temperance values, organizations build a foundation of patience and humility. Each core value is a distinct and central cornerstone of forgiveness climate emergence, influencing forgiveness climate through unique yet vital pathways. With this important bedrock delineated, we now turn to the role of external and internal contexts that shape these organizational values.

The Organization in Relation to Its Environment

A central recognition in the literature on organizational culture is that organizations do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are inextricably linked to the contexts in which they are embedded (Schein, 2010). Organizational values are therefore shaped by a multitude of forces, including national culture, governments, and community stakeholders. For example, research suggests that legal regulations exhibit coercive isomorphic pressures on organizations, aligning their values with other companies in the same nation or industry (Brodbeck, Hanges, Dickson, Gupta, & Dorfman, 2004; Chatman & Jehn, 1994). In this section we focus on three contextual factors likely to affect the emergence of our core cultural values: national culture, stakeholder culture, and geographic dispersion.

⁴ The model implies an additive effect of the three core values on the evolution of a forgiveness climate. However, it is important to note that the precise interactive effects of these values are beyond the scope of this article. Instead, our primary interest is on the centrality of these three core values to forgiveness climate emergence.

National culture. At the national level, societies are often differentiated according to values systems that serve as guiding principles. Among existing taxonomies, Schwartz's (1992) values circumplex has received consistent attention and has been validated in over seventy countries and fifty languages. Four values within this taxonomy, separated into two pairs at opposite ends of the circumplex, are particularly relevant to the valuation of restorative justice, compassion, and temperance. First are the self-transcendent values of benevolence and universalism. Benevolence refers to the valuation of traits such as helpfulness, honesty, and loyalty. Universalism refers to the valuation of traits such as social justice, equality, and a world at peace. Together, the self-transcendent values are unified by a motivation to preserve the welfare of others. In contrast are the self-enhancing values of achievement and power. Power refers to the valuation of authority, social recognition, and control over others. Achievement refers to the valuation of personal success, ambition, and competence. Together, the self-enhancing values are unified by a motivation to enhance one's personal interests.

Previous research has established an array of empirical consequences of self-transcendent and self-enhancing values that hint at their relationship with the core values of forgiving organizations. Whereas self-enhancing values are associated with a desire for revenge, war, and retributive justice, self-transcendent values are associated with a preference for restorative justice and a desire to avoid revenge and war (Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005; McKee & Feather, 2008; Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2012). Whereas self-transcendent values are associated with empathy, feelings of guilt for others' suffering, and a tendency to donate organs and buy fair trade products, self-enhancing values are associated with the reverse (Balliet, Joireman, Daniels, & George-Falvy, 2008; Ryckman, van den Borne, Thornton, & Gold, 2005). These findings suggest that self-transcendent values are associated with a compassionate orientation toward others, a restorative notion of justice, and the inhibition of vengeful tendencies and that self-enhancing values lead to an opposing suite of effects. Restorative justice, compassion, and temperance values are therefore most likely to emerge in self-transcendent nations (e.g., Finland, Hun-

gary, Slovenia) and least likely to emerge in self-enhancing nations (e.g., China, Israel, United States).

Proposition 2a: The self-transcendent values of benevolence and universalism facilitate restorative justice, compassion, and temperance, whereas the self-enhancing values of achievement and power inhibit them.

Stakeholder culture. For over thirty years stakeholder theory has received attention as a meaningful framework for understanding how altruism and profit maximization are interconnected in organizations (Parmar et al., 2010). Whereas some scholars and practitioners argue for a strict focus on profit, others suggest that profit can coexist with a concern for a broader range of stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, employees, and local communities (Parmar et al., 2010). Mitchell, Agle, and Wood's (1997) typology suggests that stakeholder integration is determined by the power, legitimacy, and urgency of a stakeholder's claim. Thus, a nonprofit hospital system might be particularly likely to attend to the desires of the local community since the community's relationship with the organization is seen as both legitimate and urgent. In recent work Jones et al. (2007) developed the concept of stakeholder culture to clarify differences across organizations in the perceived legitimacy of various stakeholders. At one end of the spectrum are agency stakeholder cultures, which are purely self-oriented and only focus on instrumental virtues (e.g., persistence, alertness) that maximize shareholder value. At the other end of the spectrum are altruist stakeholder cultures, which are purely other oriented and focus on moral virtues (e.g., benevolence, selflessness) that maximize value for all normative stakeholders.

Altruist stakeholder cultures inherently involve values systems that help to facilitate the emergence of a forgiving climate. In keeping with the valuation of restorative justice, altruistic stakeholder cultures incorporate the notion of Rawlsian fairness, whereby leaders employ a veil of ignorance to ensure that none of the organization's stakeholders are unduly harmed or disadvantaged (Jones et al., 2007). Also clear is the association between altruist stakeholder cultures and the valuation of compassion. A concern for others is central to the underlying moral

mandates of altruist stakeholder cultures, which emphasize selflessness, altruism, and benevolence (Jones et al., 2007). Given altruist stakeholder cultures' focus on the need to consider all relevant parties before making decisions, the value of temperance, patience, and humility is likewise implied. Thus, restorative justice, compassion, and temperance are most likely to emerge in altruist stakeholder cultures (e.g., nonprofits, hospitals) and least likely to emerge in agency stakeholder cultures (e.g., for-profits, real estate firms).

Proposition 2b: Altruist stakeholder cultures facilitate restorative justice, compassion, and temperance, whereas agency stakeholder cultures inhibit them.

Geographic dispersion. With technological advances allowing for practices such as telecommuting, offshoring, and virtual teams, there is a growing interest in the effects of geographic dispersion on teams and organizations (Hinds & Kiesler, 2002). At one end of the spectrum are highly integrated, interdependent organizations where employees must work together to achieve the organization's goals. At the other end of the spectrum are dispersed, independent organizations where employees work individually to achieve their separate goals.

In highly dispersed and independent groups, shared norms are unlikely to emerge (MacDuffie, 2007). Weak interaction inhibits opportunities to develop shared identities. Goal independence similarly reduces the motivation to act prosocially (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2008; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Conversely, in interdependent groups, shared norms develop with relative ease. Psychological theory suggests that interdependence directly facilitates compassion (Goetz et al., 2010), paralleling Dutton et al.'s (2006) notion of a "sense of family" as an enabler of compassionate action. Through an increased devotion to all members of the community, interdependence breeds not only compassion but also the cultural valuation of a restorative model of conflict management (Okimoto et al., 2012). Although there is less evidence to support the impact of geographic dispersion on temperance values, it is possible to suppose that temperance values might emerge in interdependent contexts as a means to facilitate smooth interactions in closely interconnected communities. Taken together, these arguments suggest that

forgiveness climates are most likely to emerge in interdependent organizations (e.g., small family businesses, hospital units) with dense interpersonal connections. Anecdotal evidence supports this claim. For example, recent years have witnessed a growing interest in forgiveness and its associated cultural values in small family businesses, where interdependence is the norm (Gomez-Mejia, Cruz, Berrone, & De Castro, 2011; Hubler, 2005).

Proposition 2c: Geographic dispersion inhibits restorative justice, compassion, and temperance, whereas interdependence facilitates them.

The Role of Organizational Practices

Organizational practices can refer to a wide range of procedures, policies, and formalized routines, from training programs and feedback systems to rules for promotion and dispute resolution systems. The culture literature and climate literature, in turn, address the role of organizational practices in different ways. To culture scholars, organizational practices are artifacts of the culture (Schein, 2010). To climate scholars, organizational practices are the foundation on which climate perceptions emerge (Schneider et al., 2011). Drawing from these associations among culture, climate, and organizational practices, scholars have recently argued that practices mediate the impact of culture on climate. Put differently, "the set of actual practices, policies, and procedures [in an organization] is the linking mechanism between culture and climate" (Ostroff et al., 2003: 576).

Given the impact of organizational practices on climate perception, the alignment of organizational cultures and practices is critical (Chow & Liu, 2009). When practices are misaligned with organizations' cultural values, employee perceptions become equivalently misaligned, leading to a disconnect between organizational cultures and climates. Additional research suggests that organizational practices both facilitate climate perceptions and enable collective capabilities such as learning, adaptation, and compassion (Lilius et al., 2011). That is, organizational practices exert a causal impact on climate by both influencing employee perceptions and acting as conduits for behaviors that reinforce organizational norms. Safety training

programs, for instance, produce emergent safety expectations (i.e., safety climate) and enable employees to strengthen climate perceptions by behaving more safely in their daily actions (Zohar & Luria, 2004). Here we focus on three key organizational practices that mediate the impact of culture on climate perceptions: restorative dispute resolution, employee support programs, and mindfulness training and appraisal.

Restorative dispute resolution. When informal attempts to resolve interpersonal conflict fail, employees often turn to organizational dispute resolution (ODR) systems—formal procedures for arbitration and mediation (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2009). Existing research suggests that ODR systems can be highly efficacious in equitably distributing outcomes (Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1988) and give voice to employees' experiences (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2009). Despite the popularity of ODR systems, relatively little attention has been paid to their content with respect to restorative versus retributive justice values.

Braithwaite (1989) identified three core goals of restorative justice: restoring victims' well-being, reintegrating offenders, and facilitating community healing. From these core objectives it is possible to infer the characteristics most indicative of a restorative ODR system. First, to ensure the restoration of victims' dignity and well-being, restorative ODR systems should emphasize offender atonement in the form of apologies, compensation, and other reparations. Second, to ensure that offenders are reintegrated into the community, restorative ODR systems should emphasize respectful dialogue and empathy for offenders' desire to return to the community. Finally, to ensure community healing, restorative ODR systems should emphasize victim forgiveness. Across each of these core components of restorative ODR systems, active participation must be emphasized. The conflict must be "ripe" for lasting resolution so that no party feels forced or coerced, and each party must emphasize a focus on interests over rights or power (Ury et al., 1988; Vallacher et al., 2010). Prototypical of such a restorative system is the forgiveness intervention, which brings victims and offenders together to reaffirm their shared values and to foster reconciliation (Worthington, 2006).

Here we argue that restorative dispute resolution systems emerge from restorative justice val-

ues and, in turn, exert a causal impact on forgiveness climate perceptions. As previously reviewed, restorative justice values entail a shared belief in the importance of resolving conflict multilaterally through the inclusion of victims, offenders, and all other relevant stakeholders. Restorative dispute resolution systems can be expected to derive directly from these values. When an organization adopts restorative justice as a core value, it will produce aligned artifacts in the form of relevant practices, such as restorative dispute resolution systems (Schein, 2010). These restorative dispute resolution systems will, in turn, function as salient, proximal reminders of the organization's core values and facilitate a shared perception of how the organization expects conflict to be managed. In other words, they will produce climates of forgiveness.

Proposition 3a: Restorative dispute resolution systems provide a mediating link between restorative justice values and forgiveness climate perceptions.

Employee support programs. Employee support systems are formalized organizational practices designed to facilitate the financial, emotional, and physical well-being of employees, going beyond the scope of standard HR programs (Hartwell et al., 1996). Examples include child care programs, retirement planning seminars, physical fitness programs, and ergonomic consultations. Whereas restorative dispute resolution systems emerge as artifacts of restorative justice values, employee support programs can be expected to emerge as a direct consequence of a compassionate organizational culture that values the alleviation of pain and suffering.

Research suggests that support programs facilitate commitment and other positive outcomes by enhancing employees' perceptions that their organizations care for them. As noted by Grant, Dutton, and Rosso, "When employees become aware of or utilize the services offered by support programs, they are more likely to feel that their work organizations value their well-being" (2008: 898). Thus, employee support programs act as institutionalized manifestations of compassion values. Even if employees do not actively utilize these support programs, the programs serve as salient reminders of the organization's caring approach to its employees and,

thus, exhibit a causal impact on forgiveness climate emergence. From the perspective of organizational practices as enablers of collective capability, employee support systems furthermore reinforce forgiveness climates by enabling employees to give and receive care. As discussed above, at Griffin Hospital, a vacation and sick leave exchange program enabled employees to give their vacation time to an ailing coworker. When it came time for employees to put aside their anger during downsizing, employees noted, "It wasn't hard to forgive" (Cameron, 2005: 12).

Proposition 3b: Employee support programs provide a mediating link between compassion values and forgiveness climate perceptions.

Mindfulness training and appraisal. Broadly defined, mindfulness refers to an awareness of and attentiveness to the present moment (Dane, 2011). As a set of organizational practices, mindfulness training and appraisal systems are our focus. The tradition of mindfulness training in the clinical and counseling sciences is extensive (Shapiro, Carlson, Astin, & Freedman, 2006). One popular example of this type of program is the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) intervention (Shapiro, Oman, Thoresen, Plante, & Flinders, 2008), which teaches participants to address stressful events with patience and self-control. Among the program's nine distinct modules are the "Mindful Sitting Meditation," which trains participants to look inward and concentrate on their emotions, postures, and breathing, and the "Loving Kindness Meditation," which focuses on the cultivation of compassion and the well-being of humanity at large. Previous research supports the efficacy of the MBSR in cultivating patience, self-control, and forgiveness and highlights the potential for its integration into employee wellness programs (Fries, 2009; Klevnick, 2008).

Even when organizations do not have the time or resources to institute extensive mindfulness training programs, briefer interventions are possible. One program has even introduced the concept of "mindful minutes," where employees pause to take notice of the present moment (*Coaching at Work*, 2011). In mindfulness training programs, posttraining assessments are common. We assume that organizations can assess mindfulness either within or beyond the

context of mindfulness training and utilize these assessments to reward employees with promotions, raises, and praise.

From the perspective of organizational culture, mindfulness training and appraisal systems are most likely to emerge from cultures that emphasize temperance. Once these training and assessment systems are put in place, they can be expected to serve as salient reminders of the organization's expectations of patience and humility in the wake of conflict and to concomitantly produce forgiving climates. In support of this assumed link from mindfulness training to forgiveness climate, anecdotal evidence suggests an especially high interest in mindfulness in the health care sector, where forgiveness climates often emerge (Kangas & Shapiro, 2011).⁵

Proposition 3c: Mindfulness training and appraisal provide a mediating link between temperance values and forgiveness climate perceptions.

The Role of Leader Attributes

Scholars are quick to note the central role of organizations' upper echelon leadership in the development of culture and climate (e.g., Ostroff et al., 2003; Schein, 2010). Although studies linking leader traits to organizational culture are rare, a growing body of literature has begun to provide convergent support for this claim. Empirical findings include linkages between leader openness and a culture of stability (Giberson et al., 2009) and between leader locus of control and a centralized culture (Miller & Toulouse, 1986). Here we focus on two primary mechanisms that drive the impact of leadership on forgiveness climate emergence. First, leaders establish and maintain cultural values through social learning, whereby employees observe, imitate, and internalize leaders' values by modeling their observable actions (e.g., Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Second, leaders act

⁵ Despite a growing interest in mindfulness as a pliable phenomenon, we recognize that a truly mindful state is not easy to attain. Supreme manifestations of mindfulness as discussed in Buddhism and other religious traditions can require a lifetime of practice. Our discussion recognizes these realities and merely implies that greater degrees of mindfulness can aid in the production of forgiveness climates in organizations.

as architects of organizational practices, aligning policies and procedures with the organization's core cultural values. For example, Naumann and Bennett (2000) refer to leaders as "climate engineers" who reinforce employees' climate perceptions by developing, enforcing, and implementing a consistent suite of organizational practices. Three leader attributes particularly relevant to forgiveness climates are restorative justice orientation, servant leadership, and self-control.

Restorative justice orientation. Recent research indicates that individuals possess stable individual differences in their preference for retributive versus restorative justice, referred to as retributive and restorative justice orientations, respectively. Whereas a retributive justice orientation is associated with a preference for justice through punishment, a restorative justice orientation is associated with a preference for justice through consensus, shared understanding, and the reaffirmation of shared values (Okimoto et al., 2012). Here we propose that restorative justice orientations among leaders will facilitate the emergence of restorative justice values and aligned organizational practices.

Upon an organization's founding, social learning should facilitate the dissemination of restorative justice as a core cultural value of the organization. Explicit behaviors associated with a restorative justice orientation might include a denouncement of retribution (e.g., tit-for-tat bad mouthing among coworkers) or the integration of multiple stakeholders into organizational discourse (e.g., inviting community members to company meetings when conflict arises). As employees witness these behaviors and see coworkers rewarded for aligning their own actions accordingly, they can be expected to imitate them on a daily basis and, thus, propagate the prevailing valuation of restorative justice. Even more directly, leaders can facilitate forgiveness climate emergence by constructing organizational practices aligned with restorative justice values.

Proposition 4a: Through restorative justice orientations, leaders build organizations' restorative justice values and align them with organizational practices.

Servant leadership. Leaders are often criticized for their failure to attend to employees'

needs and desires. In contrast to the stereotype of the self-interested leader is the servant leader, who strives to help employees succeed both personally and professionally. As noted by Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson, servant leaders focus on "forming strong long-term relationships with employees" and "make a genuine effort to know, understand, and support others in the organization" (2008: 162). Above all else, servant leadership entails attending to employee growth and well-being. Empirical research confirms that employees perceive servant leaders as people who are compassionate—who listen to their needs, attend to their concerns, and inspire them to realize their full potential (Liden et al., 2008; Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010). When employees fall short in their duties, servant leaders do not reject them but, rather, continue to accept and empathize with them (Caldwell & Dixon, 2010). By putting their employees first, servant leaders build lasting trust (Greenleaf, 1977) and "serve multiple stakeholders, including their communities and society as a whole" (Liden et al., 2008: 162).

A central tenet of servant leadership theory is that servant leaders inspire a service orientation in their followers, creating a pervasive culture of service (Liden et al., 2008). Explicit behaviors associated with servant leadership include asking employees about their concerns and directly aiding them with their daily struggles. Social learning theory suggests that, as employees witness and experience these acts of service, they will model them. Consider the example of Griffin Hospital. By acting as a servant leader and helping employees through a difficult downsizing, Griffin's CEO institutionalized compassion as a central cultural value. Beyond acting as role models, servant leaders can build forgiveness climates by constructing support programs that demonstrate compassion for employees' struggles. As noted by Ferch, a norm for forgiveness requires leaders who can "invigorate in the organization a culture of acceptance, empathy, and relational justice" and therefore "create an environment in which forgiveness can be asked and granted" (2004: 235–236).

Proposition 4b: Through servant leadership, leaders build organizations' compassion values and align them with organizational practices.

Self-control. Moving on to temperance, we focus on self-control—one's ability to override automatic behavioral responses in favor of actions that more closely align with a desired end state (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Outcomes associated with self-control include task performance, self-esteem, physical health, and optimal emotional displays (Tangney et al., 2004). Most relevant to the current context, research indicates that individuals are generally inclined to act in self-interest and that deviation from these impulses requires significant effort and inhibition (Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Thus, self-control has been posited as a central predictor of individuals' tendencies to promote and engage in prosocial interpersonal behaviors. For example, Finkel and Campbell argue that "individuals who possess high levels of self-control should be better equipped to engage in prorelationship transformation of motivation than should those who possess less self-control" (2001: 265). Research has shown that self-control directly predicts the provision of forgiveness (Balliet, Li, & Joireman, 2011). Associated individual differences, such as the emotional regulation component of emotional intelligence, can be expected to exhibit similar effects (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

What does it mean to lead with self-control? Explicit behaviors associated with self-control include patience in the face of complex organizational decisions and the cessation of anger and rage when conflict erupts. It is not difficult to imagine the converse—a reactionary leader who makes decisions without careful thought and reacts to conflict by shouting or demeaning coworkers and subordinates. From the perspective of social learning, employees who witness controlled approaches to conflict should act in turn, facilitating a culture that emphasizes temperance as a core cultural value. Beyond their role as models of temperance, self-controlled leaders can likewise facilitate forgiveness climate emergence by building and encouraging aligned organizational practices, such as mindfulness-based meditation programs.

Proposition 4c: Through self-control, leaders build organizations' temperance values and align them with organizational practices.

PHASE II: EMPLOYEE SENSEMAKING

A central assumption of the organizational climate literature is that employees' shared perceptions of organizations are important because they exhibit consistent cross-level effects on specific climate-related individual behaviors (Ostroff et al., 2003). Examples include the impact of service climate on customer service quality (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998) and the impact of safety climate on workplace injuries (Beus, Payne, Bergman, & Arthur, 2010). In this section we examine how forgiveness climates influence employees' responses to interpersonal conflict through a prosocial sensemaking process (Grant et al., 2008; Weick, 1995). As employees seek to manage their interdependence and divergent perspectives, organizational conflict is inevitable (Katz & Kahn, 1978). We submit that forgiving organizations differ from others in how employees make sense of and ultimately react to conflict in constructive ways.

According to the sensemaking perspective, employees react to ambiguous external events by scanning their environments for social cues and other information to facilitate a meaningful interpretation of the catalyzing event (Weick, 1995). Organizational climates, in turn, can be expected to influence the sensemaking process by providing relevant social cues in the form of organizational practices, leader behaviors, and communication with employees that share a prevailing point of view about "the way things are around here" (e.g., Reichers & Schneider 1990: 22). Current theory supports the idea that forgiveness and related prosocial offense responses are determined in part by victim and offender sensemaking. Andiappan and Treviño (2011) suggest that victims utilize sensemaking to determine the severity of harm incurred and the level of blame to ascribe to the offender. Similarly, Fehr et al. argue that "through the sensemaking process, victims ask themselves the question, 'What has happened here?' and via this question determine whether to forgive" (2010: 896). Consistent with these perspectives, previous research suggests that different groups (e.g., victims versus observers, ingroups versus outgroups) construct divergent interpretations of offenses' forgivability that are consistent with their existing self-and-other perceptions (Risen & Gilovich, 2007).

Following from the sensemaking perspective, we identify how employees' offense responses are shaped by organizations' forgiveness climates with a discussion of empathy triggers, emotional shifts, and restorative change. In each case we theorize that forgiveness climates enhance the chronic accessibility of relevant prosocial conflict responses, guiding employees toward prosocial emotions, cognitions, motivations, and behaviors (see Figure 1).

Empathy Triggers

In delineating the prosocial sensemaking process following workplace conflict, we propose that forgiveness climates will first act as empathy triggers, activating empathic concern (an other-oriented emotional concern for others' pain) and perspective taking (a cognitive understanding of another's point of view; Davis, 1983). Although most people possess the capacity for empathic concern and perspective taking, social cognitive models of behavioral activation suggest that the tendency for an individual to use these capacities will largely depend on the accessibility of relevant knowledge structures at a given point in time (Bruner, 1957; Higgins, 1996). Forgiveness climates provide this empathy accessibility, leading victims and offenders to experience emotions and cognitions consistent with this accessible knowledge structure (Gel-fand, Smith, Raver, Nishii, & O'Brien, 2006).

When employees engage in conflict-related sensemaking, forgiveness climate provides a partial answer to the question of "what is going on here" by encouraging victims and offenders to make sense of the event by considering the other party's point of view and connecting to the other party's affective experiences. Servant leaders, for instance, serve as salient role models who emphasize the importance of addressing coworker suffering. Empathy accessibility is similarly promoted through organizational practices—the availability of employee support systems and ODR restorative systems as well as HR practices that promote mindful responses to conflict. Accordingly, while conflicts invariably exist in all organizations, in everyday conflicts empathy and perspective taking will be more accessible in organizations that have developed forgiveness climates than those that have not.

Proposition 5: Forgiveness climates trigger empathic responses to conflict events.

Emotional Shifts

In association with increased empathic concern and perspective taking, forgiveness climates should influence the chronic accessibility of other-directed emotions, which have been shown to be key predictors of forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010). Specifically, forgiveness climates should reduce the accessibility of anger among victims of aggression in organizations, in part because of empathy triggers, as discussed above. By facilitating an understanding of offenders' points of view, forgiveness climates can reduce attributional biases, such as the ascription of intentionality to the offender. Furthermore, forgiveness climates can facilitate anger reduction through the increased accessibility of self-control and mindfulness, providing employees with the restraint needed to exhibit top-down control of emotion activation. Leaders make self-control and mindfulness accessible through their own behaviors and by engineering relevant organizational practices, such as mindfulness training programs. In addition, through confidence in the restorative justice procedures of the organization, forgiveness climates can reduce anger by mitigating victims' concerns that the conflict will go unresolved.

For the offender, forgiveness climates should lead to increased accessibility of guilt. Guilt has been defined as an unpleasant emotional reaction to one's failure to meet an internalized moral norm or expectation (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994). Thus, guilt is predicated on an offender's belief that he or she is responsible for a morally unjustifiable transgression against a victim. Predominant conceptualizations of guilt emphasize its adaptive nature. By eliciting tension and remorse, guilt motivates restorative action in the offender. Put simply, "guilt binds the person to the source of guilt and does not subside without reconciliation that tends to restore social harmony" (Izard, 1977: 422). Like anger, guilt can be expected to emerge from the top-down pressures of forgiving climates and an enhanced accessibility of associated knowledge structures. Driving forces include mindfulness, which allows offenders to step away from conflict, and empathy, which

enhances offenders' concern for victims' suffering.

Proposition 6: Forgiveness climates trigger prosocial emotional shifts following conflict events.

Restorative Change

Oftentimes, offenders respond to transgressions with more aggression, perpetuating conflict cycles and inhibiting victims' ability to intervene with forgiveness or other prosocial behaviors (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999). To break the conflict cycle, offenders must engage in conciliatory behaviors that signal their desire for reconciliation—most notably apology. Through apologies, offenders express both responsibility and regret for an offense. The intended result is a disassociation of the offender from the offense—although the offender admits that the transgression was wrong, his or her integrity is reaffirmed (Goffman, 1967). Forgiveness climates should directly enhance the accessibility of apologies through social learning and enhanced prosocial capabilities as enabled by aligned organizational practices. Likewise, forgiveness climates can influence restorative change among victims indirectly through increased empathy and guilt. As noted by De Hooge, Nelissen, Breugelmans, and Zeelenberg, guilt is particularly relevant because it produces “reparative action tendencies such as confessions, apologies, and attempts to undo the harm done [that] are aimed at restoring the relationship between transgressor and victim” (2011: 462).

Parallel processes can be expected to encourage forgiveness among victims. Forgiveness climates should directly enhance the accessibility of forgiveness as a response to conflict and should enhance employees' capabilities to forgive through organizational practices (e.g., mindfulness training). Indirectly, forgiveness climates should likewise encourage forgiveness through the enhanced accessibility of empathy, perspective taking, and anger reduction, as well as the receipt of apology.

Proposition 7: Forgiveness climates trigger restorative change following conflict events.

Boundary Conditions for the Cross-Level Effect of Forgiveness Climates

It is important to explicate moderators within our forgiveness climate model as specified in Figure 1. One likely boundary condition of forgiveness climate's impact on employees' conflict responses is climate strength, which is a measure of within-unit variability in employee perceptions of a given climate (Schneider et al., 2002). When employees generally agree about some aspect of the organizational climate (e.g., service, safety), the climate is considered strong. Disagreement conversely suggests a weak organizational climate. According to climate strength theory, strong climates accentuate climate-outcome effects, whereas weak climates attenuate them. For example, Schneider et al. (2002) found that climate strength moderates the impact of customer service climate on customer satisfaction. The reasoning behind the impact of climate strength is perhaps best illuminated by Mischel's (1976) concept of situational strength. According to Mischel, strong situations influence behavior by producing highly salient and uniform expectations. When the focus is on influencing individual behavior, strong climates become desirable. Forgiveness climates should therefore be most efficacious when perceptual variability is low and the climate concomitantly strong.

Proposition 8: Climate strength moderates the impact of forgiveness climate on victims' and offenders' responses to conflict.

Another moderator of forgiveness climate's effects on employees' conflict responses comes from the sensemaking literature. Here we focus on the equivocality and uncertainty of individual conflict events. By equivocality, we mean the potential for multiple interpretations of a conflict event. Uncertainty refers to a lack of information that inhibits one's ability to plausibly interpret a conflict event. Together, equivocality and uncertainty play a central role in scholars' understanding of the role of sensemaking in determining employee behavior (Sonenshein, 2007). Consistent with this literature, we argue that victims and offenders are most likely to engage in sensemaking about the conflict episode when the catalyzing offense is uncertain and equivocal. Even in the most forgiving

organization, victims of repeated, overt aggression are likely to respond with retribution or avoidance. Conversely, ambiguous acts of incivility are likely to trigger a more complex sense-making process, making the role of forgiveness climate more central to employees' conflict responses. Thus, we hypothesize that equivocality and uncertainty strengthen the impact of forgiveness climates on employees' conflict responses.

Proposition 9: Transgression equivocality and uncertainty moderate the impact of forgiveness climate on victims' and offenders' responses to conflict.

PHASE III: FORGIVENESS IN ACTION

Following employees' immediate conflict responses, an important question remains: Why do forgiveness climates matter? Put differently, what are the lasting consequences of forgiveness climates and employees' conflict responses for victims, offenders, and their organizations? In seeking the long-term benefits of bringing forgiveness into organizations, we mirror broader trends in the literature on organizational virtues and positive organizational scholarship, arguing that virtue, compassion, and morality provide organizations with a lasting competitive advantage (Hess & Cameron, 2006). To date, organizational scholars have provided primarily anecdotal evidence that forgiveness impacts organizations' bottom lines. For example, Kerns suggests that "forgiveness strategies at work can encourage employee retention, enhance innovative problem solving, promote profitability and facilitate flexibility in adjusting to changing market conditions" (2009: 81–82; see also Bright & Exline, 2011). Nonetheless, systematic theoretical treatments of forgiveness's multilevel impact at work are lacking. Our goal is to advance some of the mechanisms through which forgiveness climates can exert a lasting impact on outcomes important to organizations. Consistent with the strategic approach to climate research (Schneider et al., 2011), we focus on two outcomes that are closely aligned with the forgiveness climate construct: relationship commitment and interpersonal citizenship behaviors (ICBs).

Through restorative change, forgiveness climates should first and foremost predict commitment within the victim-offender dyad. Existing research confirms that restorative actions including apology and forgiveness lead to increased constructive communication, less aggression, and greater feelings of closeness (Fincham, 2000). Further research indicates that the effects of forgiveness on relationship quality are lasting and can persist for at least twelve months (Fincham & Beach, 2007). More directly, recent findings by Ysseldyk and Wohl (2011) indicate that forgiveness exerts a direct, causal effect on commitment within the victim-offender dyad. This is true not only for deeply entrenched, long-term relationships but for newly formed relationships as well (Terzino & Cross, 2009). Beyond the dyadic level, social network dynamics further imply additional effects on relationships broadly construed. Following the tenets of balance theory, reconciliation between victims and offenders can be expected to produce triadic transitivity (Contractor, Wasserman & Faust, 2006). In other words, the victim will develop committed ties with the offender's close others. Thus, forgiveness climates can be expected to lead to the development of committed relationships across a wide set of potential ties. This should be particularly true in contexts where the victim-offender relationship is important to employees' daily activities, such as leader-follower relationships.

Proposition 10: Forgiveness climates facilitate relationship commitment.

We also theorize that forgiveness climates have a cross-level effect on the frequency and intensity of ICBs, whereby employees voluntarily help each other address work-related problems. Although helping behavior is by definition outside the realm of an employee's prescribed role, its effects on employee effectiveness are well documented, influencing such central criteria as job performance, job satisfaction, and turnover (Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Previous research indicates that forgiveness exerts a direct and positive effect on ICBs. After granting forgiveness, victims are more likely to make personal sacrifices for their offenders, to respond constructively to future destructive acts, and to cooperate with their offenders in social dilemma tasks (Karremans & Van Lange, 2008). Most telling is research sug-

gesting an effect of forgiveness on ICBs in general, extended beyond interactions within the victim-offender dyad. When the concept of forgiveness was made salient, Karremans, Van Lange, and Holland (2005) demonstrated significant increases in willingness to both donate money to a charity and spend time volunteering for the same organization. Presumably, prosocial motivations such as forgiveness exhibit lasting spillover effects, fundamentally shifting the behavioral inclinations of both victims and offenders.

Proposition 11: Forgiveness climates facilitate interpersonal citizenship.

DISCUSSION

For better or worse, conflict is a ubiquitous part of life in organizations. Consequently, there is much to be gained from a deeper understanding of how employees respond to conflict. Despite decades of scientific research on forgiveness and other prosocial responses to interpersonal conflict, scholarship within the organizational sciences has lagged. Of particular concern is the lack of multilevel conceptualizations of forgiveness at work. Whereas organizational scholars have long acknowledged the importance of multilevel theorizing in understanding organizational conflict, studies of forgiveness in the workplace have almost exclusively focused on the individual level of analysis. In this article we argue that although forgiveness is rooted in individual behavior, it also emerges at the organizational level in the form of forgiveness climate, with lasting implications for employees and their organizations.

Theoretical Contributions

By proposing a multilevel model of forgiveness, we make a number of important theoretical contributions to the literature on prosocial behavior, culture and climate, and the psychology of forgiveness. Taken together, these contributions point to exciting new directions in our understanding of the multilevel determinants of prosocial responses to workplace conflict.

Prosocial behavior. Research often paints a bleak picture of interpersonal conflict at work. Harassment, bullying, mobbing, tyranny, incivility, social undermining, and emotional abuse

are just a sample of the methods employees devise to harm each other psychologically, emotionally, and physically (Aquino & Thau, 2009). Research on egocentric biases and conflict spirals furthermore suggests that employees frequently become entrenched in intractable conflicts, with no end in sight. The ironic consequence is an absence of care and compassion precisely when they are needed the most. One key contribution of our forgiveness climate model is a better understanding of how organizations can craft their environments to facilitate a more prosocial response to conflict. To build a culture that values restorative justice, compassion, and temperance, organizations must be helmed by leaders who are oriented toward restorative justice, act as servant leaders, and exhibit self-control. Most proximally, they must build organizational practices that institutionalize their values, such as employee support and mindfulness training programs. Taken together, our theoretical model paints an encouraging picture of the organization's potential to influence how employees respond to conflict. Whereas previous research has focused on largely uncontrollable predictors of prosocial responses to conflict (e.g., victim personality), our model of forgiveness climate considers multiple pathways through which organizations can sustain lasting forgiveness norms.

Culture and climate. Schneider et al. recently characterized culture and climate as two siblings who "share much in common but have typically failed to see the benefits that might accrue to them if they learned more about each other" (2011: 373). While culture grew from the traditions of sociology and anthropology, climate grew from the traditions of psychology. For many years the two constructs developed in tandem, with distinct theories, assumptions, and methodologies (Schneider et al., 2011). Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in combining culture and climate within the same nomological net. By examining the interrelationships between organizations' cultural values and forgiveness climates, ours represents one model that begins to integrate the culture literature and climate literature in the context of a specific organizational phenomenon. Moreover, we explore a range of factors that mediate and moderate the culture-climate link. Examples include the proposed mediating effect of mindfulness training on the link between temperance

values and forgiveness climate and the role of servant leadership in the development of employee support programs. Furthermore, we link organizations' core cultural values to key environmental forces, including national culture, stakeholder culture, and geographic dispersion. Following climate emergence, we emphasize the sensemaking process as a theoretical backdrop that clarifies precisely when and how climates influence employee behavior. By introducing climate strength and issue equivocality/uncertainty into our model, we provide specificity in our propositions and identify contexts in which forgiveness climate's effects are most likely to be realized.

The psychology of forgiveness. As reviewed in our introduction, research on forgiveness in organizations is sparse. Even less prevalent are multilevel considerations of forgiveness processes. This article represents a significant contribution to the forgiveness literature by advancing a multilevel perspective on forgiveness. Whereas psychological scientists typically conceptualize forgiveness as the product of individual dispositions, relational dynamics, and offense characteristics (Fehr et al., 2010), we highlight the vital role of the environment in fostering forgiveness. In doing so we respond to calls for more research examining how social contexts influence forgiving behavior (Bright & Exline, 2011). By linking organizational culture and climate with broader contextual phenomena, we further broaden the multilevel scope of forgiveness to include aspects of national culture and industry norms.

Practical Considerations: Why Forgiveness?

One of the most important questions for scholars and practitioners is "Why?"—why would an organization seek to develop a forgiving climate, and why should scholars deem forgiveness climates worthy of theoretical and empirical analysis? In previous theoretical treatments of workplace forgiveness, scholars have mentioned the perceived relevance of forgiveness as one barrier to its integration into organizations. To quote Stone:

When I interviewed executives in the USA the common opinion was that forgiveness was an abstract philosophical or religious idea that was "inappropriate" to discuss in the workplace. It often brought up fears about losing trust and/or

control. There was a common fear that the balance of power would be disrupted and it would create a permissive environment that would lead to chaos and anarchy (2002: 278–279).

Our model of forgiveness climate argues for the alternative view—that forgiveness climates can grow within organizations through values and practices that serve the organization for the better. A forgiveness climate serves organizations in two key ways. First, it is consistent with a growing public interest in organizations that embody desirable social values, from compassion, temperance, and justice to creativity, wisdom, and hope (Cameron, 2003). By emphasizing the inherent benefits of these social values, we align our forgiveness climate model with other prosocial models of organizing, including ethics of care models derived from Gilligan (1982) and altruist stakeholder cultures wherein "moral standards . . . are decisive and not subordinate to pragmatic considerations" (Jones et al., 2007: 149). Beyond its inherent virtue, we also argue that a forgiveness climate can provide organizations with a strategic advantage, thus acting as both a prosocial and a profit force for organizations. In this way we link to broader bodies of literature on organizational virtue (Hess & Cameron, 2006) and evolutionary psychology (De Waal & Pokorny, 2005) that emphasize the practical benefits of forgiveness and other prosocial behaviors. That said, it is important for organizations to build their core values and organizational practices out of genuine prosocial concern. When employees attribute climates to disingenuous motives, research suggests that their benefits quickly dissipate (Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008). Thus, it may not be possible for organizations to institutionalize forgiveness overnight. Rather, forgiveness climates must emerge gradually and genuinely from social contexts, leaders, and an organization's core values.

Future Directions

Forgiveness and organizational success. To date, scholars have provided primarily anecdotal evidence that forgiveness impacts organizations' bottom lines. To explore these potential effects, we hypothesized a direct impact of employees' prosocial conflict responses on their relationship commitment and interpersonal citizenship. Future research can expand on these

propositions by considering a broader array of linkages between forgiveness climates and organizational success. For example, research tentatively suggests that prosocial conflict responses might directly influence employee performance. According to social capital theory, interpersonal relationships serve as resource pools through which individuals can attain their goals (Lin, 2001). Given the proposed link between forgiveness and relationship commitment, victims and offenders can be expected to experience access to a wider social network following forgiveness, providing a distinct performance advantage.

Forgiveness climate measurement and paths to emergence. Future empirical research necessitates a consideration of measurement and emergent processes with respect to forgiveness climate. Following Chan's (1998) compositional typology, scholars might use a referent shift model to measure forgiveness climate. In referent shift models scholars adopt an additive approach, taking the average of employees' individual perceptions but utilizing the organization as the measurement target. Thus, employees do not report how forgiving they are as individuals but, rather, their perceptions of the organization's expectations. At the same time it is important to realize that the organization might not always be the most appropriate unit of analysis. Rather, organizational climates might more consistently emerge at a lower level, such as units within a hospital. Scholars must be sensitive to this issue and aggregate accordingly (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

Beyond these measurement issues, future research must attend to different patterns of climate emergence. In our research we argue for convergent emergence, whereby climate emerges homogenously around a single set of norms with little between-individual variability (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). At the same time we note the potential for other configurations of climate emergence. For example, it is possible that forgiveness climates emerge but in a less pure form (e.g., pooled constrained emergence; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Thus, it is important for future researchers to be explicit about the model of climate emergence underlying their work and to align their measurement approach accordingly.

Generalizability of the model. We believe that the core tenets of our model likely are generalizable across organizations and cultures. For ex-

ample, we believe that restorative justice, compassion, and temperance are likely universal "bedrocks" of forgiveness climates. However, the specific ways in which these values are instantiated through leader behavior and organizational practices may be culture specific. Accordingly, future research needs to examine the unique ways in which these values become instantiated in particular practices in different organizational contexts. Likewise, our multilevel model of forgiveness at work, while capturing many essential predictors and consequences of forgiveness climate, clearly fails to capture all relevant factors and moderators that are possibly relevant. Accordingly, we view our effort as a beginning roadmap to launch a multilevel research agenda on forgiveness climates.

Conclusion

Few situations cry out for care and compassion as loudly as interpersonal conflict. Ironically, it is often these situations where care and compassion are most rare. To overcome egocentric biases and vengeful desires, employees may need more than a forgiving disposition. In this article we have presented a novel theoretical model of forgiveness to explore how organizations can encourage their employees to respond to conflict prosocially. By introducing the construct of forgiveness climate, we have illuminated many previously unexamined pathways through which prosocial responses to conflict can emerge. Cultural values, environmental contexts, organizational practices, and leader attributes all play a vital role in when and if forgiveness emerges at the organizational level. In tandem, they hold the potential to shift even the most severe conflict episodes down the path of forgiveness and reconciliation.

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