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Validation of Negativity: Drawbacks of Interpersonal Responsiveness During Conflicts With Outsiders

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The current research included 7 studies testing a model of interpersonal processes when people disclose to their close relationship partners ("confidants") about their conflicts involving adversaries outside the dyad. The model posits that confidants who feel close to disclosers tend to adopt goals to be responsive to disclosers during these interactions, which motivates them to validate disclosers' negativity toward their adversaries. Disclosers interpret this validation of negativity as responsive, which motivates them to continue confiding in these confidants, but also respond to this behavior with more negative moral evaluations of their adversaries, reduced willingness to forgive their adversaries, and reduced commitment to maintaining a relationship with their adversaries. Results of 3 cross-sectional studies, 3 experiments, and a behavioral observation study support this model. This research suggests potential drawbacks of partner responsiveness during discussions of conflicts, and suggests processes through which people reward, draw closer to, and depend on partners who validate negativity and, consequently, undermine conflict resolution with others.

Keywords: conflict, forgiveness, morality, responsiveness, validation

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People want their friends and romantic partners to be warm, kind, and helpful (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Regan, Levin, Sprecher, Christopher, & Gate, 2000; Sprecher & Regan, 2002). Furthermore, their satisfaction with their close relationships is strongly tied to beliefs that their relationship partners provide support (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Feeney & Collins, 2015), care for their welfare (Clark, Lemay, Graham, Pataki, & Finkel, 2010; Lemay, Clark, & Feeney, 2007), and have positive regard for them (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2000). The concept of responsiveness provides a conceptual integration of these phenomena (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004; Reis & Gable, 2015). Responsiveness refers to how partners attend to and support each other's needs and goals. People perceive their relationship partners as responsive when those partners communicate understanding (i.e., partners understand their core needs, desires, strengths, and weaknesses), validation (i.e., partners respect or value their views of the self and world), and care (i.e., partners are warm, affectionate, and express concern for their welfare; Reis et al., 2004; Reis & Gable, 2015). Perceived partner responsiveness has been associated with greater relationship satisfaction, relationship commitment, intimacy, trust, and relationship persistence (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006; Gable, Gosnell, Maisel, & Strachman, 2012; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Lemay & Neal, 2014; Segal & Fraley, 2016). Furthermore, people who perceive their partners as responsive reap personal benefits, such as greater happiness and life satisfaction, more proactive coping, better health, and reduced mortality (Lemay & Neal, 2014; Maisel & Gable, 2009; Selcuk, Gunaydin, Ong, & Almeida, 2016; Selcuk & Ong, 2013; Slatcher, Selcuk, & Ong, 2015).

Does responsiveness have drawbacks? In contrast to the extensive evidence regarding its benefits, negative outcomes of responsiveness are not well understood. Understanding the costs of responsiveness, and how to mitigate them, is important given that responsiveness is often described as a means to improving relationships (see Clark & Lemay, 2010; Reis et al., 2004). The current research tests novel predictions regarding the costs of goals to be responsive to close relationship partners (e.g., friends, family members, romantic partners) who are involved in conflicts with people outside of the dyad. People in close relationships often discuss their extended social network members (McAndrew, Bell, & Garcia, 2007), including nega-

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tive experiences with these members (Eaton & Sanders, 2012; Volkema, Farquhar, & Bergmann, 1996). Hence, close relationship partners often have the opportunity to intervene in each other's conflicts with outsiders. We propose that, during these interactions, goals to be responsive to relationship partners often elicit related goals and behaviors that can interfere with partners' resolution of conflicts with outsiders. Furthermore, we propose that partners often interpret these behaviors as responsive, and, hence, they seek out confidants who enact them. A model of our predictions is depicted in Figure 1. Below we describe the model in detail.

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Costs of Responsiveness When Close Partners Have Conflicts

When describing our predictions, we use the term *disclosers* to refer to people who share information with their close relationship partners (e.g., close friends, romantic partners, or family members), who are termed *confidants,* regarding disclosers' conflict with *adversaries*, who are people outside the discloser-confidant relationship. Given the importance of goals, or desired end-states, in self-regulation of behavior (Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Trötschel, 2001; Carver & Scheier, 1998; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Higgins, 1987; Kruglanski et al., 2002), our model emphasizes social goals.

Closeness Elicits Confidants' Responsiveness Goals

We expect that confidants who feel close to disclosers will often adopt goals to be responsive to disclosers after learning about disclosers' conflicts with outside adversaries (Path A in Figure 1). Given that responsiveness is typically desired and expected in close relationships, and that people often care for the welfare of close relationship partners (Clark & Lemay, 2010), confidants who feel close to disclosers should feel motivated to be responsive to disclosers' needs and communicate their understanding, validation, and care during these situations. Indeed, many studies suggest that people are more motivated to provide responsiveness, help, and support to closer relationship partners relative to distant partners (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Clark & Lemay, 2010; Korchmaros & Kenny, 2006; Reis et al., 2004; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

Confidants' Responsiveness Goals Elicit Their Negativity Validation Subgoals

To accomplish their goals, people often adopt associated goals, termed subgoals, that are expected to be instrumental in goal pursuit (Fishbach, Dhar, & Zhang, 2006; Gollwitzer, 1999; Kruglanski et al., 2002). We examine validation of disclosers' negativity as one such subgoal. Negativity validation goals involve wanting to express agreement, acceptance, and support of disclosers' negative thoughts or feelings about their adversaries, and cast adversaries in a less favorable light relative to disclosers. Confidants may view their validation of disclosers' negativity as effectively serving their broader goal of being responsive to disclosers. When people experience negative events, they view social support that validates their negative thoughts and feelings as responsive, and they believe that other people also view this type of validating support as responsive (Marigold, Cavallo, Holmes, & Wood, 2014). Furthermore, in conflict situations specifically, people usually want to receive affirmation of their self-worth and validation of their negative views of their adversaries, and are motivated to see themselves as morally superior relative to their adversaries (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Eaton, Struthers, & Santelli, 2006; Kennedy & Pronin, 2008; Schüutz, 1999). People tend to feel close (Bosson, Johnson, Niederhoffer, & Swann, 2006) and self-affirmed and supported by others (Eaton & Sanders, 2012) when their negative views about other people are validated. Hence, it is likely that confidants view validation of negativity as an effective means of being responsive to partners in conflicts. As such, after learning about disclosers' interpersonal conflicts, we expect that confidants who adopt the goal of being responsive to disclosers will often adopt the related subgoal of validating

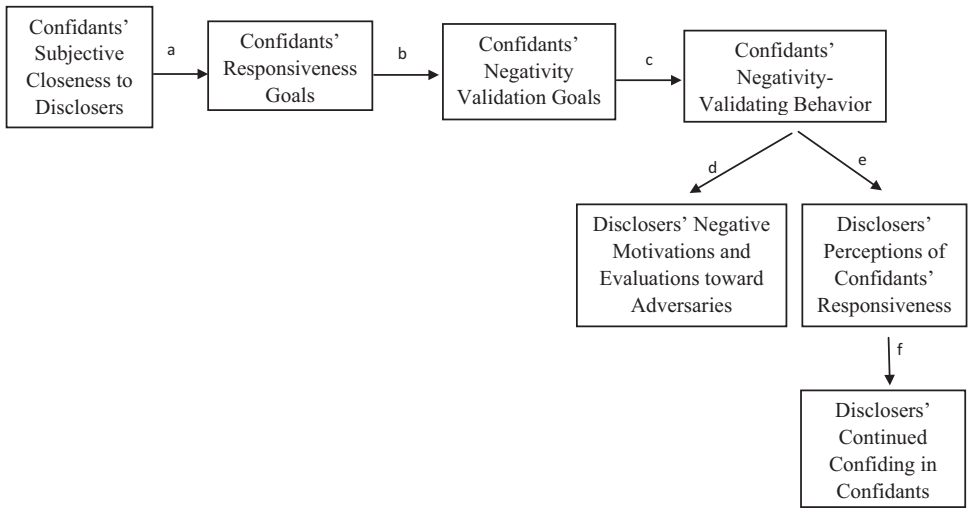

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Figure 1. Theorized model guiding current research.

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disclosers' negativity toward disclosers' adversaries (Path B in Figure 1).

Confidants' Negativity Validation Goals Motivate Their Negativity-Validating Behaviors

Confidants who want to validate disclosers' negativity may enact a variety of behaviors to accomplish this goal (Path C in Figure 1). For example, they may express negative attributions for the adversary's negative behaviors, such as beliefs that they were intentional and selfish, that the adversary should be blamed, or that the negative behaviors were caused by factors that are stable qualities of the adversary. For people involved in conflicts with others, these attributions are associated with negative relationship evaluations, anger, more intense conflicts, and poor conflict resolution (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010; Fincham, 2000; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992; Fincham, Paleari, & Regalia, 2002). Hence, expressing these attributions may effectively validate disclosers' negativity toward adversaries. Consistent with this prediction, prior research examining autobiographical narratives regarding experiences of disclosing conflicts to close relationship partners suggests that close relationship partners often communicate these sorts of attributions regarding adversaries' harmful behaviors (Eaton & Sanders, 2012). Other research has shown that third parties who are close to others in conflict tend to reproduce biased narratives that minimize the blame of their close others and emphasize the blame of their adversaries (Lee, Gelfand, & Kashima, 2014). We predict that these responses are often motivated by goals to be responsive to close partners and, in turn, to validate their negativity.

Confidants who adopt the goal to validate disclosers' negativity may also characterize the adversary as uncaring or rejecting, as likely to continue enacting the negative behavior in the future, as unapologetic, and as severely destructive. Each of these behaviors may be seen as an effective strategy to validate disclosers' negativity toward their adversaries. Indeed, for people involved in conflicts, perceiving adversaries as uncaring and rejecting (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998; Lemay, Overall, & Clark, 2012), believing that they lack remorse (Eaton et al., 2006; McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997), expecting continued aversive behavior (Burnette, McCullough, Van Tongeren, & Davis, 2012; McCullough, Pedersen, Tabak, & Carter, 2014), and viewing offenses as severe (Fehr et al., 2010; Fincham, Jackson, & Beach, 2005) appear to undermine forgiveness and prolong negative sentiments toward adversaries. Hence, confidants may often enact these behaviors as means to validate disclosers' negativity.

Efforts to validate disclosers' negativity may also take the form of suggestions to avoid forgiving adversaries. Forgiveness involves a tendency to relinquish motivations to retaliate against or maintain estrangement from an offender, along with increasing motivation for reconciliation and goodwill for the adversary (McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998). Confidants who want to validate disclosers' negative thoughts and feelings about adversaries may discourage reconciliation with adversaries and encourage their revenge or avoidance.

Confidants' Negativity-Validating Behaviors Shape Disclosers' Motivations Toward and Evaluations of Adversaries

Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors may shape disclosers' motivations and evaluations toward their adversaries. Attitudes tend to become more polarized when they are corroborated by others (Baron et al., 1996), and people are particularly likely to adopt the attitudes of their close relationship partners (Davis & Rusbult, 2001). Hence, when confidants enact negativity-validating behaviors, disclosers may evaluate their adversaries' morality more negatively, become less motivated to forgive their adversaries, more motivated to avoid them or seek revenge on them, and less committed to maintaining a relationship with them (Path D in Figure 1).

This process should have important implications for disclosers' resolution of conflicts with their adversaries. Perceptions of moral character are fundamental to impression formation, global evaluation, and attraction (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014; Hartley et al., 2016). In addition, forgiveness is critical to maintaining satisfying and harmonious interpersonal relationships (Fincham, 2000; Karremans & Van Lange, 2008; Maio, Thomas, Fincham, & Carnelley, 2008; Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2005; Tsang, McCullough, & Fincham, 2006). Likewise, commitment is associated with a variety of prorelationship behaviors, such as willingness to sacrifice for partners and enactment of prosocial behaviors during conflicts (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Van Lange et al., 1997), and it predicts greater relationship persistence (Le & Agnew, 2003). Hence, disclosers' more negative moral evaluation, reduced forgiveness, and lower commitment toward their adversaries following interactions with confidants who validate their negativity would signify impaired conflict resolution and threats to the discloser-adversary relationship.

Consistent with this prediction, Klein and Milardo (2000) found that people were more confident in the legitimacy of their own perspective on conflicts with romantic partners when they reported that a large number of their social network members supported their position. Similarly, Eaton and Sanders (2012) found that people were less likely to forgive their adversaries, and had more negative views of adversaries, when their relationship partners provided emotional support that permitted them to vent their anger, encouraged them to blame their adversaries, or encouraged revenge and avoidance toward adversaries (see also Eaton, 2013). These results suggest that disclosers' attitudes and motivation regarding conflict resolution are influenced by responses from others not involved in the conflict. The current research extends this prior work by examining interpersonal goals as a driver of these processes, and by examining mechanisms that may reinforce them, as we describe next.

Seeking Out Validating Confidants

Given that disclosers often want their negative evaluations and feelings about their adversaries validated by confidants, they are likely to interpret confidants' negativity-validating behavior as responsive to their needs (Path E in Figure 1). Indeed, as described earlier, prior research suggests that people feel especially connected to those who share their negative attitudes about others (Bosson et al., 2006), that people feel

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self-affirmed and supported when their close relationship partners validate their negative views of adversaries in conflicts (Eaton & Sanders, 2012), and that people evaluate others more positively when they validate their perspectives on conflicts (Eaton, 2013). In turn, given that people want to be close and disclose to those they perceive as responsive (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Omarzu, 2000; Reis & Shaver, 1988), disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness should be associated with disclosers' greater desires to confide in those confidants when they have conflicts with others (Path F in Figure 1).

Such a process may have important implications. It suggests that, relative to more impartial partners, partners who validate negativity may be more often selected as confidants, providing them with greater ability to influence disclosers' relationships with outside adversaries. Moreover, given the rewarding and intimacy-building effects of self-disclosure and perceived responsiveness (Collins & Miller, 1994; Reis et al., 2004; Reis & Gable, 2015; Reis & Shaver, 1988), it suggests mechanisms through which disclosers may draw closer to and reward confidants who validate their negativity, potentially increasing the likelihood that their negativity is validated in future conflicts with adversaries.

Resisting the Negativity Bandwagon: Factors That May Disrupt the Validation of Negativity

Given that most people want to be validated when they have conflicts with others, we expect that most confidants will view negativity validation as a means to be responsive. Nevertheless, some factors may disrupt the validation of negativity either by weakening the links in the model we described above or independently reducing confidants' motivation to validate negativity.

Personal characteristics of confidants may constitute one set of factors. Some confidants may be more motivated to maintain harmonious interpersonal interactions for themselves and others. For example, agreeableness is a personality trait reflecting a tendency to be warm and trusting, and to desire harmonious interactions (Graziano & Tobin, 2009). Agreeableness is associated with a proclivity to forgive (Fehr et al., 2010), more negative views regarding destructive conflict resolution tactics (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001), and better interpersonal adjustment (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2001). Although agreeableness is also associated with providing more social support (Branje, van Lieshout, & van Aken, 2005), these results suggest that agreeable confidants may support their partners involved in conflicts with outsiders in ways that do not validate negativity, such as by encouraging forgiveness.

Qualities of disclosers, as well as relationships between confidants and disclosers, may also be important. For example, prior research has demonstrated that people are less likely to validate the negative thoughts and feelings of low self-esteem partners, relative to high self-esteem partners (Marigold et al., 2014). Related to this, prior research suggests that people are less supportive of partners who frequently express negativity, perhaps because they interpret their partner's negative disclosure as less indicative of a need for support, or because they feel resentful toward chronically negative partners or assume that support will not help them (Forest, Kille, Wood, & Holmes, 2014; Forest & Wood, 2012). Relatedly, people's perceptions of their partner's needs may change over successive disclosures about the same interpersonal conflict. Validation of negativity may be used to provide emotional support the first time a conflict is disclosed, when the discloser's emotional distress is likely heightened, but confidants may instead seek to help the discloser resolve conflicts after the discloser's initial distress has subsided. Hence, confidants who interact with a low self-esteem discloser, or who discuss a conflict that has already been disclosed, may provide less validation of negativity.

Features of the relationship between confidants and adversaries may constitute another set of factors that can disrupt the validation of negativity. Instead of validating negativity, confidants who have a close relationship with disclosers' adversaries may try to protect those adversaries by presenting them in a positive light to disclosers and encouraging disclosers to forgive them. Indeed, prior research suggests that people often try to help their friends create desired impressions on audiences (Schlenker & Britt, 1999). This type of support is especially likely when people have positive attitudes toward their friends (Schlenker & Britt, 2001). Hence, confidants' closeness to disclosers' adversaries may be associated with confidants' reduced validation of disclosers' negativity toward their adversaries, or this closeness may weaken the link between confidants' responsiveness goals and their goals to validate disclosers' negativity.

Finally, confidants' beliefs about the relationship between disclosers and their adversaries may constitute another set of factors that can disrupt the validation of negativity. Rather than validating negativity, confidants may present adversaries in a positive light to disclosers, and encourage disclosers' forgiveness of adversaries, when confidants are aware that disclosers and adversaries typically have a close relationship. They may do so, in part, because they believe that it is in disclosers' best interests to restore relationships with close and important adversaries, and confidants want to provide support that promotes disclosers' long-term welfare. In addition, confidants may resist validating negativity of disclosers' close adversaries because they expect that disclosers will not be receptive to confidants expressing negativity toward those adversaries, even if they are currently feuding.

In these cases, confidants may try to be responsive to disclosers in ways other than validating negativity. For example, they could acknowledge the discloser's feelings but then try to help the discloser forgive the adversary by portraying the adversary's behavior as less severe, describing the adversary as remorseful, and encouraging forgiveness. Indeed, Eaton and Sanders (2012) identified a group of disclosers who reported receiving emotional support from confidants that lacked validation of negative views toward adversaries. The factors described above may motivate confidants to provide this kind of support.

The Current Research

The current research includes seven studies testing the model depicted in Figure 1. Study 1 is a cross-sectional study examining typical responses when discussing conflicts with close relationship partners. Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c involve experimental manipulations to examine causal effects of responsiveness goals on validation of negativity. Studies 3a and 3b examine participants' self-reported behavioral responses and long-term responses to adversaries after receiving negativity validation from romantic partners. Study 4 tests predictions using behavioral observation methods. In addition, potential moderating variables described

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above are tested in Study 4, including confidants' agreeableness, disclosers' self-esteem, prior discussion of the conflict, confidants' closeness with disclosers' adversaries, and confidants' perceptions of closeness between disclosers and their adversaries.

This research makes significant contributions to understanding the role of informal third parties in conflict resolution. Several studies suggest that formal third parties—people employed as mediators or arbitrators—are effective in resolving disputes (Arnold & O'Connor, 1999; Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Naylor & Cowie, 1999). Much less is known regarding the role of informal third parties, such as romantic partners, close friends, and family members. However, one important difference is that, unlike most formal third parties, informal third parties are not necessarily motivated to form an unbiased assessment of the conflict or even to resolve the conflict (Eaton & Sanders, 2012; Lee et al., 2014). Indeed, our model suggests mechanisms through which they may, instead, impair conflict resolution.

By examining unexplored relationship factors and goals that motivate confidants to validate disclosers' negativity, the current research makes novel contributions to theorizing on motivation, third-party conflict resolution, and interpersonal responsiveness. Support for our predictions regarding responsiveness, negativity validation, and partners' responses to this validation would suggest that interpersonal closeness and goals to be responsive to partners engender adoption of subgoals and behaviors that, despite providing partners with validation, may impair their resolution of conflicts with people outside the dyad. This is a particularly novel contribution given the dearth of research demonstrating drawbacks of interpersonal responsiveness or effects of responsiveness within a dyad on relationships involving people outside the dyad. Furthermore, prior research on disclosers' responses to validation behavior from informal third parties has not examined perceived responsiveness and desire for future self-disclosure as outcomes. Support for our predictions would suggest mechanisms that reinforce the validation of negativity and provide confidants who validate negativity with privileged influence over disclosers' social networks.

Study 1

This first study tested predictions regarding experiences within close relationships as confidants and disclosers of conflicts involving an outside adversary. To test predictions regarding the experience of confidants, participants completed measures assessing closeness to their relationship partner, goals to be responsive when this partner discusses a conflict with outside adversaries, goals to validate the partner's negativity toward those adversaries, and enactment of negativity-validating behavior. Negativity-validating behavior was operationalized as expressing negative causal and responsibility attributions for the adversary's negative behavior, including attributing the adversary's negative behavior to internal, stable, and global factors, blaming the adversary, and claiming that adversary's negative behavior was intentional and selfishly motivated. As described previously, these sorts of attributions have been associated with lower relationship quality, more intense conflicts, and poor conflict resolution for those involved in conflicts (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992; Fincham et al., 2002). Hence, expressing these attributions for adversaries' behavior to relationship partners may exacerbate or prolong partners' conflicts with adversaries (Eaton & Sanders, 2012). Extending prior research, we expected to find an indirect effect of subjective closeness to relationship partners on enactment of this negativity-validating behavior via responsiveness goals and, in turn, negativity validation goals (Paths A, B, and C in Figure 1). That is, when people feel close to their partner, we expect they will adopt goals to be responsive to their partner when the partner discloses about conflicts with adversaries, which should predict their adoption of goals to validate their partner's negativity toward their adversaries and, in turn, their expression of negative attributions for adversaries' behavior. Evidence for this process would suggest that closeness and responsiveness goals elicit subgoals and behaviors that may exacerbate partners' conflicts with outside adversaries.

To test predictions regarding the experiences of disclosers, participants completed measures assessing perceptions of their relationship partner's enactment of the same negativity-validating behaviors (i.e., expressing negative attributions) when participants disclosed to these partners about their own conflicts with outside adversaries, perceptions of their partner's responsiveness toward them during these interactions, the frequency of confiding in partners about conflicts with outside adversaries, and intentions to confide in the partner about these conflicts in the future. When participants perceive that their partner validates negative views about adversaries, they should see their partner as more responsive, which should predict greater frequency of confiding in their partner about conflicts with outside adversaries and intentions to continue confiding in the future (Paths E and F in Figure 1). Support for this prediction would suggest that partner behaviors that validate negativity and exacerbate conflict with outside adversaries are experienced as responsive and, consequently, people confide in partners who enact these behaviors.

Method

Participants. Participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk, an online marketplace in which users can perform short-term tasks for pay. Users with an approval rate (based on all of their prior work assignments) of at least 90% were eligible for participation. Applying this eligibility criterion eliminated users with a history of poor performance on assignments and improved the likelihood of obtaining a sample of participants who tend to follow study instructions and answer questions carefully. The online questionnaire used in this study was accessed 360 times. However, entries were eliminated from the study if (a) they had the same Internet Protocol address as a more complete or prior entry, which reduces the likelihood that the same person provided more than one set of responses, or (b) they were finished in less than two minutes, which excludes participants who completed the questionnaire so quickly as to suggest careless responding. After implementing these screening procedures, a sample of 324 respondents remained in the study, which included 176 men and 124 women (M age = 34.40; SD = 11.10). The sample included participants with diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (54% White, 29% Asian, 8% Black or African American, 20% Hispanic or Latin American; 4% American Indian/Alaska Native; 3% other), diverse educational backgrounds (8% with high school education or less; 16% with some college education; 14% with 2-year degree or

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vocational degree or certification; 50% with a 4-year college degree; and 14% with a graduate degree), and diverse annual income levels (22% with less than $20,000; 36% between $20,000 and $50,000; 27% between $50,000 and $80,000; and 14% greater than $80,000). Participants were paid $.50 for their participation. With this sample, statistical power is .99 to detect moderate and small-to-moderate effects. Given that we test indirect effects, including two-variable serial indirect effects, we also used Monte Carlo simulations to estimate power to detect simple indirect effects involving a single mediator and complex indirect effects involving two serial mediators (Thoemmes, MacKinnon, & Reiser, 2010). With the current sample, estimated power was .99 to detect simple indirect effects with paths that were moderate or small-to-moderate in size. In addition, estimated power was .97 to detect two-mediator serial indirect effects with paths that were small-to-moderate in size and 1 to detect two-mediator serial indirect effects with paths that were moderate in size.

Procedure and measures. Participants provided the first name of a close relationship partner. Those who were involved in a romantic relationship provided the name of their romantic partner (n = 252). The remaining participants provided the name of a different type of relationship partner (n = 63), most (94%) of which were friends. Participants completed the following measures with regard to this person.

Interpersonal closeness. Participants completed six items adapted from the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998) to assess relationship commitment (e.g., "I want our relationship to last a very long time"; "I feel very attached to this relationship, very strongly linked to this person"; α = .83), five items adapted from the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult et al., 1998) to measure relationship satisfaction (e.g., "I feel satisfied with our relationship"; "Our relationship makes me very happy"; α = .92), five items adapted from the Communal Strength Scale (Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004) to assess care for the partner (e.g., "Helping [partner name] is a high priority for me"; "I care for [partner name]'s needs"; α = .80), and two items assessing subjective closeness (i.e., "[partner name] and I have a close relationship"; "My relationship with [partner name] is important to me"; α = .85). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). In addition, participants completed the single-item Inclusion of Other in Self Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), a pictorial measure of closeness in which participants indicate their felt closeness from seven pairs of progressively overlapping circles representing the self and partner. Responses to these five measures were standardized and averaged to create an index of closeness (α = .87).

Responsiveness goals. Participants completed a 10-item measure of goals to be responsive to their relationship partner after learning about their partner's conflicts with outside adversaries. All items include the stem "When [partner name] is angry or upset with other people (people other than me) . . ." and were completed using 7-point response scales (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Items assessed goals to validate partners in a general sense ("I try to help [partner name] feel that he/she is right"; "I try to express agreement with [partner name]"; "I try to help [partner name] feel good about himself/herself"; "I try to help [partner name] feel accepted and valued"; "I try to show [partner name] that I have positive views of him/her"), goals to make partners feel understood ("I try to help [partner name] feel understood"; "I try to show [partner name] that I understand the situation"), and goals to express care for partner and valuing of the relationship ("I try to show [partner name] that I care for him/her"; "I try to be supportive of [partner name]"; "I try to show [partner name] that I am loyal"). Items were adapted from prior research on responsiveness (Reis, Maniaci, Caprariello, Eastwick, & Finkel, 2011), but they were modified to assess responsiveness goals rather than perceptions of responsiveness. Responses were averaged to create an index of responsiveness goals (α = .93).

Negativity validation goals. Participants completed nine items assessing their goals to validate their partner's negativity toward outside adversaries. All items used the same item stem described above to refer to situations in which the partner is angry or upset with others, and were answered using the same response scales. Items assessed goals to validate the partner's negative emotions toward adversaries ("I try to help [partner name] feel that he/she is right to feel upset with these people"; "I try to help [partner name] feel that I understand why he/she is upset with these people"; "I try to be supportive of [partner name]'s anger or hurt feelings regarding these people"), to validate negative evaluations of adversaries or their behavior ("I try to express agreement with [partner name]'s negative views of these people"; "I try to show [partner name] that I understand these people's behavior is hurtful or offensive"; "I try to help [partner name] feel that I value his/her perspective about these people"), to affirm the greater morality of the partner relative to adversaries ("I try to show [partner name] that his/her behavior is more appropriate than the behavior of these other people"; "I try to show [partner name] that he/she was more correct than these people"), and to demonstrate valuing of the partner relative to adversaries ("I try to show [partner name] that I value him/her more than I value these people"). Responses were averaged to create an index of negativity validation goals (α = .90). Although these items seem similar to responsiveness, unlike the responsiveness items, they specifically focus on validating the partner's negative sentiments regarding the adversary.

Enactment of negativity-validating behaviors. Participants completed a nine-item measure assessing their enactment of behaviors that may validate partners' negativity and escalate conflict between partners and adversaries. All items used the same item stem described above to refer to situations in which the partner is angry or upset with others, and were answered using a 5-point response scale (*never* to *nearly always*). Items assessed expressing negative (i.e., internal, stable, and global) attributions regarding the cause of adversaries' behavior (i.e., "say to [partner name] that this situation is due to something about these other people [e.g., the kind of people they are]"; "say to [partner name] the behavior of these other people is unlikely to change"; "say to [partner name] that this situation affects other areas of the relationship between [partner name] and these other people") as well as conveying negative responsibility attributions, including attributions that the adversary's behavior was intentional, selfish, blameworthy, and wrong (i.e., "say to [partner name] that these other people engaged in negative behavior on purpose"; "say to [partner name] that these other people were being selfish"; "say to [partner name] that these other people were being irresponsible"; "say to [partner name] that these other people deserve to be blamed"; "say to [partner name] that these other people are responsible for the situation"; "say to [partner name] that these other people are wrong"). Items were adapted from the Relationship Attribution Measure (Fincham &

Bradbury, 1992). Responses were averaged to create an index of enactment of negativity-validating behavior ($\alpha = .91$).

Using the same response scales, participants completed an analogous set of nine items assessing perceptions of their relationship partner's enactment of these negativity-validating behaviors during situations in which participants had conflicts with outside adversaries (e.g., "When I am angry or upset at other people, how often does [partner name] say that that these other people deserve to be blamed"). Responses were averaged to create an index of perceived partner enactment of negativity-validating behavior ($\alpha = .91$).

Perceived partner responsiveness during conflict discussions. Participants completed 15 items assessing perceptions of their relationship partner's responsiveness when they disclosed to their partners about their conflicts involving outside adversaries. All items used the stem "When I tell [partner name] that I am upset or angry with other people, he/she . . ." and were completed using 7-point response scales (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Items were adapted from prior research on perceived responsiveness (Reis et al., 2011), and assessed perceived understanding ("understands my point of view"; "really listens to me"; "is on 'the same wavelength' with me"; "understands the facts about the issue"; "is an excellent judge of the situation"), perceived validation ("has positive views of me"; "agrees with my point of view"; "values my opinions"; "respects my views about the issue"; "expresses liking and encouragement for me"), and perceived care ("seems to care about my welfare"; "is supportive of me"; "is concerned for my feelings"; "seems interested in what I am thinking and feeling"; "wants to help me"). Responses were averaged to create an index of perceived partner responsiveness ($\alpha = .96$).

Frequency of discussing external conflicts. Participants completed two items assessing the frequency of discussing conflicts involving outside adversaries with their relationship partner (i.e., "When difficulties or conflicts arise with other people, how often do you talk to [partner name] about it"; "When you feel angry or upset with other people, how often do you talk to [partner name] about it"). Items were completed using 5-point response scales (*never* to *nearly always*). Responses were averaged to assess frequency of disclosing conflicts ($\alpha = .79$).

Intentions to discuss external conflicts. Participants completed five items assessing their intentions to discuss conflicts involving outside adversaries with their relationship partner in the future (i.e., "In the future, I plan to talk to [partner name] about problems I have with other people"; "In the future, I plan to confide in [partner name] about problems I have with others"; "In the future, I plan to seek advice from [partner name] regarding conflicts I have with others"; "In the future, I plan to ask [partner name] about his/her opinion regarding other people"; "In the future, I plan to ask [partner name] for feedback regarding my problems with other people"). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Responses were averaged to create an index of intentions to disclose future conflicts ($\alpha = .93$).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and correlations. Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1. Consistent with predictions regarding the goals of confidants, closeness to partners was associated with goals to be responsive to partners and validate their negativity toward adversaries, which were associated with more frequent enactment of negativity-validating behaviors. Consistent with predictions regarding reactions of disclosers, perceived partner enactment of negativity-validating behavior was associated with greater perceived partner responsiveness, frequency of confiding in the partner, and intentions to confide in the future. T1

Below we describe results of two models, one examining links between confidants' goals and their enactment of negativity-validating behavior, and one examining disclosers' reactions to receiving negativity-validating behavior.

Model of confidants' experience: Closeness, interaction goals, and enactment of negativity-validating behavior. A path model (using AMOS 17.0) tested predictions relevant to the goals of confidants. We expected that participants who felt closer to their partners would adopt goals to be responsive after learning of their partners' conflicts with adversaries (Path A in Figure 1). In turn, responsiveness goals were expected to predict adoption of subgoals to validate partners' negativity toward adversaries (Path B in Figure 1), which should predict enactment of negativity-validating behaviors (i.e., expressing negative attributions of adversaries' behavior; Path C in Figure 1). To ensure that the model was properly specified, all direct effects were modeled. Hence, the model was saturated and fit statistics are irrelevant. Bias-corrected confidence intervals are presented, which are based on 2,000 bootstrap samples.

Results are depicted in Figure 2. As expected, closeness was associated with adopting goals to be responsive to the partner when the partner was in conflict with outside adversaries (Path A; F2

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlations (Study 1)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Closeness	0 (.81)							
2. Responsiveness goals	.69***	5.7 (.93)						
3. Negativity validation goals	.50***	.76***	5.27 (.98)					
4. Negativity-validating behavior	.06	.30***	.58***	3.24 (.73)				
5. PP negativity-validating behavior	.11†	.33***	.51***	.81***	3.27 (.77)			
6. PP responsiveness	.58***	.77***	.59***	.25***	.41***	5.54 (.99)		
7. Confiding frequency	.56***	.57***	.51***	.30***	.35***	.57***	3.87 (.85)	
8. Confiding intentions	.68***	.70***	.56***	.25***	.38***	.72***	.68***	5.54 (1.21)

Note. PP = perception of partner. *M* (*SD*) appear on the diagonal.
† $p < .06$. *** $p < .001$.

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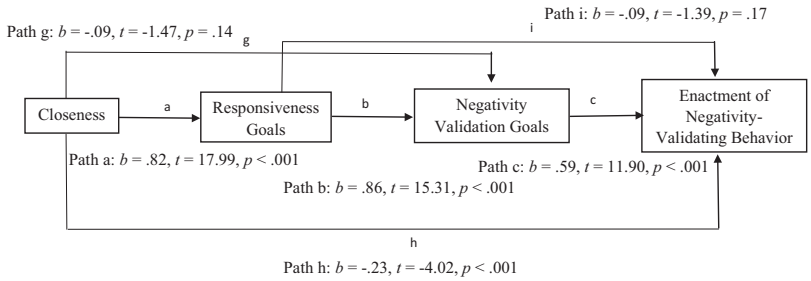

Figure 2. Results of path model testing predictions relevant to confidants' experience: linking subjective closeness to enactment of negativity-validating behavior via interaction goals (Study 1).

95% CI [.68, .94]). In turn, responsiveness goals predicted greater adoption of negativity validation goals (Path B; 95% CI [.75, .98]), suggesting that participants who wanted to be responsive sought to validate their partner's negativity toward their adversaries. In turn, negativity validation goals predicted participants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors (Path C; 95% CI [.47, .72]). Participants who wanted to validate their partner's negativity were more likely to express negative attributions for adversaries' behavior. An unexpected negative direct effect of closeness on enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path H; 95% CI [−.37, −.12]) suggests that, after accounting for the hypothesized mediating process linking closeness to more negativity-validating behavior, closeness was also associated with reduced enactment of negativity-validating behavior through some other process. However, this direct effect was not replicated in subsequent studies. Other direct effects were not significant.

Indirect effects. Indirect effects were tested by constructing 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals based on a distribution of 2,000 bootstrap resamples of the data (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). Most relevant to predictions regarding the costs of responsiveness goals, responsiveness goals indirectly predicted enactment of negativity-validating behaviors (i.e., expressing negative attributions) via goals to validate negativity (Path B × C), 95% CI [.38, .66]. Other indirect effects involving closeness were also significant. Closeness indirectly predicted negativity validation goals via responsiveness goals (Path A × B; 95% CI [.57, .85]), and closeness indirectly predicted negativity-validating behavior via responsiveness goals and, in turn, negativity validation goals (Path A × B × C; 95% CI [.30, .56]).

Alternative models. We tested an alternative model that switched the position of negativity validation goals and responsiveness goals, and a second alternative model that switched the position of negativity validation goals and enactment of negativity-validating behavior. Indirect effects were weaker in these alternative models, suggesting better support for the hypothesized model. Details are available in the online supplemental materials.

Model of disclosers' experience: Receiving validation of negativity, perceived partner responsiveness, and confiding in the partner. Another fully saturated path model tested predictions relevant to the experience of disclosers (i.e., the person involved in conflicts with outside adversaries). We expected that participants would perceive their relationship partners as responsive when they reported that their partners often validate their negativity toward outside adversaries (Path E in Figure 1), and that perceived responsiveness, in turn, would predict more frequent confiding and intentions to confide in the partner about their conflicts with outside adversaries (Path F in Figure 1). Again, bias-corrected confidence intervals are presented, which are based on 2,000 bootstrap samples. Results are depicted in Figure 3. As expected, participants' perception of their partner's negativity-validating behavior predicted greater perceived partner responsiveness (Path E; 95% CI [.39, .70]), which predicted greater frequency of confiding in partners (Path F1; 95% CI [.35, .54]) and intentions to confide (Path F2; 95% CI [.69, .97]). There was also a significant direct effect of perceived partner enactment of negativity-validating behavior on frequency of confiding (95% CI [.04, .26]), but not on intentions to confide (95% CI [−.004, .32]).

Indirect effects. Indirect effects were tested using the bootstrapping described earlier. Perceived partner enactment of negativity-validating behavior indirectly predicted frequency of confiding in the partner (Path E × F1 in Figure 3; 95% CI [.17, .32]), and intentions to confide in the partner (Path E × F2 in Figure 3; 95% CI [.31, .61]) via perceived partner responsiveness, suggesting that participants confided in negativity-validating partners and intended to continue confiding in the future, in part, because they perceived those partners as responsive.[1]

Alternative models. We tested an alternative model that switched the position of perceived partner responsiveness and the confiding outcomes. Indirect effects were weaker in these alternative models, suggesting better support for the hypothesized model. Details are available in the online supplemental materials.

Summary. This study supports predictions regarding the experience of confidants and disclosers. We found evidence for a serial indirect effect linking confidants' closeness to their enactment of negativity-validating behavior via responsiveness goals and, in turn, negativity validation goals. That is, participants who felt close to their partner tended to adopt goals to be responsive to their partner after learning about their partner's conflicts with outside adversaries, which predicted adoption of goals to validate their partner's negativity, and, in turn, their expression of negative attributions for their adversaries' behavior. These attributions have been shown to escalate conflict in prior research. We also found indirect effects suggesting that perceptions of the partner's

[1] Multiple-group path models were tested to explore potential gender differences in the paths presented in Figures 2 and 3. Although closeness predicted responsiveness goals for both men and women, the effect was stronger for men ($b = .95$, $p < .001$) than for women ($b = .53$, $p < .001$). Other model paths did not significantly vary across gender. Additional details are provided in the online supplemental materials.

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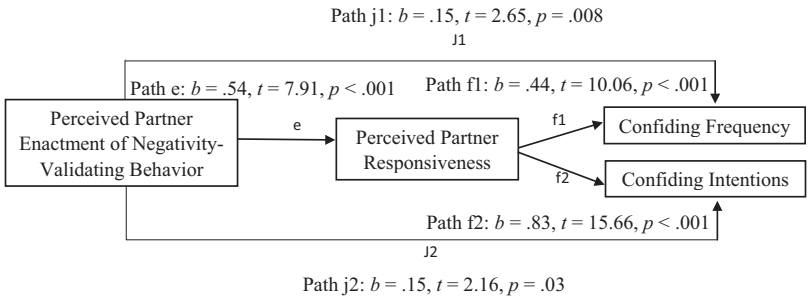

Figure 3. Results of path model testing predictions relevant to disclosers' experience: perceived partner enactment of negativity-validating behavior, perceived partner responsiveness, confiding frequency, and confiding intentions (Study 1).

negativity-validating behavior promotes confiding in the partner via perceived partner responsiveness. Participants perceived their relationship partners as responsive to them when those partners validated their negativity toward outside adversaries, and this perception of responsiveness predicted greater frequency of confiding in partners about these conflicts and intentions to continue confiding in the future. This suggests that partner behaviors that validate negativity toward outside adversaries are experienced as responsive, and, hence, people seek partners who enact these behaviors to serve as confidants.

Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c

Our model assumes that people adopt goals to validate their partners' negativity toward their adversaries as a means to fulfill their goal to be responsive to partners. In other words, responsiveness goals activate negativity validation subgoals. In Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c, we sought to test this hypothesis by manipulating responsiveness goals and examining effects on negativity validation goals and intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors. Fn2 Study 2a was a preregistered study.[2] Studies 2b and 2c replicate findings from this study.

Method

Participants. For Study 2a, participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk. Users residing in the United Stated with an approval rate (based on prior work assignments) of 90% were eligible for participation. The online questionnaire was accessed 372 times. Entries were eliminated if (a) they had the same Internet Protocol address as a more complete or prior entry, which reduces the likelihood that the same person completed the study more than once, (b) they failed attention-check questions, which excludes participants who seemed inattentive, or (c) they completed the questionnaire in less than two minutes, which eliminates many participants who likely responded in a careless manner. The final sample included 281 participants (140 men; 118 women; *M* age = 36.65 years; *SD* = 12.11). Participants had diverse racial backgrounds (58% White, 22% Asian, 9% Black or African American, 12% Hispanic or Latin American; 3% American Indian/Alaska Native; 4% other), education levels (5% with high school or less; 22% with some college education; 12% with 2-year degree or vocational degree or certification; 47% with a 4-year college degree; 13% with a graduate degree), and income (19% less than $20,000; 38% between $20,000 and $50,000; 29% between $50,000 and $80,000; 11% greater than $80,000). Participants were paid $.50. With this sample, statistical power is .99 to detect a medium or small-to-medium effect using a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA).

For Study 2b, recruitment and data cleaning procedures were the same as in Study 2a. The questionnaire was accessed 350 times. After implementing the cleaning procedures described above, the final sample included 234 participants. Because of a programming error, demographic data were not collected. However, given the similarity in recruitment methods, we expect that demographic characteristics are similar to those described above. With this sample, statistical power is .99 to detect a medium or small-to-medium effect using a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA).

For Study 2c, participants were undergraduate college students who received extra credit in a Psychology course for participation. Eight entries were eliminated because participants failed attention check questions or completed the study in less than two minutes. The final sample included 76 participants (15 men; 60 women; *M* age = 20.17 years; *SD* = 1.6). Participants had diverse racial backgrounds (69.7% White, 14.5% Asian, 19.7% Black or African American, 7.9% Hispanic or Latin American; 1.3% American Indian/Alaska Native; 2.6% other). With this sample, statistical power is .99 to detect a medium effect, and .85 to detect a small-to-medium effect, using a repeated-measures ANOVA. These samples are larger than the minimum recommended by Fritz and MacKinnon (2007) for detecting moderate indirect effects with .8 power, and Studies 2a and 2b were larger than the minimum for detecting small-to-moderate indirect effects with .8 power.

Procedure and measures. In all three studies, participants read about a hypothetical social interaction in which a relationship partner (the "partner") tells the participant about a conflict involving an absent person (the "adversary"). Participants' goals in this conversation were manipulated. The goal manipulation was modeled after prior research on goals in which participants are explicitly instructed to complete measures while adopting a particular goal (e.g., Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001; Chartrand & Bargh, 1996; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1994; Rusbult, Van Lange, Wild-

[2] Information on the preregistration can be found at https://osf.io/vz5u9/.

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schut, Yovetich, & Verette, 2000). Using a repeated-measures design, participants completed outcome measures once after being instructed to adopt the goal of making their partner feel understood, validated, and cared for (high responsiveness condition), and once while not being concerned with their relationship partner's feelings (low responsiveness condition). A repeated-measures design was used to enhance statistical power. Exact instructions are presented in Appendix A. Condition order was counterbalanced. Participants completed the following dependent measures twice, once under each level of the within-subjects responsiveness manipulation. While completing the measures, participants were reminded of the goal they should adopt (i.e., "assuming you want [partner name] to feel you understand him/her, have positive views of him/her, and care for him/her" or "assuming you are not concerned with [partner name]'s feelings").

Negativity validation goals. Participants completed nine items assessing goals to validate the partner's negativity toward their partner's adversary. Items were identical to the negativity validation goals items described in Study 1 except they were reworded to assess goals regarding the specific conflict involving the partner and adversary (i.e., "I would try to help [partner name] feel that she is right to feel upset with [adversary name]"). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). This measure had good internal consistency across studies and conditions ($\alpha > .87$).

Intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors. Using the same 7-point response scales, participants completed nine items assessing their intentions to enact specific behaviors that may validate partners' negativity and escalate the conflict between partners and adversaries. Consistent with Study 1, the behaviors involved expressing negative attributions for adversaries' behavior. Items were identical to the negativity-validating behavior items described in Study 1 except they were reworded to assess behavioral intentions in the specific discussion (e.g., "I would tell [partner name] that [adversary name] deserves to be blamed"). This measure had good internal consistency across studies and conditions ($\alpha > .87$).

Manipulation check. Using the same 7-point response scales, participants completed a three-item measure of goals to be responsive to partners during the conversation ("I would try to make [partner name] feel that I understand her"; "I would try to make [partner name] feel that I care for her"; "I would try to make [partner name] feel that I like her"). This measure had good internal consistency across studies and conditions ($\alpha > .83$).

Results and Discussion

T2 Pearson correlations are presented in Table 2.

Manipulation check. A repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) compared scores on the manipulation check across conditions. Results, including bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals for
T3 mean differences, are presented in Table 3. Across all three studies, participants reported stronger goals to be responsive to partners in the high responsiveness condition relative to the low responsiveness condition, which suggests that the manipulation was effective.

Effects of responsiveness goals on negativity validation goals and intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors. A repeated-measures ANOVA compared scores on negativity validation goals and intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors across conditions (see Table 3). Across all three studies, participants reported stronger adoption of negativity validation goals and intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors in the high responsiveness condition relative to the low responsiveness condition. These results support predictions that goals to be responsive to partners elicit subordinate goals to validate negativity toward their adversaries and motivate behaviors that may validate negativity.[3] Fn3

Mediation model. Additional analyses tested the prediction that negativity validation goals mediate the effect of manipulated responsiveness goals on intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors (i.e., expressing negative causal attributions). Multilevel models treated the repeated assessments (one for each level of the responsiveness manipulation) as nested within person. A compound-symmetry error structure was used to account for the covariance in outcome variables across the two assessments. Experimental condition was dummy coded (0 = low responsiveness, 1 = high responsiveness) and, in models including negativity validation goals as a predictor, negativity validation goals was centered on person means (centered on the participant's average of negativity validation goals across the two conditions) to examine only within-person effects attributable to differences across responsiveness conditions (Enders & Tofighi, 2007). Results are presented in Figure 4. Consistent with F4 mediation predictions, across all three studies, the direct effect of the responsiveness manipulation on intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors (Path I′ in Figure 4) was not significant after controlling for negativity validation goals (Study 2a 95% CI [−.19, .09]; Study 2b 95% CI [−.16, .17]; Study 2c 95% CI [−.26, .66]). Negativity validation goals (Path C in Figure 4) strongly predicted intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors (Study 2a 95% CI [.57, .72]; Study 2b 95% CI [.52, .70]; Study 2c 95% CI [.40, .83]). Indirect effects of manipulated responsiveness goals on intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors via negativity validation goals (Path B × C) were tested by constructing 95% confidence intervals based on a distribution of 20,000 Monte Carlo simulations of the indirect effect (MacKinnon et al., 2004; Preacher & Selig, 2012; Selig & Preacher, 2008). These indirect effects were significant—Study 2a, 95% CI [.67, .97]; Study 2b, 95% CI [.58, .85]; Study 2c, 95% CI [.75, 1.59]—indicating that responsiveness goals increased intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors (i.e., intentions to express negative attributions) through negativity validation goals.[4] Fn4

Alternative models. We tested an alternative mediation AQ: 7 model that switched the position of negativity validation goals and negativity-validating behavioral intentions. Across all three stud-

[3] Additional exploratory between-subjects ANOVAs used only responses to the first level of the responsiveness goals manipulation completed by participants and treated responsiveness condition as a between-subjects factor. This analysis essentially transforms the repeated-measures design into a between-subjects design, which is useful to ensure that the repeated measurements did not create demand effects. Supporting predictions, in this between-subjects transformation, participants in the high responsiveness condition continued to report more responsiveness goals, negativity validation goals, and intentions to enact negativity-validating behavior relative to those in the low responsiveness condition (Study 2a $ps < .001$; Study 2b $ps < .05$; Study 2c $ps < .001$). Hence, support for our predictions was not an artifact of experimental demand characteristics introduced by our use of a repeated-measures design.

[4] We conduced three additional models in Studies 2a and 2c to examine gender differences in model paths. Gender and product terms representing interactions of predictors with gender were included in the model. Gender did not significantly moderate any of the effects depicted in Figure 4 (Study 2a $ps > .27$; Study 2c $p > .43$).

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Table 2
Pearson Correlations (Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c)

Variable	1	2	3
Study 2a			
1. Responsiveness goals (manipulation check)	−.07	.51***	.12
2. Negativity validation goals	.71***	.16**	.65***
3. Intentions to enact negativity-validating behavior	.46***	.76***	.45***
Study 2b			
1. Responsiveness goals (manipulation check)	.08	.61***	.18**
2. Negativity validation goals	.77***	.17*	.66***
3. Intentions to enact negativity-validating behavior	.54***	.70***	.45***
Study 2c			
1. Responsiveness goals (manipulation check)	.31**	.42***	.05
2. Negativity validation goals	.81***	.24*	.37**
3. Intentions to enact negativity-validating behavior	.17	.43***	.15

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are for the unresponsive condition. Correlations above the diagonal are for the responsive condition. Correlations on the diagonal are correlations across the two conditions.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

ies, indirect effects were weaker in this alternative model, suggesting better support for the hypothesized model. Details are available in the online supplemental materials.

Summary. Studies 2a through 2c provide experimental support for predictions. Relative to when participants were in low-responsiveness conditions, participants instructed to adopt goals to be responsive to a relationship partner adopted subordinate goals to validate the partner's negativity toward adversaries and intended to enact negativity-validating and conflict-escalating behaviors (i.e., expressing negative attributions for adversaries' behavior). Supporting our model, the effect of responsiveness goals on intentions to enact negativity-validating behaviors was mediated by negativity validation goals. These results support our view that responsiveness goals often activate negativity validation subgoals and intentions to enact specific negativity-validating behaviors that may serve the goal of conveying responsiveness to partners.

Studies 3a and 3b

In Studies 3a and 3b, we tested the prediction that receiving validation of negativity from a romantic partner is associated with impaired resolution of conflicts with outside adversaries, including greater avoidance and revenge, reduced forgiveness, and negative moral evaluations of adversaries (path D in Figure 1). We examine this effect with regard to reports of immediate behavioral responding to adversaries after receiving negativity validation, and with regard to reports of long-term influence of romantic partners on resolution of conflicts with adversaries. Furthermore, we examine negativity validation by romantic partners in two different ways, including the intensity of negativity validation regarding a particular adversary within a single interaction and the frequency of negativity validation across multiple interactions regarding a second adversary. This approach allowed us to test the prediction that receipt of both intense and frequent negativity validation would be associated with impaired conflict resolution, and to examine whether negativity validation has implications for multiple relationships. Lastly, we examine whether participants endorse lay theories that validating negativity is a means to be responsive to partners involved in conflicts. According to our theoretical framework, people use negativity validation as a strategy to be responsive to partners. In other words, responsiveness goals often activate negativity validation subgoals that serve as their means. Participants' endorsement of beliefs that validating negativity conveys understanding, validation, and care would support our theoretical perspective.

Table 3
Mean Comparisons Across Responsiveness Conditions (Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c)

Outcome	Low responsiveness *M*	High responsiveness *M*	*F*	*p*	η^2	95% CI for *M* difference
Study 2a						
Manipulation check (responsiveness goals)	4.08	6.04	279.94	<.001	.52	[−2.19, −1.72]
Negativity validation goals	3.88	5.14	201.50	<.001	.44	[−1.44, −1.07]
Negativity-validating behaviors	3.59	4.34	90.56	<.001	.26	[−.90, −.60]
Study 2b						
Manipulation check (responsiveness goals)	4.24	5.93	218.10	<.001	.49	[−1.92, −1.47]
Negativity validation goals	4.03	5.16	157.02	<.001	.41	[−1.36, −.99]
Negativity-validating behaviors	3.67	4.38	68.18	<.001	.23	[−.89, −.55]
Study 2c						
Manipulation check (responsiveness goals)	3.90	6.48	377.97	<.001	.84	[−2.83, −2.31]
Negativity validation goals	3.79	5.67	216.49	<.001	.75	[−2.12, −1.64]
Negativity-validating behaviors	3.08	4.44	93.22	<.001	.56	[−1.63, −1.09]

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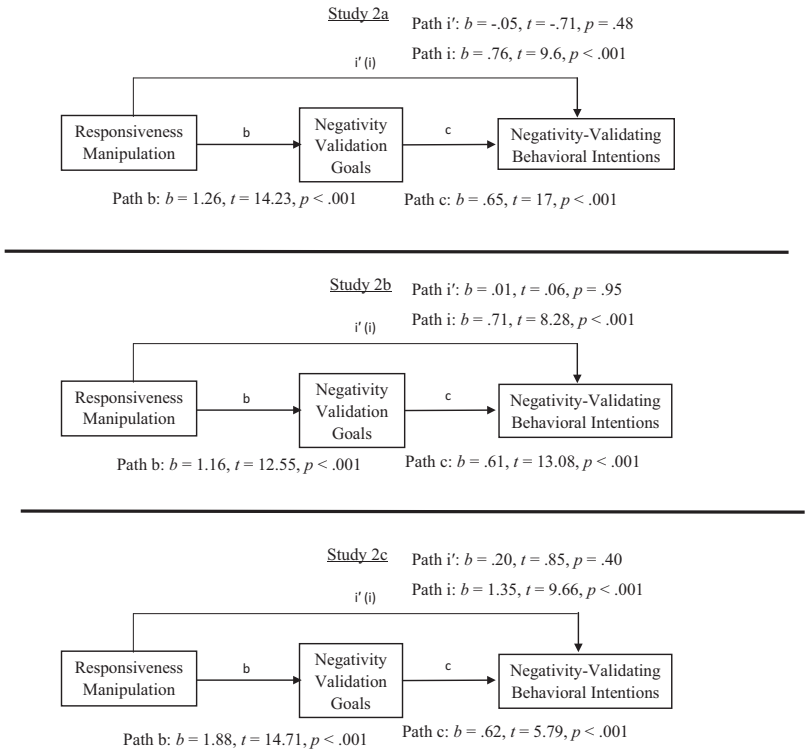

Figure 4. Results of analyses examining negativity validation goals as a mediator of the effect of manipulated responsiveness goals on negativity-validating behavioral intentions (Studies 2a–2c). Path i′ refers to the direct effect of the manipulation on negativity-validating behavior. Path i refers to the total effect.

Method

Participants. For Study 3a, participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk. Users who were involved in a romantic relationship, residing in the United States, with an approval rate (based on prior work assignments) of 99% or higher, and with completion of 1,000 prior assignments, were eligible for participation. Entries were eliminated if (a) they had the same Internet Protocol address as a more complete or prior entry, which reduces the likelihood that the same person completed the study more than once, (b) they failed attention-check questions, which excludes participants who seemed inattentive, (c) they failed English literacy questions, or (d) they completed the questionnaire in less than two minutes. The final sample included 200 participants (93 men; 107 women; *M* age = 37.14 years; *SD* = 10.57). The distribution of race/ethnicity was as follows: 85% White, 4% Asian, 20% Black or African American, 6% Hispanic or Latin American; 1.5% American Indian/Alaska Native; and 4% other. Participants had diverse education levels (10% with high school or less; 20% with some college education; 13% with 2-year degree or vocational degree or certification; 46% with a 4-year college degree; 12% with a graduate degree), and annual income (17% less than $20,000; 33% between $20,000 and $50,000; 30% between $50,000 and $80,000; 21% greater than $80,000). Participants were paid $.50. With this sample, statistical power is 1 to detect a medium effect, and .98 to detect a small-to-moderate effect.

For Study 3b, college students involved in romantic relationships were recruited using a Psychology participant pool and via advertisements in Psychology courses. Participants received partial course credit in exchange for participation. Entries were eliminated if participants failed attention-check questions or English literacy questions. The final sample included 165 participants (30 men; 135 women; *M* age = 19.73 years; *SD* = 1.93). The distribution of race/ethnicity was as follows: 72% White, 21% Asian, 7% Black or African American, 12% Hispanic or Latin American; 1% American Indian/Alaska Native; 6% other. With this sample, statistical power is 1 to detect a medium effect, and .95 to detect a small-to-moderate effect.

Procedure and measures. In both studies, participants were asked to think about a specific time in which they were angry or upset with a particular person (termed the "situation-specific adversary" below) and discussed this incident with their romantic partner. On average, these events occurred 543.78 days ago (*SD* = 928.26) in Study 3a and 187.9 days ago (*SD* = 275.75) in Study 3b. After describing the incident, participants completed the situation-specific measures described below. Then participants identified a second person (termed the "situation-general adversary" below) they have discussed with their romantic partner who has made them angry or upset in the past. Participants completed the situation-general measures describe below with regard to this person. Finally, participants completed a measure of their lay theories with regard to negativity validation.

Situation-specific measures. Participants completed a nine-item measure assessing perceptions of their romantic partner's enactment of negativity-validating behaviors after learning about

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the conflict with the situation-specific adversary. The content of the items was identical to the validation of negativity measure described in Study 1 except items were slightly reworded to assess perceptions of the romantic partner's behavior in the specific situation (e.g., "[romantic partner name] said that [situation-specific adversary name] deserved to be blamed"). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (1: *strongly disagree* – 7: *strongly agree*). Responses were averaged across items (Study 3a $\alpha = .86$; Study 3b $\alpha = .88$).

Using the same 7-point response scales, participants completed a modification of the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motives Scale (McCullough et al., 1998) to assess their responses toward the situation-specific adversary after discussing the incident with their romantic partner. When possible, items in the scale were reworded to assess behaviors rather than motivations, including revenge (e.g., "After talking with [romantic partner name] about this situation, I made [situation-specific adversary name] pay"; "After talking with [romantic partner name] about this situation, I tried to get even with [situation-specific adversary name]"; five items; Study 3a $\alpha = .86$; Study 3b $\alpha = .84$), avoidance (e.g., "After talking with [romantic partner name] about this situation, I avoided [situation-specific adversary name]"; "After talking with [romantic partner name] about this situation, I withdrew from [situation-specific adversary name]"; seven items; Study 3a $\alpha = .94$; Study 3b $\alpha = .94$), and benevolence (e.g., "After talking with [romantic partner name] about this situation, I tried to make peace and move forward with my relationship with [situation-specific adversary name]"; 8 items; Study 3a $\alpha = .93$; Study 3b $\alpha = .91$).

Using the same response scales, participants also completed 10 items assessing perceptions of their romantic partner's long-term influence on their responses to situation-specific adversaries. Items assessed avoidance (e.g., "[romantic partner name] convinced me to keep a distance from [situation-specific adversary name]"; three items; Study 3a $\alpha = .92$; Study 3b $\alpha = .92$), revenge (e.g., "[romantic partner name] convinced me to get even with [situation-specific adversary name]"; two items; Study 3a $\alpha = .91$; Study 3b $\alpha = .93$), benevolence (e.g., "[romantic partner name] convinced me to forgive [situation-specific adversary name]"; one item), and moral evaluation (e.g., "[romantic partner name] convinced me that [situation-specific adversary name] is immoral"; "[romantic partner name] convinced me that [situation-specific adversary name] is a bad person"; four items; Study 3a $\alpha = .91$; Study 3b $\alpha = .90$). Participants were instructed to complete these items with regard to how their partner influenced them in the long run.

Using 5-point response scales (1: *not at all*; 5: *extremely*), participants also completed seven items assessing perceptions of the severity of the situation-specific adversary's aversive behavior (e.g., "How much did [situation-specific adversary name]'s behavior harm you"; Study 3a $\alpha = .84$; Study 3b $\alpha = .87$).

Situation-general measures. Participants completed a nine-item measure assessing the frequency with which their romantic partner enacts behaviors that validate participants' negativity toward the situation-general adversary after learning about situations in which this adversary made the participant feel angry or upset. The negativity-validating behaviors were identical to the behaviors used in the situation-specific measure and in Study 1, but items were reworded to assess the romantic partner's frequency of enactment across multiple situations (e.g., "When I am angry or upset at [situation-general adversary name], how often does [romantic partner name] say that [situation-general adversary name] deserves to be blamed?"). Items were completed using 5-point response scales (1: *never*; 5: *nearly always*; Study 3a $\alpha = .92$; Study 3b $\alpha = .93$).

Participants also completed 10 items assessing perceptions of their romantic partner's long-term influence on their avoidance (Study 3a $\alpha = .94$; Study 3b $\alpha = .93$), revenge (Study 3a $\alpha = .89$; Study 3b $\alpha = .92$), benevolence, and moral evaluation (Study 3a $\alpha = .91$; Study 3b $\alpha = .92$) responses toward the situation-general adversary. Items were identical to the long-term influence items described above, and answered on the same 7-point response scales (1: *strongly disagree*; 7: *strongly agree*).

Lay theories. Participants completed six items assessing lay theories regarding negativity validation. Three items assessed beliefs that validating negativity is an instrumental means of communicating responsiveness when friends are feeling hurt or angry by others ("Agreeing with my friend's negative views toward these other people is a way to show my friend that I care about him/her"; "Agreeing with my friend's negative views toward these other people is a way to help my friend feel understood"; "Agreeing with my friend's negative views toward these other people is a way to validate my friend"; Study 3a $\alpha = .90$; Study 3b $\alpha = .85$). An additional three items assessed beliefs that invalidating negativity is an instrumental means of communicating responsiveness ("Disagreeing with my friend's negative views toward these other people is a way to show my friend that I care about him/her"; "Disagreeing with my friend's negative views toward these other people is a way to help my friend feel understood"; "Disagreeing with my friend's negative views toward these other people is a way to validate my friend"; Study 3a $\alpha = .86$; Study 3b $\alpha = .76$). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (1: *strongly disagree*; 7: *strongly agree*).

Results and Discussion

Analysis of situation-specific variables. Descriptive statistics and correlations for situation-specific variables appear in Table 4. Consistent with predictions, across both Study 3a and Study 3b, receiving negativity validation from romantic partners was associated with greater short-term revenge on adversaries, greater short-term avoidance of adversaries, and lower short-term benevolence toward adversaries following disclosure of the event to romantic partners. In addition, across both studies, receiving negativity validation from romantic partners was associated with reports of the partner's long-term influence on the participant's relationship with the adversary, including greater avoidance in the long-term, reduced benevolence in the long-term, and more negative moral evaluations in the long-term. Furthermore, in Study 3b, but not Study 3a, receiving negativity validation from romantic partners was associated with participants' reporting that partners influenced them to take revenge on adversaries. These results indicate that negativity validation is associated with long-term and behavioral consequences for participants' relationships with adversaries.

As indicated in Table 4, receiving negativity validation from romantic partners was associated with greater severity of the adversary's transgression in both studies. That is, participants were more likely to receive validation of negativity when they described

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Table 4
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Situation-Specific Variables (Studies 3a and 3b)

Variable	Study 3a *M* (*SD*)	Study 3b *M* (*SD*)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Partner negativity validation	5.33 (1.14)	4.78 (1.23)	—	.23**	.49***	−.30***	.46***	.18*	.47***	−.33***	−.53***
2. Short-term revenge	2.37 (1.29)	2.06 (1.14)	.26***	—	.49***	−.23**	.35***	.72***	.46***	−.14	−.48***
3. Short-term avoidance	4.22 (1.77)	3.6 (1.74)	.49***	.53***	—	−.69***	.57***	.30***	.60***	−.44***	−.52***
4. Short-term benevolence	3.72 (1.54)	4.01 (1.39)	−.24**	−.26***	−.68***	—	−.43***	−.10	−.37***	.63***	.35***
5. Transgression severity	3.61 (0.78)	3.35 (0.88)	.55***	.19**	.50***	−.36***	—	.18*	.42***	−.25**	−.40***
6. Long-term revenge	1.89 (1.28)	1.73 (1.14)	.11	.65***	.29***	0	.10	—	.51***	−.03	−.55***
7. Long-term avoidance	3.3 (1.93)	2.76 (1.75)	.45***	.50***	.72***	−.45***	.42***	.43***	—	−.22**	−.83***
8. Long-term benevolence	3.2 (1.81)	3.91 (1.78)	−.18*	−.16*	−.46***	.64***	−.17*	.08	−.33***	—	.32***
9. Long-term moral evaluation	4.39 (1.87)	5.1 (1.61)	−.59***	−.51***	−.61***	.39***	−.48***	−.39***	−.78***	.31***	—

Note. Correlations for Study 3a appear below the diagonal. Correlations for Study 3b appear above the diagonal.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

particularly severe mistreatment from adversaries. In addition, transgression severity was associated with participants' more negative responses to adversaries. To ensure that transgression severity did not function as a common-causal variable that explains the link between receipt of negativity validation from romantic partners and more negative responses to adversaries, we used regression analyses to examine effects of receipt of negativity validation on responses to adversaries while controlling for transgression severity. Note, however, that these analyses are conservative, given that negativity validation may exert some of its effects on participants' responses to adversaries by persuading participants to appraise adversaries' behavior as more severe. In other words, controlling for participants' perceptions of transgression severity may eliminate a mediating pathway through which negativity validation operates. Results, including bias-corrected confidence intervals based on 2,000 bootstrap samples, are displayed in Table 5. Controlling for transgression severity, receipt of negativity validation from romantic partners predicted more short-term revenge (Study 3a), more short-term avoidance (Studies 3a and 3b), more long-term avoidance (Studies 3a and 3b), less long-term benevolence (Study 3b), and more negative moral evaluations (Studies 3a and 3b).

The power of these models to detect effects of negativity validation may be limited by the strong correlation between negativity validation and transgression severity. To provide a more statistically powerful test of the effects of negativity validation while controlling for transgression severity, we conducted an additional set of regression models after combining data from Studies 3a and 3b ($N = 365$). Controlling for transgression severity, receiving validation of negativity from partners was associated with greater short-term revenge ($b = .17$, $p = .004$, 95% CI [.06, .28]),

Table 5
Effects of Situation-Specific Partner Negativity Validation on Participants' Responses to Adversaries While Controlling for Transgression Severity (Studies 3a and 3b)

Predictor	Study 3a			Study 3b		
	b [95% CI]	*t*	*p*	*b* [95% CI]	*t*	*p*
Predicting short-term revenge						
Partner negativity validation	.26 [.08, .43]	2.74	.007	.08 [−.08, .25]	1.04	.302
Transgression severity	.10 [−.18, .36]	.73	.465	.40 [.20, .60]	3.7	<.001
Predicting short-term avoidance						
Partner negativity validation	.47 [.23, .71]	4.31	<.001	.41 [.19, .60]	4.21	<.001
Transgression severity	.75 [.41, 1.06]	4.64	<.001	.87 [.60, 1.15]	6.34	<.001
Predicting short-term benevolence						
Partner negativity validation	−.09 [−.38, .17]	−.85	.399	−.15 [−.32, .03]	−1.62	.108
Transgression severity	−.63 [−.95, −.30]	−3.99	<.001	−.59 [−.84, −.36]	−4.7	<.001
Predicting long-term revenge						
Partner negativity validation	.08 [−.09, .24]	.83	.41	.12 [−.06, .31]	1.49	.138
Transgression severity	.11 [−.11, .32]	.76	.45	.15 [−.05, .35]	1.38	.17
Predicting long-term avoidance						
Partner negativity validation	.52 [.27, .77]	4.13	<.001	.50 [.31, .71]	4.58	<.001
Transgression severity	.63 [.26, 1]	3.41	.001	.51 [.21, .82]	3.41	.001
Predicting long-term benevolence						
Partner negativity validation	−.19 [−.50, .07]	−1.41	.161	−.39 [−.62, −.17]	−3.27	.001
Transgression severity	−.24 [−.63, .22]	−1.23	.219	−.25 [−.58, .06]	−1.47	.144
Predicting long-term moral evaluations						
Partner negativity validation	−.75 [−.97, −.51]	−6.79	<.001	−.57 [−.78, −.39]	−5.91	<.001
Transgression severity	−.55 [−.87, −.26]	−3.44	.001	−.36 [−.62, −.09]	−2.64	.009

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short-term avoidance ($b = .45$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.30, .62]), long-term avoidance ($b = .52$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.36, .69]), and long-term negative moral evaluation ($b = -.68$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.83, −.55]), and reduced long-term benevolence ($b = -.33$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.52, −.15]).

Analysis of situation-general variables. Descriptive statistics and correlations for situation-general variables appear in Table 6. Consistent with predictions, across both Study 3a and Study 3b, receiving more frequent negativity validation from romantic partners was associated with reports of the partner's long-term influence on the participant's relationship with the adversary, including greater revenge and avoidance toward the adversary, reduced benevolence, and more negative moral evaluations of the adversary in the long-term.

Analysis of lay theories. In both studies, the average endorsement of beliefs that negativity validation is a means to convey responsiveness (Study 3a $M = 4.37$; Study 3b $M = 4.75$) was significantly higher than the neutral midpoint on the response scale, Study 3a $t(199) = 3.61$, $p < .001$, 95% CI for mean difference [.17, .57]; Study 3b $t(161) = 7.56$, $p < .001$, 95% CI for mean difference [.55, .94], indicating general agreement with these beliefs. In addition, the average endorsement of beliefs that invalidating partners' negativity is a means to convey responsiveness (Study 3a $M = 3.33$; Study 3b $M = 3.56$) was significantly lower than the neutral midpoint on the response scale, Study 3a $t(199) = -6.72$, $p < .001$, 95% CI for mean difference [−.86, −.47]; Study 3b $t(161) = -4.19$, $p < .001$, 95% CI for mean difference [−.64, −.23], indicating general disagreement. Beliefs that validating negativity communicates responsiveness also received significantly greater endorsement relative to beliefs that invalidating negativity communicates responsiveness, Study 3a $t(199) = 7.8$, $p < .001$, 95% CI for mean difference [.78, 1.3]; Study 3b $t(161) = 8.19$, $p < .001$, 95% CI for mean difference [.89, 1.46]. Consistent with our theoretical framework, participants believed that validating relationship partners' negativity toward their adversaries conveys understanding, validation, and care, and they thought this was a better strategy to convey responsiveness relative to challenging their partners' negativity.

Summary. Results from Studies 3a and 3b suggest that, when romantic partners validated participants' negativity regarding a specific incident with adversaries, participants had more short-term negative responses to adversaries, including revenge, avoidance, negative moral evaluations, and reduced benevolence. Participants who received validation of negativity from romantic partners also reported that their romantic partners persuaded them to avoid adversaries, seek revenge on adversaries, evaluate adversaries' morality negatively, and refrain from reconciliation in the long-term. Although some of these effects were explained by transgression severity, effects of partners' negativity validation on avoidance and negative moral evaluation of adversaries were consistently observed even after controlling for transgression severity, and a more powerful analysis combining both studies revealed significant effects of receiving negativity validation on short-term revenge, short-term avoidance, long-term avoidance, reduced long-term reconciliation, and long-term negative moral evaluation even while transgression severity was controlled. In other words, independently of how participants appraised the severity of the adversary's behavior, receiving negativity validation was associated with impaired forgiveness in the short-term and long-term, and negative evaluations of the adversary's morality. Receiving frequent validation of negativity across multiple interactions with romantic partners was also associated with long-term negative influence on forgiveness and moral evaluation of a second adversary. These results suggest that both intensity and frequency of negativity validation are associated with conflict resolution, and that negativity validation may have implications for conflicts with multiple adversaries. Consistent with our model, participants generally believed that validating negativity was a means to convey responsiveness.

Study 4

In Study 4, we tested predictions using behavioral observation methods. Participants (disclosers) disclosed about a conflict involving an outside adversary to their relationship partner (confidants) while being recorded. We expected that confidants who felt closer to disclosers would adopt goals to be responsive to them during this interaction (Path A in Figure 1). In turn, we expected that confidants' responsiveness goals would predict their adoption of goals to validate disclosers' negativity toward their adversaries (Path B in Figure 1), which would more directly motivate confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors (Path C in Figure 1). Furthermore, we expected that disclosers would perceive confidants as more responsive when confidants validated their negativity (Path E in Figure 1), which would predict their greater intentions to disclose to confidants in the future (Path F in Figure 1). We also predicted, however, that disclosers would be less forgiving and committed to their adversaries, and perceive them as immoral, when confidants validated their negativity (Path D in Figure 1).

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Situation-General Variables (Studies 3a and 3b)

Variable	Study 3a *M* (*SD*)	Study 3b *M* (*SD*)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Partner negativity validation	3.19 (.92)	2.85 (0.94)	—	.32***	.62***	−.37***	−.72***
2. Long-term revenge	1.81 (1.21)	1.77 (1.15)	.18**	—	.47***	−.14	−.54***
3. Long-term avoidance	3.08 (2.01)	2.71 (1.7)	.56***	.41***	—	−.35***	−.80***
4. Long-term benevolence	3.64 (1.99)	4.13 (1.69)	−.25***	−.09	−.38***	—	.37***
5. Long-term moral evaluation	4.88 (1.82)	5.31 (1.62)	−.67***	−.46***	−.82***	.38***	—

Note. Correlations for Study 3a appear below the diagonal. Correlations for Study 3b appear above the diagonal.
** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

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We explored additional possible predictors and moderators of confidants' negativity validation, including confidants' closeness to adversaries, confidants' perceptions of the closeness between disclosers and adversaries, confidants' agreeableness, disclosers' low self-esteem, and whether the conflict has been discussed in the past. As discussed in the Introduction, each of these factors may predict confidants' reduced negativity validation or attenuate the link between confidants' responsiveness goals and their validation of negativity.

Method

Participants. Both members of 162 friendship or romantic dyads ($N = 324$) were recruited through advertisements in an undergraduate participation pool and flyers posted on a university campus and in retail and dining establishments.[5] The sample included 98 men and 224 women (M age = 20 years; $SD = 2.43$ years), and was racially diverse (150 Whites, 94 Asians, 48 Blacks of African Americans, and 26 participants of Hispanic origin). Participants were instructed to bring a close relationship partner to the study session. The sample included 46 romantic relationships (mostly unmarried dating relationships) and 116 nonromantic relationships (mostly friendships). On average, their relationships were 25.66 months long ($SD = 32.22$). With this sample, statistical power is .99 to detect a medium effect, and .94 to detect a small-to-moderate effect. Given that we test indirect effects, including complex indirect effects involving multiple serial mediators, we also used Monte Carlo simulations to estimate power of the current sample to detect simple indirect effects involving a single mediator and complex indirect effects involving two and three serial mediators (Thoemmes et al., 2010). Assuming constituent pathways that are moderate in size, estimated power is .99 to detect simple indirect effects, .94 to detect serial indirect effects involving two mediators, and .80 to detect serial indirect effects involving three mediators. Assuming constituent pathways that are small-to-moderate in size, estimated power is .75 to detect simple indirect effects, .39 to detect serial indirect effects involving two mediators, and .09 to detect serial indirect effects involving three mediators.

Procedure. After obtaining informed consent, participants completed the preinteraction measures described below in separate rooms. A randomly selected member of each dyad (*disclosers*) identified and described a conflict involving an absent third person, referred to as the *adversary*, to discuss with their study partner (*confidants*). Disclosers were asked to select an incident that did not directly involve the confidant and that involved an adversary with whom the confidant is familiar. Disclosers received the following prompt:

> Next, please think about a recent event in which someone wronged you or hurt your feelings in some way. This event should meet two requirements. First, this event should not involve [confidant name] and should not be one that [confidant name] has directly observed. Second, [confidant name] should already know at least a little about the person who treated you negatively.

Adversaries included friends (50%), romantic partners (6.2%), acquaintances (11.1%), family members (13%), coworkers (7.4%), and former romantic partners (4.9%). Confidants were informed of the name of the adversary so they could complete preinteraction measures. After completing preinteraction measures, participants discussed the conflict for 10 min while being recorded. Following the interaction, they completed the postinteraction measures described below. Only measures relevant to this article are described below.

Preinteraction measures.

Interpersonal closeness. Confidants completed four of the closeness measures described in Study 1 with regard to disclosers, including commitment, satisfaction, communal strength, and closeness ($\alpha > .78$). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (*strongly disagree*; *strongly agree*). Responses were averaged across scales ($\alpha = .87$). Confidants also completed this set of measures with regard to their closeness toward the adversary identified by disclosers ($\alpha > .83$). Again, responses were averaged across scales ($\alpha = .95$).

Confidants' perception of disclosers' closeness to adversary. Using the 7-point response scales described above, confidants completed nine items assessing their perceptions of the discloser's closeness to the adversary (e.g., "[discloser name] usually feels very attached to [adversary name]; "[discloser name] and [adversary name] have a close relationship"; "[discloser name] depends on [adversary name] to meet his/her needs"). Responses were averaged to assess confidants' perceptions of disclosers' closeness to the adversary ($\alpha = .95$).

Confidants' agreeableness. Confidants completed the 9-item agreeableness subscale of the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999; e.g., "is helpful and unselfish with others"; "has a forgiving nature") using the same 7-point response scale ($\alpha = .75$).

Disclosers' preinteraction motivations toward adversary. Disclosers completed the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motives Scale (McCullough et al., 1998) to assess revenge motivation (e.g., "I want to get even with [adversary name]"; $\alpha = .75$) and avoidance motivation (e.g., "I want to cut off my relationship with [adversary name]"; $\alpha = .96$) toward the adversary. In addition, participants completed a measure of benevolent motivations to maintain good will toward and reconcile with the adversary, including the seven items used by McCullough and Hoyt (2002) and an additional item used by McCullough et al. (2003; e.g., "Despite what [adversary name] did, I want us to have a positive relationship again"; $\alpha = .94$). Items were completed using the same 7-point response scales described above.

Disclosers' preinteraction evaluation of adversary. Disclosers completed an 8-item measure assessing evaluations of adversaries' morality (e.g., "[adversary name] is ethical"; "[adversary name] is moral"; "[adversary name] is a good person"). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (1: *strongly disagree*; 7: *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .92$). After reverse-scoring responses to negatively worded items, responses were averaged.

Disclosers' preinteraction commitment to adversary. Disclosers completed the same six-item commitment measure described in Study 1 with regard to their relationship with the adversary ($\alpha = .98$).

Disclosers' self-esteem. Disclosers completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) using 7-point response scales (1: *strongly disagree*; 7: *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .89$).

[5] Data from two participants were missing because of a computer malfunction.

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Disclosers' prior discussion of conflict. Disclosers completed an item assessing the extent to which they already described the conflict involving the adversary with confidants using a 3-point response scale (1: *not at all*; 2: *slightly or only generally*; 3: *in full and complete detail*).

Disclosers' perceptions of severity of adversary's transgression. Disclosers completed a 7-item measure assessing perceptions of severity of the adversary's negative behavior (e.g., "How painful is [adversary name]'s behavior"; "How much did [adversary name]'s behavior harm you"; "How much did [adversary name]'s behavior hurt your feelings"; $\alpha = .90$). Items were completed using 5-point response scales (1: *not at all;* 5: *extremely*).

Postinteraction measures.

Confidants' responsiveness goals. Confidants completed eight items assessing their goals to be responsive to disclosers during the interaction. Items assessed goals to validate disclosers in a global sense (i.e., "I was trying to help [discloser name] feel good about himself/herself"; "I was trying to help [discloser name] feel accepted and valued"; "I was trying to show [discloser name] that I had positive views of him/her"), goals to make disclosers feel understood (i.e., "I was trying to help [discloser name] feel understood"; "I was trying to show [discloser name] that I understood the situation") and goals to demonstrate care for disclosers and the relationship ("I was trying to show [discloser name] that I cared for him/her"; "I was trying to be supportive of [discloser name]"; "I was trying to show [discloser name] that I was loyal"). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) and responses were averaged across items ($\alpha = .90$).

Confidants' negativity validation goals. Confidants also completed eight items assessing their adoption of goals to validate disclosers' negative thoughts and feelings about the adversary (i.e., "I was trying to help [discloser name] feel that he/she was right to feel upset with [adversary name]"; "I was trying to express agreement with [discloser name]'s negative views of [adversary name]"; "I was trying to help [discloser name] feel that I understood why he/she was upset with [adversary name]"; "I was trying to help [discloser name] feel that I valued his/her perspective about [adversary name]"; "I was trying to show [discloser name] that I understood why [adversary name]'s behavior was hurtful or offensive"; "I was trying to be supportive of [discloser name]'s anger or hurt feelings regarding [adversary name]"; "I was trying to show [discloser name] that his/her behavior was more appropriate than [adversary name]'s behavior"; "I was trying to show [discloser name] that he/she was more correct than [adversary name]"). Items were completed using the 7-point response scales described above and responses were averaged across items ($\alpha = .89$). Items were analogous to those described in prior studies.

Disclosers' postinteraction motivations toward adversary. Disclosers completed measures assessing forgiveness-related motivations toward the adversary following the interaction, including revenge ($\alpha = .91$), avoidance ($\alpha = .97$), and benevolence motivations ($\alpha = .95$). Items were analogous to those described above, but worded to assess current motivation following the interaction (e.g., "Right now, I have forgiven [adversary name] for his/her behavior"). Items were completed using the 7-point response scales described above.

Disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness. Disclosers completed a measure assessing perceptions of confidants' responsiveness during the interaction. The content of the items was identical to the measure described in Study 1, except wording was slightly modified to assess perceptions within the specific conflict discussion (e.g., "[confidant name] seemed to care about my welfare during this discussion"). Items were completed using 7-point response scales (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .95$).

Disclosers' intentions to disclose future external conflicts with confidants. Disclosers completed the measure of intentions to discuss future conflicts with the confidant described in Study 1 (e.g., "In the future, I plan to talk to [partner name] about problems I have with other people"). Items were completed using the 7-point response scales described above ($\alpha = .97$).

Disclosers' postinteraction moral evaluation of adversary. Following the interaction, disclosers completed again the measure of moral evaluation of adversaries described above ($\alpha = .92$).

Disclosers' postinteraction commitment to adversary. Following the interaction, disclosers completed again the measure of commitment to adversaries described above ($\alpha = .99$).

Behavioral coding. A panel of 10 trained observers viewed the recorded conflict discussions and rated confidants' behavior using 48 items (see Appendix B) on 5-point response scales (1: *not at all*; 5: *extremely*). ICCs were calculated to assess intercoder reliability of scale scores (after averaging across items comprising each scale).[6] Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess internal consistency reliability for multiple-item scales (after averaging ratings across coders). Three items assessed confidants' expressions of negative causal attributions for the adversary's behavior, including internal (ICC = .80), stable (ICC = .76), and global (ICC = .67) attributions. Responses were averaged to create an index of expressing negative causal attributions ($\alpha = .91$). Additional items assessed expression of negative responsibility attributions for the adversary's behavior, including intentional (five items; ICC = .71; $\alpha = .97$), blame (two items; ICC = .78; $\alpha = .98$), and selfish attributions (one item; ICC = .82). Scores were averaged to create an index of expressing negative responsibility attributions ($\alpha = .84$). Additional items assessed confidants' portrayal of the adversary as uncaring or rejecting (three items; ICC = .72; $\alpha = .88$), confidants' forecasting of the adversary's continued negative behavior (four items; ICC = .76; $\alpha = .97$), confidants' portrayal of the adversary as remorseful (four items; ICC = .64; $\alpha = .93$), and confidants' portrayal of the adversary's negative behavior as severe (seven items; ICC = .83; $\alpha = .95$). Another set of items assessed confidants encouraging disclosers to seek revenge on the adversary (five items; ICC = .54; $\alpha = .90$), avoid the adversary (seven items; ICC = .77; $\alpha = .97$); and adopt benevolent motivation and reconcile with the adversary (seven items; ICC = .83; $\alpha = .97$). After reverse-scoring scores on encouraging benevolent motivation, these scores were averaged to index

Fn6

[6] ICCs were McGraw and Wong's (McGraw & Wong, 1996) ICC (*C*,*k*), which is equivalent to Cronbach's α and assesses degree of reliability (or consistency) across multiple observers. This is the appropriate index when observers rate all stimuli, when consistency, rather than absolute agreement is of importance, and when the average of observers' ratings is the measurement of interest.

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negativity-validating behavior ($\alpha = .90$). Higher values suggest enactment of more negativity-validating behaviors.[7]

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and correlations. Descriptive statistics and correlations for primary study variables appear in Tables 7 and 8. Consistent with predictions, confidants' closeness to disclosers, goals to be responsive to disclosers, goals to validate disclosers' negativity, and enactment of negativity-validating behavior were positively associated. In addition, consistent with predictions regarding the response of disclosers, confidants' negativity-validating behavior was positively associated with disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness, disclosers' desires to confide in confidants in the future, and disclosers' motivation to avoid and seek revenge on adversaries following the interaction. Confidants' negativity-validating behavior was also negatively associated with disclosers' benevolent motivations toward adversaries, disclosers' evaluation of adversaries' morality, and disclosers' commitment to adversaries following the interaction.

Model of confidants' experience: goals that motivate validation of negativity. A path model (using AMOS 17.0) tested predictions regarding the process linking confidants' closeness to their observed negativity-validating behavior. We expected that confidants who felt close to disclosers would adopt goals to be responsive to disclosers (Path A in Figure 1), which would predict greater adoption of negativity validation subgoals (Path B in Figure 1), which would predict their enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path C in Figure 1). To ensure that the model was properly specified, all paths linking upstream model variables to downstream model variables were estimated. Hence, this model was fully saturated and fit statistics are irrelevant. Given that the severity of the conflict or transgression identified by disclosers could function as a common causal variable, disclosers' preinteraction perceptions of the severity of the transgression committed by the adversary was included as an exogenous covariate that was modeled as correlated with closeness and predicting all downstream variables. Bias-corrected confidence intervals are presented, which are based on 2,000 bootstrap samples.

The model and results are depicted in Figure 5. As expected, confidants' subjective closeness predicted their adoption of goals to be responsive to disclosers during the discussion (Path A; 95% CI [.15, .59]). Confidants tried to be more responsive when they felt closer to disclosers. In turn, confidants' responsiveness goals predicted their adoption of negativity validation goals (Path B; 95% CI [.39, .83]). Confidants who wanted to be responsive to disclosers adopted goals to validate disclosers' negativity toward adversaries. In turn, confidants' negativity validation goals predicted observed enactment of negativity-validating behaviors (Path C; 95% CI [.05, .17]). Confidants who wanted to validate disclosers' negativity were more likely to enact negativity-validating behaviors as judged by the observers. Other direct paths linking these variables were not significant.

Indirect effects. Indirect effects were tested by constructing bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals based on a distribution of 2,000 bootstrap samples (MacKinnon et al., 2004). Most relevant to predictions regarding costs of responsiveness, the indirect effect of confidants' responsiveness goals on enactment of negativity-validating behavior via negativity validation goals was significant (Path B $\times$ C), 95% CI [.02, .12]. Indirect effects of closeness were also significant. Closeness indirectly predicted confidants' negativity validation goals via responsiveness goals (Path A $\times$ B; 95% CI [.11, .39]) and indirectly predicted negativity-validating behavior via responsiveness goals and, in turn, negativity validation goals (Path A $\times$ B $\times$ C; 95% CI [.01, .05]).

Ancillary analyses. The composite index of negativity-validating behaviors included a variety of behaviors that are relevant to diverse perspectives on conflict. Hence, ancillary regression analyses examined the effects of confidants' negativity validation goals on their enactment of the individual behaviors comprising this index while controlling for other model variables and the covariates described previously (i.e., transgression severity and confidants' closeness to disclosers and responsiveness goals). Results are presented in Table 9. Confidants who adopted goals to validate disclosers' negativity were more likely to express negative causal and responsibility attributions about the adversary's behavior, portray the adversary as uncaring and rejecting, forecast continued negative adversary behavior (marginal), portray the adversary's behavior as severe, and encourage disclosers to seek revenge on and avoid the adversary (marginal). Furthermore, confidants with negativity validation goals were less likely to portray the adversary as remorseful (marginal) or encourage benevolence toward the adversary. Hence, negativity validation goals predicted a wide array of specific negativity-validating behaviors.

We also tested alternative mediation models. We tested an alternative model that switched the position of negativity validation goals and responsiveness goals, and a second alternative model that switched the position of negativity validation goals and enactment of negativity-validating behavior. Indirect effects were weaker in these alternative models, suggesting better support for

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics for Primary Study Variables (Study 4)

Variable	*M*	*SD*
Variables assessed on confidants		
1. Closeness to discloser	5.88	0.74
2. Responsiveness goals	5.71	0.89
3. Negativity validation goals	5.42	1
4. Negativity-validating behavior	2.04	0.33
Variables assessed on disclosers		
5. Preinteraction avoidance of adversary	3.25	1.86
6. Preinteraction revenge on adversary	1.94	1.04
7. Preinteraction benevolence toward adversary	4.78	1.53
8. Preinteraction evaluation of adversary	4.72	1.36
9. Preinteraction commitment to adversary	5.92	0.96
10. Postinteraction perception of confidants' responsiveness	5.88	0.75
11. Postinteraction confiding intentions	6.12	0.86
12. Postinteraction avoidance of adversary	3.18	1.92
13. Postinteraction revenge on adversary	1.79	0.97
14. Postinteraction benevolence toward adversary	4.62	1.55
15. Postinteraction evaluation of adversary	4.69	1.39
16. Postinteraction commitment to adversary	3.78	2.07

[7] Scores on portraying outside adversaries as remorseful were not included in the composite index of negativity-validating behavior because of a low item-total correlation ($r = .29$), although results were not meaningfully impacted by including this score.

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Table 8
Pearson Correlations for Primary Study Variables (Study 4)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Cs' closeness to D										
2. Cs' responsiveness goals	.33***									
3. Cs' negativity validation goals	.19*	.62***								
4. Cs' negativity-validating behavior	.16†	.30***	.49***							
5. Ds' perception of Cs' responsiveness	.23**	.34***	.26**	.27**						
6. D's confiding intentions	.19*	.26**	.31***	.21*	.55***					
7. Ds' postinteraction avoidance of A	.08	.10	.24**	.63***	.14	.03				
8. Ds' postinteraction revenge on A	.03	−.02	−.02	.20*	−.22**	−.31***	.43***			
9. Ds' postinteraction benevolence toward A	−.08	−.08	−.29***	−.69***	−.13	−.06	−.73***	−.28***		
10. Ds' postinteraction evaluation of A	−.02	−.02	−.21**	−.62***	−.07	−.04	−.79***	−.38***	.72***	
11. D's postinteraction commitment to A	−.08	−.14	−.27**	−.57***	−.22**	−.20*	−.71***	−.23**	.66***	.65***

Note. C = Confidant; D = Discloser; A = Adversary.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

the hypothesized model. Details are available in the online supplemental materials.

Models of disclosers' responses to validation of negativity.

Perceived responsiveness and intentions to confide. The next set of models examined disclosers' responses to the interaction. First, we expanded the path model described above to test predictions regarding disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness and disclosers' intentions to confide in confidants in the future. We expected that disclosers would perceive confidants as more responsive to them when confidants enacted negativity-validating behavior (Path E in Figure 1), which would predict their intentions to confide in confidants in the future (Path F in Figure 1). The expanded model is depicted in Figure 6. Paths A, B, C, G, H, and I are conceptually identical to these paths in Figure 5. New to this model, confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior was modeled as predicting disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness (Path E), which was modeled as predicting disclosers' intention to confide in the future (Path F). Again, to control for transgression severity, this variable (not displayed in Figure 6) was modeled as correlated with confidants' closeness and as an exogenous predictor of all other variables. To ensure that the model was properly specified, all direct effects were estimated. As a result, this model was saturated and fit statistics are irrelevant. Once again, bias-corrected confidence intervals are presented, which are based on 2,000 bootstrap samples.

Results for paths predicting disclosers' perception of responsiveness and intentions to confide are presented in Table 10. As expected, confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors predicted disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness (Path E). Disclosers perceived confidants as more responsive when confidants enacted negativity-validating behaviors. Also as expected, disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness predicted disclosers' intentions to confide in confidants in the future (Path F). Two unanticipated direct effects were also significant. Confidants' goals to be responsive predicted disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness (Path M), and confidants' goals to validate negativity predicted disclosers' stronger intentions to confide in confidants in the future (Path P).

Indirect effects were tested using the bootstrapping procedure described above. Most relevant to the prediction that disclosers pursue confidants who validate negativity because these confidants are perceived as responsive, the indirect effect linking confidants' negativity-validating behavior to disclosers' intentions to disclose via disclosers' perceptions of responsiveness (Path E × F in Figure 6) was significant, 95% CI [.05, .51]. Other indirect effects in-

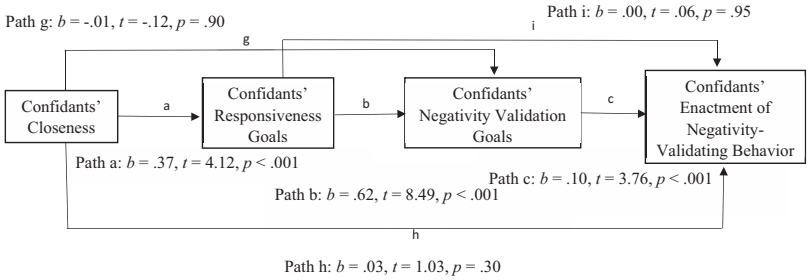

Figure 5. Results of path model linking confidants' subjective closeness to confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior via interaction goals (Study 4). Transgression severity (not displayed) was modeled as an exogenous covariate correlated with closeness, which predicted stronger responsiveness goals, $b = .17$, $t = 2.43$, $p = .015$, stronger negativity validation goals, $b = .27$, $t = 4.05$, $p < .001$, and enactment of negativity-validating behavior, $b = .18$, $t = 7.87$, $p < .001$, but was not significantly correlated with closeness, $r = .06$, $p = .44$.

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Table 9
Effects of Confidants' Negativity Validation Goals on Individual Negativity-Validating Behaviors (Study 4)

Confidants' negativity-validating behavior	*b*	95% CI	*t*	*p*
Expressing negative causal attributions	.16	[.06, .32]	2.89	.004
Expressing negative responsibility attributions	.18	[.08, .32]	4.39	<.001
Portraying adversary as uncaring	.07	[.03, .12]	2.53	.012
Forecasting adversary's continued negative behavior	.08	[.01, .20]	1.89	.061
Portraying adversary as remorseful	−.05	[−.11, .02]	−1.71	.090
Portraying adversary's negative behavior as severe	.12	[.04, .24]	2.79	.006
Encouraging revenge on adversary	.02	[.01, .03]	1.67	.097
Encouraging avoidance of adversary	.06	[−.001, .16]	1.67	.097
Encouraging benevolence toward adversary	−.10	[−.22, −.03]	−2.46	.015

Note. $df = 150$.

volving hypothesized pathways (i.e., Paths A, B, C, E, and F in Figure 6) were also significant, $ps < .05$.[8]

Alternative model. We tested an alternative model that switched the position of disclosers' perceived partner responsiveness and their intentions to confide. Indirect effects were weaker in this alternative model, suggesting better support for the hypothesized model. Details are available in the online supplemental materials.

Disclosers' forgiveness motivations. Next, we extended the original path model to examine changes in disclosers' forgiveness-related interpersonal motives, including revenge, avoidance, and benevolence motivations. We expected that confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors would predict disclosers' greater adoption of revenge and avoidance motivations, and reduced adoption of benevolent motivations, following the interaction (Path D in Figure 1). The model is depicted in Figure 7. Paths A, B, C, G, H, and I are conceptually identical to these paths in Figure 5. New to this model, confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior was modeled as predicting disclosers' postinteraction forgiveness-related motivation (avoidance, revenge, or benevolence; Path D). To control for transgression severity and disclosers' preinteraction forgiveness motivation, these variables (not displayed in Figure 7) were modeled as correlated with confidants' closeness and as exogenous predictors of all other variables. Once again, to ensure that the model was properly specified, all direct effects were estimated. As a result, this model was fully saturated and fit statistics are irrelevant. Again, bias-corrected confidence intervals are presented, which are based on 2,000 bootstrap samples.

Results for paths predicting disclosers' postinteraction forgiveness motivations are presented in Table 11. Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors predicted increases in disclosers' avoidance motivation and decreases in their benevolent motivation, but not their revenge motivation, following the interaction (Path D). As expected, disclosers adopted stronger avoidance motivation and weaker benevolence motivation following interactions in which confidants enacted negativity-validating behaviors. The only other significant predictors of disclosers' postinteraction motivations were their preinteraction motivations. These results suggest that disclosers' avoidance and benevolent motivations were somewhat stable, but also changed in accordance with confidants' negativity-validating behaviors.

Indirect effects were again tested using the bootstrapping methods described earlier. Most relevant to predictions regarding the costs of responsiveness, confidants' responsiveness goals indirectly predicted increases in disclosers' avoidance motivation, 95% CI [.01, .11], and decreases in disclosers' benevolent motivation, 95% CI [−.20, −.04], via a serial indirect effect involving confidants' negativity validation goals and, in turn, confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path B × C × D in Figure 7). All other indirect effects involving hypothesized paths (Paths A, B, C, and D in Figure 7) were also significant.[9]

Disclosers' evaluation of and commitment to adversaries. Next, we extended the original path model to examine changes in disclosers' evaluation of adversaries' morality and commitment to maintaining a relationship with adversaries. We expected that confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors would predict disclosers' more negative evaluations of adversaries' morality and reduced commitment to adversaries following the interaction (Path D in Figure 1). The model was analogous to the forgiveness model depicted in Figure 7, except the forgiveness motivation outcome variable was replaced with postinteraction evaluation of adversaries' morality or commitment to adversaries. Transgression severity and disclosers' preinteraction evaluation or

[8] Additional indirect effects were tested using the bootstrapping procedure described in the text. These indirect effects were calculated within the path model displayed in Figure 6 and path letters refer to the paths in Figure 6. The following indirect effects were significant: The serial indirect effect linking confidants' closeness to disclosers' intentions to confide (Path A × B × C × E × F; 95% CI [.00095, .02]) and perceptions of confidants' responsiveness (Path A × B × C × E; 95% CI [.001, .03]); the serial indirect effects of confidants' responsiveness goals on disclosers' intentions to confide (Path B × C × E × F; 95% CI [.002, .05]) and perceptions of confidants' responsiveness (Path B × C × E; 95% CI [.004, .08]); the serial indirect effect of confidants' negativity validation goals on disclosers' intentions to confide (Path C × E × F; 95% CI [.003, .07]); and the indirect effect of confidants' negativity validation goals on disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness (Path C × E; 95% CI [.005, .11]). These indirect pathways suggest links among model variables that are consistent with predictions.

[9] Additional indirect effects were tested using the bootstrapping procedure described in the text. These indirect effects were calculated within the path model displayed in Figure 7 and path letters refer to the paths in Figure 7. The other significant indirect effects included the following: The serial indirect effects linking confidants' closeness to disclosers' avoidance motivation (95% CI [.003, .05]) and benevolent motivation (95% CI [−.10, −.01]; Path A × B × C × D); and the indirect effects linking confidants' negativity validation goals to disclosers' avoidance motivation (95% CI [.01, .15]) and benevolent motivation (95% CI [−.30, −.08]; Path C × D). These indirect pathways suggest links among model variables that are consistent with predictions.

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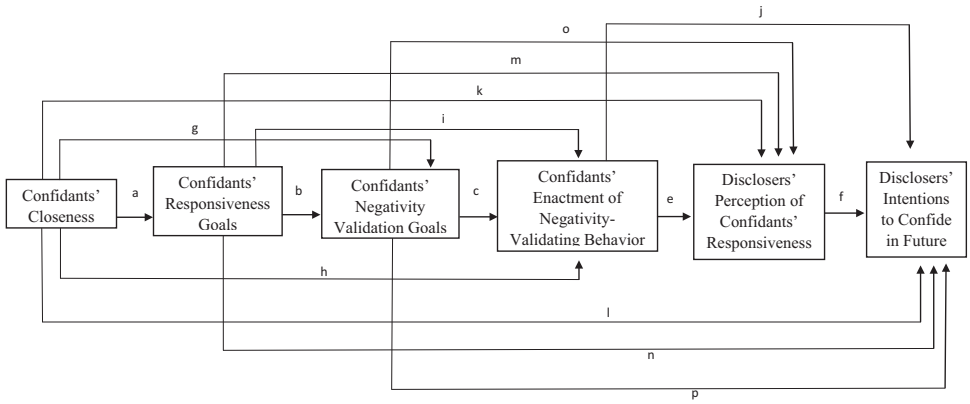

Figure 6. Path model linking confidants' subjective closeness to disclosers' desire to confide in confidants in the future (Study 4). Transgression severity (not displayed) was modeled as an exogenous covariate correlated with closeness and predicting all endogenous model variables.

commitment toward adversaries were included as covariates, modeled as correlated with confidants' closeness and as exogenous predictors of all other variables. Once again, all direct paths were estimated, the model was saturated, and bias-corrected confidence intervals are presented, which are based on 2,000 bootstrap samples.

Results for pathways predicting disclosers' postinteraction evaluation and commitment toward adversaries are presented in Table 12. As expected, confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors predicted decreases in disclosers' evaluation of adversaries' morality (Path D in upper section of Table 12) and decreases in disclosers' commitment to adversaries following the interaction (Path D in lower section of Table 12). Disclosers evaluated their adversaries more negatively and were less committed to maintaining a relationship with them following the interaction when confidants enacted negativity-validating behaviors. The only other significant predictors of disclosers' postinteraction evaluations and commitment toward adversaries were the preinteraction assessments of their evaluation and commitment. Hence, disclosers' evaluation and commitment toward adversaries were somewhat stable over the course of the study, but also changed in accordance with confidants' negativity-validating behaviors.

Once again, we tested indirect effects using the bootstrapping methods described earlier. Most relevant to predictions regarding the costs of responsiveness, confidants' responsiveness goals indirectly predicted decreases in disclosers' evaluation of adversaries after the interaction, 95% CI [−.09, −.02], and decreases in disclosers' commitment to adversaries after the interaction, 95% CI [−.09, −.01], via a serial indirect effect: confidants' responsiveness goals → confidants' negativity validation goals → confidants' negativity-validating behavior → disclosers' evaluation or commitment toward adversaries (Path B × C × D in Figure 7). All other indirect effects involving hypothesized paths were also significant.[10]

Moderator analyses. Next we explored the role of additional predictor and moderator variables that were not included in the primary models described above.

Role of confidants' closeness to adversaries. We examined whether confidants' closeness to adversaries predicted their adoption of negativity validation goals and enactment of negativity-validating behavior. Controlling for upstream model variables, confidants' closeness to adversaries predicted their reduced adoption of negativity validation goals, $b = -.09$, $t = -2.46$, $p = .015$, 95% CI[−.17, −.02], and their reduced enactment of negativity-validating behavior, $b = -.03$, $t = -2.56$, $p = .012$; 95% CI [−.06, −.01]. Consistent with predictions, confidants were less motivated to validate disclosers' negativity toward their adversaries when confidants were close to adversaries.

Furthermore, confidants' closeness to adversaries moderated the effect of confidants' responsiveness goals on their negativity validation goals, $b = -.15$, $t = -3.09$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [.29, 0]. Predicted values are plotted in Figure 8. Confidants' responsiveness goals more strongly predicted their negativity validation goals when confidants were low in closeness to adversaries (1 *SD* below the mean), $b = .87$, $t = 8.69$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.60, 1.10], relative to when they were high in closeness to adversaries (1 *SD* above the mean), $b = .38$, $t = 3.47$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [.04, .73]. Hence, consistent with predictions, confidants' goals to be responsive to disclosers were less likely to predict adoption of goals to validate disclosers' negativity toward adversaries when confidants felt close to adversaries, although the simple effect of responsiveness goals on negativity validation goals was significant at low and high levels of closeness. Confidants' closeness to adversaries did not

[10] Additional indirect effects were tested using the bootstrapping procedure described in the text. These indirect effects were calculated within the path model displayed in Figure 7, and path letters refer to the paths displayed in Figure 7. The other significant indirect effects in the model included the following: The confidants' closeness → confidants' responsiveness goals → confidants' negativity validation goals → confidants' negativity validation behavior serial indirect effects (Path A × B × C × D) predicting disclosers' evaluation of adversaries (95% CI [−.04, −.004]) and disclosers' commitment to adversaries (95% CI [−.04, −.004]); and the confidants' negativity validation goals → confidants' negativity validation behavior indirect effects (Path C × D) predicting disclosers' evaluation of adversaries (95% CI [−.13, −.03]) and commitment to adversaries (95% CI [−.13, −.02]). These indirect pathways suggest links among model variables that are consistent with predictions.

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Table 10
Results of Path Models Predicting Disclosers' Perception of Confidants' Responsiveness and Intentions to Confide in Future (Study 4)

Predictor	*b*	95% CI	*t*	*p*
Predicting disclosers' perception of confidants' responsiveness				
Transgression severity	−.04	[−.21, .13]	−.48	.63
Confidants' closeness (Path K)	.12	[−.03, .28]	1.48	.14
Confidants' responsiveness goals (Path M)	.21	[.03, .37]	2.61	.01
Confidants' negativity validation goals (Path O)	.01	[−.16, .17]	.07	.95
Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path E)	.45	[.06, .88]	1.98	.048
Predicting disclosers' intentions to confide in future				
Transgression severity	−.06	[−.21, .10]	−.75	.46
Confidants' closeness (Path L)	.06	[−.09, .20]	.74	.46
Confidants' responsiveness goals (Path N)	−.05	[−.22, .12]	−.60	.55
Confidants' negativity validation goals (Path P)	.20	[.06, .39]	2.53	.01
Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path J)	.01	[−.47, .42]	.04	.97
Disclosers' perception of confidants' responsiveness (Path F)	.58	[.40, .78]	7.21	<.001

Note. Path letters refer to the paths depicted in Figure 6.

moderate effects of negativity validation goals on enactment of negativity-validating behavior, $p = .47$.

Role of confidants' perceptions of closeness between disclosers and adversaries. We also examined the effects of confidants' perceptions of closeness between disclosers and adversaries in predicting their negativity validation goals and behavior. Consistent with predictions, controlling for upstream model variables, confidants' perceptions of disclosers' closeness to adversaries predicted their reduced adoption of negativity validation goals, $b = -.10$, $t = -2.49$, $p = .014$, 95% CI [−.17, −.03], and reduced enactment of negativity-validating behavior, $b = -.06$, $t = -4.71$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.09, −.03]. However, confidants' perceived closeness between disclosers and adversaries did not attenuate the effect of confidants' responsiveness goals on their negativity validation goals or the effect of confidants' negativity validation goals on their negativity-validating behavior, $ps > .48$. Even when they believed that disclosers were close to adversaries, confidants who wanted to be responsive to disclosers attempted to validate disclosers' negativity toward adversaries.

Role of confidants' agreeableness. We also examined the role of confidants' agreeableness in predicting their negativity validating goals and behavior. Confidants' agreeableness did not predict confidants' negativity validation goals or behavior, $ps > .43$. In addition, confidants' agreeableness did not moderate effects of responsiveness goals on negativity validation goals, or effects of negativity validation goals on negativity-validating behavior, $ps > .28$. Hence, even agreeable confidants tried to validate disclosers' negativity when they adopted goals to be responsive to disclosers.

Role of disclosers' self-esteem. We examined the role of disclosers' self-esteem in predicting confidants' responsiveness goals, negativity validating goals, and negativity-validating behavior. Controlling for upstream model variables, disclosers' self-esteem did not predict confidants' responsiveness goals, negativity validation goals, or negativity validation behaviors, $ps > .57$. In addition, disclosers' self-esteem did not moderate the links between confidants' closeness and their responsiveness goals, between confidants' responsiveness goals and their negativity validation goals, and between confidants' negativity validation goals and their negativity-validating behaviors, $ps > .33$. Hence, responsiveness goals were associated with negativity validation regardless of disclosers' self-esteem.

Role of prior discussion of the conflict. On average, disclosers indicated previously discussing their conflict with confidants only slightly or generally ($M = 2.11$, $SD = .73$). We examined whether prior discussion of the conflict predicted confidants' negativity validation, whether prior discussion moderated the effects of confidants' responsiveness goals on their adoption of negativity validation goals, and whether prior discussion moderated the effect

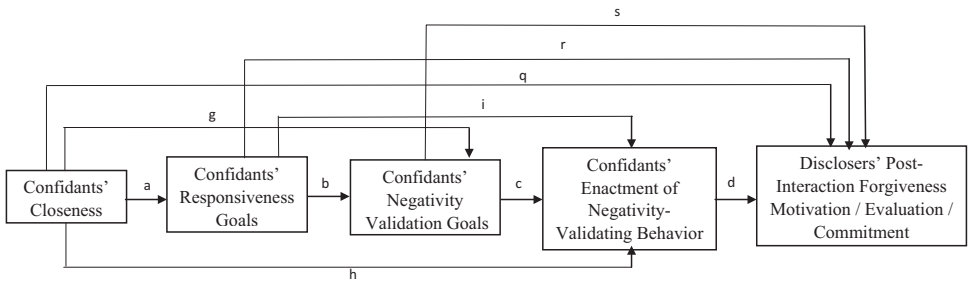

Figure 7. Path model linking confidants' subjective closeness to disclosers' postinteraction forgiveness motivation, evaluation of adversaries, and commitment to adversaries (Study 4). Transgression severity and disclosers' preinteraction forgiveness motivation, evaluation, or commitment (matching the outcome variable) were modeled as exogenous covariates correlated with closeness and predicting all endogenous model variables.

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Table 11
Results of Path Models Predicting Disclosers' Postinteraction Forgiveness Motivations (Study 4)

Predictor	*b*	95% CI	*t*	*p*
Predicting disclosers' postinteraction avoidance motivation				
Transgression severity	.07	[−.17, .28]	.62	.53
Disclosers' preinteraction avoidance motivation	.78	[.64, .90]	14.22	<.001
Confidants' closeness (Path Q)	.08	[−.16, .28]	.70	.49
Confidants' responsiveness goals (Path R)	−.10	[−.31, .10]	−.90	.37
Confidants' negativity validation goals (Path S)	.03	[−.17, .23]	.30	.76
Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path D)	.79	[.15, 1.44]	2.27	.02
Predicting disclosers' postinteraction revenge motivation				
Transgression severity	.01	[−.16, .19]	.15	.88
Disclosers' preinteraction revenge motivation	.64	[.49, .79]	11.03	<.001
Confidants' closeness (Path Q)	.15	[−.02, .32]	1.88	.06
Confidants' responsiveness goals (Path R)	−.07	[−.24, .12]	−.86	.39
Confidants' negativity validation goals (Path S)	−.02	[−.23, .13]	−.25	.80
Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path D)	.08	[−.43, .63]	.36	.72
Predicting disclosers' postinteraction benevolent motivation				
Transgression severity	−.02	[−.21, .15]	−.24	.81
Disclosers' preinteraction benevolent motivation	.63	[.51, .76]	11.31	<.001
Confidants' closeness (Path Q)	−.02	[−.19, .16]	−.19	.85
Confidants' responsiveness goals (Path R)	.11	[−.08, .32]	1.17	.24
Confidants' negativity validation goals (Path S)	−.11	[−.26, .07]	−1.27	.21
Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path D)	−1.26	[−1.87, −.70]	−4.25	<.001

Note. Path letters refer to the paths depicted in Figure 7.

of confidants' negativity validation goals on their negativity validation behavior. Controlling for upstream model variables, prior discussion of the conflict predicted confidants' greater adoption of negativity validation goals, $b = .20$, $t = 2.32$, $p = .021$, but prior discussion did not predict their enactment of negativity validation behaviors, $p = .12$. Prior discussion of the conflict also did not moderate the effect of confidants' responsiveness goals on their adoption of negativity validation goals, $p = .30$, and did not moderate the effect of confidants' negativity validation goals on confidants' negativity-validating behavior, $p = .19$. Hence, responsiveness goals were associated with negativity validation to these same extent regardless of whether the conflict had already been discussed.

Relationship length. We also tested whether the length of the relationship between confidants and disclosers moderated effects posited by the model. Relationship length did not moderate any of the model paths ($ps > .15$).

Relationship type. We also tested whether the type of relationship between confidants and disclosers (i.e., romantic vs. not romantic) moderated effects posited by the model. Relationship type did not moderate any of the paths ($p > .07$).[11]

Fn11

Summary. This study supported predictions using behavioral observation methods. Confidants who felt close to disclosers adopted goals to be responsive to disclosers when disclosers discussed their conflicts involving adversaries. In turn, confidants' goals to be responsive predicted their adoption of goals to validate disclosers' negativity toward adversaries, which predicted confidants' enactment of a wide array of negativity-validating behaviors. Disclosers, in turn, perceived confidants who enacted such behaviors as responsive, which predicted their greater desire to confide in confidants in the future, supporting predictions that negativity-validating behaviors are received as responsive and rewarding and, hence, those who enact such behaviors are sought out as confidants. Supporting predictions that negativity-validating behaviors may have costs for resolution of conflicts with adversaries, disclosers became more avoidance-motivated and less benevolently motivated toward adversaries, more critical of adversaries' morality, and less committed to adversaries following discussions in which confidants enacted negativity-validating behaviors. However, confidants' responsiveness goals were less strongly associated with subgoals to validate disclosers' negativity when confidants were close to disclosers' adversaries. These finding suggest that closeness between confidants and adversaries may introduce competing goals that alter how confidants respond to the needs of disclosers during discussions of their conflicts with outside adversaries, an issue discussed further in the General Discussion.

General Discussion

People often turn to close relationship partners to discuss their relationships with others (Eaton & Sanders, 2012; McAndrew et al., 2007; Volkema et al., 1996), and these interactions may have a significant impact on people's social lives. In the current re-

[11] We also conducted 10 ancillary regression analyses to examine whether confidant or discloser gender moderated any of the links posited by our conceptual model (paths A, B, C, D, E, and F in Figures 6 and 7). We tested one model for each of the paths. Discloser and confidant gender, and product terms representing interactions of predictors with discloser and confidant gender, were included in each of the models. Gender did not significantly moderate the effect of confidants' closeness on adoption of responsiveness goals ($p > .21$), the effect of responsiveness goals on negativity validation goals ($ps > .25$), the effect of negativity validation goals on negativity-validating behaviors ($p > .10$), the effect of negativity-validating behavior on disclosers' perceptions of responsiveness ($p > .26$), the effect of perceived responsiveness on desire to confide ($p > .24$), or the effects of negativity-validating behaviors on change in disclosers' motivations, evaluations, and commitment toward adversaries ($ps > .05$). Hence, the central model paths did not significantly vary across confidant and discloser gender.

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Table 12
Results of Path Models Predicting Disclosers' Postinteraction Evaluation and Commitment Toward Adversaries (Study 4)

Predictor	*b*	95% CI	*t*	*p*
Predicting disclosers' postinteraction evaluation of adversary				
Transgression severity	.01	[−.18, .16]	.07	.95
Disclosers' preinteraction evaluation of adversary	.77	[.63, .87]	14.93	<.001
Confidants' closeness (Path Q)	−.003	[−.19, .17]	−.04	.97
Confidants' responsiveness goals (Path R)	.08	[−.08, .27]	1.09	.28
Confidants' negativity validation goals (Path S)	−.002	[−.19, .13]	−.03	.98
Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path D)	−.81	[−1.2, −.42]	−3.46	<.001
Predicting disclosers' postinteraction commitment toward adversary				
Transgression severity	.03	[−.17, .17]	.32	.75
Disclosers' preinteraction commitment to adversary	.87	[.76, .94]	26.80	<.001
Confidants' closeness (Path Q)	−.04	[−.25, .11]	−.50	.61
Confidants' responsiveness goals (Path R)	.06	[−.06, .21]	.68	.50
Confidants' negativity validation goals (Path S)	−.06	[−.23, .07]	−.71	.48
Confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behavior (Path D)	−.77	[−1.27, −.36]	−3.01	.003

Note. Path letters refer to the paths depicted in Figure 7.

search, we presented and tested a model of the processes that unfold when people (termed *disclosers*) disclose to their relationship partners (termed *confidants*) about their conflicts with people outside the dyad (termed *adversaries*). According to our model, confidants who feel close to disclosers will validate disclosers' negativity toward their adversaries in an effort to be responsive to disclosers. Furthermore, the model predicts that confidants who validate disclosers' negativity are perceived as responsive by disclosers and, consequently, are sought out to serve as confidants in future interactions, but that this validation of negativity also reduces disclosers' motivation to forgive and reconcile with the outside adversaries involved in the conflicts. Results of seven methodologically diverse studies supported this model.

In Study 1, participants reported on their typical experiences during conversations with a relationship partner about conflicts with outside adversaries. Participants who felt close to their partners reported greater adoption of goals to be responsive when their partners disclosed about their conflicts, which predicted their adoption of goals to validate partners' negative thoughts and feelings about their adversaries. Participants' adoption of these negativity validation goals, in turn, predicted their tendencies to enact behaviors that would validate their partners' negativity, including expressing negative causal and responsibility attributions for the adversary's behavior. Furthermore, participants perceived their relationship partners as more responsive when their partners enacted these negativity-validating behaviors, and these perceptions of responsiveness predicted participants' tendencies and intentions to confide in their partners about their conflicts.

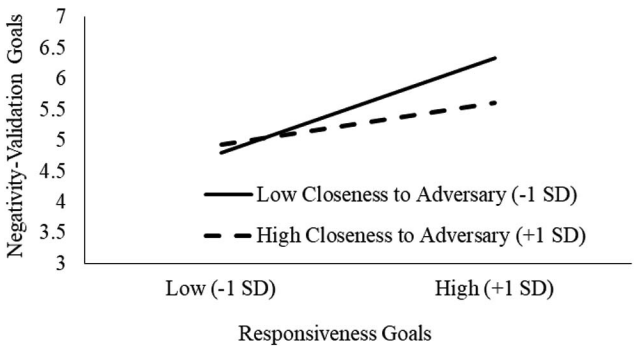

Figure 8. Effects of confidants' responsiveness goals on their negativity validation goals during the conflict discussion as a function of their closeness to adversaries (Study 4).

Experimental studies (Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c) provided evidence for a causal effect of confidants' responsiveness goals on their intentions to validate disclosers' negativity toward their outside adversaries. Participants reported greater adoption of goals to validate their partner's negativity and intentions to enact specific negativity-validating behaviors (i.e., expressing negative causal and responsibility attributions for the adversary's behavior) when they were instructed to adopt goals to be responsive to their partners, relative to when they were instructed to not be responsive.

Studies 3a and 3b revealed that receiving negativity validation from romantic partners was associated with participants' reports of more negative forms of conflict resolution with their adversaries, including their greater short-term revenge on adversaries, greater short-term and long-term avoidance of adversaries, reduced long-term reconciliation with adversaries, and long-term negative moral evaluation of adversaries. These effects were independent of participants' appraisals of the severity of the adversary's behavior, and emerged with regard to both a specific instance of negativity validation during conflict with an adversary, and with regard to repeated receipt of negativity validation during conflicts with a different adversary. Furthermore, participants believed that validating a close partner's negativity was a means to convey responsiveness, and they endorsed this belief more than they endorsed the countervailing belief that challenging the partner's negative attitudes would convey responsiveness. These beliefs are consistent with our claim that people often view negativity validation as a means to be responsive to partners.

Study 4 provided additional support for our model using behavioral observation methods. Confidants who felt close to disclosers reported a stronger desire to be responsive during a recorded laboratory conversation about disclosers' conflicts with outside adversaries. In turn, confidants with responsiveness goals reported

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adopting the goal of validating disclosers' negativity toward the outside adversary, which predicted their observed enactment of a variety of negativity-validating behaviors during the discussion, according to a panel of objective observers. The effects of confidants' responsiveness goals on their negativity validation did not vary as a function of confidants' agreeableness, disclosers' self-esteem, length of relationship between disclosers and confidants, type of relationship between disclosers and confidants (romantic vs. platonic), prior discussion of the conflict, or confidants' perceptions of the closeness between disclosers and adversaries.

Confidants' enactment of these negativity-validating behaviors, in turn, predicted disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness, and, in turn, their desires to confide in confidants about their conflicts in the future. Confidants' enactment of these negativity-validating behaviors were also associated with increases in disclosers' motivation to avoid outside adversaries, decreases in their benevolent motivations toward adversaries (i.e., reduced desire to reconcile), more negative evaluation of adversaries' morality, and reduced commitment to adversaries following the interaction. This study found support for a wide array of negativity-validating behaviors that were associated with confidants' goals to validate negativity, such as expressing negative causal and responsibility attributions for adversaries' behavior, portraying adversaries as uncaring and destructive, forecasting adversaries' continued negative behavior, and encouraging disclosers' to refrain from reconciling with adversaries. Of course, these are not the only behaviors that people may use to validate a partner's negativity, which may be one reason why the associations between negativity validation goals and negativity-validating behaviors were moderate in size. For example, people may also express dislike for the adversary. In addition, measurement error and the fact that people do not always enact behaviors to pursue their goals likely attenuated the associations between negativity-validating goals and negativity-validating behaviors.

Indirect effects supported our model across these studies. For example, confidants' adoption of responsiveness goals indirectly predicted their enactment of negativity-validating behaviors via their adoption of negativity validation goals. In other words, results suggest that confidants who wanted to be responsive enacted negativity-validating behaviors because they adopted goals to validate negativity. In addition, confidants' enactment of negativity-validating behaviors indirectly predicted disclosers' intended and actual frequency of confiding in confidants about outside conflicts via disclosers' perceptions of confidants' responsiveness. In other words, results suggest that disclosers who received negativity-validating behaviors frequently disclosed to their confidants and intended to continue disclosing in the future because they perceived their confidants as responsive.

These findings have important implications for understanding social support and interpersonal responsiveness. Prior research has suggested that relationship partners are valued as informal sources of support (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Feeney & Collins, 2015), and that responsiveness is a highly desired quality in partners that affords a large array of interpersonal and personal benefits (Reis et al., 2004; Reis & Gable, 2015). Although these benefits have been well studied, no research to our knowledge has revealed costs of responsiveness. Our findings highlight a cost. Specifically, the current findings suggest that strategies that people typically employ to provide responsive support to close relationship partners who are involved in conflicts with outside adversaries are indeed effective in communicating responsiveness and strengthening relationships with those partners, but have the cost of potentially undermining conflict resolution with outside adversaries.

Hence, these results suggest drawbacks of responsiveness in some situations. This is not unique to responsiveness. Many psychological phenomena involve trade-offs, and drawbacks of other prosocial phenomena have recently been noted. For instance, perspective-taking and empathy—both thought to be indicators of prosocial orientations—have recently been proposed as predictors of unethical or antisocial behaviors in certain contexts (Bloom, 2017; Gino & Galinsky, 2012). People who empathize with, or adopt the perspective of, a particular target may attempt to benefit that target at the expense of other people. The current model suggests that responsiveness may follow a similar pattern; people who wish to be responsive to a partner engaged in conflict with an outsider may validate the partner's negativity, which may make the partner feel understood, validated, and cared for, but this validation of negativity may inhibit the partner's resolution of the conflict. Future research should more closely examine the motivations underlying this effect. It is possible that people who want to be responsive to partners validate their negativity only to satisfy their partner's immediate emotional needs and provide support to a partner when the partner especially needs it. It is also possible that people who care for a partner's welfare have high standards regarding how that partner should be treated by others, which may motivate punishment of those who harm the partner. Prior findings suggesting that people have difficulty forgiving people who betray their close partners (Green, Burnette, & Davis, 2008) suggests that people often want to protect their close partners from being harmed by others, and this may be especially true for those who report wanting to be responsive to their partner's needs.

Although negativity validation may be harmful to conflict resolution, it may ultimately serve the goal of caring for the partner's needs by motivating the partner to sever harmful relationships, or motivating adversaries to treat the partner better. In Study 4, we found that confidants were less motivated to validate the discloser's negativity when they perceived the discloser as close to the adversary. This effect may reflect the fact that, independently of their goal to be responsive, confidants consider the costs and benefits of conflict resolution for the discloser when deciding whether to validate negativity. This outcome-sensitive approach to validating negativity could ultimately benefit partners' relational well-being in the long-run by encouraging them to maintain and strengthen important and beneficial relationships while also distancing from harmful and unimportant partners. These possibilities should be more closely examined in future longitudinal research.

The current research provided support for our model in samples of mostly young and middle-aged adults, and it did not include tests of our hypotheses in samples of older adults. Relative to younger adults, older adults exhibit preferences for positive information over negative information in attention and memory (Reed & Carstensen, 2012; Reed, Chan, & Mikels, 2014). Furthermore, according to socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999), the belief that time is limited motivates older adults to prioritize emotion regulation goals, leading them to pursue affectively pleasant social interactions. Therefore, older adults may be less likely to seek out confidants who will validate negative feelings toward adversaries, less likely to view these

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confidants as responsive to their needs, and less likely to validate others' negativity. Support for our model may also vary across cultures. Recent research suggests that perceived partner responsiveness is a stronger predictor of well-being for people living in the United States relative to people living in Japan (Tasfiliz et al., 2018). Furthermore, relational mobility (i.e., ease of leaving relationships) tends to be lower in Japan relative to the United States (Thomson et al., 2018), and lower relational mobility is associated with maintaining relationships even when social support and intimacy are low (Kito, Yuki, & Thomson, 2017; Schug, Yuki, & Maddux, 2010; Thomson et al., 2018). If responsiveness is more important to those living in relationally mobile societies, and if dissatisfying relationships are more easily dissolved in those societies, confidants in relationally mobile societies may be more motivated to validate negativity as a means of conveying responsiveness, and disclosers in relationally mobile societies may be more likely to respond to this validation by avoiding their adversaries, relative to those living in more relationally stable societies. These possibilities should be tested in future research.

The current research also significantly contributes to understanding of third-party conflict resolution. Much of the past research on mediation of conflicts involve formal third parties, such as those who are appointed as mediators, arbitrators, or negotiators (Arnold & O'Connor, 1999; Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992). However, people often turn to informal third parties, such as romantic partners, friends, and family members, when they have conflicts with others (Eaton & Sanders, 2012), and so it is important to understand the interpersonal processes that unfold in these contexts and impact the effectiveness of these informal third parties. To that end, the current research suggests that goals for responsiveness, which often arise when the informal party is close to one of the conflicting parties, may often serve as a source of bias that compromises the effectiveness of informal third parties in achieving conflict resolution. These strategies contrast with those typically employed by formal third parties, such as arbitrators, who are not typically motivated to be responsive to only one of the conflicting parties. Future research should examine differences in strategies employed by both formal and informal supports and whether these differences are determined by differences in responsiveness goals. Consistent with the current findings demonstrating that responsiveness goals mediate effects of closeness, we would predict that differences in adoption of responsiveness goals, and prioritization of the needs of one party over the other, may explain many differences between formal and informal third parties in the strategies they adopt to mediate conflicts.

The current research extends what is known about goal systems in social interaction. Goal systems are organized in a hierarchical fashion, in which a goal may be divided into smaller, component pieces, or subgoals (Berger, 2002). For instance, John may have a goal of developing a relationship with Mary. This superordinate goal may activate other subgoals, such as introducing himself to Mary, or obtaining her contact information. Our present findings extend this past work by providing evidence that goals for interpersonal responsiveness toward a close partner elicit adoption of the subordinate goal to validate the partner's negativity toward adversaries, which guides enactment of negativity-validating behaviors. In Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c, manipulation of the goal to be responsive to partners activated the goal to validate the partner's negativity, consistent with the view that negativity validation is a related subgoal of responsiveness goals that serves as its means. In Studies 3a and 3b, participants directly reported that validating negativity is a way to convey understanding, validation, and care, which is also consistent with this prediction. Furthermore, the mediation results in Studies 1 and 4 suggesting that negativity validation goals mediate effects of responsiveness goals on downstream model variables is consistent with the view that, in this context, responsiveness goals exert their effects through activation of negativity validation goals. Finally, participants in Studies 1 and 4 interpreted negativity-validating behavior as responsive, suggesting that negativity validation is often a successful tactic for communicating understanding, validation, and care. We expect that this link between responsiveness goals and negativity validation subgoals exists because most people want validation of their negative views of their adversaries, leading most people to believe that validating negativity is a means of being responsive to partners in conflict with others.

However, we are not suggesting that responsiveness always contributes to the escalation of conflicts, or that responsiveness has a net negative effect on partners' relationships with others. Some individuals may pursue responsiveness goals in ways other than validating negativity, such as by distracting their partners from thinking about conflicts or by suggesting more benign reappraisals of their adversaries' actions. These subgoals may involve distinct social experiences with distinct implications for cognition, affect, behavior, and relationships while still promoting the overall goal of being responsive. Identifying the situational, personal, and relationship factors that determine the means people adopt to be responsive to partners is an important task for future research. In addition, responsiveness may have important positive effects on partners' relationships with outsiders in other contexts. For example, people who want to be responsive to partners may express support for those partners' relationships with outsiders, and receiving this support may promote those relationships (Agnew, 2014; Sprecher et al., 2006). This positive effect of responsiveness on relationships with outsiders should be examined in future research. Given that having multiple high-quality relationships is important for well-being, people who want to be responsive to their partners may usually try to support their partners' other relationships. Responsiveness goals may motivate behaviors that harm partners' relationships primarily when partners desire to receive feedback that is harmful, such as when they have conflicts with outsiders and want validation of their negativity, or when people believe that their partners' relationships are harmful to them.

People may have multiple goals that are activated at once, which may constrain the strategies they adopt to pursue their goals (Kruglanski et al., 2002). This phenomenon may explain results of Study 4. In that study, confidants who felt close to the discloser's adversary were less likely to try to validate the discloser's negativity toward that adversary, and the effect of confidants' responsiveness goals on their adoption of negativity validation subgoals was attenuated. One explanation for these results is that confidants had at least two goals activated simultaneously when they were close to both the discloser and the discloser's adversary: the goal to be responsive to the discloser and the goal to protect the discloser's adversary. This dual activation may have lead participants to resist validating negativity as a means of satisfying responsiveness goals, and to instead choose other means to be responsive. Indeed, in that same study we found that confidants'

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responsiveness goals directly predicted disclosers' perceptions of responsiveness, independently of confidants' negativity validation goals and behavior (Path M in Figure 6), which suggests that some confidants communicated responsiveness in ways that were independent of validating negativity. The activation of multiple goals may also explain some prior findings on third-party conflict resolution suggesting that informal third parties sometimes encourage their partners to forgive their adversaries (Eaton & Sanders, 2012). Perhaps these confidants were contending with multiple goals of both responding supportively to their partners while protecting their partners' adversaries. Future research should manipulate the activation of multiple goals in these interactions and measure a wider range of behavioral responses to examine how responsiveness goals may differentially shape behavior as a function of the joint activation of other social goals.

This research also extends understanding of forgiveness, moral evaluation, and relationship commitment. Research on the predictors of forgiveness has emphasized characteristics of victims (e.g., personality, empathy, attributions) and characteristics of perpetrators (e.g., apology) as predictors of forgiveness (e.g., Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004; Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Fehr et al., 2010). The current research suggests that forgiveness is also influenced by actions of people outside of the victim-perpetrator dyad, and that a comprehensive understanding of forgiveness must consider this external social influence. Similarly, the current research suggests that perceptions of a perpetrator's morality are influenced by actions of people outside the victim-perpetrator dyad. This may be an interpersonally significant form of social influence in light of prior research suggesting that perceptions of moral character are more influential than other types of perceptions (e.g., warmth, competence) in impression formation and global evaluation (Goodwin et al., 2014; Hartley et al., 2016). The current research suggests that these important perceptions of a person's moral character are influenced by biased relationship partners who are motivated to help perceivers form negative evaluations of the target person's morality to validate their negativity. Research on relationship commitment already suggests the importance of social networks. For instance, Sprecher (Sprecher, 1988; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1992) demonstrated that people are more committed to their romantic relationships when they perceive that other social network members approve of those relationships. The current research suggests novel processes through which social network members may influence relationship commitment, including tendencies for relationship partners to turn to social network members for support during times of conflict, and the validation of negativity that often ensues. Furthermore, the current research demonstrates that people may perceive lack of support for their relationships from social network members who were motivated to be responsive and validating, suggesting that interpersonally destructive influence may stem from benevolent intentions. These insights are afforded by the interactional approach taken in the current research. Social support (or undermining) of relationships by social network members, like support more generally (Collins & Feeney, 2000), is a social interaction that unfolds between two individuals, and is dependent on the goals, behaviors, and perceptions of both parties. Future research on social network influences should continue to examine such influence as it unfolds in social interactions.

Finally, the current research suggests processes that may reinforce the validation of negativity. In the current research, participants reported more frequent self-disclosure about their interpersonal conflicts to relationship partners who validated their negativity. They also intended to engage in more of this self-disclosure in the future with such partners. These effects were mediated by perceived partner responsiveness, suggesting that partners who validate negativity are sought out as confidants because they are perceived as responsive. These results may suggest processes that could strengthen intimacy between, and confer power to, partners who validate negativity. That is, people may continue confiding in partners who validate their negativity (and are seen as responsive), which provides those partners with greater opportunity to enact negativity-validating responses in the future, and become closer (Reis & Shaver, 1988). As they become increasingly relied on to advise on interpersonal difficulties, these partners may exert a privileged influence on disclosers' social networks. The possibilities that negativity validation increases closeness between confidants and disclosers and, in turn, provides confidants' with greater opportunities to influence disclosers should be examined in future longitudinal research. Given that negativity-validating confidants have a negative influence on conflict resolution, the process of interpreting them as responsive and seeking them out may have negative effects on people's social lives. Indeed, this process may partially contribute to interpersonally detrimental tendencies for people to minimize their own wrongdoing and vilify adversaries during conflicts (Baumeister et al., 1990; Kennedy & Pronin, 2008; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007). Rather than being determined only by intrapsychic forces, these biases may have some interpersonal roots; they may be sustained by people's tendencies to surround themselves with relationship partners who validate their negativity and encourage such biases in the name of interpersonal responsiveness.

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Appendix A

Responsiveness Goals Manipulation Instructions (Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c)

High responsiveness manipulation: Imagine that someone you know, Mary, tells you about an intense conflict or fight she is having with Pat, who you do not know. Further, imagine that you want to make Mary feel that you understand her, have positive views of her, and care for her. How would you respond to Mary while she tells you about this conflict, assuming you want Mary to feel understood, validated, and cared for by you? Please think about how you would respond and then click to the next page to answer some questions about this.

Low responsiveness manipulation: Imagine that someone you know, Mary, tells you about an intense conflict or fight she is having with Pat, who you do not know. Further, imagine that you are not particularly concerned with Mary's feelings. How would you respond to Mary while she tells you about this conflict, assuming you are not concerned about Mary's feelings? Please think about how you would respond and then click to the next page to answer some questions about this.

(*Appendices continue*)

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Appendix B

Items Used for Behavioral Coding of Negativity-Validating Behavior (Study 4)

To what extent did the confidant . . .

Expressing Negative Causal Attributions

Say that the adversary treated him/her in this negative way because of something about him/her (e.g., the type of person he is, the mood he/she was in).

Say the reason why the adversary treated him/her in this negative way is not likely to change.

Say the reason why the adversary treated him/her in this negative way is something that affects other areas of their relationship.

Expressing Negative Responsibility Attributions

Say that the adversary engaged in this behavior because he/she wanted to hurt him/her.

Say that the adversary knew in advance that his/her behavior would hurt him/her.

Say that the adversary meant to treat him/her in this negative way.

Say that the adversary intended to treat him/her in this negative way.

Say that the adversary treated him/her in this negative way on purpose rather than by accident.

Say that the adversary's negative behavior was motivated by selfish rather than unselfish concerns.

Say that the adversary deserves to be blamed for his/her negative behavior toward him/her.

Say that the adversary is to blame for what he/she did to him/her.

Portraying Adversary as Uncaring or Rejecting

Say that the adversary treated him/her in this negative way because he/she does not like him/her.

Say that adversary treated him/her in this negative way because he/she does not care for him/her.

Say that the adversary treated him/her in this negative way because he/she does not want a relationship with him/her.

Forecasting Continued Negative Behavior

Say that the adversary will behave in a morally wrong way in the future.

Say that the adversary will treat him/her in a negative way in the future.

Say that the adversary is likely to hurt him/her in the future.

Say that the adversary will offend him/her in the future.

Portraying Adversary as Remorseful

Say that the adversary feels remorse or regret for what he/she has done.

Say that the adversary feels guilty for what he/she has done.

Say that the adversary will try to make up for what he/she has done.

Say that the adversary plans to treat me in a more positive manner in the future to make up for this.

Portraying Transgression as Severe

Focus on the pain that the adversary has caused him/her.

Say that the adversary's behavior harmed him/her.

Say that the adversaries' behavior was hurtful.

Said that the adversary's behavior was morally wrong.

Say that the adversary's behavior was offensive.

Say that the adversary's behavior was insulting.

Say that the adversary's behavior was disrespectful.

Encouraging Revenge

Say that he/she should make the adversary pay.

Say that he/she wishes something bad would happen to the adversary.

Say that he/she wishes the adversary would get what he/she deserves.

Say that he/she should get even with the adversary.

Say that he/she wants to see the adversary hurt and miserable.

Encouraging Avoidance

Say that he/she should keep as much distance from the adversary as possible.

Say that he/she should live as if the adversary doesn't exist, isn't around.

Say that he/she should not trust the adversary.

Say that he/she should not act warmly toward the adversary.

Say that he/she should avoid the adversary.

Say that he/she should cut off his/her relationship with the adversary.

Say that he/she should withdraw from the adversary.

Encouraging Benevolence

Say that he/she should forgive the adversary for his/her behavior.

Say that he/she should have goodwill for the adversary.

Say that he/should bury the hatchet with the adversary and move forward with their relationship.

Say that he/she should try to have a positive relationship again.

Say that he/she should give up their hurt and resentment.

Say that he/she should put his/her hurt aside so he/she could resume a relationship with the adversary.

Say that he/she should release his/her anger toward the adversary so he/she can work on restoring their relationship to health.

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