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**Third Party Hurt:  
Consequences of Receiving Hurtful Messages Through a Third Person**

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**Third Party Hurt:  
Consequences of Receiving Hurtful Messages Through a Third Person**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

### **Third Party Hurt: Consequences of Receiving Hurtful Messages Through a Third Person**

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Previous work on hurtful messages focused on receiving hurtful messages in dyadic relationships. However, hurt feelings are also elicited when people receive hurtful messages from individuals other than the person who originally stated the message. The current study examined peoples' experience of hurt, perception of intent, and tendency to distance themselves from both perpetrators (those responsible for generating the hurt invoking message) and deliverers (those responsible for revealing or delivering the hurt invoking message). The investigation revealed associations between victims' perceptions of the degree of similarity they shared with perpetrators and the intensity of hurt felt by victims, as well as the degree to which the message threatened victims' negative face and the intensity of hurt victims felt. For both perpetrators and deliverers, as victims'

perceptions of intent increased, the distancing effect on the relationship also increased. The intensity of hurt victims felt was associated with the tendency for victims to distance themselves from perpetrators. Victims perceived that friends intentionally hurt their feelings to a greater extent than did romantic partners.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Hurtful messages occur in all types of relationships and situations. No one is excluded from the emotions they elicit nor does the type of relationship in which the messages take place safeguard people against feeling hurt. As suggested, both experiencing an unpleasant interpersonal event (Weiner, 1986) and communication (Vangelisti, 1994) are components involved in the generation of hurt feelings. Though often intensely painful, hurt feelings usually do not prevent individuals from initiating and managing interpersonal communication or from communicating in general. Nor does the potential for creating hurt feelings necessarily deter individuals from delivering hurtful messages that they or that someone else constructed.

A growing body of research has revealed much about the experience of hurt. However, many of the variables associated with hurtful events, including the presence of more than two people, have yet to receive consideration. For example, how does the addition of a third person into the communication process impact the intensity of hurt an individual experiences? Does the person who was hurt interpret the intent of the other two people differently, and if so, which interpretation of intent has more influence on the degree to which the individual is hurt? Finally, how does the interpretation of intent impact the victim's distancing response from the other two people involved in the interaction?

Researchers have investigated hurt in a variety of contexts and in many different situations (for a review of the literature see Vangelisti, 2010). Nonetheless, they have yet to explore a crucial factor that may contribute to the experience of hurt. The exchange of

a hurtful message can occur directly between a sender and receiver or perpetrator and victim, but this is not the only way that hurt is produced. Hurt feelings may be evoked by gossip, secret sharing, and hearing harsh words another person spoke through a third person or message deliverer. The purpose of the current research is to explore the uniqueness of a hurtful experience when three people are involved as opposed to only two. More specifically, the goal of this study is to understand the impact a third person has on the intensity of hurt felt, the perceived intent of the parties involved, and how perceived intent is related to distancing between the perpetrator of the hurtful message and the victim, and the deliverer of the hurtful message and the victim.

The current research will contribute to extant literature in several ways. The literature compiled on hurt in dyadic relationships is enlightening, yet scholars should not assume that the findings for dyads are applicable to other relationship configurations. Most studies have focused on retrospective accounts of hurtful experiences in which the participants are instructed to recall a conversation in which “someone said something that hurt their feelings” (Vangelisti & Young, 2000, p. 402) or in which “a partner said or did something that hurt their feelings” (Feeney, 2004, p. 494). Such instructions limit participants to describing interpersonal interactions and communication exchanges that involved two people. Yet, hurt can occur outside of dyads.

By studying hurt in triads, the circumstances that are prevalent in hurtful situations also will be further understood. For example, certain speech phenomena such as gossip may be revealed as frequently generating hurt. Likewise, greater insight will be gained into how individuals prioritize certain environmental and relational factors as relevant for appraising a message as hurtful.

Finally, studying hurt in triads consisting of a victim, the person feeling hurt; a perpetrator, the person responsible for generating the hurt invoking message; and a deliverer, the person responsible for revealing the perpetrator's message to the victim, will provide the foundation to compare hurt feelings that occur in dyads and triads. Because the victim experiences the hurtful event through another person instead of first hand, it is possible that the addition of a third person to hurtful interactions increases uncertainty surrounding victims' perception of perpetrators' intent, which, in turn, makes distancing a more likely response to hurtful messages.

In the following pages, a review of relevant literature is presented to provide a foundation for the research questions and hypotheses under investigation. The next section includes the method for collecting data and measuring the variables in the study. The manuscript concludes with the findings, limitations, and possible implications of the research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review and Rationale

### *What is Hurt?*

The subjective nature of feelings associated with the experience of hurt makes the concept difficult to define. Most researchers studying hurtful messages, however, characterize it by a sense of vulnerability (Kelvin, 1977) and describe it as a sensation experienced by an individual in reaction to emotional distress (Folkes, 1982; L'Abate, 1977).

Initially, three schools of thought provided models for conceptualizing hurt. The emotional blend model suggests that hurt is a combination of sadness and fear. Supporting scholars claimed that hurt resulted from sadness that one was injured emotionally and fear due to vulnerability to harm (Vangelisti, 2001; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). The common negative affect model proposes that hurt is linked to all other aversive emotions through a common negative core. This model suggests that situations are categorized according to whether they are pleasant or unpleasant and arousing or calming. The categorization of the event predicts the experience of an emotion with an aversive core or an emotion with an attractive core (Barrett, Mesquita, Ochsner, & Gross, 2007). Lastly, the distinct emotion model views hurt as a unique emotion different from all others (Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998). Until recently, little evidence existed that provided greater support for the accuracy of one model over another. However, Leary and Leder (2010) conducted two studies that provided empirical evidence supporting the distinct emotion model as the most likely explanation of hurt.

In the first study, participants recalled a personally hurtful occurrence and then answered a series of questions that analyzed the negative emotions involved in the experience. The researchers found that the items measuring hurt accounted for a significant portion of the variance, thus contradicting the basic premise of the blended emotion model. Furthermore, specific variance was accounted for primarily by hurt and four other emotions, contradicting the common negative affect model.

In the second study, respondents participated in an experiment in which they were strategically chosen last by a confederate to be on a team. Respondents then rated their feelings through two measures consisting of several items. Overall, Leary and Leder concluded that, although other emotions may be present during the experience of hurt and aversive emotions share a common core of negative affect, hurt is a distinct emotion.

In conjunction with knowing what hurt is, understanding the process responsible for the experience of hurt is equally important. One commonly accepted explanation is appraisal theory.

### *Appraisal Theory*

Appraisal theory may be used to understand how people come to feel hurt. According to the theory, emotions, such as hurt, are the product of how individuals evaluate a situation or event. When people receive messages, they experience an emotional response based on the perceived impact the communication has on their well-being. It is the meaning individuals derive from an event, rather than the event itself, that produces emotion (Lazarus, 1991; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Scherer, 1984).

The experience of emotion is a continuous process (Lazarus & Smith, 1988; Lazarus, 1991; Smith and Lazarus, 1990) that is initiated by appraisal. An appraisal is

the process through which people evaluate a situation (Smith & Lazarus, 1990).

Appraisals are used to explain the causes of emotions and may be categorized as primary, secondary, or reappraisals.

Primary appraisals concern how an event interrupts people's goals, desires, and plans of action. If the event is in agreement with people's goals, they may experience a positive emotion such as happiness or comfort. However, if the event does not agree with people's goals, they may experience a negative emotion such as anger or hurt.

In contrast, secondary appraisals involve people's perceived ability to cope with the personal damage cause by the event. Both internal and external resources are considered in this process (Lazarus, 1991). Individuals will conduct a secondary appraisal by evaluating the event to determine whether or not they can adequately manage the feelings they achieved through the primary appraisal.

Furthermore, it is possible for individuals to experience a different degree of the emotion achieved through the primary appraisal or a different emotion altogether after conducting the secondary appraisal. Lazarus (1991) refers to this evaluation of circumstances as reappraisal and notes that the only difference between reappraisals and primary and secondary appraisals is their occurrence later in the appraisal process. Reappraisals occur through individuals' contact with the environment and can alter the original understanding of the event. Reappraisals may be the result of perceiving how the event interfered with goals differently or of developing a new understanding of coping ability (Lazarus, 1991). Under such circumstances, it becomes necessary to adjust the original emotion experienced by the individual. The continuous process of appraisal (Lazarus & Smith, 1988; Lazarus, 1991; Smith and Lazarus, 1990) and how primary,

secondary, and reappraisals allow for emotions to evolve are helpful in understanding how hurtful messages produce hurt feelings and how the intensity of hurt may fluctuate under different circumstances as a result of the way individuals interpret the event. More specifically, the assumptions of appraisal theory provide a reasonable framework for discerning the role third parties play in hurtful occurrences by acting as the message deliverers.

The use of appraisal theory to explain the impact of third parties on hurtful occurrences is also supported by the premise that, according to appraisal theory, each emotion is the result of a specific perception pattern (Lazarus, 1991; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1986). For example, imagine a road map in which there is only one route to each destination. The destinations are emotions such as sadness, anger, fear, hurt and so on. The routes are how an individual perceived the event. Research conducted by Leary and Leder (2010) indicates that hurt results from appraising that a partner values a relationship less than the other partner would like. This perception, termed relational devaluation, is one cause of hurt that can be explained by many more specific causes meriting further discussion.

#### *What Elicits Hurt?*

In addition to relational devaluation, people experience hurt due to the behavior or communication of another person (Vangelisti, 1994). Thus, as appraisal theory suggests, the way messages are interpreted by individuals influences the hurt those individuals experience. By understanding the specific perceptual pattern that brings about hurt, more is learned about hurt's occurrence in speech acts, topics hurtful messages concern (Vangelisti, 1994), and categories of hurtful events (Feeney, 2004; Leary et. al., 1998).

Vangelisti (1994) took one of the first steps in identifying the underlying components that predict hurt feelings by developing a typology of hurtful message speech acts. Participants recounted hurtful episodes which were then coded into ten categories, including: accusation, evaluation, directive, advise, express desire, inform, question, threat, joke, and lie.

Accusations were illustrated by messages in which a person was blamed for something. Devaluing a person characterized messages of evaluation, while directives were described as telling a person what to do. Messages labeled as advise represented suggestions, and when a message contain information about a personal preference, it was labeled as express desire. The inform category included messages in which information was revealed, the question category included messages that scrutinized a person, and the threat category contained messages that gave a warning. Funny remarks that hurt feelings were placed in the joke group, and false statements were placed in the lie group.

Vangelisti's (1994) analysis of the message types revealed that the most commonly recalled categories were accusations, evaluations, and informative messages, while the least common categories were lies and threats. Of the common categories, informative statements were most often rated highly hurtful and accusations were most often rated less hurtful.

In addition to the types of messages that are hurt provoking, Vangelisti (1994) identified the topics hurtful messages concern. The topics included romantic relations, nonromantic relations, sexual behavior, physical appearance, abilities/intelligence, personality traits, self-worth, time, and ethnicity/religion. Though certain topics elicited significantly more or less than the average degree of hurt, the intensity of hurt associated

with topics varied across samples thus making the role of message topic in the elicitation of hurt irrelevant for the current study.

Recognizing the limitations that result from focusing solely on the verbal message rather than the message and the interpersonal interaction, Leary et al. (1998) developed categories of hurtful events that complemented Vangelisti's categories. They included: active disassociation, passive disassociation, criticism, betrayal, teasing, and feeling unappreciated. Furthermore, while investigating hurt in couple relationships, Feeney (2004) adjusted Leary's categories and concluded that couple's hurtful experiences could be grouped into five types, including: active disassociation, passive disassociation, criticism, infidelity, and deception. Feeney argued that betrayal included a significant number of infidelity and deception cases, and both were events prominent enough in couple relationships to deserve their own categories.

Thus far, the categories mentioned are descriptive, but they do little to help researchers understand why specifically people experience hurt. Using inductive analysis, factor analysis, and other techniques, Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, and Alexander (2005) uncovered eight explanations for feeling hurt: relational denigration, humiliation, verbal/nonverbal aggression, intrinsic flaw, shock, ill-conceived humor, mistaken intent, and discouragement. Relational denigration occurred when the relationship was perceived by an individual as meaning less to the partner than the individual would like. Humiliation resulted from a person feeling embarrassed, while verbal/nonverbal aggression was characterized by the way, such as tone of voice or violent behavior, the message was communicated. Intrinsic flaw highlighted a person's unalterable failing, and shock categorized instances when a person was surprised by a

message. Ill-conceived humor was defined as joking at the person's expense, and mistaken intent resulted from being misinterpreted. Finally, discouragement occurred when a person received a lack of or negative support. Though each cause is different, they all can elicit hurt feelings in a person.

The underlying theme of several of the explanations for feeling hurt (Vangelisti et al., 2005) and a defining characteristic of hurt, is relational devaluation (Leary et al., 1998; Leary & Springer, 2001). Devaluation, as previously stated, occurs when one individual is perceived to demonstrate a lower level of care for the relationship than the other individual desires (Vangelisti et al., 2005). This cause may be observed in situations where one person finds the relationship less valuable than the partner finds it. Leary (Leary et al., 1998; Leary & Leder, 2010) emphasizes the importance of relational devaluation in the experience of hurt by arguing that relational devaluation is the characteristic that distinguishes hurt from all other emotions.

#### *Third Party Disclosures*

Relational devaluation has been shown to occur between two people, yet just as hurt is not limited to occurring in dyads, relational devaluation may occur under circumstances that involve more than two people as well (Greene, Derlega, Yep, & Petronio, 2003). Much of the information people obtain, both solicited and unsolicited, comes from third parties. In fact, third parties are responsible for an estimated 30% of the information people receive in their social networks (Hewes, Graham, Doelger, & Pavitt, 1985). Since "feelings of hurt are evoked and expressed through communication," (Vangelisti, 1994, p. 54) and a significant amount of information is received through third

parties, third parties are a potential means for delivering messages that cause hurt feelings.

The motivation for revealing hurtful information, more specifically the information of others, may be similar to the reasons for self-disclosing and sharing secrets. Rosenfeld and Kendrick (1984) revealed eight reasons for self-disclosing. The reasons included: catharsis, revealing information as a form of release; self-clarification, revealing information to talk through situations; self-validation, revealing information to receive support for actions; reciprocity, revealing information to encourage a conversational partner to do the same; impression formation, revealing information to portray a certain self-image; relationship maintenance and enhancement, revealing information to improve the quality of a relationship; social control, revealing information to control a person or situation; and manipulation, revealing information in a premeditated fashion to achieve goals.

Likewise, Afifi and Steuber's (2009) risk revelation model, which proposes that people evaluate the risks posed to the self, the relationship, and other people when determining whether or not to reveal a secret, identifies three reasons, supported by research, for disclosing secrets. The reasons uncovered for telling secrets help explain why third parties may reveal information. Firstly, individuals may view revealing information as a catharsis (Stiles, Shuster, & Harrigan, 1992). Secondly and in concurrence with Omarzu (2000), Afifi and Steuber claim that satisfying goals is a reason for revealing information. Finally, individuals may reveal secrets if they believe the target has a need to know the information (Afifi & Steuber, 2009).

The motivations for revealing information demonstrate potential reasons third parties disclose hurtful information. However, these motivations do not explain how this same hurtful information is interpreted by recipients. It is possible that the perceived causes for revealing information and whether the sharing of information is interpreted by recipients as intentional or unintentional are two of many factors associated with the intensity of hurt victims experience.

### *Intensity of Hurt*

Past research on hurt has examined various relationships, including family (Vangelisti, Maguire, Alexander, & Clark, 2007; Young, Kubicka, Tucker, Chavez-Appel, & Rex, 2005), romantic (Feeney, 2004; Zhang & Stafford, 2008), friends (Young, 2004), and acquaintances (Snapp & Leary, 2001). Hurtful messages may be delivered by strangers, companions, and other types of people (Vangelisti 1994). Taken together, the research indicates that the type of relationship can affect the intensity of hurt people experience. For example, Vangelisti and Crumley (1998) learned that people who described messages that occurred in their families were more hurt than those who described messages occurring in nonfamily/nonromantic relationships. There was no difference in the degree of hurt elicited in the family context and the romantic context. However, by using an experimental design rather than relying on retrospective data, Snapp and Leary (2001) found that participants assigned to a low familiarity condition were significantly more hurt when rejected by the confederate than participants experiencing rejection in the high familiarity condition. These findings demonstrate that relational context is associated with hurt feelings. Thus, a context in which three

relationships are involved instead of only one may also create variation in the intensity of hurt victims feel.

Furthermore, research has revealed that the more contact two people have with each other, the lower the intensity of hurt a victim experiences when receiving a hurtful message from the perpetrator (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). For example, victims who spend a great amount of time with the perpetrator and deliverer may not feel as hurt as victims who do not spend a large amount of time with the deliverer and perpetrator, or those victims who spend significant time with either the deliverer or perpetrator, but not both.

*H1.* Victims' perception of closeness with perpetrators will be negatively associated with the degree of hurt victims feel.

*RQ1.* Is there an association between victims' perceived closeness with deliverers and the degree of hurt victims feel?

In addition to the degree of closeness people share, there is also a relationship between victims' relational satisfaction and the intensity of hurt they experience. Vangelisti and Crumley (1998) found a negative association between the degree of satisfaction injured people felt with their relationship and the amount of hurt they felt. As relationship satisfaction increased, the intensity of hurt felt by the victims decreased.

The association between relationship satisfaction and the intensity of hurt felt by people may be connected to people's self-esteem. Interestingly, self-esteem is connected to relational satisfaction (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993). Researchers also suggest that the way people feel about themselves influences their appraisals of their feelings of hurt (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). For instance, Vangelisti and Hampel (2010)

noted that people with low self-esteem might be more likely to interpret a message as indicating relational devaluation than would people with high self-esteem. Because of the possible links between self-esteem and both relational satisfaction and hurt, self-esteem should be controlled when investigating questions involving relational satisfaction and hurt feelings.

*H2.* When self-esteem is controlled, victims' perception of relational satisfaction with perpetrators will be negatively associated with the degree of hurt victims feel.

*RQ2.* When self-esteem is controlled, is there an association between victims' perception of relational satisfaction with deliverers and the degree of hurt victims feel?

Another variable related to how people feel about themselves and associated with the intensity of hurt they experience, is face threat. All people have a self-image, or face, they present to the public (Goffman, 1967). Threats to face occur when people are evaluated in a way that violates their self-image. Brown and Levinson (1987) identified two types of face threats: positive face threats, those acts that jeopardize the affinity people desire, and negative face threats, those acts that jeopardize the autonomy or control people desire. The topics hurtful messages concern (i.e., self-worth, abilities/intelligence, and physical appearance; Vangelisti, 1994) may create a context for face-threatening acts to transpire, resulting in the person whose face was threatened feeling hurt. For example, Zhang and Stafford (2008) found associations between threat to face and the intensity of hurt victims felt. In general, the more face-threatening victims perceived a message to be, the more hurt victims believed they would experience. For both positive and negative face-threatening acts, as the threat increased in intensity, so did the intensity of hurt victims felt. Therefore:

*H3.* Victims' perception of the original hurtful message as face threatening will be positively associated with the degree of hurt victims feel.

*RQ3.* Is there an association between victims' perception of the repeated hurtful message as face threatening and the degree of hurt the victims feel?

### *Hurtfulness and Intent*

The previous section provided arguments for why associations may exist between the intensity of people's hurt feelings and perceived closeness, relational satisfaction, and threat to face. However, arguments may also be made for the existence of associations between the hurt that people feel and perceived intent. Research has shown that message recipients' perception of perpetrators' intent has a strong impact on recipients' hurt feelings.

Vangelisti and Young (2000) investigated hurtful messages based on whether they were viewed as intentional or unintentional. They developed nine descriptions of appraisals of intentionality associated with hurtful messages. In addition to categorizing some messages as intentional, they noted that unintentional messages could be described by eight categories, including: expressive, strategic, descriptive, supportive, accidental, justified, self-centered, and trait-oriented. The researchers' findings revealed that messages perceived by victims as intentional were significantly more hurtful than messages they perceived as unintentional.

*H4.* Victims' perception of the perpetrators' intent will be positively associated with the degree of hurt victims feel.

*RQ4.* Is there an association between victims' perception of the deliverers' intent and the degree of hurt victims feel?

Although the literature concerning the role intent plays on message hurtfulness is revealing, the research on factors that cause individuals to determine intent has not been exhausted. For example, the fundamental attribution error states that when a person who is held in high regard underperforms, the underperformance will be blamed on situational factors as opposed to dispositional factors (Ross, 1977). Thus, a person who received a hurtful message generated by a close friend, someone the person holds in high regard, but delivered by an acquaintance may assume that the message was misinterpreted by the acquaintance and therefore perceive the message as unintentional. However, if the reverse were to occur and a person received a hurtful message delivered by a close friend but generated by an acquaintance, the recipient may have greater faith in the source of his/her information and label the message as intentionally hurtful.

*RQ5.* Does the type of relationship victims have with perpetrators affect victims' perception of perpetrators' intent?

*RQ6.* Does the type of relationship victims have with deliverers affect victims' perception of deliverers' intent?

### *Distancing*

Intent may also impact the distance created between two people once the message is delivered. Distance is referred to as “a noticeable rift in an otherwise, or formerly, intimate relationship” (Helgeson, Shaver, & Dyer, 1987, p. 224). For instance, when people view a message as intentionally hurtful, they are much more likely to distance themselves from the person who hurt them than if they perceive the message as unintentional (Vangelisti & Young, 2000). Therefore:

*H5.* Victims' perception of perpetrators' intent will be positively associated with victims' tendency to distance themselves from the perpetrators.

*RQ7.* Is there an association between victims' perception of deliverers' intent and victims' tendency to distance themselves from the deliverers?

Furthermore, the hurtfulness of a message is associated with the degree to which victims engage in relational distancing. People tend to avoid agents that bring about unpleasant feelings. The more hurtful a message is, the more likely victims are to distance themselves from the source of their pain (McLaren & Solomon, 2008). Likewise, the less hurtful a message is, the less victims will distance themselves from people responsible for the hurtful words.

*H6.* The intensity of victims' hurt feelings will be positively associated with victims' tendency to distance themselves from perpetrators.

*RQ8.* Is there an association between the intensity of victims' hurt feelings and victims' tendency to distance themselves from deliverers?

## Chapter 3: Method

### *Participants*

Participants consisted of a convenience sample of 204 undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses at a large southwestern university. Two participants were dropped from the analyses because they did not following instructions, and three participants opted not to complete the survey because they were uncomfortable with the subject matter. The sample population was composed of 36.4% males ( $n = 72$ ) and 63.6% females ( $n = 126$ ); one participant declined to indicate his/her sex. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 54 years old with a mean age of 20.55 years, ( $SD = 3.13$ ); one person declined to indicate age. Of the participants, 59.1% were Caucasian ( $n = 117$ ), 15.2% were Latino ( $n = 30$ ), 14.6% were Asian ( $n = 29$ ), 4.5% were African American ( $n = 9$ ), 1% were Middle Eastern ( $n = 2$ ), and 5.6% were other ( $n = 11$ ). All respondents were offered extra course credit for their participation. Those individuals who did not want to participate in the current study were offered an alternative means for earning extra course credit.

### *Procedures*

Upon arriving at the data collection location, participants read, signed, and returned an informed consent form. Participants then received a packet consisting of several measures. The first measure required participants to recall a situation in which their feelings were hurt when someone (the deliverer) told them something another person (the perpetrator) said or did that hurt the participants' feelings. Participants were asked to report their relationship with the perpetrator and deliverer at the time of the

hurtful event as well as the sex of both the perpetrator and deliverer. Participants identified their relationships with perpetrators as a friend (48.5%;  $n = 96$ ), an acquaintance (22.2%;  $n = 44$ ), a romantic partner (12.1%;  $n = 24$ ), a former romantic partner (7.6%;  $n = 15$ ), a family member (5.1%;  $n = 10$ ), and other (4.5%;  $n = 9$ ). Deliverers were identified by participants as a friend (77.4%;  $n = 154$ ), a family member (9.5%;  $n = 19$ ), a romantic partner (6%;  $n = 12$ ), an acquaintance (5%;  $n = 10$ ), and other (2%;  $n = 4$ ). Nearly half, 43.4%, of the perpetrators were male ( $n = 86$ ) and 56.6% ( $n = 112$ ) were female. Similarly, 42.2% of the deliverers were male ( $n = 84$ ) and 57.3% ( $n = 114$ ) were female. One participant declined to indicate his/her relationship with the perpetrator, the perpetrator's sex, and the deliverer's sex.

Participants were next asked to describe the conversation between the victim and deliverer in which the hurtful message was received in a scripted format. Instructions directed participants to provide details on events that led up to and proceeded the hurtful event. Participants were asked to place a star by and underline the specific statement that hurt their feelings. It is important to note that some hurt scholars have been criticized for their use of retrospective data (Snapp & Leary, 2001), however, the focus of the current study is on the experience of hurt from the victim's perspective, making retrospective data sufficient for use in obtaining results.

### *Measures*

The following measures were used to evaluate the research questions and hypotheses proposed in this study. With the exception of the measures assessing demographic information, intensity of hurt, and self-esteem, participants responded to two versions of all measures, one for the perpetrator and one for the deliverer. The

measures for distancing response, judgments of intentionality, closeness, relational satisfaction, and face threat were randomly sequenced to prevent order effects.

*Intensity of hurt.* The degree of hurt elicited by the message was evaluated with two 7-point Likert-type items. The first item asked respondents to rate the hurtfulness of the message where a rating of one indicated that the message was “not at all hurtful” and a rating of seven indicated that the message was “extremely hurtful.” The second item asked respondents to rate the degree of emotional pain elicited by the message. A rating of one indicated that “It did not cause any emotional pain at all” and a rating of seven indicated that “It caused a great deal of emotional pain” (Vangelisti & Young, 2000). This scale is commonly used in the literature on hurt feelings and is consistently found reliable (e.g., McLaren & Solomon, 2008; Vangelisti & Young, 2000; Zhang & Stafford, 2008). In the current study, the mean for the scale was 5.41 ( $SD = 1.06$ ) and it achieved good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.77$ ).

*Distancing response.* Vangelisti and Young’s (2000) distancing measure has been found reliable in prior studies and was used in the current study to evaluate the distance created between the victim and the perpetrator and the victim and the message deliverer as a result of the victim receiving the hurtful message. Participants completed the measure for both the perpetrator and deliverer separately. The six items were based on a 7-step semantic differential and required participants to evaluate how the hurtful message affected their relationship with the perpetrator and message deliverer. Participants rated the extent to which the hurtful message made their relationship more distant or close, tense or relaxed, open or closed, remote or intimate, and friendly or hostile. For the perpetrator, the scale had a mean of 5.33 ( $SD = 1.30$ ) and it achieved

good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ). For the deliverer, the mean was 3.69 ( $SD = 1.18$ ) and the scale achieved good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ).

*Judgments of intentionality.* Perceived intentionality was evaluated by one measure containing four 7-point Likert-type items (Vangelisti & Young, 2000). The items assessed whether participants believed the perpetrator and deliverer hurt their feelings intentionally or unintentionally. A rating of one indicated that participants strongly disagreed with the statement and a rating of seven indicated that participants strongly agreed with the statement. Example items included, “This person meant to hurt me,” and “This person hurt me on purpose.” Participants completed the measure for both the perpetrator and deliverer separately. The mean rating of intentionality for the perpetrator was 4.37 ( $SD = 1.94$ ) and the measure achieved good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ). For the deliverer, the mean rating was 2.66 ( $SD = 1.55$ ) and the measure was reliable ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ).

*Closeness.* Closeness was measured using Vangelisti and Caughlin’s (1997) three-factor measure. The 15-item measure evaluated participants’ relationship with the perpetrator and deliverer on psychological closeness, similarity, and everyday centrality (contact). Ten items were based on a 7-step semantic differential and five items were based on a 7-step Likert-type scale. Sample items included, “How much do you like this person,” “How central is this person to your everyday life,” and “This person and I are very similar.” The entire measure was completed for both the perpetrator and deliverer separately. For the psychological closeness dimension of the scale, the mean for the perpetrator was 3.34 ( $SD = 1.79$ ) and the mean for the deliverer was 5.21 ( $SD = 1.65$ ).

The measure was reliable both when participants reported on their relationship with the perpetrator ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ) and the deliverer ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ). For the everyday centrality dimension of the scale, the means for the perpetrator and deliverer were 3.01 ( $SD = 1.95$ ) and 4.55 ( $SD = 1.93$ ) respectively. The measure achieved good reliability both when participants reported on their relationship with the perpetrator ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) and deliverer ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ). For the similarity dimension of the scale, the mean for the perpetrator was 3.17 ( $SD = 1.53$ ) and the mean for the deliverer was 4.78 ( $SD = 1.46$ ). The measure was reliable both when participants reported on their relationship with the perpetrator ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ) and deliverer ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

*Relational satisfaction.* Participants completed a modified version of the Marital Opinion Questionnaire (Houston, McHale, & Crouter, 1986). The word ‘marriage’ was substituted with the word ‘relationship’ to accommodate the variety of relationships participants discussed. The items evaluated how satisfied participants were with their relationship with the perpetrator and with the deliverer. The measure consisted of 11 items and was divided into two parts. The first part included 10, 7-point semantic differential items that required participants to rate their relationship with the perpetrator or deliverer using bi-polar adjectives. Sample items included, “miserable versus enjoyable,” “empty versus full,” and “lonely versus friendly.” Two items in the first part of the measure are considered filler items and were thus dropped from the analyses. The second part of the measure consisted of one 7-point semantic differential item that assessed participants’ global satisfaction with the relationship. The second part of the measure is weighted equally with the average score of the first eight items. The first part

of the measure had a mean of 3.75 ( $SD = 1.53$ ) and had good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ) for the perpetrator, and a mean of 5.32 ( $SD = 1.3$ ) and had good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ) for the deliverer. The Pearson correlation between the composite of the first eight items and the global item was 0.95 for the perpetrator and 0.94 for the deliverer.

*Face threat.* This measure evaluated how integral the hurtful message was to victims' self-identity. The 14, 7-step Likert-type items in this measure were adapted from a measure designed by Cupach and Carson (2002) that assessed positive and negative face threat. A rating of one indicated that participants strongly disagreed with the statement and a rating of seven indicated that participants strongly agreed with the statement. Example items included, "This person's statement was rude," "This person's statement was insensitive," "This person's statement showed disrespect towards me," "This person's statement was hostile," and "This person's statement made me look bad in the eyes of others." For positive face threat the scale achieved adequate reliability for the perpetrator ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ) and good reliability for the deliverer ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ). The positive face threat scale had a mean of 5.58 ( $SD = 0.86$ ) for the perpetrator and a mean of 3.63 ( $SD = 1.30$ ) for the deliverer. For negative face threat the scale achieved adequate reliability for the perpetrator ( $\alpha = 0.61$ ) and for the deliverer ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ). The negative face threat scale had a mean of 3.92 ( $SD = 1.32$ ) and 3.20 ( $SD = 1.44$ ) for the perpetrator and deliverer respectively.

*Self-esteem.* Participants completed the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965), which required participants to respond to 10, 7-point Likert-type items. A rating of one indicated that participants strongly disagreed with the statement and a rating of seven

indicated that participants strongly agreed with the statement. Item examples included: “I feel I have a number of good qualities,” and “I am able to do things as well as most other people.” The scale had a mean of 5.70 ( $SD = 0.91$ ) and achieved good reliability ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ).

## Chapter 4: Results

### *Intensity of Hurt*

To determine whether or not a negative association existed between victims' perception of closeness with perpetrators and the degree of hurt victims felt from receiving the hurtful message (*H1*), Pearson correlations were conducted. The findings failed to reveal significant associations for the psychological closeness ( $r[199] = 0.08$ ; *ns*) and everyday centrality ( $r[199] = -0.02$ ; *ns*) dimensions, but showed a significant positive association for similarity ( $r[198] = 0.17$ ;  $p < 0.02$ ). Thus, *H1* was not supported. Again, Pearson correlations were conducted to test for associations between victims' perceived closeness with deliverers and the degree of hurt victims felt from receiving the hurtful message (*RQ1*). The analyses did not reveal significant associations for the psychological closeness ( $r[199] = -0.06$ ; *ns*), everyday centrality ( $r[199] = -0.13$ ; *ns*), and similarity dimensions ( $r[199] = 0.04$ ; *ns*).

To assess whether self-esteem accounted for the association between the victims' relational satisfaction with both perpetrators and deliverers and the degree of hurt victims felt as a result of receiving the hurtful message (*H2*, *RQ2*), the link between relational satisfaction and intensity of hurt first had to be tested. A Pearson correlation indicated that the latter association was not significant for victims' relationship with the perpetrator ( $r[199] = -0.07$ ; *ns*) or deliverer ( $r[199] = -0.10$ ; *ns*). Given that satisfaction and the intensity of hurt were not significantly related, it was not necessary to test whether controlling for self-esteem affected that relationship.

To analyze the relationship between face threat and the intensity of hurt victims felt from receiving the hurtful message (*H3, RQ3*), Pearson correlations were computed. The analyses did not show a significant association between positive face threat and hurt for the perpetrator ( $r[199] = 0.11; ns$ ) or deliverer ( $r[199] = 0.08; ns$ ). However, for negative face threat, Pearson correlations showed a significant positive association ( $r[199] = 0.33; p < 0.01$ ) both for the perpetrator and for the deliverer ( $r[199] = 0.21; p < 0.01$ ). Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

#### *Perceived Intent*

A Pearson correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between the intensity of hurt victims felt from receiving the hurtful message and victims' perception of perpetrators' intent for generating the message (*H4*). The analysis did not show significance ( $r[199] = 0.10; ns$ ). Thus, *H4* was not supported. Next a Pearson correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between the intensity of hurt victims felt from receiving the hurtful message and victims' perception of deliverers' intent for repeating the message (*RQ4*). Again, the test did not show significance ( $r[199] = -0.07; ns$ ).

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of victims' perception of relationship type on perpetrators and victims' perception of perpetrators' intent for generating the hurtful message. Victims' perception of perpetrators' intent served as the dependent variable. Relationship type served as the independent variable and included six categories: family member, romantic partner, friend, acquaintance, former romantic partner, and other. The test was significant ( $F[5, 192] = 3.58, p < 0.004, \eta^2 = 0.09$ ). A Tukey post-hoc analysis indicated that victims

perceived perpetrators intended to hurt their feelings more when perpetrators were friends as opposed to romantic partners. The mean for romantic partners was 3.32 ( $SD = 1.57$ ;  $n = 24$ ) and the mean for friends was 4.60 ( $SD = 2.08$ ;  $n = 96$ ). A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of victims' perception of relationship type on victims' perception of deliverers' intent for repeating the hurtful message. Victims' perception of deliverers' intent served as the dependent variable and the six relationship types served as the independent variables. The findings were not significant ( $F[5, 193] = 2.00$ ;  $ns$ )<sup>1</sup>.

### *Distancing*

A Pearson correlation was computed to assess the relationship between victims' perception of perpetrators' intent for generating the hurtful message and the distancing effect on victims' relationships with perpetrators (*H5*). The analysis showed a significant positive association ( $r[199] = 0.37$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting *H5*. Again a Pearson correlation was computed to assess the relationship between victims' perception of deliverers' intent for repeating the hurtful message and the distancing effect on victims' relationships with deliverers (*RQ7*). The analysis showed a significant positive association ( $r[199] = 0.37$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

To assess the relationship between the intensity of hurt victims felt from receiving the hurtful message and the distancing effect on victims' relationships with perpetrators (*H6*) a Pearson correlation was computed. The analysis showed a significant positive

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<sup>1</sup> These results should be interpreted with caution, because some of the categories included a relatively small number of participants.

association ( $r[199] = 0.20$ ;  $p < 0.004$ ), supporting *H6*. Again, a Pearson Correlation was computed to assess the relationship between the intensity of hurt victims felt from receiving the hurtful message and the distancing effect on victims' relationships with deliverers (*RQ8*). The findings were not significant ( $r[199] = 0.08$ ; *ns*). A summary of this correlation, along with all other correlations tested in the current study, can be found in Table 1.

Table 1:  
Correlations

Relationship Tested	Individual Evaluated	
	Perpetrator	Deliverer
Intensity of Hurt & Psychological Closeness	0.08	-0.06
Intensity of Hurt & Similarity	0.17*	0.04
Intensity of Hurt & Everyday Centrality	-0.02	-0.13
Intensity of Hurt & Relational Satisfaction	-0.07	-0.10
Intensity of Hurt & Positive Face Threat	0.11	0.08
Intensity of Hurt & Negative Face Threat	0.33**	0.21**
Perceived Intent & Intensity of Hurt	0.10	-0.07
Distancing Effect & Perceived Intent	0.37**	0.37**
Distancing Effect & Intensity of Hurt	0.20***	0.08

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.005$

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The primary purpose of the current research was to investigate victims' perceptions of specific factors commonly associated with the experience of hurt when victims receive a hurtful message through a third person. The investigation differs from previous studies on hurt in that it focuses on hurt occurring in triads as opposed to dyads. Analyses revealed that victims' appraisals concerning perpetrators were more often significantly associated with variables such as similarity, intensity of hurt, and relational distancing than were perceptions concerning deliverers. Although some associations were significant for both the perpetrator and the deliverer, no associations were significant for the deliverer when they were not significant for the perpetrator as well. The findings of the current study contribute to extant literature on hurt by describing a previously unexplored relationship in which hurt may occur.

### *Hypotheses and Research Questions*

The first few hypotheses and research questions focused on factors that could affect the intensity of hurt victims felt when they received hurtful messages. Closeness was examined with regards to three dimensions: psychological closeness, everyday centrality (contact), and similarity. Though Vangelisti and Crumley (1998) found a negative correlation between victims' perceived contact with perpetrators and the intensity of hurt victims felt when they received a hurtful message, the association between victims' perceived similarity with perpetrators and the intensity of hurt victims felt was significant in the current study. Furthermore, the association was positive. Vangelisti and Crumley (1998) suggest that the association between contact and intensity

of hurt could result from closeness acting as a “buffer” against the hurtfulness of the message. Similar logic could be applied to the findings of the current investigation. However, instead of being a “buffer,” victims’ perceptions of similarity with perpetrators may have served to intensify the hurtfulness of the message. As opposed to mitigating intensity of hurt felt by victims, similarity may intensify it.

Next, to determine whether self-esteem was responsible for the association between victims’ relationship satisfaction with both perpetrators and deliverers and the degree of hurt victims felt from receiving the hurtful message, the association between relational satisfaction and the intensity of hurt felt by victims was first explored. Although previous research suggests that greater relationship satisfaction tends to be associated with less intense hurt (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998), there was not a significant association between victims’ relationship satisfaction with the perpetrator or the deliverer and the intensity of hurt felt by victims. Since deliverers were not responsible for generating hurtful messages, the lack of an association between victims’ relationship satisfaction and the intensity of hurt experienced by victims was not surprising. Although it is difficult to determine why no significant correlation was found between victims’ relationship satisfaction with perpetrators and the intensity of victims’ hurt feelings, the quality of the relationships that participants reported on may offer a potential explanation. People in satisfying relationships may think things or experience emotions that, if conveyed to their relational partners, would elicit hurt feelings. However, when these thoughts or feelings concern the other person in a satisfying relationship, partners may choose to preserve the relationship by refraining from communicating those thought and emotions. In the current study, an average score of

3.75 (on a 7-point scale) for victims' relationship satisfaction with perpetrators indicates that victims tended to perceive their relationship with perpetrators as relatively dissatisfying. It is possible that victims did not report on hurtful events that took place in satisfying relationships, because their partners in those relationships were less likely to say things that were hurtful.

The link between victims' appraisal of the hurtful message as a face threatening act and the degree of hurt victims felt was also investigated. Analyses for the current study yielded a positive association between the negative face threatening quality of the hurtful message and the degree of hurt victims felt for both the perpetrator and the deliverer, but no association was found between the positive face threatening quality of the hurtful message and the intensity of hurt felt by victims. In their investigation of face threat and hurtful messages, Zhang and Stafford (2008) found the content of messages was significantly associated with negative face threat, but not positive face threat. The researchers argued that relational messages, those that suggest relationship dissatisfaction, were more threatening to negative face than were physical appearance and dispositional messages. It is possible that a large number of participants in the current study reported on hurtful experiences that centered on relationship dissatisfaction. If, indeed, that was the case, hearing that a relational partner is dissatisfied with the relationship and knowing that the relational partner had voiced that dissatisfaction to other people would provide two threats to negative face by limiting victims' control of their partners' relationship satisfaction and the means through which other people learned about that lack of satisfaction. This interpretation is illustrated in the following

participant's explanation for why a particular message was hurtful, "It was so hurtful that someone I thought was my friend could say such nasty/mean things about me. And the fact that my brother knew before I did."

A second group of hypotheses and research questions were posed to investigate factors affecting victims' appraisal of intent. The association between victims' perceptions of intent and the degree of hurt victims felt yielded no significant correlations. Since victims were not present when the hurtful message was originally stated, determining the degree to which perpetrators intended to hurt their feelings may have been difficult, thus prompting participants to rate perpetrators' intent as moderate. A mean score of 4.37 (on a 7-point scale) for victims' perceptions of perpetrators' intent lends support to this notion. A mean score of 2.66 for victims' perceptions of deliverers' intent indicates that participants were inclined to believe that deliverers were not attempting to elicit hurt feelings by repeating the message. This relatively low mean may have constrained the association between victims' perceptions of deliverers' intent and the degree of hurt felt by victims.

Continuing the investigation of perceived intent, associations between the type of relationship victims had with perpetrators and deliverers and victims' appraisal of perpetrators' and deliverers' intent were explored. Though most associations examined were non-significant, victims were more likely to perceive that perpetrators hurt their feelings on purpose when perpetrators were friends than when they were romantic partners. Due to the trust and respect people in romantic relationships are expected to have for each other (Feeney, 2004), it may have been relatively difficult for victims to

believe that their romantic partners would hurt them intentionally by betraying their trust. Although friendships share trust and respect as well, victims may not hold friends to the same standard as they do romantic partners and thus, may be quicker to judge friends' actions as intentional instead of unintentional. Alternatively, victims may actually have their feelings hurt more often by friends than by romantic partners.

The final group of research questions focused on victims' tendency to engage in relational distancing after receiving the hurtful message. An analysis of the association between perceptions of intent and the tendency to engage in distancing yielded positive correlations for both perpetrators and deliverers. The more victims believed perpetrators or deliverers intended to hurt their feelings, the greater distancing effect the hurtful message had on victims' relationships with perpetrators or deliverers. These findings are in line with prior research suggesting that intentionally hurtful messages created more distance in a relationship than messages perceived as unintentionally hurtful (Vangelisti & Young, 2001). As Vangelisti and Young noted, the experience of hurt influences people to avoid the person they see as responsible for eliciting hurt.

Results from investigating the association between the degree of hurt victims felt and the victims' tendency to distance themselves from perpetrators and deliverers suggested that the degree of hurt felt by victims was positively associated with distancing from perpetrators, but not deliverers. It is possible that victims perceived that deliverers acted in a compassionate manner by informing them of the hurtful messages. Thus victims may attribute their hurt feelings to the perpetrator of the original message as opposed to the deliverer of the re-stated message.

### *Limitations*

Researchers should be careful not to generalize the findings of the present study to all instances of hurt. Since victims' reports of hurtful messages were on average highly hurtful, results from the current study should not be applied to experiences involving average or low intensity hurt. The questionnaire instructions asked participants to recall a time when their feelings were extremely hurt. This language likely prompted participants to report on only highly hurtful experiences. Though reporting on highly hurtful experiences helped to ensure that hurt was the dominant emotion elicited, it is possible that the outcome variables investigated, for instance relational distancing, perceived intent, and perceived closeness, would differ under conditions of lower intensity.

Furthermore, the findings should not be applied to all relationships in which hurt is elicited. Although the association between the type of relationship victims had with perpetrators and victims' perceived intent was significant, the relationships reported by participants were reduced to six categories. Examining a greater number of relationship types would have yielded different results. For example, relationships reported as sister, father, and cousin were all categorized as family relationships. It is possible that cousins may have characteristics that more closely resemble the characteristics of friends than immediate family members. Likewise, estranged fathers may resemble acquaintances more closely than family members. The relationship category in which relationship types were included may have prevented significance from being detected.

Additionally, the data collection techniques employed raised a few limitations that deserve attention. First, the use of a university sample restricts applying findings to other populations. Second, although retrospective data were appropriate for the purposes of the current study, other types of data could provide a more accurate description of hurtful experiences. For example, collecting data immediately following the receipt of a hurtful message would reduce the amount of time participants had to make secondary appraisals and reappraisals, thus increasing the likelihood of capturing fresher accounts of hurt. With that said, the many different circumstances under which hurtful experiences occur make it difficult to collect data in the moments following the occurrence. Third, although participants completed identical measures for both perpetrators and deliverers, participants may have attended to one set of measures more closely than the other. If instructions were not read carefully, participants could have incorrectly reported their perceptions. Finally, due to the length of the questionnaire, participants may have suffered from fatigue effects.

#### *Directions for Future Research*

The current study took the first step in identifying the unique qualities associated with receiving hurtful messages from a third person. Although the findings suggest that associations were more often significant for perpetrators than deliverers and that participants' perceptions concerning perpetrators might have greater influence on participants' interpretations of hurtful events than perceptions concerning deliverers, future work in the area of third party hurt should seek to clarify this assertion. Subsequent studies should focus on comparing and contrasting victims' perceptions of

the perpetrator and deliverer. For example, do victims feel more intense hurt knowing the message was spoken once than knowing it was repeated? Are victims' perceptions of intent more strongly associated with the intensity of hurt elicited by the perpetrator or deliverer?

Furthermore, scholars should compare the experience of hurt in dyads and triads. Understanding whether hurtful experiences change dramatically when a third person is added to an interaction is of theoretical importance. Indeed, if findings indicate no differences between receiving a hurtful message from third parties and directly from perpetrators, this would suggest that the means through which people have their feelings hurt does not influence their interpretation of the hurtful experience. Answering questions concerning the intensity of hurt felt by victims when two versus three people are involved in the exchange will further enhance the current knowledge on hurtful interactions.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, much knowledge could be gained by investigating the interactional effects among the victim, perpetrator, and deliverer. For example, if victims perceive themselves to be close to both the perpetrator and deliverer, is the intensity of hurt felt less than if victims perceive themselves to not be close at all to the perpetrator and deliverer, or close to one person but not the other? Does the greatest distancing effect occur when victims perceive both perpetrators and deliverers acted with the intent to hurt victims' feelings?

*Conclusion*

In summary, the findings reported in the current study indicate that there may be unique qualities associated with receiving hurtful messages from a third person that distinguish third party hurt from hurt elicited in a direct exchange between victims and perpetrators. The degree to which victims perceive they are similar to the perpetrator was associated with the intensity of hurt victims felt, and the intensity of hurt victims felt was associated with negative face threat. Victims perceived that friends intentionally hurt their feelings to a greater extent than did romantic partners. When victims' perception of deliverers' and perpetrators' intent increased, the distancing effect on the relationship between victims and perpetrators and victims and deliverers also increased. The degree of hurt victims felt was also associated with the tendency of victims to distance themselves from perpetrators.

## Appendix A: Consent Form

Title: Third Party Hurt: Consequences of Receiving Hurtful Messages Through a Third Person

IRB PROTOCOL # 2010-02-0041

Conducted By: Kathryn A. Breiwa  
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Telephone: 512.471.5251

*Communication Studies;*

Advised By: Anita L Vangelisti  
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*Communication Studies;*

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

**The purpose of this study** is to explore the impact the addition of a third person has when in a situation that involves the receipt of a hurtful message.

**If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:**

- Describe an emotionally hurtful experience.
- Answer a series of questions about the hurtful message.
- Answer a series of questions about the people involved in the emotionally hurtful experience.

**Total estimated time to participate** in study is 30 minutes

**Risks** of being in the study

- The risks in this study are no greater than in everyday life.
- This study may involve risks that are currently unforeseeable. If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may ask questions now or call the Principal Investigator listed on the front page of this form.

**Benefits** of being in the study include furthering our understanding of hurtful messages, and contributing to research conducted at the University of Texas. There are no direct benefits to the subjects for their participation in the study.

**Compensation:**

- One point extra course credit

**Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:**

- The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in any study.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page.

If you would like to obtain information about the research study, have questions, concerns, complaints or wish to discuss problems about a research study with someone unaffiliated with the study, please contact the IRB Office at (512) 471-8871 or Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685. Anonymity, if desired, will be protected to the extent possible. As an alternative method of contact, an email may be sent to [orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu](mailto:orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu) or a letter sent to IRB Administrator, P.O. Box 7426, Mail Code A 3200, Austin, TX 78713.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Third Party Hurt Measure

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore your perceptions concerning various factors associated with hurtful interactions.

*What I would like you to do is recall an instance in which SOMEONE TOLD YOU SOMETHING THAT SOMEONE ELSE SAID OR DID that was EXTREMELY hurtful—something that really made you feel bad.*

The message **deliverer** is the person who told you what was said. Write that person's first name here: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you label your relationship with this person (e.g., mother, boyfriend, friend, acquaintance, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Is this person male or female? \_\_\_\_\_

The **perpetrator** is the person who originally said the hurtful message. Write that person's first name here: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you label your relationship with this person (e.g., mother, boyfriend, friend, acquaintance, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Is this person male or female? \_\_\_\_\_

*What was the situation? What happened that led up to the hurtful statement? In the space below, I'd like you to write a brief "script" of the conversation as you remember it.*

*For example: I said:*

*He/she said:*

*I said:*

*He/she said:*

*ect.*

*In the space below, please note who started the conversation, what you said, and what the other person said that was hurtful to you. PUT A STAR NEXT TO THE STATEMENT OR QUESTION THAT WAS THE HURTFUL ONE. Please explain exactly what it was that made the statement/question hurtful to you. Why was the statement/question so hurtful?*

Write the exact words that hurt your feelings here:

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**Now I would like you to answer some questions about the statement that hurt your feelings.**

*Please circle the number that most accurately represents your response to each question.*

How hurtful was the statement you received?

Not at all: hurtful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:Extremely hurtful
It did not: cause any emotional pain at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It caused a great deal of emotional pain

**The next portion of the questionnaire concerns your relationship with the perpetrator, or person who originally said the hurtful statement or engaged in the hurtful behavior. Please keep this person in mind while responding to the following questions.**

*Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion.*

How did the hurtful statement affected your relationship with the perpetrator?

It had no: effect at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It had an extreme effect
It made us: more distant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more close
It made us: more tense	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more relaxed
It made us: more open	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more closed
It made us: more remote	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more intimate
It made us: more friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more hostile

*Please indicate the degree to which you **STRONGLY DISAGREE** (1) or **STRONGLY AGREE** (7) with each of the following statements.*

This person meant to hurt me.

Strongly: disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:Strongly agree
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This person hurt me by accident.

Strongly: disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:Strongly agree
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------

This person hurt me on purpose.

Strongly: disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:Strongly agree
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------





Rewarding	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Disappointing
Doesn't give me much chance	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Brings out the best in me
Lonely	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Friendly
Hard	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Easy
Worthwhile	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Useless

All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with your relationship with this person?

\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_

Completely Dissatisfied                      Neutral                      Completely Satisfied

*Please indicate the degree to which you STRONGLY DISAGREE (1) or STRONGLY AGREE (7) with each of the following statements.*

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
This person's statement was polite.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was rude.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was insensitive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement showed disrespect towards me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was justified.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was hostile.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement strengthened our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement showed contempt towards me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This person's statement damaged our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was tactful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement constrained my choices.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement took away some of my independence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement made me look bad in the eyes of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement invaded my privacy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Below is a list of statements about the **perpetrator**. Please indicate the degree to which you **STRONGLY DISAGREE (1)** or **STRONGLY AGREE (7)** with each statement.*

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
It is typical of this person to hurt my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person often hurts my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person frequently hurts my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person doesn't hurt my feelings often.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I expect this person to hurt my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It doesn't surprise me when this person hurts my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A lot of people have been hurt by this person's words.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This person often says things that hurt people.      1      2      3      4      5      6      7

This person frequently hurts people's feelings.      1      2      3      4      5      6      7

**The next portion of the questionnaire concerns your relationship with the message deliverer, or person that told you the hurtful statement or behavior engaged in. Please keep this person in mind while responding to the following questions.**

*Please circle the number that best reflects your opinion.*

How much did the hurtful statement affected your relationship with the message deliverer?

It had no: effect at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It had an extreme effect
It made us: more distant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more close
It made us: more tense	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more relaxed
It made us: more open	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more closed
It made us: more remote	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more intimate
It made us: more friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:It made us more hostile

*Please indicate the degree to which you STRONGLY DISAGREE (1) or STRONGLY AGREE (7) with each of the following statements.*

This person meant to hurt me.

Strongly: disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:Strongly agree
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------

This person hurt me by accident.

Strongly: disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:Strongly agree
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------

This person hurt me on purpose.

Strongly: disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	:Strongly agree
-----------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	--------------------

This person did not try to hurt me.

Strongly: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Strongly  
disagree agree

*Now I would like you to answer a few questions about your association with the **deliverer**. I am interested in your current relationship with the **deliverer**.*

How close are you to this person?

Not at all: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Extremely  
close close

How often do you talk to this person?

Not often: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :All the  
at all time

How much do you like this person?

Not at all: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :A great deal

How often do you talk about personal feelings with this person?

Not at all: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :All the time

How often do you see this person?

Not often: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :All the  
at all time

How important is this person's opinion to you?

Not at all: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very  
important important

How satisfied are you with your relationship with this person?

Not at all: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :Very  
satisfied satisfied

How much do you enjoy spending time with this person?

Not at all: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 :A great deal

How important is your relationship with this person?

Not at all:    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    :Extremely important

How central is this person to your everyday life?

Not at all:    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    :Extremely

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

This person and I like a lot of the same things.    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

This person and I share a lot of the same attitudes about things    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

This person and I have very different values.    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

This person and I are very similar.    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

This person and I have a similar outlook on life.    1    2    3    4    5    6    7

*I would like you to think about your relational life with the **deliverer** over the last two months, and use the following words and phrases to describe it. For example, if you think that your relationship with the **deliverer** during the last two months has been very miserable, put an X in the space right next to the word "miserable." If you think it has been very enjoyable, put an X in the space right next to "enjoyable." If you think it has been somewhere in between, put an X where you think it belongs. PUT AN X IN ONE SPACE ON EVERY LINE.*

Miserable    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    Enjoyable

Hopeful    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    Discouraging

Free    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    Tied down

Empty    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    Full

Interesting    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    \_\_\_    Boring

Rewarding	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Disappointing
Doesn't give me much chance	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Brings out the best in me
Lonely	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Friendly
Hard	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Easy
Worthwhile	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Useless

All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with your relationship with this person?

\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_

Completely Dissatisfied                      Neutral                      Completely Satisfied

*Please indicate the degree to which you STRONGLY DISAGREE (1) or STRONGLY AGREE (7) with each of the following statements.*

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
This person's statement was polite.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was rude.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was insensitive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement showed disrespect towards me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was justified.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was hostile.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement strengthened our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement showed contempt towards me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This person's statement damaged our relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement was tactful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement constrained my choices.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement took away some of my independence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement made me look bad in the eyes of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person's statement invaded my privacy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*Below is a list of statements about the **deliverer**. Please indicate the degree to which you **STRONGLY DISAGREE (1)** or **STRONGLY AGREE (7)** with each statement.*

	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
It is typical of this person to hurt my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person often hurts my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person frequently hurts my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person doesn't hurt my feelings often.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I expect this person to hurt my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It doesn't surprise me when this person hurts my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A lot of people have been hurt by this person's words.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
This person often says things that hurt people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This person frequently hurts  
people's feelings.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

**In this section of the questionnaire I want to learn more about you. Please answer the following questions about yourself.**

*Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement. Using this 7-point scale: a "7" means you STRONGLY AGREE with the statement. A "1" means that you STRONGLY DISAGREE. A "4" means you NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE.*

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
At times, I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sex:  Male  Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic origin (*check **only one***):

- African American/Black
- Caucasian/White/European
- Middle Eastern
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Latino/Hispanic
- Native American/American Indian

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## **Vita**

Kathryn Ann Breiwa was born on March 21, 1983 in Bowling Green, Kentucky. She is the daughter of Dr. John N. Breiwa and Sybil L. Breiwa. Upon completing her work at Bowling Green High School, Bowling Green, Kentucky, in 2001, she attended the University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky. Kathryn transferred her program of study to Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, in 2002. She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Corporate and Organizational Communication with two minors in Marketing and Business Administration in May, 2005. Upon graduating, Kathryn accepted an internship with Senator Mitch McConnell in Washington, District of Columbia. She began employment as a staff assistant at Bockorny Group, Inc., Washington, District of Columbia, in 2005. In 2006 she was promoted to office manager and remained in that position until entering The Graduate School at the University of Texas at Austin in August, 2008.

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