

Deliberate Discomforting:

Making Others Feel Bad, Distressed and Hurt Emotionally

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Abstract

This research examines times people deliberately seek to distress others emotionally. Participants report a conversation in which they intentionally discomfort others to test hypotheses relevant to the goal of discomforting (its activation, planning, and targets), tactics used for its accomplishment (their nature, politeness, and efficiency), and consequences resulting from its pursuit (task, relational, and emotional). Results show that: (1) Discomforting is an important, multi-motivated goal, largely unaffected by planning, often undertaken (in part) as retribution for perceived wrongdoing by the target, though also done to benefit targets, third parties, and relationships. (2) Participants use strategies differing in politeness and efficiency (e.g., putting down, forewarning, unfacing, rebuffing and verbally assaulting targets), and pay heed to these constraints when discomforting, loosening politeness to maintain and/or increase efficiency when faced with goal failure. (3) Participants are quite effective at hurting others, choosing to discomfort persons older than themselves, who they feel close to, and with whom their relationships are not fragile, typically having more relational power which increases as a consequence of discomforting. Based on principles of Conversational Constraint Theory, we conclude that individuals discomfort in ways consistent with the pursuit of other conversational goals.

Our relationships with others are not without pain: we frequently hurt others and they frequently hurt us (Leary & Springer, 2001). Nor is this hurt purely inadvertent: we hurt and are hurt both accidentally and intentionally (Leary & Springer, 2001; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). The accidental hurts people incur constitute the primary basis of research questions and data samples (Knapp, Stafford, & Daly, 1986; Leary & Springer, 2001; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998; Miller, 1997; Snapp & Leary, 2001; Vangelisti, 1994, 2001; Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). We have limited insight into how those who perceive they are hurt intentionally feel (Leary et al., 1998; Vangelisti & Young, 2000), and we know only a little about times we hurt others and then, primarily by accident (Leary et al., 1998). This research examines times people intentionally seek to make others feel bad, distressed and hurt emotionally, that is, times people deliberately seek to discomfort, rather than comfort, others.

Perspective

We approach the discomforting of others from a goal-oriented perspective. We focus not on the person hurt, but the person doing the hurting – the “dis-er” rather than the “dis-ee”; not on the feelings that occur, but on the goal that is pursued; and not on that which is accidental, but on that which is intentional. We seek to balance our knowledge of times individuals desire to comfort and alleviate emotional distress (see, for review, Albrecht, Burlison, & Goldsmith, 1994; Burlison, Albrecht, & Sarason, 1994; Burlison & Goldsmith, 1998) with times individuals desire to discomfort and distress, that is, times individuals intend to hurt others (Knapp, et al., 1986; Leary et al., 1998).

We also approach the discomforting of others from a functional, rather than a “dark” (see, e.g., Andersen & Guerrero, 1998; Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994), perspective. Deliberate discomforting need not be evil. Only rarely do people deliberately induce guilt, evoke jealousy, or strategically embarrass others for malicious purposes (Bradford & Petronio, 1998; Sharkey, 1997; Sommer & Baumeister, 1997; White, 1980), despite “victims” judging intentional “perpetrators” as significantly more malicious, arbitrary, immoral and insensitive than accidental “perpetrators” (see, e.g., Baumeister, Stillwell & Wotman, 1990; Leary et al., 1998). Deliberate discomforting also need not be negative. While painful or aversive, outcomes of deliberate discomforting may, at times, be

equally or more important than respecting others' face and autonomy (Vangelisti, 1994; Vonk, 2001). We presume people discomfort others for reasons (which may be good or evil) and obtain outcomes (which may be constructive or destructive). Our perspective is functional rather than presumptively dark, disconcerting rather than inherently injurious, focusing on dis-ers pursuing a goal of discomforting, rather than on dis-ees feeling discomforted.

We conduct this research from the perspective of Conversational Constraint Theory (CCT) (Kellermann, 1988, 1992, 2001; Kellermann & Kim, 1991; Kellermann, Kim & Park, 2001; Kellermann & Lee, 2001; Kellermann & Park, 2001; Kellermann, Reynolds, & Chen, 1991; Kellermann & Shea, 1996), a theory explaining individuals' tactical choices for achieving conversational goals. CCT posits that individuals pay heed to the efficiency (i.e., expediency) and appropriateness (i.e., politeness) of their behavior (Kim, 1994, 1995; Kim & Aune, 1997; Kim et al., 1996; Kim & Wilson, 1994), though do not always wish to be polite or be efficient. Minimum preferred levels of efficiency and appropriateness range, independent of each other, from low (can be inefficient/impolite) to high (must be efficient/polite) as a function of situational (urgency, privacy, formality), relational (bond, position), individual (goal-orientation, social-orientation), and interactive (expectation, matching) factors. For example, public and formal situations, higher status others, and a strong social-orientation increase a person's minimum preferred level for politeness, while private and informal situations, equal status others, and a weak social-orientation decrease a person's minimum preferred level for behavioral politeness. An individual's minimum preferred level for efficiency increases in times of urgency, negligible relational concerns, and a strong goal-orientation while non-urgent situations, significant relational concerns, and a weak goal-orientation decrease an individual's minimum preferred level for behavioral efficiency.

According to CCT, behaviors are acceptable for goal pursuit if they meet or exceed the minimum preferred levels of behavioral efficiency and appropriateness for particular conversations. For non-urgent leave-takings, for example, moderately polite and relatively inefficient tactics are acceptable, whereas for urgent leave-takings, behavior must be moderately polite and moderately efficient (Kellermann & Park, 2001). When faced with goal blockage, emotional arousal, knowledge

deficits or incompetence, individuals increasingly enact unacceptable behaviors that violate the least important constraint, until such point that they achieve their goal or abandon goal pursuit.

CCT claims to explain tactical choices for any conversational goal, so it should be able to do so for discomforting. While we will describe the details of CCT more fully when we explore tactics individuals might use for discomforting, our basic position is that appropriateness and efficiency are ongoing considerations in tactical choices as individuals try to make others distressed and hurt emotionally; that is, individuals pay heed to politeness and efficiency even when deliberately discomforting others. We first explore the goal of discomforting and its activation, then we consider individuals' possible tactical repertoires and choices, and finally we consider task, relational, and emotional consequences of deliberate discomforting.

The Goal of Discomforting

We commonly seek to alleviate others' emotional distress and make them feel better (Burlison & Goldsmith, 1998). We also intentionally disquiet others emotionally – strategically embarrassing them (Bradford & Petronio, 1998; Sharkey, 1997), purposefully angering them (Baumeister et al., 1990), deliberately making them feel guilty (Miceli, 1992; Sommer & Baumeister, 1997; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998), calculatedly inducing jealousy (Fleischmann, Spitzberg, & Andersen, 2001; Sheets, Fredenhall, & Claypool, 1997; White, 1980), willfully seeking their disliking (Kellermann & Lee, 2001), and knowingly hurting them (Knapp et al., 1986; Leary & Springer, 2001).

Likelihood of discomforting. It is unknown how often people deliberately try to discomfort others. Many people admit having strategically embarrassed (97-99%), deliberately induced jealousy in (73%), and sought disaffinity from (98%) another person, with 75% purposefully embarrassing someone in the past 6 months, 26% "sometimes" or "frequently" inducing jealousy, and seeking disaffinity over 8 times a year on average (Fleischmann et al., 2001; Kellermann & Lee, 2001; Sharkey, 1997; Sharkey, Kim & Diggs, in press; Sheets et al., 1997; White, 1980). People report feeling hurt more than once a month and believe 20-30% of these hurts are intentionally induced (Leary & Springer, 2001; Vangelisti, 1994). On purely logical

grounds, a non-biased group of individuals should report deliberately discomforting others as often as they report being deliberately discomforted. While people estimate intentionally seeking disaffinity from others as often as disaffinity is intentionally sought from them (Kellermann & Lee, 2001), they report more often being intentionally embarrassed and hurt by others than intentionally embarrassing or hurting others (Leary et al., 1998; Sharkey & Waldron, 1990; Sharkey et al., in press). We explore the frequency with which people deliberately try to discomfort others, and compare it to the frequency people report that others intentionally seek to discomfort them.

Reasons for discomforting. People likely deliberately discomfort others for the same reasons they pursue any goal – by doing so, they achieve (or try to achieve) desired (or more desirable) outcomes (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Vangelisti, 1994). People project hostile self-presentations (Vonk, 2001), induce jealousy (White, 1980), seek disaffinity (Kellermann & Lee, 2001), and embarrass others (Bradford & Petronio, 1998; Sharkey, 1997) to accomplish particular objectives. Little direct research exists on deliberate discomforting, so we rely on the literature on aversive behaviors (e.g., Andersen & Guerrero, 1998; Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994; Kowalski, 1997a, 2001a; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998) to guide our thinking about why people intentionally seek to hurt others emotionally. We offer only possible reasons people might deliberately discomfort others as much of the literature is speculative or concerned with goals other than discomforting.

People may deliberately try to hurt others for many different reasons. Individually, people may feel at ease enacting aversive behaviors (Kowalski, 1997c) or hurting others may bolster their self-esteem (White, 1980). Interpersonally, individuals may discomfort others to show their own feelings have been hurt (Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998; Vonk, 2001), to highlight behaviors they dislike (Bradford & Petronio, 1998), to release the hurt they incur at someone else's doing (Leary & Springer, 2001), or to influence others' behavior so as to gain their compliance (Gardner & Martinko, 1998; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998; Vonk, 2001), change what they do (Kowalski, 1997b, 1997c; Sharkey, 1997; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998) or acquire power over them (Bradford & Petronio, 1998; Gardner & Martinko, 1998; Kowalski, 1997b; Miceli, 1992; Sharkey, 1997; Sommer & Baumeister, 1997; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998; Vonk, 2001; White, 1980). More selfishly,

individuals may deliberately discomfort others to retaliate for the others having hurt them (Guerrero & Anderson, 1998; Leary & Springer, 2001; Sharkey et al., in press; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998; White, 1980), to punish others (Sharkey et al., in press; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998; White, 1980), to discredit others (Bradford & Petronio, 1998; Kowalski, 1997b; Sharkey, 1997), or to impress third parties (Sharkey et al., in press; Vonk, 2001). Less selfishly, individuals may feel others benefit in some way from being hurt (Kowalski, 1997b; Vangelisti, 2001) or that others deserve to be hurt (Sharkey, 1997; Sommer & Baumesiter, 1997). Relationally, individuals might deliberately discomfort others either to improve (Fleischmann et al., 2001; Guerrero & Anderson, 1998; Kowalski, 1997b, 1997c; Sheets et al., 1997; Sommer & Baumeister, 1997; Vangelisti, 1994; White, 1980) or worsen relationships with them (Cunningham, Barbee & Druen, 1997; Leary et al., 1998). Individuals may intentionally hurt their partner to glean relational information (Guerrero & Anderson, 1998; Vangelisti, 1994; White, 1980), share or spread relational distress (Kowalski, 1997c; Vangelisti & Sprague, 1998), or get a partner to commit more to a relationship (Kowalski, 1997b; Sheets et al., 1997; White, 1980). Socially, inducing hurt may ensure internalization of norms (Micelli, 1992; Sharkey, 1997), socialize individuals into groups (Sharkey, 1997; Sharkey et al., in press), or show solidarity with others (Bradford & Petronio, 1998; Sharkey, 1997; Sharkey et al., in press).

We feel it important not to view these reasons for deliberate discomforting as implying people hurt others for only, or even primarily, one of these reasons. We believe the reasons people deliberately try to distress others emotionally are often multiple and complex. First, discomforting is unlikely a goal of first resort. While people might want others to feel bad solely because others hurt them, or solely because others deserve it, or solely because others need it, or solely because people "can't take it any more," we believe it more likely people deliberately discomfort others because others hurt them and others deserve it and others need it and people can't take it any more and so on. Second, we believe people are often balancing both the risks and the benefits of discomforting others deliberately, and decide hurting others is "worth it" to achieve some other goal (Katz & Joiner, 2001; Kowalski, 1997b; Vangelisti, 1994; Vonk, 2001).

Third, the pervasive “dark” metaphor attached to research on discomforting and related “dis-ing” goals suggests an aversion people have to their willy-nilly activation that likely demands a more restrictive set of conditions be met to make discomforting others a justifiable aim. Admittedly, singular motives are possible for deliberate discomforting. Only 6.5% of strategic embarrassors’, for example, report more than one motive for their behavior (Sharkey et al., in press) and individuals hurt others – accidentally or intentionally – for seemingly uncomplicated reasons (Leary et al., 1998; Vangelisti, 2001; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). We believe these findings reflect coding schemes with relatively few categories (4 to 8) that often presume singular motivation (i.e., assignment to one and only one category) with “intentional” discomforting being a unitary designation generally perceived by dis-ees and unexplored for the interplay of reasons that might underlie goal activation by dis-ers. We explore the different reasons people have for intentionally trying to hurt others, we look at the interplay of those reasons, and we do so from the dis-er’s perspective. We expect to find many reasons, reflecting a complex set of circumstances, for deliberate discomforting.

Mindset of discomforter. Discomforting situations can arise spontaneously or through planning (Berger, 1997), the goal can be activated at the beginning of or during interactions (Wilson, 1990, 1995, 1997), and dis-ers might be in positive or negative moods prior to such encounters (Dillard & Peck, 2001). While dis-ees perceiving they are hurt intentionally assume discomforters plan interactions a priori (Vangelisti, 2001), we do not know how often individuals plan for or opportunistically capitalize on situations, how often dis-ers discomfort others from the start of interactions or the goal arises in the course of ongoing interactions, or if discomforters pursue their goal in particular locations (i.e., whose “turf”), via particular channels (e.g., face-to-face, telephone), or in the presence of other people. As strategic embarrassors are attentive to the location where embarrassment takes place (Bradford & Petronio, 1998) and most persons are hurt in face-to-face interactions (Leary et al., 1998), planning makes intuitive sense. We explore intentional discomforters’ situation planning and goal activation as a first step in addressing these issues.

Dis-ers’ mood prior to deliberate discomforting may relate to situation planning and goal activation. Grossly considered, the mood of dis-ers prior to the discomforting interaction might either be positive or negative, this difference in valence being a primary dimension of emotional experience (Dillard & Peck, 2001; Guerrero, Anderson, & Trost, 1998; Leary & Springer, 2001). We speculate that negative moods likely precede the discomforting of others in planned situations or when the discomforting goal is activated from an interaction’s beginning, whereas either positive or negative moods might precede spontaneously arising situations or times the discomforting goal arises during the interaction. We examine how dis-ers’ mood prior to the discomforting interaction relates to situation planning and goal activation.

Target of discomforting. People can choose whom to hurt when deliberately discomforting others – strangers, acquaintances, friends, significant others, co-workers, or anyone. We expect people intentionally discomfort those they know more so than unfamiliar others. People direct most aversive behaviors toward those with whom they are close (Kowalski, 1997b, 1997c). Of persons hurt by others (i.e., dis-ees), over 80% report being hurt by friends, romantic partners, and family; only 2% report being hurt by a stranger (Leary et al., 1998; Vangelisti, 1994). Dis-ers also report hurting persons (Leary et al., 1998) and regretting messages said primarily to people (Knapp et al., 1986) close to them. The proximity of those close to us provides increased opportunity for hurting them (Leary & Springer, 2001; Leary et al., 1998), and our “weaponry” may be stronger with significant others than with strangers (Bradford & Petronio, 1998; Kowalski, 1997b, 2001b; Leary & Springer, 2001; Miller, 1997; Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993). Of course, strangers and others less intimate with us might also be targets of deliberate discomforting. People are capable of hurting perfect strangers (Leary & Springer, 2001; Snapp & Leary, 2001; Strausser, 1997) and they act intentionally hostile toward strangers as well as intimates (Vonk, 2001). Nonetheless, we expect that deliberate discomforters primarily hurt those familiar and/or close to them.

Tactics for Discomforting

People find certain types of messages hurtful. Vangelisti (1994) inductively categorizes messages reported to be hurtful as accusations, evaluations, directives, advice, expressions of

(non-)desire, disclosures of information, questions, threats, jokes and lies. Leary et al. (1998) report that hurtful experiences fall into inductively derived categories of active disassociation (explicitly reject, abandon, or ostracize other), passive disassociation (ignore, shun, don't include other), criticism, teasing, betrayal, and feeling unappreciated/used/taken for granted. Kinney (1994) empirically categorizes messages reported to be hurtful as group membership attacks (membership, motivation, preparedness), personal failings attacks (awareness, characteristics), and relational failings attacks. Despite different labels and levels of abstraction, consistently people report being hurt by criticisms (e.g., personal accusations, negative evaluations, group membership attacks, personal failings, relational failings), forewarnings (e.g., unsolicited advice), rebuffs (e.g., rejections, disclosures, non-inclusions, abandonments, non-desire expressions, deflections), confrontations (e.g., questions), verbal assaults (e.g., threats, obscenities, characteristic attacks), betrayals (e.g., lies, infidelities, feeling used), and thoughtlessness (e.g., insensitive teasing, tactless jokes).

We expect deliberate discomforters are aware these messages are hurtful and might employ them, though certain ones might better reflect unintentional hurts (e.g., thoughtlessness) and therefore not be part of deliberate discomforters' repertoire. Deliberate discomforters also likely engage in goal parlaying (Berger, 1997) and so make others guilty, jealous, and embarrassed as a means of hurting them (Micelli, 1992; Sharkey, 1997; Sommer & Baumesiter, 1997; Vangelisti, Daly & Rudnick, 1991; White, 1980). We identify tactics deliberate discomforters use to hurt others and empirically validate the strategies underlying the tactics.

Whatever tactics and strategies discomforters ultimately employ, we expect them to vary in politeness and efficiency in accord with Conversational Constraint Theory. Evidence exists that a wide variety of behaviors differ in politeness and efficiency for a diversity of goals (Kellermann & Kim, 1991; Kellermann et al., 2001; Kemper & Thissen, 1981; Price & Bouffard, 1974) including tactics of affinity testing (Douglas, 1987), disaffinity seeking (Kellermann & Lee, 2001), information seeking (Berger & Kellermann, 1983), stopping annoying habits, ending relationships, having obligations fulfilled (Kellermann, 2001), and conversational retreat (Kellermann et al., 1991;

Kellermann & Park, 2001). For example, people can stop talking to others rudely and slowly (e.g., restlessness signals) or rudely and rapidly (e.g., turn their back and walk away) or politely and rapidly (e.g., announce their departure) or politely and slowly (e.g., hints) (Kellermann et al., 1991; Kellermann & Park, 2001). Discomforting tactics appear to evidence similar variations in politeness and efficiency. Verbal assaults are likely rude, while forewarnings less rude for discomforting others. Certain rebuffs (e.g., deflections, non-inclusions) are likely inefficient while criticisms efficient for discomforting others. We expect discomforters can hurt others politely or impolitely and efficiently or inefficiently. CCT expects any set of tactics for any goal to be differentiable by politeness and efficiency, and here we test that expectation for discomforting tactics.

In accord with CCT, we believe deliberate discomforters pay heed to the politeness and efficiency of their behavior. First, per CCT we expect efficiency to be of more importance than politeness to discomforters. Minimum preferred levels for efficiency are likely to be high – the situation might be urgent, relational concern negligible, and goal-orientation strong (all predictors of high efficiency preferences in CCT). Minimum preferred levels for politeness are likely to be moderate at best – the situation informal and not fully public, relational position of equal or higher status than the target, and the social orientation for some dis-ers probably quite low (all predictors of low politeness preferences in CCT). Discomforters thus likely set higher preferences for efficient behavior than for polite behavior. Second, we expect discomforters' politeness preference to decrease over the course of the conversation and their efficiency preference to maintain or increase, at least until they accomplish or abandon their goal. Many discomforters are probably emotionally aroused and initial tactics may not achieve the goal. Under either of these conditions, CCT predicts goal-seekers loosen (i.e., violate) the least important constraint – in this case, politeness – and maintain the most important constraint – in this case, efficiency – in ongoing tactical choices. Tactics women use to “cool out” men in singles bars evidence politeness constraint loosening for efficiency constraint maintenance: women's politeness gives way to “defensive incivility” for the sake of efficiency in the face of goal failure (Snow, Robinson, & McCall, 1991). When people want others to dislike them, they become both less polite and more efficient

until they achieve their goal, after which they become more polite and less efficient (Kellermann & Lee, 2001). This research provides a test of CCT's prediction of constraint loosening and maintenance/tightening in the face of goal failure and achievement. We expect discomforting tactics to vary in politeness and expediency, and for politeness to give way to expediency in the face of goal failure.

Consequences of Discomforting

We explore task, relational, and emotional consequences of deliberate discomforting. CCT suggests examining two inter-related task considerations – effectiveness in goal achievement and resistance of targets – to test its claim that the less targets resist, the more effective individuals are in achieving their goals. We expect discomforters to emotionally distress effectively and targets not to resist significantly. Individuals inducing guilt, jealousy, embarrassment, and hurt generally report overwhelming success (Fleishmann et al, 2001; Leary et al., 1998; Sharkey, 1997; Sharkey et al, in press; Sommer & Baumeister, 1997), and perhaps more so than they know as dis-ees are often reluctant to let discomforters know they feel hurt (Leary et al., 1998). While dis-ees might attack, defend, remain silent or concede, evidence suggests many express anger or criticize the discomforter (Leary et al., 1998), though most ultimately resign themselves and yield to dis-ers' desires (Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). Resistance is most likely under conditions of perceived deliberate discomforting (Leary & Springer, 2001). In the face of target resistance, dis-ers might justify their behavior, as justifications rationalize and defend actions meant to disconcert others (Schönbach, 1980; Scott & Lyman, 1968). The “interplay” of target resistance and dis-er justification likely influences the effectiveness of goal achievement.

Relational consequences of disaffinity seeking might alter dis-ers' relational power and/or their affective bond with targets. Gaining power over others and breaking (or preventing) affective bonds with them are two reasons why individuals intentionally intimidate, seek disaffinity from, and behave aversively toward others (Cunningham et al, 1997; Gardner & Martinko, 1998; Kellermann & Lee, 2001; Kowalski, 1997b; Schneider, 1981; Vonk, 2001). First, we expect that relational power increases with discomforting. Intentionally embarrassing others acquires and maintains

power over them (Sharkey, 1997; Sharkey & Waldron, 1990) and inducing jealousy equalizes power in romantic relationships by increasing control of the weaker person (White, 1980). Second, we expect the affective bond between dis-er and dis-ee might deteriorate or improve. If the discomforter wants to terminate a relationship or get rid of the dis-ee, the affective bond is likely to deteriorate as a desired outcome. If the discomforter wants to repair a relationship or help the dis-ee, the affective bond might improve (Clark & Grote, 1998). Distancing and strengthening effects on relational bonds occur for intentional evocation of guilt (Sommer & Baumeister, 1997), regrettable messages (Knapp et al., 1986), and hurt feelings (Leary & Springer, 2001; Leary et al., 1998; Vangelisti, 2001), though perceptions of intentionality are associated with distancing rather than strengthening (Leary et al., 1998; Vangelisti & Young, 2000). We expect discomforting increases dis-ers' relational power and variously influences their affective bond with targets.

CCT makes no statement about the emotional consequences of goal pursuit, though dis-ers' feelings about having deliberately hurt others, their enjoyment of discomforting, and their satisfaction with the results seem important considerations. How dis-ers feel while and after discomforting others is unknown. Research on disaffinity seeking suggests bimodal, rather than normally distributed, responses; that is, some individuals feel fine and others feel awful both during and after making others dislike them (Kellermann & Lee, 2001). Whether evaluating themselves negatively or not for discomforting, people may still enjoy having targets feel hurt and be satisfied with the results. For example, guilt inducers feel better after achieving their goal despite “metaguilt” (i.e., feeling guilty for inducing guilt in others) (Sommer & Baumeister, 1997) and disaffinity seekers are emotionally satisfied with their handiwork even when feeling bad afterwards (Kellermann & Lee, 2001). We expand CCT by exploring how negatively dis-ers feel about themselves during and after the discomforting interaction, their enjoyment of having targets distressed emotionally, and their satisfaction with the results of their actions.

Method

We explore (1) the goal of discomforting – its activation, planning, and targets; (2) tactics for discomforting – their nature, politeness, and efficiency; and (3) the consequences of doing so –

for the task (effectiveness and resistance/justification interplay), the relationship (power, affective bond), and dis-comforters' emotions (self-evaluation, enjoyment, satisfaction). The primary research tool – a survey requesting an autobiographical narrative and asking other pertinent questions – is described here. So as to maintain clarity of presentation, follow-up data collections and analyses are described with the results where their undertaking is justified.

Participants

Fifty-eight undergraduate students are provided the primary research survey requesting they report on one conversation in which they deliberately tried to make someone feel bad, distressed or hurt emotionally. One individual provided a narrative about a goal other than discomforting, yielding 57 (37 females, 20 males), primarily upper-division (95%), retained participants.

Goal Definition and Tactic Elicitation

The first page of the survey orients participants by telling them the survey looks at ways people achieve interpersonal goals in conversations with others, and that one goal people commonly pursue in conversation is to comfort others when they are emotionally distressed. Participants are then told “there are times, however, when people want to do just the opposite and make another feel bad, distressed and hurt emotionally.” While we were torn about providing reasons for discomforting to participants when we were simultaneously interested in their reasons for doing so, the need to have participants agree they had deliberately sought to discomfort others led to a compromise of the provision of a descriptive and lengthy, though declared noninclusive, list of reasons generated by a 24-person focus group.¹ Participants were then told to think of an actual conversation where “you actively (i.e., not accidentally) tried to make someone feel distressed emotionally (for whatever reason).” Participants were told to (a) recall one specific conversation (rather than a series of episodes, a plan of action, or a course of a relationship), (b) with one other person (e.g., a friend, relative, coworker, stranger, roommate, etc.), (c) where they can remember in detail what they said and did as well as where, when and to whom they were talking, in which (d) making the person distressed or hurt emotionally was their primary goal.

Participants were then asked the first initial of the person they wanted to distress emotionally, when the conversation took place (i.e., the year and month), the location of the conversation (e.g., at home, restaurant, bar, grocery store, McDonald's, etc.), and the reason(s) why they wanted the person to feel bad (i.e., be emotionally distressed, hurt). While this “reason” section was meant to be distinct from “tactics” reported in a separate narrative section, participants so routinely provided reasons throughout both the reason and narrative sections, both were ultimately coded for discomforting reasons.

In the narrative section, participants were asked to describe everything they said and did in their specific conversation to make the other person feel bad (i.e., to distress and discomfort the other person emotionally). Participants were provided 18 lines to write their narratives and many continued writing on the sides and back of that survey page. The conversations seemed vivid and memorable (i.e., often verbatim, with words in quotation marks, highly specific and detailed), characteristics widely noticed in narratives of aversive behaviors (Kellermann & Lee, 2001; Kowalski, 1997c), relationship loss (Weber, 1998), and hurt feelings (Leary et al., 1998; Vangelisti, 1994). Such conversations are salient (Vangelisti, 1994), remembered for a long time (Kowalski, 1997; Vangelisti, 1994), and “embarrassingly accessible” (Weber, 1998). Recalled conversations occurred from 9 years previous to within the same month; 83% were within 1 year and 42% were within the last 2 months. The age of the conversation correlates only with targets' resistance – the older the conversation, the less the resistance, $r = -.27$, $p < .030$ – and the post-conversation affective bond – the older the conversation, the more the relationship deteriorated, $r = -.26$, $p < .037$.

Measurement of Goal Activation, Consequences, and Interaction Components

The remaining pages of the survey asked questions about goal activation, tactical politeness and efficiency, and consequences of intentional discomforting. Unless otherwise specified, all items are measured on 7-point magnitude scales (1=not at all, 7=very).

Goal activation items. Participants respond to questions about the frequency, importance, planning, mindset, and target of their deliberate discomforting. Participants report on goal frequency by writing-in the number of times in the past month they deliberately tried to

discomfort another person and the number of times other people deliberately tried to discomfort them,² and they identify the importance of goal achievement in their recalled conversation.³

Participants also report on their conversational planning. First, participants indicate the degree to which the situation in which they held their conversation was preplanned or spontaneous (1=preplanned, 7= spontaneous). Second, a coder identifies the timing of goal activation from the open-ended reason and narrative sections as the goal either being activated from the beginning of the conversation or being activated at a time during the conversation. Participants often directly reference when the goal was activated (e.g., “I said exactly what I knew what make her feel miserable”) or when they enacted their first tactic (e.g., “Well, first I started by...”), or they provide clear “indirect” cues such as starting their narrative with tactics intended to discomfort (e.g., “I called her derogatory names regarding her actions – evil, etc.”), identifying precipitating conditions (e.g., “I knew that it would be the perfect time to comment”), providing extensive “background” descriptions leading up to goal activation or initial disaffinity tactic use, or using “intentional” words (e.g., “I stressed that...”; “I pointed out...”). Test-retest reliability, separated over 4 months, was 90%. Third, a coder records “turf-control” from the open-ended conversation location response according to who controlled the turf where the conversation occurred – the dis-er, the dis-ee, both, or neither – almost always by use of pronouns (e.g., “my house,” “their car”). Test-retest reliability, separated over 4 months, was 100%.

Each participant also describes (on 2 provided lines) their mood just before the start of the conversation with the other person. Most participants write one or two words, $M=1.4$, to describe their mood prior to discomforting. A mood coding scheme, listing every mood on over 400 surveys collected in 6 different research projects assigns moods to categories.⁴ All moods are categorized as positive, negative, or non-valenced. Reported physical states (e.g., drunk, tired) are noted, though not considered moods and not included in mood analyses. As the coding scheme is a complete categorization of all moods across all relevant surveys, coding involves assignment rather than judgment and faces only transcription errors, of which there were none. Goal activation is thus measured in terms of its frequency, importance, situation planning, timing, turf, and mood.

Tactics. Three coders, working separately and then reaching a joint decision, code the conversation narratives for discomforting tactics. Only behaviors (i.e., words, deeds, or ways of acting) of participants occurring after goal activation and during one conversation are coded as tactics.⁵ Identification and segmentation of tactics across all 3 coders simultaneously yields a reliability of 94% with most of the errors involving “differential chunking” of complex behaviors rather than failure to consider the complex behaviors as tactics. Across the 57 narratives, 406 separate tactics are identified, $M=7.1$. Two stratifiers then individually sort the 406 tactics into categories of similar tactics. Stratified sampling of the first stratifier's, and then the other's, tactic categorization is conducted to select a subset of tactics to represent the diversity (rather than the frequency) of tactics in the overall list. Eighty-seven tactics are selected to represent both the central nature and variation of each category of both stratifiers' classifications considered simultaneously. Additional data collection, described later, is then undertaken to group tactics into discomforting strategies and to assess their politeness and efficiency. The primary survey participants are asked (a) how polite and efficient (i.e., quick, direct) they were as they hurt others,⁶ (b) whether, on 5-point scales, they became more or less polite, and more or less efficient, over the course of the conversation,⁷ and (c) open-ended questions as to why their politeness level and their directness level each increased, decreased, or stayed the same to test CCT's expectation of politeness constraint loosening and efficiency constraint maintenance/tightening.

Consequences. Participants are asked 3 task items: effectiveness in achieving their goal, active resistance of targets, and whether they justified their actions to targets.⁸ For relational consequences, participants report on (a) their affective bond with the target – its fragility and intimacy prior to the conversation,⁹ and whether after the conversation the relationship improved, deteriorated or stayed the same (on a 5-point scale);¹⁰ and (b) their power and control in the relationship both prior to and after the conversation (on 5-point scales).¹¹ For emotional consequences, participants report how negatively they felt about themselves during and after the conversation, their satisfaction with the results of what they did, and how much they enjoyed (if at all) making the other person feel bad emotionally.

Components. Individual and situational factors that might be important to the context of the conversation are also measured. At the individual level, the dis-ee's age (as best the dis-er can estimate) and gender are requested along with the dis-er's own age and gender. Participants also report on 7-point semantic differential scales the degree to which the situation was formal/informal, private/public, relaxed/anxiety-provoking, urgent/nonurgent, task-related/socially-related, and noisy and busy/quiet and calm. Situational items could not be reduced through factor analysis, and so are tracked separately in this research.¹²

Procedure

Participants complete surveys either at the end of class or in separate data collection sessions. Surveys take from 15 to 20 minutes to complete; all participants finish within 30 minutes. Participants are unusually talkative at the end of the data collection sessions, commenting on their interest in the topic and the survey, and the ongoing importance of their recalled conversations.

Results

Results are reported for the goal of discomforting, its tactics, and its consequences. The means and standard deviations of each of the measured items are listed in Table 1, and referenced throughout presentation of the results. In Table 1, each mean is compared to its theoretic midpoint (i.e., 3 on a 5-point scale, 4 on a 7-point scale) to support claims, presented throughout the results, of somewhat (less than the theoretic midpoint), moderate (equal to the theoretic midpoint), and extensive (greater than the theoretic midpoint) discomforting.

Goal of Discomforting

Frequency and importance. Participants report deliberately discomforting others as often as other research reports people feeling hurt both intentionally and accidentally. As Table 1 details, participants report intentionally discomforting others about 4 times every 3 months (i.e., 1.34 times/month) and being deliberately discomforted by them about half again as often (i.e., 2.02 times/month), $t(51)=-1.85$, $p<.035$. As Table 1 records, the deliberate distressing of others in the recalled narratives is very important to participants; and the more important, the more quickly participants report hurting the other person, $r=.26$, $p<.025$, the more power they report initially

Table 1. Goal, Tactic, Consequence and Component Item Means

Item	Mean	Std. Dev	t
<i>Foundations</i>			
Goal			
Do to Others	1.34 ¹	1.37	
Done to Me	2.02 ¹	1.91	
Importance	5.09	1.80	4.57***
Constraints			
Politeness	3.58	1.99	-1.60
Politeness Change	2.42 ²	1.08	-4.03***
Quickness	5.26	1.62	5.89***
Directness	5.42	1.86	5.77***
Directness Change	3.49 ²	.97	3.84***
<i>Consequences</i>			
Task			
Effectiveness	5.70	1.48	8.71***
Resistance	3.60	1.97	-1.55
Justification	4.19	2.42	.60
Relationship			
Fragility	3.63	2.13	-1.32
Intimacy	5.55	1.26	9.11***
Close	5.54	1.81	6.35***
Like	5.49	1.65	6.83***
Know	6.16	1.33	12.22***
Relate	3.75 ²	1.16	4.82***
Relationship Change	2.60 ²	1.13	-2.69**
Power	3.05	1.21	.33
Power Change	3.46 ²	.93	3.71***
Emotional			
Feelings During	3.70	1.93	-1.17
Feelings After	4.61	2.09	2.22*
Satisfaction	4.72	1.92	2.84**
Enjoyment	3.63	1.92	-1.45
<i>Components</i>			
Individuals			
Gender	65% F, 35% M		
Gender of Target	50% F, 50% M		
Age	20.7 ³	2.84	
Age of Target	27.8 ³	13.35	
Age Difference	-7.14 ³	13.78	-3.88***
Situation			
Formal	1.77	1.25	-13.42***
Private	5.68	2.05	6.22***
Relaxed	3.53	1.98	-1.80
Urgent	3.51	2.04	-1.82
Task-related	3.32	2.25	-2.29*
Noisy/busy	2.70	1.83	-5.35***
Planned	2.91	2.25	-3.64***

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all means are measured on 7-point scales. Each t-test compares an item's reported mean to its theoretic mean (4 on a 7 point scale, 3 on a 5 point scale, 0 for age difference). ¹ Frequency per month measurement scale with outliers removed. ² 5-point measurement scale. ³ Measured in years. * $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$. *** $p<.001$.

having and gaining from discomforting, have: $r=.30$, $p<.012$, gain: $r=.32$, $p<.008$, the more effective they report being at hurting the target, $r=.35$, $p<.003$, the more they enjoy hurting the other person, $r=.24$, $p<.038$, and the more satisfied they are with the results of their actions, $r=.60$, $p<.001$. Goal importance is unrelated to planning of the discomforting interaction, $r=.10$, ns, and men and women find it equally important to emotionally distress their target, $F(1,55)=.54$, ns.

Reasons. Reasons for discomforting are coded by grouping (near-)verbatim reasons by attribution to the target, dis-er, third party, relationship, or situation. Within each attribution category, we separately distinguish reasons pointing to faults (e.g., target was bad, did me wrong/deserved it, bothered me; dis-er was bad, in a certain mood, simply wanted target to feel bad) from those pointing to benefits (e.g., for target's own good, for dis-er's benefit, to protect or help third parties) from those pointing to desire to reject another (e.g., dis-er disliked target, dis-er wanted not to interact with target, dis-er wanted not to escalate or terminate a relationship with target). Each of these categories is comprised of more specific types of reasons, these specific reason types serving as the level of analysis for coding. After being trained in reason coding, two coders individually examine the reason and narrative sections of 15 surveys, segment each reason, assign it a category code, and then meet to agree on the reason coding for each survey. This procedure is repeated one week later on the same surveys. Across 59 unique reason codes between the two passes of the 15 surveys, only 4 disagreements occur in either segmentation or reason category assignment, yielding a simultaneous segmentation and classification reliability of 93%. These two coders, first working individually and then meeting as a dyad, code all reasons for all surveys, the results of which we present in Table 2.

As Table 2 details, the most common reason for discomforting is some fault of the target, and particularly, the feeling that the target deserved it for having done the dis-er wrong. Participants report multiple reasons for deliberately distressing others, $M=4.2$; only 1 person reports a single reason (of the target being a bad person). When reasons are grouped into the 8 larger categories in Table 2 (i.e., target's fault, target's own good, dis-er rejects target, dis-er's fault, dis-er's own good, third party's own good, relational good, situational reasons), most

Table 2. Discomforting Reasons

Reason	Freq.
<i>Target Reasons</i>	
1. It Was the Target's Fault	104
Target is a Bad Person – target has bad character (5), acted unethically (7), said/did something he/she shouldn't have (9), didn't say/do something should have (2)	(23)
Target Did Me Wrong/Deserved It – target did me wrong (2), betrayed me (7), was mean to me (1), disrespected me (6), embarrassed me (1), offended me (2), verbally abused me (1), insulted me (5), put me down (4), hurt me/revenge (19), took advantage of me (5), didn't fulfill obligations/broken promises (6), ruined my day (2)	(61)
Target Bothered Me – target was being difficult (2), complaining (3), wouldn't listen (2), offered an inadequate explanation (2), coercive/controlling (5), mind-reading (1), upset me (2), made me mad (1), was annoying me (1), wouldn't go away (1)	(20)
2. It Was for the Target's Own Good – for other's own good (generally) (6), so they are happier/more positive (1), so they are not used by others (2), so they are provided a warning (1), so they realize their own erroneous nature (6), so they take action (8)	24
<i>Self Reasons</i>	
3. I Reject the Target	10
I Feel Negatively About the Target – I disliked the target (3)	(3)
I Wanted Not to Interact With the Target – I wanted target to leave me alone (1)	(1)
I Wanted Not to Escalate My Relationship With the Target – I wanted not to go from acquaintance/friends to boyfriend/girlfriend (1)	(1)
I Wanted to End My Relationship With the Target – I wanted to end my friendship relationship with the target (1), my romantic relationship (4)	(5)
4. I Was at Fault	45
I Was Bad/Doing Wrong – I was being a jerk (1)	(1)
I Was in a Certain Mood – I was in a bad mood (2), angry (5), upset (4), jealous (1), frustrated (3), bored (3), hurt (by a third party) (1), didn't want to listen (2), had had enough (5)	(26)
I Wanted the Target To Feel Bad – I wanted the target to fear me (1), to feel mad (2), to feel guilty (5), to feel jealous (3), to be embarrassed (2), to feel uncomfortable (3), to be upset (1), to feel like a jerk (1)	(18)
5. It Was For My Own Good	43
I Wanted the Target to Know – I wanted the target to know my feelings (6), to understand (5), to not act this way again (3), to know they did wrong (1)	(15)
I Wanted to Gain the Target's Compliance – I wanted an admission (2)	(2)
I Wanted To Gain a Benefit -- self-protection (5), it would be to my advantage (2), I wanted to feel better (5), be in control (3), feel powerful (4), get their attention (2), be blameless (2), protect another relationship (1), be independent (1), do my own things (1)	(26)
<i>Third Party Reasons</i>	
6. It Was For a Third Party's Good	8
To Protect Third Parties – target hurts others (revenge for others) (4), bothers others (1), was taking advantage of others (2)	(7)
To Help Third Parties – to serve as a middleman for others (1)	(1)
<i>Relational Reasons</i>	
7. It Was For the Relationship's Good	5
To Fix Relational Troubles - at work (2), with a friend (1)	(3)
To Promote Us – so we both benefit (2)	(2)
<i>Situational Reasons</i>	
8. For situational reasons – the situation was tense (1), was my role in the situation (1)	(2)

participants provide reasons for discomforting that cross 2 or more of these categories, $M=2.5$. For example, one participant writes they deliberately tried to hurt their target because: "I wanted her to stop feeling sorry for herself [target's own good] and take action against her problem [target's own good]. It was bothering everyone [third party's good]. I didn't want to hear it anymore [dis-er's own good]." Another participant writes they discomforted because: "I caught him lying [target's fault] and I wanted to watch him squirm [dis-er's fault]." Another writes: "He hurt me [target's fault]. I was very upset [dis er's fault]. I hated him [reject target]." Deliberate discomforting is a multi-motivated goal.

For each participant, we calculate 8 dichotomous variables tracking the presence or absence of each of the 8 main reason categories for discomforting. Both factor and chi-square analyses suggest these 8 main reason categories occur independent of each other. Factor analysis fails to find good intercorrelations among these reasons, KMO Sampling Adequacy = .57, generates 3 factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 accounting for only 43% of the variance, one reason doesn't load on any factor (i.e., reject target), one reason double-loads (i.e., target's good), and only the first factor is "well-defined" in any minimally acceptable statistical sense. Chi-square analyses between each pair of reasons yield only 6 times (of 28 possible) that one reason significantly elevates or depresses the occurrence of another reason, half of those times involving very low occurrence reasons (i.e., third party's good, relationship's good, situational reasons).¹³ For the remaining 3 instances, when people discomfort for the target's good, they are less likely to fault the target, $\chi^2(1)= 14.87$, $p<.001$, or themselves, $\chi^2(1)= 5.99$, $p<.014$, and when they do fault the target, the less they discomfort for their own good, $\chi^2(1)=5.83$, $p<.016$. The 8 main categories of reasons occur mostly independent of each other, participants generally discomfort for 2 or more of these 8 main reasons, and participants generally are motivated by multiple reasons within these 8 categories. Deliberate discomforting occurs for multiple and complex sets of reasons.

The 8 main reasons for discomforting are associated with goal, tactic, consequence, and component characteristics. Table 3 details effects the presence or absence each reason has on particular characteristics. First, when discomforters are motivated, at least in part, by some fault of

Table 3. Effects of Discomforting for Particular Reasons

Effect of Particular Reason	Reason Absent	Reason Present	$F(1,54)$	η^2
<i>Target Reasons</i>				
Target is at Fault	(n=11)	(n=46)		
task: quickness	4.36	5.48	4.46*	.08
constraint: directness change	4.09 ¹	3.35 ¹	5.69** ¹	.09
For Target's Own Good	(n=45)	(n=12)		
relationship: power change	3.60 ¹	2.92 ¹	5.57** ¹	.09
<i>Self Reasons</i>				
I Rejected the Target	(n=47)	(n=10)		
relationship: relationship change	2.79 ¹	1.70 ¹	8.65** ¹	.14
It was My Fault	(n=25)	(n=32)		
situation: relax	2.92	4.00	4.42*	.07
situation: task	4.04	2.75	4.92*	.08
For My Good	(n=27)	(n=29)		
relationship: fragility	3.04	4.17	4.21*	.07
<i>Third Party Reasons</i>				
For a Third Party's Good	(n=49)	(n=8)		
task: resist	3.37	5.00	5.06*	.08
relationship: fragility	3.88	2.13	4.97*	.08
relationship: intimacy	5.91	4.06	15.81***	.23
<i>Relationship Reasons</i>				
For the Good of the Relationship	(n=52)	(n=5)		
goal: importance	5.27	3.20	6.67*	.11
situation: task	3.04	6.20	10.50**	.16
<i>Situational Reasons</i>				
For Situational Reasons	(n=55)	(n=2)		
goal: importance	5.18	2.50	4.58*	.08
constraint: quickness	5.35	3.00	4.28*	.07
situation: task	3.18	7.00	6.04*	.10

Note: Unless otherwise noted, means are on 7-point magnitude scales on items of interest for when particular reasons are present or absent. ¹ Means are on 5-point scales.

the target, they do so more quickly and maintain (rather than increase) their directness. Female dis-ers (92%) almost uniformly fault targets as a reason motivating discomforting and far more than male dis-ers (60%), $\chi^2(1)=8.48$, $p<.004$. Activation of the discomforting goal during the conversation always co-occurs with faulting the target, while only frequently co-occurring (2/3 of the time) when goal activation occurs prior to the start of the conversation, $\chi^2(1)=7.37$, $p<.007$.

Second, when discomforting is not for the target's own good, dis-ers gain relational power from discomforting. Third, when disers discomfort to reject targets, the relational bond deteriorates significantly (versus maintaining when not rejecting targets). Fourth, when participants hold themselves responsible for hurting targets, they are more relaxed and less task-oriented. Fifth, when dis-ers discomfort for their own good, their relationships with targets are less fragile. Sixth, discomforting for the good of a third party occurs in less fragile and less intimate relationships, and begets more resistance from targets. Seventh, when discomforting for the good of the relationship, achieving the goal is less important and the situation is more task-oriented. Finally, when discomforting for situational reasons, goal achievement is less important, dis-ers pursue the goal less quickly, and the situation is more task-oriented. Dis-ers' motivations for discomforting consistently relate to goal importance, quickness of goal pursuit, the task-oriented nature of the situation, and their relational bond with targets. Dis-ers' relational power increases when they are not discomforting to benefit the target.

Mindset. As Table 1 records, participants vary substantially among themselves in their planning of the situation in which they deliberately discomfort. While the mean extent of planning appears minimal, the distribution is bimodal with 60% of participants reporting the situation arose spontaneously (i.e., 1 or 2 on a 7-point scale) and 32% reporting the situation was planned (i.e., 5, 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale). Planning is more likely in urgent situations, $r=.31$, $p<.009$, and when people activate the discomforting goal at the beginning of the conversation, $M=3.51$, than during the conversation, $M=1.80$, $F(1,55)=8.51$, $p<.005$, $\eta^2=.13$. Approximately 65% of discomforters activate the goal at the beginning and 35% during the conversation. People justify their actions more when they activate the goal during, $M=5.05$, versus prior to, $M=3.73$, the conversation,

$F(1,55)=4.09$, $p<.048$, $\eta^2=.07$. Quite interesting is that planning is unrelated to either goal importance, $r=.10$, ns, or effectiveness, $r=-.01$, ns. Neither planning nor goal activation timing (before, during) are related to any other goal, constraint, consequence, component, situation, or individual characteristics.

Goal location. As Table 1 records, participants discomfort others in informal, private, somewhat tense, and moderately urgent situations. About 30% of the time, participants discomfort others on turf under their sole control, about half the time (54%) the turf is under at least partial control of the target, and only 16% of the time is the turf under neither party's control. As might be expected, when the discomforting interaction happens on turf under neither party's control, relational intimacy between dis-er and dis-ee is lower, $M=4.43$, than when on either the dis-er's turf, $M=5.33$, or under at least partial control of the target, $M=6.00$, $F(2, 50)=5.49$, $p<.007$, $\eta^2=.18$ (with Student-Newman-Kuels follow-up test). Like planning and goal activation timing, turf control is unrelated to other goal, constraint, consequence, and component characteristics.

Dis-er's mood. As can be seen in Table 4, 57 participants report 81 moods prior to their discomforting conversations, 13 of which are non-valenced (i.e., neither negative nor positive), of which 5 are physical (non-mood) states. Thirty-six participants report solely negative moods, 14 report solely positive moods, and only 1 reports a mixed positive and negative mood prior to their discomforting conversations. Negative moods are much more likely to precede discomforting when the goal is activated at the beginning of the conversation (82%) than when activated during the conversation (50%), $\chi^2(1)= 4.64$, $p<.031$. While discomforting happens primarily in informal situations (see Table 1), the situation is more formal when a positive, $M=2.36$, rather than a negative, $M=1.50$, mood precedes discomforting, $F(1,48)=5.21$, $p<.027$, $\eta^2=.10$. Dis-ers' negative or positive mood is unrelated to all other goal, constraint, consequence, and component characteristics, including planning, $F(1,48)=3.00$, ns.

Targets. As Table 1 details, participants mostly discomfort persons older than themselves; only 24% of targets are younger than dis-ers, while 55% are older. Despite 65% of dis-ers being female, targets are nearly identically split between males ($n=29$) and females ($n=28$). Men and

Table 4. Mood Frequency

Negative		Positive		Non-valenced	
dissatisfied	1	satisfied	1		
upset	5	calm	5	unknowing	1
angry	13				
defensive	1				
frustrated	2				
annoyed	2				
anxious	9				
stressed	1				
bad	1	good	4	normal	5
sad	7	happy	5	apathetic	1
hurt	3				
jealous	2				
uncomfortable	3				
concerned	1			curious	1
uncertain	2				
				drunk	1
				tired	4
<i>Total</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>13</i>

Note: Each mood term is associated with lists of related words which can be obtained from the authors.

women dis-ers equally target males and females for discomforting, $\chi^2(1)=1.46$, ns.

Summary. Discomforting is an important, multi-motivated goal, commonly justified (in part) by faulting the target (especially for female dis-ers and always when activated during an interaction) and from which dis-ers gain relational power when not discomforting for the target's benefit. Discomforting is largely unaffected by planning, mostly occurs on private and informal turf under one or the other party's control, with negative moods preceding goal activation at the beginning of conversations. Surprisingly, dis-ers hurt persons older, rather than younger, than themselves.

Tactics of Discomforting

We expect discomforting tactics cohere together into a number of different strategies. To identify these strategies, the 87 representative discomforting tactics selected by stratified sampling are sorted by 70 new (and different) participants into tactical groups based on tactical similarity.¹⁴ A tactic co-occurrence matrix¹⁵ is submitted to a hierarchical cluster analysis using the average linkage between groups method to identify strategies (i.e., groupings of tactics) of deliberate discomforting. The jumps and flattenings in fusion coefficients (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984) suggest tactics group hierarchically into 3, 5, and 10 strategies (coefficients = .525, .487, .420, .407, .376, .374, .362, .362, .356, .324, .321, ...). Table 5 identifies these deliberate discomforting strategies, and lists the tactics comprising each. At the highest hierarchical level, deliberate discomforting is accomplished by approaching (i.e., interacting) and withdrawing from (i.e., refusing to interact with) others (Dillard, 1998), and also by independent action rather than interaction (i.e., assaulting). When accomplishing discomforting through interaction, individuals put targets down by criticizing and rubbing matters in, forewarning targets, and "unfacing" targets by inducing guilt and confronting them. Discomforting is also pursued by refusing to interact with targets, that is, rebuffing targets by fending them off, staring them down, acting/being sarcastic, and outright rejecting them or what they say. People also discomfort by assaulting others, that is, verbally and physically battering targets, acting toward them rather than interacting (or even refusing to interact) with them. Deliberate discomforters use certain hurtful messages (i.e., criticisms, forewarnings,

Table 5. Discomforting Tactics

Interacting to Accomplish

1. PUT TARGET DOWN

1a. Criticize

5. I used an obvious mistake the person had made, was aware of and had apologized for, to hurt her.
10. I said, "It is amazing to me that someone can be so cold and unfeeling."
11. I said, "I feel sorry for you."
14. I said, "Do you realize that the really sad part is that this person you detest is exactly like you?"
42. I told him he was acting like a baby.
45. I talked down to him in a way that pushes his buttons.
51. I told him he was young and naive.
56. I was saying things like, "You have no idea what you are talking about."
57. I tried to show that my character would make me successful while her way of doing things would get her nowhere."
60. I put down that person's religion.
61. When she bragged about how hard her major was and how hard she worked, I told her that she's lucky that she is BioPsych and not Bio because it's an easier major.
62. I said, "If you and I weren't sisters, I know I would never hang around with you."
64. I told someone of my other teammates what he'd done so that he could overhear, and I made it sound really harsh.
75. I reminded him of the time when we were playing in a basketball tournament and he lost the game for us.
83. I said something that would make him feel insecure about his physical appearance.
84. I threw out a painful experience that had happened to her.
86. I played off of her inferiority complex.

1b. Rub It In

12. I told my boyfriend about a date I had with a guy who was actually a "platonic friend."
32. I strategically questioned him to watch him squirm.
33. I told my ex-boyfriend about all of the people I had been going out with since we had broken up.
72. I deceived him.
73. I was very "matter-of-fact" when telling him things I'd done that I knew would hurt him.
81. I purposely made him force me to tell a story that would make him jealous.

2. UNFACE TARGET

3a. Induce Guilt

4. I said exactly what I knew would make her feel guilty.
21. I said to my parents, "My friends' parents call them all the time."
39. I started groaning with hunger pains in front of my mother and her co-workers so she would look bad (she knew I had not had a chance to eat all day).
40. I just purposely looked extremely tired, hot and hungry so she'd feel guilty and bad for making me stay.
78. I started crying in hopes of making him feel like a jerk.
80. I told my boyfriend all of the reasons that he had given me to break up with him so that he would feel bad and think that I was justified.
82. I manipulated the situation so that I could lay blame on him, making me appear guiltless.

3b. Confront

1. I called her on a lie she told.
2. I told him that he really hurt me.
3. I told him that I could no longer trust him.
9. I went up to his room uninvited to talk to him about the night before.
13. I asked her (in an accusatory tone) why she said the things she did to my friend.
19. I called him because he'd said he would call me (and hadn't).
20. I said, "I don't feel loved."
25. I said it was her turn to call me when she asked why I hadn't called.
35. I said, "Now you know how I have felt for a long time now."
36. I said I was tired of being treated so terribly by him.
43. I told him that the one time I wanted to change our plans around, he was totally closed-minded.
63. I told him that his unreliability offended me.

3. FOREWARN TARGET

6. I told him we disapproved of what he did.
23. I made clear the consequences that would result from the continuation of her behavior.
24. I told her that she was very close to being fired.
26. I told her again that I didn't agree with her.
27. I told her again that it was up to her how long she wanted to dwell on what she had done.
29. I tried to tell her that she needed to do something about her problem instead of just cry about it.
30. I said that if she didn't take action against her problem then I didn't want to hear it anymore.
48. I put him on the spot by saying, "We need to have a talk about what you're going to do with your future."
50. I said he would regret what he had done later.
58. So my husband would realize that he wasn't doing enough to support the family, I stressed the importance to have enough money to pay all bills by the end of the month.
67. I told her she was trying to buy my love and it wasn't working.
68. I told him that another person was using him.
70. I told her the only reason she was apologizing to me was to regain control of the situation.
71. I said she was wasting her talent.
85. I told her not to let her son walk all over her.
87. I told her she was not fulfilling her role as a parent at all.

Refusing to Interact to Accomplish

4. REBUFF TARGET

4a. Fend-Off

16. I hung up on him.
17. I stalled by saying, "Hang out for a while and I'll get back to you."
28. I stayed silent while he was agonizing over what could be wrong.
31. I was very aloof and cold.
46. I looked away when he was trying to apologize to me.
47. I pretended I was bored.
53. I started by giving short answers like "yes" or "whatever".
54. I tried to ignore her for a while.
66. Every time he tried to apologize to me, I just said "its no big deal" (even though it was).
74. I made it seem as if I'd had no time at all in the past six months to ponder our "falling out."
76. I kept putting him off.
79. I kept pushing him away.

4b. Stare Down

8. I tilted my head forward a bit and looked him directly in the eye, and held this position for about ten seconds.

4c. Be Sarcastic

34. I had a smile on my face as he cried.
37. I gave her an attitude so maybe she would realize something was wrong.
44. I was totally sarcastic.
65. I smiled at him, but with a "How dumb can you be" amused look.

4d. Reject

15. I told him that I would have nothing to do with him.
22. I told her that I wasn't in the best of moods.
69. I didn't accept her apology.

Acting to Accomplish

5. ASSAULT TARGET

7. I stood up when he called me a name.
18. I insulted her by really calling her names.
38. I began to use expletives.
41. I verbally went off, letting everything out.
49. I got in his face.
52. I raised my voice.
55. I used a scolding tone of voice that made her feel bad.
59. I argued with this person.
77. I punched him in the stomach.

impolite and inefficient, supportive of CCT's prediction of such emotional arousal prompting unacceptable behavior. Politeness and efficiency differentiate discomforting tactics, theoretically and perceptually.

Dis-ers completing the primary narrative survey report being moderately polite and very efficient (i.e., very quick, very direct) at hurting others, as Table 1 details. Over the course of their conversations, dis-ers report becoming less polite and more direct (see Table 1); only 14% increase their politeness and only 11% become less direct. As expected, decreased politeness is related to increased efficiency, $r=-.27$, $p<.021$. Discomforting is more efficient than polite, and politeness gives way to efficiency.

We explore dis-ers understanding of these conversational constraints by coding their open-ended reasons for changing/maintaining their politeness and efficiency (i.e., directness) for references to politeness (i.e., any reference to face), efficiency (i.e., any reference to time, effort, or resources), effectiveness (i.e., any reference to goal achievement), and/or "other" matters such as the dis-er's own emotional state (i.e., upset to calm), the situation (e.g., formal, professional), or moral issues (e.g., right or wrong thing to do).¹⁸ Each reason can receive multiple codes. After training, two coders achieve perfect test-retest reliability for all codes for 20 participants for politeness and directness reasons considered simultaneously. Participants offer, on average, 1 to 2 reasons explaining change or maintenance in their politeness, $M=1.51$, and directness, $M=1.25$.

The vast majority of reasons (80%) dis-ers provide for maintaining or changing their politeness and efficiency center on their concerns for politeness, efficiency, and effectiveness. Table 6 details when dis-ers increase, decrease, or maintain both their politeness and their directness for politeness, efficiency, effectiveness, or other reasons. Effectiveness concerns – most of which reflect goal failure – significantly loosen the politeness constraint, $\chi^2(2)=13.31$, $p<.001$, and significantly maintain and increase the efficiency constraint (i.e., directness), $\chi^2(2)=7.09$, $p<.05$. When participants decrease their politeness, they do so for politeness, efficiency, and effectiveness reasons equally, $\chi^2(2)=4.27$, ns, though when they increase their directness, they do so for effectiveness, $\chi^2(2)=11.38$, $p<.01$. When politeness or directness remain

Table 6. Discomforting Reasons For Changes in Politeness and Directness

Reason	Politeness				Directness				# of unique participants
	Decreases	Stays Same	Increases	Total # of Participants	Decreases	Stays Same	Increases	Total # of Participants	
Politeness	11	3	5	19	3	2	2	7	21
Efficiency	8	4	4	16	1	12	8	21	31
Effectiveness	18	9	2	29	4	13	16	33	43
Other									
Upset/calm	6	3	1	10	0	2	1	3	12
Situation	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Relationship	0	5	0	5	0	1	0	1	6
Moral Reason	1	2	2	5	1	1	1	3	7
No reason to change	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	3
Total	44	28	14		9	34	28		

the same over the course of the conversation, effectiveness reasons note that tactics worked, the target didn't resist, or that participants were already maximally rude or direct. Per CCT, emotional upset/calm (14% of reasons provided) affects politeness and efficiency in the same way as effectiveness, and for nearly identical reasons: the participant is upset (so loosening politeness and becoming more direct) or already maximally rude and direct (so staying the same). Every participant references politeness, efficiency, or effectiveness reasons at least once as grounds for changing or maintaining their politeness and directness, and as Table 6 details, from 37% to 75% of participants do so uniquely for each of these 3 reasons. Participants pay heed to politeness and efficiency considerations when discomforting, and loosen politeness and maintain/tighten efficiency to be effective.

Consequences of Discomforting

At the task level, participants judge themselves effective at hurting others (see Table 1) – only 1% think themselves completely ineffective – and targets resist moderately. We separately regressed dis-ers' reported effectiveness and target's resistance onto 8 different groups of predictors – goal activation, constraints, task effectiveness, task "interplay" (e.g., resistance, justification), relational qualities, emotions, individual characteristics, and situational dimensions (see Table 1) – and report the results in Table 7. Greater task effectiveness is achieved when the goal is important, the tactics are quick, resistance is minimal, the relationship is intimate, the dis-er has more relational power than the target, and the dis-er feels bad after the conversation; however, quick tactics, intimate relationships, more power, and low resistance are sufficient to predict task effectiveness. Target resistance is most likely when slower tactics are used, dis-ers are ineffective, and the relationship is non-intimate. As expected, effectiveness and resistance are negatively correlated and dis-ers are more effective when hurting those they know.

Relationally, dis-ers hurt those with whom they are closest (see Table 1), though 14% report hurting strangers or acquaintances. Relationships with targets are only moderately fragile prior to discomforting and change for the worse afterwards (see Table 1). However, relationships with targets improve for 21% of dis-ers and no relational change occurs for another 37%. Dis-ers

Table 7. Prediction of Task Consequences

Predictor Set	adj R ²	F	Predictors	β	t
<i>Effectiveness</i>					
Foundations					
Goal	.11	7.15**	Importance	.35	2.67**
Constraints	.16	11.40***	Quickness	.41	3.38***
Consequences					
Task interplay	.15	10.74**	Resistance	-.40	-3.28**
Relationship	.20	7.73***	Intimacy	.45	3.44***
			Power	.38	2.94**
Emotions	.12	8.31**	Feeling Bad After	.36	2.88**
Components					
Individuals		ns			
Situation		ns			
Final	.37	8.66***	Quickness	.29	2.49*
			Intimacy	.33	2.66*
			Power	.36	3.07**
			Resistance	-.26	-2.08*
<i>Resistance</i>					
Foundations					
Goal		ns			
Constraints	.07	5.06*	Quickness	-.29	-2.25*
Consequences					
Task effectiveness	.15	10.74**	Effectiveness	-.40	-3.28**
Task interplay		ns			
Relationship	.13	9.01**	Intimacy	-.38	-3.00**
Emotions		ns			
Components					
Individuals		ns			
Situation		ns			
Final	.21	8.03***	Effectiveness	-.31	-2.45*
			Intimacy	-.28	-2.22*

Notes: Predictors are entered into separate equations by sets of conceptually similar variables, absent the dependent variable. Only predictors within a set that relate significantly to task consequences are listed. A final regression equation is conducted entering only variables already found to be significant predictors in the prior analyses. The goal set includes importance of goal achievement and frequency of discomforting from others and from oneself. The constraint set includes tactical politeness, change in politeness, quickness, directness and change in directness. Task consequences are separated into effectiveness and interplay (resistance, justification) sets due to their conceptual and statistical independence. The relationship consequences set includes fragility, intimacy, change in relationship, power, change in power, gender make-up (same, different), and age difference between the participant and target. The emotions set includes negative self-evaluation during and after disaffinity seeking, and participants' enjoyment and satisfaction with what they did. The individuals set includes participants' age, the age of the target, participant's gender and gender of target. The situation set includes how formal, private, relaxed, urgent, task-related, noisy, and planned the situation was for the conversation. The final set includes those predictors that significantly relate to the dependent variable.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

typically have equal relational power to their targets, and gain power from hurting them (see Table 1); 48% report gaining power, only 11% report losing power. Table 8 details results of regression analyses seeking to predict changes in participants' affiliative bond and relational power.

Relationships deteriorate most when they are fragile prior to discomforting and when female dis-ers hurt male targets. Relational power increases the more dis-ers find goal achievement important, discomforting enjoyable, and the situation socially-oriented, though enjoyment is sufficient to predict increased relational power for dis-ers.

Emotionally, dis-ers feel moderately bad while discomforting, though their negative self-feelings post-conversation are somewhat stronger (see Table 1). Dis-ers moderately enjoy discomforting and are emotionally satisfied with their handiwork (see Table 1), though many do not feel bad at all either during (35%) or after (21%) discomforting. Table 9 details results of regression analyses seeking to predict post-conversation negative self-evaluation and discomforting enjoyment. Post-conversation negative self-evaluations are most likely when discomforting is quick, tactics are effective, dis-ers offer justifications for hurting targets, relationships are intimate, and dis-ers feel bad while discomforting; however, feeling bad while discomforting and being effective are sufficient to predict post-conversation negative self-feelings. Enjoyment of discomforting increases when goal achievement is important, discomforting generates relational power, dis-ers are satisfied with the results of their actions and do not feel bad while discomforting, and the situation is public and formal; increased relational power, satisfaction, lack of negative self-feelings while discomforting and public situations are sufficient to predict enjoyment of discomforting.

Summary. Discomforting is an important, multi-motivated goal often undertaken as retribution for perceived wrongdoing by the target, though also done to benefit targets, third parties, and relationships. Most participants do not plan their interactions nor is planning related to either goal importance, effectiveness, or *a priori* mood. Participants primarily discomfort persons older than themselves, who they feel close to, and with whom their relationships are not fragile, gaining power and variously influencing their affective bond. Deliberate dis-ers distress by putting

Table 8. Prediction of Relational Consequences

Predictor Set	adj R ²	F	Predictors	β	t
<i>Relationship Change</i>					
Foundations					
Goal		ns			
Constraints		ns			
Consequences					
Task effectiveness		ns			
Task interplay		ns			
Relationship	.14	5.33**	Fragility	-.28	-2.20*
			Gender Difference	.28	2.16*
Emotions		ns			
Components					
Individuals		ns			
Situation		ns			
Final	.14	5.33**	Fragility	-.28	-2.24*
			Gender Difference	.28	2.20*
<i>Power Change</i>					
Foundations					
Goal	.08	5.66*	Importance	.32	2.38*
Constraints		ns			
Consequences					
Task effectiveness		ns			
Task interplay		ns			
Relationship		ns			
Emotions	.15	10.87**	Enjoyment	.41	3.30**
Components					
Individuals		ns			
Situation	.05	4.21*	Task-Oriented	-.27	-2.05*
Final	.15	10.87***	Enjoyment	.41	3.30**

Notes: Predictors are entered into separate equations by sets of conceptually similar variables, absent the dependent variable. Only predictors within a set that relate significantly to relational consequences are listed. A final regression equation is conducted entering only variables already found to be significant predictors in the prior analyses. The goal set includes importance of goal achievement and frequency of discomforting from others and from oneself. The constraint set includes tactical politeness, change in politeness, quickness, directness and change in directness. Task consequences are separated into effectiveness and interplay (resistance, justification) sets due to their conceptual and statistical independence. The relationship consequences set includes fragility, intimacy, change in relationship, power, change in power, gender make-up (same, different), and age difference between the participant and target. The emotions set includes negative self-evaluation during and after disaffinity seeking, and participants' enjoyment and satisfaction with what they did. The individuals set includes participants' age, the age of the target, participant's gender and gender of target. The situation set includes how formal, private, relaxed, urgent, task-related, noisy, and planned the situation was for the conversation. The final set includes those predictors that significantly relate to the dependent variable.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 9. Prediction of Emotional Consequences

Predictor Set	adj R ²	F	Predictors	β	t
<i>Negative Self-Evaluation</i>					
Foundations		ns			
Goal		ns			
Constraints	.06	4.45*	Quickness	.27	2.11*
Consequences					
Task effectiveness	.12	8.31**	Effectiveness	.36	2.88**
Task interplay	.05	4.21*	Justification	.27	2.05*
Relationship	.09	6.13*	Intimacy	.33	2.48*
Emotions	.18	13.35***	Feeling Bad During	.44	3.65***
Components					
Individuals		ns			
Situation		ns			
Final	.26	10.44***	Feeling Bad During	.44	3.59***
			Effectiveness	.31	2.58*
<i>Enjoyment</i>					
Foundations					
Goal	.04	2.98	Importance	.24	1.73
Constraints		ns			
Consequences					
Task effectiveness		ns			
Task interplay		ns			
Relationship	.15	10.28**	Power Change	.41	3.21**
Emotions	.39	18.57***	Satisfaction	.50	4.33***
			Feeling Bad During	-.39	-3.74***
Components					
Individuals		ns			
Situation	.15	5.99**	Privacy	-.35	-2.79**
			Formality	.24	1.95
Final	.47	13.15***	Satisfaction	.50	4.33***
			Feeling Bad During	-.39	-3.74***
			Privacy	-.23	-2.23*
			Power Change	.22	2.16*

Notes: Predictors are entered into separate equations by sets of conceptually similar variables, absent the dependent variable. Only predictors within a set that relate significantly to emotional consequences are listed. A final regression equation is conducted entering only variables already found to be significant predictors in the prior analyses. The goal set includes importance of goal achievement and frequency of discomforting from others and from oneself. The constraint set includes tactical politeness, change in politeness, quickness, directness and change in directness. Task consequences are separated into effectiveness and interplay (resistance, justification) sets due to their conceptual and statistical independence. The relationship consequences set includes fragility, intimacy, change in relationship, power, change in power, gender make-up (same, different), and age difference between the participant and target. The emotions set includes negative self-evaluation during and after disaffinity seeking, and participants' enjoyment and satisfaction with what they did. The individuals set includes participants' age, the age of the target, participant's gender and gender of target. The situation set includes how formal, private, relaxed, urgent, task-related, noisy, and planned the situation was for the conversation. The final set includes those predictors that significantly relate to the dependent variable.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

down (i.e., criticizing, rubbing it in), forewarning, unfacing (inducing guilt, confronting), rebuffing (fending off, staring down, being sarcastic, rejecting), and assaulting targets. Discomforting tactics and strategies differ in politeness and efficiency, and participants pay heed to these constraints when discomforting, loosening politeness to maintain and/or increase efficiency in the face of goal failure. Participants are very effective at discomforting, and particularly so with others they know well.

Discussion

Participants deliberately made others feel bad, distressed and hurt emotionally, and typically (though not sufficient unto itself) because others wronged them in some way – betraying, disrespecting, embarrassing, offending, verbally abusing, insulting, or first hurting them. Seemingly, people are seeking retribution, though whether just reckoning or unjust revenge, we do not know. Twenty to 35% of participants report not feeling at all bad either during or after discomforting their targets. Are they justified? Are they unfeeling? Are they immoral? The legitimacy of their goal pursuit is unclear, especially when done, at least in part, for retribution. Our legal system daily grapples with the issue of when punishment for wrongdoing is deserved, and when undeserved, and specifies conditions related to the taking and defense of one's life, liberty, and property. We must begin grappling with when dis-ing others – disassociating, disaffirming, discrediting, dismissing, disobeying, disowning, disqualifying, disregarding, disrespecting, and distrusting them – is socially legitimate and illegitimate; when disconcerting, disquieting, and disapproving of others is morally acceptable and unacceptable. Our tendency has been to consider these goals 'dark', their pursuers 'perpetrators', their targets 'victims', their pursuit 'social undermining', and their existence the "underbelly" of human interaction (e.g., Andersen & Guerrero, 1998; Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994; Kowalski, 1997a, 2001a; Rook, 1998; Schlenker & Weigold, 1992; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998; Vinokur & van Ryn, 1993). We believe this approach confuses injury with transgression, hatred with malice, pain with misconduct, and disturbance with offense, particularly when done deliberately. Dis-ing may be painful or aversive, though not unjustified or immoral. Defamation and image-spoiling of unsavory characters may be ethical

(Gardner & Martinko, 1998; Mohamed & Gardner, 1996), and punishing criminals and children just (Felson, 1981). The issue is not that positive consequences can flow from disconcerting others – they can – but instead the legitimacy and morality of particular instances of dis-ing. Judgment demands perspective, and perspective requires knowledge. We do not know, and need to study, the conditions when dis-ing others is socially justified and morally legitimate.

We believe participants have a fairly refined sense of when, and when not, to discomfort others. Motives underlying discomforting are multiple and complex, and we believe this reflects a certain sophistication on the part of participants in deciding when to deliberately hurt others. Participants are strategic, primarily choosing to distress those closest to them when their relationships with them are not fragile; and nearly 60% of their relationships either remain the same or improve post-discomforting. Simultaneously, participants report a certain urgency when undertaking discomforting, and a definite effectiveness in achieving their goal. Though a bit unnerving, dis-ing others effectively seems a highly available social skill not only for discomforting, but for disconcerting others more generally (e.g., embarrassing them, making them dislike us, making them feel guilty and jealous, etc.). For goals that please, respect, calm, soothe and satisfy others, our communication competence seems significantly more suspect (see, e.g., Spitzberg, 1994). Is disconcerting others “natural” in some way that pleasing them is not? Do people seek to be “better” dis-ers as they do better soothers? Do we set different standards for evaluating comforting skills than for discomforting skills? Effectiveness in goal achievement may not be the correct standard by which to judge discomforting skill. On the other hand, thinking about “proper” and “suitable” ways to discomfort seems peculiar. Communication competence may depend on the simultaneous achievement of multiple goals (i.e., instrumental, relational, identity), more than on the effectiveness and propriety of achieving a particular goal (e.g., discomforting or comforting).

Discomforting Empirically

Perspective and intentionality on discomforting matter. Participants report deliberately discomforting others more than once a month, and less than others deliberately discomfort them. Dis-ees in prior research report being hurt both intentionally and accidentally as often as dis-ers

here report intentionally hurting others (Leary & Springer, 2001; Vangelisti, 1994). Our participants might intentionally discomfort others unusually often, though we do not believe so, given their similarity in so many other ways to participants in prior research. We note that participants in prior research do not report guilt and jealousy evocation as tactics they perceive others employ when hurting them, yet our participants report using guilt induction and jealousy evocation to discomfort others. Dis-ees may incorrectly infer discomforters’ true goal when achieved through guilt and jealousy induction. Dis-ees also may not realize that most of the hurts they experience are intentionally induced, or are motivated not to make that attribution. We can only speculate at present that acts of deliberate discomforting may be misperceived – in objective and/or intent.

Strategies of deliberate discomforting are not unlike messages people report hurt them, though our participants do not report using thoughtlessness and betrayal to hurt and rely additionally on guilt induction and jealousy evocation. Deliberate discomforting strategies also seem to differ in form (attacking or controlling) and force (weak or strong), dimensions Kinney (1994) finds underlie hurtful messages. Criticizing and rubbing it in (i.e., putting target down) are attacking in form while confronting, inducing guilt, and forewarning are controlling. Fending off targets is weak in force while verbally assaulting them strong. Dillard (1998) argues that behavioral action differs in only two ways – approach and withdrawal – though we find discomforting strategies offer 3 main behavioral options – approach, withdrawal, and assault. Approach and withdrawal presume interaction – something or someone being approached or withdrawn from – while verbal assaults act toward targets instead of interacting (or refusing to interact) with them.

Our research orientation to discomforting has been functional rather than “dark,” intentional rather than accidental, and from the point of view of the dis-er rather than the dis-ee. While providing a counter to past research, discomforting is not amoral, always intentional, or purely a dis-er driven activity. Ultimately, dis-ing needs examination from the joint and concurrent perspectives of both dis-ers and dis-ees. Two recent attempts to address this issue compare narratives of dis-ers with narratives of dis-ees, though the dis-ers and dis-ees are not reporting on

the same episode (Leary et al., 1998; Sharkey et al., in press). One possible approach to resolving this problem is to study dis-ing goals in the context of established couples where particular interactions can be explored from the perspective of both parties or to examine conversational interactions in chat rooms where dis-ing, both constructive and destructive (O'Sullivan & Flanagan, 2000), is common and observable.

A significant issue in all dis-ing research with which we are familiar is the reliance on autobiographical narratives rather than actual behavior. We believe autobiographical narratives are useful for studying behaviors that are otherwise exceedingly difficult to study ethically in laboratory conditions. While distortions are inevitable when relying on such narratives, the findings consistently provide insights useful to understanding actual behavior (e.g., Leary et al., 1998; Vangelisti, 1994; Vangelisti & Crumley, 1998). We believe the insights are more credible if they address theoretical as well as descriptive issues. Rather than seeking only to report descriptive facts about discomforting, we also tested our theoretical thinking about how individuals make tactical choices to accomplish conversational goals. We argue, based on CCT, that when discomforting, individuals pay heed to the politeness and efficiency of their behavior, and sacrifice politeness to maintain and/or increase their efficiency in the face of goal failure. We report evidence here in our autobiographical narrative method to support this claim. We point to evidence from other research, by other researchers, using other methods, and coming from other traditions that this principle extends beyond discomforting and autobiographical narratives.

Discomforting Theoretically

Within the framework of CCT, efficiency and politeness are constraints to which individuals pay heed when pursuing conversational goals. Participants differentiate discomforting tactics and strategies by efficiency and politeness, initially are more efficient than polite, and become less polite and more efficient to be effective (if not already maximally so). In CCT, minimum preferred levels of efficiency and politeness are determined by situational, relational, individual and interactive factors, and respond to – through loosening and tightening – goal blockage, emotional arousal, knowledge deficits, and incompetence. Said differently, efficiency and politeness are

qualities of tactics, while effectiveness is an assessment of goal achievement. Tactics are assessed with respect to their efficiency and politeness, which serve to constrain which tactics are deemed acceptable to use to achieve the goal in different situations, with different relational partners, under different interactive expectations, and with different personal predispositions. Goal failure begets either loosening of the least important constraint to facilitate goal success through the use of less acceptable tactics or abandonment of goal pursuit. The results of this research support CCT's position that effectiveness affects tactical choice, rather than determining tactical acceptability, driving the loosening, maintenance, and tightening of politeness and efficiency constraints (rather than being an inherent feature of the tactics used to achieve goals). Effectiveness and appropriateness (i.e., politeness) are not similar conceptual creatures along which tactics are assessed.

While discomforting tactics and strategies vary in both politeness and efficiency, people face certain difficulties being both polite and efficient simultaneously, as being polite is somewhat incompatible with being efficient when discomforting others. Conversational Constraint Theory posits that this incompatibility results from intrinsic characteristics of the discomforting goal – its negative affect potential (threat to positive face), its autonomy restriction (threat to negative face), and its task orientation (extensiveness of undertaking) (Kellermann, 1988, 2001; Kellermann & Park, 2001; Kellermann et al., 2001), characteristics that also distinguish compliance gaining goals of giving advice, asking favors, and enforcing unfulfilled obligations (Wilson, Kim & Meischke, 1991; Wilson & Kunkel, 2000). Discomforting likely implies disapproval or disrespect of the other person (evidenced by the many attacking strategies) and may somewhat restrict others' autonomy (evidenced by the fewer controlling strategies), though seems not to demand extensive effort. CCT argues that the greater the negative affect potential, autonomy restriction, and task orientation of a goal, the less congruent (i.e., more incompatible) efficiency and politeness become as constraints on tactical choice. The moderate incompatibility of efficiency and politeness for discomforting is consistent with CCT's understanding of constraint congruence.

Our goal is to continue testing CCT to explain people's tactical choices for achieving any conversational goal, including discomforting. We feel it important to investigate when people abandon goal pursuit, which no participant did here even in the face of target resistance, though targets may not have resisted effectively, objected strongly, or reacted emotionally enough. We feel it important to situate goal pursuit within its relational context, given participants discomforted others with whom they maintain ongoing relationships, and we know little about processes of regret and/or making amends. We feel it important to explore CCT's distinction between relational concern (concern about the status of the relationship) and relational intimacy (emotional closeness), as discomforting occurred most often when relationships were less fragile and more intimate. We feel it important to understand how planning occurs, as 35% of participants report planning their discomforting interaction, though how much, how long, and whether they talked to others about doing so is unknown. We feel it important to identify conditions under which goals are socially legitimate and illegitimate to pursue, and to begin judging the morality of interpersonal actions. We feel it important to continue to test CCT to better understand tactical choice and goal pursuit.

NOTES

¹ Participants are told: "You might want to make someone feel bad, distressed, or hurt emotionally for all sorts of reasons, including but not limited to: for their own good (e.g., to push them to do better or work harder, to motivate them, to make them face the truth, to change their behavior, to protect them, etc.); you feel they deserve it (e.g., as punishment, to teach a lesson, for revenge, to make them jealous, because they hurt you, to protect your loved ones, etc.); to protect yourself (e.g., to make people go away, to end a relationship, to fight back, to stop being a doormat, to get out of a hopeless situation, to get people to stop asking for favors, to prevent others from taking advantage of you, etc.); to gain control (e.g., to get respect, to be feared, to build character, to intimidate, to make others rely on you, to gain leverage, to get others to quit or leave work, to make others insecure, to make others dislike you, etc.); because you're in a bad mood (e.g., to blow off steam, to alleviate your anger, for your own amusement, to embarrass them, to see them squirm for the heck of it, to lash out, to pick a fight, so you can "make-up" afterwards, etc.); or to impress people (e.g., to impress your friends, to please someone else, to become part of a group, because you are told to, as a favor for someone else, etc.)." Twenty-four upper-division college students from the same university serve as focus-group participants to brainstorm these reasons, abstract them from details of particular experiences, describe them in as neutral terms as possible, and organize them into subgroups. All reasons are based on experiences of deliberate discomforting by participants or of others they knew or of which they had heard.

² In the past month, how many times have you tried to make another person feel bad emotionally? In the past month, how many times has another person tried to make you feel bad emotionally?

³ How important was it to you (i.e., how much did it matter to you) to achieve your goal of making the other person feel bad emotionally?

⁴ A copy of this comprehensive mood coding taxonomy can be obtained from the first author.

⁵ Coders are trained to ignore participants' internal thoughts, feelings, evaluations, or reactions, and all targets' behaviors and internal musings. Coders do not code behaviors prior to goal activation or in subsequent interactions. Each and every time a behavior is used by participants it is coded. Behaviors are coded regardless of their effectiveness. Separate behaviors are segmented if the participant grammatically separates them or when behaviors are conceptually distinct. A copy of the coding rules can be obtained from the first author.

⁶ During the conversation, how polite were you toward the other person as you tried to make them feel bad emotionally? How quickly (rapidly) in the conversation did you try to achieve your goal of making the other person feel bad emotionally? During the conversation, how direct (e.g., straightforward, to the point) were you as you tried to make the other person feel bad emotionally?

⁷ Did your politeness level [directness level (i.e., being straightforward and to the point)] change during the course of the conversation as you tried to make the other person feel bad emotionally? 1=Yes, I became much less polite [direct], 2=Yes, I became somewhat less polite [direct], 3=No, my politeness [directness] stayed the same, 4=Yes, I became somewhat more polite [direct], 5=Yes, I became much more polite [direct]

⁸ Ultimately, how effective were you in making the other person feel bad emotionally? During the conversation, to what extent did the other person actively resist your attempts to make them feel bad emotionally? During the conversation, to what extent did you justify or explain why you were trying to make the other person feel bad emotionally?

⁹ The a priori fragility of the affective bond is measured by asking: Prior to the conversation, how fragile (i.e., vulnerable, at risk, endangered) was your relationship with the other person? The intimacy of the affective bond is measured by 4 items: Prior to the conversation, how emotionally close were you and the other person? Prior to the conversation, how well did you like the other person? Prior to the conversation, how well did you know the other person? Prior to the conversation and regardless of your social role to the other person (i.e., parent, coworker, sibling,

roommate, ex-anything, etc.), which of the following best describes the social nature of your relationship which the other person? 1=strangers, 2=acquaintances, 3=friends, 4=close friends, 5=partners (e.g., significant others, spouses, lovers). This 5-point social relationship scale is linearly transformed into a 7-point scale prior to conducting intimacy scale analyses. A factor analysis of these 5 affective bond items yields a 2-factor solution accounting for 63% of the variance with relationship fragility loading significantly lower than the 4 intimacy items (all of which load at .70 or higher). Cronbach's alpha for the 4-item intimacy scale is .89; forcing fragility onto the scale lowers the reliability. This factor analysis supports the distinction Conversational Constraint Theory makes between relational concern (i.e., fragility) and relational intimacy.

¹⁰ After the conversation, did your relationship with the other person improve, deteriorate, or stay the same? 1=My relationship with the other person deteriorated considerably, 2=...deteriorated somewhat, 3=...stayed the same, 4=...improved somewhat, 5=...improved considerably.

¹¹ Prior to the conversation, did you feel you had more, less, or equal power and control in your relationship with the other person? 1=My power and control in the relationship was much less than the other person's, 2=...somewhat less..., 3=...about the same (or equal)..., 4=...somewhat greater..., 5=...much greater... After the conversation, did your power and control in your relationship with the other person increase, decrease, or stay the same? 1=My power and control in the relationship decreased considerably, 2=...decreased somewhat, 3=...stayed the same, 4=...increased somewhat, 5=...increased considerably.

¹² Two factors emerge with eigenvalues greater than 1 for 7 items, no factor is conceptually coherent, and these same 7 items produce a different structure in other research (Kellermann & Lee, 2001).

¹³ We provide the results of these analyses noting the results are questionable as only 8 people discomforted others for a third party's good, only 5 did so for the good of the relationship, and only 2 people did so for situational reasons. When discomforting is done for the good of third

parties, discomforting is unlikely also to be for a dis-er's own good, $\chi^2(1)=5.48$, $p<.019$.

Discomforting for the good of third parties is significantly more likely when also done for the target's good (50%) and virtually nonexistent when not done for the target's good, $\chi^2(1)=9.62$, $p<.002$.

Situational reasons make relational reasons more likely as well, $\chi^2(1)=21.56$, $p<.001$.

¹⁴ Participants are provided the 87 tactics on separate slips of paper that are arranged differently and randomly for each participant. Participants are instructed to sort tactics into piles so those similar in method are placed in the same pile and a new pile is started whenever a tactic is different in method from those previously sorted. Participants are told they can create as many or as few piles as they feel is necessary to describe the similarities and differences between tactics.

¹⁵ The co-occurrence matrix records for each pair of tactics the total number of times each pair is placed in the same group across the 70 participants. The higher each pair of tactics' co-occurrence, the more similar the tactics.

¹⁶ Participants rating efficiency are told that: "An efficient tactic for getting others to feel bad, distressed and/or hurt emotionally is immediate and to the point; it does not waste time, energy, effort or steps in generating discomfort. An efficient tactic is expedient. By contrast, an inefficient tactic for generating discomfort takes time, energy and/or effort; it is an indirect and roundabout way of getting others to feel bad, distressed and/or hurt emotionally. An inefficient tactic is wasteful." Participants rating politeness are told that: "A polite tactic for getting others to feel bad, distressed and/or hurt emotionally is socially appropriate; it is pleasant, proper, considerate, and mannerly in generating discomfort. A polite tactic is nice. By contrast, an impolite tactic for generating discomfort is socially inappropriate; it is discourteous, ill-mannered, uncivil, and/or nasty. An impolite tactic is rude." Participants rate tactical politeness or efficiency on 7-point, magnitude scales (1=very inefficient or very impolite, 7=very efficient or very polite). The 87 tactics are then listed in the context of the discomforting goal (i.e., "To make the other person feel bad, distressed and hurt emotionally, I").

¹⁷ Distributions of participants' estimates for each tactic's efficiency and politeness are leptokurtic (i.e., more converged than normal on the mean of the distribution; a smaller than expected variation), indicating participants agree in their tactical assessments.

¹⁸ For politeness, reasons refer to face maintenance, face saving, or defacing either participants' or targets' positive or negative face, and use words or phrases evidencing approval or disapproval of others, respect or disrespect for others, or concern or lack thereof for others. For efficiency, reasons refer to expediency by using words or phrases involving time (e.g., speed, slow, fast quick), effort (e.g., patience, not losing steam, intensity), or resources (e.g., keeping focused, expending energy). For effectiveness, reasons refer to goal achievement, and use words or phrases that evidence participants' tactics are working (or not), meeting resistance (or not), getting through (or not), or reaching the goal (or not).

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