Official Public Apology Effects on Victim Group Members' Evaluations of the Perpetrator Group

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Many scholars, politicians, and pundits speculate that apologies and reparations for historical injustices improve intergroup relations and affirm social identities. We examined these questions in two studies. In Study 1, we surveyed a group of Chinese and non-Chinese Canadians before and after the Canadian government apologized for unjust policies enforced on Chinese immigrants between 1885 and 1947. In Study 2, we randomly assigned Canadians to read that an apology had or had not been offered for a harm either committed or experienced by Canada. In each study, we found that victim group members evaluated the perpetrator group more favorably after redress was offered. Apologies weakly and inconsistently affected social identity evaluations amongst victim and perpetrator groups. We discuss the psychological and policy implications of the results.

Keywords: intergroup apology, reconciliation, historical injustice

Politicians, scholars, and the general public debate whether governments should apologize and offer material compensation for government sanctioned past injustices, such as slavery and Jim Crow laws. So far, eight American states and the federal House of Representatives have apologized for slavery, but the Senate and President have not (Fears, 2008). No U.S. government body has offered material compensation for slavery. In other cases, governments have apologized and offered compensation for historical injustices. For instance, Canada and the U.S. offered apologies and financial compensation for the internment of people of Japanese heritage during WWII more than 40 years after the war (Brooks, 1999).

Those who support government redress for historical harms argue that it is a moral imperative (Thompson, 2008). Supporters also suggest that apologies and compensation benefit both sides by promoting conciliatory responses from the recipients (Hall, 1997) and removing any negative associations those who belong to recipient and apologizing groups may have with their ingroups (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Blatz, Schumann, & Ross, 2009; Brooks,

1999; Minow, 1998). Opponents of redress counter that: (a) it is illogical to apologize for the actions of others, (b) it is unfair to ask current generations to pay compensation for injustices they did not commit, and (c) members of the previously victimized group will often regard the offer as inadequate (Brooks, 1999; Howard, 1997; Thompson, 2008).

As psychological researchers, we do not seek to establish the morality or logic of redress; we leave such debates to scholars from other disciplines (e.g., Gibney, Howard-Hassmann, Coicaud, & Steiner, 2008). However, we can contribute to the debate by testing empirically whether, in certain contexts, redress has the proposed negative and positive consequences. In the current article, we present two studies that examine the effects of offers of redress on people's evaluations of the perpetrator and victim groups.

Intergroup Apology Structure

People say all sorts of things when they have wronged someone and are trying to make amends. When has someone apologized, and when have they simply excused, explained, or justified their actions? Linguists and other scholars claim that the defining elements of an apology are an expression of remorse and an acceptance of responsibility (Blum-Kulka & Olstain, 1984; Tavuchis, 1991), but the vast majority of interpersonal apologies contain nothing other than a simple statement of remorse (e.g., "sorry"; Meier, 1998). A host of other statement types can accompany apologies. Apologizers will sometimes admit wrongdoing (e.g., "That was wrong"), acknowledge harm done (e.g., "You were hurt by my actions"), promise forbearance (e.g., "I will never do that again"), self-castigate (e.g., "I am such a fool"), and offer repair (e.g., "I will pay for the damages"; Blatz et al., 2009; Blum-Kulka & Olstain, 1984; Lazare, 2004; Scher & Darley, 1997; Tavuchis,

1991). Intergroup apologies differ from interpersonal apologies in that they often will contain many if not all apology elements (Blatz et al., 2009; Tavuchis, 1991). This more thorough wording likely occurs because intergroup apologies are offered in settings in which sincerity must be communicated formally, and because they are typically offered for very severe harms (Blatz et al., 2009).

Intergroup Apology Effects

Political apologizers are often comprehensive and clear, but do their apologies achieve their oft-stated goals of improving group relations? Employing comparative history to substantiate their claims, some historians and legal scholars suggest that group apologies promote forgiveness and reconciliation (Barkan, 2000; Brooks, 1999; Dyzenhaus & Moran, 2006; Minow, 1998, 2002). For example, they suggest that Japan's reluctance to redress its wartime actions has prevented reconciliation with its neighbors, whereas Germany's offers of redress have promoted positive relations with its former enemies (Barkan, 2000). Although instructive, such evidence is inconclusive because countries and past injustices diverge on many dimensions.

Recently, Wohl, Matheson, Branscombe and Anisman (in press) used a nonexperimental survey design to study the effects of an apology given by the Canadian government for a policy known as the Chinese Head Tax (the same apology is the focus of Study 1 of the present article, see below). At two times—once before this apology was given, but after it had been announced as forthcoming, and again a year later—Chinese Canadians indicated whether they forgave Canadians for the Head Tax. Participants initially reported feeling forgiving of Canadians, but one year later such forgiveness had reduced. The authors attributed this decline to Chinese Canadians feeling that the words in the apology were not followed up by significant action. Although instructive, this study is limited as a test of intergroup apology effectiveness. First, in the survey conducted before the apology was given, the authors described to participants that an apology was coming very soon. It is possible that forgiveness increased when participants heard the apology would happen, but then later this forgiveness boost waned. In essence, the study lacks the no apology control condition needed to test apology effectiveness. Second, participants were not required to read or hear the apology. Many argue that, as a symbolic gesture, apologies are only effective when the words, feelings, and emotions expressed in the apology are experienced by the apology's recipients (Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Blatz et al., 2009; Tavuchis, 1991). Third, it is possible that an initial positive response is possible once the apology is offered, but this positive reaction is lost when the apology is not followed with meaningful action (Wohl, Hornsey, & Philpot, 2011).

A few researchers have tested whether government apologies elicit forgiveness a short time after they are offered. These studies use experimental designs which allow for cause and effect inferences (for reviews see Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Wohl et al., 2011). The evidence from these studies is equivocal. For instance, Brown, Wohl, and Exline (2008) randomly assigned Canadian university students to read that former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had or had not apologized for an accidental friendly fire killing of Canadian soldiers by U.S. Air Force pilots. Participants who were presented with the apology exhibited greater willingness to forgive the U.S. military than did those who did not read the apology. Wohl, Hornsey, and Bennett (2012) conducted a similar study comparing the effect of an intergroup apology, compared with no apology, offered a short time after a different friendly fire incident. They found that this apology elicited forgiveness, but only if the apology used primary emotion terms (e.g., anger and sadness) and not if the apology used secondary emotion terms (e.g., shame and concern; see also Leonard, Mackie, & Smith, 2011). On the other hand, Philpot and Hornsey (2008) asked Australian university students to read about a series of intentional injustices suffered a long time ago by Australia. The researchers randomly assigned participants to read that the perpetrator groups had or had not apologized. Across four studies, the results consistently demonstrated that participants did not report increased group forgiveness after an apology relative to before. How can apologies sometimes encourage group forgiveness and sometimes not? Two differences may be important to the present discussion. First, the friendly fire incidences occurred shortly before the apology, whereas the injustices in the Australian studies occurred many years before the apologies. Second, the actions of the perpetrators of the Australian injustices were intentional, whereas the friendly fire incidences were accidental. Conceivably, apologies offered for distant, intentional harms do not promote forgiveness.

We propose a shift in focus from past literature. Apologies for distant, intentional harms may improve group relations even if they have little effect on forgiveness. Many conflict resolution scholars suggest that apologies for intentional, historical injustices should not be expected to elicit forgiveness (de Grieff, 2008; Minow, 1998). Redress for a much earlier injustice is often targeted at descendants of the victims, or the victim group generally. As they were not directly victimized themselves (if many or all of the original victims are deceased), current members of the victim group may feel that they are not in a moral position to offer forgiveness (McLernon, Cairns, & Hewstone, 2002). Nonetheless, current members of the victim group can still express positive feelings for current members of the perpetrator group (de Grieff, 2008; Hamber, 2007; Minow, 1998). For example, although contemporary members of groups targeted in the Holocaust may refuse to forgive the perpetrators, they could regard Germans favorably today.

In the present studies, we asked members of the victimized group to evaluate the perpetrator group on a global evaluation scale. We assessed whether evaluation on a global, somewhat decontextualized attitude measure would be altered by redress. By focusing on global evaluations this research also connects to the broader group relations literature in which researchers commonly use global evaluation measures to assess the favorability of an intergroup relationship (Nadler & Liviatan, 2006; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). In addition to examining how the victim group evaluated the perpetrator group, we assessed how members of the perpetrator group evaluated the victim group. According to Just World Theory (Hafer & Begue, 2005; Lerner, 1980), an uncompensated injustice may lead people to disparage the victims; therefore, offering an apology, and possibly reparations, for an historical injustice may lead members of the perpetrator group to be less likely to disparage members of the victim group.

We also examined the effects of redress on participants' evaluations of their ingroups. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people are motivated to think highly of the groups to which they belong. For perpetrator majority group

members, it is perhaps more difficult to evaluate their group favorably when the government and legal system are accused of perpetrating unjust harms (Shnabel, Nadler, Ullrich, Dovidio, & Carmi, 2009; Wohl et al., 2011). By acknowledging and condemning the harm, redress serves to dissociate current members of the perpetrator majority group from the injustice and may enhance their social identity (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988).

Unredressed historical harms also potentially threaten victim group members' social identity. The government's failure to redress the harms may be taken as evidence that society minimizes the injustice and undervalues their group. Anecdotally, victim group members declare that they would feel more accepted in their country after receiving redress. For instance, one Chinese Canadian who advocated for an apology for the Chinese Head Tax (see Study 1 for more details) said "[u]ntil this apology is done, many in the community feel that Chinese-Canadians are not full citizens because they've never been apologized to" ("Harper Makes Apology," 2006). We assessed whether redress had this anticipated effect.

Overview of the Studies

In Study 1, we examined the implications of the Canadian government's apology and compensation for the Chinese Head Tax and related policies (Dyzenhaus & Moran, 2006). In Study 2, we used an experimental design to examine the effects of apologies. We focused on apologies rather than compensation because apologies directly address the psychological hurt and upset caused by a transgression, and because political groups offer apologies more commonly than reparations (Brooks, 1999). These studies differ from much past research in that we include members of both the perpetrator and victim groups in our analyses. We also examine responses to both an actual government apology as well as an experimentally contrived apology. Previous research only reports the results of either an experiment or a nonexperiment.

Study 1

In the late 1800s, the Canadian government recruited Chinese men to Canada to help build a railroad. Once the railroad was complete, the government decided to limit Chinese immigration by imposing a Head Tax equivalent to 2 years wages on Chinese, and only Chinese, immigrants. At the same time, the government spent millions of dollars recruiting immigrants of European descent. The Head Tax separated families for years, as men living in Canada could not afford to pay for their families to join them. On June 22, 2006 the Canadian Parliament unanimously approved an apology for the Chinese Head Tax, which Prime Minister Stephen Harper subsequently delivered in the House of Commons ("Harper Makes Apology," 2006). Reparations in the form of $20,000 accompanied this apology to every Head Tax payer, or their spouse if they were deceased. The government also created a memorial education fund ("PM Unveils Redress," 2006).

Before and after the Canadian government offered this apology, we asked Chinese and non-Chinese Canadians to indicate their attitude toward the perpetrator and victim groups, as well as to indicate how much they identified with Canada. By doing so, we tested whether apologies can improve intergroup attitudes and restore social identity. As a secondary research goal, we asked

participants to complete a variety of scales which measured their opinion of the actual apology and reparations package. We did this in part to examine whether people react positively or negatively to redress, and in part to help interpret our results. Some scholars suggest that an apology or reparations offer may be devalued by both the victimized and perpetrator groups. That is, the victimized group may reactively devalue redress because: (a) they are skeptical of any offer provided by a group that has previously wronged them (Ross & Ward, 1995), or (b) any historical harm cannot be adequately compensated through apologies or reparations (Minow, 1998). Others suggest that a perpetrator group may evidence a backlash against a redress offer because it threatens their image of their group (see Blatz et al., 2009 for a review). Collecting data on how people evaluated the redress allowed us to test these notions.

Method

Participants

Three-hundred and eighteen Canadian university students completed the initial questionnaire in May of 2006. Of the participants, 97 reported Chinese heritage. Four weeks after the government offered redress, in July−August of 2006, we sent an online questionnaire to all 97 Chinese Canadians in our sample and a random selection of 101 others. Fifty-nine non-Chinese (21 women, $M_{age} = 20.74$) and 58 Chinese Canadian (23 women, $M_{age} = 21.76$) participants completed the survey (59% overall completion rate). Although this completion rate is lower than ideal, it is higher than many other time-sensitive research studies (e.g., flashbulb memory research such as Hirst et al., 2009 or Schmolck, Buffalo, & Squire, 2000). When asked to indicate ethnicity, 49 of the 59 people in the non-Chinese Canadian sample chose White/Caucasian, six chose Asian, two chose East Indian, and two chose other.

Procedure and Materials

At both Time 1 and Time 2, participants read a brief description of the Head Tax. At Time 2, participants read the full text of the apology and a description of the reparations package after reading the summary of the Head Tax policy, but before completing any of the outcome measures.

At both Time 1 and Time 2, after reading the passage, the participants evaluated Canadians of European and Chinese heritage on separate one-item scales (e.g., "How positively or negatively do you feel toward Canadians of European heritage?"). Endpoints of the scale were labeled 1 (very negative) and 7 (very positive). All participants also completed a 4-item identification with Canada scale adapted from Obst and White (2005). On this scale, they indicated their agreement to items (e.g., "I am pleased to be Canadian") on 7-point scales with endpoints labeled 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree); Time 1 $\alpha = .82$, 95% CI [.82, .90], Time 2 $\alpha = .88$, 95% CI [.84, .91]. For additional information on reliability and validity of this scale see Obst and White (2005). Chinese participants completed the same 4-item scale assessing identification with being Chinese Canadian; Time 1 $\alpha = .78$, CI [.69, .86], Time 2 $\alpha = .60$, 95% CI [.39, .75].

At Time 2 only, participants evaluated the apology, and indicated their agreement with several statements about why the government apologized and offered compensation. For all items, par-

ticipants indicated agreement on 7-point disagree-agree scales with endpoints labeled 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). Four statements created an index of evaluation of the apology ("I am satisfied with Harper's apology"; "Harper offered a sincere apology"; "Harper's apology is complete"; and "I find Harper's apology unacceptable" (reverse coded); non-Chinese α = .84, 95% CI [76, .90], Chinese α = .87, 95% CI [.80, .91]). Participants' views regarding the effectiveness of the redress offer were assessed by indicating their agreement with five statements ("With the apology and financial compensation, justice has finally been done," "Harper's apology satisfactorily explained why the head tax occurred," "Most non-Chinese Canadians are deeply sorry for the Head Tax," "Because of the apology, similar unjust government practices will never happen again," and "Because of the cash payments, similar unjust government practices will never happen again"; non-Chinese α = .54, 95% CI [.33, .70], Chinese α = .70, 95% CI [55, .81]).

Results

Data analyses only included participants who completed both surveys. All measures completed at both Time 1 and Time 2 were subjected to a 2 (Ethnicity: Chinese or non-Chinese Canadian) × 2 (Time of survey: before or after redress) Mixed-Model Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Answers to the questions appearing only at Time 2 were tested for ethnicity differences using *t* tests.

Evaluation of the Apology and Reparations

Means and standard deviations for measures collected only at Time 2 are presented in Table 1. Overall participants were positively disposed toward the apology (M = 5.07, SD = 1.08), but were somewhat sceptical of the impact the entire redress package would have, as indicated by a mean slightly below the midpoint on the redress effectiveness measure (M = 3.39, SD = 0.97). Although all groups evaluated the apology positively, non-Chinese participants evaluated the apology more favourably than Chinese Canadian participants did (see Table 1), $t(115)$ = 2.19, p = .031, Cohen's d = 0.26. In addition, non-Chinese Canadian respondents were also more likely to think that the redress was effective (see Table 1), $t(115)$ = 2.27, p = .025, Cohen's d = 0.35.

Comparisons Between Measures Completed at Both Times

Group means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2. For European Canadian evaluations, there was a main effect of

Table 1
Mean (and Standard Deviation) Response to Apology and Compensation at Time 2 as a Function of Ethnicity (Study 1)

	Ethnicity	
	Non-Chinese	Chinese
Evaluation of apology	5.29[*] (1.09)	4.85[*] (1.04)
Redress effectiveness	3.59[*] (0.91)	3.19[*] (1.00)

Note. Participants indicated agreement with items on a 7-point scale with endpoints labeled (1) *strongly disagree* and (7) *strongly agree.* An [*] indicates that the means differ at p < .05.

ethnicity, $F(1, 114)$ = 7.89, p = .006, Cohen's d = 0.39. Non-Chinese Canadian participants evaluated European Canadians more favourably than did Chinese Canadian participants (M = 5.11, SD = 1.13, and M = 4.60, SD = 1.15). Both groups evaluated European Canadians more favourably after the redress at Time 2 (M = 4.96, SD = 1.19) than before the redress at Time 1 (M = 4.75, SD = 1.13), but this main effect of time was not statistically significant, $F(1, 114)$ = 3.35, p = .070, Cohen's d = 0.15. The overall interaction was not significant, F < 1.

There were no effects of the redress on Chinese or non-Chinese Canadian participants' evaluations of Chinese Canadians or identification with Canadians, or on Chinese Canadian participant's identification with Chinese Canadians (all Fs < 1).

Discussion

Contrary to the predictions of some scholars and politicians (e.g., Brooks, 1999), neither the previously victimized nor the perpetrator group reacted negatively against the redress. Although Chinese Canadians evaluated the apology less positively than non-Chinese Canadians did, both groups evaluated the apology positively. On the other hand, neither group thought the overall redress would be very effective at promoting justice or preventing future injustices. Notably, Chinese Canadians were more pessimistic about the effectiveness of the redress package compared with non-Chinese Canadians.

Our primary interests were in whether the apology and reparations offer would promote reconciliatory attitudes and more positive evaluations of people's social identities. Looking at the pattern of means, participants of both ethnicities indicated more positive evaluations of European Canadians after the redress was offered compared with before, consistent with the predictions that redress contributes to more positive intergroup evaluations and restores social identities. However, this finding's *p* value (.07) did not reach standard levels of statistical significance (p < .05), so cannot be interpreted as supporting either the social identity or reconciliation prediction. The study contained a number of other measures that examined the social identity hypotheses. How participants evaluated of the victim group, Chinese Canadians, was unaltered by an offer of redress; as well, neither the victim nor the perpetrator group identified more strongly with their ingroups after the redress offer, compared with before. Thus, the participants' pessimism about the effects of the apology and reparations seems warranted; the redress was not particularly effective at promoting reconciliation or affirming social identities.

Study 1 is a very rare dataset. In most research conducted to date on intergroup apologies, researchers have been compelled to fabricate an apology, and, occasionally, an injustice (Brown et al., 2008; Leonard et al., 2011). But in the present study, neither the injustice nor the redress was fabricated, and the apology was tested in the context and around the time it was given. However, with these strengths come some associated weaknesses. An attrition rate over 40% between Time 1 and 2 limits the strengths of our conclusions. Moreover, a lack of random assignment to conditions limits our ability to conclude cause and effect. Next we report a more controlled, experimental study, in which we again examine the effects of an apology on intergroup attitudes.

Table 2
Mean (and Standard Deviation) Response to Head Tax as a Function of Ethnicity and Time (Study 1)

	Ethnicity			
	Non-Chinese		Chinese	
	Time (before or after apology and compensation)			
	Before	After	Before	After
Evaluation of European Canadians	5.00 (1.14)	5.19 (1.11)	4.48 (1.05)	4.72 (1.23)
Evaluation of Chinese Canadians	5.02 (1.16)	4.93 (1.34)	4.98 (1.22)	5.14 (1.07)
Identity with Canadians	6.28 (0.97)	6.23 (1.07)	5.23 (1.02)	5.21 (1.05)

Note. For evaluations of European and Chinese Canadians, participants indicated how positively they evaluated the group on a 7-point scale with endpoints labeled (1) *very negative* and (7) *very positive*. For identity with Canadians, participants indicated agreement to four items on a 7-point scale with endpoints labeled (1) *strongly disagree* and (7) *strongly agree.*

Study 2

We randomly assigned Canadian participants to read about an injustice in which Canadians were presented as either perpetrators or victims. We adapted the Olympic doping passage developed by Philpot and Hornsey (2008). Canadian participants were randomly assigned to read that either the Canadian or Dutch government was complicit in doping Olympic athletes, ultimately costing athletes from the other country Olympic medals. Thus, as participants were all Canadians, they were randomly assigned to read the materials from the perpetrator group perspective—when Canada committed the harm— or the victim group perspective—when the Netherlands committed the harm. To our knowledge, this is the first study of intergroup redress that randomly assigns participants to belong to the victim or perpetrator group. We also randomly assigned participants to read that the doping country had or had not officially apologized.

Also unlike previous studies, we presented the apology in all conditions. However, in the no official apology condition, participants read that the apology was leaked to a newspaper and that the government was only considering it. In the official apology condition, participants read that the Prime Minister of the perpetrating country had offered the apology. By including the leaked apology in the no official apology condition, we ensure that all participants complete the measures with the same apology in mind, rather than have the apology group respond to a consistent apology, and the no apology group anticipates a possible apology whose structure varies from participant to participant.

Method

Participants

Two-hundred and thirty-eight Canadian university students (160 women, 71 men, seven gender unreported; M_{age} = 20.91) completed an online questionnaire in exchange for course credit. When asked to indicate ethnicity 108 chose Asian, 90 White, nine East Indian, four Black, four Middle Eastern, two Hispanic, one Aboriginal, 13 indicated other, and seven left the question blank.

Procedure and Materials

After consenting to complete the study, participants read a brief description of a fictionalized injustice, which we adapted from Philpot and Hornsey (2008) to be more relevant for Canadian participants. Speed skating is Canada's most successful Olympic program. Since 1992, Canada has won 41 medals in speed skating, second only to the Netherlands with 44. Participants were randomly assigned to read that Canadian or Dutch government officials had encouraged speed skating athletes to take steroids. When Canada implemented the cheating program, participants read that the program negatively affected the Netherlands more than any other country. When the Netherlands cheated, participants read that the program affected Canada more than any other country.

Participants then read that the government of the victimized country had demanded an apology from the government of the perpetrating country. We randomly assigned participants to read that the government of the perpetrating country had or had not apologized. Participants in all conditions read this apology:

> The Canadian government (government of the Netherlands) and Ministry of Sport should have prevented this illegal activity. On behalf of our entire nation, I sincerely apologize to the Dutch (Canadian) athletes who were deprived of medals and to the people of the Netherlands (Canada) who were unable to experience the thrill of Olympic victories.

In the official apology condition, participants read that the government had offered this apology at a press conference. In the no official apology condition, participants read that the government had yet to decide whether to apologize, but that someone leaked an apology they were considering to a newspaper.

We assessed participants' evaluations of Canadians and Dutch people on 101-point thermometer evaluation measures with endpoints of the scale labeled 0 (*extremely unfavorable*) and 100 (*extremely favourable*). Participants indicated how much they identified with Canadians by indicating agreement on 7-point scales with endpoints labeled 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*) to all 12 items of the Obst and White (2005) group identification measure (e.g., "I am pleased to be Canadian"; α = .91, 95% CI [.88, .93]).

Results

Means and standard deviations of the outcome measures by condition are presented in Table 3. Answers to all measures were analysed using 2 (Perpetrating country: Canada or the Netherlands) × 2 (Apology: not offered or offered) ANOVAs. When the

Table 3

Group Evaluations as a Function of Randomly Assigned Group Status and Apology (Study 2)

	Group status			
	Victimized		Perpetrator	
	Apology			
	No	Yes	No	Yes
Evaluation of Dutch people				
M	53.60	63.07	67.38	69.97
SD	21.28	16.39	16.68	16.23
Evaluation of Canadians				
M	77.07	81.60	78.13	75.43
SD	12.98	10.15	13.07	15.42

Note. All evaluations made on 101 thermometer evaluation scale with endpoints labeled (1) *extremely negative* and (100) *extremely positive*.

analysis yielded a significant interaction, we tested simple effects using the pooled error and degrees of freedom.

Evaluation of Dutch People

Overall, participants evaluated Dutch people favourably ($M = 63.63$, $SD = 18.75$). The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of perpetrating country, $F(1, 227) = 19.23$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.50$. Participants evaluated Dutch people more positively when they suffered from Canada's Olympic doping program ($M = 68.92$, $SD = 16.39$) than when the Netherlands implemented a doping program ($M = 58.30$, $SD = 19.52$). The main effect of apology was not significant, $F(1, 227) = 2.13$, $p = .146$, Cohen's $d = 0.10$, but importantly the interaction was, $F(1, 227) = 6.54$, $p = .011$, Cohen's $d = 0.76$. Simple effects analyses revealed that when the Netherlands perpetrated the doping program, participants evaluated Dutch people more favourably if the government of the Netherlands had apologized than if it had not (see Table 3), $F(1, 227) = 8.17$, $p = .005$, Cohen's $d = 0.39$. When Canada perpetrated the doping program, participants evaluated Dutch people equally positively whether the Canadian government had or had not apologized (see Table 3), $F(1, 227) = 0.59$, $p = .443$, Cohen's $d = 0.13$.

Evaluation of Canadians

Overall participants evaluated Canadians favourably ($M = 78.16$, $SD = 13.04$). The ANOVA revealed neither a significant main effect of perpetrating country, $F(1, 234) = 2.37$, $p = .125$, Cohen's $d = 0.15$, nor apology, $F(1, 234) = 0.27$, $p = .606$, Cohen's $d = 0.07$, but did show a significant interaction between the variables, $F(1, 234) = 4.70$, $p = .031$, Cohen's $d = 0.44$. When Canada perpetrated the injustice, there was no significant difference in how Canadians evaluated Canadians as a group (see Table 3), $F(1, 234) = 1.36$, $p = .245$, Cohen's $d = 0.19$. When the Netherlands perpetrated the injustice, participants evaluated Canadians more positively after the apology compared with before (see Table 3), but this effect did not reach standard significance levels, $F(1, 234) = 3.62$, $p = .058$, Cohen's $d = 0.39$.

Identification with Canadians

Overall, participants identified with being Canadian ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.98$). The analyses revealed no significant effects.

Discussion

Our primary goal in this study was to examine whether an apology offered on behalf of a perpetrator group for a historical harm would improve victim group attitudes toward the perpetrator. Participants in the victim group condition indicated significantly more positive attitudes toward the perpetrator group after the apology compared with before. This result, observed in an experimental setting examining a contrived apology, was consistent with a trend observed in response to an actual apology in Study 1. Government apologies appear to promote reconciliatory feelings in the form of more positive global evaluations of the perpetrator group felt by the historically victimized group. As we randomly assigned participants to the victim or perpetrator condition, we can be certain that membership in a victim group, rather than some other characteristic of their group, leads people to respond to the apology with more positive evaluations of the perpetrator group. This strengthens the conclusions one can draw from these data. However, it is unclear from the present data exactly why apologies promote more positive evaluations of the perpetrator group by the victim group.

Recall that Philpot and Hornsey (2008) found that apologies for historical and intentional harms do not lead to forgiveness. We adapted our scenario from Philpot and Hornsey (2008); thus, any differences between the injustices in this study and their study are not likely to account for the different results. We believe, instead, that the differences between our results and those of Philpot and Hornsey (2008) arise because we are examining a different outcome variable. That is, we believe an apology can make victim group members feel more positively disposed toward the perpetrator. Finally, we once again examined whether an apology would alter evaluations of, and identification with, one's ingroup in both the victim group and perpetrator group condition. Neither evaluation of the ingroup nor identification with the ingroup were altered by the apology in either the victim or perpetrator group conditions.

General Discussion

We were primarily interested in whether official public apologies offered for historical harms improve how the victim group evaluates the group on whose behalf the apology is offered. Two studies that have complementary strengths and weaknesses supported that they do, but the results were much stronger in one of these studies than in the other. Study 1—a test-retest study which examined the effects of an apology before and after it was actually offered—showed modest support. Although, at a mean level, Chinese Canadian participants became more positively disposed toward European Canadians after the government apologized for the Chinese Head Tax, this effect was not statistically significant ($p = .07$). In Study 2—an experiment in which participants were randomly assigned to the victim or perpetrator group and randomly assigned to an official apology or no official apology condition—Canadians became significantly more positively disposed toward

Dutch people when the Dutch government apologized for perpetrating an Olympic doping scenario compared with when they had not apologized. We may have observed a more muted effect in Study 1 because, when we collected data before the apology was offered, the government had already promised that an apology was forthcoming; therefore, some of its effect may have already taken place.

It would be fruitful for future research to sort out exactly why apologies can, in some contexts, promote more positive global evaluations of the perpetrator group, but not elicit forgiveness (e.g., Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). We speculate that global evaluations of the perpetrator group can increase when forgiveness does not because victim group members are encouraged by the apology, but are reluctant to offer forgiveness either because they do not feel they are in the moral position to offer forgiveness for harms they did not personally suffer (McLernon et al., 2002), or because they feel that the perpetrator group needs to follow through with more action before forgiveness can be granted (Wohl et al., 2011). It is likely that victim group members consider both concerns when examining an apology, and that each carries more or less weight depending on the particulars of the injustice and the apology being offered for it. However, we do not have any direct evidence for such conjectures, and await further observations before drawing conclusions. Regardless of the mechanisms involved, the present data suggest that intergroup apologies can have beneficial effects for the intergroup relationship. Their effectiveness may be limited, but they can be a valuable gesture.

It would also be fruitful to sort out the mechanisms behind why intergroup apologies have conciliatory effects. Many scholars speculate why intergroup apologies may be beneficial. Some propose that apologies restore dignity and empower victimized groups, thereby helping fulfill a need created by the original injustice (Lazare, 2004; Shnabel et al., 2009; Thompson, 2008). Others claim that apologies help intergroup relations by establishing that the perpetrator group considers their actions wrong and will uphold the violated standards in the future (de Grieff, 2008). Still others suppose that apologies "set the record straight" as to who was responsible for the injustice, thereby removing any identity threat felt by the victimized group (Tavuchis, 1991). All of these ideas, and others, may account for apology effects to some degree and under some circumstances. However, no empirical evidence exists which sorts out when these proposed mechanisms contribute to promoting forgiveness and more positive intergroup relations (for thorough reviews see Blatz & Philpot, 2010; Wohl et al., 2011).

We also examined whether intergroup apologies offset any potential threat to social identity felt by victim or perpetrator group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Wohl et al., 2011). We found weak and inconsistent support for this hypothesis. We await further research before we draw definitive conclusions, but the present data do not provide a ringing endorsement of the hypothesis that government apologies affect the social identities of either the victim or the perpetrator groups.

Additional results of our research are potentially encouraging from a policy perspective. In Study 1, we included evaluations of the apology and compensation for an actual historical injustice. Both the perpetrator and victim group evaluated the apology, which they read verbatim, positively. The compensation packaged was perceived as mediocre. These findings may be helpful to policymakers when deciding whether or not (and how) to apologize and compensate victim groups when confronting past injustices. Future research still needs to examine more nuanced details regarding the presence or absence of specific apology elements, or compensation (Blatz et al., 2009). However, the relatively positive reception of the apology and reparations, combined with the positive evaluations of perpetrator groups, suggests that any fears of backlash or disapproval amongst the victim or perpetrator group could be assuaged.

We feel it prudent to comment at this point on an intriguing difference between our results and those of Wohl et al. (in press). These authors assessed Chinese and European Canadians' perception of the Chinese Head Tax apology as deserved and sincere after the apology had been promised but before it had been made. Consistent with the current study in which participants evaluated the full text of the delivered apology, both European and Chinese Canadians in the Wohl et al. study were positively disposed toward the apology. However, the findings of Study 1 of the current article indicated that perpetrator group members evaluated the actual apology more positively than victim group members did, but Wohl et al.'s study showed that the victim group evaluated the apology more positively than the perpetrator group. Comparisons across studies should always be made with caution, but, considered together, the results of the apology evaluations in Study 1 of this article and Wohl et al.'s study suggest that victim group members are more encouraged than perpetrator group members to find out about an apology but are less encouraged about what was actually offered. As Wohl et al. suggest, this likely reflects that victim group members are, on average, more motivated to see an apology offered than perpetrator group members are. This motivation may lead them to both be more excited about the prospect of a forthcoming apology, and to notice more deficiencies and shortcomings in the apology that is given. We await future research which tests these speculations more systematically.

Conclusion

In light of the growing prevalence of apologies and reparations for historical harms, social psychologists have begun to examine their effects. We examined whether apologies promote intergroup harmony, and restore potential threats to social identity. We found that apologies contribute to more positive global evaluations of the perpetrator group by the victim group, but do not affect people's evaluations of their ingroups. The present research delineates how an intergroup apology can, in part and under some circumstances, contribute to peaceful intergroup relations.

Résumé

De nombreux chercheurs universitaires, personnalités politiques et chroniqueurs suggèrent que les excuses et les indemnités faites pour des injustices historiques améliorent les relations intergroupes et soutiennent les identités sociales. Les auteurs ont examiné ces questions au moyen de deux études. Dans l'Étude 1, ils ont interrogé un groupe de répondants Chinois et des Canadiens

non chinois avant et après que le Gouvernement du Canada eut formulé des excuses pour les politiques injustes à l'endroit des immigrants de Chine de 1885 à 1947. Dans l'Étude 2, ils ont demandé à des Canadiens choisis au hasard de prendre connaissance d'excuses qui avaient ou qui n'avaient pas été offertes pour des injustices faites par le Canada ou vécues par lui. Dans chaque étude, il a été constaté que les membres du groupe évaluent le groupe auteur de l'injustice sous un jour plus favorable après la formulation des excuses. Les excuses ont eu un effet faible et inconsistant sur l'évaluation de l'identité sociale, tant parmi les groupes de victimes que les groupes d'auteurs d'injustice. Les auteurs discutent des répercussions de ces résultats sur les plans psychologie et politique.

Mots-clés : excuses intergroupes, réconciliation, injustice historique.

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