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Title:

A Long Time Coming: Delays in Collective Apologies and Their Effects on Sincerity and Forgiveness

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A long time coming:**Delays in collective apologies and their effects on sincerity and forgiveness****Running head:** Delays in collective apologies**Abstract**

Political apologies by one group to another often occur a significant period of time after the original transgression. What effect does such a delay have on perceptions of sincerity and forgiveness? A delayed apology could reflect the offender group's reluctance to apologize or, alternatively, it could represent time and consideration spent on developing an appropriate response. In the latter case, the delayed apology would represent a sincere acknowledgement of the harm done, whereas in the former case it would not. In two studies we found that a verbal collective apology, when delayed, was perceived to be less sincere than when offered more immediately following a transgression, and this translated to less forgiveness. However, in Study 2 the negative effects of time delay on sincerity and forgiveness were mitigated or reversed when the apology was in the form of commemoration. The commemorative apology, in particular when delayed, gave rise to favorable attributions (including representativeness of apologizing group, commitment to remember, and giving voice to victims), which mediated the effects on sincerity. The results suggest that collective apologies that are offered with considerable delay appear less meaningful and less deserving of a forgiving response, unless the apologizing group is able to express consideration and thoughtfulness through the apology process.

Keywords: collective apologies; commemoration; time; sincerity; forgiveness

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Over six decades leading up to 1970, thousands of Australian children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent were forcefully removed from their families, to be placed in state homes, foster families, and missions. These children were robbed of their families, lives, and culture; they are referred to as the Stolen Generation, and represent a dark chapter in Australian history. The Australian government has since apologized for these practices, but only after decades of raising awareness and grassroots campaigning, a national inquiry by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission from 1995-97, years of wrangling over the appropriateness of a government apology, and a change of federal government in the 2007 election. Finally, in February 2008, the Prime Minister of Australia at the time, Kevin Rudd, presented an apology to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian parliament, almost 40 years after the blighted practices had ceased.

Such delays between a wrongdoing and an apology appear to be rather common in political and intergroup contexts. For example, in an early article by Philpot and Hornsey (2008) on collective apologies, every example they studied referred to current or recent apologies for transgressions that happened months, years, or decades earlier, such as Japan apologizing for abuses of prisoners of war in WWII, France apologizing for nuclear testing in the South Pacific in the 1990s, or a pharmaceutical company apologizing for corrupted safety controls and deceit in prior years. The same is true for many other psychological studies on collective apologies, including: President Clinton's apology to African-Americans who were withheld treatment in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study that was terminated 25 years before (Steele & Blatz, 2014); the Canadian government's apology for the head tax and other restrictions imposed on Chinese immigrants over a century earlier (Wohl, Matheson, Branscombe, & Anisman, 2013); or the Canadian government's apology to Aboriginal peoples for abuses suffered in the Indian Residential School system, which was terminated 12 years before (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2013).

At the same time, psychological research has painted a rather bleak picture of the effects of collective apologies, specifically in terms of promoting forgiveness (see Hornsey & Wohl, 2013, for a review). The evidence that collective apologies can promote forgiveness is inconsistent, with some studies showing positive effects (e.g., Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008; Leonard, Mackie, & Smith, 2011), but others showing non-significant or highly qualified effects (Berndsen, Wohl, & Hornsey, 2015; Okimoto, Wenzel, & Hornsey, 2015; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008, 2011; Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012; Wohl et al., 2015). In light of the mixed evidence, it is paramount to identify qualifying conditions, as well as the distinctive hurdles that intergroup contexts present for apologies. Hornsey and Wohl (2013) argue that the issue largely boils down to the problem of trust - apology effectiveness depends on trust in the apology itself and its perceived genuineness or sincerity. In the present research we investigate whether a delay in apologizing could undermine the perceived sincerity of an apology and, as a result, present a hurdle for the effectiveness of collective apologies.

Sincerity and Delayed Apologies

An apology is a communication or gesture whereby offenders, at a minimum, acknowledge their wrongdoing and responsibility, and express remorse (Lazare, 2004). In a collective apology, the offenders are a group or members of a group who acted in terms of their group membership, and the apology is expressed on behalf of the group. Apologies are considered an important means for moral repair after wrongdoing, promoting a sense of justice, reaffirming shared values, and facilitating reconciliation and forgiveness (Lazare, 2004; Smith, 2008; Tavuchis, 2001). From the perpetrator group's perspective, there are instrumental pay-offs for this in terms of reducing punitive/retributive actions from victim group members that are costly for the offenders (see Wenzel & Okimoto, 2016). As a consequence, apologies may invite suspicion as to whether they are true reflections of the offenders' views, or strategic moves to avoid punishments and costs. Hence, a key to the

effectiveness of apologies is whether they are considered sincere (e.g., Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Zechmeister, Garcia, Romero, & Vas, 2004).

Beliefs about remorsefulness and the sincerity of an apology are fundamentally an *attribution* that victims (or third parties) make about its authenticity; namely whether it reflects genuine sentiment and is non-manipulative, humble, and meaningful. The wording of an apology, such as its elaborateness, may provide victims one basis for their attributions (Darby & Schlenker, 1982; Steele & Blatz, 2014). Additional features may also inform apology sincerity, such as the expression of consistent and appropriate emotions (Hareli & Eisikovits, 2006), perceived normative pressures to apologize (Okimoto et al., 2015), indications that the offenders are willing to follow through by making material sacrifices or practical attempts at repair (Ohtsubo et al., 2012), or even just the positive relationship victims feel they have with the offenders (Schumann, 2012). For collective apologies, perceptions of sincerity further depend on whether victims perceive the offender group as able to experience the moral emotions expressed (Wohl et al., 2012), and whether the apology is seen to be representative of the wider offender group rather than just being the position of the individual expressing it (Wenzel, Okimoto, Hornsey, Lawrence-Wood, & Coughlin, 2016).

We propose that the timing of an apology could be a further clue to its perceived sincerity. If an apology is not immediately forthcoming offenders may appear reluctant to apologize. When they finally apologize this may be seen more as a sign of giving in, merely complying with the pressure put on them, or staving off the continuing costs of non-reconciliation and sanctions. The apology may be seen to be less morally motivated because it is known – and victim group members may believe so, too – that offenders' collective guilt declines with temporal distance (Peetz, Gunn & Wilson, 2010), unless the harm to victims is ongoing (Imhoff, Wohl, & Erb, 2013). Offenders even actively create subjective temporal

distance to alleviate the identity threat of a wrongdoing (Peetz et al., 2010). Thus, with increasing delay an apology may not be seen as a sincere or genuine reflection of their actual sentiments. In such contexts we therefore predict that victim group members will regard a delayed apology as less sincere than an immediate apology and, as a consequence, respond to a delayed apology with less forgiveness.

Time and Commemoration

However, it is not always credible to apologize immediately after a wrongdoing. If the wrongdoing was clearly intentional it might seem unbelievable for offenders to immediately renounce an act as inappropriate (Struthers, Eaton, Santelli, Uchiyama, & Shirvani, 2008). If the offense was wrong, why did the group intentionally commit it in the first instance? It would seem more credible that the offenders would need time to understand that they were wrong and how their actions harmed the victims; to listen to the victims' views and understand their perspective; and to engage in moral learning and true reform. Indeed, research in interpersonal contexts has found that an apology leads to greater victim satisfaction and forgiving sentiments when it occurred later in the interaction rather than earlier, because when it occurred later the victims were more likely to feel heard and understood (Frantz & Bennigson, 2005). Time may be necessary for victims to have their say, as well as possibly overcome their anger and develop a readiness to accept an apology; but time may also be necessary for offenders to give victims voice, attend to their perspective, and reform their own morality based on a better understanding of the situation.

As a consequence, we argue that it is not necessarily detrimental for offenders to take their time with an apology. Rather, it is a question of what they are seen to have done with that time; that is, whether they have used it to truly understand their wrongdoing and the victims' suffering, and whether they have invested time and energy in coming to terms with their guilt and developing an appropriate response and gesture to the victims. In intergroup

contexts such a process might involve measures that raise awareness of the issue among the wider offender group, to make sure an apology is representative of the group as a whole (Wenzel et al., 2016). It might involve a gesture that the offender group does not wish to wipe the guilt away through an apology, but is rather committed to its remembrance; and that it does not wish to silence the victims but is instead open to hearing their testimonies and memories. One measure to achieve all of this might be to combine an apology with an act of commemoration (see Blustein, 2010, 2014).

Commemoration refers to ceremonies that “in addition to or in tandem with monuments and museums, can preserve the public memory of the victims and raise moral consciousness about past abuses” (Blustein, 2010, p. 586). Thus far, there has been very limited controlled-quantitative research on the effects of commemoration on reconciliation and moral repair, specifically commemorative acts by *offender groups* remembering their wrongdoing and the perceived effects on their victims. In a series of experiments, Vollhardt, Mazur, and Lemahieu (2014) found that offender groups’ commemoration of past wrongdoing (as part of an acknowledgement of the participant group’s victimization) had positive effects on victim group members’ well-being and willingness to reconcile. However, beyond communicating acknowledgement, an offender group’s active and ritual commemoration of past wrongdoing also represents a commitment to maintaining the memory and not wanting to expunge their collective guilt. Further, it may show the group’s intention to regard the past wrongdoing as a moral lesson and a formative aspect of their group identity, and to use it to cement a consensus on central identity-defining values (see Rotella, Richeson, & McAdams, 2015). It reflects the offender group’s effort in facing their past and reflecting on the hurt caused to the victims. A commemoration would thus require a proper understanding of the hurt caused and may therefore also involve giving victims a voice to communicate their memory of their group’s suffering.

As with the implied acknowledgement of wrongdoing (Vollhardt et al., 2014), we assume victims would appreciate and respond positively to these implications of commemoration. Specifically, we predict that a delayed apology that is commemorative in orientation - and thus reflects a worthy use of the time - will be regarded as relatively sincere (and responded to with more forgiveness) compared to a delayed verbal apology. Such commemoration might indeed *require* time for consideration and moral reflection, and thus will only be effective in eliciting greater perceived sincerity and forgiveness after a delay, whereas a quickly constructed commemorative apology might reflect haphazard or less thoughtful rumination.

In sum, the present research investigates the effect of timing of a collective apology on its perceived sincerity and capacity to elicit forgiveness – an issue that may be critical for our understanding of the failures or successes of collective apologies. We predict that verbal apologies will be responded to more favorably when delivered immediately compared to delayed. However, we also heed recent calls to consider the performative aspects of collective apologies (Cels, 2015). We predict that for commemorative apologies a delay will be less of a detriment, and instead the investment of time might make a commemorative apology appear even more sincere, and more worthy to be reciprocated with forgiveness.

Study 1

Study 1 was designed as a first investigation of the impact of the time at which an apology was provided in response to an intergroup transgression. We experimentally varied the time delay between an intergroup wrongdoing and the provision of an apology on behalf of the transgressor group. The apology either came within a few days of the incident or more than a year later. We expected that the provision of a simple, verbal apology immediately following a transgression rather than with considerable delay would be viewed as more sincere and, in turn, would be more likely to promote forgiveness.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were Australian residents recruited through the survey platform SurveyMonkey. Initially 207 participants commenced the survey, however 41 failed to correctly identify whether or not the offender group issued a statement of regret; having failed this attention check, they were excluded from the study. Two further participants did not complete the survey. This left 164 participants aged between 19 and 65 years ($M=47.45$, $SD=11.47$), 62% female. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: no apology, immediate apology, and delayed apology.¹

Procedure. The survey study was conducted online in July 2013. It involved participants reading a newspaper article referring to a real intergroup transgression, with some details modified for the experimental manipulations. Participants first completed demographic variables. They then read about the desecration of graves of allied WWII soldiers in Libya and rated the seriousness and intentionality of that transgression (these variables were included as covariates). Participants in the two apology conditions were then presented with information about an official apology (by the Libyan government) before completing the attention check and a series of dependent variables (outlined below). In the no-apology condition there was no further information and participants proceeded straight to the measures.

The incident. The news article describing the incident was based on material taken from the media in 2012 and outlined the desecration of Australian war graves in the Benghazi war Cemetery in Libya, by Libyan people on March 7, 2012. The article explained “The Australian soldiers laid to rest there gave their lives fighting in the fierce North African desert

¹ Initially the design included two kinds of apologies, that is, with or without the expression of shame. However, the presence or absence of the shame content in the apologies did not affect the findings and will here be ignored. Further details are available from the authors. As a consequence, the cell sizes for the three conditions were unequal; no apology $n=39$, immediate apology $n=55$, delayed apology $n=70$.

battles of WWII”, and it provided details about the “worldwide condemnation and outrage” the incident had caused. One paragraph denoted the central element of the transgression:

“Video footage of the attack shows a mob of Libyans rampaging through the cemetery smashing up and destroying headstones with their feet. The attack was obviously premeditated as they had brought a ladder to climb up onto the cross of sacrifice, where they began beating it with hammers in a particularly frenzied manner. The mob also spat on the graves whilst screaming out, ‘they are dogs’. When the headstones began to break and fall down the mob shrieked with delight and laughter”.

Experimental manipulations. In the *immediate-apology* condition, participants were presented with further information detailing that the Libyan government swiftly apologized on behalf of the Libyan people for the incident:

“The Libyan government immediately issued a statement of regret. In fact, it came the very next day following these events of March 7, 2012. The Libyan government made the following apology on March 8, 2012: ‘I speak on behalf of the Libyan people when I express our regret for the destruction of Australian war graves in our cemetery in Benghazi yesterday. We agree with the sentiment that such behaviour is deeply offensive and insulting to the memory of the brave Australian soldiers who sacrificed their lives for our peace and freedom. [...] We wish to offer an apology to all Australians for the distress this incident has caused.’”

In the *delayed-apology* condition, the same apology was reported, except that it occurred about one year later:

“The Libyan government recently issued a statement of regret. In fact, it came a year after the events of March 7, 2012. The Libyan government made the following apology on March 22, 2013: [...]”

In the *no-apology* condition, no information about a government apology was provided.

Dependent variables. The main outcome variable was the participant's level of *forgiveness* toward the outgroup. First, this was measured by a 30-item intergroup forgiveness scale used by Philpot and Hornsey (2008) (1=*not at all*, 7=*very much*). This scale includes both positive and negative statements, 10 items that tap forgiving affect ("How do you feel toward Libyans?", happy, negative, angry, warm, etc.), 10 items that tap forgiving cognitions ("I think Libyans are...", worthless, immoral, of good quality, worthy of respect, etc.), and 10 items that assess forgiving behavior ("Regarding the Libyan population, I would, or would want others to...", be harsh, break existing relationships, get even, act negatively, etc.). The 30-item scale had excellent internal consistency ($\alpha=.98$), so negatively valenced statements were reverse-scored and all items were averaged to obtain a scale score. As a validity check, we also measured participants' willingness to forgive more directly with a single item: "When thinking about this incident, do you personally feel forgiveness toward the Libyan people?" (1=*not at all*, 7=*very much*). The 30-item scale and the single-item scale were highly correlated ($r=.77$).

Further, in the two apology conditions a 7-item scale was designed to measure the perceived *sincerity* of the government's apology: "How do you find the official public statement from the Libyan official in response to the incident?"; remorseful, apologetic, sincere, meaningless, manipulative, arrogant, condescending (1=*not at all*, 7=*very much*). A Principal Component Analysis produced a strong first factor explaining 61% of the variance, on which all items loaded substantially. However, eigenvalues and scree plot pointed to a second factor (16% explained variance). Varimax rotation showed that a two-factor solution split between positive and negative items (explaining 36% and 41% of variance after rotation, respectively). The items sincere, remorseful, and apologetic loaded on one factor (loadings > .83), and the items meaningless, manipulative, arrogant, and condescending on the other factor (loadings > .66). While the results were ambiguous as to whether one or two factors

were warranted, in light of the results in Study 2 (see below), we proceeded with two factors. Because the positive factor included sincere as a marker item, we treated this as a 3-item scale of *sincerity*, and our results presentation will focus on this measure ($\alpha=.88$). The negative factor represents *inauthenticity* of the apology due to manipulative intent and lack of humility ($\alpha=.87$).

Covariates and checks. Immediately following the description of the incident, but *before* the experimental manipulations, participants rated how serious (1=*not at all serious*, 7=*very serious*) and how intentional the incident was (1=*definitely not intentional*, 7=*definitely intentional*; $r=.51$). These appraisals were designed *a priori* to be included as covariates accounting for interindividual variance in the perceptions of the transgression; appraisals of intent and harm severity are known to be robust correlates of forgiveness (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). Nonetheless, for purposes of disclosure, we also footnote the results for the analyses without covariates included. At the end of the study, participants in the apology conditions were asked to rate the time delay between transgression and apology, considering the circumstances (1=*very short*, 7=*very long*).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations are reported in Table 1. Participants rated the incident as very serious ($M=6.15$, $SD=1.13$) and intentional ($M=6.45$, $SD=1.02$). These ratings did not differ significantly between the three conditions, $F(2, 161)<1.5$. However, these appraisals accounted for a significant amount of variance in the main dependent variables (as documented below) and were therefore included as covariates in the main analyses. For the manipulation check of time delay, participants in the two apology conditions differed significantly in their ratings of the time delay between incident and apology, $F(1, 112)=67.51$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.38$. Participants in the delayed-apology condition

rated the time as significantly longer than participants in the immediate-apology condition, in line with the intended manipulation.

Table 1

An ANCOVA was conducted with a single two-level factor (immediate versus delayed apology) and sincerity of apology as the dependent variable, and with seriousness and intentionality as covariates.² Timing of apology had a significant effect, $F(1, 121)=10.37, p=.002, \eta_p^2=.08$. When the apology occurred with a year delay participants rated it as less sincere ($M_{est.}=4.68, SE=.16$) than when the apology was immediate ($M_{est.}=5.46, SE=.18$). For *inauthenticity* an equivalent ANCOVA yielded a marginally significant effect of apology timing, $F(1, 121)=3.17, p=.077, \eta_p^2=.03$. When the apology occurred with a year delay participants tended to regard it as more inauthentic ($M_{est.}=2.82, SE=.16$) than when the apology was immediate ($M_{est.}=2.38, SE=.19$).³

For the 30-item forgiveness scale, an ANCOVA with the three-level experimental factor (no vs. immediate vs. delayed apology) yielded a significant overall effect, $F(1, 121)=7.32, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.08$. Specifically, compared to no apology ($M_{est.}=3.41, SE=.20$), both

² To summarize the results for the covariates in the ANCOVAs in Study 1: Seriousness showed no significant relationship with sincerity, $F(1, 121)=0.42, p=.519, \eta_p^2=.003, B=-.08$, but intentionality was significantly positively related to sincerity, $F(1, 121)=9.13, p=.003, \eta_p^2=.07, B=.38$. The two covariates were not significantly related to inauthenticity, $F_s<1.84$. Seriousness had a significant negative relationship with the 30-item forgiveness scale, $F(1, 121)=22.15, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.12, B=-.48$, whereas there was a positive relationship between intentionality and forgiveness, $F(1, 121)=5.35, p=.022, \eta_p^2=.03, B=.26$. Seriousness was also significantly negatively related to the one-item willingness-to-forgive measure, $F(1, 121)=11.86, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.12, B=-.49$, but there was no significant relationship for intentionality, $F(1, 121)=0.36, p=.550, \eta_p^2=.002, B=.10$. As for the somewhat surprising positive relationships of intentionality with sincerity and the forgiveness scale, it is possible that, if a wrongdoing is more intentional, an apology may be considered more substantial, graver, and more costly to offenders and, thus, by implication more sincere and eliciting more forgiving sentiments.

³ ANOVAs without covariates yielded similar results. Timing of apology had a significant effect on *sincerity*, $F(1, 121)=9.45, p=.003, \eta_p^2=.07$, while for *inauthenticity* the effect of apology timing was not significant, $F(1, 121)=2.53, p=.115, \eta_p^2=.02$ (see Table 1).

the immediate ($M_{est.}=4.42$, $SE=.17$) and the delayed apology ($M_{est.}=3.98$, $SE=.15$) led to more forgiving sentiments, $Diff_{est}=1.01$, $SE=.27$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.49, 1.54] and $Diff_{est}=0.57$, $SE=.25$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.07, 1.07], respectively. The immediate apology increased forgiving sentiments more than a delayed apology did, although the difference only approached significance, $Diff_{est}=0.44$, $SE=.23$, $CI_{95\%}$ [-0.01, 0.90], $p=.056$.⁴

The same analysis for the single-item forgiveness measure yielded a significant overall effect of the experimental factor, $F(1, 121)=5.30$, $p=.006$, $\eta_p^2=.06$. Compared to no apology ($M_{est.}=3.03$, $SE=.28$), the immediate apology ($M_{est.}=4.17$, $SE=.24$) led to a greater willingness to forgive, $Diff_{est}=0.87$, $SE=.37$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.14, 1.60], but not so the delayed apology ($M_{est.}=3.17$, $SE=.21$), which did not differ significantly from no apology, $Diff_{est}=-0.13$, $SE=.35$, $CI_{95\%}$ [-0.83, 0.56]. The immediate apology led to greater willingness to forgive than the delayed apology did, $Diff_{est}=1.00$, $SE=.32$, $CI_{95\%}$ [0.37, 1.63].⁵

Finally, we tested whether the differences in forgiveness between immediate and delayed apology were mediated by perceptions of *sincerity* (inauthenticity was not significantly affected by apology timing and therefore could not mediate). We used a bootstrapping approach (Hayes, 2013, Model 4) to test for indirect effects, controlling for covariates. For the 30-item forgiveness scale, the analysis showed a significant effect of apology timing on perceived sincerity, $B=-.39$, $SE=.12$, $p=.002$, with the immediate apology being considered more sincere than the delayed apology. In turn, sincerity was significantly positively related to forgiveness, $B=.39$, $SE=.07$, $p<.001$, while the direct effect of timing was no longer significant, $B=-.06$, $SE=.10$, $p=.541$. As a consequence, apology timing had a

⁴ ANOVA without covariates yielded also an overall effect of experimental conditions, $F(1, 161)=5.29$, $p=.006$, $\eta_p^2=.06$. Both immediate and delayed apology conditions led to higher forgiving sentiments than no-apology, $p=.002$ and $.021$, respectively, but they did not significantly differ from each other, $p=.251$ (see Table 1).

⁵ ANOVA without covariates yielded again an overall effect of experimental conditions, $F(1, 161)=3.60$, $p=.030$, $\eta_p^2=.04$. The immediate apology led to higher forgiving sentiments than no-apology, $p=.047$, and the delayed apology, $p=.012$; the latter two did not differ from each other, $p=.859$ (see Table 1).

significant indirect effect via sincerity on forgiveness, $B=-.15$, $SE=.05$, $CI_{95\%} [-.28, -.06]$. The same result pattern emerged for the single-item willingness-to-forgive scale. Apology timing was significantly related to perceived sincerity (as above), and sincerity was positively related to willingness to forgive, $B=.47$, $SE=.11$, $p<.001$; controlling for sincerity, timing of apology still had a significant direct effect on forgiveness, $B=-.31$, $SE=.15$, $p=.039$.

Importantly, however, the indirect effect of apology timing on willingness to forgive was significant, $B=-.18$, $SE=.07$, $CI_{95\%} [-.34, -.07]$. Thus for both measures, a delayed apology led indirectly to less forgiveness than an immediate apology, mediated by perceived insincerity (see Figure 1).⁶

Figure 1

The findings of this study are very much in line with the proposition that a delay in offering an apology can reduce its effectiveness in promoting forgiveness, specifically because it diminishes the sincerity attributed to the apology. It is possible that a delay may be seen as a reluctance to apologize, and the eventual apology as having stemmed from external persistent pressure or mere political calculation, rather than internal conviction about its appropriateness or moral necessity.

However if this is so, circumstances that facilitate the victim's view that the delay in apologizing was necessary in order to develop exactly such conviction might reduce the adverse effects of that delay. For example, a delay might be legitimate and even necessary if the time appears to have been spent on meaningful engagement with the group's wrongdoing, on understanding its meaning and impact on victims and the moral community. A delayed

⁶ Both indirect effects, on the 30-item forgiveness scale and the one-item willingness to forgive, were also statistically significant when the covariates were omitted from the analyses, $B=-.15$, $SE=.06$, $CI_{95\%} [-.29, -.05]$ and $B=-.16$, $SE=.07$, $CI_{95\%} [-.34, -.06]$, respectively.

apology in this case may no longer be seen as less sincere, and possibly even be viewed as *more* sincere. Where the apology is not a simple verbal statement but rather a more elaborate commemoration, which implies engagement with the wrongdoing and with the victims, more favorable views of the apology and attributions of sincerity may be likely. Study 2 investigated this possibility.

Study 2

In order to mitigate the possible negative effects of a delayed apology, the delay must be given a positive meaning, for example, by implying that the time was well spent in to form a *considered response*. The aim of Study 2 was to test whether features of commemoration could improve the sincerity of a delayed apology, and subsequently increase forgiveness. Specifically, it was plausible that the time delay preceding a commemorative apology would be seen to be invested in a more thoughtful process, and through this would increase perceived sincerity. The process of developing a considered response may involve (a) the offender group collectively forming a view about their guilt and need for conciliatory efforts, making the apology more representative of the offender group; (b) the offender group seeking, through planning a recurring commemoration, not to forget but rather commit to a continuing honouring of the victims; and/or (c) the offender group giving victims a voice and listening to their experiences. All these aspects of a due process, implicated in a considered response, take time; a delay may be attributed to all three *if* the resulting apology is more than a brief verbal statement, if, for example, the apology takes the form of commemoration.

Method

Study 2 used a similar procedure as Study 1, referring to the same incident and manipulating the timing of the apology in the same way. However, we dropped the no apology condition from the design, and instead included a second, orthogonal factor: whether the apology being offered was only verbal versus commemorative. Furthermore, to increase

the generalizability of findings, we used a different population for this study (U.S. citizens) while still keeping the same incident (but now with American war graves being desecrated).

Participants and design. U.S. citizen participants were recruited through the online survey platform Qualtrics. Based on a medium-sized effect of apology delay observed in Study 1, and for a desired statistical power of .80 to .90, the present design required a sample size of between 128 and 171. Initially 177 participants completed the survey. However, available information about individuals' duration of time spent on the survey led us to exclude 28 participants who were impossibly quick ($< 6\text{min}$) or who took unreasonably long ($> 60\text{min}$). The remaining 149 participants were aged between 18 and 65 years ($M=40.72$, $SD=14.13$), 58% female. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (Timing: immediate, delayed) by 2 (Apology: verbal, commemorative) between-subjects design.

Procedure. The study was conducted online in early December 2013. The basic procedure and description of the incident were the same as in Study 1.

Experimental manipulations. The *timing* of the apology was manipulated in the same way as in Study 1, except that the delayed apology was dated somewhat later (July 2013) in order to bring this closer to the time of the study. The verbal apology (no commemoration) was the same as in Study 1. The commemorative apology condition instructions read:

“The Libyan government invited American dignitaries and family members of those troops whose graves were desecrated, to a service on [March 10, 2012; July 22, 2013], where they were given the opportunity to express their pain and devastation about the events of March 7, 2012. At this ceremony on [March 10, 2012; July 22, 2013], the Libyan government declared March 7 a national day of remembrance to continually commemorate the sad incident, and made the following apology:

“...[Apology worded as in Study 1, with the following addition]. We declare March 7 a National day of remembrance. Each year on this date, the people of Libya will mark this sad day in our history by celebrating the Americans who gave their lives for our country, and by mourning the destruction of their graves.”

Dependent variables. The measures of forgiveness were the same as in Study 1: the 30-item intergroup forgiveness scale ($\alpha=.94$), and the single-item willingness to forgive. The 30-item scale and the single-item scale were highly correlated ($r=.69$).

For a measure of perceived sincerity we included the same seven items as in Study 1, plus two further positive items: authentic and genuine. However, a Principal Component Analysis showed (more clearly than in Study 1) that the 9 items were best represented by two factors: a first factor explained 55% of the variance, and a second factor an additional 26%, before rotation. Following Varimax rotation, all 5 positively worded items loaded on one factor (loadings $> .90$), and all negatively worded items loaded on a second factor (loadings $> .79$), with the factors explaining 48% and 33% of variance after rotation, respectively. As in Study 1 we regarded the positive factor as a more literal (face-valid) measure of *sincerity*, for which the items sincere, genuine, authentic, remorseful, and apologetic were averaged ($\alpha=.96$). The second factor, *inauthenticity* ($\alpha=.87$), comprised the same items as in Study 1.

An additional three items were included in the present study in order to tap favorable attributions of processes implicated in a considered response, which commemoration with time delay may promote and which may mediate perceptions of sincerity (1=*not at all*, 7=*very much*). In line with the arguments presented above, the items tapped the perceived representativeness of the apology (“Was the official statement of the Libyan government representative of the views of the Libyan people?”), commitment to remember (“Do the actions of the Libyan government reflect an ongoing commitment to remember the desecration of American war graves?”), and voice to the victims (“Did the actions of the

Libyan government allow Americans a voice regarding the events of March 7, 2012?”). The three items, while tapping quite distinct aspects, were strongly correlated ($r=.43$ to $.71$) and cohered sufficiently to form a single scale of *favorable process attributions* ($\alpha=.78$).

Covariates and checks. Immediately following the description of the incident, but before the experimental manipulations, participants rated how serious and how intentional the incident was, using the same items used in Study 1 ($r=.32$). As in Study 1, the two appraisals were included as covariates in the analyses. At the end of the study, participants in the apology conditions were asked to rate the time delay between transgression and apology, considering the circumstances (1=*very short*, 7=*very long*).

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations are reported in Table 2. Participants rated the incident as very serious ($M=6.21$, $SD=1.19$) and intentional ($M=6.37$, $SD=1.08$).

Unexpectedly, a 2x2 ANOVA showed a marginal main effect of apology on perceived seriousness, $F(1, 144)=3.82$, $p=.052$, $\eta_p^2=.03$; no other effects were significant, $F(2, 144)<1.0$, on either measure. The incident was rated as slightly more serious in the commemorative ($M=6.31$, $SD=1.17$) than the verbal apology condition ($M=6.12$, $SD=1.21$). As the measure preceded the apology manipulation, this would have been an accidental effect. Nonetheless, this is further justification for the inclusion of seriousness and intentionality as covariates in the main analyses.

Table 2

For the manipulation check, an ANOVA on the perceived delay between incident and apology yielded a main effect of timing only, $F(1, 144)=64.74$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.31$; the main effect of apology and the interaction effect were not significant, $F<0.20$. Participants in the

delayed apology condition rated the time as significantly longer ($M=5.92$, $SD=1.40$) than participants in the immediate apology condition ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.63$), as expected.

From sincerity to forgiveness. We conducted a series of 2x2 ANCOVAs with seriousness and intentionality as covariates.⁷ On perceptions of *sincerity*, the analysis yielded a significant main effect of apology type, $F(1, 143)=15.03$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.10$. The commemorative apology was perceived to be more sincere than the verbal apology ($M_{est}=5.41$ vs. 4.49). Further, there was a significant interaction between apology type and timing, $F(1, 143)=5.58$, $p=.019$, $\eta_p^2=.04$, while the main effect of timing was not significant, $F(1, 143)=0.69$, $p=.408$, $\eta_p^2=.01$. The verbal apology was considered to be less sincere when it was delayed rather than immediate, $Diff_{est}=-0.76$, $SE=.33$, $CI_{95\%} [-1.41, -0.10]$ (see Table 3). In contrast, there was a non-significant trend for the commemorative apology to be regarded as more sincere when it was delayed than when it was immediate, $Diff_{est}=0.36$, $SE=.34$, $CI_{95\%} [-0.31, 1.03]$. As predicted, the loss in perceived sincerity when an apology was delayed, which was already demonstrated in Study 1, seemed to be prevented when the apology was of a commemorative nature. For *inauthenticity*, the ANCOVA yielded only a marginally significant main effect of apology, $F(1, 143)=3.63$, $p=.059$, $\eta_p^2=.03$; the commemorative apology tended to be perceived as less inauthentic than the verbal apology ($M_{est}=3.07$ vs.

⁷ To summarize the results for the covariates in the ANCOVAs in Study 2: Seriousness was, surprisingly, significantly positively related to sincerity, $F(1, 143)=5.01$, $p=.027$, $\eta_p^2=.03$, $B=.24$, while for intentionality the relationship was not significant, $F(1, 144)=0.13$, $p=.720$, $\eta_p^2=.001$, $B=-.04$. The covariates showed no significant relationships with inauthenticity, $F<2.4$. Seriousness had a marginally significant negative relationship with the 30-item forgiveness scale, $F(1, 142)=2.91$, $p=.090$, $\eta_p^2=.02$, $B=-.13$, while for intentionality the relationship was not significant, $F(1, 142)=0.99$, $p=.321$, $\eta_p^2=.01$, $B=-.09$. Seriousness and intentionality had no significant relationships with the one-item willingness-to-forgive measure, $F(1, 142)=0.73$, $p=.392$, $\eta_p^2=.01$, $B=-.12$ and $F(1, 142)=0.06$, $p=.810$, $\eta_p^2=.0004$, $B=-.04$, respectively. Finally, seriousness and intentionality had no significant relationships with any of the three process attributions, $F<1.5$, except for a marginally significant negative relationship between intentionality and representativeness, $F(1, 142)=2.97$, $p=.087$, $\eta_p^2=.02$, $B=-.21$.

3.59). Neither the main effect of timing nor the interaction effect was significant, $F(1, 143)=0.38, p=.864, \eta_p^2<.001$ and $F(1, 143)=0.07, p=.800, \eta_p^2<.001$, respectively.⁸

Table 3

A 2x2 ANCOVA on the 30-item forgiveness scale showed a significant main effect of apology type, $F(1, 142)=12.35, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.08$. The commemorative apology elicited greater forgiveness than the verbal apology ($M_{est}=4.14$ vs. 3.52). Further, there was a marginally significant interaction between apology type and timing, $F(1, 142)=3.88, p=.051, \eta_p^2=.03$, while the main effect of timing was not significant, $F(1, 142)=0.03, p=.876, \eta_p^2=.0002$. The verbal apology tended to elicit less forgiveness when it was delayed rather than immediate, but this was not statistically significant, $Diff_{est}=-0.37, SE=.25, CI_{95\%} [-0.86, 0.11]$ (see Table 3). In contrast, the commemorative apology tended to elicit more forgiveness when it was delayed than immediate, but again not significantly so, $Diff_{est}=0.32, SE=.25, CI_{95\%} [-0.18, 0.81]$. Looking at the interaction from an alternate angle, a delayed apology elicited significantly more forgiveness when it was commemorative rather than verbal, $Diff_{est}=0.97, SE=.25, CI_{95\%} [0.46, 1.47]$, whereas for an immediate apology there was no significant difference between commemorative versus verbal approaches, $Diff_{est}=0.28, SE=.24, CI_{95\%} [-0.20, 0.76]$.⁹

For the single-item willingness-to-forgive scale, the same ANCOVA showed again a significant main effect of apology type, $F(1, 142)=13.03, p<.001, \eta_p^2=.08$. The

⁸ ANOVA without the covariates yielded similar results. Most importantly, there was a significant interaction effect of apology type and timing on sincerity, $F(1, 145)=5.51, p=.020, \eta_p^2=.04$, with delay significantly decreasing the perceived sincerity of a verbal apology, $p=.036$, but tending to increase the perceived sincerity of a commemorative apology, $p=.225$ (see Table 2). There was no significant interaction effect, or any main effects, on inauthenticity.

⁹ ANOVA without covariates yielded similar results, however the interaction between apology type and timing was only marginally significant, $F(1, 144)=3.39, p=.068, \eta_p^2=.02$.

commemorative apology led to a greater willingness to forgive than the verbal apology ($M_{\text{est}}=4.72$ vs. 3.63). Further, the interaction of apology type and timing was significant, $F(1, 142)=4.12$, $p=.044$, $\eta_p^2=.03$, while the main effect of timing was not, $F(1, 142)=0.86$, $p=.354$, $\eta_p^2=.01$. The verbal apology tended to elicit less willingness to forgive when it was delayed rather than immediate, but this was not statistically significant, $\text{Diff}_{\text{est}}=-0.33$, $SE=.42$, $\text{CI}_{95\%} [-1.15, 0.50]$ (see Table 3). In contrast, the commemorative apology elicited significantly more willingness to forgive when it was delayed than immediate, $\text{Diff}_{\text{est}}=0.88$, $SE=.43$, $\text{CI}_{95\%} [0.38, 1.73]$. Again, from the alternate angle, a delayed apology elicited significantly more forgiveness when it was commemorative rather than verbal, $\text{Diff}_{\text{est}}=1.69$, $SE=.43$, $\text{CI}_{95\%} [0.84, 2.55]$, whereas for an immediate apology there was no significant difference whether it was commemorative or verbal, $\text{Diff}_{\text{est}}=0.48$, $SE=.41$, $\text{CI}_{95\%} [-0.34, 1.30]$. Thus, partially consistent with predictions, a delay costs a verbal apology in terms of its potential to elicit forgiveness, even though this effect failed to reach statistical significance in the present study; however, the commemorative nature of a delayed apology can restore its forgiveness-inducing effect.¹⁰

Next, we tested whether the effects of delay (vs. immediacy) of apology on forgiveness were mediated by perceptions of sincerity, moderated by the commemorative versus verbal type of apology. We used a bootstrapping approach (Hayes, 2013, Model 7) to test for the moderated mediation. Examining the 30-item forgiveness scale as outcome variable, the analysis showed a significant interaction of apology type and timing on perceived sincerity, $B=.27$, $SE=.12$, $p=.024$, in line with the ANCOVA results. In turn, sincerity was significantly positively related to forgiveness, $B=.36$, $SE=.05$, $p<.001$. The index of moderated mediation was significant, $\text{Index}=.20$, $SE=.09$, $\text{CI}_{95\%} [0.03, 0.39]$. A

¹⁰ ANOVA without covariates reproduced the same result; in particular, there was a significant interaction of apology type and timing, $F(1, 144)=4.03$, $p=.047$, $\eta_p^2=.03$. A delay tended to decrease the willingness to forgive when the apology was verbal, but this was not significant, $p=.420$, but delay significantly increased willingness to forgive in response to commemorative apology, $p=.046$ (see Table 2).

significant conditional indirect effect indicated that when the apology was verbal, delay reduced the forgiveness-inducing effect of the apology indirectly via reduced sincerity, $B=-.13$, $SE=.07$, $CI_{95\%} [-.30, -.02]$. In contrast, when the apology was commemorative, the indirect effect of delay on forgiveness, through sincerity, was not significant, but trended in the positive direction, $B=.06$, $SE=.06$, $CI_{95\%} [-.04, .18]$ (see Figure 2). For the single-item willingness-to-forgive scale the analysis yielded virtually the same picture.¹¹

Figure 2

These findings are largely in line with predictions. First, replicating Study 1, a verbal apology was considered less sincere when it was issued with a year's delay. However, a commemorative form of apology was able to undo (or even reverse) the sincerity-diminishing effect of delay. These effects on sincerity flowed through to indirectly influence forgiveness.

From process attributions to sincerity. A 2x2 ANCOVA on favorable attributions yielded a significant main effect of apology type, $F(1, 142)=35.50$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.20$, with the commemorative apology leading to more favorable attributions than the verbal apology ($M_{est}=4.85$ vs. 3.64). The main effect of timing was not significant, $F(1, 142)=0.76$, $p=.386$, $\eta_p^2=.01$. Importantly, there was a significant interaction between apology type and timing, $F(1, 142)=4.37$, $p=.038$, $\eta_p^2=.03$. While the commemorative apology elicited more favourable attributions than the verbal apology also in the immediate apology condition, $Diff_{est}=0.79$, $SE=.28$, $p=.005$, $CI_{95\%} [0.24, 1.34]$, this was more pronounced when the apology was delayed, $Diff_{est}=1.63$, $SE=.29$, $p<.001$, $CI_{95\%} [1.05, 2.20]$ (see Table 3). From the alternate perspective, a commemorative apology attracted significantly more favourable attributions

¹¹ The equivalent analyses without the covariates again produced similar results. The Index of Moderation was significant for the 30-item forgiveness scale, $Index=.18$, $SE=.09$, $CI_{95\%} [0.04, 0.39]$ as well as for the one-item scale of willingness to forgive, $Index=.31$, $SE=.15$, $CI_{95\%} [0.08, 0.70]$, showing that the indirect effect of timing on forgiveness via sincerity was significantly moderated by apology type.

when delayed than immediate, $\text{Diff}_{\text{est}} = -0.59$, $SE = .29$, $p = .041$, $CI_{95\%} [0.03, 1.16]$, whereas the verbal apology did not, $\text{Diff}_{\text{est}} = -0.24$, $SE = .28$, $p = .387$, $CI_{95\%} [-0.80, 0.31]$.¹²

Again using the bootstrapping approach by Hayes (2013, Model 8), we tested whether the effects of delay (vs. immediacy) of apology on sincerity were mediated by process attributions, moderated by the commemorative versus verbal type of apology. The analysis confirmed the significant interaction of apology type and timing on favorable attributions, $B = .21$, $SE = .10$, $p = .038$, in line with the ANCOVA results. In turn, favorable attributions were significantly positively related to sincerity, $B = .60$, $SE = .09$, $p < .001$. The index of moderated mediation was significant, $\text{Index} = .25$, $SE = .13$, $CI_{95\%} [.03, .53]$, which means the conditional indirect effects in the two apology type conditions differed significantly from each other. For the verbal apology, the indirect effect of apology delay on sincerity via favorable attributions was not significant, $B = -.07$, $SE = .09$, $CI_{95\%} [-.25, .09]$, whereas for the commemorative apology the delay significantly increased sincerity via favorable process attributions, $B = .18$, $SE = .09$, $CI_{95\%} [.01, .40]$.¹³

These additional process attribution findings illustrate one reason why a commemorative apology may be able to undo the sincerity-diminishing effect of delay. Commemoration evokes positive attributions about the process, *in particular* when the apology is delayed. Thus, while a delay in apology otherwise tends to reduce its perceived sincerity, the commemorative nature of an apology reverses the meaning of delay and leads to more favourable attributions about due process and consideration given to the apology, thus maintaining the perceived sincerity of a delayed apology.

General Discussion

¹² ANOVA without covariates yielded equivalent effects; in particular there was a significant interaction of apology type and timing, $F(1, 144) = 4.03$, $p = .040$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, reflecting the same pattern. For example, a delay significantly increased favourable attributions when the apology was commemorative, $p = .033$, but not when it was verbal, $p = .445$ (see Table 2).

¹³ The analysis produced effectively the same results without the covariates, $\text{Index of Moderated Mediation} = .25$, $SE = .13$, $CI_{95\%} [.03, .59]$.

Collective apologies are often offered with considerable delay, and such delays may be part of the reason why they tend to be less consistent in their forgiveness-evoking effects than interpersonal apologies (see Hornsey & Wohl, 2013). However, so far researchers have only speculated about the effects of the timing of apologies (for an elaborated discussion, see Lazare, 2004), without there being any systematic quantitative investigation of this issue (and only one study we know of for interpersonal apologies, Frantz & Bennis, 2005). Moreover, speculations have been somewhat contradictory, on one hand saying a delay in apologizing could be interpreted as reluctance that reduces perceived sincerity, while on the other hand a delay could add to the perceived thoughtfulness and trustworthiness of an apology (e.g., Blatz & Philpot, 2010).

We argue that, for a wrongdoing committed by individual members of the offender group, the rest of the group (through its leadership) could apologize immediately without loss of credibility, reflecting a reflexive (and thus more genuine) moral condemnation of the transgression. If they fail to do so immediately, any delay may be interpreted as an unwillingness to apologize, as tacit tolerance or condoning of the offender group's actions, with negative implications for perceived apologetic sincerity and forgiveness. The findings of the present two studies are in line with this prediction. A delay seems to reduce the perceived sincerity of the apology and through this reduce its capacity to elicit forgiveness.

However, we need to emphasize that this could be different for a wrongdoing in which the entire group is directly implicated (e.g., a small team in which all group members partake in the offence; e.g., Wenzel et al., 2016, Studies 1 and 2). In this case, an apology would be offered by those very individuals who, only a short time before, saw fit to harm the victim group; such an apparent sudden “epiphany of regret” might be regarded as unbelievable (Blatz, Schumann, & Ross, 2009, p. 234). In such situations, an immediate

apology rather than a delayed apology might be considered less sincere. However, this is for future research to address.

Another distinctive aspect of collective apologies concerns their performative features; at least in political contexts, apologies are often performed in public fora, in ceremonies and through memorials. Rarely would we ceremoniously remember our interpersonal wrongdoings! Interestingly, this feature of collective apologies seems able to undo the harm that the first feature - time delay - tends to cause. Specifically, as the present findings show, commemorative forms of collective apology tend to be perceived as no less sincere when they are offered with delay. In fact, commemorative apologies tended to *benefit* from delay, eliciting more favourable attributions about due process and consideration, thus bolstering against a loss of perceived sincerity due to delay, and overall eliciting more forgiveness than when they were immediate.

While the current research offers some evidence for the role of favourable attributions regarding a fair and considered process of deciding on and delivering the apology, this measure was rather broad or multi-faceted, and preliminary. We certainly do not want our research to be understood as an investigation of the workings, features and processes, of commemoration per se; that should be a goal for systematic empirical research in the future (see Blustein, 2014, for a theoretical discussion). Rather, our focus was on the timing of an apology, and how the otherwise detrimental effects of delay might be offset or avoided if the time delay can be given a more positive meaning. A commemorative form of apology, we have argued, can suggest such a more positive meaning because it might imply that the offender group has engaged in a process of forming their response that might have ensured consultation, support and, thus, representativeness within their group (see Wenzel et al., 2016); it might imply (or expressly involve) that the offender group engages with the views of the victim group and invites their testimony, giving the victim group a voice; and it might

imply, to the extent that a commemoration is something more permanent (e.g., a memorial) and/or recurring (e.g., a national day), that the apology is not an attempt to release one's group from the guilt but rather a commitment to remember it. Our measure included all three of these facets, and jointly they seemed to account for the effect of commemoration in undoing the harm of delay. However, future research could tease the different facets apart and identify their unique contributions or potency for the effects of commemoration generally. Similarly, in our study we operationalised commemorative apology in a realistic yet complex way that combined different elements, including an inclusive ceremony shared by victim and offender representatives and the recurring nature of the event. In future research these and other elements could be isolated experimentally in order to further pinpoint the causes of the beneficial effects of commemorative apologies.

Our investigation targeted a single transgression and operationalized time delay within a one to two year time-frame. Although commemoration effectively led participants to attribute this delay to more thoughtful development of an apologetic response, this would not explain decades of delays in the acknowledgement of harm; such extended delays more clearly imply a reluctance to apologize. Nonetheless, the time taken between demands for an apology and its conferral, or perhaps the decision to apologize and its conferral, may still illustrate more thoughtful development of that response, improving perceptions of its sincerity and enhancing its likely effectiveness in eliciting forgiveness. Thus, delineating the scope of commemoration as a buffer for the negative impacts of a time delay leading up to an apology still requires further research.

Of course, we realize how this research could be understood as providing offenders with ever more sophisticated means of restoring their moral image and social relations to their own benefit, manipulating victims and the moral community to forgive their failings and thereby avoiding ongoing costs and repercussions. We accept that apologies (in their most

mundane but also most elaborate form) can have such strategic functions for offenders. However, we also know that victims often want an apology from offenders and crave the acknowledgement of their unjust victimization, and that they draw satisfaction from an apology to the extent that they regard it as sincere and mindful of their needs and perspective (e.g., Berndsen et al., 2015). Hence, it is also to the benefit of victims that we understand how they respond to apologies, and the circumstances under which they would be less satisfied, perhaps feeling secondarily victimized, and when, conversely, they are experiencing a positive change in sentiment towards the offenders and are willing to reciprocate the apology with their forgiveness. In the end, it is about better ways to overcome injustice and unnecessary conflict, restoring social relations for a more peaceful world.

To conclude, the present research indicates that even when groups or their leaders do not apologize in a timely manner, not all is lost – an offender group can still repair the situation by making an extra effort to assure that the apology is offered in a way that illustrates its thoughtfulness and meaning to the group; one that remembers rather than erases; one that seeks the offender group's consensus and shared commitment rather than dictates to the rest of the group; and perhaps above all, one that is based on consultation with victims and establishes a continued dialogue rather than trying to silence the victims by signalling an end to dialogue and debate.

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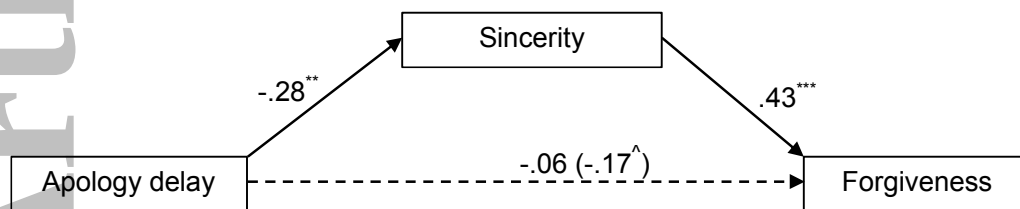


Figure 1. Study 1: Indirect effect of apology timing on forgiveness (30-item scale) via sincerity, controlling for seriousness and intentionality of the offence (not displayed; standardized coefficients). $\hat{p}=.051$, $^{**}p<.01$, $^{***}p<.001$.

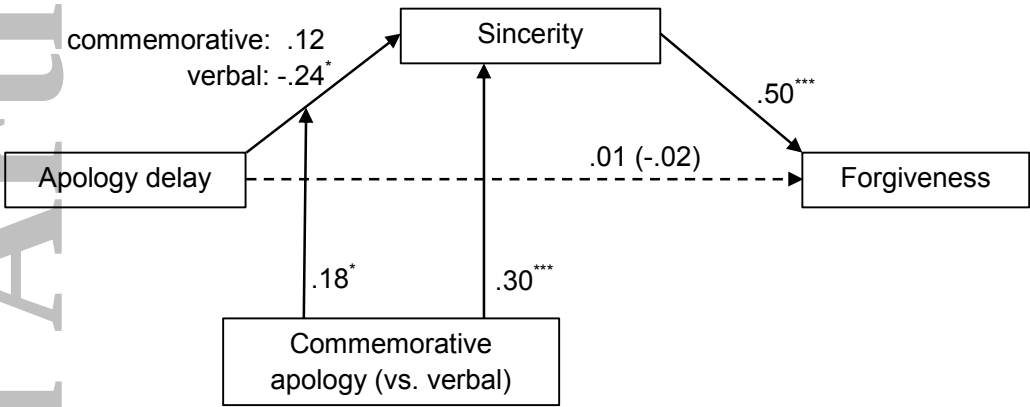


Figure 2. Moderated mediation effect on forgiveness (30-item scale) in Study 2, controlling for seriousness and intentionality of the offence (not displayed; standardized coefficients).

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

Table 1

Observed Means (Standard Deviations) and Intercorrelations for Study 1

DVs	No Apology	Immediate	Delayed	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Seriousness	6.15 (1.04)	6.34 (1.08)	6.00 (1.22)	--					
2. Intentionality	6.51 (0.94)	6.44 (1.00)	6.43 (1.08)	.51***	--				
3. Perceived delay	--	3.17 (2.06)	5.89 (1.49)	.05	.05	--			
4. Sincerity	--	5.44 (1.28)	4.89 (1.43)	.10	.26**	-.29**	--		
5. Inauthenticity	--	2.40 (1.37)	2.80 (1.37)	.05	-.08	.26**	-.59***	--	
6. 30-item forgiveness scale	3.42 (1.54)	4.32 (1.34)	4.05 (1.20)	-.28***	-.02	-.29**	.44***	-.45***	--
7. 1-item forgiveness measure	3.31 (2.02)	4.07 (1.86)	3.24 (1.67)	-.24**	-.10	-.31***	.38***	-.40***	.77***

Table 2

Observed Means (Standard Deviations) and Intercorrelations for Study 2

DVs	Verbal apology		Commemorative apology		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
	Immediate	Delayed	Immediate	Delayed							
1. Seriousness	5.96 (1.19)	6.11 (1.27)	6.29 (1.23)	6.53 (1.02)	--						
2. Intentionality	6.44 (0.97)	6.14 (1.06)	6.45 (1.06)	6.47 (1.24)	.32***	--					
3. Perceived delay	3.82 (1.65)	5.89 (1.51)	3.95 (1.63)	5.94 (1.30)	.13	.06	--				
4. Favorable attributions	3.73 (1.31)	3.52 (1.17)	4.55 (0.95)	5.17 (1.38)	.14	.02	-.07	--			
5. Sincerity	4.80 (1.39)	4.12 (1.77)	5.25 (1.38)	5.66 (1.21)	.22**	.07	-.12	.58***	--		
6. Inauthenticity	3.52 (1.63)	3.58 (1.63)	3.13 (1.63)	3.05 (1.69)	.08	-.07	.22**	-.09	-.30***	--	
7. 30-item forgiveness scale	3.74 (0.94)	3.37 (1.17)	3.97 (0.99)	4.25 (1.19)	-.13	-.10	-.24**	.60***	.49***	-.36***	--
8. 1-item forgiveness measure	3.82 (1.78)	3.49 (1.76)	4.26 (1.80)	5.12 (1.87)	-.03	-.01	-.08	.59***	.46***	-.24***	.69***

Table 3

Estimated Means (and Standard Errors) for Study 2

DVs	Verbal apology		Commemorative apology	
	Immediate	Delayed	Immediate	Delayed
Favorable attributions	3.76 (0.20)	3.52 (0.20)	4.55 (0.20)	5.14 (0.21)
Sincerity	4.87 (0.23)	4.14 (0.23)	5.23 (0.23)	5.59 (0.25)
Inauthenticity	3.58 (0.27)	3.59 (0.27)	3.13 (0.27)	3.01 (0.28)
30-item forgiveness scale	3.71 (0.17)	3.34 (0.18)	3.99 (0.17)	4.30 (0.18)
1-item forgiveness measure	3.79 (0.29)	3.47 (0.30)	4.28 (0.29)	5.16 (0.31)