

# Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology

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Online First Publication, July 29, 2021. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pac0000571>

### CITATION

Nunney, S. J., & Manstead, A. S. R. (2021, July 29). Improving the Effectiveness of Intergroup Apologies: The Role of Apology Content and Moral Emotions. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pac0000571>

# Improving the Effectiveness of Intergroup Apologies: The Role of Apology Content and Moral Emotions

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We report three studies reported in which we examined how changing the content of an intergroup apology affects how the apology is received. In Study 1, we investigated how emphasizing structural, relational, or identity-related factors influenced reactions to an apology from a large group, a small group, and from an individual. There was limited evidence that these apology variations affected the way in which the two group apologies were received, but there were large differences in the individual apology condition, where the influence of these factors was mediated by perceptions of the transgressor. In Studies 2 and 3, we combined all three apology factors into an apology from a large group, comparing this with a control condition in which none of these factors was included. We also manipulated the expression of remorse (Study 2) and of shame and guilt (Study 3) emotion in the apology. Including the apology factors increased forgiveness, an effect again mediated by perceptions of the transgressor. Higher expression of remorse, guilt, and (especially) shame also increased forgiveness, relative to control conditions. The implications for enhancing the effectiveness of intergroup apologies are discussed.

## **Public Significance Statement**

In the present research we vary the content of an intergroup apology and show that addressing concerns about equality, trustworthiness and identity in the apology increase the likelihood of forgiveness, as does expressing shame. The findings serve as an antidote to the view that apologies are generally ineffective in achieving intergroup reconciliation.

**Keywords:** intergroup apology, forgiveness, trust, remorse, moral emotions

**Supplemental materials:** <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000571.supp>

The use of the word “sorry” was rarely seen in exchanges relating to intergroup reconciliation before the end of World War Two. By contrast, the current era has been dubbed “the age of apology” (Brooks, 1999) due to the extraordinary growth in the number of apologies that are offered by one group (e.g., a government, corporation, or organization) to another group. Presumably underlying this rise in intergroup apologies is an assumption that the offering of an apology should trigger an *apology–forgiveness* cycle, thereby helping to achieve reconciliation. Although the offering of apologies

is only one way to achieve greater social justice, there is evidence in interpersonal contexts that apologies are effective in evoking forgiveness (McCullough et al., 1997; Wohl et al., 2011). However, the same cannot be said for intergroup apologies (Wohl et al., 2011). The aim of the present research is to explore factors that would increase the effectiveness of intergroup apologies. More specifically, our objectives are to test the effectiveness of apologies that include components inspired by Nadler’s (2012; Nadler & Shnabel, 2015) model of intergroup reconciliation, and to examine the impact of expressing moral emotions in intergroup apologies.

On the face of it, the offering of an intergroup apology should be beneficial. Indeed, Leonard et al. (2011) showed that offering an apology, compared to not offering one, did increase forgiveness levels. There are other studies showing more specific benefits, such as reductions in the motivation for vengeance and increased future support (Brown et al., 2008), as well as improvements in victim satisfaction and perceptions of transgressor remorse (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). However, in reviewing the literature on intergroup apologies, Hornsey et al. (2015) stated that while intergroup apologies can have positive impacts, they generally fail to elicit forgiveness. An example is a research by Bombay et al. (2013), who found that despite an increase in positive perceptions of the transgressor, individuals were generally pessimistic about the idea that intergroup relations genuinely improve as a result of apology.

This raises the question of why intergroup apologies are not effective in achieving what they are presumably intended to do, and

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The data that support the findings of this study are openly available at [https://osf.io/xdt4f/?view\\_only=930bf25f77d042ea852b3ea6d5e23fce](https://osf.io/xdt4f/?view_only=930bf25f77d042ea852b3ea6d5e23fce).

This research was supported by an ESRC grant (ES/L016486/1) and a linked studentship awarded to the first author.

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why it is that they are less effective than interpersonal apologies. A plausible explanation for the difference in how intergroup and interpersonal apologies are received relates to trust. Intergroup situations are characterized by more competition, higher fear, and greater mistrust (Halabi et al., 2013; Insko et al., 1988), all of which contribute to the perception that intergroup apologies are not to be trusted. It has also been argued that perceptions of sincerity are integral to all apologies (Wenzel et al., 2017). Given the distrustful context in which most intergroup apologies are made, it is clear why they could be perceived as insincere. This points to an apparently straightforward way to improve the efficacy of intergroup apologies: Perceptions of their trustworthiness need to be enhanced. In the current research, we examine ways of achieving this.

Intergroup apologies often involve more than the perpetrator group saying “sorry.” They often take the form of a speech, or transcript, in the course of which the apology is communicated. Therefore, intergroup apologies are often described as “scripted performances” (Hornsey et al., 2015, p. 107). It is possible that this method of communication is one reason for these apologies being regarded as untrustworthy. Whereas intergroup apologies are generally given in the form of prepared statements, interpersonal apologies are typically more spontaneous. Whereas past research on intergroup apologies has tended to focus on the effects of giving versus not giving an apology, more recent research has started to explore the components of apologies, in an effort to identify what makes them effective (Blatz et al., 2009; Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Kirchhoff & Čehajić-Clancy, 2014; Kirchhoff et al., 2012; Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). Given that intergroup apologies often take the form of a script that is longer than a simple expression of regret or remorse, it is important to study the effects of different aspects of apology content.

Reviewing past work on apology content, Kirchhoff and Čehajić-Clancy (2014) identified no fewer than 13 distinguishable components in addition to the apology itself, 6 of which had been included in the models proposed by Blatz et al. (2009) and Kirchhoff et al. (2012): Accepting responsibility for the transgression; conveying emotions such as remorse; addressing the suffering of the victim group; admitting norm violation; promising forbearance; and offering reparation. In their own experimental research, Kirchhoff and Čehajić-Clancy (2014) examined the impact of varying apology content by including or not including each of the 14 components in vignettes relating to gender discrimination in Germany (Study 1) or war crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Study 2). Which components were judged to be relevant and which were effective in eliciting greater apology acceptance varied from study to study, leading the authors to conclude that the influence of apology components is context-dependent.

Rather than focusing on whether or not a given component influences the effectiveness of an apology, in the current research, we adopt an approach to apology content inspired by Nadler’s (2012; Nadler & Shnabel, 2015) model of intergroup reconciliation. Nadler (2012) argued that genuine reconciliation can only be established when there are changes to structural, relational, and identity-related factors. The *structural* factor refers to the status and power relations between the groups; if one group was disadvantaged relative to another, there needs to be a shift to greater equality. The *relational* factor refers to the trust relation between the groups; where there was distrust, steps need to be taken to rebuild trust, for example by encouraging former adversaries to work together toward a shared goal. The *identity-related* factor refers to identity-related threats to victims and perpetrators. Victim groups may feel humiliated and seek revenge; perpetrator groups may feel guilty

and try to deny responsibility. Nadler argues that these conceptual distinctions lead to a definition of the outcome of intergroup reconciliation as: “*Trustworthy positive relations* between former adversaries who enjoy *secure social identities* and interact in an *equality-based social environment*” (2012, p. 294, original italics).

Although fully addressing each of these three factors depends on actions taken, rather than words expressed, they are issues that could in principle be addressed in verbal form and it should therefore be possible to incorporate them into the content of an apology. For example, an apology addressing the structural aspect of intergroup reconciliation might acknowledge that the victim group has lost important resources due to the actions of the perpetrator group and that the perpetrator group now wants to work toward greater equality of resources. Although this component is included (in the form of compensation) in many apology taxonomies, the other two factors highlighted by Nadler (2012), which relate to the psychological needs of the groups involved, are not included in the 14 components identified by Kirchhoff and Čehajić-Clancy (2014). An apology addressing the *relational* aspect of intergroup reconciliation might make explicit the perpetrator group’s willingness to engage in initiatives that build trust between the groups. An apology addressing the *identity-related* aspect of intergroup reconciliation might explicitly state that the perpetrator group is willing to remove any threats to the victim group’s identity. In each of the present studies, we examine whether variations in apology content designed to address these three factors, either separately (Study 1) or jointly (Studies 2 and 3), have an impact on how the apology is received.

We also take the opportunity to examine the impact of expressions of emotions such as remorse (Study 2) and shame and guilt (Study 3). Tavuchis (1991) argued that intergroup apologies typically lack the emotionality of apologies offered by individuals and that this is one reason why they are ineffective. Previous research has established that expressions of remorse increase the likelihood that an apology will be accepted (e.g., Allan et al., 2006; Gold & Weiner, 2000). There is also evidence concerning the impact of the expression of guilt and shame on the acceptance of apologies. For example, Giner-Sorolla et al. (2008) compared the influence of such expressions on the degree of insult felt by victims of collective wrongdoing and found that shame (but not guilt) expressions reduced the degree of insult felt. However, Philpot and Hornsey (2008, Exp. 4) showed that manipulating remorsefulness increased forgiveness following an individual—but not an intergroup—apology. There is also evidence that remorse in an intergroup context is most effective when expressed non-verbally (Hornsey et al., 2020) and by persons other than a group representative (Okimoto et al., 2019). Furthermore, in Čehajić-Clancy and Brown’s (2019) study, participants were more likely to forgive the perpetrator group if a member of that group offered a nonemotional acknowledgment of atrocities that had been committed than if the acknowledgment included expressions of guilt or shame. Against this backdrop of conflicting findings, in Study 2 we reexamine the influence of verbal expressions of remorse incorporated into a formal intergroup apology, and in Study 3 we reexamine this question by studying the relative impact of shame and guilt expressions on the extent to which an intergroup apology elicits forgiveness.

## Overview of Studies

The present studies explore the effects of varying apology content within the context of “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland, as seen by

people in mainland Britain. This conflict was chosen for several reasons. First, there is already a wealth of research on this conflict. Cairns and Hewstone (2002) suggested that in terms of forgiveness, “The Troubles” *must* be viewed as an intergroup, rather than interpersonal, context, making it suited to the current research objectives. They also called for future work to investigate the role that trust plays in forgiveness, citing it as a pathway toward reconciliation. Second, “The Troubles” have a particular relevance to older members of the British population, from which the participants in each of the present studies were recruited. There is also an apology transcript that was issued by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in relation to their role in the deaths of civilians (Cowan & Watt, 2002). This provided a basis on which to vary the content of a real-world apology and to explore the effects on perceptions and judgments. Although the focus in the present research is on an apology issued by one party to the conflict (the IRA) for their role in causing the deaths of unarmed civilians, such that the perpetrating group in the context of this research is the IRA and the victim group consists of civilians, we acknowledge that, like many intergroup conflicts, deaths and injuries during “The Troubles” were not solely caused by one party.

To anticipate the results of the three studies, Study 1 confirms that intergroup apologies are less effective than interpersonal apologies while holding the nature of the offenses constant and provides the first hint that intergroup apologies based on the Nadler and Shnabel perspective are effective. This latter finding is developed in Study 2, where it is found that simultaneously addressing all three of the needs identified by Nadler and Shnabel results in an effective intergroup apology. However, adding remorseful emotion to this apology appears to diminish its effectiveness. In Study 3, we show that clearly separating the expression of emotion (guilt or shame) from the three apology elements addressing the Nadler and Shnabel needs to eliminate this negative impact of emotion expression.

The three studies reported below took the form of online experiments. Participants in all three studies were recruited via Pureprofile ([www.pureprofile.com](http://www.pureprofile.com)). This enabled the recruitment of participants based upon their age (over 35) and geographical location (living in mainland Britain). The minimum age of 35 was chosen because it meant that participants would have been at least 18 years of age at the time of “The Good Friday Agreement” of 1998, which brought about the end of “The Troubles.” The mainland location was chosen because although “The Troubles” are probably associated with strongly held attitudes in those living in mainland Britain, they are likely to evoke more polarized attitudes in Northern Irish citizens. All studies reported here in this article were approved by the relevant University Research Ethics Committee. Data sets for all three studies, together with the Supplemental Materials, can be found at [https://osf.io/xdt4f/?view\\_only=930bf25f77d042ea852b3ea6d5e23fce](https://osf.io/xdt4f/?view_only=930bf25f77d042ea852b3ea6d5e23fce).

## Study 1

We examined the impact on forgiveness of intergroup apologies that included statements designed to address the structural, identity-related, or relational factors identified by Nadler (2012). The text of all three apologies was identical except for the final paragraph, which was manipulated to emphasize the perpetrator group’s willingness to engage in a structural, relational, or identity-related reconciliation process. Our assumption was that this variation in apology content would have an impact on forgiveness, although we had no predictions about which version of the apology would be more effective.

We also examined whether the apology source would make a difference, by presenting apologies ostensibly emanating from a large group (the IRA), a smaller republican group (the Irish National Liberation Army; INLA), or an individual (a republican soldier). The rationale for varying apology sources is twofold. First, there is evidence that out-group size and status influence attitudes and perceptions of the group (Hewstone et al., 2002; Liebkind et al., 2004; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). Second, the greater the number of individuals for whose actions the apology is being given, the less clear-cut is the relation between the actions and the apology. When an individual apologizes for his or her actions, this relation is direct. When a group issues an apology for its actions, the extent to which the apology is one that reflects the concerns of all members of the group is unclear; the larger the group, the more ambiguous is this relation (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002; Tavuchis, 1991). It was, therefore, expected that an apology coming from the interpersonal source would be more effective in promoting forgiveness than the two group sources and that an apology from the smaller group would be more effective than one from the larger group. Parallel predictions were made for positive perceptions of the transgressor(s), and we anticipated that these positive perceptions would (a) be positively related to forgiveness and (b) help to account for any effects of apology source or apology type on forgiveness.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Two hundred and sixty participants (127 males and 133 females) completed this study. They had a mean age of 51.70 ( $SD = 10.62$ , range = 40). The study had a fully between-subjects design, with participants randomly allocated to one of nine conditions. The stimulus material was exactly the same in each condition except for (a) the ostensible apology source (the IRA, the INLA, or an individual combatant) and (b) which feature (structural, relational, or identity-related reconciliation) was emphasized in the final paragraph of the apology.

The minimum number of participants required was determined by power analysis ( $G^*$ power 3; Faul et al., 2007). To detect a medium effect size for main effects and interactions with 80% confidence with a significance level of .05, at least 196 participants would be needed. It is worth noting that 339 participants started this study, meaning that 79 participants were excluded before finishing, 22 of whom did not give consent to use their data, while the remaining 57 failed an attention check. The attention check was located early in the survey, before any manipulations, and was used because the effectiveness of the apology type manipulation depended on the attentive reading of the text.

### Manipulation

#### Apology Source

After reading a basic description of “The Troubles,” participants were given a brief description of the perpetrator (large group, small group, or individual) that was the source of the upcoming apology. This involved a basic description of the group and event(s) for which the apology was being issued, as well as the number of people believed to have been killed as a result of the perpetrator’s actions.

## Apology Type

The apology itself followed the same format and had the same main body of text as the original apology that was offered by the IRA (Cowan & Watt, 2002). The manipulation was implemented in the concluding paragraph. In the structural version, this read: "To conclude, on the behalf of everyone connected with [the source], we are deeply sorry. We understand that people have lost the most basic of human rights, the right to life, because of our actions. Therefore, we would like to restore and compensate the communities and families that have been left disadvantaged as a result of our actions. We will seek to promote any initiatives that increase equality between everyone." In the relational condition, the paragraph read: "To conclude, on the behalf of everyone connected with [the source], we are deeply sorry. We will endeavour to promote contact with between us and any of the victims of our actions. We would like to help the communities that have been affected. We will seek to promote any initiatives that would help build trust between members of all communities in the future." In the identity-related condition, the paragraph read: "To conclude, on the behalf of everyone connected with [the source], we are deeply sorry. We would like all to know that [the source] acknowledges that it owes a moral debt and that it is willing to take action to remove all threats (real or imagined) to anyone's identity. As part of this process we will seek to endorse the rights of all those living within these islands." Full transcripts of these apologies can be found in the Supplemental Materials. This wording was consistent across the three Apology Source conditions, with the exception that first-person plural pronouns were replaced by singular pronouns in the individual condition.

## Measures

### Forgiveness

This construct was measured in two ways. A single item, "After reading this, do you think the [apology source] should be forgiven?" was responded to using "Yes" or "No" response options. This was followed by the *Intergroup Forgiveness Scale for Northern Ireland* (Hewstone et al., 2004). This 10-item scale was developed using focus groups (McLernon et al., 2002) and a previous study of intergroup forgiveness in Northern Ireland (Roe et al., 1999) to shape the item content. It was originally developed to measure forgiveness between communities in Northern Ireland, but for the purpose of the present study was adapted to measure forgiveness of the transgressor(s) by mainland British participants. The adapted measure can be found in the Supplemental Materials. Responses to the items were made using 5-point scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the scale was .82.

**Table 1**

*Mean Values (With Standard Deviations in Parentheses) of All Dependent Variables Measured in Study 1, Broken Down by Apology Source and Apology Content*

Measure	Apology source								
	Large group			Small group			Individual		
	Apology content			Apology content			Apology content		
	Structural	Relational	Identity	Structural	Relational	Identity	Structural	Relational	Identity
Binary forgiveness (% "yes" responses)	51.72%	34.48%	44.83%	44.83%	48.28%	35.71%	85.71%	86.21%	76.67%
Forgiveness scale (1–5)	3.10 (.80)	2.95 (.58)	3.03 (.62)	3.11 (.65)	3.24 (.61)	3.07 (.61)	3.48 (.63)	3.66 (.52)	3.55 (.47)
Positive perceptions (1–5)	3.36 (.85)	2.63 (.95)	3.16 (.74)	3.20 (.80)	3.33 (.77)	3.29 (.85)	3.87 (.66)	3.87 (.73)	3.88 (.49)

### Positive Perceptions of Perpetrator

Four items were used to assess perceptions of the *sincerity*, *remorsefulness*, *trustworthiness*, and *believability* of the perpetrator(s). As with the forgiveness scale, responses were made using a 5-point scale from "*Strongly Disagree*" to "*Strongly Agree*." The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for this measure was .89.

### Demographics

Participants were asked to indicate their religion (if any), the extent of their knowledge of "The Troubles," whether they had any Irish relations, and whether they or their family had been affected by "The Troubles," either directly or indirectly.

### Procedure

Participants completed an online survey that took approximately 10 min to complete. First, participants were told they were going to read an official statement prepared by a group or individual involved in the period of "The Troubles" and that they would be asked for their reactions and were asked to sign an on-screen consent form. Next, participants provided demographic information and were then taken to a page providing a brief description of "The Troubles," which was followed by the attention check. Participants then read one of the nine possible apologies, which was followed by the forgiveness and positive perceptions measures. Participants were then debriefed and thanked for their time.

## Results

None of the demographic variables was significantly associated with any of the dependent variables. The effect of condition on the binary forgiveness was analyzed using chi-square and logistic regression. The effect of the manipulation on the forgiveness scale and intergroup perceptions was analyzed using a series of 3 (Apology Source: large group, small group, individual)  $\times$  3 (Apology Type: structural, relational, identity-related) ANOVAs. The means, standard deviations for all of the dependent measures, as well as the percentage of "yes" answers to the binary forgiveness questions are shown in Table 1.

### Forgiveness

For the binary forgiveness item, the overall frequency of "yes" responses was 56.54%. A chi-square analysis showed a significant association between Apology Source and the proportion of

forgiveness,  $\chi^2(2) = 36.59, p < .001$ , but no significant association between Apology Type and proportion of forgiveness,  $\chi^2(2) = 1.02, p = .601$ . The significant association with Apology Source was driven by the much higher proportion of “yes” responses in the individual condition (82.76%), compared to the two group conditions (large group = 43.68%, small group = 43.02%).

A logistic regression was performed to ascertain the effects of Apology Source, Apology Type, and their interaction on the likelihood of forgiveness. The logistic regression model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(8) = 43.17, p < .001$ . The model explained 21% (Nagelkerke  $R^2$ ) of the variance in binary forgiveness and correctly classified 66% of cases. Consistent with the analyses reported above, there was a significant effect of Apology Source: The two group sources were less likely to result in forgiveness than the interpersonal condition (Large Group:  $b = -1.40, SE = .57, p = .014$ ; Small Group:  $b = -1.78, SE = .59, p = .002$ ). The main effect of Apology Type was not significant ( $p = .557$ ) and the interaction was also nonsignificant ( $p = .652$ ).

Turning to the forgiveness scale, there was a significant effect of Apology Source,  $F(2, 251) = 18.04, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .13$ . Bonferroni-corrected post hoc tests showed that forgiveness was significantly higher in the individual condition ( $M = 3.56$ ) compared to the two group conditions (Large Group:  $M = 3.03$ , Small Group:  $M = 3.14$ ). There were no significant effects of Apology Type on the forgiveness scale,  $F(2, 251) = .25, p = .779, \eta_p^2 < .01$ . There also was no significant interaction  $F(4, 251) = .71, p = .584, \eta_p^2 = .01$ .

### Positive Perceptions

There was a significant main effect of Apology Source on positive perceptions of the perpetrator(s),  $F(2, 251) = 26.56, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .18$ . Bonferroni-corrected post hoc tests showed that the individual condition ( $M = 3.87$ ) attracted significantly higher scores than the two group conditions (Large Group:  $M = 3.05$ ; Small Group:  $M = 3.27$ ). There were no significant main effects of Apology Type on these perceptions,  $F(2, 251) = 1.69, p = .187, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . However, there was a significant interaction between Apology Source and Apology Type,  $F(4, 251) = 2.78, p = .028, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . Simple effects analysis showed that this was driven by effects of Apology Type within the large group condition  $F(2, 251) = 7.03, p = .001$ , showing that ratings of positive perceptions in the structural condition ( $M = 3.36$ ) were significantly higher than in the relational condition ( $M = 2.63$ ). No significant interaction effects were observed in the other intergroup perceptions.

### Mediation Analysis

Regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis that the effect of Apology Source on forgiveness scale ratings would be mediated by positive perceptions of the perpetrator(s), using the PROCESS macro in SPSS. Using the interpersonal condition as the dummy variable, it was shown that the two group conditions both resulted in both lower forgiveness ratings (Large Group:  $b = -.53, SE = .09, p < .001$ ; Small Group:  $b = -.42, SE = .09, p < .001$ ) and less positive perceptions (Large Group:  $b = -.82, SE = .12, p < .001$ ; Small Group:  $b = -.60, SE = .12, p < .001$ ). The positive perceptions, in turn, significantly predicted forgiveness ratings,  $b = .53, SE = .04, p < .001$ . When controlling for the positive perceptions, neither group condition led to significantly lower forgiveness ratings

(Large Group:  $b = -.10, SE = .08, p = .184$ ; Small Group:  $b = -.10, SE = .07, p = .164$ ). More than half the variance in forgiveness was accounted for by the predictors ( $R^2_{adj} = .52$ ). The indirect omnibus effect was tested using a bootstrapping estimation approach with 5,000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The coefficient for the indirect effect was significant,  $b = .08, SE = .02, 95\% \text{ bias-corrected CI} = .05, .13$ .

### Discussion

As expected, there was a substantial difference in the effectiveness of individual and intergroup apologies. There was less evidence that the different apology types varied in effectiveness, although one feature of the results suggests that the apology types were differentially effective.

Consistent with existing literature, apologies offered by an individual, regardless of apology type, were more effective than any intergroup apology in promoting both forgiveness and positive perceptions of transgressors. There were no significant differences between the two intergroup conditions. This suggests that apologies offered in any intergroup setting face the same difficulty in promoting forgiveness and changing perceptions of the perpetrator group. The difference in group size appears to be irrelevant. The results also show that the effect of apology source on forgiveness was fully mediated by the positive perceptions of the transgressors. This is consistent with previous research showing that intergroup apologies are hampered by mistrust, which is the primary reason why interpersonal apologies are typically more effective. This suggests that, in order to make intergroup apologies as effective as their interpersonal counterparts, steps need to be taken to ensure that groups appear sincere, remorseful, and trustworthy.

Interestingly, apology type interacted significantly with apology source in shaping the positive perceptions of perpetrator(s). In the case of the large group apology, these positive perceptions were significantly higher for the structural apology, as opposed to the relational apology. This is interesting because the central purpose of the relational dimension of an apology is to promote trust between the parties. This suggests that the extent of mistrust in the intergroup context is such that an attempt to promote trust did not reduce perceptions of untrustworthiness. It is also interesting that this only occurred in the large group context. It may be that in a larger group context, what is stated in a structural apology is seen as more realistic than when the same statement is made by a smaller group. This suggests that, in the case of a large group, an apology that seeks to promote equality and mentions potential compensation is a more effective way of enhancing trust than an apology that explicitly mentions ways in which trust could be rebuilt. This could be explained using the Needs-Based Model (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015), which highlights the point that a social exchange that specifically empowers the victim group can be a successful route to identity restoration.

A limitation of the present study is that there was no control condition; nor was there a condition in which the different apology types were combined. The absence of a control condition means that it is not possible to compare the effects of the different apology types with a no apology baseline, or a baseline apology in which none of the factors is emphasized. Despite the fact that intergroup apologies attracted low forgiveness ratings, compared to individual apologies, they may have elicited greater forgiveness than a condition in which no apology was offered or none of the factors was emphasized. With respect to a “combined” apology condition, Nadler (2012)

suggested that all three factors (structural, relational, identity-related) need to be addressed in order for intergroup reconciliation to occur, a point amplified by Nadler and Shnabel (2015, p. 95) when they argued that “A social outcome that is characterised by changes in all three aspects is likely to represent a more stable reconciled intergroup reality than one characterised by change in only one or two.” Differential effects of apology type on forgiveness were not observed in this study, and this may well be because the three factors need to be considered together, rather than independently. Both of these limitations were addressed in Study 2.

## Study 2

In Study 2 a “combined” apology condition was included that incorporated the structural, relational, and identity-related factors, and compared it with a control apology condition that did not include any of these factors. As in Study 1, the manipulation was implemented by adding a concluding paragraph to the real apology that was issued by the IRA. Given that there were few differences between the two group conditions, we focused on the large group (IRA) condition because this group is more familiar to British participants and because the real-world apology that served as the basis for the research was one issued by the IRA.

In Study 1, there was evidence that it is a lack of trust that hampers the effectiveness of apology in an intergroup setting. In an effort to address the lack of trust in group apologies, it was also decided to vary another dimension of the apology, namely the degree of expressed remorse. Crossed with the “combined” versus control apology conditions, a “high remorse” versus “standard remorse” factor was also included. As noted earlier, there is some evidence that expressing remorse when apologizing increases the likelihood of forgiveness. On this basis, it was predicted that both the “combined” apology and the apology including an explicit expression of remorse would lead to more positive perceptions of the transgressor and, in turn, greater levels of forgiveness, in comparison to the control apology condition. It also seemed intuitively plausible that the two factors would interact, such that the most effective apology would be one including the combined factors and high remorse.

## Method

### Participants and Design

One hundred and eighty participants (90 males and 90 females) completed this study. They had a mean age of 50.86 years ( $SD = 8.68$ , range = 39). This study had a fully between-subjects design resulting from the factorial combination of Apology Factors (present vs. absent) and Remorse (high vs. control). Participants were randomly allocated to one of the four conditions.

**Table 2**

*Mean Values (With Standard Deviations in Parentheses) of All Dependent Variables Measured in Study 2, Broken Down by Apology Content and Degree of Expressed Remorse*

Measure	Apology factors included		Apology factors not included	
	High remorse	Control	High remorse	Control
Binary forgiveness (% “yes” responses)	31.11%	45.65%	42.22%	25.00%
Forgiveness scale (1–5)	3.04 (.65)	3.23 (.54)	3.06 (.52)	2.80 (.56)
Positive perceptions (1–5)	3.14 (.99)	3.34 (.78)	3.25 (.74)	2.67 (.83)

The minimum number of participants required was determined by a power analysis ( $G^*$ power 3; Faul et al., 2007). To detect a medium effect size for main effects and interactions with 80% confidence to a with a significance level of .05, at least 158 participants were needed. Two hundred and fifty-two participants started this study, 72 of whom were excluded before finishing. Twenty-three of these did not provide consent to use their data, while the remaining 49 failed the attention check.

## Manipulations

### Apology Factors

In the apology factors present condition, the additional concluding paragraph included all three factors that were examined in Study 1 (structural, relational, and identity-related). This combined factor paragraph included one sentence from each of the independent concluding paragraphs from Study 1. In the control condition, the participants read the original apology without the concluding paragraph.

### Remorse

In the high remorse condition, intensifying words or phrases were added throughout the statement of apology. Examples include *grievous errors* as opposed to *errors*, *sincere apologies* as opposed to *apologies*, and *deeply sorry* as opposed to *sorry*. The full transcripts of the apologies used can be found in the Supplemental Materials.

## Measure and Procedure

The measures of forgiveness (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .79$ ) and positive perceptions of the perpetrator group (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .92$ ), as well as demographic questions, were identical to those used in Study 1. The procedure was also the same as that used in Study 1.

## Results

None of the demographic variables was significantly associated with any of the dependent variables. The effect of condition on the binary forgiveness measure was analyzed using a chi-square and logistic regression. The effect of the manipulation on the forgiveness scale and intergroup perceptions was analyzed using a series of 2 (Apology Factors: present vs. absent)  $\times$  2 (Remorse: high vs. control) ANOVAs. The means, standard deviations, and 95% confidence intervals for all of the dependent measures, as well as the percentage of “yes” responses to the binary forgiveness question, are shown in Table 2.

## Forgiveness

For the binary forgiveness item, the overall frequency of “yes” responses was 36.11%. A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant association between the proportion of yes responses and whether or not apology factors were present,  $\chi^2(1) = .44, p = .507$ , or whether remorse was high or control,  $\chi^2(1) = .02, p = .877$ .

A follow-up logistic regression analysis was performed to examine the effects of the Apology Factors, the Remorse manipulation, and their interaction on the likelihood of forgiveness. The logistic regression model was not statistically significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 5.46, p = .141$ . The interaction was also nonsignificant. The model explained 4% (Nagelkerke  $R^2$ ) of the variance in binary forgiveness and correctly classified 64% of cases.

Turning to the forgiveness scale, there was a significant main effect of Apology Factors,  $F(1, 176) = 5.51, p = .020, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , but no main effect of Remorse,  $F(1, 176) = .16, p = .693, \eta_p^2 < .01$ . When the apology factors were present forgiveness scores were significantly higher ( $M = 3.14$ ) than they were in the control condition ( $M = 2.94$ ). There was also a significant interaction effect,  $F(1, 176) = 7.08, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .04$ . Simple effects analysis showed that this resulted from two significant simple effects. First, within the control remorse condition there was a significant simple main effect of Apology Factors,  $F(1, 176) = 12.54, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ , showing that inclusion of the apology factors led to a higher forgiveness score ( $M = 3.23$ ) than did the control apology ( $M = 2.80$ ). Second, within the control apology condition, there was a significant simple main effect of remorse,  $F(1, 176) = 4.62, p = .033, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , showing that the high remorse apology led to a higher forgiveness score ( $M = 3.06$ ) than did the control remorse apology ( $M = 2.80$ ). There were no significant simple effects within the high remorse conditions,  $F(1, 176) = .05, p = .825, \eta_p^2 < .01$ , or within the apology factors present conditions,  $F(1, 176) = 2.60, p = .109, \eta_p^2 = .01$ .

## Positive Perceptions

The main effect of Apology Factors on positive perceptions of the perpetrator was significant,  $F(1, 176) = 5.12, p = .025, \eta_p^2 = .03$ . Scores were significantly higher when the apology factors were included ( $M = 3.24$ ), compared to when they were not ( $M = 2.96$ ). There was no significant main effect of Remorse,  $F(1, 176) = 2.32, p = .129, \eta_p^2 = .01$ , but there was a significant interaction effect,  $F(1, 176) = 9.64, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .05$ . Simple effects analysis revealed the same pattern as was found for the forgiveness variable. There was a significant simple main effect of the Apology Factors manipulation within the control remorse condition,  $F(1, 176) = 14.40, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$ , whereby the inclusion of the apology factors conclusion led to higher scores ( $M = 3.34$ ) than did the control apology ( $M = 2.67$ ). There was also a simple main effect of Remorse within the control Apology Factors condition,  $F(1, 176) = 10.60, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$ , with the high remorse condition leading to higher scores ( $M = 3.25$ ) than the control remorse condition ( $M = 2.67$ ). There were no significant effects within the high remorse conditions  $F(1, 176) = .36, p = .552, \eta_p^2 < .01$ , or within the apology factors present conditions  $F(1, 176) = 1.26, p = .262, \eta_p^2 = .01$ .

## Mediation and Moderated Mediation Analyses

Regression analysis was used to test whether the effect of Apology Factors on forgiveness scale ratings was mediated by positive perceptions, using the PROCESS macro in SPSS. Results confirmed that inclusion of the Apology Factors significantly predicted both forgiveness ratings,  $b = .20, SE = .09, p = .022$ , and positive perceptions,  $b = .28, SE = .13, p = .030$ ; positive perceptions, in turn, significantly predicted forgiveness ratings,  $b = .50, SE = .03, p < .001$ . When controlling for positive perceptions, Apology Factors no longer significantly predicted forgiveness,  $b = .06, SE = .06, p = .313$ . More than half of the variance in forgiveness was accounted for by the predictors ( $R^2_{adj} = .56$ ). The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrapping estimation approach with 5,000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The coefficient for the indirect effect was significant,  $b = .14, SE = .06, 95\% \text{ bias-corrected } CI = .02, .27$ . An additional test was conducted to investigate the potential moderating effect of the remorse manipulation on this mediation effect. It was shown that the effect of apology factors on positive perceptions was indeed significantly moderated by the remorse manipulation,  $b = -3.11, SE = 1.00, p < .001$ . The coefficient for the indirect effect was significant in the control remorse condition,  $b = .334, SE = .87, 95\% \text{ bias-corrected } CI = 1.71, 5.14$ , but was not significant in the high remorse condition,  $b = -.52, SE = .92, 95\% \text{ bias-corrected } CI = -2.40, 1.23$ .

## Discussion

The aim of Study 2 was to examine the effects of combining the three apology factors that were studied separately in Study 1, comparing this combined condition with a control apology that made no reference to these factors and also to assess the impact of enhancing the expression of remorse in an intergroup apology. Both manipulations had a significant impact on forgiveness and on perceptions of the perpetrator group, although they did not interact in an expected manner.

First, and consistent with Nadler’s (2012) argument, the presence of the “combined” apology factors conclusion did increase levels of forgiveness. The joint presence of these apology factors also led to more positive perceptions of the out-group. However, these effects were both stronger when the apology included no further enhancement of expressed remorse, a finding reminiscent of Čehajić-Clancy and Brown’s (2019) finding that forgiveness of a perpetrator group was more likely if a member of that group offered a nonemotional acknowledgment of atrocities. A similar mediation pattern to that observed in Study 1 was also observed: Positive perceptions of the perpetrator fully mediated the impact of the apology factors on forgiveness. This is consistent with the suggestion that in order to attain forgiveness through an intergroup apology, the perpetrating group must be perceived as at least somewhat trustworthy and sincere.

A second finding was that, in the absence of the apology factors, the inclusion of an enhanced expression of remorse in an apology was effective, enhancing both forgiveness and positive perceptions of the perpetrator, relative to an apology with a standard expression of remorse. Unexpectedly, however, when the intergroup apology included both the apology factors and high expressions of remorse, forgiveness ratings were lower, albeit not significantly so.



Contrary to the expected interaction between the Apology Factors and Remorse manipulations, the observed pattern shows that the positive effects of each manipulation were strongest in the absence of the other manipulation.

A possible explanation for this unexpected result is that combining the two factors resulted in an information overload, with the result that the impact of each factor was undermined. A second way to account for these results is that the two manipulations may send conflicting messages. The apology factors are practical and future oriented, whereas a strong expression of remorse focuses on past events. These mixed messages may undercut each other and thereby limit the effectiveness of each manipulation. Again, the Needs-Based Model (Nadler & Shnabel, 2015) could be useful in accounting for this result. According to this model, which argues for the importance of meeting the need for empowerment in reconciliation efforts, it could be that, individually, the apology factors and expressions of remorse are seen as “empowering.” Thus, the forward-looking changes included in the apology factors could be regarded as empowering, as could the sense that the transgressing group is remorseful, which elevates the moral identity of the victim group. However, interweaving the apology factors and the expression of remorse may make what is being communicated unclear. It may be that if these two components were introduced independently of each other, they would operate in concert.

A third possible explanation is that the high remorse manipulation as implemented here was too complex. Expressions of remorse were distributed throughout the text, rather than concentrated in a single paragraph, as the apology factors manipulation was. Moreover, expressions of high remorse can entail several moral emotions, such as guilt, shame, and regret. Each of these emotions might have a different impact on the reader or listener. Indeed, the expression of such complex emotions does not always have a positive effect. Hornsey and Wohl (2013) found that, under certain conditions, when out-groups expressed complex “secondary” emotions in an apology, this had a more negative effect on reconciliation than if they had not offered any apology at all. Although Hornsey and Wohl argued that this might be because in-groups do not regard perpetrator out-groups as capable of experiencing such emotions, the present findings show that in the absence of the “combined” apology factors, expressing high remorse did have a positive impact on forgiveness and on perceptions of the perpetrator group.

Study 3 was designed to explore the effects of a clearer separation of the manipulations of the remorse and apology factors. This would also provide the opportunity to study the effects of implementing the high remorse condition by contrasting the moral emotion expression of guilt with that of shame. The rationale for this change was to see whether the differences already found between these emotions (Lickel et al., 2005; Shepherd et al., 2013) extend to their effects within apologies, as well as to investigate whether expressing either emotion is more effective than an apology without expression of these emotions.

### Study 3

The aim of Study 3 was to gain further insight into the unexpected results of Study 2. This was achieved by having a cleaner separation between the two manipulations included in the intergroup apology. In Study 2, the “combined” apology factors came in the concluding paragraph, whereas the high remorse expression was distributed

throughout the text, including the concluding paragraph. To distinguish more clearly between the two manipulations, in the present study the apology factors manipulation was again implemented in the final paragraph of the apology, but in the high emotion expression condition, either shame or guilt was expressed only in the opening paragraph, followed by two further paragraphs of text before the concluding paragraph.

A second change introduced in this study concerns the content of what was expressed in the high emotion paragraph. In Study 2, the moral emotions of “guilt” and “shame” were both expressed in the high remorse condition. We know from previous research that guilt and shame are associated with different appraisals and action tendencies (Schmader & Lickel, 2006; Tracy & Robins, 2006). A clearer understanding of how the expression of these emotions influences the efficacy of intergroup apologies can be gained by separating expressions of guilt from expressions of shame. Therefore, separate shame expression and guilt expression conditions were included in Study 3, along with a no-emotion control condition.

A third change introduced in this study concerned the control condition. In Study 2, the apology factors conclusion was simply added to the text of the original IRA apology and it could therefore be argued that any positive effects resulting from its inclusion were simply due to the provision of additional information. To counter this, the control condition used in Study 3 included a concluding paragraph of similar length to the apology factors paragraph, but without any content relating to the three apology factors.

It was predicted that both the inclusion of the apology factors and the expression of emotion in the intergroup apology would result in higher forgiveness ratings and more positive perceptions of the perpetrator group. Also, due to previous research suggesting that shame is perceived as a more powerful emotion than guilt (Lickel et al., 2005; Shepherd et al., 2013), we predicted that the expression of shame would be more effective than an expression of guilt in eliciting higher forgiveness levels and more positive perception of the perpetrator group.

## Method

### Participants and Design

Two hundred and twenty-eight participants (113 males and 115 females) completed this study. They had a mean age of 55.54 ( $SD = 11.08$ , range = 47). As in the previous studies, participants were selected based on age (>35 years) and location (living in mainland Britain). The study had a fully between-subjects design comprising the six conditions resulting from the factorial combination of Apology Factors (present vs. absent) and Emotion (guilt or shame or no-emotion control), with participants randomly allocated to one of them.

The minimum number of participants required was determined by power analysis ( $G^*$ power 3; Faul et al., 2007). To detect a medium effect size for main effects and interactions with 80% confidence to a with a significance level of .05, at least 179 participants were needed. It is worth noting that 292 participants started this study. Thus 64 participants were excluded before finishing the study, 16 for not providing consent to use their data, and 48 because of a failed attention check.

**Manipulation**

**Apology Factors**

This manipulation was identical to that used in Study 2, with the exception that the Apology Factors absent condition included a concluding paragraph of similar length and sentence structure to the one used in the Apology Factors present condition, but without any reference to the three apology factors.

**Emotion Expression**

The first paragraph of the intergroup apology included a final sentence that included expressions of either guilt or shame. This read as follows: “There is an immense feeling of guilt [shame] over the fact that we as a group were able to commit the acts that we did.” There was also a no-emotion control condition, in which this sentence was omitted. The full transcripts for the apologies used can be found in the Supplemental Materials.

**Measure and Procedure**

To check the effectiveness of the Emotion Expressed manipulation, participants responded to single-item statements about the presence of guilt or shame in the apology. Responses were made using a 5-point scale from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*.

Forgiveness (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .82$ ) and positive perceptions of the perpetrating group (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .90$ ), as well as demographic questions, were measured in the same way as in Studies 1 and 2. The procedure was also the same as that used in Studies 1 and 2.

**Results**

None of the demographic variables was significantly associated with any of the dependent variables. The means, standard deviations for all dependent measures, as well as the percentage of “yes” responses to the binary forgiveness question, are shown in Table 3.

**Manipulation Checks**

**Guilt**

Emotion had a significant effect on perceptions of guilt,  $F(2, 222) = 10.75, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$ . Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that significantly more guilt was perceived in both the guilt ( $M = 3.62, p < .001$ ) and the shame ( $M = 3.26, p = .047$ ) conditions, compared to the no-emotion condition ( $M = 2.85$ ). The

difference between the guilt and shame conditions was not significant. Interestingly, the apology factors manipulation also had a significant effect on the perception of guilt,  $F(1, 222) = 5.71, p = .018, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , with those in the apology factors included condition ( $M = 3.40$ ) perceiving more guilt in the apology than those in the condition where the apology factors were not included ( $M = 3.08$ ).

**Shame**

There was a significant effect of Emotion on perceptions of shame,  $F(2, 222) = 17.15, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .13$ . Bonferroni post hoc tests showed that significantly more shame was perceived in the shame condition ( $M = 3.68$ ), compared to both the guilt ( $M = 2.88$ ) and no-emotion ( $M = 2.88$ ) conditions. The apology factors manipulation did not significantly affect the perception of shame,  $F(1, 222) = 1.53, p = .217, \eta_p^2 = .01$ .

**Forgiveness**

For the binary forgiveness item, the overall frequency of “yes” responses was 53.95%. A chi-square analysis showed that there was no significant association between the proportion of “yes” responses and whether or not apology factors were present,  $\chi^2(1) = .47, p = .493$ . However, a significant association was found between the proportion of “yes” responses and whether guilt, shame, or no emotion was expressed,  $\chi^2(2) = 10.86, p = .004$ . The percentage of “yes” responses was lower in the no-emotion condition (38.96%) than in the guilt (59.21%) and shame conditions (64.00%). Examination of the standardized residuals (Agresti, 2002) suggests that the no-emotion condition was the major contributor to this significant effect, in that there were more “no” responses than expected in this condition (standardized residual = 1.9), relative to the residuals for the “no” responses in the guilt (-.7) and shame (-1.3) conditions, where there were fewer “no” responses than expected.

Turning to the forgiveness scale, there were significant main effects of Apology Factors,  $F(1, 222) = 7.08, p = .008, \eta_p^2 = .03$ , and Emotion,  $F(2, 222) = 17.89, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .14$ , but no interaction,  $F(2, 222) = .34, p = .713, \eta_p^2 < .01$ . Forgiveness ratings were significantly higher when the apology factors were included ( $M = 3.49$ ), compared to when they were not ( $M = 3.30$ ). Post hoc tests with Bonferroni correction showed that the main effect of emotion expression was due to the fact that both emotion conditions, guilt ( $M = 3.52$ ) and shame

**Table 3**

*Mean Values (With Standard Deviations in Parentheses) of All Dependent Variables Measured in Study 3, Broken Down by Apology Content and Type of Emotion Expressed*

Measure	Apology factors included			Apology factors not included		
	Expressed guilt	Expressed shame	Control	Expressed guilt	Expressed shame	Control
Binary forgiveness <sup>†</sup>	62.16%	64.86%	42.11%	56.41%	63.16%	35.90%
Forgiveness scale	3.60 (.38)	3.65 (.48)	3.23 (.52)	3.45 (.72)	3.49 (.59)	2.96 (.50)
Positive perceptions	3.11 (.74)	3.22 (.64)	2.98 (.78)	2.79 (.78)	3.20 (.92)	2.58 (.84)
Perceived guilt	3.68 (1.16)	3.38 (1.01)	3.16 (1.08)	3.56 (1.05)	3.13 (.99)	2.54 (.88)
Perceived shame	2.89 (.84)	3.73 (.80)	3.05 (1.06)	2.87 (1.08)	3.63 (1.03)	2.69 (.98)

<sup>†</sup> percent “yes” responses; all other measures are ratings on a 1–5 scale, where higher values represent greater forgiveness, positive perceptions, guilt, or shame.

( $M = 3.57$ ), resulted in significantly higher forgiveness ratings than did the no-emotion condition ( $M = 3.09$ ).

### Positive Perceptions

There was a significant main effect of Apology Factors on positive perceptions of the perpetrating group,  $F(1, 222) = 5.62$ ,  $p = .019$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ , with significantly higher forgiveness ratings in the apology factors included condition ( $M = 3.10$ ), compared to the condition without these factors ( $M = 2.86$ ). There was also a significant main effect of Emotion,  $F(2, 222) = 5.77$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ . Bonferroni-corrected post hoc tests showed that positive perceptions were significantly higher in the shame condition ( $M = 3.21$ ) than in the no-emotion condition ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Positive perceptions in the guilt condition ( $M = 2.95$ ) did not differ significantly from either the no-emotion condition ( $p = .528$ ) or the shame condition ( $p = .135$ ). There was no interaction effect,  $F(2, 222) = 1.19$ ,  $p = .307$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ .

### Mediation Analysis

Regression analysis using the PROCESS macro in SPSS was used to investigate whether the impact of the apology factors variable on forgiveness was mediated by the positive perception of the perpetrator group. Inclusion of apology factors significantly predicted both forgiveness,  $b = .19$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p = .014$ , and positive perceptions,  $b = .25$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $p = .020$ . The positive perceptions variable, in turn, was a significant predictor of forgiveness,  $b = .54$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .001$ . When positive perceptions of the transgressor were controlled for, the inclusion of apology factors was no longer a significant predictor of forgiveness,  $b = .06$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p = .275$ . More than half of the variance in forgiveness was accounted for by the predictors ( $R^2_{adj} = .56$ ). The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrapping estimation approach with 5,000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This indicated that the indirect coefficient was significant,  $b = .13$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% bias-corrected CI = .03, .26.

Regression analysis was also used to investigate whether positive perceptions of the perpetrating group also mediated the relationship between emotion expression and forgiveness. Using the no-emotion condition as the dummy variable, it was shown that the shame condition significantly predicted both positive perceptions,  $b = .43$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p = .001$ , and forgiveness,  $b = .48$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ . The guilt condition significantly predicted forgiveness scores,  $b = .43$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ , but not positive perceptions,  $b = .17$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p = .185$ . As a result, the guilt condition was not considered further. The positive perceptions measure was a significant predictor of forgiveness,  $b = .51$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .001$ . When positive perceptions of the perpetrating group were controlled for, the expression of shame remained a significant predictor of forgiveness,  $b = .26$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ , relative to the no-emotion condition. More than two-thirds of the variance in forgiveness was accounted for by the predictors ( $R^2_{adj} = .67$ ). The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrapping estimation approach with 5,000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This indicated that the coefficient for the indirect effect was significant,  $b = .22$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% bias-corrected CI = .10, .35.

### Discussion

There was good support for the prediction that a cleaner separation of the apology factors and moral emotion expression manipulations would result in higher forgiveness ratings and more positive evaluations of the perpetrator group. Including both the apology factors and the expression of emotion led to higher forgiveness ratings, relative to their respective control conditions. However, the interaction between the factors was not significant; thus although their combination did not lead to significantly higher forgiveness ratings, there was no evidence, as there had been in Study 2, that one manipulation undermined the effectiveness of the other. Instead, it seems that an intergroup apology can lead to greater forgiveness by including either the future-oriented structural, relational, and identity-related apology factors proposed by Nadler (2012), or the expression of moral emotions such as guilt and shame, which communicate an acceptance of responsibility for wrongdoing and imply that the wrongdoing will not recur.

The positive impact of the two manipulations was also evident in the evaluations of the perpetrator group. Perceptions of the perpetrator were more positive when the apology factors were included rather than absent, and when shame was expressed than when no emotion was expressed, although the expression of guilt did not significantly impact these perceptions. In previous research, Iyer et al. (2007) have also reported differential effects for shame and guilt, with shame predicting intentions that related to avoidance and withdrawal, whereas guilt did not independently predict any action intentions.

The greater impact of shame, compared to guilt, is likely to reflect the fact that it is regarded as a more powerful emotion. This was also evident in the manipulation checks. While ratings of shame were significantly higher within the shame condition, compared to both the control and the guilt condition, ratings of guilt were not significantly higher in the guilt condition than in the shame condition, although both were significantly higher than the control condition. If shame is the stronger emotion, it may be that expressions of shame carry the implication that the person or group in question also feels guilty. Indeed, reports of shame and guilt often co-occur (Tangney et al., 1992). However, shame differs from guilt on more dimensions than extremity; for example, on some theoretical accounts, shame reflects a "bad self" rather than a "bad act" (Tangney et al., 1992), and it may be that a group that is prepared to acknowledge such a fundamental flaw in its identity is seen as one that is more committed to the reconciliation process. The positive findings resulting from shame expression add to the growing evidence that shame can have prosocial outcomes (Gausel et al., 2016; Leach & Cidam, 2015).

A final point to be made in relation to this study is with respect to the mediating effect of the positive perceptions of the perpetrating group. The effect of apology factors on forgiveness levels was fully mediated by these positive perceptions, echoing the pattern observed in Studies 1 and 2. There was also evidence that the positive effect on forgiveness of expressing shame was partially mediated, though the partial nature of this mediation suggests that these beneficial effects of shame expression may also work through a different, complementary process.

## General Discussion

A key contribution of this research is its application of Nadler's (2012) perspective on intergroup reconciliation to the study of apologies. We varied apology content by including references to the structural, relational, and identity-related factors proposed by Nadler (2012), who argued that these three factors need to be addressed in order to achieve genuine intergroup reconciliation. It was hypothesized that exposing participants to apologies addressing these factors would increase forgiveness and enhance evaluations of the perpetrator group.

Between them, the present studies show that these three factors do have a positive effect on forgiveness, as well as on positive perceptions of the transgressors. Although the results of Study 1 show that these apology factors were not differentially effective when used independently, the results of Studies 2 and 3 show that they are effective when used in combination. This is consistent with Nadler's (2012) argument that all three factors are needed to achieve true intergroup reconciliation, although without further research it is not possible to rule out the possibility that a combination of two of the factors might have been effective in eliciting forgiveness. Importantly, the presence of all three factors in Studies 2 and 3 led to significant improvements in the evaluations of the perpetrating group, and these perceptions fully mediated the effect of the apology factors on forgiveness ratings. The added value of drawing on Nadler's (2012) perspective on intergroup reconciliation is that it focuses on the psychological needs of groups, postconflict, and thereby draws attention to the socioemotional processes that are involved in addressing these needs. As noted earlier, the instrumental goal of greater equality of resources (i.e., reparation) that is emphasized in the structural factor is present in many taxonomies of apology components and was shown by Čehajić-Clancy and Brown (2019) to be effective in bringing about intergroup forgiveness, but the results of Study 1 suggest that reparation alone may not always be effective. The socioemotional goals of building trust and removing threats to identity that are emphasized in the relational and identity-related factors are less commonly included, and when used in concert with the structural factor did give rise to greater forgiveness.

A second way in which apology content was varied was by including expressions of moral emotions. In Study 2, expressions of remorse were distributed across the apology statement. Although the inclusion of these expressions resulted in greater forgiveness and more positive evaluations of the perpetrator group, these effects were unexpectedly limited to the conditions in which the apology factors were *not* included. Indeed, when the statement included the apology factors and expressions of strong remorse, both forgiveness ratings, and evaluations of the perpetrator group were lower than when either of these content variables was included on its own. Study 3 showed that a cleaner separation between these content variables, with the expression of moral emotion at the start of the apology and the apology factors at the end, yielded clearer evidence of their effectiveness. Now the expression of emotion (whether this was guilt or shame) elicited greater forgiveness regardless of the presence or absence of the apology factors, although it was only the expression of shame that influenced the positive perceptions of the perpetrating group, relative to a no-emotion control condition. It is worth considering why the expression of moral emotion was effective in the current research but was ineffective in

Čehajić-Clancy and Brown's (2019) research, especially given that the moral emotion they varied was shame. This inconsistency may reflect the unique attributes of the different intergroup conflict contexts involved, an issue we return to below. Qualitative research would be useful in understanding the role that emotions play in the acceptance of apologies by victims of past intergroup human rights violations.

Some limitations of the present research should be acknowledged. The studies were scenario studies in which third-party observers responded to different versions of a statement of apology issued by a group, the IRA, that had perpetrated violent acts for political ends. It could be argued that the judgments made by the participants do not necessarily reflect how those who were more directly involved in "The Troubles" would have reacted. In response, it could be argued that all participants belonged to a national group that was one of the targets of the violence and were all old enough to be able to recall some of the events for which the IRA issued its apology. Moreover, the statement used as the basis for the research was an official apology issued by the IRA, and some of the participants did report that "The Troubles" had had a direct impact on their lives, but their responses did not significantly differ from those who had not been directly affected. It would nevertheless be important for further research to study the reactions of participants in which a larger proportion of members have been directly or indirectly mistreated by another group and are then exposed to an apology issued by the perpetrator group.

Another limitation is that the intergroup conflict that served as the context for the present research had some specific attributes: On a superficial level, it was an intranational conflict between groups with different religious allegiances, but it also had significant political and international dimensions. This raises the question of whether the findings would generalize to intergroup apologies made in other contexts. Examining whether the apology factors studied here are also effective in other types of intergroup conflict would be a logical next step.

In conclusion, the three studies reported here provide good support for the hypothesis that the content of an intergroup apology can influence forgiveness of and evaluations of a perpetrator group. Such evidence serves as an antidote to the view that intergroup apologies are generally ineffective in achieving intergroup reconciliation. Intergroup apologies that explicitly address the structural, relational, and identity-related factors proposed by Nadler (2012) do result in more positive perceptions of a perpetrator group and thereby increase forgiveness of the group's past behavior. Furthermore, intergroup apologies that include clear expressions of shame also lead to more positive perceptions of the perpetrator group, and this in turn increases the likelihood that the group's actions will be forgiven.

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Received December 22, 2020

Revision received March 12, 2021

Accepted May 5, 2021 ■