Allowing the Victim to Draw a Line in History:

Intergroup Apology Effectiveness as a Function of Collective Autonomy Support

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ABSTRACT

We tested whether intergroup apology effectiveness increases when the apology is collective autonomy supportive (i.e., victimized group members are told they have the choice to accept or reject the apology). In Experiment 1, university students who received a collective autonomy supportive (compared to a collective autonomy unsupportive or basic) apology for derogatory remarks made by a rival university perceived the apology as more empathic. This, in turn, heightened intergroup forgiveness. Experiment 2 replicated and extended this effect in the context of the friendly-fire killing of Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan by the United States. Canadians in the collective autonomy supportive condition felt more empowered and were less critical of the apology. Sequential mediation analyses revealed that collective autonomy support had an indirect effect on intergroup forgiveness through empowerment and empathic support of the apology. Findings suggest the apology-forgiveness link strengthens when the victimized group's collective autonomy is explicitly acknowledged.

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The Kenya Human Rights Commission estimates that upwards of 90,000 Kenyans were executed by the British forces between 1952 and 1960. Thousands more were treated inhumanely in British prison camps. On June 6th, 2013, British Foreign Secretary William Hague issued a public apology to Kenya on behalf of Britain. In his apology Hague expressed a "*desire to draw a line*" in history, a hope that the apology would receive wide and positive support, and a feeling of "*trust*" that the apology would lead to reconciliation. Such language is commonly used during an intergroup apology to convey genuine hope for peaceful reconciliation with their victims (Blatz, Schumann, & Ross, 2009). We argue, however, that such language may undermine a basic need among victimized group members to feel that they can choose to accept the apology.

In the current research, we tested the idea that an apology that conveys an expectation that the apology will be accepted may undermine victimized group members' *collective autonomy* during the reconciliation process. Such a challenge may dampen positive responses to the apology (including forgiveness). Conversely, we argue that an apology that explicitly recognizes that victimized group' choice to accept (or refuse) the apology communicates a transfer of power to the victimized group, and in so doing, facilitates the reconciliation process.

Intergroup Apologies and Victims' Psychological Needs

Intergroup apologies have become increasingly common as transgressing groups attempt to reconcile with their victims (Brown, Wohl, & Exline, 2008; Wohl, Branscombe, & Klar, 2006; Wohl, Hornsey, & Bennett, 2012; Wohl, et al., 2011). However, empirical research concerning the utility of an intergroup apology for promoting positive intergroup relations is mixed (Hornsey & Wohl, 2013; Philpot & Hornsey, 2008; Wohl, et al., 2011). On the ineffective end of

the spectrum, Philpot and Hornsey (2008) found that intergroup apologies had no influence on the reconciliation process. Additionally, Blatz, Schumann and Ross (2009) showed that an intergroup apology might result in victimized group members perceiving the transgressing group as having self-serving or ulterior motives. More recently, Wohl and colleagues (2013) demonstrated that an intergroup apology may undermine forgiveness when the victims' expectations of pro-social change that stems from the apology are not met. With that said, some research has shown that intergroup apologies can have a positive effect on intergroup relations by increasing positive attitudes that victims hold toward the transgressing group (Nadler & Liviatan, 2006), reducing the victimized group's desire for retribution (Leonard, Mackie, & Smith, 2011), and promoting forgiveness (Berndsen, Hornsey, & Wohl, 2015; Wohl et al., 2012).

We, like others (Hornsey & Wohl, 2013), argue that the mixed literature suggests the presence of moderating variables that pivot the utility of an intergroup apology toward or away from positive effects. Here, we introduce *collective autonomy* as a heretofore-unexamined component of an intergroup apology that may influence whether positive outcomes are observed. This proposition is based on two related, but as yet unlinked literatures: the needs-based model of reconciliation (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Shnabel & Nadler, 2015) and self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Broadly, the needs-based model of reconciliation (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Shnabel & Nadler, 2015) proposes that a central aspect of (collective) victimhood involves experiencing a threatened sense of agency (i.e., reduced efficacy, status, power, control and autonomy). Critically, the needs-based model proposes that victims' willingness to reconcile is a function of agency re-affirmation. This contention has been empirically verified at the interpersonal level (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008) and at the intergroup level (Shnabel, Nadler, Ullrich, Dovidio, &

Carmi, 2009; SimanTov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014). For example, Shnabel and colleagues (2009) found that Jews expressed a greater willingness to reconcile with Germans for the Holocaust when Germans explicitly affirmed Jews' power and right to self-determination.

Beyond explicit affirmations of agency, the needs-based model proposes that apologies can serve to restore the victim's sense of agency (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Specifically, when an apology is issued by the transgressor, "[…] control returns to the hands of the victim, who may then *determine* whether the perpetrator will be forgiven" (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008, p.117, emphasis added). Building from this supposition, we argue that the key ingredient for apology effectiveness is explicit acknowledgment that victims have the choice to accept the apology. Specifically, we contend that for apologies to promote reconciliation, victimized group members need to feel that the decision to accept the apology is theirs and theirs alone. In this way, apology effectiveness may be impacted in part by the extent to which the transgressing group explicitly respects the victim's autonomy to accept the apology. To date however, the role played by collective autonomy supportive language within an apology has not received empirical attention.

The Role of Collective Autonomy Support in Intergroup Apologies

The need and benefits of feelings autonomous has been studied extensively within self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). At the individual level, feeling autonomous is positively associated with experiencing greater psychological wellbeing, vitality, and physical health (Chirkov, Ryan & Sheldon, 2011;Vansteenkiste, Ryan & Deci, 2008). Similarly, at the intergroup level, feeling collectively autonomous to determine and practice group customs is positively associated with the wellbeing of group members (Kachanoff, Taylor, Caouette, Wohl, & Khullar, 2016), which is a primary reason why

individuals and groups desire power to maintain their autonomy (Kachanoff, Khullar, Park, &

Taylor, 2015; Lammers, Stoker, Rink, & Galinsky, 2016; Pratto, 2016).

Within the context of an intergroup apology, however, victims' collective autonomy is

often undermined. Indeed, akin to Hague's apology to the Mau Mau of Kenya, apologies tend to

confer an expectation that victims will *draw a line* in the sands of history and express a feeling of

trust that the apology will lead to reconciliation. Although these sentiments may reflect a

genuine hope and desire for positive intergroup relations to develop, they do not allow

victimized groups to have collective autonomy to choose the path of forgiveness and

reconciliation. Postcolonial theorists have suggested that historical power differences often

persist between former transgressing ('colonizer') and victimized ('colonized') groups (see Lloyd,

2000). This power differential may lead victims to feel that failing to forgive may anger the

transgressing group, which may dash future reconciliatory efforts (Harth, Hornsey, & Barlow,

2011). Additionally, suppositions that reconciliation follows an apology (see Tavuchis, 1991)

may place further pressures on the victim to forgive. Ironically, such expectancies may further

exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the threats to agency and power that is characteristic of

experiencing collective victimhood.

Given the external pressures to accept an apology when offered, we propose that there is

a need for the transgressing group to provide explicit collective autonomy support to the

victimized group within the apology. From an SDT framework, autonomy support is a multi-

dimensional construct. One core feature of autonomy support involves providing people with

choices and respecting their freedom to determine their own behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000

Williams et al., 1996). In the context of an intergroup apology, we contend that collective

autonomy support is provided when the transgressing group explicitly acknowledges and

respects that the victimized group may not feel ready to accept the apology. Including collective autonomy supportive language in an intergroup apology may help reduce the tendency for victimized group members to feel pressured to accept the apology.

Beyond explicitly supporting choice and autonomy, autonomy support also involves being empathic – acknowledging people's emotions, taking people's perspectives, being trustworthy and caring, and asking people questions in order to understand their perspective (Gagné, Koestner, & Zuckerman, 2000; Williams et al., 1996). To the point, empathic support involves recognizing and acknowledging the emotions of others rather than vicariously "feeling for" them. This distinction is important given recent evidence that low-power individuals are more empowered when receiving the cognitive (perspective taking) form of empathy from a high-power individual rather than receiving the emotional (feeling for) form of empathy (Vorauer & Quesnel, 2015). We argue that by respecting the victims' choice, the transgressing group signals to the victimized group that they have taken their perspective and understand that they may not be ready to forgive. Thus, we propose that victimized group members who feel that their choice to accept the apology is supported within the apology, and who in turn feel empowered by the apology, will perceive the apology as being more empathic. Moreover, we propose that perceiving the apology to be higher in empathic support should promote victims to forgive the transgressing group to a greater extent. This hypothesis is in accord with previous research linking perceived empathy from the transgressor with greater willingness to reconcile with the transgressor (Nadler & Liviatan, 2006; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Forster, & Montada, 2004).

Overview of Present Research

In two experiments, we manipulated the content of an intergroup apology to test the potential importance of collective autonomy supportive language for the apology-forgiveness

link. Specifically, Experiment 1 examined the utility of autonomy supportive language within the context of an ostensibly real apology for a transgression between two rival universities. Experiment 2 then tested the impact of autonomy supportive language within an ostensibly real apology for a severe real-world transgression. In both experiments, some participants received a basic apology (i.e., an apology that simply acknowledged wrongdoing), whereas other participants received the basic apology, and *additional* information that either conveyed an understanding that acceptance of the apology was in the hands of the victimized group (i.e., collective autonomy supportive) or that there was an expectation that the victimized group would accept that apology (i.e., collective autonomy unsupportive).

In Experiment 1, we assessed whether autonomy supportive language in an apology indirectly increases intergroup forgiveness via perceived empathic support within the apology. Expanding on the simple indirect model tested in Experiment 1, we then tested a sequential mediation model in Experiment 2. Specifically, we predicted that a collective autonomy supportive apology would heighten group members' feelings of empowerment, which would, in turn, increase their perceptions of empathic support within the apology. The outcome would be greater forgiveness towards the victimized group. Additionally in Experiment 2, we included a novel open-ended behavioral task in which participants could edit the text of the actual apology delivered by the transgressor group. As such, more modifications of the apology would serve as a behavioral indicator of apology suitability. We hypothesized that victimized group members exposed to a collective autonomy unsupportive apology would want to make more edits than those exposed to a collective autonomy supportive apology.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 tested the hypothesis that *autonomy supportive apologies* that explicitly acknowledge the choice of victims to accept or refuse the apology are more efficacious, relative to *autonomy unsupportive apologies* that confer an expectation of forgiveness, and relative to *basic* apologies that contain neither autonomy supportive nor autonomy unsupportive language. We tested this hypothesis within the context of an ostensibly real transgression in which a rival university insulted the academic integrity of students' home university. Undergraduate student participants read an article that described the transgression and quoted an apology ostensibly delivered by the rival university for their transgression. We then assessed group members' willingness to forgive the rival university and their perceptions of the apology.

Method

Participants

Two hundred and thirty-five undergraduate students (57 male, 170 female, 8 unspecified) from Carleton University were recruited for an online study on their university's social events in exchange for course credit. Power analysis using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2007) indicates that a sample of 183 would be sufficient to achieve a statistical power of .80 for detecting a small yet meaningful effect of condition on our outcome ($\eta^2 = .05, f^2 = .23,$ Cohen, 1992). Fifty-five students were excluded from the analyses for either responding to an attention check item incorrectly, for failing to agree that the target article mentioned either an apology or a transgression (both of which were explicitly detailed), or due to missing data for at least one of our key outcomes. The final sample consisted of 180 undergraduate students (43 male, 134 female, 3 unspecified) ranging in age from 17 to 50 years old ($M = 21.75, SD = 4.89$).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three apology conditions: basic apology, collective autonomy supportive apology, and collective autonomy unsupportive apology.

Procedure

Upon granting consent, participants were directed to read an ostensibly real newspaper article published by the Carleton University student newspaper[1]. This article described a derogatory remark made by the president of the University of Ottawa concerning the academic reputation of Carleton University[2]. It was explained that the derogatory remark was posted on the University of Ottawa's Twitter and Facebook accounts. The newspaper also noted that these posts received over a thousand 'likes' from University of Ottawa students. Participants were then randomly assigned to read one of three apologies (basic apology, collective autonomy supportive, and collective autonomy unsupportive) issued by the University of Ottawa President.

All three articles were identical except for the content of the apology (basic, collective autonomy supportive, or collective unsupportive) that was quoted in its entirety at the end of the article. The *basic* apology was adapted from Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper's (1989) framework of what they propose are the five essential components of a successful apology (see also, Blatz, et al., 2009). Specifically, the apology included: (1) an acknowledgement of fault (2) an expression of remorse (3) an expression of responsibility, (4) a promise of forbearance, and (5) an offer of repair. The apology read:

> *On behalf of the University of Ottawa, I would like to offer a public apology to Carleton*
> *University students and President Runte. Our lack of support and poor sportsmanship*
> *has resulted in an atmosphere of hostility and distrust among fans, athletes, and members*
> *of our communities alike. As a fellow respected Canadian institution, we want to take this*
> *moment and express our dedication to insuring[3] that this appalling behaviour exhibited*

by our university is never conveyed to future generations of students. We are committed

to playing our part to insure that cooperation can be restored.

In the collective autonomy supportive condition, the following text was added to the basic

apology:

The University of Ottawa hopes that all members of the Carleton University community

may forgive us for this transgression. However, I and all other members of the University

of Ottawa community understand that it may be difficult for all members of the Carleton

University to accept this apology. We don't expect that an apology will smooth all the

waters. We understand the hurt this has caused, and we respect Carleton University's

right to be offended with the University of Ottawa.

In the collective autonomy unsupportive condition, the following text was added to the basic

apology:

The University of Ottawa hopes that all members of the Carleton University community

may forgive us for this transgression. We expect that this apology can smooth the waters.

It is time that both our groups turn the page on this unfortunate event.

After reading the article, participants completed a series of questionnaires that included the

variables of focus for the present research. All questionnaire items were anchored at 1 (*strongly*

disagree) and 7 (*strongly agree*). As a manipulation check of our experimental condition,

participants were asked "In their apology, the University of Ottawa acknowledged that it is

Carleton University's choice to accept or refuse their apology." Within this section of the survey,

participants also completed a 7-item scale (α=.86) that assessed their perceptions of empathic

support within the apology. This scale was adapted from Williams and colleagues (1996)

measure of autonomy support, which emphasizes the empathic perspective-taking component of

providing autonomy support. Items were: "In their apology, the University of Ottawa shows that they understand how the University of Carleton felt as a result of the transgression"; "Carleton University can trust what was said in the apology from the University of Ottawa"; "In their apology, the University of Ottawa shows that they took the time to listen to the concerns of Carleton University"; " In their apology, the University of Ottawa showed that they took the time to ask questions and understand Carleton University's reactions to the transgression"; "In their apology, the University of Ottawa showed that they care about Carleton University"; "In their apology, the University of Ottawa showed that they were able to take the perspective of Carleton University", and "In their apology, the University of Ottawa showed that they were sensitive to the feelings of Carleton University". In both Experiments 1 and 2, we conducted a factor analysis to ensure that the seven items tapped onto one factor. In both experiments we found support for a one-factor solution (see supplementary materials). Prior to assessing the quality of the apology, participants also completed a 7-item scale (α=.79) that assessed intergroup forgiveness[4] (adapted from Wohl & Branscombe, 2009). Sample items were: "The University of Ottawa should be forgiven" and "The University of Ottawa should get what is coming to them" (reverse coded).

Results

Manipulation Check: Choice Support in Apology

Means and inter-correlations for all measured variables are reported in Table 1.

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant main effect of apology condition on participants' perception that the University of Ottawa supported Carleton University's choice to accept or refuse the apology, $F(2,177)=37.53$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.30$. Comparisons using the Bonferroni correction revealed that participants who received the collective autonomy supportive apology ($M=5.40$, $SD=1.60$) perceived that the University of

Ottawa supported the choice of Carleton to a significantly greater extent than participants who

read the collective autonomy unsupportive apology, (*M*=3.57, *SD*=1.58), *Mean Difference*=1.84,

SE=.29*, p*<.001, 95% *CI* [1.15, 2.53], and participants who received the basic apology (*M*=3.03,

SD=1.56), *Mean Difference*=2.37, *SE*=.29, *p* < .001, 95% *CI* [1.67,3.07]. There was no

significant difference in perceived choice support between those who received the basic apology

and those who received the collective autonomy unsupportive apology, *Mean Difference*=.53,

SE=.29, *p*=.21, 95%*CI* [-.17, 1.24].

Impressions of Empathic Support within the Apology

One-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of apology condition on

participants' perceptions of empathic support within the apology, *F*(2,177)=4.88, *p* =.009, η^2

=.05. Comparisons using the Bonferroni correction revealed that participants who read the

collective autonomy supportive apology (*M*=4.63, *SD*=1.02) had perceived the apology as being

higher in empathic support than those who read the collective autonomy unsupportive apology

(*M*=4.10, *SD*=.98), *Mean Difference*=.53, *SE*=.19*, p*=.014*,* 95% *CI* [.08, .98], and than those

who read the basic apology (*M*=4.17, *SD*=1.08), *Mean Difference*=.46, *SE*=.19, *p*=.042, 95% *CI*

[.01 .92]. Participants in the basic apology condition and the collective autonomy unsupportive

condition did not differ in their impressions of the apology with respect to empathic support,

Mean Difference=.07, *SE*=.19, *p*=1.00, 95% *CI* [-.39, .52].

Intergroup Forgiveness

One-way ANOVA revealed no direct effect of apology condition on forgiveness, *F*(2,

177)=.28, *p*=.75, η^2 =.003. Participants in the autonomy supportive condition (*M*=5.30*, SD*=.95)

did not differ in forgiveness relative to participants in the autonomy unsupportive condition

(*M*=5.29*, SD*=.82) or the basic apology condition (*M*=5.40*, SD*=.89).

Mediation Analysis

Although there was no direct effect of the intergroup apology manipulation on intergroup

forgiveness, according to Kenny and Judd (2014) the power to detect a direct effect can be

dramatically smaller than the power to detect indirect effect. One such situation is when the

central research question is whether a randomized intervention is efficacious and there is a good

understanding of the mechanism. Under such conditions, there is benefit in testing *ab* (the

indirect effect) over *c* (*the direct effect*). The current research fits these criteria. As such, we

tested the indirect effect of the apology condition on forgiveness via perceived empathic support

using the PROCESS SPSS macro with bootstrapping (10,000 iterations; Hayes & Preacher,

2014; version 2.15, Model 4). The analyses revealed a significant indirect effect of the collective

autonomy unsupportive apology (relative to the collective autonomy supportive apology) on

forgiveness through perceived empathic support contained within the apology, indirect effect=-

.14, *SE*=.06, 95% *CI*=[-.29,-.04]. There was also a significant indirect effect of the basic apology

(relative to the collective autonomy supportive apology) on forgiveness through perceived

empathic support contained within the apology, indirect effect=-.12, *SE*=.06, 95% *CI*=[-.28,-.03]

(see Figure 1).

Discussion

Experiment 1 provided support for our general hypothesis that collective autonomy

supportive language used in an intergroup apology positively impacts impressions of the

apology, which has a downstream effect on intergroup forgiveness. In line with the theorizing of

Hornsey and Wohl (2013), we found no significant overall direct effect of the apology on

forgiveness. However, results did show an indirect effect of apology on forgiveness via

impressions of perceived empathic support within the apology. Specifically, when victimized

group members received the collective autonomy supportive apology they perceived greater empathic support within the apology (compared to those who received the collective autonomy unsupportive apology and the basic apology). Perceiving empathic support from the apology in turn promoted intergroup forgiveness. Thus, we showed that collective autonomy supportive apologies have forgiveness promoting utility, albeit indirectly through impressions of empathic support within the apology.

Experiment 2

The apology context in Experiment 1 concerned a relatively mild and fictional transgression between two groups. Building on Experiment 1, Experiment 2 sought to replicate the key findings, but within an intergroup context involving a real and more severe transgression between two national groups. Specifically, Canadian participants were exposed to an apology from the United States Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel, for the friendly fire killing of four Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan – a real event that occurred in 2002.

Experiment 2 extended Experiment 1 by assessing whether a collective autonomy supportive apology (as opposed to a collective autonomy unsupportive apology) empowered victimized group members. As noted by Shnabel and Nadler's (2008, 2015) needs-based model of reconciliation, victimized group members have a need to reclaim power lost as a result of their victimization. We contend that collective autonomy supportive language used during an intergroup apology would serve as a cue for victimized group members that the balance of power has shifted in their favour. Consistent with both the needs-based model, and self-determination theory, we predicted that the heightened sense of power that stems from a collective autonomy supportive apology would increase victimized group members' perceptions of empathic support within the apology, and in turn, their willingness to forgive. Expanding on the mediation model

tested in Experiment 1, we predicted that autonomy supportive language in the apology would have an indirect effect on forgiveness by first increasing feelings of empowerment in victims, which would then in turn promote perceptions of empathic support within the apology.

Finally, we explored the use of a novel, open-ended behavioral measure, to assess perceived suitability of the language used in the apology. Participants were given the opportunity to edit the apology they were assigned to read. Of interest was the number of edits participants made to the apology as a function of the version of the apology they read (basic, collective autonomy supportive or unsupportive). It was hypothesized that group members would find the language more suitable (and as such they would be making the least number of edits) when the apology was collective autonomy supportive.

Method

Participants

Seventy-five participants[5] recruited from the McGill University community were invited to the laboratory to partake in an experiment on intergroup relations. All participants were born in Canada. Five participants were excluded for missing data on one of the key questionnaires, or on the open-ended behavioral task, or for missing an attention check in the survey. One further participant was excluded for asking the experimenter if the article was fake during the experiment. A final sample of 69 participants[6] remained (15 male, 54 female; Mean age=22.79, SD=5.91). Participants were randomly assigned to one of 3 apology conditions: basic apology, collective autonomy supportive apology, and collective autonomy unsupportive apology. Participants were compensated $10 or 1 extra-credit in an introductory psychology class.

Procedure

Upon granting consent, participants were directed to read an ostensibly real CBC news article about a friendly fire incident in Afghanistan in which an American fighter pilot killed four Canadian troops and wounded eight others. An apology for the incident was manipulated in a similar manner as was done in Experiment 1. Participants either read a basic apology, an apology that explicitly acknowledged Canadians' choice to forgive (i.e., the collective autonomy supportive condition), or an apology that contained an expectation that the apology would be accepted (i.e., the collective autonomy unsupportive condition). The apology read:

> *On behalf of all Americans, I sincerely offer a public apology to the victims of the tragic incident that took place at Tarnak Farms, on April 18, 2002. I want to extend this apology to the families and friends of those victims and all Canadians. We failed to put into place stricter protocols that could have prevented this incident. After meetings with Canadian Government, I understand that we have also failed to offer a sense of justice to the victims' families and the Canadian people. We wish to fully acknowledge that this has caused much harm and an unspeakable loss to Canada. As Americans, we want to take this moment to express our dedication to ensuring that this type of behaviour on the part of our country is conveyed to future generations so that this is never again repeated. Furthermore, we will offer compensation to the families and relatives of the Canadian soldiers who were affected by this tragedy. We are committed to ensuring that they are fairly compensated.*

In the collective autonomy supportive condition, the following text was added to the basic apology:

> *The American Government hopes that all Canadians may forgive myself and the United States of America for these past actions. However at the end of the day, I and all other*

> *Americans understand that it will be the choice of Canadians to accept this apology and*
>
> *we don't expect that this will smooth all of the waters. We understand the hurt that this*
>
> *has caused, and we respect the right of Canadians to be angry and upset during this*
>
> *process.*

In the collective autonomy unsupportive condition, the following text was added to the basic apology:

> *The American Government is confident that all Canadians will forgive myself and the*
>
> *United States of America for these actions. We expect that this apology will smooth all of*
>
> *the waters. We believe that it is time to acknowledge this negative episode in our history*
>
> *so that we can both turn the page and continue [to][7] face the future together.*

After reading the apology, using the same measures as in Experiment 1, we assessed participants' forgiveness ($\alpha=.73$), perception that their choice to accept or refuse the apology was supported by the transgressor group and perceptions of empathic support within the apology ($\alpha=.89$). The extent to which participants felt empowered by the apology was assessed using three items adapted from Shnabel and Nadler (2008). These items, anchored at 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*), were: "The apology made Canadians feel relatively strong as a group"; "Canadians had a lot of influence on what was said in the apology"; "Canadians had a lot of control on what was said in the apology" ($\alpha=.69$)

After participants were asked for their impression of the apology, they were invited to open a Microsoft Word document that contained the apology they were exposed to in the ostensibly real CBC news article. Participants were instructed to make alterations to the apology using the track changes function in Microsoft Word if they thought changes were needed and were also able to make comments as to their impressions of the apology. The number of changes

that participants made in the apology served as the dependent measure in our main analyses[8]. We also qualitatively assessed the types of changes made to the apology, which we describe in detail in supplementary analyses.

Results

Manipulation Check

Means and inter-correlations for all measured variables are reported in Table 2. Replicating the results of Experiment 1, one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of apology condition on participants' perception that the American Government supported Canadians' choice to accept or refuse the apology, $F(2,66)=38.11, p<.001, \eta^2 =.54$. Comparisons using the Bonferroni correction indicated that participants who read the collective autonomy supportive apology (M=6.48, SD=1.33) perceived that the American Government supported the choice of Canadians to a significantly greater extent than participants who read the collective autonomy unsupportive apology (M=2.38, SD=1.76), *Mean Difference*=4.10, *SE*=.49, *p<.001,* 95% *CI* [2.89,5.31], and participants who read the basic apology (M=3.17, SD=1.79), *Mean Difference*=3.31, *SE*=.49, *p< .001,* 95% *CI* [2.10,4.52]. Participants who read the collective autonomy unsupportive apology did not differ significantly from participants who read the basic apology, *Mean Difference*=-.79, *SE*=.48, *p=.31,* 95% *CI* [-1.96,.38].

Feeling Empowered by the Apology

One-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of apology condition on the extent to which participants felt empowered by the apology, $F(2,66)=5.21, p=.008, \eta^2 =.14.$ Comparisons using the Bonferroni correction indicated that participants who read the collective autonomy supportive apology (M=3.53, SD=.94) felt empowered by the apology to a significantly greater extent than participants who read the collective autonomy unsupportive

apology (*M*=2.69, *SD*=1.10), *Mean Difference*=.84, *SE*=.30, *p*=.021, 95% *CI* [.09,1.58].

Furthermore, participants who read the collective autonomy unsupportive apology felt

significantly less empowered by the apology than participants who read the basic apology

(*M*=3.50, *SD*=.95), *Mean Difference*=-.81, *SE*=.29, *p*=.022, 95% *CI* [-1.52,-.09]. There were no

significant differences in feelings of empowerment between those who read the basic apology

and those who read the collective autonomy supportive apology, *Mean Difference*=.03, *SE*=.30)*,

p*=1.00, 95% *CI* [-.71,.77].

Impressions of Empathic Support within the Apology

Consistent with Experiment 1, one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of

apology condition on perceived empathic support contained within the apology, *F*(2,66)=3.53,

p=.035, η^2 =.10. Comparisons using the Bonferroni correction indicated that participants who

read the collective autonomy supportive apology (*M*=4.24, *SD*=1.10) tended to perceive greater

empathic support within the apology than participants who read the collective autonomy

unsupportive apology (*M*=3.64, *SD*=1.39) although this trend was not significant as was the case

in Experiment 1, *Mean Difference*=.60, *SE*=.37, *p*=.35*;* 95% *CI* [-.32,1.51]. Conversely,

participants who read the collective autonomy unsupportive apology reported significantly less

empathic support within the apology than participants who read the basic apology (*M*=4.59,

SD=1.22), *Mean Difference*=-.95, *SE*=.36*, p*=.032, 95% *CI* [-1.84,-.06]. In contrast with

Experiment 1, participants in the basic apology and the collective autonomy supportive condition

did not differ in their impression of empathic support within the apology, which both tended to

be favourable, *Mean Difference*=.35, *SE*=.37*, p*=1.00; 95% *CI* [-.56,1.27].

Intergroup forgiveness

As was the case in Experiment 1, one-way ANOVA revealed no direct effect of apology condition on forgiveness, $F(2,66)=.24$, $p=.78$, $\eta^2=.007$. Participants in the collective autonomy supportive condition ($M=4.33$, $SD=1.01$) did not differ in forgiveness relative to participants in the collective autonomy unsupportive condition ($M=4.15$, $SD=1.25$) or the basic apology condition ($M=4.14$, $SD=.82$).

Mediation Analysis

We then tested the indirect effect of apology on forgiveness via feelings of empowerment and empathic support of the apology using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012, model #6) for a sequential mediation. We followed the protocol outlined by Hayes and Preacher (2014, supplementary materials) for adapting the PROCESS macro to be suitable for testing indirect effects for data with a categorical independent variable of k levels and tested the indirect effect using bootstraping (10,000 iterations). These analyses revealed a significant indirect effect of the basic apology condition (relative to the collective autonomy unsupportive apology) on forgiveness through empowerment (entered as mediator one) and impressions of empathic support within the apology (entered as mediator two), *indirect effect*=.16, *SE*=.10, 95% *CI*=[.04,.44]. The analyses also revealed a significant indirect effect of the collective autonomy supportive apology condition (relative to the collective autonomy unsupportive apology) on forgiveness through empowerment (entered as mediator one) and impressions of empathic support within the apology (entered as mediator two), *indirect effect*=.17, *SE*=.10, 95% *CI*=[.04,.47]. None of the other indirect paths of condition on forgiveness, either through empowerment directly or impressions of empathic support directly, were significant. Figure 2 presents path coefficients and confidence intervals for the direct, and indirect effects.

We tested a reverse model in which apology condition impacted forgiveness first through perceptions of empathic support and then through feelings of empowerment. However, the indirect paths in this model were not significant. Furthermore, we tested a mediation model in which perceived empathic support and empowerment were entered in parallel into the model. Again, the indirect paths were not significant in this model (See supplementary materials).

Perceived Suitability of the Language Used in the Apology

Finally, we examined the impact of apology condition on the number of edits that participants made to the actual apology. We conceptualized this outcome as a novel behavioural measure of participants' perceived suitability of the language used in the apology. Analysis was first conducted on the number of edits made to the basic component of the apology. We then assessed the number of edits made to the collective autonomy supportive or unsupportive (i.e., experimental) component of the apology.

One-way ANOVA showed no significant main effect of apology condition on the number of edits made to the basic component of the apology that was consistent across all three conditions, $F(2,66)=1.56, p=.22, \eta^2=.05$. Participants in the collective autonomy supportive condition ($M=1.86, SD=2.39$) did not differ significantly in the number of edits made to the basic component of the apology relative to participants in the collective autonomy unsupportive condition ($M=3.21, SD=3.23$) or the basic apology condition ($M=2.96, SD=2.35$).

Critically however, one-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of apology condition on the number of edits made to the experimental component of the apology, $F(1,43)=44.09, p=.001, \eta^2=.51$. The Levene's test indicated a violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption, $F(1,43)=5.05, p=.03$; however, the Brown-Forsythe test which is robust to such a violation also indicated a main effect of condition, $F(2,36.73)=47.40, p<.001$. Participants

who read the collective autonomy unsupportive apology (*M*= 3.92, *SD*=2.02) made significantly more edits to the experimental component of the apology than participants who read the collective autonomy supportive apology (*M*=.62, *SD*=1.12).

The number of changes that participants made to the experimental component of the apology was significantly and negatively correlated to feelings of empowerment, *r*(45)=-.44, *p*=.002, and marginally negatively correlated to empathic support, *r*(45)=-.28, *p*=.06. There was no correlation with self-reported forgiveness, *r(45)*=.03, *p*=.83. Using PROCESS we explored whether feelings of empowerment and/or empathic support mediated the effect of condition on the number of changes made to the experimental component of the apology (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). We tested the model with the two potential mediators included into the model in *parallel* using bootstrapping (10,000 iterations). There was no significant indirect effect of condition on number of changes made to the apology through empathic support, *indirect effect*=-.02, *SE*=.09, 95% *CI*=[-.24,.15], or through feelings of empowerment, *indirect effect*=-.16, *SE*=.14, 95% *CI*=[-.52,.04]. As well, we tested a sequential model in which apology condition predicted empowerment, then empathic support, then number of changes to the apology. This model, however, was also not significant, *indirect effect*=-.01, *SE*=.09, 95% *CI*=[-.24,.13)].

Qualitative Analysis

As predicted, most participants changed language that suggested an expectation of forgiveness. Indeed, 98% of participants within the autonomy unsupportive condition removed at least one of the words related to expectancies. Interestingly, 88% of participants replaced the word "expect" with the more liberal term "hope". A representative example of one such corrected section is as follows (italic lettering reflects change made by participant):

Although American Government *would appreciate* that all Canadians will forgive myself
and the United States of America for these actions; *we understand that forgiveness may
take time and accept the choice of those who are unable to do so.* We *do no* expect that
this apology will smooth all of the waters *right away, however we hope it is a step in that
direction.* We believe that it is time to acknowledge this negative episode in our history
so that we can *eventually* both turn the page and continue face the future together.

A more detailed description of the qualitative analysis can be found in supplementary materials.

Discussion

Experiment 2 provided additional support for our general hypothesis that collective
autonomy support conveyed in the apology yields more positive outcomes than an apology that
is collective autonomy unsupportive. Indeed, Canadians who received either the basic apology or
the collective autonomy supportive apology for the killing of Canadian soldiers felt more
empowered by the apology relative to Canadians who received the collective autonomy
unsupportive apology. In turn, feelings of empowerment lead to greater impressions of empathic
support within the apology, and greater impressions of empathic support were ultimately
associated with greater forgiveness.

Informatively, Canadians were harsher critics of the collective autonomy unsupportive
apology than of the autonomy supportive apology. Participants in the collective autonomy
unsupportive apology condition made significantly more edits to the apology than participants
who read the collective autonomy supportive apology. In other words, victimized group
members who read the collective autonomy unsupportive apology wanted the transgressor group
to provide a different, presumably more collective autonomy supportive apology. Indeed, ninety-
eight percent of participants within the autonomy unsupportive condition, on their own accord,

targeted and changed the controlling language of the apology. However, we found that neither impressions of empathic support nor feelings of empowerment mediated the impact of apology condition on the number of changes made to the apology.

General Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to examine whether an intergroup apology that contains collective autonomy supportive language (i.e., explicit acknowledgment that it is the victimized group's right to accept the apology) increases the apology's effectiveness. Specifically, we hypothesized that victimized group members would feel more empowered by and perceive greater empathic support from a collective autonomy supportive apology (relative to basic and collective autonomy unsupportive apologies). Importantly, we predicted that a collective autonomy supportive apology would indirectly facilitate forgiveness by promoting such feelings of empowerment and impressions of empathic support.

Supporting our predictions, Experiment 1 found that victimized group members (university students who were derogated by a rival university) who received a collective autonomy supportive apology perceived greater empathic support from the perpetrating group's apology than those who received a basic apology or a collective autonomy unsupportive apology. Furthermore, the increase in impressions of empathic support was, in turn, associated with an increased willingness to forgive the transgressing group.

Experiment 2 replicated and extended Experiment 1 within an apology context involving a real and severe transgression – the friendly fire killing of four Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan by the US military. As predicted, victimized group members who read the collective autonomy supportive apology felt significantly more empowered by the apology than those who received the autonomy unsupportive apology. Importantly, sequential mediation analyses revealed that

collective autonomy supportive language in the apology may have downstream consequences for forgiveness because of its impact on feelings of empowerment, and in turn, on impressions of empathic support within the apology. Furthermore, using a novel behavioral and open-ended task, we demonstrated that victimized group members would make more corrections to a collective autonomy unsupportive vs. autonomy supportive apology. Qualitative analyses revealed that these changes were made presumably in order to remove language that was threatening to their collective autonomy. As such, group members demonstrated behaviorally that they were less accepting of the apology in the autonomy unsupportive condition, by actually trying to alter and change the apology to a greater extent than participants in the autonomy supportive condition.

Implications and Future Directions

The present research provides an important extension of Shnabel and Nadler's (2008, 2015) needs-based model of reconciliation. Thus far, theory and research using the needs-based model (Shnabel, et al., 2009; SimanTov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014) has focused primarily on how the victimized group's global sense of agency might be restored through explicit and general affirmations agency. Although it has been argued that apologies empower victimized individuals (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008), the practical question of *how* transgressors might promote victims to feel a sense of choice and empowerment during the apology process has received little attention. The present research fills this gap and introduces collective autonomy supportive language as one potential strategy for increasing feelings of empowerment amongst members of the victimized group.

Our ideas concerning the need for collective autonomy supportive language in an intergroup apology was informed by SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000). For over 40

years, SDT researchers have demonstrated that supporting an individual's need for autonomy at the personal level is essential for that individual to maintain an optimal sense of personal volition, vitality, and wellbeing. Recent work has taken SDT to the intergroup level and found preliminary evidence that feeling that one's group is free to engage in group-defining practices is positively related to wellbeing (Kachanoff et al., 2016). Expanding on this work, we applied SDT's conceptualization of autonomy support (Williams et al., 1996) to inform our conceptualization of collective autonomy supportive language in an intergroup apology (and its effect). Specifically, we predicted that explicit support of the victims' right to choose to accept the apology (choice being a core dimension of autonomy support) would lead victimized group members to believe that the transgressing group is high in empathic support (another core dimension of autonomy support). Importantly, and consistent with previous work on empathy and apology effectiveness (Nadler & Livitian, 2006; Schmitt et al., 2004), we found that greater perceptions of empathic support promoted greater forgiveness.

While our work has focused on autonomy support within the framework of intergroup apologies, a fruitful direction for future research may be to examine the role of autonomy support in apologies at the interpersonal level. Indeed, the needs-based model applies to both individual victimization and collective victimization. Thus, when receiving an apology, individuals who are victimized may look to the transgressor for recognition that it is their choice to decide if and when to forgive.

At a basic and applied level, our findings may provide insight for how transgressing groups can increase the effectiveness of a public intergroup apology. On the basis of our findings we would suggest that real-world apologies avoid phrases that may imply an expectation of forgiveness. Instead, apologies should explicitly acknowledge and support the right of the

victimized group to choose whether or *not* to accept the apology. Such autonomy support may be especially relevant in intergroup contexts in which large power differences exist between the transgressor and the victim (Lloyd, 2000).

Caveats

A few caveats should be noted. In both experiments, there was no direct effect of an intergroup apology on forgiveness. With that said, the lack of a direct intergroup apology-forgiveness link is consistent with both empirical data (e.g., Berndsen et al., 2015) and theory (Hornsey & Wohl, 2013). Indeed, the extant literature has repeatedly shown that while intergroup apologies have a positive impact on the victimized group members' overall impressions of the transgressing group, they do not necessarily directly impact intergroup forgiveness (Philpot & Hornsey, 2008). According to Hornsey and Wohl (2013) the lack of a direct effect of an intergroup apology on forgiveness suggests the presence of moderating variables that strengthen or weaken the intergroup apology-forgiveness link. Herein, we identified collective autonomy supportive language as having potentially important moderating qualities on the association between intergroup apologies and forgiveness.

Second, the present research focused primarily on the importance of the transgressing group acknowledging the victim's choice to accept or refuse the apology. At a broader level however, it may also be important for the transgressing group to acknowledge that it remains for the victimized group to decide how the future intergroup relations will unfold. In this way, the transgressing group can signal that they understand it may take time and additional effort on their part (i.e., the transgressing group) to improve trust and the prospect of reconciliation. Indeed, Wohl, Hornsey and Philpot (2011) emphasized with their staircase model of reconciliation that the apology is only one component of a multifaceted process of reconciliation. Prior to issuing an

apology, the transgressing group must meet with the victimized group in order to reach a consensus as to how both groups perceive their collective history and the transgression. After this stage, the two groups must then discuss how the transgressing group should repair the damage that was done to the victimized group. Furthermore, once the apology has been delivered, it is critical for the transgressing group to continue to form a connection with the victimized group by earning the trust of the victimized group, acknowledging the emotions and perspectives of the victimized group, and providing the victimized group with the time that they need to choose to forgive on their own terms. During all these stages of the reconciliation process, both pre-apology, during the apology, and post-apology, we argue that the transgressing group's willingness to support the collective autonomy of the victimized group is essential. At such stages of the apology, which involve direct intergroup contact between the victim and transgressor, being empathic to the victimized group, as well as respecting their choice, may be especially critical. Furthermore, following the apology, the transgressing group must be authentic to their apology and actually respect the choice of the victimized group. Future research will be needed to investigate the potentially constructive role of collective autonomy support at all stages of the reconciliation process.

Future work might also explore potential factors that may moderate the effect of autonomy supportive language on apology outcomes. Previous research has found that group identification moderates whether victimized group members are more willing to forgive as a function of the presence rather than absence of an apology (Brown et al., 2008). However, in the present work we did not find any evidence that group identification moderated the effect of apology condition on any of our key outcomes of interest (see supplementary materials for full analyses). While we assessed group identification *in general* in the present work, future research

may explore the extent to which participants feel personally impacted by intergroup

transgression, via their identification with the victimized group. Indeed, group members who are

most personally impacted by the transgression, and feel most disempowered by the transgression,

may be those most in need of autonomy supportive language within the apology.

One potential limitation of the present research is the wording used to check our

manipulation (e.g., "In their apology, the University of Ottawa acknowledged that it is Carleton

University's choice to accept or refuse their apology"). Although this item allowed us to assess

the effectiveness of our manipulation, it may have highlighted the importance of expressing

choice to accept an apology within the text of an apology. It is important to note that forgiveness

was assessed prior to the manipulation check item and thus the item could not have influenced

responses on the forgiveness scale. However, our other dependent measures were assessed after

the manipulation check. Future research may look to replicate our findings without the use of a

manipulation check.

Lastly, the autonomy supportive apology contained an expression of *hope* for forgiveness

– an expression that was absent from the basic apology used in Experiments 1 and 2 as well as

the autonomy unsupportive apology used in Experiment 2. We were reluctant to include

expressions of hope in the basic and autonomy unsupportive apologies because its meaning is

ambiguous. On the one hand, an expression of hope may be perceived as autonomy supportive in

that it signals a desire for forgiveness, as opposed to an expectation of forgiveness. On the other

hand, victims may feel that the expression of hope is an implicit demand for them to forgive. If

so, then failing to forgive may disappoint or even anger the transgressing group, which may dash

future reconciliatory efforts. However, it was common for victimized group members receiving

the autonomy unsupportive apology in Experiment 2 to change the apology to use the word

"hope". This provides some indirect behavioral evidence that victimized group members may be receptive to transgressing group members expressing a hope for forgiveness in their apology. Future research will be needed to directly assess how an expression of hope by members of the transgressing group are interpreted by victims and whether such expressions of hope promote or undermines the victims' sense of autonomy.

Conclusion

Collective victimhood involves feeling that one's group has been robbed of their basic right to have autonomy over their own actions and destiny. Intergroup apologies have the potential to restore power to victimized group members by allowing victims to determine whether or not the transgressor should be forgiven. Unfortunately, stark power differences often exist between victimized and transgressing groups. Thus, victimized group members may often feel little choice but to accept an apology when it is delivered. The present research introduces a simple strategy for enhancing the effectiveness of an intergroup apology to reduce the sense of powerlessness inherent to the experience of collective victimhood. By feeling empowered during the apology process, victims may have more favorable impressions of the apology and may be more willing to continue on the path towards reconciliation, and perhaps if they so wish, to forgive the transgressing group.

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Footnote

[1]In both experiments we measured participants' level of group identification prior to them reading the apology. In both experiments, group identification *did not* moderate the effects of apology condition on perceived empathic support, forgiveness, or empowerment. Furthermore, all reported analyses did not change when controlling for group identification. Please see supplementary materials for full analyses.

[2]We chose the University of Ottawa as the potentially threatening out-group to Carleton University students because the University of Ottawa is considered the more prestigious university in Ottawa (e.g. The 2013 Maclean's University Rankings; Dehaas, 2012) and the two universities regularly compete for students and in athletics.

[3]The text contained a small typo in which "ensuring" and "ensure" was spelt "insuring" and "insure".

[4]We describe the scales in the order they appear in our theoretical model. However, please note that the forgiveness scale was measured first, following the article.

[5]In the interest of transparency we note that we also conducted a fourth condition in which participants did not receive any apology. These participants did not complete the apology-editing task, nor did they answer questions about their perception of the apology, as there was no apology. As the focus of the present research was to examine the impact of different apologies on victimized group members, we did not include these participants who received no apology in the present analyses.

[6]It is noted that the sample size in Experiment 2 is lower than in Experiment 1. We had difficultly recruiting participants for this laboratory study (Experiment 1 was conducted online). We felt confident to proceed with analyses given the large effect sizes observed in Experiment 1. With that said, the lowest effect size observed in Experiment 2 was equal to $\eta^2 = .05$ for empathic support. Given this effect size a sample size of 187 would be needed to detect main effects reliably with a statistical power of .80. In contrast, given the strong effect size we observed for our behavioural outcome ($\eta^2 = .51$), a sample size of 31 would be needed to detect main effects reliably with a statistical power of .80.

[7]There was a small typo in the apology in which the word "to" was missing.

[8]Importantly, grammatical edits were not counted as a change. Only changes that altered the connotation or meaning of a word or sentence were counted as changes. Furthermore, if participants changed multiple words in one sentence, but these changes only changed the meaning of the sentence in one way, we counted this as one change. For example, changing "*We wish to fully acknowledge that this has caused much harm and an unspeakable loss to Canada*" to "*We wish to fully acknowledge that this has caused much harm and an unspeakable loss to the families concerned and to the rest of Canada*" was considered as one change. Similarly, deleting one entire sentence, which had a single meaning, and replacing it with an alternative sentence with a new meaning, was also counted as one change.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations (Experiment 1)

	M	*SD*	1	2	3
1. Collective Autonomy Support	4.03	1.87	1	.34***	.12
2. Empathic Support within Apology	4.31	1.05		1	.28**
3. Forgiveness	5.34	.88			1

*Note: n =180, **p<.01 , ***p<.001*

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations (Experiment 2)

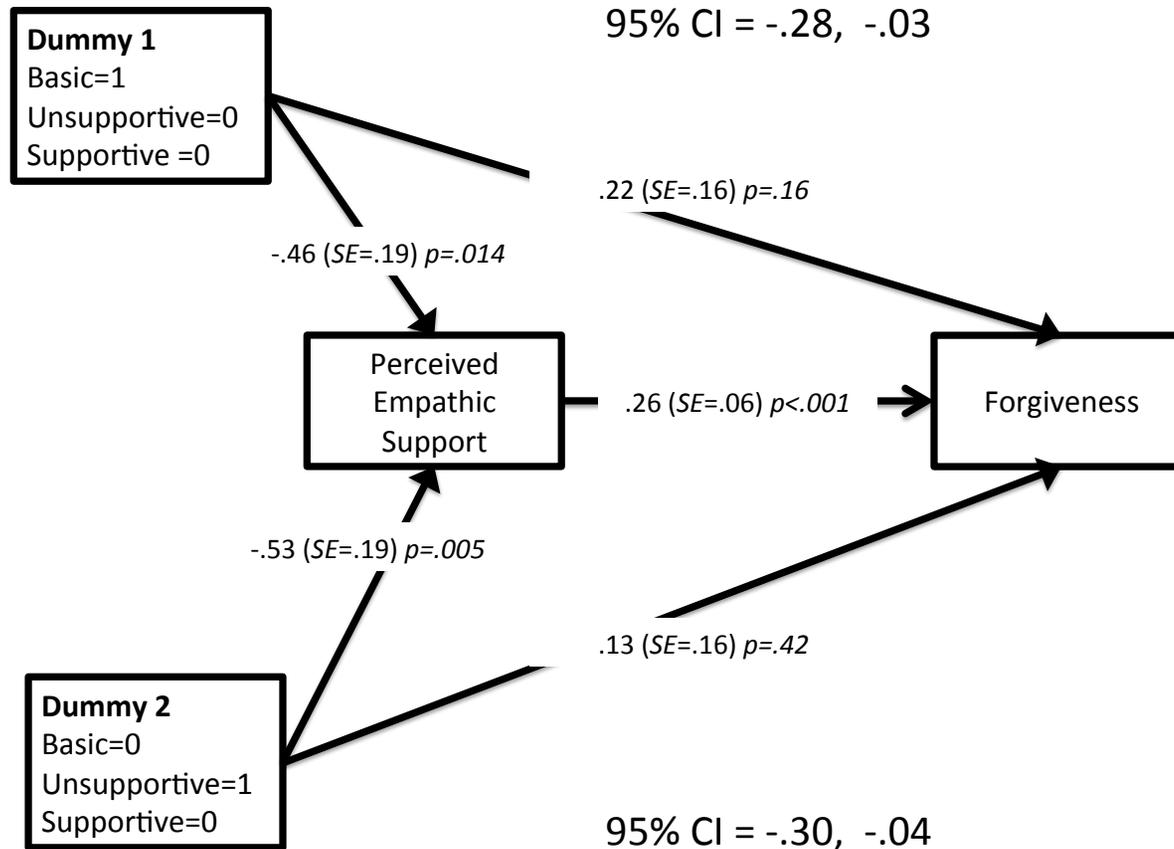|	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Collective Autonomy Support	3.90	2.39	1	.24*	.28*	.14	-.22	-.59***
2. Empathic Support within Apology	4.15	1.30		1	.49***	.33**	-.34**	-.28
3. Empowerment	3.23	1.07			1	-.02	-.27*	-.44**
4. Forgiveness	4.20	1.03				1	-.19	.03
5. Corrections -Basic Component	2.71	2.72					1	.32*
6. Corrections - Collective Autonomy Component	2.38	2.34						1

*Note: n =69, **p<.01 , ***p<.001*

Figure 1. Indirect effects model for Experiment 1 representing the relation between apology and forgiveness through impressions of empathic support within the apology. Unstandardized beta values are used to report all path coefficients. The indirect paths through impressions of empathic support within the apology between Dummy 1 and forgiveness and between Dummy 2 and forgiveness are significant because the confidence intervals do not contain zero (Hayes & Preacher, 2014).
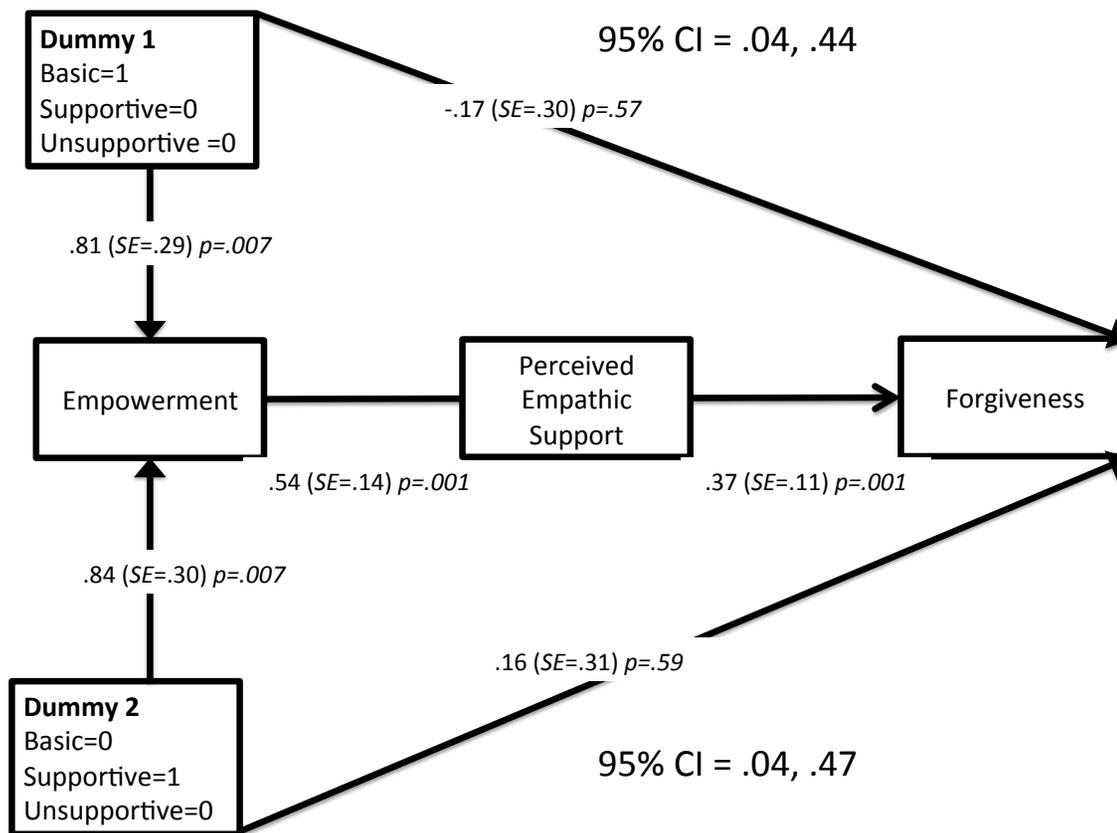
Figure 2. Indirect effects model for Experiment 2 representing the relation between apology and forgiveness through empowerment and impressions of empathic support within the apology. Unstandardized beta values are used to report all path coefficients. The indirect paths through empowerment and impressions of empathic support within the apology between Dummy 1 and forgiveness and between Dummy 2 and forgiveness are significant because the confidence intervals do not contain zero (Hayes & Preacher, 2014).