human relations
THE TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE

When saying sorry may not help: Transgressor power moderates the effect of an apology on forgiveness in the workplace

human relations
2016, Vol. 69(6) 1387–1418

DOI: 10.1177/0018726715611236
hum.sagepub.com
SAGE

Xue Zheng
China Europe International Business School, China

Marius van Dijke
Erasmus University, The Netherlands

Joost M Leunissen
University of Southampton, UK

Laura M Giurge
Erasmus University, The Netherlands

David De Cremer
University of Cambridge, UK

Abstract

An apology, as an expression of remorse, can be an effective response from a transgressor to obtain forgiveness from a victim. Yet, to be effective, the victim should not construe the transgressor's actions in a cynical way. Because low-power people tend to interpret the actions of high-power people in a cynical way, we argue that an apology (versus no apology) from high-power transgressors should be relatively ineffective in increasing forgiveness from low-power victims. We find support for this moderated mediation model in a critical incidents study (Study 1), a forced recall study (Study 2) among

Corresponding author:
Xue Zheng, Department of Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management, China Europe International Business School (CEIBS). Office 214, Faculty building,201206, Shanghai, China.
Email: zhengxue.academic@gmail.com

employees from various organizations and a controlled laboratory experiment among business students (Study 3).

These studies reveal the limited value of expressions of remorse by high-power people in promoting forgiveness.

Keywords
apology, cynicism, forgiveness, power, remorse

Introduction

It is inevitable that organization members sometimes transgress against each other. For instance, subordinates may bad mouth supervisors and supervisors may take credit for their subordinates' performance. These episodes can easily develop into full-blown conflicts, resulting in decreased job satisfaction, commitment and performance (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). To prevent transgressions from escalating, transgressors can apologize to the victim. Indeed, an apology is an effective way to obtain forgiveness from a victim (Fehr et al., 2010). As Lazare (2004: 1) states, 'One of the most profound human interactions is the offering and accepting of apologies. Apologies have the power to . . . generate forgiveness on the part of the offended parties'.

However, apologies are not always effective in promoting forgiveness (Skarlicki et al., 2004). Research in close relationships contexts has identified several factors that limit their effectiveness. For instance, apologies are less effective following intentional, rather than unintentional transgressions (Struthers et al., 2008), and in distal, rather than close relationships (McCullough et al., 1998). Although the relevance of apologies in response to workplace transgressions is clear (Kellerman, 2006; Kim et al., 2004), surprisingly little work has investigated boundary conditions to the effectiveness of apologies in stimulating forgiveness in the context of work relationships. To harvest the restorative benefits of apologies, it is important to identify when and why apologizing is effective or ineffective in promoting forgiveness in the workplace.

We will argue that apologies from transgressors who possess different levels of power may not be equally effective. Power is a fundamental organizational variable that shapes people's perceptions of, and interactions with, others in the workplace (Anderson and Brown, 2010; Fragale et al., 2011; Magee and Galinsky, 2008). We argue that power may also serve as a boundary condition to the effectiveness of apologies in stimulating forgiveness. To the best of our knowledge, only one prior study has addressed the moderating role of power in the effectiveness of apologies. In a scenario study, Walfisch et al. (2013) found that apologies were more effective in influencing a general index of perceived apology effectiveness when they were communicated by a high- rather than by a low-power transgressor, because participants were less likely to expect high-power transgressors to apologize.

In the present article, we also address how the effectiveness of an apology hinges on the power of the transgressor, relative to the victim. Yet, instead of focusing on a general index of perceived apology effectiveness that includes different constructs such as apology acceptance, willingness to forgive, how valued the offender is, and the severity of

the offence, we focus on the effectiveness of apologies in facilitating forgiveness. We argue that a different process explains the moderating role of power in realistic interactions than in scenarios, leading to a very different role for power. We build our argument on literature showing that people tend to perceive high-power actors' actions in cynical ways (Fiske and Durante, 2014; Fragale et al., 2011), suggesting that victims may question the sincerity of high-power transgressors' apologies. Because of this effect of transgressor power on victim cynicism we suggest that an apology (versus no apology) promotes forgiveness only when the transgressor has low, rather than high power, relative to the victim. Figure 1a visually represents our proposed model.

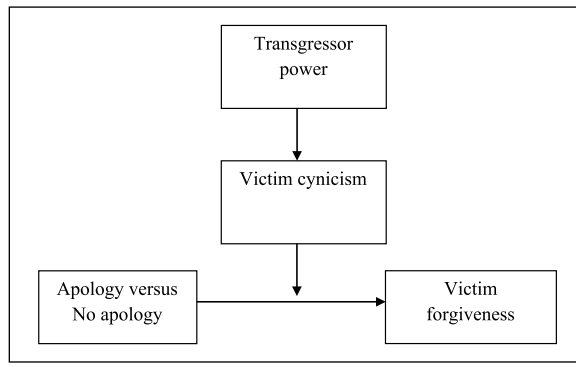

Figure 1a. Conceptual model.

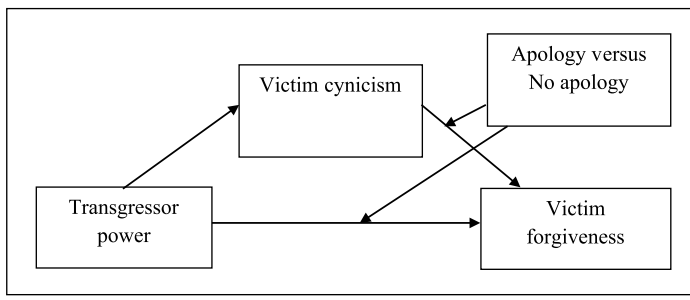

Figure 1b. Statistical model.

Apologies and forgiveness

An apology is commonly conceptualized as a verbal or written statement that contains one or more of the following components: an expression of remorse, an expression of empathy, an acknowledgement of rule-violation, or an offer of compensation (Basford et al., 2014; Fehr and Gelfand, 2010; Kim et al., 2004; Leunissen et al., 2013). In studying the effectiveness of different apology components researchers have found that an expression of remorse is the most effective component in improving forgiveness (Davis

and Gold, 2011; Scher and Darley, 1997; Tomlinson and Mayer, 2009; see Hill, 2013 for a meta-analysis). Thus, to be effective, an apology should contain at least an expression of remorse.

Remorse is characterized by a transgressor's negative feelings about the consequences of the transgression (Brooks and Reddon, 2003). Forgiveness is defined as a victim's prosocial motivational change toward a transgressor. Specifically, when people forgive, they experience a reduced motivation for avoidant and vengeful behavior and an increased motivation for benevolent behavior (McCullough et al., 2001). An expression of remorse can be effective in promoting forgiveness (Boyd, 2011; Davis and Gold, 2011; Gold and Weiner, 2000; Scher and Darley, 1997; Tomlinson et al., 2004). This is because when the transgressor indicates having negative feelings about the consequences of the transgression, the victim is more likely to see the transgression as an instance of aberrant behavior and empathizes with the transgressor (Davis and Gold, 2011; Tomlinson and Mayer, 2009; Weiner et al., 1991). As a result, the victim may overcome the urge to avoid the transgressor or to seek revenge and instead become more prosocial toward the transgressor (Tomlinson and Mayer, 2009; Weiner, 1986).

However, as noted, an apology as an expression of remorse does not always promote forgiveness (Basford et al., 2014). For an expression of remorse to be effective, its source (i.e. the transgressor) needs to be perceived as sincere (Basford et al., 2014; McCroskey and Teven 1999). In other words, the victim should not construe the transgressor in a cynical way. Cynicism is defined as people's disbelief of another's stated or implied motives for a decision or action (Andersson and Bateman, 1997; Stanley et al., 2005). Cynicism toward the transgressor is likely to influence the victim's perceived sincerity of the apology. When the victim is not cynical toward the transgressor, this implies that the victim views the transgressor's apology as truly remorseful and subsequently forgives the transgressor. In contrast, when the victim is cynical toward the transgressor, an apology would simply be seen as an empty gesture that does not convey any believable information about the transgressor's remorseful feeling and is, therefore, not likely to elicit forgiveness (Basford et al., 2014; De Cremer and Schouten, 2008; Skarlicki et al., 2004). In line with this argument, Skarlicki et al. (2004) found that when victims believed that the transgressor had manipulative intent, an expression of remorse from the transgressor was ineffective in increasing victims' perceptions of the fairness of the transgressor's behavior. In studying subordinate reactions to leader apologies, De Cremer and Schouten (2008) found that when subordinates believed that the leader was not concerned with them, an expression of remorse from this leader failed to increase subordinates' fairness perceptions. Similarly, Basford et al. (2014) showed that subordinates who doubted their leader's credibility perceived expressions of remorse as less sincere than subordinates who saw their leader as credible. This consequently led to less forgiveness, satisfaction with the leader, and organizational commitment. Thus, previous research strongly suggests that for an expression of remorse to be effective in stimulating forgiveness, victims should not have cynical perceptions of the transgressor. An antecedent that is likely to influence the victim's cynicism toward the transgressor is the power of the transgressor, relative to the victim. In the following section, we elaborate on how power may form a boundary condition to the effectiveness of apologies through its effect on victim cynicism.

Transgressor power and victim cynicism

Power is defined as the capacity to influence other people as a result of asymmetric control over valued resources (Fiske, 1993; French and Raven, 1959; Galinsky et al., 2008). Based on the extent to which people have the freedom to choose to comply with power holders, power bases are categorized as either harsh or soft power bases (French and Raven, 1959; Raven et al., 1998). Harsh power bases include coercive, reward and position power, which are characterized as controlling and unfriendly. Soft power bases include expert, referent and informational power, which allow people to have more freedom in choosing whether to comply or not (Aiello et al., 2013). In the present article, we will focus on harsh power bases, particularly, reward and position power. Reward power is the ability to reward or withhold valued resources such as salary or promotion opportunities. Position power is defined as the supervisor's right to prescribe the subordinate's behavior and the subordinate being obliged to comply because of the position of authority (Etzioni, 1961). We choose these two harsh power bases for two reasons: first, harsh power bases are directly in line with common definitions of power as well as with our theoretical reasoning that focuses on the harsh aspects of power (Fragale et al., 2011; Magee and Galinsky, 2008). Second, reward and position power are the most salient and often practiced bases of power in organizations (Aiello et al., 2013; Judge and Martocchio, 1995; Podsakoff, 1982).

Power (or at least harsh power) has a significant impact on how those who possess it are perceived by others (Fragale et al., 2011). Specifically, it is well-established that power influences the two fundamental dimensions of social perception: the extent to which someone desires to advance interests of the self (i.e. dominance) and the extent to which this person is interpersonally benevolent (i.e. warmth) (Abele et al., 2008; Fiske and Durante, 2014; Fiske et al., 2007; Fragale et al., 2011). Given that power holders constrain people's free choice, people generally dislike being controlled by power holders (Leotti et al., 2010). Thus, they tend to associate power with high dominance and low warmth (Fragale et al., 2011). Indeed, Fragale and colleagues (2011) showed that individuals in high-power occupations were rated as having more dominance-related traits (i.e. dominant, assertive, forceful) and fewer warmth-related traits (i.e. warm, cooperative, agreeable) than individuals in low-power occupations. In sum, this stream of research shows that people generally believe that high-power actors are cold and dominant in relationships, while low-power actors are believed to be warm and submissive (Anderson and Brown, 2010; Fiske and Durante, 2014; Fragale et al., 2009, 2011; Tiedens et al., 2000).

Following this line of research, we argue that low-power victims are cynical about high-power transgressors' underlying motives in workplace relationships. Specifically, because people see high-power actors as dominant and cold, they are likely to be cynical about high-power actors' underlying motives. Indeed, in a national survey of the US workforce, researchers found that employees are cynical toward their supervisors (Mirvis and Kanter, 1991). Moreover, Fiske and Durante (2014) found that people are cynical about high-power actors such as political leaders: they perceived political leaders with great cynicism and saw them as cold, insincere and dishonest. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer's (2014) global results, people disbelieve that business leaders could tell the truth or make decisions in ethical and moral ways.

Given that the power of the transgressor arguably influences the victim's cynicism toward the transgressor, we argue that the power of the transgressor may moderate the effect of expressions of remorse on the victim's forgiveness. Because people are cynical about high-power actors' interpersonal motives, they are likely to view an expression of remorse from a high-power transgressor as an empty gesture that does not convey sincere remorse. In line with this argument, scholars have suggested that followers suspect apologies coming from leaders to be primarily driven by strategic reasons (e.g. to improve their public image) rather than by genuine feelings of remorse (De Cremer and Schouten, 2008; Regehr and Gutheil, 2002). Although not empirically tested, these suggestions are in line with our argument that apologies from those who occupy high-power positions are perceived with cynicism, making such apologies ineffective in eliciting forgiveness. Therefore, we argue that an apology from a high-power transgressor will be less likely to elicit forgiveness than an apology from a low-power transgressor would.

On the other hand, apologizing may be effective for low-power transgressors. Low-power actors may be perceived with less cynicism because they are categorized as submissive and warm in relationships (Fragale et al., 2011). As such, when a low-power transgressor apologizes, it is more likely that the apology will be perceived as conveying sincere remorse. Therefore, an apology from a low-power transgressor is arguably also more likely to elicit forgiveness than an apology from a high-power transgressor. Based on the above, we formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The transgressor's power, relative to the victim, moderates the positive effect of an apology on forgiveness such that the effect is stronger when the transgressor has low, rather than high power.

Hypothesis 2: The moderating effect of the transgressor's power is mediated by the victim's cynicism toward the transgressor.

Overview of studies

We tested our hypotheses in three studies. Our focus in this article is on identifying power as a fundamental boundary condition to the effectiveness of apologies in promoting forgiveness in organizational contexts, rather than studying how apology components exert different effects. In three studies we therefore operationalized an apology as the most effective and most common apology component – *an expression of remorse*, and contrast it to a commonly used baseline condition in the apology literature – a no-apology condition (i.e. an apology is absent) (see e.g. Frantz and Bennigson, 2005; McCullough et al., 1998; Ohbuchi et al., 1989; Struthers et al., 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Van Dijke and De Cremer, 2011). In doing so, we are able to present a straightforward, yet meaningful model of apology effectiveness in the workplace.

Study 1 was a survey conducted among employees working in a variety of different organizations using a critical incidents technique (Aquino et al., 2001, 2006; Flanagan, 1954) – participants were asked to recall an incident in which someone had transgressed against them in the workplace. The transgressor's power was operationalized as reward power. After participants recalled an incident, we measured whether this person had

apologized for the transgression or not, the transgressor's reward power (Hinkin and Schriesheim, 1989), and whether the participants had forgiven the transgressor or not with a well-validated scale (McCullough et al., 2006). This design ensured ecological validity by allowing participants to recall any recent workplace transgressions that may come to mind.

In Study 2, another survey conducted among US employees, we employed an established autobiographic recall procedure (Wallace et al., 2008). We operationalized the transgressor's power as position power. Specifically, we created four conditions by asking participants to recall a specific incident in which someone of a higher (versus lower) hierarchical rank had transgressed against them and had subsequently apologized (versus not apologized). We measured forgiveness with the same scale as in Study 1. The strength of this approach is that we provided a frame of reference for participants by specifying the event they needed to recall. This assured a certain level of internal validity (Hershcovis and Reich, 2013). Additionally, we tested that power moderates the effect of apologizing on forgiveness because of its effect on victim cynicism (Hypothesis 2).

Studies 1 and 2 both relied on a procedure in which respondents were asked to recall an incident that had happened to them. This method has many advantages, most notably the fact that the context of the study is meaningful to participants. However, one limitation is that the transgression situations described by participants may differ in terms of both the severity and the intentionality of the transgression. In Study 3, we therefore maximized internal validity and tested our hypotheses in a laboratory experiment in which all participants experienced the same transgression. Similar to Study 1, we operationalized the transgressor's power as reward power. This methodological diversity allows our studies to complement each other and reinforces confidence in our findings (Campbell and Fiske, 1959).

Study 1

Method

Participants and design. Two hundred and forty-seven employees (59.9% male) with an average age of 31.94 years (standard deviation [SD] = 9.99) were recruited from a research panel, Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT), to fill out an online questionnaire. Following the standard procedures of data collection in the field of management (Schönbrodt and Perugini, 2013; Simmons et al., 2011; Sprouse, 2011), we decided the rule for terminating data collection before the data collection begins. Given that a sample size of 150 to 250 would ensure stable estimates in regression analysis and AMT has a slightly higher rejection rate of responses, we decided to collect 250 observations (Schönbrodt and Perugini, 2013). We received 247 complete responses. Studies evaluating the validity of AMT have shown that the data obtained are as reliable as those obtained from more traditional methods (Buhrmester et al., 2011). The design involved an assessment of transgressor reward power (as a continuous independent variable) and transgressor response (apology versus no apology). Based on the criteria explained below, we included in our final data analyses 215 participants (60% male) with an average age of 32.36 years (SD = 10.14) and an average organizational tenure of 4.43 years (SD = 4.17).

Of these respondents, 32.7% were Caucasian, 62.1% were Asian, 3.3% were African American and 1.9% were Hispanic/Latino. In terms of hierarchical position, 30.7% were line managers/supervisors and 69.3% had a non-management function.

Procedure. The study was conducted online. We used a critical incident technique to elicit salient experiences of workplace transgressions (Aquino et al., 2006; Basford et al., 2014; Karremans and Smith, 2010). Participants were asked to respond to the following instruction:

> Please recall a specific incident that happened in the last six months, where someone in the company did something that offended, harmed, or hurt you. If you cannot recall being offended by another person in the last six months, think about the last time you were offended by someone in your current or previous company.

Since this task required recalling a specific incident, not all participants were able to recall the incident following the instructions. Two independent coders evaluated all the incidents in terms of whether they described a workplace transgression or not. We eliminated the data of 32 participants who failed to meet this criterion.

Measures. Participants were provided a definition of apology: 'an explicit verbal or written statement of apologetic intent that contained an expression of remorse'. They were then asked to indicate whether the transgressor had apologized to them (*yes* or *no*). All other items were measured on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*). Victims' *forgiveness* of the transgressor was measured with the 18-item Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) developed and validated by McCullough et al. (2006). The items were introduced as follows: 'For the following statements, please indicate your current thoughts and feelings about the person after the transgression'. Sample items are: 'I am trying to keep as much distance between us as possible' (reverse coded) and 'Even though his/her actions hurt me, I have goodwill for him/her' ($\alpha = .89$). *Transgressor power* was measured with the four-item reward power scale developed and validated by Hinkin and Schriesheim (1989). Sample items are 'He/she can increase my pay level' and 'He/she can influence my chances of promotion' ($\alpha = .92$).

We controlled for the perceived *intentionality* and *severity* of the transgression because these two variables may give alternative explanations for the process that we set out to study: the power of the transgressor may influence the perceived intentionality and severity of a transgression (Aquino et al., 2001; Fragale et al., 2009). Perceived intentionality and severity are also two important antecedents of forgiveness (Aquino et al., 2001; Byrne et al., 2014; see Fehr et al., 2010 for a meta-analysis). We therefore asked participants to indicate whether 'He/she did it intentionally' (adapted from Basford et al., 2014; Struthers et al., 2008) and whether 'The transgression was severe' (adapted from Aquino et al., 2001).

Results

To test the hypothesized interaction effect, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses. In step 1, forgiveness was regressed on perceived intentionality and perceived

Table 1a. Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study 1 variables.

Variable	*M*	SD	1	2	3	4
Perceived severity	4.81	1.49				
Perceived intentionality	5.04	1.44	.49**			
Transgressor response	−.31	.95	−.01	−.10		
Transgressor power	3.91	1.82	.11	−.12	.16*	
Forgiveness	3.98	1.00	−.48	−.39**	.21**	−.48**

N = 215. **p < .01, *p < .05. *M* = mean, SD = standard deviation. For transgressor response, −1 = *no apology*, 1 = *apology*.

Table 1b. Results of multiple regression analysis of forgiveness on the effects of power and apology in Study 1.

Independent variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Perceived severity	−.38** (–5.61)	−.38** (–5.54)	−.38 (–5.61)
Intentionality	−.20**(–2.94)	−.19**(–2.78)	−.17**(–2.52)
Transgressor response		.20**(3.23)	.21**(3.52)
Transgressor power		−.06 (–.98)	−.12 (–1.78)
Transgressor response × Transgressor power			−.14*(–2.08)
ΔR^2	.26	.04	.01
Total R^2	.26	.30	.31
Adjusted R^2	.25	.28	.29
F	37.22**	5.37 **	4.31*
df	2, 212	2, 210	1, 209

N = 215. Regression coefficients represent standardized parameters (Betas). *T*-values are in parenthesis. *p < .05. **p < .01.

severity. In step 2, we entered transgressor power and transgressor response as predictors. Lastly, in step 3, we entered the interaction between transgressor power and transgressor response. We effect-coded transgressor response (no apology = −1; apology = 1) and centered transgressor power before calculating the interaction term (Aiken and West, 1991). Table 1a and Table 1b show the correlations between the study variables and results of the regression analysis, respectively.

In step 1, perceived severity ($\beta = -.38$, $p < .01$) and perceived intentionality ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted forgiveness, which is consistent with previous literature (Aquino et al., 2001; Byrne et al., 2014; Fehr et al., 2010). The significance of these two variables did not change in step 2. In this step, the effect of transgressor response was significant ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$), but there was no significant effect of transgressor power ($\beta = -.06$, $p = .33$). In step 3, the results for the main effects entered in the previous steps did not change. As predicted, step 3 revealed a significant Transgressor Response x Transgressor Power interaction ($\beta = -.14$, $p = .04$).[1] Figure 2 graphically depicts the interaction.

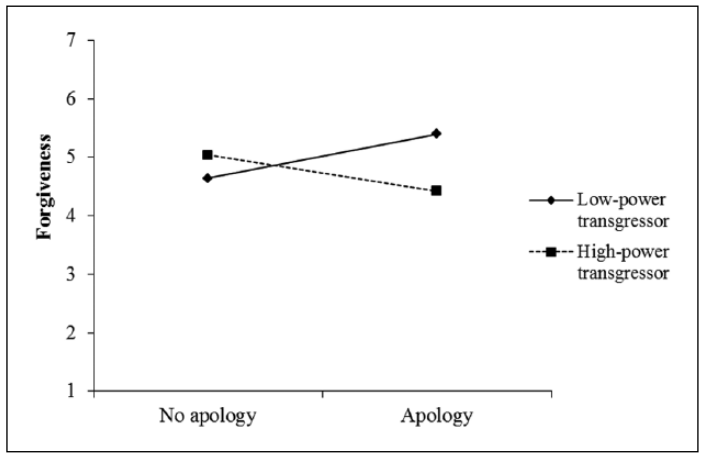

Figure 2. Forgiveness level predicted by the two-way interaction between power and apology (Study 1).

We tested the nature of the interaction following simple slopes procedures (Aiken and West, 1991). These analyses showed that for low-power transgressors, apologizing led to more forgiveness than not apologizing did ($\beta = .34$, $p < .01$). However, for high-power transgressors, an apology did not lead to more forgiveness than no apology did ($\beta = .08$, $p = .33$). This interaction can also be approached from a different vantage point. Among transgressors who apologized, high-power transgressors were forgiven less than low-power transgressors ($\beta = -.25$, $p = .02$). Among transgressors who did not apologize, their level of power was irrelevant in predicting forgiveness ($\beta = .02$, $p = .79$).

Study 2

Study 1 provides initial evidence that for low-power transgressors, there is a positive effect of an apology on forgiveness. However, for high-power transgressors, this positive effect of apologies on forgiveness is absent. Study 1 relied on the critical incident technique in which participants recalled a transgression. Transgressor power and transgressor response were measured afterwards (Aquino et al., 2006; Basford et al., 2014; Karremans and Smith, 2010). In Study 2, we attempted to replicate findings of Study 1 using an established autobiographic recall procedure (Wallace et al., 2008) in which transgressor power and transgressor response were specified. Furthermore, we tested the complete moderated mediation model depicted in Figure 1a (Hypothesis 2).

Method

Participants and design. One hundred and fifty-six US employees (57.7% female) with an average age of 32.85 years (SD = 9.89) were recruited from AMT. As in Study 1, we decided the sample size before the data collection began (Schönbrodt and Perugini,

2013; Simmons et al., 2011; Sprouse, 2011). Specifically, we chose to collect 160 observations because it ensures 30 observations in each condition and takes into account potential rejection of responses on AMT. We received 156 complete responses. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions that resulted from orthogonally manipulating transgressor power (high versus low) and transgressor response (apology versus no apology). One hundred and forty-nine participants (59.1% female) were included in our final data analysis based on the criteria explained below. Of these, 79.2% were Caucasian, 6% were Asian, 6.7% were African American, 6.0% were Hispanic/Latino, and 2% were Mixed-race. The average age was 32.68 years (SD = 10.04), and mean organization tenure was 4.36 years (SD = 3.78). In terms of participants' hierarchical position, 41.7% were line managers/supervisors and 58.3% had a non-management function.

Procedure. The study was conducted online. Participants were asked to recall and describe an incident in which someone with a higher (/lower) hierarchical position at the workplace had transgressed against them and had (/had not) apologized after the transgression (based on Wallace at al., 2008; see also Strelan and Sutton, 2011 for a similar approach). Specifically, participants in the high- (/low-) power conditions read:

> Please recall a specific incident that happened in the last six months in which someone who has power over you (/someone over whom you have power) in your company did something that offended, harmed, or hurt you. For example, this person can be someone who has a higher hierarchical position, e.g. your direct supervisor (/ someone who has a lower hierarchical position, e.g. your subordinate).

Subsequently, participants in the apology/no-apology conditions read: 'After the incident, this person apologized (/did not apologize)'.

Participants were given the following definition of an apology: 'By apology, we mean this person offered an explicit verbal or written statement of apologetic intent that contained an expression of remorse'. Subsequently they were asked, 'Please describe the content of the apology in two or three sentences. What did this person say? What did this person do?'

Finally, participants read, 'If you cannot recall being offended by another person in the last six months, think about the last time you were offended by someone in your current or previous company'.

After completing this task, participants responded to questionnaires assessing their cynicism toward the transgressor, their forgiveness of the transgressor, perceived intentionality, the severity of the transgression and manipulation check questions.

As in Study 1, two independent coders read all incidents and evaluated whether participants followed the instructions. The coders considered three criteria: (1) whether the participants recalled a workplace transgression, (2) whether the participants followed the power manipulation instructions and (3) whether the participants followed the apology manipulation instructions (i.e. whether participants in the apology condition described an apology as an expression of remorse). Eleven participants failed to meet at least one of these criteria and were thus excluded from the study. This procedure is comparable to

previous studies (Aquino et al., 2006; Basford et al., 2014). After excluding 11 participants, there were 34 participants in the low-power transgressor and no-apology condition, 33 participants in the low-power transgressor and apology condition, 37 participants in the high-power transgressor and no-apology condition, and 41 participants in the high-power transgressor and apology condition.

Measures. All items were assessed on seven-point scales (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *completely*). Consistent with Study 1, *victim's forgiveness* of the transgressor was measured with the TRIM (McCullough et al., 2006; $\alpha = .95$). *Victim's cynicism toward the transgressor* was measured with the eight-item cynical distrust scale (Greenglass and Julkunen, 1989). Items were introduced as follows: 'To what extent do you believe this person has the following characteristics.' Sample items are: 'I think this person would lie to get ahead' and 'I commonly wonder what hidden reasons this person may have for doing something nice to me' ($\alpha = .93$).

To check the manipulation of *transgressor power*, at the end of the survey, participants rated the relative power of the transgressor in the relationship with one item (taken from Galinsky et al., 2003): 'This person has power over me in the company'. To check the manipulation of *transgressor response*, participants indicated how apologetic the transgressor was after the transgression with one item (based on Skarlicki et al., 2004): 'This person was apologetic to me'. As in Study 1, we measured the perceived intentionality of the transgression ('He/she did it intentionally') and perceived severity of the transgression ('The transgression is severe') as control variables.

Results

Manipulation checks. A Transgressor Power (high versus low) × Transgressor Response (apology versus no apology) ANCOVA with perceived intentionality of the transgressor and perceived severity of the transgression as covariates on the power manipulation check revealed a significant main effect of transgressor power (F [1, 139] = 217.14, $p <$ .01, $\eta^2 = .61$). Participants in the high-power transgressor condition perceived the transgressor as having more power (mean [M] = 5.59, SD = 1.44) than participants in the low-power transgressor condition (M = 1.93, SD = 1.45). The effect of transgressor response (F [1, 139] = .07, $p = .80$, $\eta^2 = .00$) and the effect of the Transgressor Power × Transgressor Response interaction were not significant (F [1, 139] = .07, $p = .79$, $\eta^2 =$ .00).[2] A 2 × 2 ANCOVA on the transgressor response manipulation check revealed a significant main effect of transgressor response (F [1, 139] = 123.37, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .47$). Participants in the apology condition perceived the transgressor to be more apologetic (M = 5.14, SD = 1.59) than participants in the no-apology condition did (M = 2.21, SD = 1.56). The effects of transgressor power (F [1, 139] = 1.34, $p = .25$, $\eta^2 = .01$) and the interaction were not significant (F [1, 139] = .16, $p = .69$, $\eta^2 = .00$).[3]

Hypothesis test. Similar to Study 1, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses to test the hypothesized interaction effect. In step 1, forgiveness was regressed on perceived intentionality and perceived severity. In step 2, we entered transgressor power (low-power transgressor = −1; high-power transgressor = 1) and transgressor response (no

Table 2a. Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study 2 variables.

Variable	*M*	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Perceived severity	4.16	1.86					
Perceived intentionality	4.57	1.98	.48**				
Transgressor response	.02	1.00	−.04	−.10			
Transgressor power	.08	1.00	.16	.06	.03		
Victim cynicism	4.29	1.46	.52**	.43**	−.17*	.28**	
Victim forgiveness	4.53	1.29	−.45**	−.44**	.23**	−.12	−.59**

N = 145. **p < .01, * p < .05. *M* = mean, SD = standard deviation. For transgressor response, −1 = *no apology*, 1 = *apology*. For transgressor power, −1 = *low-power transgressor*, 1 = *high-power transgressor*.

Table 2b. Results of multiple regression analysis of forgiveness on the effects of power and apology in Study 2.

Independent variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Perceived severity	−.31** (–3.82)	−.30** (–3.75)	−.30** (–3.83)
Intentionality	−.30**(–3.64)	−.28**(–3.46)	−.28**(–3.54)
Transgressor response		.19**(2.68)	.20**(2.90)
Transgressor power		−.06 (–.81)	−.06 (–.78)
Transgressor response × Transgressor power			−.17*(–2.48)
ΔR^2	.27	.04	.03
Total R^2	.27	.31	.34
Adjusted R^2	.26	.29	.32
F	26.50**	3.83 *	6.15*
d.f.	2, 142	2, 140	1, 139

N = 145. Regression coefficients represent standardized parameters (Betas). *T*-values are in parenthesis. d.f. = degrees of freedom.
*p < .05. **p < .01.

apology = −1; apology = 1) as predictors. Lastly, in step 3, we entered the interaction of transgressor power and transgressor response. Table 2a and Table 2b show the correlations between the study variables and results of the regression analysis, respectively.

In step 1, perceived severity (β = −.31, p < .01) and perceived intentionality (β = −.30, p < .01) significantly predicted forgiveness, which is consistent with Study 1 and prior research (Aquino et al., 2001; Byrne et al., 2014; Fehr et al., 2010). The significance of these two variables did not change in step 2. In this step, the effect of transgressor response was significant (β = .19, p < .01), but there was no significant effect of transgressor power (β = −.06, p = .42). In step 3, the results for the main effects entered in the previous steps did not change. As predicted, step 3 revealed a significant Transgressor Response × Transgressor Power interaction (β = −.17, p = .01).[4] Figure 3a graphically depicts the interaction.

We tested the nature of the interaction following simple slopes procedures (Aiken and West, 1991). These analyses showed that for low-power transgressors, apologizing led to more forgiveness than not apologizing did ($\beta = .37$, $p < .01$). However, for high-power transgressors, an apology did not lead to more forgiveness than no apology did ($\beta = .03$, $p = .75$). This interaction can also be approached from a different vantage point. Among transgressors who apologized, it was less effective to have high power than low power ($\beta = -.23$, $p = .02$). Among transgressors who did not apologize, their level of power was irrelevant in predicting forgiveness ($\beta = .12$, $p = .24$).

Next, we tested the mediating role of victim cynicism (i.e. Hypothesis 2). Specifically, we drew on the mediation procedures of Baron and Kenny (1986) and bootstrapping procedures of Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Hayes (2013). These procedures involve several steps. First, we tested whether victim cynicism was predicted by transgressor power. Second, we tested whether the interaction of victim cynicism and transgressor response predicted victim forgiveness. Third, we tested whether the interaction of victim cynicism and transgressor response predicted victim forgiveness even after controlling for the interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). Lastly, we tested the significance of the indirect effect using Hayes' PROCESS macro (model 15; 5,000 bootstrap samples).

As a first step, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses to test whether high (relative to low) transgressor power leads to more victim cynicism. We entered perceived severity of the transgression and perceived intentionality in step 1. Transgressor power and transgressor response were entered in step 2. The interaction between these two was entered in step 3. Victim cynicism was the dependent variable. In step 1, perceived severity ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$) and perceived intentionality ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted victim cynicism. The significance of these two variables did not change in step 2. In this step, the effects of transgressor power ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$) and transgressor response ($\beta = -.14$, $p = .048$) were both significant. In step 3, the significance of perceived severity and perceived intentionality did not change. Importantly, the main effect of transgressor power remained significant ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$). The main effect of transgressor response was also significant ($\beta = -.14$, $p = .04$). The interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response was not significant ($\beta = .09$, $p = .19$). Thus, victim cynicism was predicted by transgressor power.

We proceeded to test if the effect of apology on forgiveness was moderated by cynicism, such that an apology would lead to forgiveness only among victims low in cynicism. We tested this with hierarchical regression in which we entered perceived severity of the transgression and perceived intentionality in step 1. Victim cynicism and transgressor response were entered in step 2. The interaction between these two (based on an effect coded version of transgression response and a mean centered version of cynicism) was entered in step 3. Victim forgiveness was the dependent variable. In step 1, perceived severity ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .01$) and perceived intentionality ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted forgiveness. The significance of these two variables did not change in step 2. In this step, the effects of transgressor response ($\beta = .14$, $p = .04$) and victim cynicism were both significant ($\beta = -.41$, $p < .01$). In step 3, the results for the main effects entered in the previous steps did not change. As expected, step 3 revealed a significant Victim Cynicism x Transgressor Response interaction ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$).

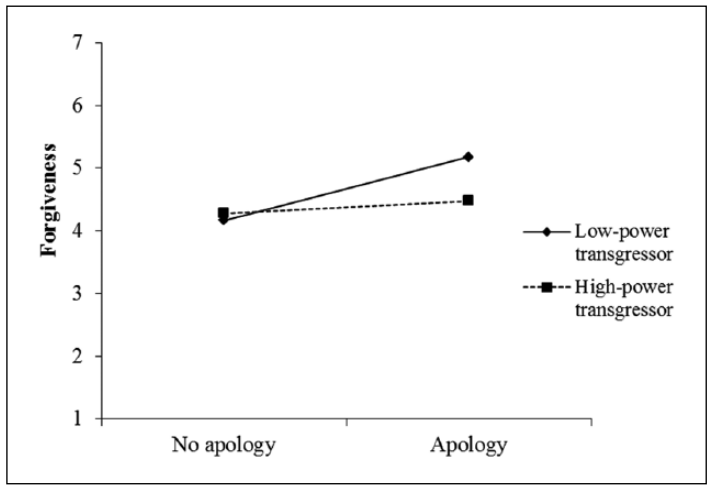

Figure 3a. Forgiveness level predicted by the two-way interaction between power and apology (Study 2).

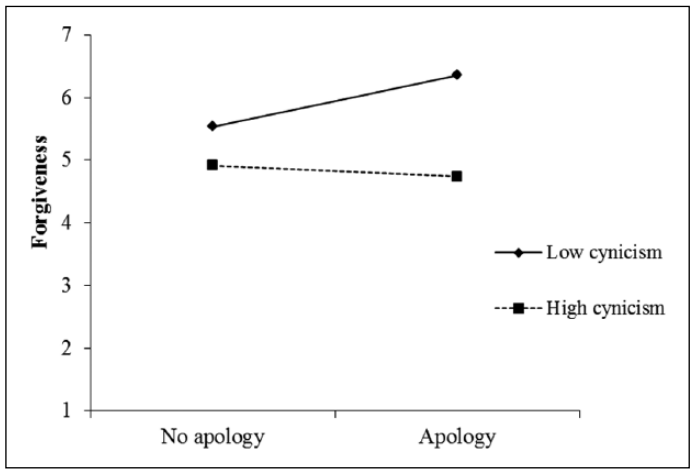

Figure 3b. Forgiveness level predicted by the two-way interaction between cynicism and apology (Study 2).

We tested the nature of the interaction following simple slopes procedures. These analyses showed that when cynicism was low (1 SD below the mean), apologizing led to more forgiveness than not apologizing did ($\beta = .33$, $p < .01$). However, when cynicism was high (1 SD above the mean), an apology did not lead to more forgiveness than no apology did ($\beta = -.06$, $p = .52$). This interaction can also be approached from a different vantage point. Among transgressors who apologized, more forgiveness was observed when cynicism was low than when it was high ($\beta = -.62$, $p < .01$). Among transgressors

who did not apologize, forgiveness levels were also higher when cynicism was low than when it was high ($\beta = -.23$, $p = .02$). Figure 3b visually represents this relationship.

We subsequently tested whether the interaction effect of victim cynicism and transgressor response predicted victim forgiveness even after controlling for the interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response. Results revealed a significant interaction effect of victim cynicism and transgressor response ($\beta = -.22$, $p = .01$). There were also significant effects of transgressor response ($\beta = .18$, $p = .03$) and victim cynicism ($\beta = -.55$, $p < .01$) on victim forgiveness. But there was no significant interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response ($\beta = -.11$, $p = .20$). The effect of transgressor power was also not significant ($\beta = .06$, $p = .49$). This suggests a mediating effect because after accounting for the interaction effect of cynicism and transgressor response, the interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response on victim forgiveness was reduced and became non-significant (Rucker et al., 2011).

Finally, we tested the significance of the indirect effect. This requires testing a model in which the moderating effect of transgressor power is mediated by cynicism (Muller et al., 2005; Van Houwelingen et al., 2014). However, given that there are no available options for testing simple indirect effects in such a model (Hayes, 2013; Rucker et al., 2011), we treated transgressor power as the independent variable and transgressor response as the moderator to assess simple indirect effects by following Van Houwelingen et al.'s (2014) procedure. In other words, we rotated our conceptual model to achieve our statistical model (see Figure 1b). Conceptually, our moderated mediation model represents PROCESS model 14. Yet, model 15 is a more conservative model that tests for the moderated indirect effect of transgressor power while controlling for the moderated direct effect of transgressor power. Thus, we used Hayes' PROCESS macro (model 15; 5,000 bootstrap samples).[5] As expected, results showed that the effect of high (versus low) transgressor power, via cynicism, on forgiveness was negative when receiving an apology, indirect effect = −.16, standard error [SE] = .07, 95% confidence interval [CI]: [−.31, −.05], thus indicating that compared with low-power transgressors' apologies, high-power transgressors' apologies led to lower levels of victims' forgiveness. The effect of transgressor power via cynicism was also negative but clearly weaker when no apology was offered, indirect effect = −.07, SE = .04, 95% CI: [−.15, −.02], which indicates that compared with low-power transgressors' no-apologies, high-power transgressors' no-apologies led to lower levels of forgiveness.

Summary

As in Study 1, Study 2 showed that transgressor power moderates the effect of an apology on forgiveness. Receiving an apology, as opposed to not receiving one, promotes victims' forgiveness toward low-power transgressors. However, this effect is absent among high-power transgressors. This interaction effect between transgressor power and transgressor response was mediated by victim cynicism. Overall, Study 2 supports our hypotheses in an organizational context while relying on an established method and operationalization of transgressor power as position power.

Study 3

Both Studies 1 and 2 used recollections of real-life transgression situations, ensuring ecological and some internal validity. In Study 3, we further optimized internal validity by having all participants experience the same transgression as part of an (ostensible) interaction with another person. In the apology condition, all participants received an identical apology message; in the no-apology condition, all participants received no message. We manipulated the power of the transgressor (relative to the victim) as reward power in a social exchange game and tested whether power moderates the effect of an apology on forgiveness. In addition, in Study 3 we aimed to replicate the findings of Studies 1 and 2 using another well-established forgiveness scale (Aquino et al., 2006). Finally, in Study 3, we aimed to replicate the mediating effect of victim cynicism on the relationship between transgressor response and forgiveness.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 127 undergraduate business students from a medium-sized European university (54.1% female) with an average age of 19.91 years (SD = 1.62). Again, we decided the sample size before data collection began (Schönbrodt and Perugini, 2013; Simmons et al., 2011; Sprouse, 2011). We chose to collect 130 observations because it ensures 30 observations in each condition and there are lower rejection rates in the well-controlled lab study (Schönbrodt and Perugini, 2013). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of a 2 (transgressor power: high versus low) × 2 (transgressor response: apology versus no apology) design.

Procedure. To have all our participants experience the same transgression, we used a procedure in which the experienced transgression took the form of a trust violation. The paradigm we used is essentially a modified trust game (developed by Leunissen et al., 2012, see also Desmet and Leunissen, 2014). The trust game (Berg et al., 1995) has been widely used in studies on organization issues (Kramer and Lewicki, 2010; McKnight et al., 1998). In the trust game, there are two roles: the trustor (Player 1) and the trustee (Player 2). Player 1 starts with a sum of endowments (e.g. 10 chips). Player 1 can decide how many chips to transfer to Player 2. This number of chips is tripled. For instance, if Player 1 transfers five chips to Player 2, then Player 2 receives 15 chips. Player 2 can then decide how many chips to return to Player 1. By transferring chips to Player 2, Player 1 is vulnerable (i.e. to receive a lower payoff than the initial endowment) in the expectation that Player 2 will return some chips. If Player 2 does not return any chips, there is a violation of Player 1's expectation caused by Player 2.

In the modified trust game that we used, all participants were told that they were in the role of Player 1 (the trustor) and another participant was in the role of Player 2 (the trustee). In reality, Player 2's actions were preprogrammed. Player 1 started the game with 10 chips and decided how much to send to Player 2. After Player 1 transferred the chips to Player 2, Player 2 did not return any chips to Player 1. Player 2's unfair behavior was used to make Player 1 feel that Player 2 had committed a transgression (see Leunissen et al., 2012).

The transgressor power manipulation was designed based on previous work (Tedeschi et al., 1973; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). The essence of reward power, as viewed in this prior work, is that one party can reward or withhold resources over the other party. In Study 3, we framed Player 2 as controlling Player 1's outcome without actually changing the experimental reward structure. With this manipulation, we simulated a common organizational context in which supervisors usually have the ability to influence their subordinates' outcomes, such as their salary. In the low-power transgressor condition, participants read:

> Player 2 depends on Player 1 to receive chips. Player 1 could, for example, keep all the chips for him/herself. Since Player 1 decides on the number of chips he/she transfers to Player 2, Player 2 has little power in this game.

In the high-power transgressor condition, participants read: 'As Player 2 divides the chips that are tripled, Player 2 has a lot of power to influence the final division. Thus Player 2 has a lot of power in this game.'

After the participant (Player 1) did not receive any chips from Player 2, (s)he first evaluated both the intentionality ('Player 2's decision was made intentionally') and the severity of the transgression ('Player 2's decision severely offended me') (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *completely*).[6] The transgressor response manipulation then commenced. We manipulated the apology as an expression of remorse. In the apology condition, participants received an email message from Player 2: '*Hey! I'm sorry about what just happened*'. In the no-apology condition, participants received no message (see Frantz and Bennigson, 2005; McCullough et al., 1998; Ohbuchi et al., 1989; Struthers et al., 2008; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Van Dijke and De Cremer, 2011 for a similar procedure).

Measures. After participants read the power manipulation instructions, they rated the transgressor's power in the game with one item: 'In this game, Player 2 has a lot of power over me' (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*; Galinsky et al., 2003). At the end of the study, participants also indicated how apologetic the transgressor was with one item: 'Player 2's message shows that he/she is apologetic' (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *completely*).

After completing the trust game, participants answered questions about their interaction with Player 2. We measured victims' *forgiveness* of the transgressor with the four-item forgiveness scale developed by Aquino et al., 2006 (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*). Sample items are: 'I will let go of the negative feelings I had against Player 2' and 'I will let go of my hate and desire for vengeance' ($\alpha = .78$). Compared with the forgiveness scale used in Studies 1 and 2, this scale can more accurately capture participants' forgiveness level. This is because the items are more meaningful to participants who interacted with the transgressor in a one-shot game than the scale used in Studies 1 and 2, which are more relevant to repeated interactions (e.g. 'I would cut off the relationship with him/her'). Consistent with Study 2, cynicism was measured with the cynical distrust scale(1 = *not at all*; 7 = *completely*; $\alpha = .81$; Greenglass and Julkunen, 1989).

Results

As our game paradigm was designed to induce a transgression with the participant as the victim, we checked if all participants ended up having fewer chips than Player 2. On average, participants transferred 6.02 (SD = 2.81) chips. Eleven participants transferred one or two chips. After receiving zero chips from Player 2, they still had more chips than Player 2 had. After excluding these participants, there were 27 participants in the low-power transgressor and no-apology condition, 31 participants in the low-power transgressor and apology condition, 28 participants in the high-power transgressor and no-apology condition, and 25 participants in the high-power transgressor and apology condition. The chips transferred by these participants did not differ between high (M = 5.76, SD = 2.84) and low transgressor power conditions (M = 6.27, SD = 2.78), F [1, 125] = 1.02, p = .32, η^2 = .01.

Manipulation checks. A one-way ANOVA with transgressor power (high versus low) as the independent variable and the power manipulation check as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of transgressor power (F [1, 109] = 139.02, p < .01, η^2 = .56). Participants in the high-power transgressor conditions perceived the transgressor as having more power (M = 5.91, SD = 1.15) than participants in the low-power transgressor conditions did (M = 2.98, SD = 1.43).[7] We did not include the transgressor response manipulation in the analyses as an independent variable because this manipulation commenced after we posted the power manipulation checks.

An ANOVA with transgressor power and transgressor response as independent variables and the transgressor response manipulation check as the dependent variable revealed only a significant main effect of transgressor response (F [1, 107] = 29.33, p < .01, η^2 = .22). Participants in the apology condition perceived the transgressor as more apologetic (M = 3.71, SD = 1.98) than participants in the no-apology condition did (M = 1.87, SD = 1.50). The effect of transgressor power (F [1, 107] = .21, p = .65, η^2 = .00) and the Transgressor Power × Transgressor Response interaction were not significant (F [1, 107] = .02, p = .88, η^2 = .00). Thus, the transgressor power and transgressor response manipulations were orthogonally induced.

One-way ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference in attributed intentionality (F [1, 109] = 1.75, p = .19, η^2 = .02) or perceived severity (F [1, 109] = 1.35, p = .25, η^2 = .01) between high-power and low-power transgressor conditions. This confirms that participants experienced similar transgression and did not perceive the transgression differently as a function of transgressor power. Therefore, we did not control for these two variables as we did in Study 1 and Study 2 in the hypotheses tests.

Hypotheses tests. As in Studies 1 and 2, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses to test the hypothesized interaction effect (i.e. Hypothesis 1). In step 1, we entered transgressor power (low-power transgressor = −1; high-power transgressor = 1) and transgressor response (no apology = −1; apology = 1) as predictors. In step 2 we entered the interaction of transgressor power and transgressor response. Tables 3a and 3b show the correlations between the study variables and results of the regression analysis, respectively.

Table 3a. Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study 3 variables.

Variable	*M*	SD	1	2	3
1.Transgressor response	.01	1.00			
2.Transgressor power	−.05	1.00	−.06		
3.Victim cynicism	4.07	1.05	−.03	.31**	
4.Victim forgiveness	4.90	1.26	.05	−.12	−.36**

N = 111. **p < .01, *p < .05. M = mean, SD = standard deviation. For transgressor response, −1 = *no apology*, 1 = *apology*. For transgressor power, −1 = *low-power transgressor*, 1 = *high-power transgressor*.

Table 3b. Results of multiple regression analysis of forgiveness on the effects of power and apology in Study 3.

Independent variable	Step 1	Step 2
Transgressor response	.04 (.42)	.03 (.30)
Transgressor power	−.12 (–1.22)	−.12 (–1.25)
Transgressor response × Transgressor power		−.27 **(–2.97)
ΔR^2	.02	.08
Total R^2	.02	.09
Adjusted R^2	−.00	.07
F	.86	8.79 **
df	2, 108	1, 107

N = 111. Regression coefficients represent standardized parameters (Betas). *T*-values are in parenthesis. *p < .05. **p < .01.

In step 1, the effects of transgressor response (β = .04, p = .68) and transgressor power (β = −.12, p = .23) were not significant. In step 2, the results for the main effects entered in the previous steps did not change. As predicted, step 2 revealed a significant Transgressor Response × Transgressor Power interaction (β = −.27, p < .01).[8] Figure 4a graphically depicts the interaction.

We tested the nature of the interaction following simple slopes procedures (Aiken and West, 1991). Consistent with Studies 1 and 2, these analyses showed that for low-power transgressors, apologizing led to more forgiveness than not apologizing did (β = .38, p = .02). However, for high-power transgressors, an apology did not lead to more forgiveness than no apology did (β = −.31, p = .07). This interaction can also be approached from a different vantage point. Among transgressors who apologized, it was less effective to have high power than to have low power (β = −.49, p < .01). Among transgressors who did not apologize, their level of power was irrelevant in predicting forgiveness (β = .20, p = .23).

Next, as in Study 2, we tested the mediating role of victim cynicism (i.e. Hypothesis 2) following the mediation procedures of Baron and Kenny (1986) and bootstrapping procedures of Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Hayes (2013). First, we tested whether victim cynicism was predicted by transgressor power. Second, we tested whether the interaction

of victim cynicism and transgressor response predicted victim forgiveness. Third, we tested whether the interaction of victim cynicism and transgressor response predicted victim forgiveness even after controlling for the interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). Lastly, we tested the significance of the indirect effect using Hayes' PROCESS macro (model 15; 5,000 bootstrap samples).

As a first step, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses to see whether high (relative to low) transgressor power leads to more victim cynicism. We entered transgressor power and transgressor response in step 1. The interaction between these two was entered in step 2. Victim cynicism was the dependent variable. In step 1, the effect of transgressor power was significant ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$). Transgressor response ($\beta = -.01$, $p = .88$) was not significant. In step 2, the main effect of transgressor power remained significant ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$). The main effect of transgressor response was not significant ($\beta = -.01$, $p = .92$). The interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response was also not significant ($\beta = .10$, $p = .28$). Thus, victim cynicism was predicted by transgressor power.

We proceeded to test if the effect of apology on forgiveness was moderated by cynicism, such that an apology leads to forgiveness only among victims low in cynicism. We tested this with hierarchical regression in which we entered victim cynicism and transgressor response in step 1. The interaction between these two (based on an effect coded version of transgression response and a mean centered version of cynicism) was entered in step 2. Victim forgiveness was the dependent variable. In step 1, the effects of transgressor response ($\beta = .05$, $p = .69$) and victim cynicism were both significant ($\beta = -.45$, $p < .01$). In step 2, the results for the main effects entered in the previous steps did not change. As expected, step 2 revealed a significant Victim Cynicism × Transgressor Response interaction ($\beta = -.30$, $p < .01$).

Simple slopes analyses revealed a pattern similar to that from Study 2. The analyses showed that when cynicism was low (1 SD below the mean), apologizing led to more forgiveness than not apologizing did ($\beta = .35$, $p = .03$). However, when cynicism was high (1 SD above the mean), an apology did not lead to more forgiveness than no apology did ($\beta = -.26$, $p = .10$). This interaction can also be approached from a different vantage point. Among transgressors who apologized, forgiveness level was higher when cynicism was low than when it was high ($\beta = -.74$, $p < .01$). Among transgressors who did not apologize, forgiveness levels were not affected, regardless of whether cynicism was low or high ($\beta = -.14$, $p = .36$). Figure 4b visually represents this relationship.

We subsequently tested whether the interaction of victim cynicism and transgressor response predicted victim forgiveness even after controlling for the interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response. Results revealed a significant interaction effect of cynicism and transgressor response ($\beta = -.23$, $p = .049$). There was also a significant effect of victim cynicism on victim forgiveness ($\beta = -.43$, $p < .01$). The effects of transgressor power ($\beta = .01$, $p = .93$) and transgressor response were not significant ($\beta = .04$, $p = .74$). The interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response was still significant but reduced ($\beta = -.23$, $p = .05$). This suggests a mediating effect because after accounting for the interaction effect of cynicism and transgressor response, the interaction effect of transgressor power and transgressor response on victim forgiveness was reduced (Rucker et al., 2011).

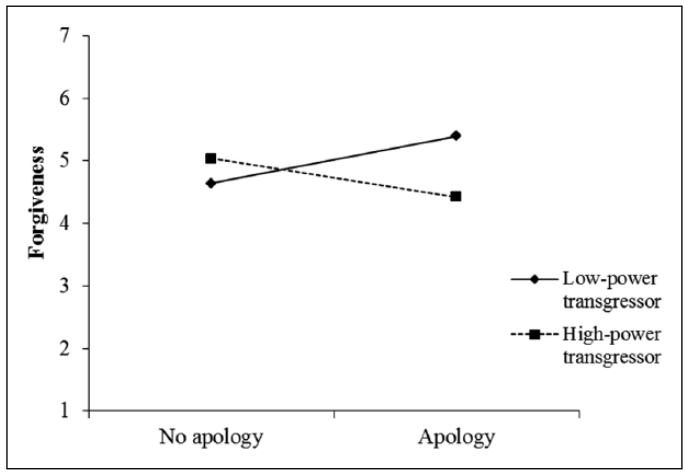

Figure 4a. Forgiveness level predicted by the two-way interaction between power and apology (Study 3).

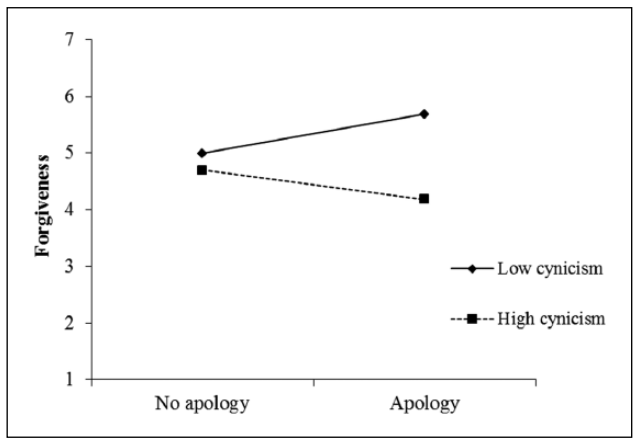

Figure 4b. Forgiveness level predicted by the two-way interaction between cynicism and apology (Study 3).

Finally, we tested the significance of the indirect effect following the same procedure as in Study 2 (Van Houwelingen et al., 2014) (see Figure 1b). We used Hayes' PROCESS macro (model 15; 5000 bootstrap samples).[9] Results showed that the effect of transgressor power via cynicism was negative when receiving an apology, indirect effect = −.41, SE = .17, 95% CI: [−.82, −.16], thus indicating that compared with low-power transgressors' apologies, high-power transgressors' apologies led to lower levels of victims' forgiveness. The effect of transgressor power via cynicism was not significant when no apology was offered, indirect effect = −.12, SE = .12, 95% CI: [−.44, .06].

General discussion

Across two surveys among employees and a controlled laboratory experiment with business students, we showed that an apology as an expression of remorse can promote forgiveness but this positive effect hinges on the power of the transgressor. An expression of remorse (versus no apology) elicits forgiveness only for low-power transgressors, but not for high-power transgressors. This is because the power of the transgressor leads to victim cynicism. Across three studies, we operationalized workplace transgressions and our dependent and independent variables in different ways. In this manner, the strengths of one operationalization compensate for the weaknesses of another. Below we discuss the implications and limitations of these findings and offer suggestions for future research.

Theoretical implications

First of all, our findings extend organizational scholars' understanding about how power differences influence workplace conflict resolution. Given that power differences characterize work relationships (Anderson and Brown, 2010; Magee and Galinsky, 2008), previous research has highlighted the role of power differences for victim forgiveness in the workplace (Aquino et al., 2001, 2006; De Reuver, 2006). However, these studies have not considered the role of transgressor responses such as apologies in this process (Fehr et al., 2010). The current article integrates these two important antecedents of forgiveness: power differences and apologies, and examines power differences as the boundary condition for the effectiveness of apologies in facilitating victim forgiveness.

Our findings also offer an explanation of why power and apologies interact to influence forgiveness by focusing on the role of cynicism. While research on employee cynicism has flourished since the 1990s, scholars have mainly focused on how cynicism influences employee work related attitudes and performance rather than its role in workplace conflict resolution (Chiaburu et al., 2013). In line with previous studies suggesting that employee cynicism influences supervisor-subordinate relationships (Davis and Gardner, 2004), our research shows that cynicism is an obstacle for apologies to be effective in workplace conflicts. Therefore, our research extends the employee cynicism literature by highlighting the important role of cynicism in workplace conflict resolutions.

This research also has implications for the power literature. A growing number of studies show that power shapes how people perceive power holders (Hinkel and Brown, 1990; Overbeck et al., 2006; Tiedens et al., 2000). That is, the fact that one possesses power will make others see him/her in a specific way – as cold and dominant in relationships (Fragale et al., 2011). However, very few of these studies have examined the implications of such perceptions for actual interactions in ongoing relationships. As Fragale et al. (2011) suggest, person perceptions 'are a cornerstone of social interactions' (p. 774). Yet, with the majority of studies focusing on how power influences perceptions only, it is not clear whether power facilitates or hinders workplace relationships through such perceptions. Our research shows that cynical perceptions, as shaped by power in the organization, influence a variable that is crucial to the functioning of workplace relationships, that is forgiveness.

Finally, our research also extends the forgiveness literature. A number of researchers have argued that offering and accepting apologies is a social ritual prescribing that a

transgressor should offer an apology after wronging the other person, and that the victim, in turn, should accept this apology (i.e. the apology-reconciliation cycle; Tavuchis, 1991). However, by focusing on forgiveness, which indicates a victim's intrinsic pro-social motivational change toward the transgressor, we caution that forgiveness requires more than just a ritualized behavior of accepting an apology; it also requires the person who offers the apology to be a believable source. Furthermore, given that a low-power victim is less likely to forgive a high-power transgressor after an expression of remorse, the obligation of accepting an apology from a high-power transgressor may result in the low-power victim reconciling without forgiving, which may then be detrimental to the victim's performance and well-being in the long term.

Practical implications

Apologizing for workplace transgressions is often promoted, especially for leaders who transgress against low-power organization members (Kellerman, 2006). One practical implication of our findings is that organizational leaders should be aware that because of their power position, they are less effective in obtaining forgiveness through a simple expression of remorse. It is important to note that we do not claim that leaders should not apologize to low-power organization members. Indeed, previous studies have shown that leaders who deliver comprehensive apologies that have all apology components are seen as more effective and transformational and able to increase low-power organization members' well-being (Byrne et al., 2014; Tucker et al., 2006). Rather, we suggest that a simple expression of remorse is not sufficient in obtaining forgiveness for leaders. This is because leaders, as those who possess power, are viewed with cynicism. These perceptions have nothing to do with the person that occupies the high-power role, but the person occupying it needs to realize that his/her role colors employees' perceptions of 'the kind of person' he/she is. Thus, to make their expressions of remorse believable and effective in facilitating forgiveness, leaders should strive to remove employees' cynicism toward them. For instance, by creating a work environment with high organizational support, leaders may remove employees' cynicism toward them and enhance the effectiveness of expressing remorse (Chiaburu et al., 2013). In addition, leaders should consider delivering comprehensive apologies to remove employees' cynicism (Byrne et al., 2014; Tucker et al., 2006). Likewise, those on the receiving end of an expression of remorse should be aware that their perceptions might be biased by an overly cynical view of people in high power positions. Thus, it is important that after a transgression that involves parties with unequal power, victims are aware of the biases that influence the effectiveness of an expression of remorse in eliciting forgiveness.

Limitations and future directions

Like all research, the current studies are not without limitations, which may form an impetus for future work. A first limitation is that our research focuses specifically on the apology–forgiveness link, and the moderating role of power in this link. Although forgiveness is fundamental to repairing a damaged relationship, it is possible that power plays a different moderating role in the relationship between apologizing and other reconciliation attempts by victims, such as condoning or reconciling with the transgressor

(McCullough et al., 2000). In fact, because low-power victims are by definition dependent on high-power transgressors, they may be particularly likely to reconcile with a high-power transgressor.

Second, our research focuses on the most common and effective apology component – expressions of remorse – and shows that for high-power transgressors, a simple expression of remorse is ineffective in eliciting victim forgiveness. However, as noted, apologies have other components such as expressions of empathy, acknowledgements of violated rules/norms and offers of compensation (Fehr and Gelfand, 2010). Especially, given that high-power transgressors are seen by low-power victims as having abundant resources needed to make amends, they may be expected to offer apologies that send 'costly signals' (Bottom et al., 2002; Ohtsubo et al., 2012). As previous studies revealed, costly apologies are more effective in restoring relationships (Ohtsubo et al., 2012). Thus, an apology that incurs some cost for high-power transgressors (e.g. offers of compensation) might be particularly effective. In the same sense, high-power transgressors could also make substantive amends that send 'costly signals'. Research showed that taking actions to amend is even more effective than a verbal apology (Bottom et al., 2002). Thus, it is important for future research to investigate effective ways of conflict resolution for high-power transgressors using costly signaling theory.

A third limitation of our research is that we operationalized power in terms of harsh power bases only (i.e. reward power and position power). These two bases of power are often practiced in organizations (Aiello et al., 2013; Judge and Martocchio, 1995; Podsakoff, 1982). Yet, it is possible that soft power bases (i.e. referent power, expert power and informational power; Raven et al., 1998) may play different roles in shaping the effectiveness of apologies. Specifically, soft power bases may lead to less cynicism and more perceived humanity, thus making high transgressor power less likely to undermine the effects of an apology as an expression of remorse in promoting forgiveness.

Furthermore, we found that high-power transgressors were perceived in a cynical way by low-power victims. As a result, victim cynicism leads to diminished forgiveness. In previous research on social perception of the powerful, researchers consistently show that high power is a salient heuristic that perceivers rely on to form perceptions regardless of perceivers' attributes (e.g. Fiske and Durante, 2014; Fragale et al., 2009, 2011). For example, Fragale et al. (2009) showed that high-power transgressors were punished more severely because their transgressions were perceived as being more intentional than those of low-power transgressors. This thus suggests that our results are driven by perceptions of victims as a function of transgressors' high power, rather than as a function of victims' low power. However, given that social power is fundamentally relational, it is possible that the diminished forgiveness displayed by a low-power victim toward a relatively high power transgressor may be driven by attributes of the low-power victim (e.g. having low power makes them cynical). Future studies should further tease out whether transgressors' high power or victims' low power explains the effects of apologies on forgiveness. For example, research could test two competing mediators – low-power victims' own subjective sense of power and their perceptions of high-power transgressors to see which process actually explains (i.e. mediates) the relationship of apologies and forgiveness.

In addition, although our findings and previous studies suggest that in general, high-power people tend to be perceived in a cynical way by low-power people (Fiske and

Durante, 2014), it is possible that cynical perceptions of the powerful and the powerless vary across different contexts. For example, Inesi et al. (2012) showed that low-power people were perceived in a cynical way by high-power people in the context of favor-exchanges. This is because unsolicited favors from low-power people suggest they have instrumental motives such as desires to gain valued resources from high-power people. However, in the context of apologies for transgressions, high-power people may be perceived in a cynical way. This is because high-power people have the instrumental needs to appear fair and manage impression in the workplace (Greenberg, 1990). Future research could test how different contexts moderate the effect of power on cynicism.

The nature of the transgression may moderate the effectiveness of apologies in promoting forgiveness. For example, competence-based violations indicate a lack of technical and interpersonal skills required for a job while integrity-based violations indicate a failure to adhere to sound principles (Kim et al., 2004). Previous studies have shown that an apology is more effective for a competence, rather than an integrity-based violation (Kim et al., 2004). Consistent with these findings, an apology as an expression of remorse for an integrity-based violation may be ineffective when communicated by a high-power transgressor because high transgressor power should lead such apologies to be viewed with cynicism. In addition, given that leaders as those who occupy high-power positions are expected to be competent (Fragale et al., 2011), it is possible that an expression of remorse for a competence-based violation is even more ineffective in promoting forgiveness than an expression of remorse for an integrity-based violation. Future studies should examine the moderating role of the nature of the transgression.

Conclusion

Work settings often include conflicts of interests, thus creating many opportunities for transgressions to emerge. Since the functioning of organizations depends on how well supervisors and subordinates cooperate, it is essential that they can repair relationships by apologizing and forgiving. As indicated by our findings, forgiveness can be achieved via an apology that expresses remorse, but only when this apology is given by a transgressor with low power. However, transgressors with high power are ineffective in promoting forgiveness by expressing remorse. This is because high-power transgressors are viewed with cynicism.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank associate editor Neil Conway as well as three anonymous reviewers for their feedback and suggestions on the earlier versions of this article. This research was conducted when the first author was a post-doctoral researcher at the Erasmus Center of Behavioural Ethics, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.

Funding

This work was supported by Erasmus Research Institute of Management (ERIM) and the Erasmus Center of Behavioural Ethics (ECBE).

Notes

1 Perceived severity did not moderate the interaction of transgressor response and transgressor power, $p = .20$, indicating that perceived severity did not intensify or weaken the interaction effects of transgressor response and transgressor power on forgiveness.

2 The effect of transgressor response (F [1, 141] = .02, $p = .90$, $\eta 2 = .00$) and the effect of the Transgressor Power × Transgressor Response interaction remained insignificant (F [1, 141] = .07, $p = .80$, $\eta 2 = .00$) without controlling for perceived intentionality and severity of the transgression.

3 The effect of transgressor power (F [1, 141] = 1.43, $p = .23$, $\eta 2 = .01$) and the Transgressor Power × Transgressor Response interaction remained insignificant (F [1, 141] = .14, $p = .71$, $\eta 2 = .00$) without controlling for perceived intentionality and severity of the transgression.

4 Perceived severity did not moderate the interaction of transgressor response and transgressor power, $p = .26$, indicating that perceived transgression severity did not intensify or weaken the interaction effects of transgressor response and transgressor power on forgiveness.

5 Model 14 revealed the same significant moderated indirect effect of transgressor power: when receiving an apology, indirect effect = −.17, SE=.07, 95% CI: [−.32, −.05]; when receiving no apology, indirect effect = −.07, SE=.03, 95% CI: [−.15, −.02].

6 To ensure that participants do not suspect that the manipulation of the transgression and that the two questions were preprogrammed, we instructed them that each individual would get different questions because questions were generated by the system calculation based on the amount sent back by Player 2.

7 We checked if the transgressor power manipulation influenced how many chips were sent by participants. Results revealed a non-significant effect of transgressor power on the number of chips sent, $p = .86$.

8 Perceived severity did not moderate the interaction of transgressor response and transgressor power, $p = .88$, indicating perceived transgression severity did not intensify or weaken the interaction effects of transgressor response and transgressor power on forgiveness.

9 Consistent with Study 2, we tested the indirect effect of transgressor power using model 15 instead of model 14 to control for the moderated direct effect. In addition, results of model 14 revealed the same results as model 15: when receiving an apology, indirect effect = −.47, SE = .19, 95% CI: [−.94, −.18]; when receiving no apology, indirect effect = −.09, SE = .11, 95% CI: [−.36, .09].

References

Abele AE, Cuddy AJC, Judd CM and Yzerbyt VY (2008) Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The stereotype content model and the BIAS map. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 40(1): 61–149.

Aiello A, Pratto F and Pierro A (2013) Framing social dominance orientation and power in organizational context. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 35(5): 487–495.

Aiken LS and West SG (1991) *Multiple Regression: Testing and Interpreting Interactions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Anderson C and Brown CE (2010) The functions and dysfunctions of hierarchy. In: Brief A and Staw B (eds) *Research in Organizational Behavior*. San Diego, CA: Elsevier, 55–89.

Andersson LM and Bateman TS (1997) Cynicism in the workplace: Some causes and effects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 18(5): 449–469.

Aquino K, Tripp TM and Bies RJ (2001) How employees respond to personal offense: The effects of blame attribution, victim status, and offender status on revenge and reconciliation in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 86(1): 52–59.

Aquino K, Tripp TM and Bies RJ (2006) Getting even or moving on? Power, procedural justice, and types of offense as predictors of revenge, forgiveness, reconciliation, and avoidance in organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 91(3): 653–668.

Baron RM and Kenny DA (1986) The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 51(6): 1173–1182.

Basford TE, Offermann LR and Behrend TS (2014) Please accept my sincerest apologies: Examining follower reactions to leader apology. *Journal of Business Ethics* 119(1): 99–117.

Berg J, Dickhaut J and McCabe K (1995) Trust, reciprocity, and social history. *Games and Economic Behavior* 10(1): 122–142.

Bottom WP, Gibson K, Daniels SE and Murnighan JK (2002) When talk is not cheap: Substantive penance and expressions of intent in rebuilding cooperation. *Organization Science* 13(5): 497–513.

Boyd DP (2011) Art and artifice in public apologies. *Journal of Business Ethics* 104(3): 299–309.

Brooks JH and Reddon JR (2003) The two dimensional nature of remorse: An empirical inquiry into internal and external aspects. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 38(2): 1–15.

Buhrmester M, Kwang T and Gosling SD (2011) Amazon's Mechanical Turk: A new source of inexpensive, yet high-quality, data? *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6(1): 3–5.

Byrne A, Barling J and Dupre KE (2014) Leader apologies and employee and leader well-being. *Journal of Business Ethics* 121(1): 91–106.

Campbell DT and Fiske DW (1959) Convergent and discriminant validation by the multitrait-multimethod matrix. *Psychological Bulletin* 56(2): 81–105.

Chiaburu DS, Peng AC, Oh IS et al. (2013) Antecedents and consequences of employee organizational cynicism: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 83(2): 181–197.

Davis WD and Gardner WL (2004) Perceptions of politics and organizational cynicism: An attributional and leader–member exchange perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly* 15(4): 439–465.

Davis JR and Gold GJ (2011) An examination of emotional empathy, attributions of stability, and the link between perceived remorse and forgiveness. *Personality and Individual Differences* 50(3): 392–397.

De Cremer D and Schouten BC (2008) When apologies for injustice matter: The role of respect. *European Psychologists* 13(4): 239–247.

De Dreu CKW and Weingart LR (2003) Task versus relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 88(4): 741–749.

De Reuver RSM (2006) The influence of organizational power on conflict dynamics. *Personnel Review* 35(5): 589–603.

Desmet P and Leunissen JM (2014) How many pennies for your pain? Willingness to compensate as a function of expected future interaction and intentionality feedback. *Journal of Economic Psychology* 43(1): 105–113.

Edelman B (2014) *Edelman Trust Barometer* (14th annual trust and credibility survey). New York: Edelman Berland.

Etzioni A (1961) *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*. New York: Free Press.

Fehr R and Gelfand MJ (2010) When apologies work: How matching apology components to victims' self-construals facilitates forgiveness. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 113(1): 37–50.

Fehr R, Gelfand MJ and Nag M (2010) The road to forgiveness: A meta-analytic review of its situational and dispositional correlates. *Psychological Bulletin* 136(5): 894–914.

Fiske ST (1993) Controlling other people: The impact of power on stereotyping. *American Psychologist* 48(6): 621–628.

Fiske ST and Durante F (2014) Never trust a politician? Collective distrust, relational accountability and voter response. In: Van Prooijen JW and Van Lange PAM (eds) *Power, Politics, and Paranoia: Why People are Suspicious about their Leaders*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 91–105.

Fiske ST, Cuddy AJ and Glick P (2007) Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 11(2): 77–83.

Flanagan JC (1954) The critical incident technique. *Psychological Bulletin* 51(4): 327–357.

Fragale AR, Overbeck JR and Neale MA (2011) Resources versus respect: Social judgments based on targets' power and status positions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 47(4): 767–775.

Fragale AR, Rosen B, Xu C and Merideth I (2009) The higher they are, the harder they fall: The effects of wrongdoer status on observer punishment recommendations and intentionality attributions. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 108(1): 53–65.

Frantz CM and Bennigson C (2005) Better late than early: The influence of timing on apology effectiveness. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 41(2): 201–207.

French JRP and Raven B (1959) *The Bases of Social Power*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 150–167.

Galinsky AD, Gruenfeld DH and Magee JC (2003) From power to action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85(3): 453–466.

Galinsky AD, Jordan J and Sivanathan N (2008) Harnessing power to capture leadership. In: Forsyth D and Hoyt C (eds) *Social Psychology and Leadership*. Westport, CT: Praeger Press, 283–299.

Gold GJ and Weiner B (2000) Remorse, confession, group identity, and expectancies about repeating a transgression. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 22(4): 291–300.

Greenberg J (1990) Looking fair vs. being fair: Managing impressions of organizational justice. *Research in Organizational Behavior* 12(1): 111–157.

Greenglass ER and Julkunen J (1989) Construct validity and sex differences in Cook-Medley hostility. *Personality and Individual Differences* 10(2): 209–218.

Hayes AF (2013) *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-based Approach*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Hershcovis MS and Reich TC (2013) Integrating workplace aggression research: Relational, contextual, and method considerations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 34(suppl. 1): S26–S42.

Hill KM (2013) When are apologies effective? An investigation of the components that increase an apology's efficacy. *Psychology Dissertations*. Available at: http://iris.lib.neu.edu/psych_diss/29/ (accessed 10 February 2015).

Hinkle S and Brown RJ (1990) Intergroup differentiation and social identity: Some links and lacunae. In: Abrams D and Hogg MA (eds) *Social Identity Theory: Constructive and Critical Advances*. New York: Springer-Verlag, 48–70.

Hinkin TR and Schriesheim CA (1989) Development and application of new scales to measure the French and Raven (1959) bases of power. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 74(4): 561–567.

Inesi ME, Gruenfeld DH and Galinsky AD (2012) How power corrupts? Cynical attributions for others' generous acts. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48(4): 795–803.

Judge TA and Martocchio JJ (1995) The role of fairness orientation and supervisor attributions in absence disciplinary decisions. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 10(1): 115–137.

Karremans JC and Smith PK (2010) Having the power to forgive: The role of power in interpersonal forgiveness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36(8): 1010–1023.

Kellerman B (2006) When should a leader apologize and when not? *Harvard Business Review* 84(4): 72–81.

Kim PH, Ferrin DL, Cooper CD and Dirks KT (2004) Removing the shadow of suspicion: The effects of apology versus denial for repairing competence-versus integrity based trust violations. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89(1): 104–118.

Kramer RM and Lewicki RJ (2010) Repairing and enhancing trust: Approaches to reducing organizational trust deficits. *The Academy of Management Annals* 4(1): 245–277.

Lazare A (2004) *On Apology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Leotti LA, Iyengar SS and Ochsner KN (2010) Born to choose: Biological bases for the need for control. *Trends in Cognitive Science* 14(10): 457–463.

Leunissen JM, De Cremer D and Reinders Folmer CP (2012) An instrumental perspective on apologizing in bargaining. *Journal of Economic Psychology* 33(1): 215–222.

Leunissen JM, De Cremer D, Reinders Folmer CP and Van Dijke M (2013) The apology mismatch: Asymmetries between victim's need for apologies and perpetrator's willingness to apologize. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 49(3): 315–324.

McCroskey JC and Teven JJ (1999) Goodwill: A reexamination of the construct and its measurement. *Communications Monographs* 66(1): 90–103.

McCullough ME, Bellah CG, Kilpatrick SD and Johnson JL (2001) Vengefulness: Relationships with forgiveness, rumination, well-being, and the Big Five. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 27(5): 601–610.

McCullough ME, Pargament KI and Thoresen CE (2000) The psychology of forgiveness: History, conceptual issues, and overview. In: McCullough ME, Pargament KI and Thoresen CE (eds) *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice*. New York: Guilford Press, 1–14.

McCullough ME, Rachal KC, Sandage SJ, Worthington ELJ, Brown SW and Hight TL (1998) Interpersonal forgiving in close relationships: II. Theoretical elaboration and measurement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75(6): 1586–1603.

McCullough ME, Root LM and Cohen AD (2006) Writing about the personal benefits of a transgression facilitates forgiveness. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 74(5): 887–897.

McKnight DH, Cummings LL and Chervany NL (1998) Initial trust formation in new organizational relationships. *Academy of Management Review* 23(3): 473–490.

Magee JC and Galinsky AD (2008) Social hierarchy: The self-reinforcing nature of power and status. *Academy of Management Annals* 2(1): 351–398.

Mirvis PH and Kanter DL (1991) Beyond demography: A psychographic profile of the workforce. *Human Resource Management* 30(1): 45–68.

Muller D, Judd CM and Yzerbyt VY (2005) When moderation is mediated and mediation is moderated. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89(6): 852–863.

Ohbuchi KI, Kameda M and Agarie N (1989) Apology as aggression control: Its role in mediating appraisal of and response to harm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56(2): 219–227.

Ohtsubo Y, Watanabe E, Kim J, Kulas J, Muluk H, Nazar G, Wang FX and Zhang JY (2012) Are costly apologies universally perceived as being sincere? A test of the costly apology-perceived sincerity relationship in seven countries. *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 10(4): 187–204.

Overbeck JR, Tiedens LZ and Brion S (2006) The powerful want to, the powerless have to: Perceived constraint moderates causal attributions. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36(4): 479–496.

Podsakoff PM (1982) Determinants of a supervisor's use of rewards and punishment: A literature review and suggestions for further research. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 29(1): 58–83.

Preacher KJ and Hayes AF (2008) Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods* 40(3): 879–891.

Raven BH, Schwarzwald J and Koslowsky M (1998) Conceptualizing and measuring a power/interaction model of interpersonal influence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 28(4): 307–332.

Regehr C and Gutheil T (2002) Apology, justice, and trauma recovery. *Journal of American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 30(3): 425–430.

Rucker DD, Preacher KJ, Tormela ZL and Petty RE (2011) Mediation analysis in social psychology: Current practices and new recommendations. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 5(6): 359–371.

Scher SJ and Darley JM (1997) How effective are the things people say to apologize? Effects of the realization of the apology speech act. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 26(1): 127–140.

Schönbrodt FD and Perugini M (2013) At what sample size do correlations stabilize? *Journal of Research in Personality* 47(5): 609–612.

Simmons JP, Nelson LD and Simonsohn U (2011) False-positive psychology undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant. *Psychological Science* 22(11): 1359–1366.

Skarlicki DP, Folger R and Gee J (2004) When social accounts backfire: The exacerbating effects of a polite message or an apology on reactions to an unfair outcome. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 34(2): 322–341.

Sprouse J (2011) A validation of Amazon Mechanical Turk for the collection of acceptability judgments in linguistic theory. *Behavior Research Methods* 43(1): 155–167.

Stanley DJ, Meyer JP and Topolnytsky L (2005) Employee cynicism and resistance to organizational change. *Journal of Business and Psychology* 19(4): 429–459.

Strelan P and Sutton RM (2011) When just-world beliefs promote and when they inhibit forgiveness. *Personality and Individual Differences* 50(2): 163–168.

Struthers CW, Eaton J, Santelli AG and Uchiyama M (2008) The effects of attributions of intent and apology on forgiveness: When saying sorry may not help the story. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 44(4): 983–992.

Tavuchis N (1991) *Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Tedeschi J, Schlenker B and Bonoma T (1973) *Conflict, Power, and Games*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.

Thibaut JW and Kelley HH (1959) *The Social Psychology of Groups*. New York: Wiley.

Tiedens LZ, Ellsworth PC and Mesquita B (2000) Sentimental stereotypes: Emotional expectations for high-and low-status group members. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 26(5): 560–575.

Tomlinson EC and Mayer RC (2009) The role of causal attribution dimensions in trust repair. *Academy of Management Review* 34(1): 85–104.

Tomlinson EC, Dineen BR and Lewicki RJ (2004) The road to reconciliation: Antecedents of victim willingness to reconcile following a broken promise. *Journal of Management* 30(2): 165–187.

Tucker S, Turner N, Barling J et al. (2006) Apologies and transformational leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics* 63(2): 195–207.

Van Dijke M and De Cremer D (2011) When social accounts promote acceptance of unfair ultimatum offers: The role of the victim's stress responses to uncertainty and power position. *Journal of Economic Psychology* 32(3): 468–479.

Van Houwelingen G, Van Dijke M and De Cremer D (2014) Fairness enactment as response to higher level unfairness: The roles of self-construal and spatial distance. *Journal of Management*. Epub ahead of print 16 April 2014. DOI: 10.1177/0149206314530166.

Walfisch T, Dijk DV and Kark R (2013) Do you really expect me to apologize? The impact of status and gender on the effectiveness of an apology in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 43(7): 1446–1458.

Wallace HM, Exline JJ and Baumeister RF (2008) Interpersonal consequences of forgiveness: Does forgiveness deter or encourage repeat offenses? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 44(2): 453–460.

Weiner B (1986) *An Attributional Theory of Motivation and Emotion*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Weiner B, Graham S, Peter O and Zmuidinas M (1991) Public confession and forgiveness. *Journal of Personality* 59(2): 281–312.

Xue Zheng is an international research fellow at the Department of Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management, China Europe International Business School (CEIBS), China. Previously, she worked as a post-doctoral researcher at the Department of Business-Society Management, Erasmus University, the Netherlands. Her research mainly focuses on the intersection of power, leadership and conflict management (i.e. trust, forgiveness and apologies). Her previous work has been published in the journal *Social Psychology and Personality Science*. [Email: zhengxue.academic@gmail.com]

Marius van Dijke is a professor of behavioral ethics at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, the Netherlands, and scientific director of the Erasmus Center of Behavioural Ethics (ECBE). His research interests lie at the intersection of morality, social justice, power, trust and leadership. He publishes in a range of leading journals in management and psychology such as *Journal of Management*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology.* [Email: mvandijke@rsm.nl]

Joost M Leunissen is a lecturer at the School of Psychology, University of Southampton, UK. He is interested in interpersonal conflict and reconciliation, and particularly on the willingness of perpetrators to initiate reconciliation and different ways to do so, such as apologizing or offering a financial compensation. His other research interests include organizational nostalgia and narcissism. He publishes in a wide range of leading journals in management and psychology such as *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *Journal of Economic Psychology* and *Evolution and Human Behavior*. [Email: J.M.Leunissen@soton.ac.uk]

Laura M Giurge is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Business-Society Management, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University, the Netherlands. Her research is concerned with unethical behavior, time, decision-making, power and leadership. She is currently leading several projects with Professor Marius van Dijke and Professor David De Cremer on topics such as power and time appropriate decision-making, power and morality, and ego depletion and unethical behavior. [Email: giurge@rsm.nl]

David De Cremer is currently the KPMG professor in management studies at Cambridge Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, UK, and a fellow of the Ruihua Innovative Management Research Institute, at Zhejiang University, China. His current research interests are behavioral business ethics and compliance, trust development and repair, business in China, leadership effectiveness and social decision making. He has published in the top tier journals in psychology and management, practitioner outlets like *Harvard Business Review*, and recently published the popular book *The Proactive Leader: How to Overcome Procrastination and be a Bold Decision Maker*. [Email:d.decremer@jbs.cam.ac.uk]