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**Effects of a Victim's Response to an Offender's Apology: When the Victim Becomes the
Bad Guy**

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Abstract

The 'apology-acceptance' script that may prevail during the victim-offender mediation process suggests that victims may feel obliged or pressured to accept an offender's offer of an apology. Violations of this expectation in terms of rejection of an apology or no recognition of it may influence the outcomes of mediation in several ways. Two experiments examined the effects of a victim's response to an offender's offer of a full apology on offenders' perceptions of the victim's response, emotional reactions, perceptions of the victim, attitudes towards the dispute, and attitudes towards mediation. Experiment 1 compared the effects of a rejection, acceptance and no recognition of an apology, and Experiment 2 further investigated the effects of an acceptance versus no recognition of an apology. It was found that offenders who had their apology rejected considered the victim's response as least appropriate and were least satisfied by it. 'Rejected' offenders felt more anger towards the victim, and had more negative impressions of the victim. Offenders who had their apology accepted felt more guilt and shame. They were, however, also more willing to reach an agreement and were more likely to perceive the conflict as being resolved. 'Accepted' offenders were also more likely participate in mediation in the future and more willing to recommend mediation to others. The present research also demonstrated that no recognition of an apology has adverse effects similar to a rejection of an apology.

The popularity of mediation as an addition or alternative to the traditional (civil and criminal) justice system is growing around the world, and mediation is often the main method of dealing with conflicts or disputes lying outside the justice system such as in educational settings and businesses. Typically, mediation practices bring conflicting parties together so they can engage in a respectful, two-way dialogue that is facilitated by a neutral third-party. The main goal of these practices is to help conflicting parties identify and negotiate a mutually agreeable resolution. During the mediation process, the parties can describe the conflict from their own perspective, explain its potential antecedents and consequences, and seek answers to their questions. Ultimately, mediation can start victims on the path towards healing, and offenders on the path towards rehabilitation and reintegration.

Given the potential of mediation and its prevalence, it is imperative to understand the mechanisms by which mediation may or may not be effective. One key mechanism that has been frequently proposed but under-researched is the offer and acceptance of apology (see Blecher, 2011; Bolstad, 2000; Latif, 2001; Levi, 1997; Petrucci, 2002). Research in the criminal justice setting has demonstrated that one of the main outcomes of mediation is an offer of an apology from the offender to the victim (e.g., Bolitho, 2012; Bonta, Wallace-Capretta & Rooney, 1998; Dhimi, 2012; Maxwell & Morris, 1993; Miers et al., 2001; Shapland et al., 2006; Shapland et al., 2007; Strang, Barnes, Braithwaite, & Sherman, 1999; Umbreit, 1995; Umbreit & Coates, 1992; Umbreit & Roberts, 1996). In fact, the opportunity to offer or receive an apology may be a strong motivation for individuals to engage in the mediation process (e.g., Shapland et al., 2007; Umbreit, 1995; Umbreit & Coates, 1992; Umbreit & Roberts, 1996).

The apologies that are offered may be partial or full. A full (i.e., genuine or sincere) apology generally involves five components (e.g., Choi & Severson, 2009; Dhimi, 2012; 2015; Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Pace, Feduik, & Botero, 2010; Risen & Gilovich, 2007;

Robbennolt, 2003; Scher & Darley, 1997; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Forster, & Montada, 2004; Slocum, Allan, & Allan, 2011). These are: (1) admitting responsibility for the behaviour and outcomes, (2) acknowledging the harm done and that it was wrong, (3) expressing regret or remorse for the harm done, (4) offering to repair the harm or make amends, and (5) promising not to repeat the behaviour in the future and to work toward good relations (i.e., forbearance).

To-date, the importance of apology in understanding the effectiveness of mediation is largely indicated by research on the effects of an *offer* of apology. It has been found that apologies can influence observers' and victims'¹ perceptions of the offender² and offence (e.g., Bornstein, Rung, & Miller, 2002; Gold & Weiner, 2000; Hodgins & Liebeskind, 2003; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Robbennolt, 2003; Scher & Darley, 1997). Apologies can also affect victims' and observers' desire to punish the offender (e.g., Bornstein et al., 2002; Gold & Weiner, 2000; Hodgins & Liebeskind, 2003; McCullough et al., 1998; Ohbuchi et al., 1989; Skarlicki, Folger, & Gee, 2004; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Wooten, 2009). In addition, apologies can influence the victim's desire to accept a settlement (e.g., Robbennolt, 2003; Skarlicki et al., 2004). The offer of an apology can also affect the victim's emotions (e.g., Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Fukuno & Ohbuchi, 1998; Ohbuchi et al., 1989; Robbennolt, 2003), and healing process (e.g., Ohbuchi et al., 1989; Robbennolt, 2003). Past research has also found that the offer of an apology can affect victims' and observers' perceptions of the prospect of both parties reconciling (e.g., Hodgins & Liebeskind, 2003; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Robbennolt, 2003; Scher & Darley, 1997; Tomlinson, Dineen, & Lewicki, 2004). Finally, apologies can affect a victim's satisfaction with mediation (e.g., Dhimi, 2012).

¹ The term 'victim' will be used to represent recipients of an apology.

² The term 'offender' will be used to represent those who offer an apology (also called transgressors or perpetrators in the literature).

However, the offender's offer of apology is just one step in the interaction between conflicting parties. We must also understand how the victim's response to an offer of apology can affect the outcomes of mediation. In response to an apology, the recipient may accept the apology fully, accept it conditionally, or reject it.³ Shapland et al. (2007) found that where offenders apologised during (direct or indirect) mediation, the vast majority of victims accepted the apology.⁴ There is also evidence to suggest that victims may feel obligated or pressured to accept an apology (Choi & Severson, 2009; Risen & Gilovich, 2007), even when it is considered to be insincere (Bennett & Dewberry, 1994, Study 2; Risen & Gilovich, 2007). By contrast to the research on the effects of the offer of an apology, there is relatively little research on the *effects* of the victim's *response* to an apology. The small body of this work is reviewed below.

Effects of Response to Apology

Wenzel and Okimoto (2010) conducted a study to examine the effects of a victim's response to an apology on the victim's own feelings and thoughts. It was found that the act of 'forgiving' an offender increased victims' sense of status/power, and perceptions of shared values with the offender. This in turn influenced victims' sense of justice. An increased sense of justice consequently resulted in victims having a reduced level of hostile emotions (e.g., anger), motivation to take revenge, and desire to punish the offender. It also increased victims' willingness to reconcile with the offender.

Risen and Gilovich (2007, Study 4) demonstrated that recipients of an apology felt better about themselves if they accepted an apology than if they rejected it, regardless of its sincerity. Recipients of an apology also anticipated that they would be judged more positively if they accepted rather than rejected an apology.

³ Although there is a difference between accepting an apology and forgiving the apologiser, some researchers have used forgiveness as a proxy for accepting an apology.

⁴ Direct mediation refers to a face-to-face exchange between the conflicting parties, whereas indirect mediation usually involves an exchange by mail.

In an early study examining the effects of a victim's response to an apology on observers' perceptions, Bennett and Dewberry (1994, Study 1a) manipulated whether the apology was accepted, rejected or received no recognition. Perceptions of the victim in terms of tolerance, emotionality, strength, wisdom, sociability, and maturity were most negative when the apology was rejected and most positive when the apology was accepted. Similarly, the relationship between the two parties was considered to be more damaged after a rejection of the apology and least after its acceptance. There was, however, no effect of response to apology on observers' sympathy for the victim or the offender. In a follow-up study, Bennett and Dewberry (1994, Study 1b) found that when an apology was rejected observers' perceptions of the victim were equally negative regardless of whether the apology was sincere or insincere.

Risen and Gilovich (2007, Study 3) found that recipients of an apology are liked more by observers when they accept an apology than when they reject it. People are also more likely to want to be friends with the recipient who accepts an apology. Recipients who accept an apology are perceived more positively (i.e., as charitable, mature, loyal, selfless, rational and tolerant) than those who reject an apology. Importantly, all of the above reactions to the recipient occur regardless of whether the apology they accept is sincere or not.

Finally, in three studies, using multiple methods, Wallace, Exline and Baumeister (2008) considered the effects of a victim's response to an apology on the offender's behaviour. They found some evidence to suggest that offenders who had their apologies accepted were less likely to reoffend. The reoffending was less likely to be against those who had accepted their apologies.

The Present Research

In sum, apologies represent a key mechanism through which the effectiveness of mediation may be explained. Most of the extant research on apology has been conducted

outside the mediation context and so little is known about how the offer and/or acceptance of apology during the mediation process can influence conflicting parties and mediation outcomes. The 'apology-acceptance' script that may prevail in the interactions between a victim and offender during the mediation process suggests that victims may feel obliged or pressured to accept an apology. Violations of this expectation in terms of rejection of an apology or no recognition of it may have adverse effects.

Although there is a growing body of literature examining the effects of an offender's offer of an apology, relatively little empirical research has investigated the effects of a victim's response to an apology. All of the few studies, but one (Wallace et al., 2008), on this topic, have focused on the effects of a victim's response to an apology on victims themselves and on observers. It has been found that the rejection of an apology or no recognition of it may have an adverse effect on aspects of victim healing and perceptions of the victim.

The lack of focus on the offender in past research is surprising, especially since some may argue that offenders are the primary audience of a victim's response to an apology, and since Wallace et al. (2008) have demonstrated the powerful effect it can have on an offender's rehabilitation. The present research, therefore, aims to fill gaps in the literature by examining the effects of a victim's response to an offer of apology on the offender during the mediation process.

In particular, the present research examines the effects of various responses to apology (i.e., acceptance, rejection, no recognition of it). The research also examines the potential for multiple-level effects on offenders (i.e., on their emotions, thoughts, and behavioural intentions). The specific emotions examined (i.e., anger, guilt, shame, and regret) were those studied in past research on apology (e.g., Bennett & Earwaker, 1994; Robbennolt, 2003; see also Blecher, 2011; Levi, 1997; Petrucci, 2002). The measures asking about perceptions of the victim (i.e., tolerance, emotionality, strength, wisdom, sociability, and

maturity) were taken from Bennett and Dewberry (1994a; see also Risen & Gilovich, 2007). Some of the measures of behavioural intentions (i.e., making reparations and reaching an agreement) reflected those used in studies exploring the effectiveness of apology and mediation (e.g., Dhimi, 2012; Robbennolt, 2003). This means that the present findings will be comparable with past work. Finally, other measures (i.e., resolution of dispute, future engagement in mediation, and recommending mediation to others) were added in order to extend upon past work.

Experiment 1

Aims and Hypotheses

The main aims of Experiment 1 were to investigate how a victim's response to an offender's offer of a full apology affect the offender's: (1) perceptions of the victim's response, (2) emotional reactions, (3) perceptions of the victim, (4) attitudes towards the dispute, and (5) attitudes towards mediation. The victim's response was defined as accepting the apology, rejecting it, or no recognition of it.

Based on the small body of past research reviewed above, and following the four main aims of the present research listed above, it was predicted that compared to the acceptance of an apology or no recognition of it, the rejection of an apology will result in an offender's perceptions of the victim's response as being less appropriate and less satisfactory (Hypothesis 1). It was also predicted that a rejection would lead to offenders having greater feelings of anger towards the victim (Hypothesis 2a). There is insufficient past research on the effects of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' feelings of guilt, shame and regret, and so a non-directional difference was hypothesized (Hypothesis 2b). It was also hypothesized that a victim's rejection of an apology would increase offenders' negative perceptions of the victim's character (Hypothesis 3). In addition, it was hypothesized that the acceptance of an apology would result in the offender being more willing to make reparations

and reach a mutually satisfying agreement, as well as being more likely to perceive the dispute as being resolved (Hypothesis 4). Finally, it was predicted that an acceptance of an apology would increase an offender's willingness to participate in mediation in the future and increase his/her likelihood to recommend mediation to others (Hypothesis 5).

Method

Participants. Ninety students resident in the Cambridgeshire, UK area volunteered to participate in Experiment 1 in return for £12. Seventy percent were female, and the average age of the sample was 24.42 ($SD = 4.07$).

Design. Victim's response to the offender's apology was the independent variable which had three levels (i.e., acceptance, rejection, no recognition of it). This was manipulated between-subjects.

Stimuli and measures. Participants were presented with a written scenario that depicted a cyclist (Klara) falling off her bicycle because of the actions of a speeding motorist. At the mediation meeting, the victim described her physical injuries, noted her bike was beyond repair and how this would impact her ability to travel to places, and said she was angry at the offender for not stopping at the scene of the incident. The offender (Darren) explained why he had been speeding, namely, because he was hurrying to meet his son who was in a fight at school, and offered a full apology (i.e., admitting responsibility, acknowledging the harm caused, expressing remorse, offering reparation, and promising forbearance). The victim's response to the scenario was either acceptance (i.e., "Klara responded by saying that she hoped Darren's son was ok. Klara then told Darren that she fully accepted his apology and accepted his offer of buying her a new bike."); rejection ("Klara responded by saying that she hoped Darren's son was ok. Klara then told Darren that she did not accept his apology at all and did not accept his offer of buying her a new bike.");

or no recognition of it (i.e., "Klara responded by saying that she hoped Darren's son was ok.").

After reading the scenario, the offender's apology and the victim's response to the apology, participants answered 18 questions. Unless otherwise stated, participants responded on 11-point rating scales anchored at each end from 'not at all' to 'completely'. The first question was a manipulation check asking participants to rate the extent to which the offender's apology had been accepted by the victim.

The remaining questions asked participants to take the perspective of the offender. Two questions measured participants' perceptions of the victim's response in terms of *appropriateness* and *satisfaction*.

Four questions elicited participants' emotional reactions to the victim's response. Here, participants were asked to imagine being the offender and rate how *angry* they would be with the victim; how *guilty* they would feel for their behaviour on the day of the incident; how much *shame* they would feel; and how much *regret* they would feel.

Six questions asked participants to rate their perceptions of the victim using the items from Bennett and Dewberry (1994a; see also Risen & Gilovich, 2007). These are *tolerant-intolerant*, *unemotional-emotional*, *strong-weak*, *foolish-wise*, *sociable-unsociable*, *immature-mature*. Responses to these were measured on 7-point rating scales anchored at each end (e.g., 'immature' and 'mature').

Finally, five questions asked about participants' perceptions of the dispute and mediation. Here, participants rated the extent to which they thought the dispute had been *resolved*; how likely they would be to replace the victim's bike within the month (*reparation*); how willing they would be to reach a mutually satisfying *agreement* at the mediation meeting; how likely they would be to participate in a mediation meeting in the

future if they were in a similar circumstance; and the extent to which they would *recommend* mediation to others in their circumstance.

Procedure. Data was collected by a trained research assistant. An advertisement was distributed via email to university mailing lists inviting students to participate in the research. Participants were randomly assigned to each experimental condition (in which there were an equal number). The questionnaire was self-administered in small groups at the University of Cambridge, and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. To protect their anonymity and confidentiality, participants were instructed not to write any identifying information on the questionnaire.

Results

Table 1 presents the inter-correlations among the dependent measures. These range from 0 to .80 (excluding sign).

TABLE 1 HERE

Manipulation check. There was a significant effect of a victim's response to the apology on participants' perceptions of the extent to which the victim had *accepted* the offender's apology, $F(2, 89) = 89.79, p < .001$. Post hoc tests using Bonferroni corrections indicated that participants in the rejection condition were significantly less likely to think the victim had accepted the offender's apology ($M = 2.12, SD = 2.16$) compared to participants in either the accept condition ($M = 8.97, SD = 2.12$) or the no recognition condition ($M = 7.95, SD = 1.99$), $ps < .001$. There was no significant difference, however, between the latter two conditions, although the responses were in the expected direction i.e., greater mean scores for those in acceptance condition than in the no recognition condition, $p > .05$.

Rather than collapse the responses of participants in the acceptance and no recognition conditions for the remainder of the analyses, they were kept separate. As will be seen below, there were several statistically significant differences that emerged between these

two conditions. Experiment 2 further compares the acceptance and no recognition conditions in order to consider the robustness of the findings observed for these two conditions in Experiment 1.

Perceptions of victim's response. There was a significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on how *appropriate* offenders considered the victim's response was to an apology, $F(2, 89) = 22.27, p < .001$. Post hoc tests using Bonferroni corrections revealed that, consistent with Hypothesis 1, participants in the rejection condition rated the victim's response as significantly less appropriate than those in the acceptance or no recognition conditions (see Table 2), $ps < .001$. There was no significant difference between the acceptance and no recognition conditions, $p > .05$.

TABLE 2 HERE

Participants in the three conditions also differed significantly from one another in how *satisfied* they were with the victim's response to an apology, $F(2, 89) = 117.38, p < .001$. As Table 2 shows, participants in the rejection condition expressed least satisfaction with the victim's response, followed by those in the no recognition condition, while participants in the acceptance condition were most satisfied. These differences were statistically significant ($ps < .009$), thus further confirming Hypothesis 1.

Emotional reactions. In support of Hypothesis 2a, there was a significant effect on offenders' feelings of *anger* towards the victim, $F(2, 89) = 7.66, p = .001$. As Table 2 shows, participants in the rejection condition expressed significantly more anger towards the victim than participants in the acceptance and no recognition conditions, $ps < .028$. There was no significant difference between those in the acceptance and no recognition conditions, $p > .05$.

Hypothesis 2b received partial support. There was no significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' feelings of *shame* and *regret*, $ps > .05$. However, the effect of a victim's response to an apology on feelings of *guilt* was marginally significant,

$F(2, 89) = 2.84, p = .064$. Here, post hoc tests revealed that participants in the accept condition said they would feel marginally significantly more guilty than those in the rejection condition (see Table 2), $p = .065$. There was no significant difference between the acceptance and no recognition conditions or between the rejection and no recognition conditions, $ps > .05$.

Perceptions of victim. The offenders' perceptions of the victim's character were measured using six items. In order to determine if the responses on these items should be analysed separately or in aggregate, Cronbach's alpha was computed after reverse coding responses on three of the six items i.e., unemotional-emotional, foolish-wise, and immature-mature (hereafter called emotional-unemotional, wise-foolish, and mature-immature), so that higher scores on all items represented a more negative impression of the victim. Alpha levels closer to the upper limit of 1 represent greater internal consistency of the items in a scale, and an alpha of .6 or less is considered unacceptable (George & Mallery, 2003). Here, alpha was .58 for the six item scale, and it reached a maximum of .68 if one item (i.e., emotional-unemotional) was removed. Thus, rather than omit data, it was decided to analyse responses on the six items separately.

These analyses revealed that Hypothesis 3 received partial support. There was no significant difference across the three conditions in perceptions of the victim's *emotionality* and *strength*, $ps > .05$. However, there were significant effects of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' perceptions of the victim's *tolerance* ($F[2, 88] = 76.25, p < .001$), *wisdom* ($F[2, 89] = 13.63, p < .001$), *sociability* ($F[2, 88] = 29.70, p < .001$), and *maturity*, $F(2, 89) = 43.20, p < .001$. As Table 2 shows, and consistent with Hypothesis 3, participants in the rejection condition perceived the victim to be significantly more intolerant, more foolish, more unsociable, and more immature than participants in either the acceptance or no

recognition conditions, $ps < .001$. There were no significant differences between the acceptance and no recognition conditions on any of these ratings, $ps > .05$.

Attitudes towards the dispute. There was partial support for Hypothesis 4. Although there was no significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' likelihood of making *reparations* ($p > .05$), there was a significant effect of a victim's response on offenders' willingness to reach a mutually satisfying *agreement*, $F(2, 89) = 5.32, p = .007$. As Table 2 shows, and consistent with Hypothesis 4, participants in the acceptance condition were significantly more willing to reach a mutually satisfying agreement than either those in the no recognition or rejection conditions, $ps < .015$. There was no significant difference between the rejection and no recognition conditions, $p > .05$.

There was also a significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' perceptions that the conflict had been *resolved*, $F(2, 89) = 47.74, p < .001$. Post hoc tests revealed significant differences across all three conditions such that participants in the acceptance condition were more likely to perceive the conflict as being resolved, followed by those in the no recognition condition, while those in the rejection condition were least likely to think the conflict had been resolved (see Table 2), $ps < .001$. This is consistent with Hypothesis 4.

Attitudes towards mediation. Finally, the effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' likelihood of participating in mediation in the *future* was marginally significant, $F(2, 89) = 2.93, p = .059$. Here, post hoc tests showed that consistent with Hypothesis 5, participants in the acceptance condition were significantly more likely to participate in mediation in the future than those in the no recognition condition (see Table 2), $p = .047$. Participants in the acceptance condition were also marginally significantly more likely to participate in mediation in the future than those in the rejection condition (see Table 2), $p =$

.076. There was no significant difference between the rejection and no recognition conditions, $p > .05$.

There was also significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' willingness to *recommend* mediation to others, $F(2, 89) = 10.35, p < .001$. As Table 2 shows, and consistent with Hypothesis 5, participants in the acceptance condition were significantly more willing to recommend mediation to others than either those in the no recognition or the rejection conditions, $ps < .014$. There was no significant difference between the rejection and no recognition conditions, $p > .05$.

Discussion

In Experiment 1, participants took the perspective of an offender who had offered a full apology to the victim during a mediation meeting and who then experienced one of three responses from the victim i.e., acceptance of the apology, rejection of the apology, and no recognition of it. It was evident that a victim's rejection of an apology has wide-ranging adverse effects.

Specifically, compared to offenders who had their apology accepted or those who received no recognition of it, offenders who had their apology rejected viewed the victim's response as least appropriate, and were least satisfied by it. 'Rejected' offenders also demonstrated greater feelings of anger towards the victim than their 'accepted' counterparts. In addition, offenders who had their apology rejected had the most negative impressions of the victim's character in terms of tolerance, wisdom, sociability, and maturity. The above findings are consistent with Bennett and Dewberry (1994, Study 1a) and Risen and Gilovich (2007, Study 3).

There was little evidence for an effect of a victim's response to an apology on the offenders' feelings of shame and regret. It was, however, found that that 'accepted' offenders tended to feel more guilt than those who had their apology rejected, although this difference

was only marginally statistically significant and needs to be replicated. Guilt is behaviour-focused (Tangney, 1991; 1995) and elicited by moral transgressions (e.g., Smith, Webster, Parrott, & Eyre, 2002). The acceptance of an apology may make the victim appear compassionate and altruistic, and so undeserving of the harm caused by the offender, thus heightening the seriousness of the transgression, and consequently amplifying the offender's sense of guilt. Future research ought to explore this possibility as well as other potential explanations for why offenders who have their apology accepted feel more guilt.

Finally, the victim's acceptance of an apology also had positive effects on offenders' attitudes towards the dispute and the mediation meeting. 'Accepted' offenders were more willing than their 'rejected' and 'no recognition' counterparts to reach a mutually satisfying agreement. They were also more likely to think that the conflict had been resolved. In fact, 'accepted' offenders were more likely to engage in mediation in the future compared to those who received no recognition of their apology. They also tended to be more likely to do so compared to their 'rejected' counterparts, although this difference was only marginally statistically significant, and so needs to be replicated. 'Accepted' offenders were also more willing to recommend mediation to others compared to those who had their apology rejected or who received no recognition of it. To our knowledge, this is the first study to systematically examine the effects of a victim's response to an apology on an offender's attitudes towards the dispute and mediation.

Since participants in the acceptance condition were not statistically significantly more likely to think that the offenders' apology had been accepted by the victim than those in the no recognition condition, further research is needed to examine the robustness of any findings pertaining to these two conditions. Specifically, is it really the case that there are no significant differences between offenders whose apology is accepted versus those who receive no recognition of it on the following measures: appropriate, anger, guilt, tolerance,

wisdom, sociability, and maturity? In addition, can the finding of differences between these two groups reported in Experiment 1 on some of the measures (i.e., satisfaction, agreements, resolved, future, and recommend) be replicated? Experiment 2, therefore, aimed to perform a more rigorous comparison of the acceptance and no recognition conditions.

Experiment 2

Aims and Hypotheses

The main aims of Experiment 2 were to compare the effects of a victim's acceptance of an offender's apology against no recognition of it, on the offender's: (1) perceptions of the victim's response, (2) emotional reactions, (3) perceptions of the victim, (4) attitudes towards the dispute, and (5) attitudes towards mediation.

The lack of past research on comparing the effects of acceptance of the offer of an apology and no recognition of it (with the exception of Bennett & Dewberry, 1994) preclude directional hypotheses for several of the variables of interest. However, based on the results of Bennett and Dewberry (1994, Study 1a) and Experiment 1, it was predicted that compared to the no recognition condition, offenders whose apology is accepted will be more satisfied with the victim's response (Hypothesis 1). It was also hypothesized that 'accepted' offenders would have more positive impressions of the victim compared to offender who receive no recognition of their apology (Hypothesis 2). In addition, it was predicted that 'accepted' offenders would be more willing to reach a mutually satisfying agreement, and they would be more likely to perceive the dispute as having been resolved (Hypothesis 3). Finally, it was predicted that that compared to offenders who receive no recognition of their apology, those whose apology is accepted would be more likely to participate in mediation in the future and to recommend mediation to others (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants. Sixty-five students resident in the Cambridgeshire, UK area volunteered to participate in Experiment 2 in return for £12. Forty-three percent were female, and the average age of the sample was 20.11 ($SD = 3.85$).

Design. Victim's response to the offender's apology had two levels (i.e., acceptance versus no recognition of it), and was manipulated between-subjects.

Stimuli and measures. Participants were presented with the same scenario as in Experiment 1. However, the victim's response was altered so as to strengthen the manipulation of the acceptance of apology and no recognition of it. The victim's response to the scenario was either acceptance of the apology (i.e., "Klara told Darren that she fully accepted his apology and accepted his offer of buying her a new bike.") or no recognition of it (i.e., "Klara responded by saying that she would like to think about what Derek has said."). Participants were presented with the same questions as in Experiment 1.

Procedure. The procedures were the same as in Experiment 1. There were 31 participants randomly assigned to the experimental condition and 34 to the control condition.

Results

Table 2 presents the inter-correlations among the dependent measures. These range from 0 to .83 (excluding sign).

TABLE 2 HERE

Manipulation check. Independent samples *t*-tests showed that participants in the acceptance condition were significantly more likely to think the victim had *accepted* the offender's apology ($M = 8.77$, $SD = 2.27$) than participants in the no recognition condition ($M = 6.13$, $SD = 2.28$), $t(63) = 4.67$, $p < .001$. Thus, the manipulation of a victim's response to an apology was successful.

Perceptions of victim's response. As Table 4 shows, participants in the acceptance condition rated the victim's response as significantly more *appropriate* than those in the no

recognition condition, $t(63) = 3.39, p = .001$. In addition, and consistent with Hypothesis 1, participants in the acceptance condition were significantly more *satisfied* with the victims' response compared to those in the no recognition condition, $t(63) = 2.21, p = .016$.

TABLE 4 HERE

Emotional reactions to victim's response. There was no significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' feelings of *regret*, *guilt* and *anger*, $ps > .05$. The effect of a victim's response to an apology on feelings of *shame* was, however, marginally significant, $t(57) = 1.81, p = .076$. Here, participants in the acceptance condition tended to feel more shame than those in the no recognition condition (see Table 2).

Perceptions of victim. There was no significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' perceptions of the victim's emotionality, strength and wisdom, $ps > .05$. However, there was a significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' perceptions of the victim being *tolerant* ($t[63] = 2.04, p = .046$), *sociable* ($t[62] = 1.78, p = .041$), and *mature*, $t(62) = 1.89, p = .032$. As Table 2 shows, and consistent with Hypothesis 2, participants in the acceptance condition perceived the victim to be significantly more tolerant, more sociable, and more mature than participants in the no recognition condition.

Attitudes towards the dispute. There were no significant effects of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' likelihood of *repairing* the harm done, and willingness to reach a mutually satisfying *agreement* during the mediation meeting, $ps > .05$. However, there was a significant effect of a victim's response on offenders' perceptions that the conflict had been *resolved*, $t(63) = 3.13, p = .003$. Here, participants in the acceptance condition were significantly more likely to perceive the conflict as being resolved compared to those in the no recognition condition. This lends partial support to Hypothesis 3 (see Table 2).

Attitudes towards mediation. Finally, there was no support for Hypothesis 4 because there was no significant effect of a victim's response to an apology on offenders' likelihood

of participating in mediation in the *future* or on offenders' willingness to *recommend* mediation to others, $ps > .05$.

Discussion

In Experiment 2, participants took the perspective of an offender who had offered a full apology to the victim during a mediation meeting and who then either had the apology accepted or received no recognition of it. Two of the findings of Experiment 2 (i.e., those pertaining to offenders' satisfaction with the victim's response and offenders' perception of the dispute being resolved) concur with the differences between the 'acceptance' and 'no recognition' conditions observed in Experiment 1. By contrast, some other findings from Experiment 1 (i.e., those pertaining to offenders' willingness to reach an agreement, to participate in mediation in the future, and recommend mediation to others) were not replicated in Experiment 2. However, the successful manipulation of the victim's response to apology (i.e., as accepting it or showing no recognition of it), in Experiment 2 revealed differences between these two conditions on several measures that Experiment 1 was unable to demonstrate (i.e., on measures of offenders' perceptions of the appropriateness of the victim's response, offenders' feelings of shame, and offenders' perceptions of the victim's tolerance, sociability and maturity). Finally, both Experiment 2 and 1 suggest that the victim's acceptance of an offender's apology does *not* have a significant influence on offenders' feelings of anger towards the victim, offenders' feelings of guilt or offenders' perception of the victim's wisdom.

In sum, from the findings of Experiment 2, it was evident that a variety of positive effects may ensue when a victim accepts an offender's apology, and that there are adverse consequences of a victim making no recognition of an offender's apology. First, compared to offenders who received no recognition of their apology, offenders who had their apology accepted, viewed the victim's response as more appropriate, and were more satisfied by it.

Second, 'accepted' offenders had more positive impressions of the victim's character in terms of viewing the victim as more tolerant, sociable and mature (see also Bennett & Dewberry, 1994, Study 1a). Third, offenders who had their apology accepted tended to feel more shame than those who received no recognition of their apology. This result was, however, only marginally statistically significant, and future research ought to evaluate its robustness. Shame is character-focused (Tangney, 1991, 1995), and typically implies a painful feeling that stems from having lost the respect of others (e.g., Smith et al., 2002). When a victim accepts an offender's apology it establishes moral superiority, which may make the offender may feel less worthy. Future research also ought to explore this possibility as well as other potential explanations for why offenders who have their apology accepted feel more shame. Finally, offenders who had their apology accepted were more likely to think that the conflict had been resolved compared to offenders who received no recognition of their apology.

In other words, the findings of Experiment 2 suggest that compared to acceptance of the offer of an apology, no recognition of it, is associated with negative impressions of the victim's response and the victim, and negative attitudes towards the dispute. Thus, it appears that no recognition of an offender's apology can be as damaging as a rejection of the apology, as demonstrated in Experiment 1. This may partly explain why so many victims accept an offender's apology during (direct and indirect) mediation (e.g., Shapland et al., 2007), and why they may feel obligated or pressured to accept it (Choi & Severson, 2009; Risen & Gilovich, 2007), even when the apology is considered to be insincere (Bennett & Dewberry, 1994, Study 2; Risen & Gilovich, 2007).

General Discussion

The offer and acceptance of apology is one mechanism that has been proposed to explain the effectiveness of mediation (see Blecher, 2011; Bolstad, 2000; Latif, 2001; Levi, 1997; Petrucci, 2002). Although there is a growing body of literature examining the effects of

an offender's offer of an apology (e.g., Dhami, 2012; Robbennolt, 2003; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Skarlicki et al., 2004; Wooten, 2009), relatively little is known about the effects of a victim's response to an apology. The present research focused on the effects of a victim's response to an apology (i.e., acceptance, rejection, and no recognition of it) during the mediation process on the offender's emotions, thoughts, and behavioural intentions. Several findings emerged from the two Experiments, which are discussed below.

First, the victim's response to an offender's apology has an impact on how the offender perceives the victim's response. Compared to offenders who had their apology accepted or who received no recognition of it, those who had their apology rejected considered the victim's response as least appropriate and were least satisfied by it. Similarly, offenders who received no recognition of their apology were also less satisfied by the victim's response compared to those who have their apology accepted. These findings may be explained by the expectations created by the 'apology-acceptance' script that appears to prevail during the mediation process (e.g., Shapland et al., 2007).

Second, the victim's response to an offender's apology also influences the offender's emotional reactions. 'Rejected' offenders felt more anger towards the victim than their 'accepted' and 'no recognition' counterparts. Feelings of anger towards the victim are unlikely to help resolve the conflict between the two parties or lead them on the path towards reconciliation. Anger may even fuel future conflict between the two parties (see Van Kleef, van Dijk, Steinel, Harinck, & van Beest, 2008). It was also found that offenders who had their apology accepted felt more guilt than those who had their apology rejected. Similarly, 'accepted' offenders felt more shame than those who received no recognition of their apology. Feelings of guilt in offenders have been found to be associated with greater self-blame (Mandel & Dhami, 2005). Such acceptance of responsibility may assist in offender rehabilitation. Feelings of shame may enhance the chances of offender rehabilitation and

reintegration while it is linked to a self-improvement motivation, but not if these feelings become stigmatising and so linked to a self-defensive motivation (Braithwaite, 1989; Gausel & Leach, 2011).

Future research ought to explore the potential consequences of the offender's feelings of anger, guilt and shame following the rejection and/or acceptance of his/her apology by the victim. Wallace et al. (2008) found that a victim's acceptance of an apology resulted in reduced reoffending, although they did not explore the mechanism explaining this link. Future research could explore the effects of a victim's response to an offender's apology on the offenders' other negative emotions such as regret and disappointment, as well as on his/her positive emotions such as happiness and gratitude.

Third, the victim's response to an offender's apology has an effect on the offender's perceptions of the victim's character. Compared to those who had their apology accepted and those who received no recognition of it, 'rejected' offenders had more negative impressions of the victim. The former group perceived the victim as more intolerant, foolish, unsociable and immature. 'Accepted' offenders also perceived the victim as more tolerant, sociable and mature than those who received no recognition of their apology. Negative impressions of the victim may flow from perceived violations of the 'apology- acceptance' script, and are unlikely to assist in the reconciliation of the two parties. Such negative impressions may even lead to further conflict between them.

Fourth, an offender's attitudes towards the dispute are affected by whether or not the victim accepts his/her apology. Offenders who had the apology accepted were more willing to reach a mutually satisfying agreement than those who had their apology rejected. 'Accepted' offenders were also more likely to perceive the conflict as being resolved, than offenders who had their apology rejected or those who received no recognition of it. The effectiveness of mediation is sometimes characterised by the ability for conflicting parties to

reach an agreement, and so the victim's acceptance of an offender's apology can stimulate the process of negotiation. The present findings also lend further support for the theoretical importance of apology in dealing with inter-personal conflict (Goffman, 1971; Tavuchis, 1991).

Fifth, the victim's acceptance of an offender's apology can also influence the offender's attitudes towards mediation. Offenders who had their apology accepted were more likely to say they would participate in mediation in the future than 'rejected' offenders. They were also more willing to recommend mediation to others. The present findings extend past research stating that the opportunity to offer and receive an apology may motivate offenders and victims to engage in the mediation process (e.g., Shapland et al., 2007; Umbreit, 1995; Umbreit & Coates, 1992; Umbreit & Roberts, 1996) by suggesting that the opportunity to have one's apology accepted may also be a motivator.

Finally, the present study demonstrates that no recognition of an apology has similar adverse effects on an offender's thoughts feelings and behavioural intentions as does the rejection of an apology. No recognition of an apology may be considered an implicit (or unspoken) rejection. Future research ought to examine this possibility, as well as explore what victims really mean by not responding immediately to an offender's apology. If victims simply need more time to give a response and offenders have misperceived their intentions, then facilitators may want to warn offenders against 'reading too much' into a no recognition of an apology. The fact that no immediate response to the offer of an apology adds a delay to the full mediation process, suggests that future research could examine the effects of the timing of an acceptance or rejection of an apology – is a delay detrimental to conflict resolution? Past research indicates that the timing of the *offer* of an apology can be associated with satisfaction with mediation (Frantz & Bennigson, 2005).

To some extent, the present findings mirror those of studies examining the effects of an offender's *offer* of an apology, suggesting that violations of the 'apology-acceptance' script that may prevail in the interactions between a victim and offender during the mediation process has symmetrical effects. In the 'apology-acceptance' script, offenders may feel pressured to offer an apology and victims may feel obliged to accept it. Violations of these expectations include not offering an apology, offering a partial apology, rejecting an apology, or showing no recognition of an apology. These violations appear to have similar adverse effects on a variety of emotions, thoughts and behavioural intentions.

A deeper conceptual understanding of the findings of the present study and the wider body of literature reviewed earlier may be attained by testing models identifying the causal relations between the offer and acceptance of apology during the mediation process and the various emotions, thoughts and behavioural intentions of victims and offenders. In terms of the present study, the correlations among the dependent measures in both experiments suggests that there are small- to medium-sized associations between mediation-related outcome variables (i.e., an *offender's* willingness to reach an agreement and offer reparations as well as his/her perceptions of the dispute being resolved), and variables such as an *offender's* emotions (i.e., anger, guilt, shame and regret), but not his/her perceptions of the victim's character. The extent to which this pattern of correlations generalizes to a *victim's* willingness to reach an agreement and his/her perceptions of the dispute being resolved need to be established. This can then be followed by establishing the degree to which the above pattern of findings is mirrored in the effects of the offer of an apology on victims and offenders. Together, such analyses can more clearly demonstrate the relations between the multiple effects of the 'apology-acceptance' script on victims and offenders.

Limitations and Further Avenues for Research

The present research measured the offender's responses in a mediation context where there was one victim and one offender (i.e., an inter-personal conflict), where the roles of victims and offenders were clear-cut, and where the two parties had no prior relationship (as well as no reason to develop one). It is unclear to what extent the findings of the present research generalize to victim's responses, mediation contexts involving inter-group conflict, where the roles and victims and offenders are less well-defined, and where reconciliation between the two parties is an important goal.

Past research suggests that victims who accept an offender's apology feel less negative towards the offender (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010) and more positive about themselves (Risen & Gilovich, 2007, Study 4), however, little is known about how they feel about the mediation process. Although past research has studied the nature and effects of the offer of an apology in inter-group conflict (e.g., Iyer & Blatz, 2012; Kirchhoff & Cehajic-Clancy, 2014), little is known about the effects of a victim's response to an apology in inter-group conflict. In addition, little is known about the effects of a victim's response to an apology where victims and offenders have dual roles, and where reconciliation is being sought. The 'needs-based model of reconciliation' (e.g., Shnabel & Nadler, 2008; Shnabel, Nadler, Ullrich, Dovidio, & Carmi, 2009; Tov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2013) suggests that the offer of an apology can restore victims' sense of power, and the acceptance of an apology can restore offenders' public moral image. Together, the fulfilment of these needs can contribute to reconciliation between the two parties. Future research can, therefore, explore how an acceptance of an apology, rejection of it, and no recognition of it can differentially affect victims' sense of empowerment and offenders' sense of social acceptance.

In addition, there are other directions that future researchers may wish to follow in order to better understand the effect of a victim's response to an apology. In particular, future research could examine the effects of a victims' response to an apology when the apology is

partial. Dhami (2011) found that elaborate or full apologies (containing some or all components of apology) were relatively uncommon in victim-offender mediation. It was more common for the perpetrator to either acknowledge harm or admit wrongdoing. Admitting wrongdoing is typically a precursor for attending mediation.

Future research could also explore the reactions of other mediation participants, beyond the offender. These others include the victim him/herself, the facilitator, as well as supporters of the offender or the victim (who may be present in 'family-group conferencing'). It would be useful to learn how the victim's response to an offender's apology influences the victim's healing process (see also Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). It would also be useful to learn to what extent supporters, who are aligned to the victim or offender, and facilitators, who are supposed to be impartial, may perceive the victim and his/her response, and the mediation process and outcome. Such research is warranted given that the offer and acceptance of apology may be key mechanisms for explaining the effectiveness of victim-offender mediation.

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Table 1. Bivariate Correlations among Dependent Measures in Experiment 1

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Appropriate	.67**	-.35**	.19	-.02	.08	-.59**	-.02	-.22*	-.57**	-.50**	-.65**	.63**	.15	.25*	.07	.24
2. Satisfied		-.42**	.25*	.07	-.02	-.80**	-.03	.05	-.50**	-.66**	-.65**	.74**	.02	.24*	.15	-.38**
3. Angry			-.44**	-.37**	-.37**	.42**	-.02	.08	.25*	.30**	.39**	-.34**	-.19	-.39**	-.34**	-.35**
4. Guilt				.58**	.49**	-.32**	.09	-.27**	-.38**	-.18	-.43**	.26*	.48**	.45**	.14	.17
5. Shame					.61**	-.18	-.10	-.00	-.12	.05	-.07	.03	.32**	.34**	.15	.03
6. Regret						-.06	-.07	-.21	-.18	.05	-.14	.06	.60**	.45**	.33**	.12
7. Tolerant- intolerant							-.14	-.06	.48**	.63**	.65**	-.71**	.60**	-.25**	-.09	-.34**
8. Emotional- unemotional								-.34**	-.19	.15	-.09	-.02	.14	.18	.01	.10
9. Strong-weak									.49**	-.02	.34**	.03	-.31**	-.23*	-.09	.00
10. Wise- foolish										.53**	.82**	-.52**	-.30**	-.22*	-.03	-.12

11. Social- unsociable	-.61**	-.63**	.07	-.15	-.13	-.30**
12. Mature- immature		-.65**	-.23*	-.25*	-.12	-.29**
13. Resolved			.14	.32**	.20	.45**
14. Reparation				.53**	.30**	.14
15. Agreement					.51**	.55**
16. Future						.77**
17. Recommend						

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. None of the correlations would be statistically significant if Bonferroni corrections were applied to the alpha level.

Table 2. Experiment 1 Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Measures by Victim's Response to Apology

Measure	No recognition		Acceptance		Rejection	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Appropriate*	8.91	2.38	9.47	2.20	5.58	2.71
Satisfied*	8.70	2.40	10.23	1.03	2.95	2.11
Angry*	2.78	2.08	2.00	1.20	4.05	2.61
Guilt ⁺	9.50	1.87	10.20	0.90	9.15	2.18
Shame	9.33	2.21	9.97	1.03	9.55	1.68
Regret	8.91	2.43	9.75	1.80	9.78	1.48
Tolerant-intolerant*	2.21	0.98	1.62	0.70	4.72	1.32
Emotional-unemotional	5.00	1.17	4.88	1.41	5.03	1.40
Strong-weak	3.33	1.63	3.33	1.75	3.08	1.33
Wise-foolish*	4.83	1.33	5.05	1.49	3.35	1.29
Social-unsociable*	2.92	1.09	2.23	1.27	4.48	1.06
Mature-immature*	5.75	1.22	5.72	1.22	3.22	1.19
Resolved*	7.65	2.80	9.95	1.46	3.95	2.71
Reparation	9.85	1.94	10.20	1.74	10.05	1.78
Agreement*	9.50	1.24	10.85	0.33	10.05	1.57
Future ⁺	9.12	1.91	10.07	1.19	9.02	2.30
Recommend*	9.08	1.51	10.37	0.96	8.18	2.70

Note: * One-way ANOVAs indicated significant (i.e., $p < .05$) main effects of the victim's response to apology on this measure. ⁺Marginally significant main effect.

Table 3. Bivariate Correlations among Dependent Measures in Experiment 2

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Appropriate	.69**	-.29*	.01	.30*	.31*	-.41**	.27*	-.32*	.19	-.48**	.39**	.52**	.06	.19	.34**	.29*
2. Satisfied		-.32**	-.00	.17	.25*	-.17	.03	-.27*	.18	-.29*	.37**	.47**	.31*	.24	.33**	.31*
3. Angry			-.36**	-.45**	-.45**	.39**	-.13	-.07	-.24	.24	-.29*	-.29*	-.28*	-.43**	-.30*	-.38**
4. Guilt				.48*	.51**	-.11	.02	-.04	.10	-.06	.28*	-.11	.37**	.44**	.22	.29*
5. Shame					.83**	-.27*	.40**	-.14	.17	-.46**	.29*	.21	.37**	.49**	.63**	.35**
6. Regret						-.14	.33**	-.05	.05	-.30*	.19	.27*	.36**	.47**	.61**	.36**
7. Tolerant- intolerant							-.06	-.12	-.30*	.24	-.42**	-.28*	-.03	-.15	-.15	-.09
8. Emotional- unemotional								-.11	.15	-.48**	.25*	.18	.12	.23	.38**	.24
9. Strong-weak									-.19	.50**	-.22	-.09	.03	-.05	-.14	-.03
10. Wise- foolish										-.33**	.50**	.07	.04	.26*	.05	.25*

11. Social- unsociable	-.35**	-.24	-.08	-.20	-.27*	-.29*
12. Mature- immature		.24	.16	.39*	.28*	.41**
13. Resolved			.06	.17	.32**	.18
14. Reparation				.39**	.36**	.31
15. Agreement					.57**	.82**
16. Future						.58**
17. Recommend						

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. None of the correlations would be statistically significant if Bonferroni corrections were applied to the alpha level.

Table 4. Experiment 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Measures by Victim's Response to Apology

Measure	No recognition		Acceptance	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Appropriate*	6.43	2.59	8.61	2.60
Satisfied*	6.22	2.85	7.94	3.42
Angry	3.50	2.39	3.08	2.66
Guilt	8.75	2.37	9.08	2.45
Shame [†]	8.12	2.96	9.26	2.01
Regret	8.65	2.44	9.35	1.79
Tolerant-intolerant*	3.22	1.33	2.50	1.52
Emotional-unemotional	4.77	1.24	4.78	1.32
Strong-weak	3.62	1.41	3.22	1.56
Wise-foolish	4.62	1.39	5.03	1.51
Social-unsociable*	3.53	1.46	2.92	1.27
Mature-immature*	5.29	1.18	5.88	1.31
Resolved*	6.31	2.24	8.23	2.69
Reparation	8.91	1.93	8.68	3.29
Agreement	9.47	1.82	9.32	2.20
Future	8.76	2.40	9.40	2.51
Recommend	9.15	1.77	9.24	2.39

Note: *Independent samples *t*-tests indicated significant effects of the victim's response to apology on this measure. [†]Marginally significant effect.