Apology and Reparation

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Intergroup Conflict: Bridging Social Psychology & Peace Perspectives
June 18 - 20, 2010 • University of Massachusetts, Amherst
intergroup conflict
{caused harm}

• illegitimacy of harm
• responsibility for harm
• power imbalance (material and moral)

apology & reparation
{redressed harm}

government representatives
• legal precedents: identity and material interests
• public opinion (re-election…)
• values & ideology

bystanders

intergroup peace
{beyond harm}

• humility & forgiveness
• renewed group identities
• power balance (material and moral)
focus of this talk

• perpetrator group’s responses...

• ...after an apology has been offered:
  - support for the apology
  - prejudice towards victim group
  - support for government policies re: victim group

→ simple illustration of the complexity involved...
perpetrator group’s support for apology

• some predict decreased support after apology (backlash)
  - threat to group’s moral identity
  - threat to group’s material interest

• others predict increased support after apology
  - upholding moral values & ideology
  - justifying actions of government (Kay, Jost, et al., 2007)
  - people value their own side’s offer in negotiations…
    (Cohen, 2003; Curhan, Neale, & Ross, 2004)
  - …in part to maintain psychological balance (Heider, 1958)

➔ empirical evidence?
study 1: background

• **Australian Stolen Generation (1910 → 1970)**
  - government policy to “civilize” biracial Indigenous children
  - 10 to 30% of Indigenous children (up to 50,000) forcibly placed in White foster homes or Christian boarding houses

• **Canadian Residential Schools (1800’s → 1996)**
  - government policy to “aggressively assimilate” native children
  - 150,000 Inuit, First Nation, and Métis children forcibly placed in Christian boarding schools

• **harm was done**
  - trauma of familial separation
  - trauma of cultural discontinuity (Chandler & Proulx, 2008)
  - in some cases, neglect and abuse in new homes / schools

→ 2008: federal apologies to both groups
study 1: results - polling data

% support for apology

Australia | Canada
---|---
before apology | after apology

* indicates significant difference
lingering question

â†’ how do we know that the increased support was due to the apology per se?

• respondents to pre-apology polls had no idea what the apology would look like

• experimental study with more control...
study 2: method

- 238 undergraduate students at urban Canadian university

- scenario:
  - Canadian Government complicit in doping scandal involving Olympic speed skaters
  - the Netherlands lost medals accordingly

- all participants read text for a Canadian Gov’t apology → manipulation: apology actually provided or not

- DV: positive evaluation of apology
study 2: results

pos eval of apology

not given
given

*
more lingering questions

- Studies 1 & 2 suggest that perpetrator groups are more open to intergroup peace after an apology is made.

- BUT other research has shown evidence of prejudice toward victim groups: increased dehumanization of outgroup when victimized by the ingroup (Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006)

  → efforts to defend ingroup’s identity and material interests

  → what is the response to the victim group when an apology has been made?

  → is this response affected by the way in which the apology frames / explains the conflict?
emotional responses to victim group

perpetrator groups may express prejudice towards victim groups with distinct emotions

• harm-doing can be framed in different ways, with emphasis placed on distinct explanations for the transgression

• appraisal theories (Scherer, Schorr, & Johnston, 2002): people’s interpretations of events can elicit distinct emotions

• contempt: victims are incompetent

• disgust: victims represent unpalatable values / character

• justification / excusing of harm-doing = victim blame, assertion of ingroup superiority

(Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2002)

anger: victim group poses obstacle to ingroup’s desired outcome
study 3: method

- study conducted 3 months after Australian federal apology to Stolen Generation
- 82 undergraduate students at urban Australian university
- all self-identified as non-Indigenous
- p’s read excerpts from apology speech by Prime Minister or Opposition Leader
  → manipulated explanation: racism or harsh conditions
- measures:
  - support for apology
  - emotions toward victim group: anger, disgust, contempt
  - support for three government policies: punitive, disengagement, infantalizing
study 3: materials

explanation of harm-doing I
Prime Minister Kevin Rudd — clear racism:

direct threat to ingroup identity & interests

“...Children were forcibly taken from their families; [and] this was the product of the deliberate, calculated policies of the state...For some in administrative authority, the forced extractions of children of so-called ‘mixed lineage’ were seen as part of a broader policy of dealing with the ‘problem of the Aboriginal population.’
“We cannot, from the comfort of the 21st century, begin to imagine what they overcame—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—to give us what we have and make us who we are. We do know, though, that language, disease, ignorance, good intentions, racial and cultural prejudices, and a vast geographical and technological chasm combined to deliver a harshness exceeded only by the land over which each sought to prevail.”

...there were harsh conditions for both groups to overcome.

IMPLICATION: the ingroup overcame hardships more effectively, suggesting superior values and character.
study 3: results - support for apology
study 3: results - felt emotion

![Bar chart showing felt emotion results]

- Racism and harsh conditions were compared for anger, contempt, and disgust.
- Asterisks indicate significant differences between conditions.
study 3: results - support for policies

justification manipulation
0 = racism

anger
-.34*

.29*

.64*

.07

.14

.24+

support for punitive policy

support for disengagement policy

support for infantilizing policy

disgust

.52*

.38*

.60*

.35*

contempt

.35*

.60*

.03

-.08

.55*

model fit: $\chi^2$ (3 d.f.) = 1.093, $p = .78$, CFI = .99, IFI = .96, GFI = .98, Std. RMR = .04, RMSEA = .05
so what do we know?

• mixed evidence for utility of apology on the road to peace:
  – Studies 1 & 2 suggest that an apology paves the way for perpetrator groups to acknowledge illegitimate harm
  – Study 3 indicates that the way the apology is framed can increase prejudice toward members of victim group → whether the group takes responsibility for the transgression or not

• possible explanations:
  – salient threats (e.g. in Australian apology speeches) more easily elicit prejudice?
  – abstract versus concrete responses to conflict?

• implications for efforts at redress after conflict...
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Intergroup peace {beyond harm} 
- legal precedents: identity and material interests 
- public opinion (re-election…)
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Bystanders 
- perpetrator vs. victim groups 
  - material interests of group 
  - identity of group 
  - values & ideology 
  - group & societal processes 

- government representatives 
  - legal precedents: identity and material interests 
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