

Psychology of Popular Media Culture

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Online First Publication, October 10, 2019. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000261>

CITATION

Nigro, G., Ross, E., Binns, T., & Kurtz, C. (2019, October 10). Apologies in the #MeToo Moment. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000261>

Apologies in the #MeToo Moment

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In 2 studies, we examined apologies for sexual misconduct. In Study 1, we coded 37 public apologies offered for sexual misconduct between October 2017 and May 2018 by male members of the Arts & Entertainment and Media industries, using a scheme adapted from the study by Slocum, Allan, and Allan (2011). In Study 2, 2 samples of male and female participants judged 4 apologies crafted for a transgression involving multiple victims, based on the cases coded in Study 1. Study 1 revealed that the public apologies contained many more elements with a focus on the accused's feelings and behavior (self-focus) than elements with a focus on the accuser's needs and feelings (self-other focus). Study 2 showed that apologies with a focus on the accuser's needs and feelings (self-other focus) were judged as more sincere, more acceptable, more likely to meet a victim's needs, and more likely to lead to closure than apologies with elements that focused on the accused's feelings and behavior. However, college-aged men did not follow this pattern, offering higher ratings for apologies with different emphases.

Public Policy Relevance Statement

Because apologies play a role in victim healing, and little is known about their role in cases of sexual misconduct, we focused on apologies in the wake of the #MeToo movement. One study analyzed 37 public apologies issued by men in the mainstream media; most of these apologies were more attentive to the feelings of the accused than the needs of the accuser. In the second study, when a male apologist focused less on his own feelings and more on his accuser's feelings and needs, participants, with the exception of college men, judged the apology as more sincere, more acceptable, more likely to meet a victim's needs, and more likely to lead to closure.

Keywords: apologies, sexual misconduct, focus

The #MeToo movement has brought sexual misconduct into public consciousness. The movement began in 2006 when civil rights activist Tarana Burke launched a campaign to raise awareness of sexual harassment and domestic violence against women and girls. It accelerated exponentially a little over a decade later when it became a hashtag on social media following the actor Alyssa Milano's disclosure of sexual misconduct by Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. Scores of women have spoken up publicly for the first time about their experiences as victims and survivors of sexual abuse.¹ According to legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon (2019), the movement may be effecting cultural changes that the law could not. Mainstream media, she argued, now reports on sexual misconduct as if it might have occurred, and that shift has fueled cultural and now legal changes.

The #MeToo movement has also brought forward public apologies, at least for some cases, and scrutiny of those apologies,

although not usually by the people who called out the misconduct. For example, Louis C.K.'s apology, issued publicly, was singled out for public commentary about its adequacy as well as for suggested edits to transform it into a genuine apology (Fessler, Merelli, & Zeidler, 2017). In this article, we first examined the public apologies offered by figures in the Arts & Entertainment and Media industries who have been accused of sexual misconduct. Then, we moved into a laboratory setting, where we generated apologies with different elements for a single case involving multiple victims that was based on a composite story crafted from the ones we examined in the first study. Taken together, our two studies demonstrated that apologies issued with a focus on the accused's feelings and behaviors, although common in the first study, did not move people to rate them as highly as apologies that took the accuser's feelings, needs, and behaviors into account.

Psychologists have examined apologies in the public sphere and in close relationships. Because both bodies of literature bear on the present study, we briefly review research from each.

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This research was supported in part by a Summer Research Apprenticeship grant from Bates College to Eleanor Ross and Georgia Nigro.

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¹ We followed the convention of authors in the psychology literature, who use this word in their research on apologies, but also used "accuser." The person accused was referred to as "the accused" or "the wrongdoer."

Apologies in the Public Sphere

Blatz, Schumann, and Ross (2009) began their examination of government apologies for historical injustices by deriving from the research literature a list of elements that political apologies should contain to be acceptable to the members of a victimized minority and a nonvictimized majority. Their 10-element list included the following: (a) remorse, (b) acceptance of responsibility, (c) admission of injustice/wrongdoing, (d) acknowledgment of harm, (e) forbearance, (f) offer of repair, (g) praise for minority group, (h) praise for the majority group, (i) praise for the present system, and (j) dissociation of injustice from the present system. After conducting a content analysis of a list of government apologies that included ones for the internment of Japanese Americans, the Tuskegee syphilis Study, and British role in the slave trade, the authors reviewed research showing that political apologies that contain most of these elements are favorably evaluated, especially by members of the nonvictimized majority. This study is just one of many in a rich tradition of study of government apologies.

Although the apologies examined in the next study were not public, the public dimension of these apologies is indisputable. Coming from a therapeutic jurisprudence perspective, Allan, Allan, Kaminer, and Stein (2006) looked at the association between apology and forgiveness in a sample of individuals who had experienced a gross human rights violation as defined by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. With data collected through questionnaires and structured interviews, Allan et al. (2006) reported that the two strongest predictors of forgiveness were gender, with men being more forgiving than women, and whether victims perceived wrongdoers to be truly sorry. The authors were uncertain what indicators led victims to conclude that wrongdoers were truly sorry, but they speculated that the gender difference may be related to the target of the violation. Men in their sample were often the target of the violation, so they had to forgive wrongdoers who had violated them, whereas women reported more violent wrongdoing against family members, so they had to forgive wrongdoers who had not violated them directly. The authors note that more research is needed to understand the dynamics of the forgiving process for women and men. Excuses, admissions of guilt, and apologies did not predict forgiveness, although the data did show a tendency for forgiveness to follow apologies.

Apologies in Close Relationships

Perceiving wrongdoers to be truly sorry probably matters as much or more in close relationships than in apologies with a public dimension. Psychologists look at apologies in close relationships from both the wrongdoers' and the victims' perspectives. Some examine what drives wrongdoers to withhold apologies or offer ineffective ones. Leunissen, Sedikides, and Wildschut (2017), for example, demonstrated in a series of studies using multiple methods that narcissists are unwilling to apologize for their interpersonal transgressions because they have little empathy for their victims and a lower level of guilt. In their study, interpersonal transgressions were scenarios involving unfair or unjust behavior toward a colleague, real-life autobiographical experiences, and a real-life transgression induced in a laboratory trust game. Schumann (2018) reviewed her own and other researchers' studies that elucidate the barriers to apologizing that wrongdoers experience. She illuminated three barriers: (a) a low level of concern for the

victim or the relationship, (b) a perceived threat to the wrongdoer's self-image that apologizing would occasion, and (c) pessimism about an apology's ability to elicit forgiveness. Schumann (2018) was hopeful that interventions based on these insights can be used in homes, classrooms, and workplaces where conflicts arise.

Other psychologists who study apologies in close relationships examine how a victim's personality and background contribute to the process of forgiveness. Shafa, Harinck, and Ellemers (2017), for example, used scenarios that involved workplace conflict to study this process; the scenarios involved a false accusation about misplaced documents, a failure to forward a worker's candidacy for a promotion, and the spreading of rumors that someone was a freeloader at work. The authors found that although an apology following a workplace conflict increased forgiveness in Turkey and the Netherlands, in Turkey, a culture that values honor, an apology judged to be not truly remorseful was considered insincere and less effective. Nudelman and Nadler (2017) used a scenario design to examine how belief in a just world figures in the relationship between apologies and forgiveness. Using scenarios involving failures to provide material or emotional support in times of need by close friends, relatives, or romantic partners, they found that people with a low belief in a just world are moved to forgive an interpersonal transgression after an apology, whereas people with a high belief in a just world do not need an apology to forgive.

Most germane to the present study is psychological research on the components of apologies. Reviewing a large body of research, Lewis, Parra, and Cohen (2015) identified five components: (a) acknowledgment of wrongdoing, (b) acceptance of responsibility, (c) expression of remorse, (d) offer of compensation, and (e) pledge not to commit the transgression again. These components resemble those identified by Blatz et al. (2009) in their study of government apologies, described earlier. Excluding the last four components of Blatz et al. (2009), which are not relevant in an interpersonal context, we see nearly complete overlap, with the exception that Blatz et al. (2009) included acknowledgment of the harm caused by the wrongdoing.

A slightly different model of apology components, developed by Slocum, Allan, and Allan (2011), includes the acknowledgment of harm. Following in-depth interviews with 23 people who had been wronged by an intimate partner, Slocum et al. (2011) proposed that apologies consist of three distinct components, each with two categories that reflect the wrongdoer's focus. The three components are affirmation, affect, and action. For affirmation, wrongdoers with a self-focus (i.e., a focus on their own needs) exhibit admission of responsibility for the wrongful behavior, whereas wrongdoers with a self-other focus (i.e., awareness of the needs of the wronged party) exhibit acknowledgment of the harm to victims. For affect, wrongdoers with a self-focus show regret and express distress over their wrongful behavior, whereas wrongdoers with a self-other focus show remorse by expressing their sorrow over the suffering of the victims. Finally, for action, wrongdoers with a self-focus offer restitution, that is, they offer to reverse tangible consequences related to the wrongdoing, whereas wrongdoers with a self-other focus offer reparation, that is, they address the needs of the wronged. The last difference is subtle. Slocum et al. (2011) argued that restitution retains a self-focus, in that wrongdoers are trying to regain social standing by paying their dues,

whereas reparation addresses both tangible and intangible consequences of the wrong.²

According to Slocum et al. (2011), their model identifies many of the same components as other models of apologies (Lazare, 2004; Tavuchis, 1991), although their nomenclature differs, and they have added the continuum from a self-focus to a self-other focus for each component. The latter feature, they argued, offers researchers a useful tool in the design of experiments about apologies. In a test of the model in the context of restorative and juvenile justice, Allan, Beesley, Attwood, and McKillop (2014) reported two experiments in which participants rated an apology with either a self-focus or a self-other focus after reading scenarios about transgressions by an adolescent boy involving property damage in one experiment and theft in another. The results of their second experiment provided clear evidence that participants perceived an apology with the three elements exemplifying a self-other focus as more sincere, and were more likely to accept it than a self-focused apology. Although their first experiment did not show the hypothesized effect, qualitative data suggested that participants thought the apology was coerced by police, a finding that may have altered their ratings in a direction at odds with their hypothesis.

Apologies for sexual misconduct may be a special case of apologies. Although sexual misconduct happens in cases of close relationships, it also occurs in cases of limited acquaintance and no previous relationship. Little to no research in psychology addresses apologies in sexual misconduct cases. A search of PsycINFO returned one study that commented on the role of public apologies in sexual harassment dispute resolution today compared with in earlier years (Morgan, 2016) and another that used mock jurors to examine the role played by Kobe Bryant's apology to a woman who accused him of sexual assault in the civil case against him (Boccaccini, Mundt, Clark, & John, 2008). Neither of these studies sheds light on the components of effective apologies in cases of sexual misconduct, although the Bryant apology can be scanned for components.

Study 1

The apologies offered in the #MeToo movement present a unique opportunity to examine the components of apologies rendered in public for behaviors that often, but not always, occurred in private. For this study, we used a slightly modified version of Slocum et al.'s (2011) model (described in the following text) to code the components of all the public apologies for sexual misconduct offered in the domain of Arts & Entertainment and Media between October 2017 and June 2018. By coding for the three components of admission, affect, and action in their self-focused or self-other focused form, we were able to discover if public apologies for sexual misconduct placed more emphasis on the accused (self-focus) or on the accuser (self-other focus). Although participants in Allan et al. (2014) judged apologies with a self-other focus as more sincere and more likely to win their acceptance than apologies with a self-focus, we speculated that the apologies in the #MeToo movement would exhibit greater self-focus than self-other focus. The public nature of the apologies may work against a full-throated admission of culpability that takes victims into account. The greater acceptance of rape myths by sex offenders (Johnson & Beech, 2017) and their lower victim empathy

(Harris, Rice, Quinsey, & Cormier, 2015) may also lead to apologies with more self-focus.

Method

Sample of coded apologies. Thirty-seven full-text apologies issued between October 2017 and June 2018 comprised the sample. The apologies were obtained by crossing a list of 219 names of people involved in the #MeToo movement published on the Vox website with apologies obtained through Google's search engine using the search terms apology, response, statement, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and #MeToo. Two of the five categories that Vox grouped names under were used: Arts & Entertainment and Media. All 37 apologies obtained in this way were issued by men. In all but one case, their accusers were women.

Coding strategy. Table 1 shows the codes we adopted from Slocum et al. (2011). Like Slocum et al. (2011), we coded apologies for the three components of affirmation, affect, and action, and within each component, for the wrongdoer's focus, which could be either a self-focus (coded elements of admission, regret, and restitution) or a self-other focus (coded elements of acknowledgment, remorse, and reparation). Our action component deviated from that of Slocum et al. (2011) in two slight ways. For the self-focused action of restitution, we included actions such as leaving work, which did not necessarily address the material loss of the accuser but may have helped the wrongdoer save his reputation. Similarly, for the self-other focused action of reparation, we included forbearance, that is, a promise for action that relates to the needs of the accuser, which Slocum et al. (2011) mentioned only as a feature of reparation. Thus, each apology could receive a check for up to six codes, depending on whether it contained self-focused and self-other focused elements for each of the three components. See Table 1 for examples of the six elements from the 37 apologies.

Coder reliability. The second two authors served as the main coders. They first worked together to agree on the coding strategy and coded a subset of the apologies to establish consistency. Each then coded all 37 apologies for the presence or absence of the six codes. Cohen's κ was computed to measure interrater agreement; it was .84.

Results

Table 2 shows the results for the 37 apologies. Ninety different elements were coded for the 37 apologies; 62 were self-focused, and 26 were self-other focused. For each component, there were

² One reviewer found the continuum from self to self-other focus a poor way to characterize the components of an apology. We agree that the language does not adequately express the way that elements at both ends of the continuum take the other, that is, the person receiving the apology, into account. For example, taking responsibility for a wrong, which Slocum et al. (2011) said is a self-focused form of admission, does signal that the accused is removing blame from the accuser. But, as Slocum et al. (2011) argued from their data, participants who had been wronged in a relationship wanted more than this admission of responsibility; they wanted acknowledgement that they were hurting deeply. So, although we understand the critique of the language used by Slocum et al. (2011), we believe that the authors have made a convincing case for the value of their model.

Table 1
Elements of Apologies

Apology focus	Affirmation	Affect	Action
Self-focused	Admission Admit responsibility for, and explain, the wrongful behavior e.g., "I take responsibility for my past," he said. "That is the reason I made the decision to tell the truth of my rape and its damaging aftermath." (A7)	Regret Verbalize that they are distressed by their wrongful behavior e.g., "I am sorry for ignoring the way in which my position, status, and power as a member of a band affected the way people viewed me or their approach to their interactions with me." (A17)	Restitution Reverse tangible consequences e.g., "I have spent my long and lucky career talking and saying anything I want. I will now step back and take a long time to listen." (A20)
Self-other	Acknowledgement Validate the consequences of the wrong and admit the harm done to recipients e.g., "The actions of my past have caused pain and harm to a number of people, and I want to say that I am absolutely sorry." (A17)	Remorse Verbalize and demonstrate their deep sorrow over the suffering experienced by recipients e.g., "To hear that I have caused pain is profoundly upsetting, as is the idea that I might have crossed a line with anyone who considered me a mentor." (A14)	Reparation Address the tangible and intangible needs of recipients by communicating to never do it again. e.g., "Going forward, my having come to terms with my past conduct will inform all my future interactions not only with women, but with all individuals." (A34)

Note. In the parentheses that follow each example are numbers corresponding to the apologies coded in Study 1. A = Apology.

many more elements that were self-focused as opposed to self-other focused. For affirmation, 30 apologies expressed admission that the person was responsible for the wrongful behavior, whereas only 16 acknowledged the harm to the accuser. For affect, 22 apologies reflected regret for the wrongful behavior, whereas eight expressed remorse over the suffering caused. For action, 10 apologies conveyed restitution, mainly by the wrongdoer leaving his place of employment, and two conveyed reparation in the sense of communicating a plan never to engage in the wrongdoing again.

Table 2 also shows that none of the 37 apologies had all six elements, and four of the apologies contained none of the six elements. For example, one apology that received no coded elements read mostly as a denial of the accusations, except for one line that could be read as an apology, which says in part, "If I've ever inadvertently treated . . . disrespectfully . . . , I'm truly sorry." Many of the apologies contained only a few coded elements, but the number of coded elements was unrelated to the length of the public apology. (Average length of the apologies was 221 words.) Apologies could be long even without coded elements because they addressed topics that did not count as elements of an apology or because they used explanatory language in the form of either excuses or justifications (Riordan, Marlin, & Kellogg, 1983), although sometimes it was hard to judge whether someone was offering an excuse or a justification. Notable examples of explanatory language were expressions of a lack of intention to harm, identification as a victim of sexual abuse, and perception of changing cultural norms.

Discussion

The #MeToo movement has produced a large number of public apologies, with the majority of those apologies in the Arts & Entertainment and Media sectors containing elements that focused on the wrongdoer rather than on the harm or suffering caused to others. When the accuser was considered in the apology, it was usually in acknowledgment of the harm caused to that person rather than in the affective or action-oriented components of the apology. Even though

acknowledgment of the harm caused was the most frequent self-other focused element expressed, apologizers were almost twice as likely to take responsibility for their behavior in the affirmation component as they were to acknowledge the harm.

In the next study, we extracted key features from the sample of apologies in the first study and crafted a single scenario with different apologies that we asked participants to judge along several dimensions. Based on the work on apology focus in restorative and juvenile justice (Allan et al., 2014), we asked participants to judge the sincerity and acceptability of the apologies, as well as the extent to which they met the accuser's needs. Because Allan et al. (2014) found that apology focus was not related to forgiveness, we chose instead to ask participants if the apologies afforded a sense of closure. Karp and Frank (2016) have used sense of closure in their work on restorative justice in institutions of higher education. In particular, they have used it as one measure of what student offenders learn from participating in restorative justice following a charge of wrongdoing on campus. We thought its extension to the study of outcomes for accusers who receive apologies was appropriate.

Study 2

Although Study 1 gave us insight into the elements of apologies that wrongdoers are wont to offer when sexual misconduct is alleged, it gave us no sense of the elements that would move accusers to judge an apology as sincere, to accept it, to feel that the accused was thinking of their needs, and to gain a sense of closure from it. These judgments were examined in our second study through an experimental design. Based on Allan et al.'s (2014) findings, we hypothesized that apologies with a self-other focus would receive higher ratings than apologies with a self-focus, apologies with elements of both kinds, and apologies that included explanatory elements.

Method

Participants. Two samples of participants took part in this study. One sample included 103 college students (51 women and

Table 2
Coding of the Apologies for the Six Elements

Apology number	Affirmation		Affect		Action	
	Admission	Acknowledge	Regret	Remorse	Restitution	Reparation
	SF	SO	SF	SO	SF	SO
A1	✓					
A2	✓				✓	
A3			✓	✓		
A4	✓		✓			
A5	✓				✓	
A6			✓			
A7	✓					
A8						
A9	✓	✓	✓		✓	
A10	✓					
A11	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
A12	✓		✓		✓	
A13			✓			
A14	✓		✓	✓		
A15	✓					
A16	✓	✓	✓	✓		
A17	✓	✓	✓		✓	
A18	✓	✓	✓		✓	
A19	✓		✓			
A20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
A21	✓	✓	✓	✓		
A22	✓					
A23	✓					
A24						
A25	✓		✓			
A26	✓	✓	✓			
A27						
A28	✓	✓	✓		✓	
A29	✓			✓		
A30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
A31	✓	✓				
A32						
A33	✓	✓	✓			
A34	✓	✓				✓
A35	✓	✓	✓		✓	
A36	✓	✓	✓			
A37	✓	✓	✓			

Note. SF = self-focused; SO = self-other; A = Apology.

52 men) who participated for course credit. Mean age of this sample was 18.9; 78% of these participants identified as White. They came from 17 states, the District of Columbia, and two foreign countries. A second sample included 74 Mechanical Turk (MTurk) workers (38 women and 36 men). Mean age of this sample was 37.1; 83% of this sample identified as White, and they came from 30 states, with the largest proportions from California and Texas. Participants were paid \$1.00.

Materials, procedure, and design. Drawing from the common features of the apologies in Study 1, we wrote a single scenario and four different apologies for Study 2. The vignette described a 64-year-old director of critically acclaimed movies and TV series who is accused of sexually harassing six women over an 11-year period. One woman identifies herself, and five remain anonymous. The behaviors that the women reported ranged from comments on their breasts and buttocks to cornering them and inviting them to his hotel room.

Four different versions of an apology from the director were generated. The first apology contained the three self-focused ele-

ments of admission, regret, and restitution; the second contained the three self-other elements of acknowledgment, remorse, and reparation; the third contained all six elements, that is, the three self-focused elements and the three self-other elements; and the fourth contained the three self-other elements and three explanatory elements. The explanatory elements were an expression of lack of intention, a mention of changing cultural norms, and an admission of previous status as a victim of sexual abuse. To ensure that every apology contained an equal number of propositions, even if it had only three distinct apology elements, the apologies with three elements repeated the elements using different language. In every apology, three sentences were followed by the short sentence, "Let me be clear." After that, three more sentences followed that expressed the same elements as the first three sentences for the self-focused and self-other focused apologies and expressed three new elements in the case of the apology with both kinds of elements and the apology with self-other plus explanatory elements. The four apologies were roughly equal in length: The self-focused apology had 188 words, the self-other apology had

187 words, the apology with both kinds of elements had 188 words, and the apology with added explanatory elements had 185 words. See Table 3 for the full text of the vignette and apologies.

Dependent variables included ratings of the sincerity of the apology, the acceptance of the apology, the extent to which the accused was thinking of the victim's needs, and the experience of a sense of closure on 7-point Likert scales, where 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *completely*. Participants were instructed to take the point of view of one of the accusers in making these ratings.

The procedure was approved by the Bates College Institutional Review Board. Before the start of the study, participants read an informed consent form in which they learned that they would be reading about sexual misconduct. Participants who thought that the material might be upsetting were invited to discontinue at this point. At the end of the study, participants were also provided information about contacting the investigators or sexual assault support services if participation proved unsettling. No one contacted us.

The materials were delivered to participants through the software survey platform Qualtrics (Provo, UT). Participants first

answered demographic questions about their age, residence, and racial/ethnic identity as well as a single question about whether they had ever been a victim of sexual misconduct. Next, participants read the scenario and then received one of the four apologies and completed the four ratings. A new page repeated the scenario with another one of the apologies and the four ratings. A third page repeated the scenario once more with the four ratings, and finally a fourth page did the same. Order of the apologies was counter-balanced with a balanced Latin square.

Results

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for the four dependent variables across the four apologies in the college sample, and Table 5 shows the same for the MTurk sample. To check for order effects, a 4×4 (Order $\times$ Apology) mixed factorial analysis of variance was run for each dependent variable in the two samples. The order variable showed no main effects and only two interactions with apology: When college participants rated the

Table 3
Vignette and Apologies

Vignette	Tim Reynolds, a 64-year-old well-known director of critically acclaimed movies and TV series, has been accused by six women, five who wished to remain anonymous (aged 21–34), and Ann Miller (aged 32), of a range of sexual harassment acts in the workplace, reportedly over the past 11 years. The women have reported being groped, receiving lewd comments on their bodies both on-set and through emails, and feeling “uncomfortable” due to Reynolds’ behavior. Several women reported that Reynolds approached them regularly on the set, commenting on their breasts and buttocks. They say he tried to corner them by standing very close. One woman reported that she was invited to his hotel room, despite several attempts to reject both kisses and dates. He has recently responded to these statements.
Apology with a self-focus	I have come to the realization that I have treated the women I work with disrespectfully. I take full responsibility for my inappropriate behavior and the way in which I have conducted myself on the job. I wish I did not conduct myself so poorly, and I am so embarrassed by the whole situation. I will be stepping down from my position in order to allow myself time for self-reflection. I now realize the mistakes I have made and realize that I need to take others’ feelings into account when engaging with women in the workplace. Let me be clear. My actions were wrong and are not the way an employer should conduct themselves. Looking back, the interactions I had with these six women were extremely unprofessional. Once again, I am sorry for the way I behaved. I wish I could go back in time and completely change my actions, but unfortunately, that is not the way the world works. I hope that my time off proves to be productive as I try to change myself into a better boss and man. I am finally ready to listen.
Apology with a self-other focus	As a result of my inappropriate behavior, I have caused these six women a great deal of pain and anguish. My actions were unsuitable for the workplace, creating a toxic environment for the women I worked with. I cannot apologize enough for all the trouble I have caused. The fact that I have affected these women so negatively makes me feel terrible. In order to fix the harm I have caused, I am more than willing to pay for any counseling these women may wish to have. I just hope I can help in whatever way possible so as to take away some of their pain. Let me be clear. My behavior has affected these women’s lives in a way I can never change. I wish I could go back and fix the damage I have caused. I am deeply sorry for the way in which I have made these women feel and for any suffering I caused them. I will try and fix the problems I have caused. I will pay for counseling and also make a donation to whatever charities these women wish.
Apology with both kinds of elements	It has come to my attention that the interactions or words I have had with these six women were inappropriate. My behavior caused these women a great deal of discomfort in the workplace. I truly wish I could go back in time and change my behavior toward all of these women, as I am extremely embarrassed by my actions. Let me be clear. I am not going to make any excuses for my actions, as the only thing that matters is apologizing for the negative effects I have had on these women’s lives. I feel awful that my inappropriate behavior caused the pain that these women are feeling. To address my issues, I will be taking time off of work to reflect on my past mistakes. During this time, I will be working to use my past mistakes to gain some perspective and become a better person. I will start by paying for the therapy sessions of the women I have harmed. In addition, I will be making donations to the charities of their choosing in order to try to ease some of the suffering I have caused.
Apology with added explanatory elements	It has come to my attention that my actions have resulted in these six women feeling violated and disrespected in the workplace. My unprofessional behavior caused the unwanted feelings these women experienced. For my behavior, I wanted to say that I am truly sorry that I have caused these women to feel so negatively when they were just doing their job. I feel terrible about my actions and the effects they have had on others’ lives. In order to take away some of the pain, I will donate to charities each of the women chooses and pay for any therapy sessions for the women I have hurt. Let me be clear. When I was growing up, the way men and women interacted was much more flirtatious. I never intended for my actions to come across as anything other than harmless. I thought that the feelings I was pursuing were mutual, but I now realize that I was wrong. Years ago, I was also a victim of sexual assault and hate to think that I have caused the same pain I experienced when I was younger.

Table 4
Mean Ratings for Four Dependent Variables for Four Apologies: College Sample

Dependent variable	Apology			
	Self-focus <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Self-other focus <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Both <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Self-other + Explanatory <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Sincerity				
Women	4.47 (1.60)	4.65 (1.43)	4.45 (1.60)	4.61 (1.76)
Men	4.85 (1.14)	4.35 (1.33)	4.67 (1.37)	5.50 (1.95)
Acceptance				
Women	3.94 (1.63)	4.14 (1.47)	4.06 (1.56)	3.24 (1.56)
Men	4.23 (1.35)	3.96 (1.58)	4.52 (1.42)	3.73 (1.64)
Needs met				
Women	3.53 (1.71)	4.73 (1.39)	4.12 (1.84)	3.53 (1.86)
Men	3.69 (1.39)	4.15 (1.66)	4.69 (1.41)	4.29 (1.98)
Closure				
Women	3.76 (1.75)	3.96 (1.41)	3.76 (1.69)	2.78 (1.30)
Men	3.69 (1.35)	3.87 (1.44)	4.10 (1.39)	3.77 (1.59)

apology with added explanatory elements first, they rated it high for acceptance ($p < .02$), and when they got the apology with self-other first, they rated it fairly low for closure ($p < .02$). No other order effects were significant.

For the college sample, the main effect of apology was significant for each dependent variable: for sincerity, $F(3, 101) = 3.07$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$; for acceptance, $F(3, 101) = 9.56$, $p = .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$; for needs met, $F(3, 101) = 8.51$, $p = .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$; and for closure, $F(3, 101) = 6.31$, $p = .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. For three of these dependent variables, however, the main effect was qualified by a Significant Apology $\times$ Gender interaction: for sincerity, $F(3, 101) = 3.07$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$; for needs met, $F(3, 101) = 4.60$, $p = .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$; and for closure, $F(3, 101) = 4.34$, $p = .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. As Table 3 shows, women always gave the highest endorsement to the apology with self-other elements, whereas men preferred the apology with both self-focus and self-other focus elements for three of the four ratings. For the sincerity rating, men showed a preference for the apology with self-other plus explanatory elements.

For the MTurk sample, the main effect of apology was significant for each dependent variable: for sincerity, $F(3, 72) = 4.61$, $p = .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$; for acceptance, $F(3, 72) = 4.38$, $p = .00$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$; for needs met, $F(3, 72) = 2.66$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$; and for closure, $F(3, 72) = 3.96$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. No other effects were

significant. As Table 4 indicates, the self-other apology received the highest ratings for all the dependent variables except for sincerity, where participants gave their highest ratings to the apology with self-other plus explanatory elements.

A percentage of participants in each sample reported being a victim of sexual misconduct. To see how victimization affected the data, we conducted t tests, comparing the ratings of victims to nonvictims. In the college sample, 21 participants reported that they were victims. When their ratings were compared with those of nonvictims, results indicated that victims gave lower ratings than nonvictims for all ratings of the self-focused apology and the apology with both self-focused and self-other focused elements. All differences were significant ($p < .05$) or marginally significant ($p < .10$). In the MTurk sample, 39 participants reported that they were victims, but their ratings did not differ from those of the nonvictims.

Discussion

In an experimental setting, judgments of apologies depended in part on whether a participant was in college or not. College women judged apologies with a self-other focus to be better compared with apologies with a self-focus, apologies with both self and self-other elements, and apologies that contained self-other ele-

Table 5
Mean Ratings for Four Dependent Variables for Four Apologies: Mechanical Turk Sample

Dependent variable	Apology			
	Self-focus <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Self-other focus <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Both <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Self-other + Explanatory <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Sincerity				
Women	4.21 (1.70)	4.47 (1.87)	4.24 (1.81)	5.11 (2.54)
Men	4.50 (1.56)	4.56 (1.48)	4.44 (1.70)	4.97 (2.37)
Acceptance				
Women	4.13 (1.70)	4.47 (1.98)	4.13 (1.88)	3.95 (2.24)
Men	4.36 (1.78)	4.56 (1.63)	4.39 (1.73)	3.61 (1.74)
Needs met				
Women	3.82 (2.08)	4.29 (1.98)	4.12 (1.95)	3.97 (2.47)
Men	3.61 (1.76)	4.36 (1.82)	4.14 (1.88)	3.92 (2.08)
Closure				
Women	4.03 (1.78)	4.26 (1.84)	4.00 (2.00)	3.55 (2.24)
Men	3.67 (1.79)	4.36 (1.62)	4.08 (1.93)	3.58 (1.83)

ments along with explanatory ones. College men showed a preference for apologies that contained both self-focused and self-other focused elements, except in the case of sincerity, where they preferred the apology with self-other and explanatory elements. Like college women, the sample of MTurk workers showed a preference for apologies with a self-other focus, except for sincerity, when they preferred the apology that combined a self-other focus with explanatory elements. Women and men in this sample did not differ in their ratings. Thus, the sincerity of the apology, the willingness to accept it, the judgment that the accuser's needs were met, and the sense of closure derived from the apology all fell short when an apology contained only the self-focused elements of admission, regret, and restitution. When an apology instead contained the self-other elements of acknowledgment, remorse, and reparation, it was more acceptable on all dimensions to the participants in the study. Participants in the college sample who were victims of sexual misconduct added results that further point to the inadequacy of apologies with self-focused elements: They rated apologies that contained self-focused elements, even in combination with self-other elements, lower on all dimensions than apologies without these elements.

The gender difference in the college sample merits further investigation. The college men were, on an average, 20 years younger than the MTurk workers, so their preference for apologies that include both the accuser's and the accused's perspectives may be a developmental phenomenon. As college men navigate the terrain of sexual relationships, their relative inexperience may lead them to empathize with both the accuser and the accused, whereas slightly older men may have developed a better understanding of sexual harm. Although many of the research studies introduced earlier included male and female participants, only the Allan et al. (2006) study tested for an effect of gender. Their finding that men were more likely to forgive a human rights violation than women, seems, on the face of it, unrelated to our finding, but perhaps it is not. A willingness to forgive may spring from a willingness to take the perspective of both the wrongdoer and the wronged. Women victimized by sexual misconduct may find that dual perspective insufficiently attentive to the harms caused to them, which may include physical, psychological, legal, and economic harms. That college participants who were victimized found apologies with a strong focus on the accused's feelings especially objectionable lends credence to this possibility.

Summary and Concluding Discussion

In two studies, apologies for sexual misconduct received scrutiny. In Study 1, the public apologies of 37 men were coded for whether the three components of affirmation, affect, and action were present or absent in the apologies in one or both of two forms: with a self-focus or a self-other focus. Apologies with the self-focused elements of admission, regret, and restitution predominated. In Study 2, two samples of participants rated four apologies for a single instance of sexual misconduct. Apologies with the self-other focused elements of acknowledgment, remorse, and reparation were rated as more sincere, more likely to be accepted, more likely to meet the needs of the victim, and more likely to lead to closure for the victim than apologies with self-focused elements, both kinds of elements, or self-other plus explanatory elements.

Taken together, our two studies demonstrate the usefulness of the Slocum et al. (2011) model for capturing the intentions of offenders who offer public apologies for sexual misconduct and for assessing the acceptability of apologies for sexual misconduct to women who are possible victims. Although the two studies differed in method, with one involving a content analysis of public apologies and the other an experimental design with a made-up scenario and apologies, they nevertheless converged on the importance of a focus on the victim in formulating an effective apology. Although Slocum et al. (2011) conceptualized focus as a continuum that ranges from wrongdoers' focus on their own needs (self-focus) to an awareness of the needs of the wronged party in addition to a focus on their own needs (self-other focus), our studies suggested that apologies sometimes contain elements that typify a self-focus along with elements that typify a self-other focus. So, for example, in Study 1, for the affirmation component, 11 of the apologies contained self-focused as well as self-other elements. Study 2 showed that college men found apologies with both kinds of elements preferable to other apologies. But women, especially those of college age who identified as victims, did not find apologies with both kinds of elements acceptable.

Our studies represent a beginning; there is still much to learn about apologies in cases of sexual misconduct. Although Slocum et al.'s (2011) model provided insight into the elements of a good apology in cases of sexual misconduct, it did not specify whether some elements were more critical than others. Is it critical that a wrongdoer acknowledge the harm (which constitutes remorse, according to this model)? In Study 1, there were eight apologies that included a clear statement that the wrongdoer understood the harm he had done. A different analytical approach, such as regression, would be helpful in addressing this question of whether some elements are more critical than others.

The public nature of the apologies may have led to the inclusion of elements that diminished ratings of the apologies' quality. In Study 1, 12 apologies included partial (and in some cases, full) denials. For example, one of the apologies read, "Some of the allegations that have been made against me are not true" (A9). Another element that may have come from the public nature of the apologies was the declaration of respect for women, which appeared in five of the apologies. It was beyond the scope of this research to compare public apologies for sexual misconduct to private ones, but such a comparison would be helpful in establishing the conditions that lead to greater healing.

Wrongdoers' and victims' personalities likely have a role to play in offering and accepting apologies (Leunissen et al., 2017; Nudelman & Nadler, 2017; Schumann, 2018). Given the intimate nature of sexual misconduct, it is difficult to extrapolate from previous research on personality factors in apologies. This difficulty extends to other issues as well. Although other researchers have reported a pronounced tendency for people to accept what the researchers considered imperfect apologies (Allan et al., 2014), the participants in Study 2 just crossed the midpoint in the rating scales for sincerity, acceptance, meeting of their needs, and closure. In other words, all our apologies seem to have been fairly imperfect. Perhaps people are reluctant to rate an apology highly when they know there were other victims, much as women seemed reluctant to forgive human rights violations when their family members were victims (Allan et al., 2006). Perhaps, too, people do not expect apologies to fully meet the needs of victims or accord

them a sense of closure in cases of sexual assault. That these ratings were even less likely to reach the midpoint in the ratings scales than sincerity and acceptance is consistent with this possibility.

Apologies will never play a huge role in responses to sexual and physical violence (SPV), but they may have a small part in reimagining coordinated community responses that center victim voice (Koss, White, & Lopez, 2017). Koss and her colleagues (2017) discussed the expansion of judicial options to include nonadversarial ones. They offered restorative justice as “a promising victim-focused avenue for SPV cases as an alternative to outcome-focused strategies (diversion, plea agreements, and/or specialty courts and dockets), which have mixed or negative reviews from victims” (p. 1027). An important feature of restorative justice, apologies may have a role to play in new policies and practices for addressing sexual harm.

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Received September 17, 2018

Revision received August 23, 2019

Accepted September 10, 2019 ■