

The Impact of Culture on Relationship Repair in Negotiation

by

Sylvie Wiseman

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### **Author's Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

Negotiation is an emotionally charged process, in which relationship rupture can occur. While past research has focused on predictors of relationship rupture in negotiation, there has been a dearth of research focusing on effective relationship restoration behaviour following a rupture to the relationship. When relationship rupture occurs, relationship restoration is imperative for successful negotiation outcomes, however, cultural variations in communication can create barriers for effective restoration. This research examined how culture influences the effectiveness of two types of relationship repair strategies - direct and third-party apologies. We proposed that cultural differences in apology preferences may be due to variations in context dependence, a communication norm which guides the degree to which individuals attend to or rely on contextual cues in communication. We hypothesized that an apology recipient's cultural background (Caucasian North American vs. Chinese) would moderate the relationship between type of apology and restoration, such that restoration would be most effective when the type of apology used to restore a relationship aligns with culturally-congruent context dependence norms (low for Caucasians vs. high for East Asians). Results from our study indicate partial support of our prediction, as Caucasian North Americans perceived culturally-congruent, direct apologies as more effective for restoring ruptured negotiator relationships compared to culturally-incongruent, third-party apologies.

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## **Introduction**

Negotiation is a communication process, in which two or more parties with some shared and conflicting interests, communicate in order to come up with a mutual agreement (Weingart & Olekalns, 2004). At its core, negotiation is a basic form of social interaction that can be used in both personal and professional settings on a continuous basis (Patton, 2005; Greenhalgh & Chapman, 1998). Successful negotiations have the power to amicably reconcile disputes and create greater opportunities for all parties involved (Raiffa, 1982). However, negotiations can be fraught with emotionally charged and intense exchanges because the very nature of negotiation involves highlighting and working out differences between parties who often hold conflicting views and interests (Adler, Rosen, & Silverstein, 1998).

Given the potential for conflict in a negotiation, often words may be exchanged that can hurt one or more parties and rupture the relationship among negotiators. Relationship rupture can produce negative consequences for negotiating parties and the negotiation at hand (Ren & Gray, 2009). Ruptures hinder the working negotiator relationship, with negotiators less likely to reach agreement and create joint gain following rupture (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; White, Tynan, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004).

Primarily, past research has focused on predictors of relationship rupture and its implications, attempting to clarify the processes and implications of ruptured negotiator relationships (Oetzel, Meares, Myers, & Lara, 2003; Dirks, Lewicki, & Zaheer, 2009). Although this research has provided valuable insight for understanding damaged relationships, only recently have researchers begun to examine how best to restore relationships following rupture (Ren & Gray, 2009; Dirks et al., 2009). Relationship restoration, defined as actions among parties which return the relationship to a positive state, is imperative for negotiators given the



interdependent and continuous nature of negotiations where strong working relationships are needed to achieve favourable outcomes (Dirks et al., 2009; Ren & Gray, 2009; Waldron & Kassing, 2010; Greenhalgh & Chapman, 1998; White et al., 2004).

Understanding relationship restoration in a negotiation context is further complicated by the many cultural factors which influence the repair process (Ren & Gray, 2009). With an increasingly globalized world, negotiating with people of different cultural backgrounds is occurring more frequently than ever before (Elahee, Kirby, & Nasif, 2002). Research suggests that people may approach communication in negotiations differently depending on their culture, such that individuals from different cultures may use or prefer different communication strategies to restore ruptured negotiator relationships (Drake, 1995; Ren & Gray, 2009; Adair & Brett, 2004).

Therefore, understanding *how* culture guide relationship repair preferences may be important for determining the effectiveness of various restoration strategies. This research focuses on the effectiveness of different types of apologies (direct vs. third-party), which serve as important social tools for resolving conflict, inspiring forgiveness, and repairing relationships (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Ren & Gray, 2009). In addition, relationship restoration will be examined from the victim perspective (i.e., person who was negatively impacted by the offender) as restoration success depends primarily on a victim's satisfaction with an offender's restorative actions (Ren & Gray, 2009).

### **Relationship Rupture**

Relationship rupture is characterized as a violation during a negotiation interaction which causes the positive states of a relationship to disappear and negative states to arise (Druckman & Olekalns, 2013; Dirks et al., 2009). According to Ren and Gray (2009), relationships are

governed by a set of rules and social order which help individuals establish interaction expectations and navigate relationships effectively (Goffman, 1967). Individuals hold expectations that their important needs will be met and upheld within a negotiation interaction; however, when one party violates another party's fundamental needs, thus violating relationship expectations, rupture can ensue (Cropanzano, Goldman, & Folger, 2005; Schutz, 1958).

Ren and Gray (2009) present two fundamental needs that when violated, serve as important triggers of relationship conflict. One such need that can be violated is maintaining one's sense of identity. Individuals adopt identities to define who they are, with identities being used to shape individuals' values, beliefs, and expectations about the world (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Albert & Whetten, 1985). Identities can be threatened when boundaries that preserve identities are challenged within an interaction (Ren & Gray, 2009). For example, in a negotiation, one party may make attributions about their counterpart's identity that conflicts with the counterpart's own assessment (e.g., other party states counterpart lacks skillset required for the negotiation, but counterpart believes they are competent). This interaction may jeopardize the criticized individual's identity, causing them to feel disrespected, and can often trigger relationship rupture (Baron, 1988; Ren & Gray, 2009). Additionally, Ren and Gray propose that violations of an individual's sense of control may also lead to rupture. Individuals maintain a sense of control through their ability to influence their desired goals, interaction procedures, and outcomes. Yet, when one party impedes the other party from attaining goals, following procedures, or achieving certain outcomes that they feel they are entitled to, the impeded party may perceive these actions as unfairly violating relationship expectations, which can push the relationship into a negative state (Cropanzano et al., 2005; Schutz, 1958). For instance, within an arbitration context, if a party loses an arbitration case and they attribute this loss to unfair

arbitration procedures, relationship rupture with the arbitrator is more likely to ensue because the faulty procedures prevent the losing party from achieving desired goals and outcomes (Ren & Gray, 2009).

When need violations occur, several interrelated factors can be damaged, including the psychological (e.g., how one feels about the other party), social (e.g., how one perceives their own standing, the norms, or conventions within the relationship), and structural (e.g., how one feels about the formal interaction structure) aspects of a relationship, with each of these factors having important implications for the viability of the relationship (Dirks et al., 2009).

Many researchers cite *trust* as an important psychological factor that can become damaged when need violations are committed (see Dirks et al., 2009; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998). Trust, the psychological state comprising one's willingness to be vulnerable to the actions or intentions of another party, is essential to the negotiator relationship because it guides how a party chooses to interact with and interpret a counterpart's intentions (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Trust can break down between negotiators when the trustor shows vulnerability to the trustee (i.e., trustor shares information), but then perceives the trustee as exploiting the vulnerability (i.e., trustee reacts poorly to the information) (Mayer et al., 1995; Gunia, Brett, Nandkeolyar, & Damdar, 2011). The exploitative actions provide negative information about the trustee which can be used by the trustor to make negative inferences about the other party's intentions (Dirks et al., 2009). This reduction in trust can have negative consequences for the negotiator relationship because victims become less willing to interact and hold a relationship with distrustful counterparts (Lewicki et al., 1998; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996).

*Negative Emotions*, another psychological factor, may also be experienced following a needs violation. Specifically, the violating behaviour may lead the victim to experience negative

emotions such as anger and frustration directed towards the offender (Dirks et al., 2009; Shapiro, 2002). Again, negative emotions have important implications for the negotiator relationship, with negative emotions having the potential to further reduce trust and to be used as grounds to terminate the relationship all together (Dirks et al., 2009).

As noted earlier, Ren and Gray (2009) state that rupture occurs when social factors like relationship expectations are violated. Violations call into question the relative standing of the parties and the norms which govern the relationship, leading to the emergence of a *relationship disequilibrium* (Ren & Gray, 2009; Dirks et al., 2009). This volatile state produces uncertainty for all parties, who can no longer use the established norms to guide interaction behaviour and the relationship can suffer (Ren & Gray, 2009).

Finally, need violations trigger the breakdown of structures in place that uphold positive interactions, resulting in a shift from positive exchanges (e.g., cooperation) to *negative exchanges* (e.g., no cooperation) (Dirks et al., 2009; Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, & Murnighan, 2002). Once again, negative exchanges create a tumultuous environment for negotiators who will have difficulty continuing the relationship and reaching agreement (Dirks et al., 2009).

A decrease in trust, an increase in negative emotions, a disruption to the social order, and a breakdown in exchange, create barriers for the negotiator relationship, with these four need violation outcomes contributing towards negotiating parties' perceived interpersonal incompatibility and relationship rupture (Dirks et al., 2009; Jehn, 1995). In addition to the negative repercussions outlined above, damaged relationships can produce several other harmful consequences. For instance, the psychological impact of relationship conflict, an operationalization of the relationship rupture construct, includes heightened anxiety, psychological strain, reduced listening and information processing abilities, all of which

negatively impact a negotiator's ability to effectively communicate with a counterpart (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). In addition, ruptures hinder negotiator working relationships and jeopardize the potential success of negotiations as ruptures make negotiators less likely to reach agreement or create joint gain (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; White et al., 2004). Given that ruptures endanger the viability of current and future negotiations, negotiators must restore relationships, but how best to restore relationships remains an important question among researchers.

### **Relationship Restoration**

To repair ruptured relationships, negotiators must take part in relationship restoration, which occurs when activities by one or both parties substantively return the relationship to a positive state (Dirks et al., 2009; Ren & Gray, 2009). This focus on relationship repair for negotiators is important for several reasons. First, negotiations consist of interdependent relationships where all parties must be willing to share information and cooperate to achieve favourable results (Greenhalgh & Chapman, 1998; Waldron & Kassing, 2010). Second, negotiations are often continuous processes where parties continue to negotiate with the same counterpart numerous times (Greenhalgh & Chapman, 1998). Finally, negotiator relationships are often non-voluntary, with negotiators having little control over their choice of counterpart (Waldron & Kassing, 2010). Thus, given the interdependent, continuous, and non-voluntary nature of negotiations, it is in the best interest of negotiators to repair relationships to move stalled negotiations forward and to achieve favourable results (Greenhalgh & Chapman, 1998).

As noted earlier, Dirks et al. (2009) outline that violations can damage several interrelated factors, including trust, the emotional state, the social order, and positive exchanges. Effective relationship restoration involves targeting each of the factors that were damaged post-violation, with the restoration process involving repairing trust, reducing negative emotions, re-

establishing the social order, and rebuilding structures to promote positive exchanges (Dirks et al., 2009; Ren & Gray, 2009).

To repair trust, the commitment of both parties is essential. The offender must engage in a series of steps to rebuild trust with their counterpart, who must be willing to accept the offender's actions (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). The offender must first recognize that the violation eroded trust and admit that their actions played a role in destroying trust (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996). They must also provide a new narrative to offset the victim's negative inferences resulting from the violation (Lewicki & Weithoff, 2000). Specifically, the offender must reshape the victim's negative attribution which can be done through the offender showing that the violation was not a reflection of their true nature, the offender experiencing redemption, and/or the offender taking responsibility for their actions (Dirks et al., 2009; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996).

As with trust, reducing negative emotions and re-establishing the social order must also be targeted in relationship repair. Violations call into question the governing norms of the relationship and produce an unstable social state, but having the offender re-affirm broken norms offers one avenue to reduce negative emotions and re-establish order (Goffman, 1967). Specifically, the reinstatement of norms occurs through social rituals, such as accounts, apologies, penance, etc. (Ren & Gray, 2009). Rituals help to resolve disputes and re-establish relationship expectations, and have been shown to be particularly useful for decreasing negative emotions and returning the relationship to a positive state (Dirks et al., 2009; Ren & Gray, 2009).

Finally, structures must be re-built to foster greater positive exchanges and to prevent the occurrence of future violations (Dirks et al., 2009). Here, the context in which ruptured relationships are situated must be altered to ensure effective repair. For example, "hostage posting", the idea of the offender self-sanctioning post-rupture, is one method that could be used

to make it difficult for the offender to commit future violations (Nakayachi & Watabe, 2005). Alternatively, “legalistic remedies” (e.g., procedures, policies, guidelines, etc.), increase the trustworthiness of future behaviour and allow for more positive exchanges to resume (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). Overall, the structural perspective signals to the victim that structures have been created to protect the current and future relationship (Dirks et al., 2009; Ren & Gray, 2009).

Relationship restoration involves various processes, which have been associated with fixing different aspects of a relationship. However, different processes may be related and indirectly impact different facets of a relationship. For instance, trust repair may also be used to reduce negative emotions and restore positive exchange; likewise, re-establishing norms may also contribute to repairing trust (Dirks et al., 2009). Whether all factors that were damaged post-violation need to be repaired to restore the relationship remains debated in the literature. On the one hand, the factors of trust, emotion, social order, and exchange are separate constructs derived from diverse literatures (Dirks et al., 2009). Nevertheless, the disrepair of one factor may negatively affect the long-term sustainability of the relationship. For example, reducing negative emotions in the short-term may be ineffective if lack of trust remains because the absence of trust may cause the negative emotions to resurface later on (Tomlinson & Mayer, 2009).

### **Relationship Restoration Mechanism: Apology**

Across the various repair processes, *apologies* have been used to resolve conflict, inspire forgiveness, and repair relationships (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010; Ren & Gray, 2009). Apologies, defined as statements that acknowledge both responsibility and regret of violation on the part of the offender, serve as useful social tools that allow victims to make sense of offenders’ actions and manage the state of relationship uncertainty resulting from the violation (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004; Basford, Offermann, & Behrend, 2014). Empirical evidence suggests

that apologies tend to be effective mechanisms to repair relationships. Studies have found that delivering apologies can reconcile professional relationships and victims experience reduced negative emotions and better impressions of offenders when they receive apologies (Tomlinson, Dineen, & Lewicki, 2004; Ohbuchi, Kameda, & Agarie, 1989).

According to Lewicki and Polin (2012), effective apologies must signal the following, including: (1) the experience of redemption and regret, (2) an acknowledgment of responsibility, (3) the intention to avoid similar violations in the future, and (4) a request for forgiveness. Components (1) and (2) are essential for rebuilding trust with the victim and reducing negative emotions because these components provide the victim with a new narrative to offset the victim's negative inferences about the offender (Dirks et al., 2009). In addition, component (3) is especially useful for resuming positive exchange, re-establishing norms, and restoring the social order because the acknowledgment of avoiding future violations signals to the victim that the offender intends to uphold relationship expectations and positive communication throughout current and future interactions (Dirks et al., 2009; Ren & Gray, 2009). Finally, component (4) transforms the apology into a joint communication process, where the victim must accept the offender's apology to complete the relationship repair procedure (Lewicki, Polin, & Lount Jr., 2016). In essence, the act of an apology can be viewed as "social ritual" which is used by the offender to restore the relative standing of the parties involved (Goffman, 1967).

Although advice on giving effective apologies can be found in everything from self-help books to distinguished research articles, apology preferences can differ among individuals (Frantz & Bennis, 2005). Specifically, apology recipients may differ in terms of how they would like to receive an apology, while apology givers may differ in terms of how they choose to deliver one (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). In fact, apologies can be delivered in various forms,



including *directly* or through a *third-party*. In a direct apology, the offender apologizes directly to the victim, whereas in a third-party apology, the offender asks a neutral third-party to apologize to the victim on their behalf. An individual's inclination towards a direct or third-party apology may depend on cultural preferences, as culture prescribes and proscribes communication norms which shape appropriate relationship restoration behaviour (Drake, 1995; Ren & Gray, 2009). Thus, negotiators with various cultural background may prefer apologies that align with their own cultural communication norms (Ren & Gray, 2009; Adair & Brett, 2004).

### **Culture, Norms, and Communication**

Culture is defined as a society's characteristic way of perceiving its social environment, with culture being shared, adaptive, and transmitted across generations (Triandis, 1972; 1994). It manifests in group members' shared beliefs, values, attitudes, norms, and typical behavioural patterns, as well as in the social institutions which propagate cultural ideology through rewarding and sanctioning social interactions that fit with or go against the culture (Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, & Janssens, 1995; Brett, 2001). When members of different cultural groups are socialized, they learn various interaction patterns, which are based on their own culture's unique set of principles (Gudykunst et al., 1996). Variations in norms offer one potential avenue to account for why members of diverse cultures differ in their interactions, social cognitions, and behavioural choices (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Leung & Morris, 2015).

Norms describe and explain behaviour, and include rules for commonly accepted behaviour and rules forbidding unacceptable conduct (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Two perspectives have been used to explain norm development within societies (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). The societal-value perspective dictates that norms are arbitrary rules for behaviour that are adopted because they are valued by the dominant culture, whereas the functional perspective proposes

that norms help group members to effectively accomplish group goals and thwart behaviours which threaten survival (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Overall, norms provide evidence for what is effective and adaptive action within one's environment, while providing group members with mental shortcuts on how to behave (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Chiu, Gelfand, Yamagishi, Shteynberg, & Wan, 2010). Norms serve as a proxy for the influence of culture on behaviour because norms represent typical cultural responses to specific situations (Leung & Morris, 2015).

While the direct impact of norms on behaviour has been established in the literature, this effect becomes strengthened when norms are salient (Leung & Morris, 2015; Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991). Leung and Morris propose that norms become salient under conditions of social evaluations (e.g., risk of being judged by others), ambiguity (e.g., an unfamiliar situation with limited knowledge on how to behave), cue specificity (e.g., formal environments cue polite conduct), behavioural tasks with social implications (e.g., how one should interact effectively), and cultural tightness (e.g., the degree to which the compliance of norms is expected within society). In each case, these situational variables strengthen the role of norms in transmitting the influence of culture on individual behaviour (Leung & Morris, 2015).

As stated previously, negotiation is a communication process fraught with potential relationship complications because interdependent parties must work together to align differences and resolve conflict (Adair & Brett, 2004; Ren & Gray, 2009). When relationship ruptures occur, communication, the process by which people exchange information, plays a key role in determining how each party chooses to enact and respond to relationship repair (Adair & Brett, 2004; Ren & Gray, 2009). Communication norms (i.e., communication patterns which are considered appropriate), may govern the relationship repair process, as they can influence how one uses and interprets communication behaviour during restoration (Ren & Gray, 2009;

Gudykunst et al., 1996). Moreover, cultural differences in apology repair preferences may depend on communication norms because members of diverse cultural groups rely on distinct communication norms to influence their interactions (Adair & Brett, 2004).

One communication norm that could explain cultural differences in relationship restoration is Hall's (1976) conceptualization of low and high context communication. Hall proposes that communication can be understood through the way in which individuals attend to or rely on contextual factors to convey meaning during interactions. According to Hall, cultures fall along a low-high context continuum that runs from low to high reliance on contextual factors. Low context communication involves direct, unambiguous messages in which meaning is explicit and contained in the transmitted message, whereas high context communication involves indirect, implicit messages in which meaning is embedded within the context (Hall, 1976). While members of a culture may use both low and high context communication, one type is likely to prevail, such as low context communication within Western cultures (e.g., Canada) and high context communication within non-Western cultures (e.g., China) (Hall, 1976). Although Hall's (1976) seminal work on communication context has been adopted by many (e.g., Gudykunst et al., 1996), his work lacks an explanation for what comprises context and how to empirically measure an individual's context dependency systematically (Adair, Buchan, Chen, & Liu, 2016). Given this, Adair et al. (2016) identified the components of context and developed an empirical tool to distinguish among individuals' reliance on contextual cues in communication.

*Context dependence* is a type of communication norm that measures the degree to which an individual relies on and attends to contextual cues in communication to convey and understand meaning (Adair et al., 2016). The construct can be captured by four components –

message, relationship, spatial, and temporal context. The first component, message context, encompasses “cues that convey implied and inferred meaning accompanying a verbal message in communication” (Adair et al., 2016, p. 200). Individuals who rely less on message cues communicate in direct, explicit codes, whereas those relying on message cues use the indirect, implicit meaning embedded within messages to understand information (Adair et al., 2016). The second component, relationship context, includes “cues relating to the meaning associated with the nature of a relationship between two interlocutors” (Adair et al., 2016, p. 201). For example, individuals reliant on relationship cues may use status or relationship history to guide communication behaviour and interpretation; in addition, individuals who are highly dependent on the relationship context may use communication not only as a means to transmit information, but also as a way to preserve the relationship by employing non-confrontational face-saving measures (e.g., engaging in self- and other-face maintenance) (Adair et al., 2016; Ting-Toomey, 2012). The third component, spatial context, encompasses cues within one’s physical environment (e.g., physical distance between interlocutors) that carry meaning within social interactions (Adair et al., 2016). Finally, the temporal context captures the way in which individuals attend to or move through time in communication (Adair et al., 2016). For instance, whether one views time as polychromic (e.g., time is fluid) or monochromic (e.g., time is serial) influences an individual’s interactions such as their perceptions of lateness (Adair et al., 2016).

As discussed in Leung and Morris (2015), norms become salient under different conditions, one of which is through the presence of situational cues. Although Adair et al. (2016) propose that a four-component structure embodies the domain of context dependence, we believe that the relationship restoration process may activate relationship and message context dependence norms because the process primarily depends on relationship information

(relationship component) and communication (message component) to restore a relationship (Ren & Gray, 2009; Dirks et al., 2009). For instance, ruptures highlight the damaged relationship status (i.e., victims may question continuing the relationship), which in turn may activate appropriate relationship context dependence norms that can be used to fix the relationship (Ren & Gray, 2009). In addition, restoration is a communication process, in which verbal expressions like an apology are used to repair the relationship (Dirks et al., 2009). Given the verbal nature of restoration, communication norms like message context dependency may become salient and impact restoration. In both cases, message and relationship context dependence norms may serve as important indicators for how individuals prefer to communicate relationship repair efforts.

While spatial and temporal cues may also be part of the repair process, they play a less significant role (Ren & Gray, 2009; Dirks et al., 2009). For example, the spatial distance between parties during an apology may impact apology interpretation, but its impact should be less influential than the content of the apology (message component) and the relationship status among parties (relationship component), which both hold greater direct associations with the restoration process (Ren & Gray, 2009; Dirks et al., 2009). Therefore, because restoration makes message and relationship norms more salient, only these components will be further discussed. In addition, both components will be examined separately because previous research suggests that context dependence consists of distinct, independent components (Adair et al., 2016).

To summarize, people lower in message context dependency value direct, unambiguous messages and will use the explicit content contained within a message to convey and infer meaning; in contrast, individuals higher in message context dependency value indirect, implicit communication and will use meaning embedded within a message to facilitate understanding (Adair et al., 2016). In addition, individuals with lower relationship context dependency value

direct facework, while those higher in relationship context dependency value more indirect facework tactics (Adair et al., 2016; Ren & Gray, 2009). *Facework* refers to communication strategies used to uphold *face*, the self-image we wish to convey during interactions (Goffman, 1967; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). Context dependence plays a role in determining facework strategy preferences, such that low relationship context dependent individuals prefer direct facework, which involves straightforward and candid facework strategies; in contrast, high context dependent people prefer indirect facework, which consists of roundabout facework discourse that provides individuals with a non-confrontational method to protect and promote relationships (Merkin, 2006; Adair et al., 2016).

### **Context Dependence by Culture**

Similar to Hall's (1976) observations that low context communication prevails within Western cultures and high context communication is more common within non-Western cultures, cultural variations exist for context dependence (Adair et al., 2016). Research suggests that individuals from Western cultures such as Canada are less reliant and attentive to message and relationship cues (i.e., lower in context dependence) and individuals from East Asian cultures such as China are more reliant and attentive to these cues (i.e., higher in context dependence) (Adair et al., 2016). As mentioned previously, norms help society members determine appropriate and effective behaviour within their social environments and they may differ depending on what is valued by society (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Ren & Gray, 2009; Chiu et al., 2010).

Western cultures value self-expression, where expressing inner thoughts, preferences, and feelings allow people from these cultures to realize their individuality (Kim & Sherman, 2007; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, communication norms which promote individual, self-

expression should flourish within Western cultures. Low message and relationship context dependence norms should be more prevalent among Westerners because they allow these individuals to use direct communication and facework to express how they feel. On the other hand, social harmony and relatedness are embedded within East Asian cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Here, communication serves not only as a tool to transmit information, but also as a social instrument to uphold relationships (Cohen, 1997). The indirect, non-confrontational communication and facework associated with high message and relationship context dependence norms allow East Asians to avoid direct confrontation and preserve relationships. In effect, a heavier reliance on contextual cues allows East Asians to minimize explicit communication which could potentially offend counterparts. Although within-culture variability is possible (e.g., some East Asians may be lower on context dependence), on average, we expect individuals to hold culturally-congruent context dependence norms (Adair et al., 2016; Ren & Gray, 2009)

**Hypothesis 1a:** On average, East Asians will be significantly higher on message context dependence compared to Westerners.

**Hypothesis 1b:** On average, East Asians will be significantly higher on relationship context dependence compared to Westerners.

### **Cultural Apology Preferences and Relationship Restoration**

Variations in context dependence communication norms may explain cultural preferences for either direct or third-party apologies. Specifically, when a type of apology used to repair a relationship aligns with culturally-congruent communication norms, an individual may perceive an apology as being more effective compared to when the type of apology does not align with cultural norms. Research suggests that *apology efficacy* may facilitate relationship restoration

following rupture, thus serving as an important mediator for the indirect effect of type of apology on relationship restoration (Tomlinson et al., 2004).

As predicted in *hypothesis 1a and 1b*, culture reinforces an individual's place on the low-high context dependence continuum, such that message and relationship context dependence norms should be significantly higher for East Asians compared to Westerners. A direct apology would be considered culturally-normative for Western individuals because their low message and relationship context dependence norms encourage direct, explicit messaging to convey repentance and straightforward facework tactics to repair a relationship. In contrast, a third-party apology would be viewed as culturally-normative for East Asians because their higher message and relationship context dependence norms support more indirect, implicit communication. Here, the East Asian individual can use message context to infer the subtle meaning behind a third-party apology (i.e., the offender feels remorseful but uses a third-party apology because they are uncomfortable and embarrassed to directly confront their victim). Third-party apologies also align with East Asian, high relationship context dependence norms such as indirect facework because they allow offenders to avoid shame and embarrassment by not directly apologizing (Leung, 1997). An East Asian person would understand that a third-party apology offers an indirect, non-confrontational method to repair the relationship (i.e., offender shame is avoided, which is important to both the offender and the victim) (Adair et al., 2016).

In contrast, individuals may perceive apologies as being less effective when a clash exists between cultural norms and the type of apology. Specifically, third-party apologies might be considered counter-normative for low context dependent, Western individuals, whereas direct apologies could be viewed as counter-normative for high context dependent, East Asians. Because their low context dependence norms favour direct communication and facework,



Westerners would have difficulty inferring the subtle meaning and relationship nuances embedded within third-party apologies (i.e., they are used to allow offenders to avoid shame and embarrassment). Instead, third-party apologies could be interpreted as a cop out, which could lead Westerners to become frustrated with the offender for not directly apologizing.

Moreover, direct apologies may be perceived as too straightforward and candid for East Asians, given that their high context dependence norms support indirect communication and facework. However, because East Asians rely to a greater extent on contextual cues in communication compared to Western individuals, they may also have greater flexibility in adjusting their communication styles within different settings (Adair et al., 2016). In fact, research has shown that high context, contextually attuned Japanese can effectively adjust their communication to a low context counterpart's style in negotiations (Adair, Okumura, & Brett, 2001). Thus, although East Asians should view third-party apologies as more culturally-normative compared to direct apologies, third-party apologies should only be slightly better received by East Asians because their communication flexibility may allow them to appreciate both third-party and direct apologies (Figure 1).

In conclusion, the type of apology used to repair a relationship has important implications for relationship restoration because culture prescribes and proscribes norms which govern apology preferences (Ren & Gray, 2009). As described above, one reason why culture may affect apology preferences is because of context dependence communication norms. Low context dependent, Western individuals should perceive culturally-normative, direct apologies as more effective compared to culturally-deviant, third-party apologies. Moreover, high context dependent, East Asians should perceive third-party apologies as aligning with cultural norms (although communication flexibility may allow them to still comprehend and appreciate direct

apologies). Therefore, while East Asians should view third-party apologies as more effective compared to less normative direct apologies, this effect should only be marginal.

We expect that culture will moderate both directly and indirectly the relationship between type of apology and restoration. Significant results from *hypothesis 1* (cultural differences in context dependence) will be used to make interpretations about the moderating role of culture in our model. In the direct relationship (type of apology → relationship restoration), apology recipients should have more successful relationship restoration when they receive a culturally-normative apology. However, research suggests that apology efficacy may facilitate relationship restoration and serve as an important mediator (Tomlinson et al., 2004). Therefore, culture may also moderate the type of apology and apology efficacy relationship, such that culturally-normative apologies should be perceived by apology recipients as more effective, which in turn, should result in more successful relationship restoration for apology recipients (Figure 2).

**Hypothesis 2:** The relationship between type of apology and relationship restoration will be mediated by apology efficacy. In addition, culture will moderate the type of apology-restoration relationship and type of apology-apology efficacy relationship.

Overall, Westerners will have greater restoration success when they receive a culturally-normative direct apology as compared to a counter-normative third-party apology. This relationship will be reversed for East Asians.

## Method

### Participants

One hundred and thirty-three (49% Female) North Americans and 144 (58% Female) Chinese working professionals were recruited and compensated through MTurk and SoJump, online research platforms based out of the United States and China. To qualify, participants had

to identify as Caucasian or Chinese, live in North America (restricted to Canada and the United States) or China, and be native English or Mandarin speakers. Mandarin-speaking Chinese participants were chosen over East Asian North Americans because language, in this case Mandarin, serves as an important cultural prime (Lee, Oyserman, & Bond, 2010). All material for SoJump participants was translated into Mandarin using the back-translation method (Brislin, 1986). Participants who failed the attention checks ( $n = 8$ ) were excluded from the analyses.

### **Design and Procedure**

The study consisted of a 2 (type of apology: direct apology or third-party apology) x 2 (context dependence: high or low) x 2 (culture: Caucasian North American or Chinese) between-participant mixed design. Participants were randomly assigned to the *direct* ( $n = 139$ ; Caucasian North American sample = 67; Chinese sample = 72) or *third-party* ( $n = 138$ ; Caucasian North American sample = 66; Chinese sample = 72) apology conditions. *Context dependence* was a measured variable and *culture* was self-reported. In both conditions, participants completed an *apology efficacy* scale as well as *relationship restoration* scales.

Participants read and responded to an online negotiation vignette, in which the apology manipulation was embedded. In the vignette, participants assumed the role of a manager who was asked to negotiate the price of a product with a counterpart. After receiving relevant background information, participants read about the negotiation interaction. The initial phase of the negotiation progresses well (e.g., concessions are made on both sides), but the negotiation becomes endangered when the counterpart reacts poorly to one of the participant's pricing offers. In return, the counterpart delivers a rude, take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum counter-offer to the participant, which is intended to rupture the negotiator relationship. An ultimatum offer was selected because it has been shown to increase the likelihood of feelings of unfairness and anger

among offer recipients, as well as weaken rapport (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996; Barry, Fulmer, & Van Kleef, 2004) (see Appendix A for the negotiation vignette and take-it-or-leave-it offer).

To confirm that the offer induced relationship rupture, a manipulation check was conducted to measure participants' reactions towards the counterpart and the offer. After the manipulation check, the vignette explicitly informs participants that they are offended by the counterpart's offer and are unsure whether to continue the negotiation with the counterpart. Next, participants receive an apology phone call either from their counterpart or a representative from their counterpart's organization who is apologizing on the counterpart's behalf. After reading a text version of the phone call, participants are asked to complete a questionnaire, which is intended to gauge participant's own assessment of whether the relationship was effectively repaired following the receipt of the apology. Finally, participants completed a context dependence measure, followed by a mood boosting task and demographic questions.

## **Measures**

**Relationship rupture manipulation check.** Participants were asked to rate their feelings after receiving a rude, take-it-or-leave-it offer from their counterpart. The seven-point bipolar rating scale featured four pairs of oppositional adjectives (e.g., pleased and offended) (Al-Hindawe, 1996) (Appendix B). Higher ratings (e.g., more offended) were indicative of a more effective counterpart offense and relationship rupture.

**Type of apology (ToA).** Participants either received a direct apology from Sam, their counterpart, or a third-party apology where Alex, a representative from Sam's company, delivered the apology on behalf of Sam (Appendix C). Both apologies used similar content except personal pronouns were changed to reflect the appropriate apology delivery person ("I" in the direct apology vs. "Sam" in the third-party apology condition). The apologies reflected

Lewicki and Polin's (2012) guidelines for effective apologies, including the offender's: (1) experience of redemption and regret (e.g., "I am (vs. we are) deeply sorry"), (2) acknowledgment of responsibility (e.g., "I take (vs. Sam take's) personal responsibility..."), (3) intention to avoid similar violations in the future (e.g., "I (vs. Sam) can promise you that it will not happen again"), and (4) request for forgiveness (e.g., "I hope you can forgive me (vs. Sam)").

**Context dependence (CD).** Thirty-six items were selected from the context dependence message and relationship subscales, which measure the extent to which individuals attend to or rely on message and relationship cues in communication (Adair et al., 2016; Adair, Buchan, & Chen, 2016) (Appendix D). The measure included 36 items which could theoretically explain differences in relationship restoration communication between low and high context dependent people. Because the domain of context dependence comprises distinct, independent components, both message and relationship context dependence were treated as separate scales.

**Message context dependence (MCD).** The message subscale consisted of 18 items ( $\alpha = .86$ ) on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Sample items include, "I avoid clear-cut expressions of my feelings when I communicate with others" and "I am able to recognize others' subtle and indirect messages".

**Relationship context dependence (RCD).** The relationship subscale contained 18 items ( $\alpha = .88$ ) on a 7-point Likert scale. Items include, "I will avoid telling the truth if it protects the social harmony" and "I avoid making other lose face in communication".

**Apology efficacy (AE).** A three-item apology efficacy scale (Lewicki et al., 2016) and a four-item apology sincerity scale (Basford et al., 2014) were used to measure perceptions of the effectiveness, trustworthiness, and credibility of the apology. Participants responded to statements such as "the phone call offered a sincere apology for the incident" on a 5-point Likert

scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An exploratory factor analysis revealed that all seven items loaded on one factor, which explained 61.76% of the variance with factor loadings from .518 to .735. Therefore, the two scales were combined to form the new apology efficacy variable ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

**Relationship restoration.** Restoration was operationalized using two established repair measures, as well as one developed by the author (see below). Each measure was chosen because it evaluated the four factors of effective relationship restoration (Dirks et al., 2009; Ren & Gray, 2009).

**Subjective value inventory (SVI).** Subjective value inventory measures a range of subjective, social psychological outcomes in negotiation (Curhan, Elfenbein, & Xu, 2006). In the current study, the four-item relationship SVI subscale was used to gauge relationship outcomes. Items on the subscale, which range from 1 (not at all) to 7 (perfectly), measure trust repair (e.g., “to what degree do you trust Sam, your counterpart?”), re-establishment of the social order (e.g., “how satisfied are you with your relationship with Sam, your counterpart?”), and a return to positive exchanges (e.g., “to what degree do you think there is a good foundation for a future relationship with Sam, your counterpart?”). The scale was found to be highly reliable ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

**Forgiveness.** An eight-item measure of forgiving ( $\alpha = .88$ ) taken from two existing forgiveness scales evaluated the degree to which individuals experienced positive feelings, as opposed to negative feelings, towards the offending party after receiving an apology (McCullough, Worthington Jr, & Rachal, 1997; McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). The first seven items ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (e.g., “I wish Sam, my counterpart, well), while the eighth item, “I have forgiven Sam, my counterpart, for what happened”, ranged from 1 (not at all forgiven) to 7 (completely forgiven). Items measured a return to positive

emotions (e.g., “I feel favourably about Sam, my counterpart”) and positive exchanges (e.g., “I want us to have a positive relationship again”).

**Relationship restoration outcome.** An additional four-item restoration measure ( $\alpha = .78$ ) was developed because the other measures lacked a direct, explicit assessment of the method used to restore the relationship and whether the participant would be willing to continue negotiations with the same counterpart. Relationship restoration outcome measured the current and future relationship (e.g., “I believe the relationship was effectively repaired” and “I would be willing to negotiate with Sam, my counterpart, again”). Participants were also asked for their satisfaction with the apology tactic (e.g., “I was satisfied with the approach used to restore the relationship”).

**Demographic variables.** Participants indicated their gender, birth country, current country of residence, mother’s birth country, father’s birth country, culture, race, native tongue, and responded to basic questions about the language spoken in their home.

## Results

Correlations and descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1. As expected, MCD and RCD were highly but not perfectly correlated ( $r = .76, p < .01$ ). Thus, each scale was treated separately in the analyses. Apology efficacy also had a positive relationship with the three restoration measures, such that as apology efficacy scores increased, so too did SVI, forgiveness, and relationship restoration outcome scores. For culture, higher MCD ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ) and RCD ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ) scores were associated with Chinese participants (coded as 1). In addition, the direct (coded as 0) as opposed to the third-party apology condition tended to co-occur with significantly higher apology efficacy ( $r = -.18, p < .01$ ), SVI ( $r = -.43, p < .01$ ), forgiveness ( $r = -.32, p < .01$ ), and relationship restoration outcome ( $r = -.25, p < .01$ ) scores.

To further explore these relationships, we split the data by Culture (Table 2a and 2b). Within both cultures, the association between apology efficacy and the restoration scales followed a similar pattern to Table 1 ( $p < .05$ ). For Caucasians, no significant correlations emerged between the CD scales and the restoration measures ( $p > .05$ ). However, for Chinese participants, MCD scores were positively associated with all three restoration measures ( $p < .05$ ), while only RCD and forgiveness ( $p < .05$ ) were positively correlated.

### **Manipulation Check**

On average, participants felt surprised, offended, annoyed, and suspicious after receiving an ultimatum offer from their counterpart ( $M = 5.46$  on a 1-7 scale;  $SD = 1.07$ ), which confirms that the rupture manipulation was successful.

### **Hypothesis Testing**

**Context Dependence by Culture.** Hypothesis 1a and 1b predicted that Chinese participants would score significantly higher on MCD and RCD compared to Caucasians. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare CD scores between cultures.

For MCD, Levene's test for equality of variances was violated,  $F(1, 275) = 22.67, p < .01$ . Owing to this violation, a  $t$  statistic not assuming homogeneous variances was computed. The results of the t-test indicate that there was a significant difference between groups, with Chinese scoring higher on MCD ( $M = 5.21, SD = 0.59$ ) compared to Caucasians ( $M = 4.82, SD = 0.90$ ),  $t(225.86) = 4.32, SE = -0.58, p < .01, d = 0.52$ , supporting H1a.

For RCD, Levene's test was once again violated,  $F(1, 275) = 19.31, p < .01$  and a t-test not assuming homogenous variance was used. The test revealed that there was a significant difference between groups, with Chinese scoring higher on RCD ( $M = 5.48, SD = 0.55$ )



compared to Caucasians ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ),  $t(213.35) = 6.49$ ,  $SE = 0.92$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = 0.79$ , providing support for H1b.

A similar procedure was carried out for MCD and RCD subscales (Appendix D contains subscales). As shown in Table 3, Chinese scores were significantly higher than Caucasian scores for most subscales ( $p < .05$ ) except for three (MC Implicit, MC Recog. Emo., and RC Misc) ( $p > .05$ ). Although these three subscales were insignificant, Chinese scores were always higher or equal to Caucasian scores, suggesting that Chinese are still higher in context dependence compared to Caucasians. Because we found support for our hypothesized cultural differences in context dependence, these results were used to make speculative interpretations about culture's moderating role in the type of apology and relationship restoration relationship.

**Cultural Apology Preferences and Restoration.** A moderated serial mediation model was proposed for H2 (Figure 2). The model was computed using PROCESS Model 8, a statistical mediation and moderation software package (Hayes, 2017; Figure 3 shows a visual of Model 8). The moderated serial mediation was modeled by entering type of apology as the predictor (X), culture as the moderator (W), apology efficacy as the mediator (M1), and one of the three restoration variables (SVI, forgiveness, relationship outcome) as the outcome (Y). In total, three models were created (results appear in Tables 4-6).

Table 4a (SVI as Y) shows that type of apology was a significant predictor of apology efficacy,  $\beta = -.32$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p = .014$ , 95% CI =  $-.58, -.07$  and apology efficacy was a significant predictor of SVI,  $\beta = .74$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI =  $.58, .89$ . Furthermore, type of apology ( $\beta = -1.24$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI =  $-1.58, -.89$ ) and culture ( $\beta = .56$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p = .0013$ , 95% CI =  $.22, .90$ ) significantly predicted SVI. Culture did not moderate the relationship between type of apology and apology efficacy ( $p > .05$ ); however, culture significantly moderated the

relationship between type of apology and SVI ( $\beta = .63$ ,  $SE = .24$ ,  $p = .0091$ , 95% CI = .16, 1.10), such that direct apologies significantly predicted SVI scores for both Caucasian ( $\beta = -1.24$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = -1.58, -.89) and Chinese ( $\beta = -.61$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = -.94, -.28) cultural groups (see Table 4b). The predictors accounted for 43% of the variance found in SVI ( $R^2 = .434$ ). Table 4b also shows that apology efficacy significantly mediated the relationship between type of apology and SVI for Caucasians ( $\beta = -.24$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI = -.45, -.05), supporting a partial moderated mediation. This suggests that only Caucasians view direct apologies as effective, which leads to greater restoration (i.e., SVI). The full model was unsupported ( $p > .05$ ), as the bootstrapped confidence interval around the index of moderated mediation contained zero (CI = -.18, .35).

Figure 4 shows the Culture x Type of Apology on SVI interaction. Although we would have expected Caucasians to have higher SVI scores compared to Chinese in the direct apology condition, simple effects analyses revealed that when both cultural groups received direct apologies, they did not significantly differ in SVI,  $F(1, 272) = 2.19$ ,  $p = .140$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .008$ . However, as expected, when both cultures received a third-party apology, Chinese ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ), had significantly higher SVI scores compared to Caucasians ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ),  $F(1, 272) = 27.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .091$ . In addition, Caucasians had significantly higher SVI scores in the direct ( $M = 4.14$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ) compared to the third-party apology condition ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ),  $F(1, 272) = 57.13$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .174$ ) and Chinese SVI scores were significantly higher when they received a direct ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) compared to a third-party apology ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ),  $F(1, 272) = 16.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .057$ . Overall, these findings suggest that both Caucasians and Chinese may prefer direct over third-party apologies in relationship restoration.

Table 5a (forgiveness as Y) shows numerous significant predictors, including type of apology  $\rightarrow$  apology efficacy,  $\beta = -.32$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p = .014$ , 95% CI =  $-.58, -.07$ , and apology efficacy  $\rightarrow$  forgiveness,  $\beta = .58$ ,  $SE = .04$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI =  $.49, .66$ ). Type of apology ( $\beta = -.40$ ,  $SE = .09$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI =  $-.58, -.21$ ), but not culture ( $p > .05$ ) significantly predicted forgiveness. Additionally, culture did not moderate the relationship between type of apology and apology efficacy ( $p > .05$ ) or the relationship between type of apology and forgiveness ( $p > .05$ ). Approximately 47% of the variance in forgiveness was accounted for by the predictors ( $R^2 = .473$ ). Although the moderated mediation model was unsupported in Table 5b ( $p > .05$ ), a partial moderated mediation occurred for Caucasians ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI =  $-.33, -.04$ ). Again, this implies that Caucasians perceive direct apologies as effective repair mechanisms, resulting in greater restoration (i.e., forgiveness). In fact, simple effects analyses revealed significant forgiveness differences in the direct apology condition,  $F(1, 272) = 9.28$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .033$ , supporting our prediction that Caucasians ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = .65$ ) compared to Chinese ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) are more forgiving after receiving a direct apology. However, although we would have expected Chinese (vs. Caucasian) to be more forgiving after receiving a third-party apology, the two cultures did not differ in forgiveness,  $F(1, 272) = .62$ ,  $p = .433$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .002$ . Moreover, Caucasians had significantly higher forgiveness scores in the direct ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = .65$ ) compared to the third-party apology condition ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = .74$ ),  $F(1, 272) = 25.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .085$ . Chinese followed a similar pattern ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = .71$  in direct condition;  $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = .63$  in third-party condition;  $F(1, 272) = 8.57$ ,  $p = .004$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .031$ ). These results suggest that both cultures may prefer direct to third-party apologies in relationship repair.

Table 6a also shows that type of apology predicted apology efficacy,  $\beta = -.32$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p = .014$ , 95% CI =  $-.58, -.07$  and apology efficacy predicted relationship outcome,  $\beta = .58$ ,  $SE =$

.05,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = .48, .67). In addition, type of apology ( $\beta = -.38$ , SE = .11,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI = -.59, -.17) and culture ( $\beta = -.25$ , SE = .11,  $p = .021$ , 95% CI = -.45, -.04), significantly predicted relationship outcome. Culture did not moderate the relationship between type of apology and apology efficacy ( $p > .05$ ), however, culture marginally moderated the relationship between type of apology and forgiveness ( $\beta = .28$ , SE = .15,  $p = .072$ , 95% CI = -.01, .56), such that direct apologies predicted forgiveness scores for Caucasians ( $\beta = -.38$ , SE = .11,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = -.59, -.17) but not for Chinese ( $p > .05$ ) (Table 12b). Around 40% of the variance in relationship outcome was accounted for by the predictors ( $R^2 = .404$ ). In Table 6b, the full model was unsupported ( $p > .05$ ), but a partial moderated mediation was found for Caucasians ( $\beta = -.19$ , SE = .08,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI = -.34, -.04), supporting a Caucasian preference for direct apologies in relationship restoration (i.e., relationship outcome scores). As expected, simple effects analyses revealed that participants in the direct apology condition differed in relationship outcome,  $F(1, 272) = 13.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .048$ , such that Caucasians ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) had significantly higher scores compared to Chinese ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = .81$ ). However, for participants who received third-party apologies, outcome scores did not differ between the two cultures,  $F(1, 272) = .82$ ,  $p = .365$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .003$ . In addition, Caucasians had significantly higher relationship outcome scores in the direct ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) compared to the third-party apology condition ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = .78$ ),  $F(1, 272) = 20.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .069$ , but no statistically significant differences were found in scores for Chinese who received either the direct or third-party apology condition,  $F(1, 272) = 3.32$ ,  $p = .069$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .012$ ). These results imply that Caucasians may prefer direct apologies for restoration, but Chinese do not always have a preference.

## Discussion

In this study, we intended to examine how culture impacts relationship repair in negotiation. We argued that an apology's effectiveness and its impact on relationship restoration depends on an apology recipient's culture, such that restoration will be most effective when the type of apology used to restore a relationship aligns with cultural norms (e.g., context dependence norms). First, we showed that cultural differences exist in context dependency, such that Chinese are higher in message and relationship context dependence norms compared to Caucasians. Given that we found our expected cultural differences in context dependence, these results were used to make speculative interpretations about the impact of culture in the restoration process (Leung & Morris, 2015). Our findings suggest that culture affects the relationship between type of apology and restoration, such that Caucasians have better restoration after receiving culturally-normative direct apologies. We found that compared to Caucasians who received third-party apologies and Chinese who received direct apologies, Caucasians often viewed direct apologies as more effective, which led to greater restoration. However, apology preferences and restoration success varied for Chinese (i.e., they had higher SVI and forgiveness scores in the direct apology condition, but we found no effect for relationship outcome scores). These findings contribute to the cross-cultural negotiation literature by showcasing that culturally-normative direct apologies may positively influence an apology's effectiveness and its impact on relationship restoration for Caucasians.

### **Culture, Type of Apology, and Restoration**

Most noteworthy are our findings that direct apologies are viewed as more effective and lead to better restoration for Caucasian apology recipients. These results imply that culture may affect the restoration process because it prescribes and proscribes norms which dictate apology

preferences and restoration outcomes among Caucasians (Ren & Gray, 2009). Specifically, these results suggest that Caucasians fare better when culturally-normative direct apologies are used to restore a relationship (i.e., for Caucasians, direct apologies align with culturally-congruent low context dependence norms). Unfortunately, culture played a weaker role in restoration for our Chinese sample. Although Chinese sometimes viewed third-party apologies as more effective and had greater restoration compared to Caucasians in the third-party apology condition, results for Chinese were mixed. For instance, direct apologies lead to slightly higher SVI and forgiveness scores for Chinese. However, apology effectiveness did not explain the relationship between type of apology and restoration for our Chinese sample, as neither direct or third-party apologies were viewed as more effective. This suggests that direct apologies may play an equal or greater role in relationship restoration among Chinese. These results can be interpreted in at least two different ways.

First, current cross-cultural research provides some support for this finding, as East Asians may not always prefer indirect and ambiguous modes of communication in all contexts (Sugimoto, 1997). In fact, one study showed that direct apologies may be one communicative behaviour that is important for both Westerners and East Asians - in Western cultures, actions matter and direct apologies serve as proxies for actions; whereas in East Asia, messages can function independently of actions (Sugimoto, 1997). Thus, having the offender apologize directly may be equally as satisfying to actual remediation for East Asians. Rather than investigating cultural differences in apology type (direct vs. third-party), perhaps a more fruitful line of research could examine cultural differences in direct apology content. For instance, some preliminary research has shown that Japanese prefer direct apologies that cater to the status of the victim, while Americans prefer more general, direct apologies (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990).

Second, these results could imply that culture influences relationship restoration, but it manifests in different ways. Research suggests that cultural variations exist in terms of how members of Western and East Asian cultural groups approach communication and conflict (Adair et al., 2016; LeResche, 1992). Because communication styles and approaches to resolving conflict are more fixed within Western cultures (i.e., direct communication, structured repair processes), we would expect stronger preferences to emerge (Sugimoto, 1997; LeResche, 1992). Thus, Westerners should hold preferences for how to restore a relationship, which would explain why our Caucasian sample preferred culturally-congruent direct apologies to culturally-incongruent third-party apologies. In contrast, East Asian cultures have greater flexibility in their communication and approach to resolving conflict (i.e., can adapt communication to context, conflict can be resolved through a variety of solutions) (Adair et al., 2001; Sugimoto, 1997; LeResche, 1992). Therefore, we might not expect strong repair preferences to arise within East Asian culture. This could explain why in some instances Chinese participants showed no predilection for either apology type since both are acceptable ways to communicate remorse within East Asian culture.

Nonetheless, the results for our Chinese sample should be interpreted with caution. One possibility is that these results emerged due to our operationalization of third-party apologies. Specifically, the third-party apology was delivered by an unknown company representative with no mention of the representative's hierarchical status within the organization. However, the representative's status may play an important role in determining third-party apology preferences, as third-party apologies delivered by higher status individuals may be perceived as more trustworthy and sincere, especially within hierarchical, East Asian societies (Hwang, 1987; Kowner & Wiseman, 2003).

## **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Overall, this research has many implications. This work provides an empirical component to Ren and Gray's (2009) theoretical model of effective relationship restoration, which in part dictates that relationship repair processes are culturally embedded and outcomes depend on choosing a repair mechanism that aligns with prevailing cultural norms. Incorporating a cultural perspective into the relationship repair process allows researchers to move beyond a "one-size-fits-all" solution to relationship repair and instead take into account the relational and culturally embedded components of the relationship repair process (Ren & Gray, 2009). Our findings suggest that Caucasians favour culturally-normative direct apologies in relationship restoration, while preference for direct or third-party apologies among Chinese remains inconclusive. Although we initially expected Chinese to favour what we deemed to be culturally-normative third-party apologies, we did not take in to account the extent to which flexibility may influence communication and repair processes within East Asian culture (LeResche, 1992). Although contrary to our initial expectations, our results confirm at least partial support for culture's impacts on relationship repair.

In addition, this study extends the relationship repair literature, an important yet understudied field of research (Dirks et al., 2009). Specifically, we add to the extant literature by incorporating different repair perspectives (e.g., direct vs. third-party apologies) over a more generalized approach to relationship repair (e.g., do apologies work?). By comparing two different types of apologies (direct vs. third-party), this allowed for a more precise understanding of why certain apologies work better among members of diverse groups. It is clear that direct apologies as repair mechanisms lead to better restoration outcomes for Caucasians. However, third-party apologies may not always be suitable repair choices for Chinese. Despite third-party



intervention in relationship ruptures receiving growing attention from theorists, only a few inconclusive empirical findings have materialized (Rubin, 1980; Giebels & Janssen, 2005). In East Asian cultures where direct confrontational strategies are less common and relationships are emphasized, third-parties can facilitate repair without making parties lose face; however, third-party intervention can also exacerbate conflict, especially when conflict intensity is high (Rubin, 1980; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2002). While our research provided a solid first attempt to investigate the relationship between culture and third-party apologies, more work needs to be done to confirm culture's role in third-party help.

From a practical standpoint, our work provides organizations and their negotiators with greater insight into the relationship repair process, helping them to target their apologies according to cultural guidelines and effectively repair damaged negotiator relationships. The cultural perspective embedded within our research could also assist negotiators in multicultural contexts successfully navigate cross-cultural negotiations. Our work should encourage negotiators to develop a broader range of responses to relationship ruptures that match the cultural restoration preferences of negotiation counterparts. Although our findings were inconclusive for the Chinese sample, third-party apologies should be avoided among Caucasians, as our findings suggest that they prefer culturally-normative direct apologies.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

As with all research, the present study has several limitations. Most notable was our choice to incorporate culture rather than context dependence into our model (Figure 2). We argued that one potential reason why culture might affect relationship restoration is because it governs communication norms (e.g., context dependence) which shape apology preferences (Ren & Gray, 2009). Because our independent t-test results supported cultural variations in context

dependence norms, we used these results to make interpretations about culture's moderating role in relationship repair. Specifically, we inferred that Caucasians' preference for direct over third-party apologies could have occurred because direct apologies align with culturally-congruent low context dependence norms.

One concern with this approach is that we can only make assumptions, rather than conclusions about the effect of context dependence communication norms; however, a myriad of other cultural factors may have also explained cultural differences in apology preferences. For instance, cultural variations in communication flexibility may also account for our findings, such that less flexible, Caucasians hold stronger direct apology preferences, whereas high communication flexibility allows East Asians to be more receptive to different types of apologies (Adair et al., 2016; LeResche, 1992).

Additionally, our context dependence interpretations may have been limited by our operationalization of the construct. Specifically, we measured context dependence at the individual level (e.g., I use silence to imply my opinions), but norms operate at the group or cultural level (e.g., People in my cultural group use silence to imply their opinions) (Shteynberg, Gelfand, & Kim, 2009). Descriptive norms, defined as typical beliefs, values, and behaviours of one's own group, influence individual behavioural preferences, as people tend to behave according to beliefs and values that they perceive to be widespread within their own group (Shteynberg et al., 2009). Empirical evidence suggests that if a certain behaviour is normative within a group (e.g., direct communication aligns with low message context dependence norms), individuals report behaving according to the same norm even if it is incongruent with their own preferences (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Shteynberg et al., 2009). As such, changing the frame of reference for context dependence from self to other (i.e., ask about perceptions of other people's

context dependence norms) may be more appropriate to make conclusions about cultural differences in context dependence because norms reside within a persons' intersubjective perceptions of their own group (Chiu et al., 2010).

Finally, our context dependence interpretations may be unfounded due to weak norm activation. Specifically, the impact of context dependence norms on behaviour is strengthened when norms are salient, such as under conditions of cue specificity (Leung & Morris, 2015). We argued that the relationship restoration process would activate both message and relationship context dependence norms because the process primarily relies on relationship information and communication cues to repair a relationship. However, norms may not have even been activated, and therefore might not have been made salient during the study. One possibility is that our single negotiation vignette limited the amount of relationship and communication information available to cue the participant (i.e., participants had no relationship history or prior communication with the fictitious counterpart). The vignette's written format could have also hindered a participant's ability to pick up on certain relationship and message contextual cues that would have been more easily accessible during a face-to-face interaction (e.g., counterpart's relative status, emotional state, etc.). Studies have confirmed that in-person interactions facilitate cue activation compared to non-visual online formats (e.g., Okdie et al., 2011).

In addition to the context dependence restrictions, this research may also be limited by several factors. First, the current study's use of an online negotiation vignette to test apologies and relationship restoration was problematic. Although this method allows for more precise control and precision, this was done at the expense of generalizability. While we attempted to simulate an authentic workplace negotiation and used a working professional sample as opposed to students, the results outlined here should be applied with caution to real-world relationship

repair. Second, relationship rupture was not developed organically in our study (i.e., participants received a take-it-or-leave-it offer from their counterpart. Rupture was later reinforced when participants were explicitly told this episode upset them and made them question continuing the negotiation). Although we measured participants' feelings towards the counterpart post-offer, we did not measure attitudes prior to the offer or following our rupture reinforcement. This limits our findings, as we cannot be certain that we successfully manipulated relationship rupture. In hindsight, we should have created a non-rupture control condition and compared counterpart impressions across conditions. Significant differences (i.e., participants hold more negative feelings towards their counterpart in the rupture compared to the control condition), would have provided us with a stronger indication of rupture success. Third, while our narrow focus on apologies as repair tactics allows for more precise conclusions about the repair process, many other methods could be used to restore relationships (e.g., penance, denial, social accounts, compensation, punishment, etc.), with appropriate restoration behaviour being embedded within a culture (Ren & Gray, 2009). For instance, one's preference for private or public compensation could depend on culture, such that compensation might be offered privately rather than publicly in East Asian cultures to minimize threats to offender's face (Ren & Gray, 2009). Public compensation could result in negative reactions by the offender and could exacerbate, rather than repair, relationship ruptures (Ren & Gray, 2009).

Efforts have already begun to continue this line of research. Current plans include collecting more data and re-running the Figure 2 model with context dependence as the moderator instead of culture. However, before collecting data and re-running this model, we suggest changing the frame of reference of the context dependence scale from "self" to "other" given the influence of intersubjective perceptions on individual behaviour (Shteynberg et al.,

2009). In this revised model, a significant effect of context dependence would confirm that context dependence communication norms govern apology preferences. However, insignificant results could suggest that another cultural variable (e.g., communication flexibility) better explains cultural differences in apology preferences and restoration outcomes. In addition, efforts should be made to amend the third-party apology to include the apology giver's status, which might improve the apology's effectiveness within East Asian cultures that cherish hierarchical status in social relations (Hwang, 1987; Kowner & Wiseman, 2003).

However, if the above changes do not further clarify cultural direct or third-party apology preferences, future research may want to explore cross-cultural differences in apology content rather than apology type. Preliminary research has shown that matching apology content with a victim's self-construal facilitates forgiveness; however, this research did not examine cross-cultural differences in self-construal (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). Because certain self-construals are more accessible within some cultures (i.e., collective self-construal for East Asians and independent self-construal for Westerners), we might expect apology components which align with culturally-congruent self-construals to be most effective (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For example, acknowledging violated rules and norms might be particularly effective for collectivist East Asians, who place greater importance on social rules and norms compared to Westerners; in contrast, apologies focused on compensation may be better perceived by independent Westerners, who have higher concern for equity (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010). In addition, results may indicate that East Asians still appreciate more indirect communication style within a direct apology (e.g., indirect statements of remorse or explanations) (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990).

General future directions include examining the likelihood of ruptures re-occurring following relationship repair in negotiation. Current negotiation research suggests that "conflict

spirals”, contentious communication that is continuously reciprocated within a relationship, can be broken by various strategies, including not reciprocating contentious communication and labelling the communication as ineffectual (Brett, Shapiro, & Lyttle, 1998). Although our research used a simple example of rupture and restoration, continuous restoration success may depend on individuals’ cultural preferences for responding to contentious communication within the negotiation context. Finally, while our research examined relationship restoration from the victim perspective, efforts should also be made to explore restoration from the standpoint of the offender, as research suggests that each perspective may be associated with different key needs, which could alter relationship restoration preferences and satisfaction (Shnabel & Nadler, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Successful negotiations can amicably settle disagreements and create win-win scenarios, where all parties can achieve more by working together on mutual benefits (Raiffa, 1982). However, negotiation success is contingent on maintaining healthy working relationships, which can become easily damaged during tense communication exchanges. Because negotiators are less likely to succeed in negotiations following rupture, relationship repair is especially vital (White et al., 2004). As globalization continues to expand worldwide, negotiations among people of different cultural backgrounds with varying communication norms are becoming more common (Elahee et al., 2002). Our research has attempted to show that tailoring apologies to culturally guided preferences can result in greater relationship restoration. Overall, this research has broad social implications as it lays a foundation for examining effective relationship restoration through a cultural framework.

## Tables & Figures

Table 1

*Correlation & Descriptive Statistics (N = 277)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. MCD	(.86)							
2. RCD	.76**	(.88)						
3. AE	.10	.07	(.89)					
4. SVI	.18**	.15*	.43**	(.93)				
5. Forgive	.15*	.08	.66**	.67**	(.88)			
6. Rel. Outcome	.07	-.004	.61**	.50**	.65**	(.78)		
7. Culture <sup>a</sup>	.26**	.38**	-.20**	.25**	-.15*	-.18**	—	
8. ToA <sup>b</sup>	-.08	-.06	-.18**	-.43**	-.32**	-.25**	—	—
<i>M</i>	5.03	5.19	3.61	3.73	3.40	3.47		
<i>SD</i>	.79	.80	.77	1.30	.73	.78		
<i>Range</i>	2-6.6	1.4-6.67	1-5	1-7	1-5	1-5		

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Note:* Entries on the main diagonal are Cronbach's alpha. MCD = Message Context Dependence; RCD = Relationship Context Dependence; AE = Apology Efficacy; SVI = Subjective Value Inventory; Rel. Outcome = Relationship Outcome; ToA = Type of Apology

<sup>a</sup>Culture: 0 = *Caucasian North American*, 1 = *Chinese*; <sup>b</sup>ToA: 0 = *direct apology*, 1 = *third-party apology*.

Table 2a

*Correlation & Descriptive Statistics for Caucasian North Americans (N = 133)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. MCD	(.89)						
2. RCD	.75**	(.90)					
3. AE	.12	.14	(.92)				
4. SVI	.07	.06	.46**	(.95)			
5. Forgive	.10	.11	.67**	.76**	(.90)		
6. Rel. Outcome	.08	.009	.65**	.64**	.70**	(.80)	
7. ToA <sup>a</sup>	-.11	-.12	-.21*	-.53**	-.39**	-.36**	—
<i>M</i>	4.80	4.88	3.77	3.39	3.51	3.62	
<i>SD</i>	.89	.91	.77	1.39	.75	.79	
<i>Range</i>	2-6.6	1.4-6.4	1-5	1-7	1-5	1-5	

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Note:* Entries on the main diagonal are Cronbach's alpha. MCD = Message Context Dependence; RCD = Relationship Context Dependence; AE = Apology Efficacy; SVI = Subjective Value Inventory; Rel. Outcome = Relationship Outcome; ToA = Type of Apology

<sup>a</sup>ToA: 0 = *direct apology*, 1 = *third-party apology*.



Table 2b

*Correlation & Descriptive Statistics for Chinese (N = 144)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. MCD	(.76)						
2. RCD	.71**	(.78)					
3. AE	.22**	.19*	(.86)				
4. SVI	.23**	.07	.56**	(.89)			
5. Forgive	.33**	.19*	.62**	.72**	(.86)		
6. Rel. Outcome	.17*	.15	.54**	.50**	.58**	(.77)	
7. ToA <sup>a</sup>	-.04	.04	-.14	-.34**	-.24**	-.15	—
<i>M</i>	5.21	5.48	3.46	4.04	3.30	3.34	
<i>SD</i>	.59	.55	.74	1.14	.69	.75	
<i>Range</i>	3.8-6.5	3.6-6.7	1-5	1-7	1-5	1-5	

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

*Note:* Entries on the main diagonal are Cronbach's alpha. MCD = Message Context Dependence; RCD = Relationship Context Dependence; AE = Apology Efficacy; SVI = Subjective Value Inventory; Rel. Outcome = Relationship Outcome; ToA = Type of Apology

<sup>a</sup>ToA: 0 = *direct apology*, 1 = *third-party apology*.

Table 3

*Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for MCD and RCD subscales by culture*

CD Subscale	Culture							
	Caucasian N. Am.			Chinese			95% CI	t
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n		
MC Feeling <sup>a</sup>	5.01	1.31	133	5.51	.70	144	-.75, -.25	3.94***
MC Indirect	3.78	1.23	133	4.22	1.26	144	-.73, -.14	2.91**
MC Implicit <sup>a</sup>	5.37	1.23	133	5.39	.96	144	-.27, .25	.08
MC Recog. Emo.	5.56	.96	133	5.56	.85	144	-.21, .22	.03
MC Conflict <sup>a</sup>	4.38	1.82	133	5.46	1.29	144	-1.46, -.70	5.65***
MC Disagree <sup>a</sup>	4.59	1.59	133	5.15	1.06	144	-.87, -.23	3.34***
RC Other Feelings <sup>a</sup>	5.23	.95	133	5.50	.64	144	-.46, -.07	2.70**
RC Other Status <sup>a</sup>	4.77	1.25	133	5.85	.70	144	-1.32, -.83	8.75***
RC Facts	4.03	1.58	133	4.52	1.64	144	-.87, -.11	2.53*
RC Image <sup>a</sup>	4.47	1.26	133	5.37	.80	144	-1.15, -.65	7.00***
RC Misc.	5.10	1.55	133	5.31	1.33	144	-.56, .13	1.24

†  $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Levene's test was violated. T-tests for these variables assume unequal variances.

Table 4a

*Model Coefficients for Process Model (with SVI)*

Antecedent	M (Apology Efficacy)				Y (SVI)			
	$\beta$	SE	p	95% CI	$\beta$	SE	p	95% CI
ToA <sup>a</sup> (X)	-.32	.13	.014*	-.58, -.07	-1.24	.13	<.001***	-1.58, -.89
AE (M)	--	--	--	--	.74	.08	<.001***	.58, .89
Culture <sup>b</sup> (W)	-.36	.13	.004**	-.61, -.11	.56	.17	.0013**	.22, .90
ToA x Culture (XxW)	.11	.18	.526	-.24, .47	.63	.24	.0091**	.16, 1.10
Constant	3.93	.09	<.001***	3.75, 4.11	1.24	.34	.0003***	.57, 1.91
	$R^2 = .071$				$R^2 = .434$			
	$F(3, 271) = 6.90, p = .0002***$				$F(4, 270) = 51.76, p = <.001***$			

†  $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Note: ToA = Type of Apology; AE = Apology Efficacy.

<sup>a</sup>ToA: 0 = direct apology, 1 = third-party apology; <sup>b</sup>Culture: 0 = Caucasian North American, 1 = Chinese

Table 4b

*Regression Results for Conditional Direct and Indirect Effects (with SVI)*

Paths	$\beta$	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
<b>ToA → SVI</b>				
Caucasian North American	-1.24***	.17	-1.58	-.89
Chinese	-.61***	.17	-.94	-.28
<b>ToA → AE → SVI</b>				
Caucasian North American	-.24*	.10	-.45	-.05
Chinese	-.15	.09	-.33	.03
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>				
Culture	-.08	.13	-.18	.35

†  $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Note: ToA = Type of Apology; AE = Apology Efficacy. The direct and indirect effects were calculated with a bootstrap analysis with a bootstrap sample of 5,000.

Table 5a

*Model Coefficients for Process Model (with Forgiveness)*

Antecedent	M (Apology Efficacy)				Y (Forgiveness)			
	$\beta$	SE	p	95% CI	$\beta$	SE	p	95% CI
ToA <sup>a</sup> (X)	-.32	.13	.014*	-.58, -.07	-.40	.09	<.001***	-.58, -.21
AE (M)	--	--	--	--	.58	.04	<.001***	.49, .66
Culture <sup>b</sup> (W)	-.36	.13	.004**	-.61, -.11	-.13	.09	.156	-.31, .05
ToA x Culture (XxW)	.11	.18	.526	-.24, .47	.63	.24	.151	-.07, .44
Constant	3.93	.09	<.001***	3.75, 4.11	1.53	.18	<.001***	1.17, 1.89
	$R^2 = .071$				$R^2 = .473$			
	$F(3, 271) = 6.90, p = .0002***$				$F(4, 270) = 60.48, p = <.001***$			

†  $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Note: ToA = Type of Apology; AE = Apology Efficacy.

<sup>a</sup>ToA: 0 = direct apology, 1 = third-party apology; <sup>b</sup>Culture: 0 = Caucasian North American, 1 = Chinese

Table 5b

*Regression Results for Conditional Direct and Indirect Effects (with Forgiveness)*

Paths	$\beta$	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
<b>ToA → Forgiveness</b>				
Caucasian North American	-.40***	.09	-.58	-.21
Chinese	-.21*	.09	-.39	-.04
<b>ToA → AE → Forgiveness</b>				
Caucasian North American	-.19*	.08	-.33	-.04
Chinese	-.12	.07	-.26	.02
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>				
Culture	.07	.11	-.14	.28

†  $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Note: ToA = Type of Apology; AE = Apology Efficacy. The direct and indirect effects were calculated with a bootstrap analysis with a bootstrap sample of 5,000.

Table 6a

*Model Coefficients for Process Model (with Rel. Outcome)*

Antecedent	M (Apology Efficacy)				Y (Relationship Outcome)			
	$\beta$	SE	p	95% CI	$\beta$	SE	p	95% CI
ToA <sup>a</sup> (X)	-.32	.13	.014*	-.58, -.07	-.38	.11	.0005***	-.59, -.17
AE (M)	--	--	--	--	.58	.05	<.001***	.48, .67
Culture <sup>b</sup> (W)	-.36	.13	.004**	-.61, -.11	-.25	.11	.021*	-.45, -.04
ToA x Culture (XxW)	.11	.18	.526	-.24, .47	.28	.15	.062†	-.01, .56
Constant	3.93	.09	<.001***	3.75, 4.11	1.64	.21	<.001***	1.22, 2.05
	$R^2 = .071$				$R^2 = .404$			
	$F(3, 271) = 6.90, p = .0002***$				$F(4, 270) = 45.72, p = <.001***$			

†  $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Note: ToA = Type of Apology; AE = Apology Efficacy.

<sup>a</sup>ToA: 0 = direct apology, 1 = third-party apology; <sup>b</sup>Culture: 0 = Caucasian North American, 1 = Chinese

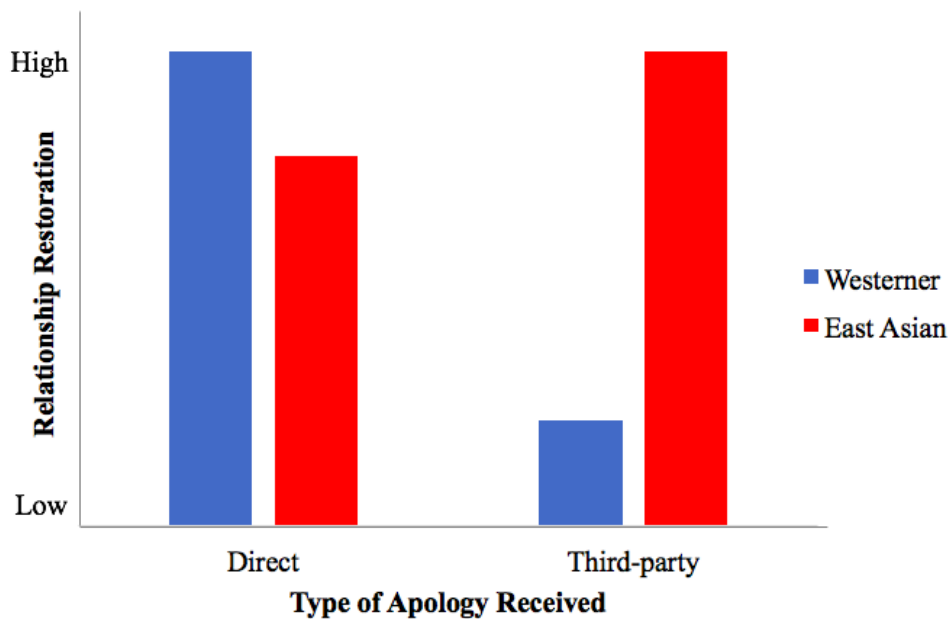
Table 6b

*Regression Results for Conditional Direct and Indirect Effects (with Rel. Outcome)*

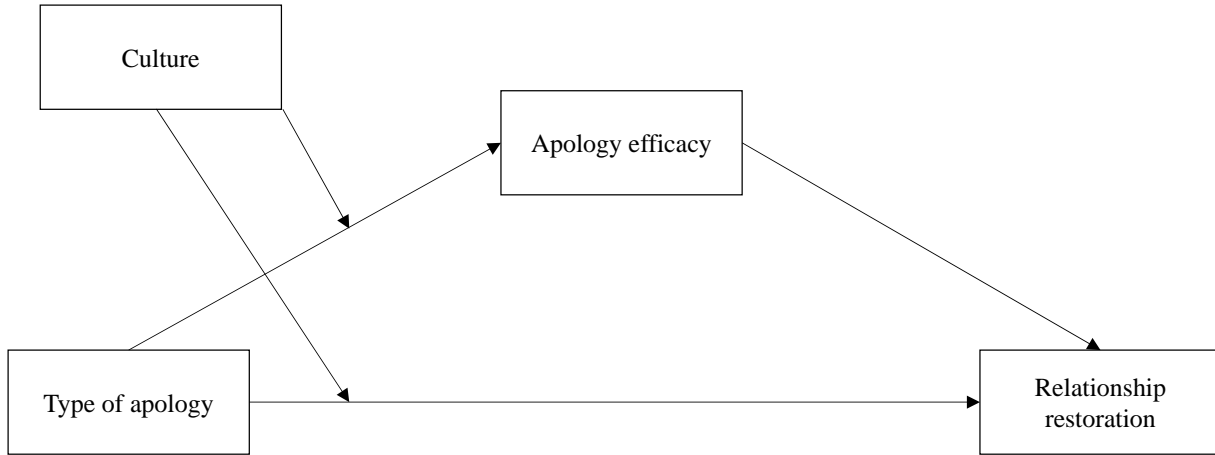
Paths	$\beta$	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
<b>ToA → Rel. Outcome</b>				
Caucasian North American	-.38***	.11	-.59	-.17
Chinese	-.11	.10	-.31	.10
<b>ToA → AE → Rel. Outcome</b>				
Caucasian North American	-.19*	.08	-.34	-.04
Chinese	-.12	.07	-.25	.02
<b>Index of moderated mediation</b>				
Culture	.07	.10	-.13	.28

†  $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Note: ToA = Type of Apology; AE = Apology Efficacy. The direct and indirect effects were calculated with a bootstrap analysis with a bootstrap sample of 5,000.



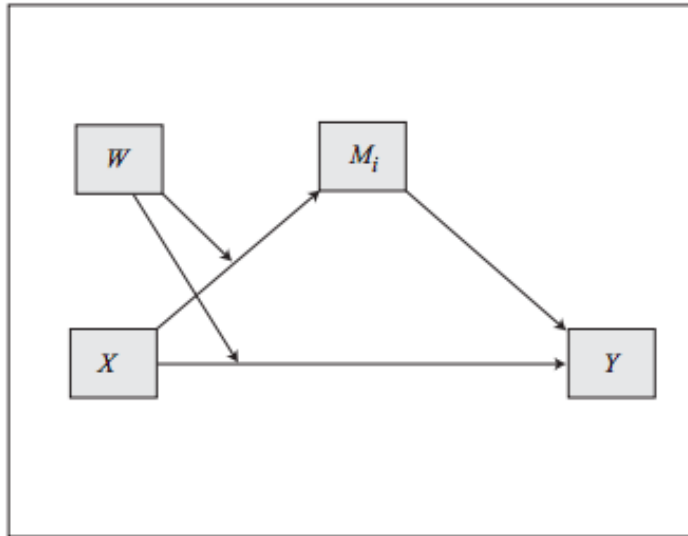
*Figure 1.* Visual representation of Type of Apology Received X Culture interaction, such that Westerners will have greater relationship restoration after receiving a direct compared to a third-party apology and East Asians will have marginally more successful relationship restoration after receiving a third-party apology compared to a direct one.



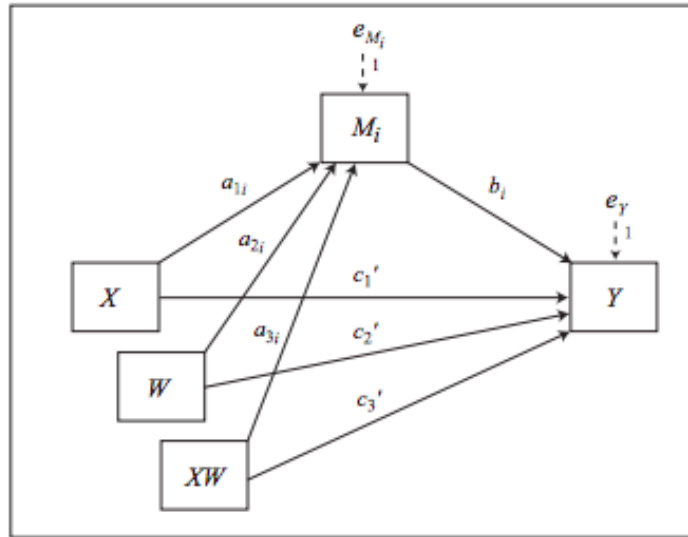
*Figure 2.* Moderated mediation model. Type of apology impacts Relationship restoration through Apology efficacy, with Culture moderating the relationship between Type of apology and Apology efficacy, as well as the relationship between Type of apology and Relationship restoration.

### Model 8

Conceptual Diagram



Statistical Diagram



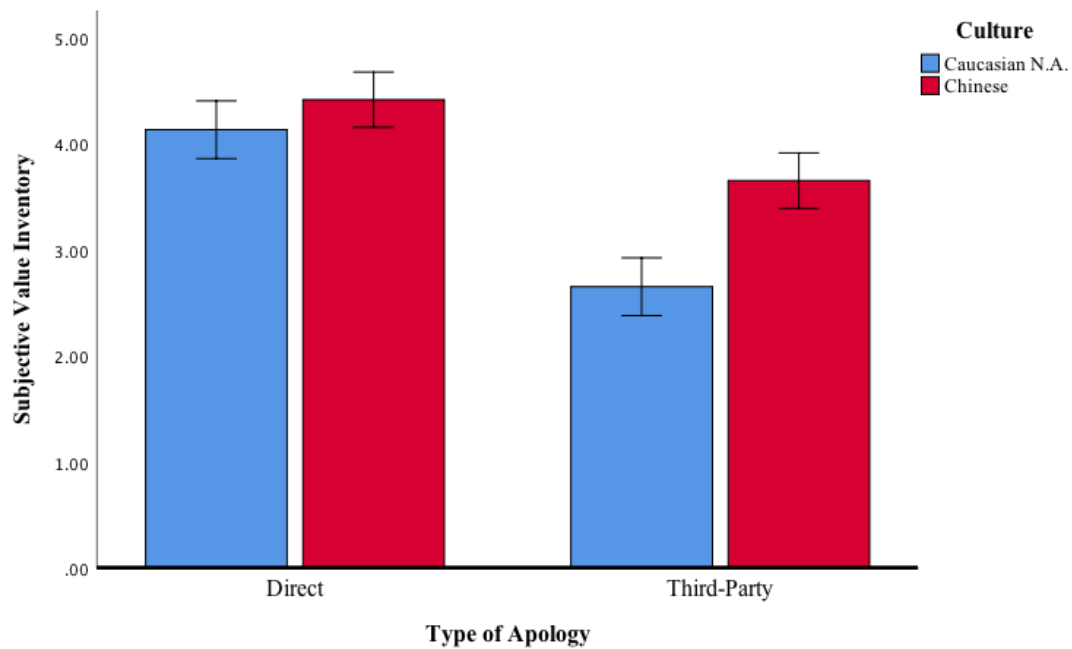
Conditional indirect effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  through  $M_i = (a_{1i} + a_{3i}W)b_i$

Conditional direct effect of  $X$  on  $Y = c_1' + c_3'W$

\*Model 8 allows up to 10 mediators operating in parallel

Figure 3. Conceptual and Statistical Diagrams for PROCESS Model 8 (Hayes, 2017)





*Figure 4.* Mean Subjective Value Inventory (SVI) scores for Caucasian North American and Chinese participants in the direct apology and third-party apology conditions. Error bars represent 95% CI [please note: AE (the mediator) does not appear in this figure because it cannot be used to calculate simple effects].

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### **Negotiation Vignette (Take-it-or-leave-it offer is bolded)**

Your initially offer \$3,300 for the centrifuge, but Sam quickly rejects your offer stating that this is a special centrifuge and your price is much too low.

Sam makes a counter offer of \$7,500 but you instantly reject that offer because this price is simply too expensive. You explain that Esbe Labs would not be able to resell the centrifuge for \$7,500. You tell Sam that Esbe Labs would end up losing money on this price.

After making several concessions and going back and forth with Sam on the phone for approximately an hour, you believe you are getting closer to making a deal. You are feeling good about this negotiation and are looking forward to working together with Sam in the future.

You offer Sam a new price of \$4,400 for the centrifuge. You explain to Sam that this price is fair and reasonable given the model and year of the centrifuge. You expect Sam to like and accept this offer.

**For a moment, Sam goes silent. Then, in a loud and angry tone, Sam states that your offer is ridiculous and that you are wasting Sam's time. Sam makes a counter-offer of \$6,500 and tells you that this is the best and final offer, so "take it or leave it". Sam continues to tell you that Heitech is being more than generous with this offer and makes it clear to you that under no circumstance will Heitech go lower than \$6,500 for this centrifuge.**

You tell Sam that you will have to speak with your supervisor and will call Sam back shortly.

Appendix B

**Relationship Rupture Manipulation Check**

Imagine being on the phone with Sam (your counterpart) and hearing Sam make this final offer.  
Please rate how you feel using the following scale:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not Surprised	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Surprised
Pleased	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Offended
Not Annoyed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Annoyed
Trusting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Suspicious

## Appendix C

### **Type of Apology**

#### **Direct Apology:**

The following day you receive a phone call from Sam (your counterpart):

Hi - I got your voicemail and wanted to apologize to you for how I came across in our previous phone call. I realize now that my tone and take-it-or-leave-it offer may have been interpreted as disrespectful to you and Esbe Labs, and for that I am deeply sorry. I take personal responsibility for my poor choice of words and I can promise you that it will not happen again. I hope that you can forgive me. With your permission, I would like to resume negotiations on the price for our centrifuge. What do you think?

#### **Third-party Apology Condition:**

The following day, you receive a phone call from Alex, a representative from Sam's company:

Hi - I am Alex from Heitech (Sam's company). On behalf of Sam and our company, I would like to apologize to you for how Sam came across in your previous phone call. Sam's tone and take-it-or-leave-it offer may have been interpreted as disrespectful to you and Esbe Labs, and for that we are all deeply sorry. Sam takes personal responsibility for their poor choice of words and can promise you that this type of phone call will not happen again. Sam hopes you can forgive them. With your permission, I would also like to reconnect the two of you in order to continue negotiations on the price for our centrifuge. What do you think?

Appendix D

**Context Dependence Scale**

<b>Message Context</b>	
<b>Communicate Based on Feelings</b> (MC Feeling)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feelings are a valuable source of information.</li> <li>2. I orient to people through my emotions.</li> <li>3. I use my feelings to determine how I should communicate.</li> <li>4. I trust my feelings to guide my behaviour.</li> </ol>
<b>Communicate Indirectly</b> (MC Indirect)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. I use silence to avoid upsetting others when we communicate.</li> <li>6. I avoid clear-cut expressions of my feelings when I communicate with others.</li> <li>7. I use silence to imply my opinions.</li> </ol>
<b>Recognize Implicit Messages</b> (MC Implicit)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. I catch on to what others mean even when they do not say it directly.</li> <li>9. I am able to recognize others' subtle and indirect messages.</li> <li>10. Even if I do not receive a clear response from others, I can understand what they intended.</li> </ol>
<b>Recognize Other's Emotions</b> (MC Recog. Emo.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. I can tell when someone has something to tell me but is apprehensive about discussing it.</li> <li>12. During conversation, I am very good at knowing the feelings other people are experiencing.</li> <li>13. I can tell from another person's behaviour whether he or she likes me.</li> </ol>
<b>Avoid Conflict</b> (MC Conflict)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. When I argue, I avoid confrontation.</li> <li>15. When I disagree with someone, I avoid direct conflict.</li> </ol>
<b>Avoid Disagreement</b> (MC Disagree)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. I try to stay away from disagreement with another person.</li> <li>17. I try to keep my disagreement with others to myself in order to avoid hurt feelings.</li> <li>18. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges.</li> </ol>
<b>Relationship Context</b>	
<b>Adjust Communication for Other's Feelings</b> (RC Other Feelings)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I try to adjust myself to others' feelings when we are communicating.</li> <li>2. I am modest when I communicate with others.</li> <li>3. I qualify (e.g., use "maybe," "perhaps") my language when I communicate.</li> <li>4. If I think the person will be hurt by my refusing an invitation, I provide additional reasons for my response.</li> <li>5. I listen very carefully to people when they talk.</li> <li>6. In interacting with someone I dislike, I keep my true feelings hidden.</li> <li>7. When flattered, I am humble.</li> <li>8. If I have something negative to say to others, I am tactful in telling them.</li> </ol>

<b>Adjust communication for Other's Status</b> (RC Other Status)	9. When addressing someone of a higher rank than me, I tend to be rather formal. 10. I always begin conversations with a formal greeting. 11. It is important to know someone's position so you can greet them accordingly. 12. When addressing someone older than me, I tend to be rather formal.
<b>Convey Facts Sensitive</b> (RC Facts)	13. I will avoid telling the truth if it protects the social harmony.
<b>Adjust Communication for Own Image</b> (RC Image)	14. I do everything to avoid losing face in communication. 15. I avoid making others lose face in communication. 16. If I lose face in a situation, it makes me annoyed. 17. If I lose face in a situation, it makes me unhappy.
(RC Misc.)	18. My communication style is very different depending on whether I am interacting with colleagues at work or in a social setting.

## Appendix E

### Measures

#### Apology Efficacy Scale

1. The phone call was effective at dealing with my concerns.
2. The phone call was credible.
3. The phone call was adequate.
4. The phone call was sincere.
5. The phone call offered a sincere apology for the incident.
6. I could tell in the phone that Sam, my counterpart, was truly sorry for the harm or ill-will caused to me.
7. The phone call expressed genuine remorse for the harm or ill-will caused to me.

#### Subjective Value Inventory

1. What kind of “overall” impression did Sam, your counterpart, make on you?
2. How satisfied are you with your relationship with Sam, your counterpart?
3. To what degree do you trust Sam, your counterpart?
4. To what degree do you think there is a good foundation for a future relationship with Sam, your counterpart?

#### Forgiveness Scale

1. I wish Sam, my counterpart, well.
2. I disapprove of Sam, my counterpart. \*
3. I think favorably of Sam, my counterpart.
4. I condemn Sam, my counterpart. \*
5. Despite what happened, I still have goodwill for Sam, my counterpart.
6. I want to move forward with my relationship with Sam, my counterpart.
7. Despite what happened, I want us to have a positive relationship again.
8. I have completely forgiven Sam for what happened.

\*reversed.

#### Relationship Restoration Outcome Scale

1. I was satisfied with the approach used to restore the relationship.
2. I believe the relationship was effectively repaired.
3. I feel threatened by Sam, my counterpart. \*
4. I would be willing to negotiate with Sam, my counterpart, again.

\*reversed.